

Behavioral Health Sub-Committee
Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission
Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division
Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

January 12, 2023
9:30 – 11:00 am
(via TEAMS)

Minutes

In attendance: Michael Aiello, Christopher Burke, Thomas Burr, Gail Hardy, Thomas Kocienda, Kirk Lowry, Michael Norko

1. Minutes of the September 1, 2022 and November 10, 2022 meetings were approved.
2. Discussion of resuming criminal justice operations, inter-agency communications and preparation.

DMHAS report from Michael Norko and Chris Burke:

Competency to stand trial evaluations have continued at a pre-pandemic pace. We are collecting data about the number of evaluations ordered in each office over the last several years to be able to assess whether the number of evaluations ordered are increasing. We are also assessing whether we need to increase or re-assign resources to manage higher volume from some courts. The several week increase in admissions to Whiting for competency restoration reported at the November meeting has resolved, and the hospital has been able to discharge people and be ready to admit new cases.

The Enhanced Forensic Respite Bed (EFRB) pilot program in Bridgeport has been utilized well; the 3 beds were filled about a month ago, now 2 beds are filled and 2 more clients are being evaluated for admission. We plan to expand from 3 beds to 8 beds in Bridgeport and open programs in New Britain and New Haven, bringing the total to 15 beds in the state. We are waiting on approval by the Office of the Attorney General of the scope of services language for the new contracts. We are also discussing use of these beds for outpatient restoration, and transfer from inpatient to outpatient restoration for appropriate clients.

Pretrial Intervention Program (PTIP) referrals continue, but at a reduced rate this past fall. Our most recent data for September through November show both a decrease in number of referrals and an increase in fee waivers. If this trend continues, the fund for this program will be depleted within FY 24. We will monitor closely, and keep the group informed, as well as keep OPM informed so that funding of this program does not deprive other DMHAS services of funding. The RFP for new contracts should go out in the near future.

The ABH Case Manager, Ayana Smith, is being utilized often to work with PSRB clients who are on TL and CR. Referrals come from the community providers who identify clients who can use additional support.

The grant for the re-entry program (funded through a TTI-NASMHPD grant) with Alliance for Living, Safe Futures, and York Correctional Institution (YCI) is coming to a close. We hope to be able to find funding to continue this trauma and education work through other sources. The TTI grant providing clinical support for the six shoreline police departments is also coming to an end and may not continue.

The DMHAS Division of Forensic Services has hired two social workers to re-establish the Conditional Release Services Unit (CRSU). They have completed their training and are starting to provide six-month reports to the PSRB.

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CSSD report from Michael Aiello:

CSSD is working on finalizing MOAs to use unspent ARPA dollars to expand their housing efforts to the pre-trial population, which has the greatest current need among all the disciplines of CSSD. They will be establishing twelve 2-bedroom apartments to house 24 clients for up to 4-6 months at a time, with appropriate more permanent housing referrals to follow. The program will be located in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Waterbury, and New London. If the beds are under-utilized for pre-trial clients, they will consider probation clients as well for these beds. The Sierra Program is doing well by their clients in the new supervision structure at The Connection, Inc., which Chris Burke echoed.

Division of Criminal Justice report from Gail Hardy:

Chief State's Attorney Pat Griffin continues to support the expanded use of the Early Screening and Intervention Program (ESI). He has conducted site visits and met with public defenders around the state. They are working to establish resource coordinators in all 13 Judicial Districts. GA 13 Enfield court has been closed and consolidated into GA 14 Hartford. They are working on insuring that vendors for GA 13, such as with domestic violence, are able to continue to support individuals following the merger. Chris Burke noted that the jail diversion clinician for GA 13 was provided by a private non-profit, CHR, and that we are planning to have that clinician continue to provide services in that catchment area through the Hartford court.

DOC report from Thomas Kocienda:

Dr. Burns stepped down from his role as Chief Mental Health Officer for DOC in October 2022, although he continues to supervise psychiatrists temporarily while DOC works to refill the vacancy. COVID positive persons are being relocated to one DOC facility. Mental health services are now being provided in person, rather than through telehealth. Telehealth services will continue for forensic evaluations. Discharge planning services are returning to previous operations, after a time during which Dr. Kocienda had to manage more of these activities.

CLRP report from Kirk Lowry:

Kirk noted three items on the CLRP agenda: 1) A recent client was sent to Whiting for restoration of competence to stand trial on motor vehicle violations. This client could only be held for 30 days for restoration given the maximum possible sentence. A petition to probate court for appointment of a special limited conservator was denied at a hearing on January 6. There were concerns among the members about using the competency restoration process in a motor vehicle violation case. Gail Hardy said she would follow-up with the special unit that handles these cases. Michael Norko and Chris Burke said they would follow up with Whiting and jail diversion. 2) Transfers from Whiting maximum security to Dutcher have been occurring since the statute (§ 17a-599 as amended by P.A. 22-45, Section 8) was changed to allow this on October 1, 2022. The first challenge of such a transfer by a state's attorney has occurred, and a hearing will be held by the PSRB this month to review the current status of the patient. 3) Access to religious services at WFH is being addressed by the CEO, Jose Crego. The hospital is in the process of posting for a chaplain position and using contract services for additional services. One client is being taken to services twice monthly in the community.

NAMI-CT report from Thomas Burr

NAMI-CT is beginning a series of legislative forums in each of the five Congressional districts in the state. They continue to be interested in diversion from the criminal justice system and will continue their advocacy for enhanced mental health resources to facilitate diversion and good care in the community.

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Other agency updates: none

- 3. CJPAC: Next meeting March 30, 2023

- 4. Scheduled meetings of the Behavioral Health Subcommittee (9:30 – 11:00 am):
 - March 9, 2023
 - May 11, 2023
 - July 13, 2023
 - September 14, 2023
 - November 9, 2023