

ACJC Workgroup on Barriers to Reentry
Staff Notes and Member Assignments, March 31, 2015
Atwood Conference Center,
Anchorage, Alaska

Commissioners attending: Jeff Jessee, Greg Razo, Ron Taylor
Staff present: Mary Geddes, Susie Dosik
Participating: Deb Periman, Kaci Schroeder, Steve Williams, Dennis Schranz, Phil Cole

Future meetings: None scheduled

The group agreed that the Workgroup should expand its current focus to legally created barriers to housing and public assistance. DOC will continue to implement its policies with respect to reintegration of the offender back into the community but many of the restrictions are law-related and therefore not within the purview of its own work.

Susie Dosik mentioned two individuals – Cathy Stone and Mark Rommick at AHFC – who have indicated interest in reentry; they seem very open to considering state law related reforms. Its important to learn about their variance and waiver process. It was also suggested that the Workgroup contact Rural CAP and Cook Inlet Housing Authority to learn of their efforts thus far.

Dennis Schranz suggested an individual with possible expertise in removing barriers to housing: Heather Garretson, a professor at Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Ms.. Garretson has expertise with certificates of rehabilitation as a helpful legal mechanism.

A question was raised as to whether the JRI would get into the specifics of Alaska’s barriers to reentry. Susie Dosik suggested that we could use their considerable resources to become better informed about other states’ efforts and ‘best practices’ for policy makers. She also noted that JRI has done a ‘deep dive’ on collateral consequences elsewhere; perhaps they could do the same here, too.

As the Commission had indicated they were not ready to recommend Ban the Box legislation and needed more information, the Workgroup members decided they could follow up on the directions to contact human resource professionals at CIRI and elsewhere. The group could also look at the experience of those states like Georgia whose governments have enacted this type of legislation. Given that Target and Walmart have adopted Ban the Box as a company policy, perhaps those retailers could share their experiences. The group took note of Greg Razo’s comment that federal law compels very restrictive hiring practices which may be at odds with this type of legislation. That observation begged the question of what is happening with ban the Box strategies at the federal level? Staff should investigate. Phil Cole suggested that it may be hard to measure the success of more liberal hiring processes, but his experience had taught him that longevity means something. He suggested more employer to employer education on the issue.

It was noted that former Commissioner Blumer was a proponent of the DOL bonding program (Fidelity Bonding) insuring the employers of returning citizens against any loss resulting from that employment. Blumer had said that it was a greatly underused resource and that getting bonded was not a difficult process.

The Workgroup resolved to continue working on the following issues, by circulating emails and drafts, not reconvening immediately. On its list of important issues are: Ban the Box; addressing housing barriers in partnership with AHFC; promoting Fidelity Bonding; supporting Deb and Barbara’s work on expungement research; and activating a sub0-group on Title 28 issues.