

Process and Evaluation Workgroup

Meeting Minutes

September 6, 2023

In attendance:

- **Rodney Brooks**, Alameda County Public Defenders Office
- **Janene Grigsby**, Alameda County Probation Department
- **Gina Temporal**: Alameda County Probation Department
- **Jason Sjoberg**, Alameda County District Attorney's Office
- **Nancy French**, Alameda County Probation Department
- **Alex Garcia**, Alameda County Probation Department
- **Rick Wood**, Rubicon Programs
- **John Jones**, Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency
- **Mac Hoang**, Asian Prisoner Support Committee
- **Chanthon Bum**, Asian Prisoner Support Committee
- **Charles Turner**, Alameda County Workforce Development Board
- **Pujya Pascal**, Alameda County Probation Department
- **Karen Chin**, The Justice Reinvestment Coalition
- **Jamaica Sowell**, ROOTS Community Health Center
- **Jean Moses**, Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails
- **Darryl Stewart**: Alameda County Supervisor Nate Miley's Office

The attendees introduced themselves.

A summary was provided about the August meeting, in preparation for the discussion about updating the objectives for the Process and Evaluation Workgroup.

Individuals who were previously under supervision and representatives from organizations contracted to serve AB 109 clients were invited to attend the meeting. Individuals previously under supervision were asked to talk about what was required of them that was useful, and what could have been helpful but was lacking. Representatives from organizations with county contracts were asked to discuss which measurements are

helpful and what additional assessments and measurements would be beneficial to clients but not recognized by Probation.

A summary of the discussion is below.

- Clients face numerous challenges, and the solutions are not always funded. For example, people who have caused harm in a community may not be comfortable returning to that community to work or receive services.
- The levels of trauma are often underestimated. Clients will have experiences with friends, family members, and systems that have failed them; and therefore, find it difficult to hope that what they receive from Probation (a system that has failed them) will be beneficial.
- Potential solutions: How can you give clients a sense of agency, where they feel like they can positively change their lives. The onus should not be fully placed on the client.
- It is important to get information from clients about what they need to thrive. programs need to be more client centered.
- Clients need to learn how to pursue a career, not a job. Programs need to address the issues preventing clients from succeeding i.e., housing, healthcare, and transportation.
- Clients participating in a few programs will not interrupt the generational forces that have brought people into the criminal legal system. Until there is the disruption of existing practices, programs will not be able to meet the needs of clients. For example, the term “second chance employment” still stigmatizes and punishes clients.
- Are we using the right data to evaluate success?
- If the experiences of clients were tangibly getting better, we would not be facing the same questions.
- The magnitude of challenges faced by clients are not being recognized, so in our everyday language and activities we “normalize” the harm. People who design programs often don’t have lived experience. The question: have you ever been convicted of a felony? retraumatizes clients, but it is asked when onboarding a program.
- The sources of poverty and mass incarceration are euro-centric practices, and they can’t be dismantled with a euro-centric approach. Data does not tell the story about what a client has overcome.
- It is very hard to quantify via data if an incident has been prevented due to someone’s activity or intervention.
- The intake process again focuses on the worst thing that someone has done, retraumatizing the client.

- At intake you are often asked to share information with someone you don't know or trust. Generally, most people would not do that, but clients are expected to. There is also the question, does the person doing the intake care about you.
- However, there are contractual obligations which hinder the ability for the service providers and clients to develop a trusting relationship.
- A high touch approach means doing a lot of things with clients (the together approach) and reduces the number of clients for staff members. Often allowing the caseworker to influence the behavior of the government agencies and others to have more positive interactions with clients.
- High touch also allows the caseworker to advocate on the client's behalf in difficult situations, which is often hard to quantify.
- High touch is not a new approach, it has been done with foster care. With returning citizens it allows the clients to allow people to engage in services and follow directions.
- Smaller service providers are having difficulty keeping the staff to comply with county contracts.
- One on one interactions that result in successes like clients getting a disability BART card are not measured as contract deliverables. Solving the client's issues (which can often mean addressing family and other relationships) is not often measured in contract deliverables. The current configuration only allows the service providers to decrease the probability of clients engaging in bad behavior.
- High touch coupled with extensive resources is the strategy often used with foster youth, people have less sympathy for returning citizens and thus, less of an appetite for that approach.
- Auxiliary funding could assist in supporting the work of programs not recognized in the contract deliverable.
- Would it be possible for contracts to measure increased outreach and sharing of issues from client to provider or when friends and family are reaching out to the case worker? Case workers clearly see when this happens and focus on not shaming clients when they start to share issues and challenges.
- Funding needs to be more flexible; the current rigid funding structure allows the same organizations to receive funding.
- Strict funding requirements only consider numbers and stifles the creativity of smaller organizations.
- The contract compliance requirements are too vast for smaller organizations, requiring them to hire staff challenging their budgets.
- If the goal is to dismantle systems, there needs to be data in place to support the need for the change. It is intentional that we don't have the data to tell the true story of clients and their challenges.

- It is important to collect the data because vendors have challenges in bringing clients to meetings to tell stories. The process of requesting funding does not “paint the story.”
- Many smaller organizations are not interested in the AB 109 contracts.
- The contracts are not structured in a way to provide an intensive relationship based service.

What could be measured that is not:

- The relationship between the caseworker and the clients.
- Time spent with clients and loved ones. Problems are solved often by working with loved ones.
- Can third party organizations be hired to submit the required data/compliance information?
- There are highly functional individuals, yet additional resources are needed to support less functional individuals who are employed with service providers.
- Returning citizens do not see a job as secure and have a limited number/types of jobs they can apply to, i.e., working for the County is not an option. Resulting in employment being seen as a “hustle” and not a long-term prospect.
- Innovation is not rewarded.
- Is there a way to measure avoided violations due to the intervention by a service provider.
- The new contracts allow for some of the improved measures being discussed in this meeting.
- The newly implemented CORE contract requires the staff to provide additional services as they identify additional client needs.
- Smaller grassroots organizations won’t apply because of the stigma in the community about working with probation and compliance issues. Requesting additional funding would require more compliance staff.
- The current contracts are not “fee for service” so organizations are not rewarded for providing services that are traditionally seen as measurable or not. Contractors are funded based on the budget they submit and therefore should be fully funded to appropriately address the needs of clients. Contractors need to apply for livable wages for their staff.
- Probation is creating a process for contractors to be able to paint the picture that data does not capture.
- Probation has engaged contractors on many of the issues discussed in the meeting, and some will be reflected in future contracts.
- How can stronger lines of communication be developed allowing contractors and the Probation Department to understand their respective challenges.

- Is there a way to memorialize the feedback that is given by service providers after completing a contract.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55.