

The State of Re-Entry Re-visited: One Year Later

Introduction

The State of Re-Entry Summit: Coming Home for Good hosted by Sheriff Michael G. Bellotti was held on October 30, 2014. The objective of the Summit was to bring together a cross-section of justice professionals to network and learn from each other in the hopes of developing best practices for future planning and practice.

In the year since the Summit, there have been new challenges and successes that we have shared with many of our counterparts because of the dialogue that began on the 30th of October. As we review and examine these issues a year later, some major initiatives come to mind immediately. The opioid epidemic has continued to be in the forefront of the local and national media. The Harvard School of Public Health released a study in May 2015 utilizing data from 2014 that reported 39% of the residents of Massachusetts knew someone who was affected by an addiction to prescription painkillers.

Governor Baker's Opioid Drug Task Force made 65 recommendations that have prompted some major changes in the way the state government is going to address this crisis. On October 15, 2015, the Governor in conjunction with the Commissioners from Department of Mental Health and the Department of Public Health filed legislation to solidify the task force's recommendations.

Effective July 1, 2015, the Massachusetts Health Connector re-vamped the entire Massachusetts Health Insurance system. The new system has simplified the process for end-users and specifically, correctional staff to identify the status of a returning citizen. In most cases, offenders being released from the Norfolk Sheriff's Office are either reactivated or newly enrolled in MA Health prior to release.

This year has also brought a considerable change to the trial court's use of specialty courts as a diversion of offenders from jails. In Norfolk County, there is the Quincy District Court Drug and Mental Health Courts and Dedham District Court has a Veteran's Court. We will discuss these and many more issues from the Summit more in-depth as we review the workshops as future discussions.

A brief review of the Summit is necessary as an informational platform with more than 400 professionals that represented police agencies, the court system, corrections, elected officials, and the Judiciary was in attendance. There were a total of ten individual 50 minute workshops that covered a host of Re-Entry subject matters. It is evident to those in attendance that a 50 minute workshop was not long enough to have in-depth discussions on all aspects of the subject matter; however, they were long enough to begin much needed conversations. Whether it was an exchange of business cards or topic discussions of ideas as an opening, it all began in these workshops.

The Summit began with Sheriff Bellotti providing opening remarks that outlined the importance of providing the forum for all stakeholders to discover new ideas, explore new and existing practices and broaden networks. He spoke about the need and importance for collaborative partnerships with the goal of discontinuing the practice of agencies operating in a silo. Sheriff Bellotti stressed the importance of his commitment to re-entry as a public safety and community benefit.

Executive Secretary of Public Safety and Security Andrea Cabral also welcomed the group and spoke about the significance of gathering together. The fact that the United States incarcerates more individuals than any other industrial nation was an issue that Secretary Cabral spoke about. She challenged the attendees to step up and answer the call to address this important issue.

After the morning opening, the large group broke out to attend the workshop sessions. The workshops along with the moderators and panelists are outlined below:

Challenges of Returning Citizens

Moderator Steven Peevy, Suffolk Sheriff's Department, Boston Reentry Initiative
Panelists Jeremiah Falvey, Associate Director of the North Cottage Program
Karen LaFranzia, Executive Director of the St. Francis House
Chris Mitchell, Massachusetts Department of Correction, Director of Re-Entry

Victim Impact and Advocacy

Moderator Pamela Friedman, Chief of Domestic Violence, Norfolk District Attorney's Office
Panelists Ashley Abernethy, Victim Services Coordinator, Norfolk Sheriff's Office
Maureen Flores, Civilian Domestic Violence Advocate for DOVE, Inc.
Dr. Malcolm Astley, Victim Advocate.

Family Reunification

Moderator Patrick McDermott, Registrar of Probate at Norfolk County
Panelists Donna Feinberg, Chief Probation Officer at Norfolk Probate Court
Fernando Mederos, Director of Fatherhood Engagement, Department of Children and Families
John O'Neill, Director of the Family Nurturing Center
Michael Carthcart, Middlesex Recovery Home/Quincy Drug Court graduate

Diversion: Alternatives to Incarceration

Moderator James Brennan, Quincy District Court Chief Probation Officer
Panelists Melissa Bickler, Quincy Police Department
Judge Diane Moriarty, Quincy District Court Drug Court
John Quinn, Regional Program Manager, Office of Community Corrections
Judge Mary Hogan Sullivan, Justice of the Specialty Courts

The Mental Health Crisis Facing Our Communities

Moderated Joanne Barros, Director of Mental Health, Norfolk Sheriff's Office
Panelists Kathy O'Neill, Director of Behavioral Health, MA DOC
Denise McDonough, Deputy Superintendent MCI Bridgewater
Dr. Jorge Veliz, Correctional Psychiatric Services.

Impact of Returning Citizens

Moderator True-See Allah, Director, Boston Reentry Initiative Suffolk Sheriff's Department
Panelists Judge Mark Coven, First Justice of the Quincy District Court
Glenn MacKinley, Assistant United States Attorney
Lt. Timothy Sorgi, Quincy Police Department.

Re-Entry Best Practices

Moderator Sandra McCroom, Undersecretary of Criminal Justice, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Panelists James Bynum, Re-Entry Coordinator, Norfolk Sheriff's Office
John Larivee the Chief Executive Officer of Community Resources for Justice
Lyn Levy, Executive Director of SPAN, Inc.
Dr. Robert Monahan, Executive Director, South Shore Recovery Home Coalition

Opioid Epidemic

Moderator Mary Kelley, ADS, Offender and Court Management, Norfolk Sheriff's Office.
Panelists John McGahan, President and Chief Executive Officer, Gavin Foundation
Bill Spinks, Bay State Community Services
Lt. Detective Patrick Glynn, Quincy Police Department.

Substance Abuse and Recovery

Moderator Jo Rothman, Probation Coordinator, Quincy District Court
Panelists Paul F. McDevitt, Modern Assistance Program
Sean O'Malley, Quincy Drug Court graduate
Laurence Schneider, Executive Director, North Cottage Program

Security Challenges with Re-Entry

Moderator Gerard Horgan, Superintendent, Norfolk Sheriff's Office
Panelists Sgt. Danette Britto, Plymouth County Sheriff's Office
Sgt. Todd DeBoer, Norfolk Sheriff's Office
Sgt. Christopher Taranto, Suffolk County Sheriff's Department

We will review each of these workshops and will provide updates as we re-visit a year later. Stay tuned for more information on each of these important issues!

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