

**MINUTES**  
**WORK GROUP 1 – IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**PROBLEM SOLVING IN FAMILY MATTERS COMMITTEE**  
**FEBRUARY 18, 2009**

The work group on Identification, Assessment, and Recommendations met in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor conference room at 90 Washington Street, Hartford, CT at 2:00 p.m.

Those in attendance: Chief Family Support Magistrate Sandra Sosnoff Baird (ex-officio), Family Support Magistrate Linda T. Wihbey, Mr. Brian Coco, Ms. Michelle Hayward, Ms. Debra Kulak, and Ms. Dalia Panke.

### **1- Welcome and introductions**

Chief Family Support Magistrate Sandra Sosnoff Baird welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 2:08 p.m.. She introduced Magistrate Linda Wihbey and Ms. Dalia Panke as leaders of the work group and asked all attendees to introduce themselves and explain their background and experience so we could better determine their contribution to this work group.

Family Support Magistrate Wihbey provided background information on the Magistrates, described the Family Support Magistrate Division and briefly discussed problem solving courts. She and Ms. Panke also explained the vital role of Support Enforcement Services is to assist and facilitate the collection of child support in the court.

Magistrate Wihbey compiled a list of resources containing articles related to problem solving. This list was provided to all members. Electronic copies of the articles can be requested by any member at anytime should they need them.

### **2- Identifying and assessing the challenges of inmates re-entering society in terms of meeting their responsibilities as parents**

Challenges have cropped up because - although agencies have been dealing with the same problems and the same individuals - they are performing in silos.

The following challenge categories were identified and discussed at length:

- Employment
- Housing
- Education
- Individual
- Parenting

The group agreed that all of these categories overlap creating a vicious cycle.

### **3- Identifying existing resources in the Department of Correction**

A discussion ensued to clarify what the terms “release” and “conditions of release” constitute within the Department of Correction. In the past, Support Enforcement staff and Magistrates understood that inmates -upon being “released”- were free to move about as they pleased. Therefore, they were expected to become wage earners immediately. Release is defined as the moment when the sentence is finished and the inmate is released to the community. However, in many instances the person is still under the Jurisdiction of the Department of Correction. The following types of supervised release were discussed by the group:

- Transitional Supervision (for inmates with a sentence of 2 years or less where 50% of it has been served, and there is a sponsor);
- Parole;
- Transfer parole;
- Transitional parole;
- Half-way House;
- Furlough (not currently available);
- Probation

The group recommended that issues relating to the issuance of *capias* and contempt applications, as well as earning capacity be reviewed in light of the information that an individual may not be “confined” to a facility, but they are still under the jurisdiction of DOC until the balance of their sentence lapses.

In addition, the following resources provided by the Department of Correction for those in custody were identified:

- Parenting classes
- Fatherhood programs – Embracing Fatherhood and Fatherhood Initiative
- Reentry program
- 8 reentry counselors
- 6 DOC facilities have job centers
- 1 job coordinator (statewide)
- 8 reentry teachers

Ms. Hayward agreed to forward information regarding “conditions of release” and programs available during the parole period.

#### **4- Recommending additional resources and proper delivery systems to meet the challenges.**

CSSD's Probation office provides free services to those who are currently on Probation. There is no need to have insurance. There are many services but some are limited - housing, jobs, and transportation. Services available through Probation are:

- Alternative Incarceration Program (AIC) – may include case management, substance abuse assessment, group interventions (employment, substance abuse, cognitive skills, anger management, transitional housing beds);
- Adult Behavioral Contractors may include substance abuse assessment, group and intensive outpatient SA treatment, anger management group, mental health evaluation and treatment;
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy;
- Behavioral Counseling;
- C.A.L.M. – program to address anger and criminal thinking. It helps re-address the way they think so that they won't go back to old behaviors;
- Housing - They also provide short-term housing until long-term housing is available. However, only a few beds are available;
- Employment - Job clubs at the AIC's help with resume writing, but there are no job connections. Currently, they are working on a partnership with the City of New Haven to find jobs;
- Education - CSSD uses the adult education system for GED needs;
- Residential treatment for substance abuse.

The group members agreed to identify additional resources and delivery systems after the update from the other work group. The following recommendations were made however:

- Develop a way to disseminate confidential information without violating confidentiality laws because the information available now is mostly “one-way”;
- Understand the complexity of a person's release;
- Consider the individual's diminished earning capacity when setting child support awards;
- Improve communication between Magistrates, Court Support Services Division, and Support Enforcement prior to or immediately following a court date to begin or ensure continued services;
- Collaborate with DHMAS to discuss psychiatric needs and mental health services available;
- Understand the cascading effect of the different services available through community organizations as inmates are transitioning out. Even though probation

offers an array of free services, they are only available to those who are on probation. Therefore, it is imperative to improve the coordination of services offered by community service providers given that after the probation or parole ends, all free services end as well;

- Seek support and expansion of the Court Service Centers. Invite their participation in the work group;
- Seek the collaboration of housing specialists;
- Seek the collaboration of an education expert (Community Colleges); and
- Seek the assistance of summer interns to immediately develop a data base of resources for use by the Court Service Centers, SES and the court in all judicial districts.

#### **5- Future meetings**

The next meeting date and time will be discussed at the large committee's meeting on Monday, February 23, 2009. It will be posted on the Committee's website.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.