



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REDUCING RECIDIVISM AND REMOVING IMPEDIMENTS TO EX-OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT

Room 411 South
State Capitol

July 13, 2016
10:00 a.m. – 4:05 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the July 13, 2016 meeting of the Study Committee on Reducing Recidivism and Removing Impediments to Ex-Offender Employment. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Darling called the committee to order. The roll was called and a quorum was determined to be present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Alberta Darling, Chair; Rep. Rob Hutton, Vice-Chair; Reps. Jill Billings, Evan Goyke, and John Nygren; Sen. Lena Taylor; and Public Members Edward Bailey, David Borowski, Jerome Dillard, Sadique Isahaku, Eric Johnson, Mary Prosser, Amy Schabel, Lisa Stark, and Kelli Thompson.

COMMITTEE MEMBER EXCUSED: Public Member Earl Buford.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Michael Queensland, Senior Staff Attorney; Lauren Weber, Legislative Intern; and Tracey Young, Support Staff.

APPEARANCES: Senator Mary Lazich and Representative Joan Ballweg, Co-Chairs, Joint Legislative Council; Terry Anderson, Director, Legislative Council Staff; Silvia Jackson, Director, Department of Corrections (DOC) Reentry Unit; Holly Audley, Evidence-Based Program Manager, DOC Reentry Unit; Lars Brown, Reentry Disabilities Coordinator, DOC Reentry Unit; Ray Woodruff,

Reentry Employment Coordinator, DOC Reentry Unit; Megan Jones, Director, DOC Research and Policy Unit; Georgia Maxwell, Deputy Secretary, Department of Workforce Development (DWD); and Bruce Palzkill, Deputy Division Administrator, Division of Employment and Training, DWD.

Opening Remarks by the Joint Legislative Council

Senator Mary Lazich, Representative Joan Ballweg, and Terry Anderson, Director of the Legislative Council Staff, welcomed committee members. At an orientation session immediately preceding the meeting, Mr. Anderson provided background information on the Legislative Council committee process's history, along with logistical information for the committee's public members.

Introduction of Committee Members

Chair Darling asked the members to introduce themselves and provide a brief explanation of their backgrounds and interest in the committee's topic.

Presentation by the Department of Corrections (DOC)

Silvia Jackson, Director, Reentry Unit; Holly Audley, Evidence-Based Program Manager, Reentry Unit; Lars Brown, Reentry Disabilities Coordinator, Reentry Unit; Ray Woodruff, Reentry Employment Coordinator, Reentry Unit; and Megan Jones, Director, Research and Policy Unit

Ms. Jackson provided an overview of DOC's reentry initiatives. She explained that DOC established its Reentry Unit in 2007 to provide DOC's divisions and local community service providers with technical assistance, training, and funding for reentry practices; the Reentry Executive Team works collaboratively to guide reentry-related policy decisions. Ms. Jackson also reviewed the Reentry Unit's priorities, which include: conducting risk and need assessments for offenders, providing consistent case management for offenders, implementing evidence-based practices, and targeting medium- and high-risk offenders. Finally, Ms. Jackson described how DOC uses \$10.2 million annually from the Becky Young Community Corrections appropriation to fund programming aimed at reducing recidivism, such as cognitive behavioral programs.

Ms. Audley reviewed the National Institute of Corrections' eight principles of effective intervention, explaining how DOC is working to implement each of the eight principles. Ms. Audley also described how the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI) supports DOC's work in implementing evidence-based programs, along with measurement standards to improve quality and effectiveness for the programs. Ms. Audley explained that, based on UCCI evaluations and studies, DOC developed an evidence-based corrections program checklist to assist agencies in improving their programs, evaluating funding proposals, and encouraging research on the efficacy of correctional treatment programs.

Mr. Brown gave an overview of DOC's mental health initiatives. He focused on three programs: Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS), Disabled Offender Economic Support (DOES) Project, and BadgerCare Plus application assistance. Mr. Brown detailed how each program works, explained the participant criteria for each program, and described program outcomes, such as a reduction in recidivism rates over one-, two-, and three-year follow-up periods for the OARS program.

Mr. Woodruff described DOC's efforts to integrate corrections and workforce development strategies. Mr. Woodruff explained that correctional education is linked to an increased likelihood of finding employment after release, while people who are employed and earning high wages soon after release from incarceration have a lower likelihood of recidivating. Mr. Woodruff also explained how DOC's programming to reduce criminogenic risk by, for example, addressing anti-social behaviors and teaching problem-solving skills, also helps to improve employment outcomes. Lastly, Mr. Woodruff described some of the programs DOC operates in conjunction with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), including Windows to Work and the CNC Mobile Lab.

Ms. Jones explained how DOC defines recidivism, and how DOC measures and reports on recidivism rates. Additionally, Ms. Jones reviewed overall recidivism rates from 1990-2011, and provided a breakdown of recidivism rates by age, gender, and type of release (without supervision, to supervision, and to parole supervision). Finally, Ms. Jones discussed the Results First Initiative, through which DOC created the Wisconsin Adult Criminal Justice Program Inventory and performed cost-benefit analysis of DOC's Earned Release program. Ms. Jones noted that DOC intends to expand cost-benefit analysis to its primary programs, which include cognitive behavioral therapy and anger management, and to specialty court programming, including drug court and DUI/OVI court.

Presentation by DWD

Georgia Maxwell, Deputy Secretary; and Bruce Palzkill, Deputy Division Administrator, Division of Employment and Training

Ms. Maxwell explained that part of DWD's mission is to develop a workforce that meets the needs of employers. As a part of that mission, Ms. Maxwell noted the importance of assisting ex-offenders who face significant employment barriers. She explained that DWD works with DOC, technical colleges, and employers to assist workers overcome these barriers.

Mr. Palzkill provided an overview of the programs that DWD directly oversees or collaborates with other partners on that connect ex-offenders with employment. According to Mr. Palzkill, Wisconsin Fast Forward grants have been used to fund two programs offered by technical colleges that provide Computer Numerical Control (CNC) training to inmates or ex-offenders. Mr. Palzkill also explained that DWD and DOC have entered into a memorandum of understanding that allows inmates to have access to career exploration and assessment tools. In addition, Mr. Palzkill described how, through a partnership with DWD, DOC will be administering skills assessments and assisting inmates attain National Career Readiness

Certificate credentials. Mr. Palzkill also detailed certain incentives for employers to hire formerly incarcerated individuals, including the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit and federal fidelity bonding program.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Chair Darling asked committee members to explain their vision for the committee's future and which issues the committee should focus on, and to indicate which speakers they would like to see at future meetings. Committee members indicated an interest in a broad range of topics. Some of these topics include: earned time credits; justice reinvestment; collateral consequences of conviction; expungement; education and training; continuity of medication; mentoring; and matching ex-offenders with employers.

Other Business

There was no other business before the committee.

Plans for Future Meetings

Chair Darling requested committee members to indicate which days would work best for future meetings.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

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