

Vermont Department of Corrections
October 8, 2014 Town Hall Meeting Reponses

Responses to the questions and comments made at the October 8, 2014 Town Hall Meeting are below. We have done our best to provide a response without making it too long or complicated. In several instances, we included a link to a document that provides more information. We also recognize that our answers may not satisfy the participant. This does not mean that the Department does not value the comment. All of the comments are given serious consideration and weighed against the current constraints of the Department. In the course of our planning, we will review public input and make changes, where appropriate, to the operations of the Department.

We are thankful for your participation and look forward to future dialogue at the February 10, 2015 meeting.

1. How does the new Pre-trial work and the work of the Department of Justice Grant fit into the current organization? Does it change the operations?

RESPONSE : The new pre-trial work is defined in statute ACT 195. This is extensive legislation crossing the Agency of Human Services designed to provide alternatives to the traditional criminal justice system, consistent with public safety, for individuals that can benefit from alternative responses. The DOC was also instructed to hire a full-time director to oversee and implement the actions outlined in the legislation. The Pre-Trial work does not change the operations of the DOC.

Major points include:

- The DOC shall select risk and needs assessment and screening tools for use in the various decision points in the criminal justice system, including pretrial, community supervision screening, community supervision, prison screening, prison intake, and re-entry. The Department shall validate the selected tools for the population in Vermont.
- The Department, in consultation with law enforcement agencies and the courts, shall contract for or otherwise provide pre-trial services described in this section, including performance of risk assessments, needs screenings, and pretrial monitoring. The contract shall include requirements to comply with data collection and evaluation procedures.
- The DOC shall develop and implement a one year demonstration project to pilot the continued use of medication-assisted treatment within Department facilities for detainees and sentenced inmates.
- The Department shall collaborate with the Department of Health to facilitate the provision of opioid overdose prevention training for pilot project participants who are incarcerated and the distribution of overdose rescue kits with naloxone at correctional facilities to persons who are transitioning from incarceration back into the community.

- The Agency of Human Services and its departments shall assist the Department of Corrections in fully enacting the provisions of the Affordable Care Act and Vermont's health care reform initiatives as they pertain to persons in the criminal justice population, including access to health information technology, the Blueprint for Health, Medicaid enrollment, the health benefit exchange, health plans, and other components under the Department of Vermont Health Access that support and ensure a seamless process for reentry to the community or readmission to a correctional facility.

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/DOCS/2014/ACTS/ACT195.PDF>

RESPONSE: The Department of Justice Grant has a more direct connection to the work of the DOC. This award also requires the DOC to hire full-time staff to oversee implementation of the grant activities. The staff will be paid entirely with Federal funds and will not continue once the grant period is over. This grant is expected to have an impact on operations in a number of ways: update of policies; increased training for staff and community partners; and increased quality improvement activities. It will not change the mission of the Department.

2. Will the DOC reconsider sending people out of state? (Andy wants to attach a chart)

We work hard to limit the use of Out-of-State incarceration. The number of inmates housed out-of-state is lower today than it has been in last few years. We are working to bring the numbers down by use of appropriate furlough and diverting non-violent offenders to create more available in state beds. We generally agree that there are too many non-violent offenders in facilities. With that, there are still more people sentenced to serve a sentence of incarceration than the state has in bed capacity. In order to house all of these people, the state must send some out state. We have looked for options in neighboring states but there are none available. We are currently soliciting proposals for vendors to provide this service. There are not many bidders due to the small size of our population.

3. The discussion of case management does not reflect the fact that we are sending people back to communities that are resource poor. Shouldn't we be putting more efforts into prevention?

The Department of Corrections agrees that community connections and resources are a vital component to successful reentry. Our casework staff regularly communicates with community partners to facilitate a smooth transition back to the community. Through these partnerships we can help identify gaps in services that can assist with successful reentry. The Department is also part of a larger system of intervening with people engaged in the criminal justice system. Each partner has a specific role to play. This system can be framed as intercept points (pictured below). Steps 1 -3 are functions of community partners and other criminal justice organizations. When all the steps are working we are more successful at reducing the need for incarceration and creating successful reentry activities

Criminal Justice System of Care



Population Based Approach

Before Seeing Prosecutor

Pre-Arrestment

Initial Detention
Initial Hearing

Post-Arrestment (prior to accepting responsibility / still presumed innocent while case is pending)

Judicial / Court Based Outcomes

Corrections Based Outcomes

Transitioning back to the community

Community Justice Center Pre-charge (direct referrals)

Emergency Services

Law Enforcement Diversion

Mobile Crisis Teams

Social Workers in Police Dept

Court Diversion (Statewide)

Rapid Intervention (Chittenden)

Rapid Referral (Chittenden)

Sparrow Program (Windsor)

Combo of Rapid Referral & Rapid Intervention (Franklin)

Treatment Court

Probation

Furlough

Home Confinement

Incarceration

Conditional Re-entry

Re-entry programs (Circles of Support & Accountability - COSA at the Community Justice Centers)

Reintegration Furlough

Local Interagency Teams & State Interagency Team

Robust Mental Health and Substance Abuse Programs To Include: Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Developmental Services & Recovery Services

