

MINUTES
WORK GROUP 1 – IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
PROBLEM SOLVING IN FAMILY MATTERS COMMITTEE
APRIL 27, 2009

The work group on Identification, Assessment, and Recommendations met in the 4th Floor conference room at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT at 10:00 a.m.

Those in attendance: Chief Family Support Magistrate Sandra Sosnoff Baird (ex-officio); Family Support Magistrate Linda T. Wihbey (Co-chair); Ms. Dalia Panke (Co-chair); Mr. Andrew Clark; Atty Joseph Del Ciampo; Ms. Barbara Geller; Mr. Joseph Greelish (ex-officio); Ms. Michelle Hayward; Ms. Debra Kulak; and Mr. Edgar C. Young. Guests in attendance were: Eddie Cajigas, Career Resources in Bridgeport; Amy Miller, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund; and Krista Hess, Program Manager, Court Service Centers.

1. Welcome & Introduction of Invited Guests & Interested Organizations

All members and guests introduced themselves. Ms. Panke explained that the workgroup's goal is to ultimately provide a balanced product; therefore, the input of those guests present was vital and necessary. In addition, other guests will be invited to attend future meetings.

2. Approval of Minutes 2/18/09 and 3/16/09

The minutes from 2/18/2009 and 3/16/2009 were unanimously approved by the committee.

3. Progress updates

A. Update on Work Group 2

Mr. Greelish provided the update on behalf of workgroup 2. The workgroup has made progress analyzing the vast number of identified networks which contain information on the population being addressed. This group has been focusing on identifying the information available from each agency, and looking at the type of information available (public or subject to FOI). This information has been distributed to some Family Magistrates and Judges for analysis and for identification of those specific elements that will be most helpful to the Bench. A concern is that this information may be privileged and subject to HIPPA laws. This group will continue working on obtaining information from the different computer systems and on understanding how to make the information public to be useful in directing people through the system. Specifically, the group is looking at where people are, what database they have contact with, and what services they have received. Workgroup 1 complements the work done by group 2 by focusing on what services this population should be getting and how to deliver those services. Looking at what this population currently has access to is helpful because it serves as a pointer to identify what other services are available and what else they should be participating in. DHMAS is concerned about the inability of their population to navigate the system without a case manager. SES staff already has case manager-like responsibilities but in the future someone needs to be identified to handle this in depth.

It was also discussed that, perhaps, changes to the Practice Book Rules are needed since discussions between staff and clients are confidential. Additionally, Mr. Greelish reiterated that group 2 will continue to work on data match to find the most meaningful output.

B. Update on the assessment of challenges to inmates

Re entering society in terms of meeting their responsibilities as parents:

1. DOC Update

Ms. Hayward explained DOC Program Manuals are being re-vamped. Some changes will be made to the Offender Accountability Plan in order to prioritize as high, medium or low risk. She has requested a boxed item be added to DOC's Plan in order to identify if the inmate has a child support case. In addition, inmates will be asked during the intake for the mother's

name, child(ren's) name(s), and last address. This change to the plan will help prioritize parenting program needs.

A discussion ensued regarding the fact that the Child Support Program is a one-way system, where information comes in but cannot be shared with any other agency due to confidentiality rules. The group agrees that such rules need to be discussed within DSS to allow for the use of this information for the benefit of the Offender Accountability Plan since it would be in the best interest of the IV-D program. Ms. Hayward was asked how DOC prioritizes the programs since the information is self-reported, which may render inaccurate results since often enough inmates are afraid to say they owe child support. The group discussed several challenges: parents do not care, a disconnect between the community and what people are saying, and most importantly, people are afraid of the system. Mr. Cajigas stated his program's success stems from the way they develop relationships in the community. His suggestion is to show that systems do really care and people will open up. The information DOC can obtain has a two-fold use; first, it can be used while they are incarcerated by providing the right programs, second, the inmates would be able to use the information and knowledge gained upon being released into the community. A challenge identified is that the exchange of information is governed by the Federal Administration. They decide what information is released and to whom. The possible solution is to match the data available prior to entering the "certified IV-D system" where stricter rules apply. Group 2 is also faced with the challenge of finding a unique identifier that links all systems.

Another DOC issue being addressed is the difficulties inmates encounter when trying to re-activate social security benefits upon being released. This agency is currently working on a data match between DOC and SS to automatically re-instate services.

2. Probation/ Parole Update

There were three issues discussed – capias, education, and transition into the community.

Probation is assessing the department's responsibility in identifying outstanding capiases. They have submitted a survey to all Probation Officers to find out how staff is currently handling this issue. From the public and policy standpoint, they feel they should not be disclosing information on a civil matter. There are concerns such as lack of legal authority, and possible acts of domestic violence resulting from their involvement. The survey results show that the problem is not as pervasive, and may be solved with better communication not intensive training.

The Probation Office would like to develop an education information session with Support Enforcement Services to figure it out as Probation Officers do not want to act as mediators. The committee's legal staff, Attorney Del Ciampo expressed his concern with the overwhelming task of the committee and how many of these issues are side or ancillary issues beyond the committee's control. It was suggested to keep track of them and to forward them to the proper outlet at the right time to be address.

3. Update on Personal /Individual Barriers

The main challenge overall is HIPPA and confidentiality issues.

a. Housing Update

Housing is a local issue. A suggestion was made to train staff on how to properly refer people out. There is new money coming out of the Stimulus Package called Rapid Re-Housing. It is available for people who have lost their job, but are not homeless. This "shallow subsidy" is valid for up to 18 months. The best way to find general housing information is directly from the individual local communities and then have the Court Service Centers provide it to the public. Ms. Hess explained the Court Service Centers already connect the public to the right resources and have reciprocal relationships with community organizations. They actively maintain those resources and are constantly searching for more. As a backup, 2-1-1 service may be used. Also, creating a database where certain criteria can be entered to get the best match or option for the individual would be helpful. Another recommendation made was to get Rental Assistance Program (RAP) certificates. They are state funded Section 8 certificates. The housing

challenge is the cost. There are currently people living in shelters that are employed but cannot afford housing. Another recommendation is to order everyone to be in a waiting list, even though the current wait is two years. Another challenge is having a felony conviction. A solution is to provide case management for this population.

b. Health and Addiction Services update

DHMAS treats people without insurance. SAGA will help with providing services. DSS is presently granting medical assistance to inmates as they prepare to exit. DSS is also helping them with getting the process started to apply for food stamps.

A barrier to this is that some institutions are not open to this problem solving one-stop concept due to spacing issues.

c. Employment update

This item was not discussed and will be taken up at a future meeting.

4. Additional Areas to be addressed

Magistrate Wihbey asked all members to continue forwarding information as she is putting together a list of recommendations and will create a list of areas that need to be addressed – some of which can be tackled by the committee and others will be forwarded to the appropriate bodies. As an exercise, she asked all to continue brainstorming on how this Problem Solving concept applies to each of their individual establishments.

a. Establishment of Orders

This item was not discussed and will be taken up at a future meeting.

b. Measurement of Outcomes

This item was not discussed and will be taken up at a future meeting.

c. Policy – statutory recommendations

This item was not discussed and will be taken up at a future meeting.

d. Recommendations to Work group II

This item was not discussed and will be taken up at a future meeting.

e. Participants recommendations for additional resources and delivery of services

This item was not discussed and will be taken up at a future meeting.

5. Future meetings

The co-chairs will decide when the next meeting will take place. All members will be notified.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.