

# CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

## **Recidivism Reduction Committee**

Thursday, March 13, 2014

10:00 AM

Café 24 Conference Room  
CT Department of Correction  
24 Wolcott Hill Rd.  
Wethersfield, CT

**Members Present:** Maureen Price-Boreland (Co-Chair), Vivien Blackford (Co-Chair), Karl Lewis, John Santa, Kathleen Maurer, Lauren Siembab, Steve Lanza, Sue Quinlan, Rich Sparaco, Ivan Kuzyk, Linda Meyer, James Dzurenda

**Also Participating:** Jason DePatie, Vanessa Brown, Amy Zurlo

## **MINUTES**

### **I. MEETING CONVENED**

Vivien Blackford called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 a.m.

### **II. WELCOME: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS COMMISSIONER DZURENDA**

Vivien Blackford welcomed Commissioner Dzurenda to the meeting and invited him to share his ideas for the Department of Corrections. Commissioner Dzurenda informed the Committee that every five to eight months, roughly seventy state commissioners meet to discuss ways of improving the corrections system. Commissioner Dzurenda stated that at their previous meeting, they discussed how collaboration is the key to preventing recidivism. Commissioner Dzurenda asked all of the Connecticut State Agencies involved in the post-release process to write a new mission statement and goals for the Department of Corrections. A new mission statement and goals for the Department of Corrections was created by merging the responses from these organizations, and will be released in two weeks. Commissioner Dzurenda stressed that to reduce recidivism, offenders need to meet with the resources that will be available to them in the community prior to release to develop a relationship. He noted that he will be working to make it easier for reentry organizations and offenders to meet prior to release, and provided the example of allowing furloughs for offenders to attend specific programs. He is also hoping to change the relationship between restrictive housing status and visitation policies.

## CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

As it is currently, visitation privileges can be reduced or eliminated as a form of sanction. Commissioner Dzurenda discussed the difficulties faced when trying to change policies and explain the importance of the changes to 6,000 employees in the Department of Corrections. He stressed the importance of measuring the outcomes of any changes so that there is research to back up the desired changes. Commissioner Dzurenda is also trying to prevent teens from becoming offenders by participating in programs at high schools to demonstrate the dangers of drinking and driving during prom. Vivien Blackford invited committee members to comment on his ideas, and thanked him for attending the Committee meeting.

### **III. CHILD SUPPORT INDEBTEDNESS AND INCARCERATION PROJECT**

Maureen Price-Boreland announced that many inmates are incurring child support debt, and upon release, are unable to pay their debt while trying to support themselves. Maureen Price-Boreland noted that many inmates are unaware of their child support modification rights. The goal is to spread information about these rights via letters. She recommends that a system be put in place to begin modification proceedings prior to release and educate Department of Corrections officials on how to work with offenders who have incurred child support debt. Research on this issue has been compiled using Yale Law students, but they have found that there is a lack of data.

### **IV. THE DOC'S RESPONSE TO TEN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CT SENTENCING COMMISSION**

Karl Lewis discussed with the Committee briefly the Department of Corrections' response to the recommendations made by the CT Sentencing Commission. Members of the Committee in attendance received a letter from Commissioner Dzurenda that describes the response in further detail. Thus far, the visiting policy and procedures have been revised. Karl Lewis informed the committee that they administered a survey to see how visitors view DOC visits. They surveyed six facilities and received an estimated three hundred responses. From the responses, they learned the following: (1) most visitors travel lengthy distances to the facilities (2) visitors generally drive themselves (3) almost every visitor had a visit cancelled upon arrival to the facility, or the visit was curtailed (4) the majority of responses said they had positive interactions with DOC staff. Based on these responses, Karl Lewis noted that they are going to put policies in place to make the visitation process better and to communicate more effectively with visitors.

## CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

### **V. MALTA CRIMINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE** (Formerly *Malta Prison Volunteers Activities*)

John Santa discussed how many people have no knowledge of the criminal justice system, and most are disappointed to learn about the money being spent within the criminal justice system. They want to educate people about the system and the reform that is needed and will focus on three groups of people that have the potential to be leaders: the business community, the faith community, and the academic community.

### **VI. DEVELOPMENTS IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT IN CT**

Dr. Kathleen Maurer shared with the Committee that in Connecticut, 20% of inmates are incarcerated for substance crimes, and 80% have substance abuse disorders. The Department of Corrections Health Services has three philosophies in terms of treating substance abuse (1) attack it as a disease that needs treatment (2) use evidence based research to guide treatment and (3) there is a need to build strong links with the community. Dr. Maurer informed the Committee that they've started to develop medication assisted therapy programs. There is a methadone maintenance pilot program in New Haven that can treat a maximum of thirty people.

Lauren Siembab from DMHAS discussed HB 5487, a bill that provides immunity to a person who distributes the medication Naloxone (narcan) to someone who is an actively overdose on opioids, but is unsuccessful in saving the person's life.

### **VII. RESULTS FIRST ACTIVITY IN CT**

Jason DePatie discussed the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative and provided the Committee with two documents outlining the project's methodology and participating states' recent successes

### **VIII. DISCUSSION ON THE COMMITTEE'S PRIORITIES FOR 2014**

Vivien Blackford suggested that the Committee meet within the next month to establish the Committee's priorities for 2014 and to break into working groups. The Committee also expressed interest in learning about the seven-year study on recidivism, and Brian Hill agreed to give a presentation providing further information on the study at the next meeting.

### **IX. MEETING ADJOURNED**

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

## CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

### **Materials**

- 1) Letter from Commissioner Dzurenda to Recidivism Reduction Committee Co-Chairs detailing the Department of Corrections' response to the CT Sentencing Committee Recommendations, dated February 4, 2013
- 2) *A Guide to the Meta-Analytical Process Used in the Results First Model*, by Ashley Provencher & Christine Geer, dated September 2012
- 3) *Achieving Success With the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, A State Progress Report 2011-13*, dated February 2014