

Process and Evaluation Workgroup

Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2025

In attendance:

- **Rodney Brooks**, Alameda County Public Defenders
- **Shawn Rowland**, Our Road Prison Project
- **Doug Butler**, Alameda County Community Advisory Board
- **Charlie Eddy**, Urban Strategies Council
- **Janene Grigsby**, Alameda County Probation Department
- **Rodney Scott**, Open Gate
- **Joey Mason**, Alameda County Probation Department
- **Alex Garcia**, Alameda County Probation Department
- **Karen Chin**, Urban Strategies Council
- **Celina Cuevas**, Alameda County Probation Department

The meeting opened with introductions and a brief summary about the purpose of the Workgroup, and outlining the agenda item for the meeting, hearing from people with lived experience about their efforts to enter Santa Rita Jail.

One meeting participant noted that the Sheriff's Classification Unit, which approves clearances to enter the Jail, are primarily concerned with their interpretation of safety. Often experienced staff in the Classification Unit use the available resources to make a thoughtful decision. However, mistrust and assumptions about the initial responses can play a part in the challenges/denial in obtaining clearance to enter the jail. Often if something is inaccurate, the Sheriff's staff will assume it is deceitful. It was suggested the Workgroup focus their attention on ensuring applicants accurately complete the form prior to submission.

Frequently formally incarcerated people will "brush over" the sections that ask about previous convictions. Some of the individuals with lived experience are coached to say they will explain later, which often does not work for the Sheriff's classification staff. It was suggested the Workgroup become more active in helping people fill out the application for clearance properly.

For many individuals with prior convictions, it is emotional to list their previous encounters with the Sheriff. It would be helpful if the individuals had the opportunity to talk about what they have done since incarceration in the initial application and not the appeal process.

It was asked why the Sheriff doesn't just run an applicants' conviction history – they do but if your application is inaccurate, the assumption is you are trying to deceive them.

For those who are returning to a facility it is a mix of emotions, some of the staff are encouraging, while others are suspicious. The benefits for inmates hearing from people who are successful after leaving incarceration is validating. If you are a Substance Abuse Counselor with lived experience, it is easier to enter a jail setting, that experience is valued. One attendee noted, when attempting to enter Santa Rita Jail for a one day event, they just attached a copy of the record of convictions. One participant noted that he would always appeal after the initial denial by providing the information the Sheriff asked for.

It was suggested the Workgroup develop a training video and include the voice of people with lived experience as well as the rules and issues from the law enforcement perspective. The training video should amplify the value of the assistance people with lived experience can provide for individuals currently in Santa Rita Jail. The deputies who are involved with programming often understand the benefit of people with lived experience coming into Santa Rita.

Next steps could include the Sheriff coming forward and outlining what they require to enter Santa Rita. It was suggested that the Workgroup create two training videos, one for the Sheriff's staff; and a separate video and workshops for CBO staff who have recently obtained AB 109 contracts. Identifying officers who buy into the concept and encouraging them to spread the word would increase the chances of success. It is important to understand our target audience, the Deputies working in classification; it would also be helpful to get the endorsement of Sheriff Sanchez and for her to say a few words in the video.

It was suggested the Workgroup frame the issue differently, if CBO's currently feel there is a barrier, they will put their energy elsewhere. Could the Workgroup pose the question as having a goal of increasing the number of people who are providing services in the jail; and do a quick survey of the CBOs who have AB 109 contracts. It is important to identify who has the capacity to produce the training materials.

The Workgroup reviewed the minutes from the April 2nd meeting, with a proposed amendment, change the title of the document to "Agenda Item Request" it was agreed to make the change.

The meeting adjourned at 11:16 AM.