



PALM BEACH COUNTY'S PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT
Palm Beach County Reentry Task Force

October 27, 12:00-1:30PM
WebEx Virtual Meeting

Summary Meeting Minutes

Members & Guests Present:

Chair, Dr. Angela Bess, Palm Beach County School District
Vice Chair, Gregory Starling, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
Adam Davis, PBC Library
Alan Johnson, State Attorney's Office
Alicia Reno,
Armando Fana, City of West Palm Beach
Arnja Perpignand, Florida Department of Corrections
Ashley Houlihan, Supervisor of Elections Office
Bert Winkler, Criminal Justice Commission
Calli Cain, Florida Atlantic University
Calvin Sloan, Florida Atlantic University
Carey Haughwout, Office of the Public Defender
Cassandra Atkin-Plunk, Florida Atlantic University
Charisse Van Biesen, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
Charles Vercillo, Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.
Craig Spatara, GEO Group
Darren Romelus, Palm Beach County Fire Rescue
Dhiny Mercedes, CareerSource of Palm Beach County
Elizabeth Hopkins, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Emily McBay, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Erika Ray, The Lord's Place
Fernando DeCardenas, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Geeta Loach-Jacobson, PBC Youth Services Department
Jacqueline Jackson, Criminal Justice Commission
Jeanette Marshall, Healthier Neighbors
Jennifer Loyless, Office of the Public Defender
Joey Nieves, The Lord's Place
Judge Jeffery Dana Gillen, 15th Judicial Circuit
Judge Kathleen Kroll, 15th Judicial Circuit
Julia Dattolo, CareerSource PBC
Kevin Jones, City of West Palm Beach
Kimberly Comer, NAMI

Laura Waterman, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Linda Porter, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Lynn Trimble, Choice to Change
Maggie Witherow, Restoration Destination
Marcia Bahia, Palm Beach Sheriff's Office
Marsha Martino, National alliance on Mental Illness: PBC Chapter
Negaysha Walcott, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
Nikki Girard, The Lord's Place
Orie Bullard, The Reentry Center of Riviera Beach
Oswald Newbold, The Reentry Center of Riviera Beach
Pam Berry, Salvation Army
Peter Noel, Alpha & Omega House
Ramona La Roche, African American Research Library, Broward County
Regenia Herring, Criminal Justice Commission
Rishma Holt, Community member
Rosalind Murray, Criminal Justice Commission
Sade Lyons, The Lord's Place
Serena Marlow, Florida Department of Corrections
Shirlon St. Amour, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
Tamara Starks, Palm Beach Sheriff's Office
Tarcel King, The Lord's Place
Wenfred Dorsey, The Lord's Place
William Freeman, The Reentry Center of Riviera Beach

Public Safety Department Staff Present:

Arlene Griffiths, PBC Public Safety Department
Alexis Benkly PBC Public Safety Department
Jessica Hidalgo, PBC Public Safety Department
Nicole Bishop, PBC Public Safety Department
Randi Taylor, PBC Public Safety Department
Margo Smith, PBC Public Safety Department
Stephanie Sejnoha, PBC Public Safety Department

I. Welcome and Roll Call, Chair, Dr. Angela Bess, PBC School District

Arlene reminded the group of the importance of entering your attendance in the chat and advised that if any attendees do not see their name listed on the previous minutes, to let her know.

Please Note: Florida Sunshine Law provides this is a public meeting; all meetings are audio recorded and documents are open to public inspection.

- II. **Approval and/or Additions to the Preliminary Agenda** – Approved
- III. **Approval and/or Corrections to the 7/28/21 Meeting Minutes** – Approved
- IV. **PBC Reentry Task Force's Chair** – Nomination and Election, *Chair, Dr. Angela Bess*
Dr. Bess nominated Public Defender Carey Haughwout. A vote was taken and with no objections, Judge Gillen and Judge Johnson both advised to call the vote thereby unanimously approving PD Haughwout as the new Chair. Dr. Bess welcome her and expressed her enthusiasm in her assuming the Chairmanship.
- During the January 2022 meeting, Dr. Bess will officially be recognized for her leadership.
- V. **FDC Sago Palm Reentry Center Updates**, *Serena Marlow, Assistant Warden, Florida Dept. of Corrections*
Ms. Marlow reported on the additional programs including learning labs for computer training, Microsoft programs, other educational programs, and peer to peer program which is community based where the residents in the system are responsible for each other and report to each other. They are also looking to extend the program HVAC, CDL, and plumbing. She mentioned the FDC's Roadmap to Restoration initiative coming to Palm Beach County.
- VI. **Reentry Outreach Process**, *Carey Haughwout, Public Defender of 15th Judicial Circuit, Office of the Public Defender*
Ms. Jennifer Loyless reported on behalf of Ms. Haughwout, regarding efforts to work with FDC community transition specialist – one in each region to facilitate access to the prisons to better engage returning individuals prior to release. She mentioned the current technology available that may be utilized it to reach them.
- VII. **Reentry Program Office Updates**, *Nicole Bishop*
Ms. Nicole Bishop announced the resignation of Criminal Justice Programs Manager, Chenise Bonilla, and noted that interviews are currently underway to fill the position. Staff prepared and submitted 19 funding reports, held six public meetings, coordinated staff training, and working with FDC to facilitate the Road May to Restoration community event on November 9, 2021. Staff also welcomed the University of Cincinnati for a train the trainer LSI-R Risk and Needs Assessment training in September, where four reentry provider staff and two county staff were participated. EKPI – performance indicators were presented. With regards to other staff updates, Sarah Sanchez was promoted to another division within Public Safety, Ashely Reid is no longer with The Reentry Center in Riviera Beach, Alexis Davis is currently interning from Palm Beach State College, and Margo Smith from Justice Services is providing administrative assistance to reentry.
- VIII. **Florida Department of Correction's Roadmap to Restoration Event**, *Arlene Griffiths, PBC Public Safety Dept.*
Arlene announced the roadmap event at the Marina Event Center in Riviera Beach on November 9, 2021 from 3-5pm. The purpose is to have a conversation with the community to identify gaps in reentry and establish work groups to work with the FDC in addressing the gaps.
- IX. **Amplifying Impact, Riviera Beach & West Palm Beach Community Conversations**, *Kevin Jones, City of WPB*
Reverend Jones reported that the City of Riviera Beach is looking to create an outreach campaign targeting individuals in the criminal justice system. They are looking to create brochures and working with Channel 20 To develop public service announcements in that regard. Ideas will be presented to the Criminal Justice Commission on July 3, 2022, The Belle Glade group on the other hand is looking to create a portal to extend current reentry program and increase advocacy. Arlene Griffiths and William Freeman participate in the mentioned groups.
- X. **Salvation Army Collab w/ the Bureau of Prisons**, *Pam Berry, Director of Social Services, The Salvation Army*

Ms. Pam Berry introduced her staff to the committee with the hope of them participating in one of the subcommittee as their expertise allows. She provided a brief history and purpose of the Salvation Army, noting that they serve returning citizens in Palm Beach County and other jurisdictions. The main building has 87 beds (13 for females), and highlighted the impact of COVID. She mentioned “direct temp confinement” where they released vulnerable individuals to avoid unnecessary exposure to COVID. She remarked about the many barriers for individuals returning to the community, including housing which is the most challenging.

XI. Subcommittee Updates

- Employment, Training, & Education Subcommittee, *Dhiny Mercedes, CareerSource*

Mr. Mercedes spoke on the following three objectives that will be tracked:

1. Educate employers and city municipalities about the banning the box where a flyer/ brochure is being created as a reference guide for employers regarding tax credit, federal bonding, and on the job training programs to help returning individuals with employment.
2. Provide returning residents with educational and training opportunities
3. Increase number of employees who hire returning residents

Dr. Bess inquired about the number of employees that “ban the box”, and recommend tracking placement with those employers to make sure they are complying as should. Mr. Mercedes further mentioned the need for a Vice chair for the subcommittee and asked interested individuals to indicate their interest in this position, to himself Arlene. Jennifer spoke on the city of West Palm Beach’s role in ban the box and proposed researching the progress to date.

- Sustainability Subcommittee, *Tamara Starks, Palm Beach Sheriff’s Office*

Ms. Starks reported on the cancellation of the scheduled meeting, and also asked for a volunteer for a volunteer as chair as she is temporarily filling in while the current Chair is on medical leave.

- Data & Evaluation Subcommittee, *Jennifer Loyless, Office of the Public Defender, & Cristina Lucier, The Lord’s Place*

Ms. Loyless provided updates on the objectives and announced the reentry summit in October 2023. Judge Johnson inquired about the number of individuals with sexual offenses that are affected by the housing barrier, noting the need to address the issues.

- Youth Reentry Subcommittee, *Judge Kathleen Kroll, 15th Judicial Circuit, & Geeta Loach-Jacobson, PBC Youth Services Department*

Ms. Jacobson and Ms. Taylor updated on the progress of the progress made with the transition process hoping to return to face to face, and also the progress the subcommittee’s objectives. Ms. Taylor also spoke about conversation with DJJ headquarters PBSC, PB youth academy. (I will have to listen the recording to figure out what happened here.

- Housing Subcommittee, *Armando Fana, City of West Palm Beach, & Peter Noel, Alpha & Omega House*

Chairman Fana provided update from the recent housing meeting, and reported that the local housing authorities were encouraged to review their policies and procedures on access to housing for returning individuals with the hopes of being more flexible. She referenced Ms. Loyless’ advice to connect with her to provide enhanced background checks on reentry client’s actual criminal background to aid in determining eligibility on a case by case basis.

- Sexual Offenses Subcommittee, *Meredith Powers-Lupo, West Palm Beach Veterans Affairs, & Nikki Girard, The Lord’s Place*

Chairman Meredith Powers-Lupo spoke on the effects of having a sexual offense, explain that the sexual offender registry presents a more challenging barriers vs the actual charge. Reported that the goals/

objectives and reviewed and modified accordingly, and mentioned a **Developing a system (SOP) of who in the judicial system to go to or does the judicial reviews**
Judge Gillen will assist in creating a mechanism to help alleviate the barriers for the elderly individuals that need care and are not able to receive it because of the ankle monitors.

XII. Additional Member and Guest Comments

- Ms. Alexis Davis shared information on the residency restriction map she is currently working with ISS. She also discussed her ultimate goal for the map.
- Mr. Oswald Newbold – Liberty University – Mr. Newbold provided information about his recent venture to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia where he introduced reentry to students in criminal justice programs. He provided them with handouts about reentry in PBC and discovered that a lot of students showed interested in reentry. The professor also invited him back to speak further about the program next month.
- Mr. Al Johnson shared information he received on his inquiry, indicating anyone released from prison on probation for a sexual offense, will have a monitor, which is most likely the majority of the individuals.

XIII. Next Steps

a) Recap Action Items

Arlene provided a recap/action items for next meeting

1. Ban the box - # of employers who have banned the box for Palm beach county and for the city of West palm beach, as well as a comparison of the number of employees that were hired with criminal records prior to and after banning the box.
2. The percentage of individuals of with sexual offenses that have served and returned to the community through the reentry program
- 3.

b) Next Meeting Date: January 26, 2022

XIV. Adjournment – Thank you for your service Dr. Bess and a Virtual wave goodbye