

Behavioral Health Sub-Committee

Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission
Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division
Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

January 18, 2024

9:30 am – 11:00 am

(Russell Hall, CVH, Room 217-A; and TEAMS)

Minutes

1. Attendance: Gail Hardy, Kirk Lowry, Reena Kapoor, William O'Connor, Thomas Burr, Michael Aiello, Kevin Lawlor, Patricia O'Rourke
2. Minutes of meeting on November 9, 2023, were approved with one correction by Judy Dowd.
3. Resignation of Marc Pelka

Gail Hardy reported that Maurice Reeves will be filling in until an interim is appointed. Marc Pelka will be deputy director of Office of Victim Services. Although the larger CJ PAC may be in transition, the BHS members would like to keep meeting every other month. All members support having a space to discuss inter-agency challenges like reentry of incarcerated people and treatment for justice-involved clients with mental health issues. Mike Aiello reminded the group of the importance of working together and building efficiencies, as well as exploring resources available through CJ PAC.

4. Legislative updates

Competence to Stand Trial: Reena Kapoor and Bill O'Connor reported that the Sentencing Commission's CST proposal has run into opposition from the public defender's (PD's) office, who raised concerns about setting up defendants to fail by enrolling them in diversion programs before assessing competency. The PD's office is proposing alternate language related to doing outpatient CST evaluations for misdemeanor cases. Reena Kapoor stated that CST evaluations are currently done wherever the defendant is, so it is not clear what is really being proposed by the PD's office. A long discussion ensued about whether the proposed legislation (Sentencing Commission or PD) would accomplish the overall goal of detaining fewer individuals with misdemeanor charges in maximum-security hospital settings. Alternative strategies were discussed, including (1) converting inpatient to outpatient restoration after a period at Whiting, and (2) devoting resources to residential, wraparound mental health services for pretrial individuals, which may have the greatest impact on the ability to provide outpatient restoration.

Supervised Diversionary Program: Patricia O'Rourke reported that there have not been major objections to the idea of including individuals with Intellectual Disability and Autism-Spectrum Disorders. The Sentencing Commission has been discussing the proposal with DSS and DDS. DSS will present at the next MH Subcommittee meeting of Sentencing Commission.

Peer respite: Thomas Burr stated that NAMI continues to gather support for peer respite. The fiscal arguments are strong, and a bill will hopefully be raised during the legislative session. Thomas will distribute a Peer Respite fact sheet to committee members and keep everyone informed of public hearings as the legislative session begins.

5. Agency updates: Because of the long discussion about competence to stand trial, agency updates were deferred until the next BHS meeting in March.
6. CJPAC: Next meeting TBD
7. BHS Scheduled Meetings: 9:30am – 11:00am [Russell Hall, CVH, Room 217-A and Teams for those unable to attend in person]
 - March 14, 2024
 - May 9, 2024
 - July 11, 2024