



PLANNING COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, October 17th, 2016
12:00 noon – 1:30PM
700 Lavaca, Room 1.112
Minutes

Attendees: Helen Gaebler, Darwin Hamilton, Melissa Orren, Kimberly Pierce, Jorge Renaud, Jaime Rodriguez, Reggie Smith, Danny Smith, Douglas Smith, Laura Sovine, Kenneth Thompson, Pete Valdez, Bree Williams, Sarah Worthington

Staff: Caity Barillas, Lauren Johnson, Kelly Nichols

Guests: Rebecca Farrell, Laura Griebel, Marcus Ramirez

I. Introductions (Helen Gaebler)

Helen Gaebler welcomed the Planning Council and facilitated a round of introductions.

II. Approval of September 2016 Minutes (Helen Gaebler)

ACTION: Sarah Worthington moved to approve the September minutes, Laura Sovine seconded, and the council unanimously approved the motion.

III. Planning Council Membership Update & Vote (Kenneth Thompson)

Kenneth Thompson announced the candidates for nomination to the Planning Council.

ACTION: Kenneth nominated Laura Griebel, Rebecca Farrell, and Karen Keith as Planning Council members, Jaime Rodriguez seconded and the council unanimously approved the motion. Jorge Renaud suggested that the Roundtable seek to recruit a Planning Council member who is a women of color who has been previously incarcerated. **Action Item:** WNA will email new members the onboarding packet.

- Laura Griebel, M.Ed. - Goodwill Industries of Central Texas
- Rebecca Farrell, PhD., LPCC - Truth Be Told
- Karen Keith - Community Representative

IV. Executive Committee Update (Helen Gaebler)

• **Financial update**

Helen updated attendees about the current Roundtable financial reports. Helen noted that there are two outstanding requests including \$25,000 from Shield-Ayres Foundation and \$10,000 in additional funding from the City of Austin. In the event that prospective funding is not realized, the Reentry Roundtable may opt to fund projected expenses through cash reserves or may opt not to fund a second Fellowship.

• **Advocacy Fellowship/Shield-Ayres Grant Proposal**

Helen informed attendees that the Roundtable submitted an application to the Shield-Ayres for a second Advocacy Fellowship. Notification of the grant application is expected by the end of December.

V. Vote on Update to Bylaws re: Proxy Voting (Helen Gaebler)

Helen explained the proposed updates to the bylaws about proxy voting. Attendees discussed the changes to the bylaws and the proxy form and suggested additional language related to

the following items:

- Limiting the number of times a proxy can vote for the member to three consecutive monthly meetings; and
- Including a requirement that the proxy must speak with the member before voting to ensure that the proxy votes accordingly with the member.

Action Items: WNA and the Executive Committee will rework the bylaws with the suggested updates from members and update the proxy form for review at the next Planning Council meeting.

VI. Discussion: FY17 Deliverables and Work Plans

• Behavioral Health (Danny Smith)

Helen Gaebler reviewed the Behavioral Health goals from the Roundtable Strategic Plan:

- 1) Partner with existing groups (e.g., Behavioral Health Advisory Committee; Austin Travis County Substance Abuse Disorders Task Force) to document/affirm need for behavioral health resources for persons with criminal histories
- 2) Establish and maintain connections and partnerships to mental health advocacy organizations in our community
- 3) Advocate for continuity of care planning in local jails
- 4) Advocate for culturally competent and gender appropriate behavioral health services
- 5) Educate stakeholders and the wider community about the mental health challenges of persons with criminal histories, and the need for additional resources to address the challenge.

Danny Smith provided an update on the work of the Health Justice Learning Collaborative in partnership with ATCIC, including the following issues:

- Social Security. Receiving a social security card still remains a logistical challenge for recently released inmates and that the Sherriff's Office has been focusing on addressing barriers to receiving social security by working with the Social Security Office. The local Social Security Office will now receive updated lists of recently released inmates so that they can automatically begin benefits upon release.
- Coordination with Austin/Travis County Integral Care. The Sherriff's Office has also set up a direct phone line to ATCIC specifically to make priority appointments for people who are being released from jail.
- Reentry Planning. Through the Health Justice Learning Collaborative, ATCIC and the Sherriff's Office are working on implementing a grading system for the different levels of reentry plans for each person being released from jail with the goal of having reentry plans in place for each person leaving local jails.

Danny suggested that substance abuse is a key issue that the Roundtable should continue to focus on. He also noted the FY17 Behavioral Health deliverable - hosting a public forum focusing on the behavioral health needs of current and previously incarcerated women.

• Employment (Helen Gaebler/Lauren Johnson)

Helen Gaebler reviewed the Employment goals from the Roundtable Strategic Plan:

- 1) Bring in technical assistance (TA) provider such as Council of State Governments to train A/TCRRT members and other stakeholders on employment related issues and strategies to overcome barriers to employment (i.e., train the trainers)
- 2) Adapt TA resources and fact sheets on employment issues and develop employer packet with fair chance employer's literature

- 3) Educate policymakers and government staff about reentry employment issues (e.g., co-sponsor an employment forum with the University of Texas at Austin Opportunity Forum)
- 4) Conduct three awareness presentations per year to local employers and business organizations
- 5) Advocate for compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Guidelines
- 6) Advocate for culturally competent and gender appropriate employment services
- 7) Support statewide advocacy partners on employment-related legislative efforts, including efforts related to: a) statewide “Ban the Box”, b) prohibition of bulk sale, release, and dissemination of mug shots and criminal history records, and c) prohibition of access to non-conviction criminal records

Lauren Johnson summarized the Employment Forums that were held earlier in the year, and her follow-up efforts to make connections with HR professionals and strengthen diversity and inclusion conversations related to employment. Laura Sovine offered that each member of the Planning Council should advocate at their own organizations, not only for Fair Chance Hiring, but also for creating a welcoming environment for hiring previously incarcerated individuals.

Helen Gaebler reviewed the FY17 deliverable for the Employment Work Group: Provide a minimum of 12 hours of technical assistance and/or feedback to Travis County employment-focused planning efforts including the City of Austin Fair Chance Hiring ordinance implementation, Workforce Solutions Regional Workforce Development Plan, and other efforts related to expanding local employment opportunities for persons with criminal backgrounds.

Douglas Smith shared information about Fair Chance Hiring on the State level. He noted that there were discussions on the State level to get part or all of Fair Chance Hiring rolled back. He also noted that his organization is looking for ways to mitigate the collateral damage. Kelly Nichols informed the group about the final steps that came out of the employment forum:

- Promote best practices through a learning community approach
- Support the creation of new paid peer employment opportunities
- Conduct outreach to employers including HR professionals representing large and mid-size employers, and small and minority-owned businesses
- Develop communications tools to inform the general public about employment
- Participate in the regional Workforce Development Plan
- Support Fair Chance Hiring implementation
- Further collaboration between employment case managers, employers, and the criminal justice system

- **Housing (Melissa Orren)**

Melissa Orren reviewed the Housing goals from the Roundtable Strategic Plan:

- 1) Promote/advocate for development and implementation of effective mental health assessment/housing need tools in local jails (Coordinated Assessment-ECHO/Behavioral Health Advisory Committee Assessment Tool)
- 2) Promote/advocate for increase in funding/options for appropriate transitional/bridge/sober housing to serve more persons for longer periods of

- time who are leaving local jails
- 3) Advocate for increase in the number of and access to effective permanent supportive housing (PSH) to serve persons with criminal backgrounds
 - 4) Work with community partners in development of advocacy strategies to reduce criminal history barriers to expand access to free market housing options
 - 5) Investigate the possible development of a reentry family reunification pilot project for Austin/Travis housing authorities
 - 6) Advocate for gender appropriate housing

Melissa Orren noted that the City of Austin Code Enforcement was looking at regulations for group homes and was potentially planning stakeholder meetings, before the recent leadership change. Melissa Orren announced that the housing white paper on criminal background barriers to housing has been released, and that Bree Williams has agreed to serve as the new chair for the Housing Work Group. She also summarized the FY17 deliverable for the Housing Work Group: Convene implementation work group (hold at least four meetings) with system partners focused on enhancing access to housing opportunities for persons with criminal backgrounds.

VII. Legislative Session Update (Douglas Smith)

Douglas Smith updated members on reentry-related issues in the upcoming Legislative Session, including the following:

- Reducing penalties for misdemeanors
- Pretrial reform involving risk assessment and presumptive release for low to moderate risk crimes
- The Second Look Law for people who were sentenced as youth
- Making rehabilitative options available for misdemeanors
- Work time credits
- Lessening technical punishments
- Testing cognitive behavioral pilot
- Sending non-police officers to mental health calls
- Raise the Age
- Medicaid continuity
- Repealing the Driver's Responsibility Program
- Collateral consequences dealing with preemption
- Parole reform
- Independent oversight of TDCJ

Helen Gaebler suggested adding a temporary Work Group assigned to the upcoming Legislative Session.

VIII. Announcements:

- Helen Gaebler announced that for the upcoming Planning Council meetings, a majority of the time will be set aside to be used to work directly on Work Group issues and asked members to think about which issue area group they will participate in.
- Rebecca Farrell offered to serve as the Employment Work Group Co-Chair.
- Danny Smith announced the 2016 Vision Summit on Mental Health, November 2nd-4th: <https://www.tcsheriff.org/vision-summit>
- Bree Williams announced the upcoming Career Fair for Veterans.
- Helen Gaebler announced the 28th UT Opportunity Forum on October 28th: <https://law.utexas.edu/opportunity-forum/>