

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

March 4, 2021
10:00 – 11:00 am
(via TEAMS)

Minutes

In attendance: Chris Burke, Craig Burns, Thomas Burr, Jillian Cundari, Judy Dowd, Tasha Hamm-Busha, Gail Hardy, Thomas Kocienda, Michael Norko, Terry Nowakowski, Monte Radler, David Rentler, Sandra Violette, Sally Zanger

1. Introductions. Jillian Cundari was welcomed as the new DMHAS analyst from OPM and Deputy Warden Sandra Violette was welcomed from the DOC Addiction Treatment Unit.
2. Minutes of the December 3, 2020 meeting were approved without additions or corrections.
3. Discussion of resuming criminal justice operations, inter-agency communications and preparation DMHAS report from Michael Norko and Chris Burke:

Vaccine distribution to DMHAS staff who are patient-facing and to inpatients has been progressing. Monte Radler noted that some patients felt unready to accept the vaccine on the appointed date; Michael Norko will speak to Whiting Forensic Hospital leadership about plans for re-offering to patients. The pilot of courthouse evaluations in Hartford in December 2020 went well, and has now been extended to Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury courts. We are currently developing a plan for the Norwich court. Competency evaluations have also occurred in person in DOC facilities and in the community offices for those not in custody. Since March 2020, 197 evaluations have been performed (normal volume before pandemic limitations would be 550-650 per year). In the past five weeks, an average of 10 evaluations per week have been completed, with the normal average being 11-13, so the courthouse plan has significantly improved our ability to keep up with the demand from the courts for these services. Also since March 2020, 987 jail diversion evaluations have been completed (normal rate would be about 2100) and 2916 referrals have been made to the Pretrial Alcohol and Drug Education Programs (which is about 10-20% of the normal rate of referrals from the courts). There has been a recent slight increase in the alcohol and drug referrals; we are hoping that the rate of increase will continue at a pace that will allow our private non-profit agencies to re-hire their clinical staff to administer the programs. A pilot diversion program was discussed at the January 28 CJPAC meeting for defendants with serious mental illness facing misdemeanor charges only. Work is under way to gather data about the number of such cases by court per year, to help identify a potential target for the pilot. The Division of Forensic Services has provided recent training to state's attorneys on jail diversion and management of sex offenders in the community; the next planned trainings are on competency to stand trial and DMHAS Young Adult Services.

DOC report from Craig Burns and Sandra Violette:

Northern Correctional Institute will be closing July 1; staff are working on placements for inmates located there currently. Vaccines have been administered to staff and inmates and the process continues. Webcams and desktops on rolling tables have been purchased with a DMHAS grant. These will be used to 1) support discharge planning; 2) conduct involuntary medication panel hearings; and 3) expand capacity for video competency evaluations. Methadone is now available in six facilities; this will increase to nine by late spring. Buprenorphine and vivitrol will also be available by late spring. Narcan is being distributed to discharging offenders, parolees, and halfway houses.

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Parole report from David Rentler:

No substantial changes from the December report in parole operations. Parole officers are collaborating with the DOC Addiction Services Unit and planning to distribute Narcan to parolees.

Division of Criminal Justice report from Gail Hardy:

The division continues to respond to the re-opening efforts in Judicial. The case management system is operational. Chief State’s Attorney Rich Colangelo is asking that the system be used to help identify defendants with mental illness and homelessness concerns to assist in diversion activities, as currently occur in the Early Screening Intervention (ESI) program.

NAMI report from Thomas Burr:

Nami-CT is advocating with the legislature for \$6 million in expansion of respite beds and peer services in the community to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and keep individuals better connected to their local communities. They are pointing out the increased mental health stresses experienced by the populace during COVID, and that we can expect a two-year fall-out period even after the pandemic is brought under control. NAMI is supportive of diversion projects and recommends that community respite programs not occur in locked facilities.

Public defender report from Monte Radler:

The public defenders are working to manage the increased flow of cases through the courts as the court workload volume continues to increase. They are supportive of the pilot and other diversion projects and offer to help in any way possible.

CLRP report from Sally Zanger:

No new updates. CLRP also supports continued expansion of diversion opportunities.

Partnership for Strong Communities report from Terry Nowakowski:

PSC has worked with DOC, CSSD, and the CT Coalition to End Homelessness for the last two years on developing a housing survey. That survey is now being implemented by CSSD. Preliminary findings demonstrate high numbers of people with housing insecurity among the justice-involved population.

- 4. Other agency updates
none

- 5. CJPAC: Next meeting March 25, 2021.

- 6. BHS Scheduled Meetings: 10:00 am – 11:00 am via TEAMS
 - June 3, 2021
 - September 2, 2021
 - December 2, 2021