

COMMUNITY PARTNER: MARION COUNTY RE-ENTRY COALITION (MCRC)

Notes from MCRC's January 17, 2013 Meeting

I. UPDATE ON THE RE-ENTRY POLICY STUDY COMMISSION

It is important for MCRC to be aware of the work of the City County Council's Re-Entry Policy Study Commission. The Study Commission, should leverage the knowledge of MCRC, and the MCRC should leverage the policy influence of the Study Commission.

Overview

The Re-Entry Policy Study Commission was established by Council Resolution Number 80, 2012 and was later amended by Council Resolution Number 90, which expanded the membership of the Commission.

Vop provided an overview of the Study Commission. The Study Commission wants to learn about best practices across the country, learn about what's happening in the state, and figure out what is causing the high recidivism rate in Marion County (which according to a study, is about 51%). It is unacceptable to think about the lives cycling through criminal justice system and the dollars being wasted. If you fail more than you succeed, there's something wrong.

The Study Commission has nine different hearings, the fourth of which is taking place later today. The topics of the hearings include, but are not limited to, things such as housing, employment, case management wraparound services, alternative sentencing, health/mental health/addictions, and how time is spent during incarceration.

The Study Commission wants to know:

- What suggestions and recommendations can we make to our state legislature?
- What we need to learn and coordinate with others in Marion County?
- What can we do that we have local control over?

There are areas and administrative policies that we can address immediately with existing programs and resources through coordination, which are short-term strategies, and then there are things that will require legislative policy changes, which are long-term strategies.

Who

The following organizations are represented on the Study Commission:

- 3 City-County Council members
- Sheriff's Office
- Prosecutor's Office
- Mayor's Office of Re-entry
- MCRC
- Community Based Organization -- PACE
- Marion County Superior Court
- Indianapolis Department of Public Safety
- Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce
- Ex-offenders

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Mission

The mission of the Re-Entry Policy Study Commission is to increase public safety in Marion County by breaking the cycle of criminal activity by ex-offenders who are reentering the community. This will be accomplished by examining, investigating, and facilitating the implementation of policy and procedure related to the reentry of ex-offenders with a focus on the economic and community impacts of those measures.

Commission Duties and Responsibilities (defined in enacting resolution)

- To examine and investigate current policies and procedures relating to the reentry of ex-offenders and the economic and community impact of reducing recidivism in Marion County.
- To hold public hearings and take public input
- To report to the Council findings and recommendations for improvement.

How does their work relate to the work of MCRC?

The direction of the Study Commission is to take action. It would be great to figure out how MCRC can help with this work, particularly around identifying barriers and policy issues. Then the Study Commission can find their role in regarding those policies.

Instead of focusing on local vs. state issues, which may result in us missing something, it would be best to consider the issues themselves and then figure out how the Study Commission can impact those issues.

MCRC may be able to more quickly identify policy barriers and needs than the Study Commission can which would make them an integral part of criminal justice planning.

What are the policy priorities that need to be addressed? What are the barriers?

- There is a lot of big-level policy stuff that Indiana can address across systems, including the education system, the health care system, and the child welfare system. We are dealing with the barriers of those systems and how they correlate to the criminal justice system. These bigger conversations need to take place.
- In addition to barriers, it is important to remember the opportunities and tools that could be used more widely and more effectively: IRAS, Evidence Based Practices, and ATR. If we can use those opportunities, we can reduce those barriers.

Based on the progression of an act of crime – crime committed, arrest, pre-incarceration, courts, incarceration, pre-release, etc. – what are the barriers? What role could the Study Commission have?

- Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and/or similar trainings for those throughout the criminal justice system, including police, probation, parole, and community corrections
 - The initial response to the crime guides how the rest of the process will go. I'm not positive we're doing as well as we can with training law enforcement for that first response interaction. It's systemic. Are we responding in too punitive of a way?

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- Some of the best-trained police officers went through CIT and are able to assess mental illness in offenders. Not everyone gets this training due to resources and training responses.
- What is the difference in the responses of those trained in CIT vs. those not trained?
 - How they talk to the person
 - How they engage
 - Verbal Judo
 - Little more leeway for aggressive behavior
 - More astute to mental health concerns
 - Each police district has several trained officers on each shift
 - Can prevent someone from getting involved in the CJ process
- ICJI should be brought to the table for this piece as a potential funder.
- We need a culture of response that 100% of people committing crimes are doing so possibly because of trauma or mental illness. Give the offender the benefit of the doubt, and have officers respond appropriately.
- Engagement Center
 - Currently, the options for offenders are to go to jail, Wishard, or APC upon arrest. For those with mental health issues, it would be good to have another option, an Engagement Center that could be staffed by Wishard and mental health professionals.
 - Wishard has a unit for emergencies for mental health, but people are resistant to mental health or addictions diagnoses. Getting the end user to accept their diagnosis is a big problem. If you're not getting those who need the service to embrace it as a possibility, it's not doing any good. We need to figure out a way to get folks to embrace it.
 - Make sure people are going to the right place, so they don't continually cycle through the system.
 - Could use the Study Commission's help in selling the engagement center to the community – reinforcing public education of the need for the engagement center (it will save money). There is some momentum right now.
 - Sheriff gets billed when APC sends someone to Wishard. Emergency services are the most expensive form of health care, so we need a more cost-effective alternative.
- Culture of valuing watching the number of people going into the criminal justice system as well as those coming out
- Is there anything that can be done on the amount of time we have to make a decision about where offenders go between being picked up and being charged before we have to release them?
- Tie funding, including Community Crime Prevention Grant, Drug Free Marion County, and Community Development Block Grant dollars, to being able to show competence in motivational interviewing and effective best practices
 - Prove to us, not just tell us, that you know what you're doing if you are getting said funding

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- Support the capacity building and building the knowledge base of non-profit and community organizations around effective best practices

What role does MCRC want to play in the work of the Study Commission?

Participants shared their ideas.

- I would see MCRC as a steering committee. We need to be more highly aligned with our goals and tasks as a group.

Based on the conversation, MCRC wants to have an official engagement with the Reentry Study Commission. MCRC's role would be to keep an eye on and make recommendations about policies, both administrative and legislative, and best practices. MCRC will bring programmatic and systematic expertise to the Study Commission's policy approaches.

Currently, the Study Commission is soaking up as much knowledge as they can, especially from the experts that participate in the co-design sessions that Lena puts together. The Study Commission is a blank slate listening to information during the hearings. However, there are a few scheduled sessions where the Study Commission members can play with and discuss some of the ideas they've heard. When the time comes, MCRC would like the Study Commission to bring them ideas to vet and provide feedback and support.

Currently, the last session for the Study Commission is March 21st, but it could be extended beyond March.

MCRC Communication with the Reentry Study Commission

There are several methods of communication between MCRC and the Study Commission:

- MCRC members should be receiving emails from the Study Commission.
- Study Commission sessions are public and have opportunities for testimony.
- There are several Study Commission members in MCRC.