

Meeting - March 1, 2023 12-2pm (Deb Facilitating)

Attendees:

Jennifer Lambert (she/her - Neighborhood Defender Services)
Mik Kinkead (he/him - Legal Aid Society)
Saloni Sethi (they/she - Mayor's Office to End Gender Based Violence)
Natalie Fiorenzo (she/her - New York County Defenders Services)
Shear Avory (facilitating; they/them - New Pride Agenda)
Deborah Lolai (taking minutes; she/her - Bronx Defenders)
Nicole Levy (she/her - Correctional Health Services)
Sahar Moazami (they/them - City Council)
Kandra Clark (she/her - Exodus Transitional Community)
Lucas Marquez (he/they - Brooklyn Defenders Services)
Chelsea Chard (she/her - Department of Correction)
Michael Griffin (he/him - NYC Commission on Human Rights)
Liz Munsky (she/her - Department of Correction)
Rachel Golden (she/they/Rachel - Golden Psychology)
Heather Burgess (she/her - Board of Correction)
Dori Lewis (she/her - retired LAS)

New Agenda Items:

- Update from Sahar on whether it would be an ethical problem to fundraise for engagement of directly impacted people, or donation to F2L: Sahar has done some investigation into this. This is historically part of most task forces, to make sure that we are not city employees.
 - Mik: the local law says “members cant be compensated.” if these individuals are paid, not as members, but as participants, would that be different? Sahar says we need to think about how we define “members” and just in general to flag what we are comfortable with
 - Also, nothing keeps us as individuals from making donations to F2L
 - Shear: law requires us to have someone from the inside to be present, so we are not in compliance right now. The Local Law 145 is also unethical for not having compensation, and where is engagement from the council?
 - Sahar: there has been engagement and follow-up within the council since the hearing. Letters have been sent. Sahar hasn't seen any responses yet. But if they see something they will let people know. Engagement between CC and DOC is ongoing. Bills are now laid over in committee, so now council members need to be told to push for these bills. The Task Force should engage with that
 - Mik: update on bills - held 2 editing sessions, he still needs to send out the amendments to the whole group to make sure that we are in agreement before sending to drafter's offices for meeting.
 - Mik shared that no response from Powers' office. Reaching out to Ben Jacobs and Hayley Brundige but no response. Does anyone have better contacts? Deb will see.
 - Who holds LL 145? Because it's enacted no one holds it, Rivera would make sense because of Committee chair change but any CC member could make edits.

- Update from drafting committee

- First meeting will be in march. Deb read out names, if you want to join please tell Deb.

- Update from Chelsea/Liz to give us a copy of what's in the LGBTQ folder on the tablet for LGBTQ resources. Contents: (1) resource guide (2) therapeutic activities
 - Just the re-entry resource guide is on the tablet. The “therapeutic activity” writing prompts haven’t gone on yet because they need to be viewed for triggers
 - Liz can share the PDF guide to Heather who can forward; it has not been updated since COVID. There are some online and hotline informations but nothing current.
 - Liz will go through the resource to make sure that they are correct. Mik will connect Liz to Andrea Williams for another ATI Re-Entry Group meeting

- Update from Chelsea/Liz to inform us of process for getting approved for the tablet
 - Send material to Liz and Chelsea and they will send to the people who are managing that process and they will take it from there. Who is the unit who approves the process? Not sure. Tablet is managed by programs overall, Chelsea does not know anything more because it’s pretty brand new. Fairly liberal with what is on there but does not have the details. There are labels and categories but they are all for everyone.
 - Task Force will share documents if we think it is appropriate for the folder? Should be stuff that is non-changing and static. Should be PDF but not sure yet
 - Goal of tablets was to have them fully rolled out by end of this first quarter, so should be fully out very soon. Not for people in intake (part of intake will be assigning a tablet). For changes in housing like restrictive housing tablet access gets limited (like entertainment) but you still have your tablet. Tablets don’t travel with you - so not going to hospital, court, etc. Only time to not have them is when charging.

- Question from Deb about SCU paperwork
 - Alternative ways to get SCU paperwork outside of outing themself to an officer on the unit (and potentially everyone else): Chelsea says there are other non-unit staff who can meet with them like Liz, non-uniform staff, uniform staff from other units. This is a wait time issue of about 1 day/2 days (really depends on touring).
 - What is the physical space of the conversation? Especially for a dorm style housing unit?
 - A meeting with anyone is a signal that something is up. There is always not enough privacy. Convos take place in the bridge area - the area between two units where there are plexiglass windows and the officer’s bubble. Liz says that you can’t hear on the bridge (Mik says you can). Other facilities have different set ups so use those when they can.
 - Liz shares that people know who she is and what she does, same as PREA team, so sometimes that outs people, sometimes people refuse to meet.
 - Deb suggests attorney/client meeting space as a place where this can happen: Chelsea says this is something that they can take into consideration as they review forms. Deb says thanks, that would help.

- Mik asks: what about court houses and law library? Chelsea doesn't know. Will have to go through the law library and the court houses and check. Mik says thanks, that would be great.
- Chelsea: Goal of tablets is to be able to have confidential convos with the unit without in-person meeting, was temporarily available at one point but then stopped.
- Application and denial: they get paperwork, DOC does not share that paperwork but of course the individual can do that. What about when someone has been approved and transferred, then moved back to non-affirming facility? Is that treated as a denial? No, that is not and there is no paperwork related to that.
- Mik shares sometimes people don't understand it needs to be written on the SCU form so goals of 1) making the SCU form more available everywhere and 2) making other ways to request available
- Mik asks about access issues: Liz says yes, they have that and the officer writes something like "this is written based upon x person's statement" - all under ADA, PREA, Minimum Standards. No one knows if there is a Directive that explains how, when, why etc.
- PREA standard 115.16 Inmates, detainees, and residents with disabilities and inmates, detainees, and residents who are limited English proficient <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/standard/115-16> (BOC minimum standards mirror these, it's under standard 5-07)

Updates from BOC, CHS, DOC:

- Rachel shares that she and Mik had a really great meeting with CHS and are looking forward to moving forward with reinforcing existing relationships and making new ones. Rachel has talked to Health and Hospitals (Pride Centers) about what is available, Health and Hospitals has a lot of goals for what they want to offer, but not all in place yet like where gender-affirming surgeries are actually available. What they can actually offer right now
- Nicole will take some of this feedback to H&H on how this gets advertised and what they can actually do.
- Rachel would love to have more info on re-entry support and what is available etc. Also wants to name that this is not the best and most ethical way to provide services, people can't choose the best provider for them
- Shear: what is CHS working on with regards to the borough based jails? And as someone on the Queens BBJ plan, what has Kandra encountered?:
 - Nicole: would love people being able to walk to appointments, not be escorted, the re-entry team has now broken down into "special populations" and TGNCNBI people is one. It's ongoing, a lot still to do.
 - Kandra: this administration has no plans to close Rikers or reduce the population of people who would go to RMSC. No discussion of special housing, no discussion of how someone arrested outside of Queens would get to Queens...we have to try and get folks off the island as best as we can. Treatment not Jails is very important. None of the things have been thought through for the BBJ, and the way that women of all identities and NB, GNC, and I folks are not considered is awful
 - Discussion that we should highlight this in the next report.

- Mik asked about the BOC meeting that had to be canceled because it was advertised as hybrid and under open meeting laws couldn't go forward. Rescheduled to March 14th and will be hybrid too. Very important to have people come out to vote on these for why limiting transparency is problematic.
- Amanda Masters is leaving BOC as ED, Jasmine is the interim Acting ED - we have been cc-d with the new ED. Not sure how/if this will effect BOC involvement with the Task Force, will need to see.
- Shear: where did the limitations on public meetings come from? What has BOC done in response to both internal and external pressures?
 - Heather: there have been responses on linked in and statements made about the denial of videos. Internal convos are happening on the incorrect statements said under oath at the hearing etc but nothing Heather knows about on that level of staffing
 - Natalie: Chair Sampson is much more involved? What does that mean?
 - Heather: Has more direct idea of how BOC staff should be conducting work, prioritizing monitoring, etc. There are some staffing plans in the work, just much more involved with staff and wants more reporting.

Question for DOC:

- There seems to be a difference in how wigs are treated in different facilities. Men's jails seem to allow for wigs, including wigs made out of mops and other homemade materials. But when clients get approved to RMSC the wigs are taken which causes dysphoria and can make people feel very unwelcome.
 - Chelsea: wigs are not allowed in any of the facilities. If they are being allowed then it's because they aren't familiar with policy, it's an oversight. It would not be allowed policy for women to be allowed to have wigs in the female facility.
 - Deb asks about wigs as medical devices: Chelsea says that some items that are medically approved can still be security concerns. Nicole says CHS can recommend a wig but ultimate decision would be DOC security.
 - Deb asks would undergoing chemotherapy result in such a recommendation, or alopecia?:
 - Rachel asks what can be done with a wig?: conceal contraband, escape device, making a sleeping dummy etc.
 - Mik asks if non-uniform officers, volunteers, etc can wear wigs: Chelsea doesn't know, Mik asks if she can get that please for us to review.
 - What about razors?: The publicly available hygiene directive doesn't go into details "each facility will allow for a person to shave daily" is all it says, and then 4008R-A, Distribution and Control of Razors is not public. Mik says it is very important to take dysphoria seriously. That so many things can be traced back to that - misbehavior reports, dissociation, self harm, etc. So anything we can do to increase access is saving lives and assisting the general public by ensuring that people are coming home as whole as possible.

Things to follow up on:

- Mik reconnect Liz with Andrea Williams for Re-Entry guide support
- Chelsea: did staff go through law library etc to look for SCU forms?
- Mik will send around amended bills to Update on bill editing and then TF members can begin pushing for meetings
- Chelsea: standards re: wigs, weaves, hair pieces for people going into the jails (not visitors)?

- Mik is going to put a formal request in writing for the following: directives re: access to razors at RMSC and in various units within RMSC (4008R-A, Distribution and Control of Razors); directives re: wigs at RMSC vs other facilities; names of who they consult with on policies, both internal and external

Next Meeting & facilitator:

-April 5th at 12pm. Mik facilitating.