

DOC/BOPP Meeting
October 15, 2014
Deer Lodge, Montana

The meeting was chaired by Fern Johnson, Executive Director, BOPP

Department of Corrections Staff in attendance: Director Mike Batista, Deputy Director Loraine Wodnik, Ron Alsbury, Cathy Gordon, Colleen Ambrose, Adrienne Slaughter, and Pat Schlauch.

BOPP members and staff in attendance: Chairman Mike McKee, Darryl Dupuis, Pete Lawrenson, Sandy Heaton, Director Fern Johnson, Timothy Allred, Meaghan Shone, Christine Slaughter, Julie Thomas, and Mike Webster.

Introductions were given.

1. Old Business

Minutes from the past meeting were handed out and correction to the spelling of Ben Reed's name was made.

2. New Business

3. Upcoming Legislation

Director Batista stated there is only have a handful of bills that will be introduced as Department bills. It is expected there will be more bills that will affect DOC. Most of the DOC's efforts will be toward budgetary issues. DOC will most likely be requesting a supplemental. DOC will be taking a different approach to how we present our budget this session including educating legislators about what the numbers we present mean in terms of how it affects the criminal justice system statewide and population projection. DOC hopes to include stakeholders such as the Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association in the discussion regarding creative solutions. DOC and BOPP will continue daily update meetings during the session. Fern gave an update on recording parole hearings and stated that no fiscal note has been requested yet.

4. Pew/NGA study

Director Batista gave an update on the report from Pew/National Governor's Association, which they hope to be receiving soon. DOC has been working with Dennis Schrantz, the consultant hired by Pew, to discuss a case logic model for Montana and case management. Additionally, Mr. Schrantz has been advising on how DOC can move forward regarding a System Blueprint that begun a few years ago and has since stalled. The work he has done in other states has been impressive and recidivism has been reduced as a result. We cannot stall the development of a single case management system or a plan for how to improve reentry.

Director Johnson stated that they were invited to the Case Management Logic workshop last week. She mentioned that the DOC is going to start to include the risk/needs assessment (MORA and WRNA) in the parole report that will be available to Board members to use as another tool in making their decision and setting conditions of parole.

5. Jail Holds

Deputy Director Wodnik gave a report on the jail beds issue, stating that DOC is currently budgeted for 178 jail hold spaces on any given day. DOC came into this biennium with over 200 and so were already over-budgets. They have reached what is hopefully a high of over 350 people in the month of July. DOC is focusing a lot of efforts and resources to determine why the jail holds are so high and how to bring them down while maintaining public safety as a priority. To deal with jails in sanctions DOC has developed a work group to discuss how they can reduce the numbers. DOC has implemented an incentives and interventions grid and hopes to develop something similar for community corrections facilities and programs to utilize.

Ron Alsbury stated the field Officers have received the incentives and interventions grid well and have communicated that they appreciate the structure. The jail hold workgroup looked at other states when creating this grid and also tried to incorporate feedback from line staff. We've been pretty good historically about providing swift sanctions; this grid will assist us in providing more consistent incentives and interventions. We hope to provide more motivational interviewing to offenders and support the relationships that need to develop to reduce recidivism. Copies of the grid were handed out to the BOPP.

Cathy Gordon reviewed how the grid is applied. The goal was to increase consistency and incorporate a systematic approach.

BOPP stated that if they were contacted regarding offenders

There was discussion on stopping offenders from repeatedly cycling through the system. The application of a better case management system will help to identify risk and needs within the offender population. Better identification of offenders and the treatment the need should keep us from sending people to treatment by default rather than by design. There was further discussion of the merits of flexibility of time in a PRC program. Many felt looking at this would be beneficial.

6. CDFS

Colleen Ambrose review statutes regarding Conditional Discharge From Supervision and Cathy Gordon led discussion on the Interstate procedures for CDFS parolees. If the BOPP denies CDFS, they remain on interstate supervision. Julie Thomas suggested that conditions of supervision be assessed and potentially changed prior to allowing a CDFS. BOPP requested that DOC withhold CDFS requests until the individual has been supervised in the community for at least a year.

7. Legal

Colleen Ambrose reviewed other litigation with the group. There has been an increase in habeas petitions. Denials of parole should be well documented on the disposition to avoid litigation, especially in liberty interest cases.

8. Public Comment (none)

9. Meeting was adjourned. Next meeting tentatively set for the 2nd Wednesday in April 2015.