Justice Reinvestment Advisory Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 20 · 12:00 – 1:00pm
Google Meet joining info
Video call link: https://meet.google.com/dzw-byhc-tcm
Or dial: (US) +1 254-863-1501 PIN: 755 125 708#

Board Attendance

- ~~Jamin Ford, *American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)*~~
- ~~Lenora Dawson, *The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*~~
- Ama S. Frimpong-Houser, *CASA de Maryland*
- Olivia Spaccasi, *The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Maryland* (sitting in for Yanet Amanuel)
- ~~Judge Carlos Acosta, *Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) Criminal Law & Practice Section Council*~~
- Victoria Reaves, *Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV)*
- ~~Lisac C. Jordan, Esq. *Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)*~~
- ~~Jen Corbin, *Anne Arundel County Crisis Center*~~
- Cailey Locklair, *Maryland Retailers Association*
- Debra Carr, *Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF)*
- Bill Gaertner, *Gatekeepers Inc.*
- ~~Bob Clegg, *Maryland Chamber of Commerce*~~

Minutes

- **Welcome and Introductions**
    - **Bethany Young, Director of Policy and Legislation, GOCPP**

- **GOCPP Updates**
    - **Lindsey McCullough, Justice Reinvestment Coordinator, GOCPP**
        - Local Government Commission (LGC) Update
            - Chair is Warden Mary Ann Thompson, St. Mary's County
            - This year, the LGC has worked to recenter their focus, ensuring goals align with the JRA, the Commission's responsibilities, and the statutory requirements.
            - Looking into 2025, next steps include two surveys:
                - Survey #1 will revisit the provisions utilized in the *Justice*

Reinvestment Initiative, Budgetary Requirements on Local Detention Centers (2016) report and collect comparative data for 2024. This follow-up data will show what has changed since the implementation of the JRA and how the JRA has impacted local detention centers.
        - Survey #2 will gather data on the Board's Performance Incentive Grant Fund (PIGF) Priorities for FY26 that will be included in the NOFA.
        - The board will select and rank which priority areas are most salient to them in meeting the current needs of their jurisdictions.
- **Brandi Cahn, Assistant Director, GOCPP**
    - Oversight Board Update
        - Chair is Judge Philip Caroom
        - The board met 5 times this year, and the board was very engaged. Last year was a transition year, so the board did not meet.
        - Started first meeting with a high-level overview of the board's mandated responsibilities and the JRCC's final recommendations.
        - Then, the board made suggestions on other areas of research:
            - Restitution – Recommended to devote at least 5% of FY26 JRA funding to restitution enhancements.
            - Pretrial Survey – Assessed pre-trial services in local detention centers which led to several local reentry presentations.
            - DPSCS provided information on their reentry efforts as well (education, digital literacy, vital documentation).
            - Emerging Adults Program – presentation from Vera Institute on their Restoring Promise program, which shifts prison culture through transforming housing units.
        - Future focus will be on expanding eligibility to licensure and certificates of rehabilitation.
    - Reinvestment Funding Update
        - In FY25, GOCPP administered about $13.3 million in PIGF or JRA funding to about 50 subrecipients (most we have had).
        - In Q1, 12% of JRA and 13% of PIGF funding were requested
            - Below the ideal 25% mark, but awards were late to come out so subrecipients should catch up in Q2.
            - FY26 NOFA to come out earlier in February to start the process earlier.

- **Board Recommendations**
    - Bill Gaertner discusses the recent work Gatekeepers has been doing in Washington County's local facility.
        - Next Step Club: Individuals who have been using their resources and have gotten out in the past year have had successful outcomes, and here, these returning individuals can focus on the "next step." This club has groups that meet every other Tuesday and Wednesday. Gatekeepers bring in counselors and community members, employers, and organizations to assist with transition and engagement as returning citizens.
        - Teaming up with Hagerstown's osteopathic medical school that is opening in January. Gatekeepers is serving to educate students on the Business of Living and the impact of incarceration on communities. These students will be interns for Gatekeepers.
    - Cahn asks Bill to help her make connections in Hagerstown to get a local perspective on reentry initiatives and have them present on their efforts.
    - Ama Frimpong brings up the increase in immigration enforcement that is expected to affect communities starting in the next couple of months.
        - Frimpong asks about the appropriate space and time to raise this issue and make sure that reentry facilities/services remain protected areas.
        - CASA is looking to propose legislation that explicitly names protected areas across the state. This would include spaces that recently released individuals can go to get back on their feet such as shelters, Gatekeepers, parole/probation offices, etc.
        - Frimpong also asks what types of advocacy can be done to ensure that resources meant to be utilized by the community for these purposes are not being used to support federal immigration enforcements instead.
    - Cahn will add this topic to future focus areas.
    - Cailey Locklair shares that MRA is currently working with the Department of Commerce to investigate where warehouses are located in the state and how to better connect individuals being released to this employment in communities.
    - Locklair notes that there is an issue with vital documentation, specifically individuals unable to get duplicate copies of their social security cards needed for employment. She also notes the turnaround time being especially problematic in central Baltimore City.
        - Locklair asks what employers can do to help with this barrier to reentry.
    - Cahn says this is a major issue for DPSCS and they have started a program that uploads vital documentation into a cloud-based software. Individuals will receive a password upon release so that the documentation is always saved and accessible. However, there is still a lot to be done for addressing MOUs with the social security administration and the lag time.

- Locklair shares that MRA wants to be helpful in this, as having a job upon release is the most important thing to the returning individuals they have worked with.
- Gaertner notes that every Saturday, Gatekeepers has a resources meeting that includes representatives from the MVA and helps with vital documentation.
- Debra Carr is looking to expand on the recommendations to further understand the board's goals and objectives for each research area. Understanding specific pain points can guide fact-finding and influence who is asked to present to the board, leading to a more effective recommendation or policy proposal.
- Locklair clarifies that she feels that many training programs are failing to make direct connections between the individual receiving the specialized training and potential employers/opportunities that align with the certification received while incarcerated.
    - Carr suggests that the lack of connection described is likely between MDOL and DPSCS.
- Locklair adds that the other part of the frustration is that an employer cannot hire an individual if they do not have documentation. Progress is being made electronically, but that cannot always be relied upon for certain hiring processes.
    - She feels that these individuals are being set up to fail, as they cannot get a job without this assistance.
    - Director Young adds that there are several barriers to completing this process of obtaining documentation, such as not being accepting of the assistance or not having the proper materials to even start the process.
- Carr suggests exploring this area of connecting training with comparable opportunities with MDOL and DPSCS. She also suggests having an employer on this panel, so all entities understand the pain points from an employer perspective.
- Locklair stresses the importance of interagency connections. We should be looking at where the majority of individuals are being released and look at what warehouses and companies are located there, willing to hire individuals with backgrounds and specific certifications.
- Cahn will look into this topic and ask representatives to speak to this issue, as DPSCS and MDOL work closely with each other and are both active on the JRA Oversight Board.
- Carr suggests walking through the immigration issue in the same way.
    - Young explains the objective/goal with this topic appears to be creating legislation for the upcoming session.
    - Carr suggests that once this work is more complete, those in the immigration space can present their ideas to the board.
- Gaertner raises the shortage of correctional officers as a problem.
- Carr summarizes the main future focus areas and possible presenters:
    - Connecting individuals to employment

            - Vital documentation issue
            - How pre-release training connects individuals to employers
            - Shortage of correctional officers limiting access to programming
            - Presenters: MDOL, DPSCS, employers
    - Carr suggests investigating which work groups within the MEJC are tackling these issues and suggests having them present to this board.
        - Cahn notes that MEJC is finalizing their recommendations now. The recommendations are coming from the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI). Cahn can ask for presentations from both CJI and the chairs of the committees of interest.
        - CJI is making wonderful recommendations, and now Cahn and Young are focusing with CJI on implementation.

- **Member Updates**
    - Regarding legislative policy and the State's budget, Carr encourages the board to consider policy-based recommendations that either generate revenue or long-term cost savings.
        - Ensure we are *preventing* bad things that would ultimately cost *more* money to address.
    - Cahn will circulate materials from this meeting. Cahn will be seeking board input on the Advisory Board summary included in the legislative report.

- **Open Discussion and Next Steps**
    - The next meeting will be in March 2025.