



Yakima Jail Therapeutic Community Program

2019 Report to the Legislature

As required by Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1109 (2019)

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This is the report to the Legislature as directed by ESHB 1109 (2019) and contains information on the Department of Corrections' Therapeutic Community Program at the Yakima Jail.

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Department of Corrections Yakima Jail Therapeutic Community Program

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Executive Summary

The Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) has only one of its eight major correctional facilities specifically dedicated to the incarceration and treatment of the female population that enters the prison system. Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) located in Purdy, Washington, has a capacity of 874 incarcerated women from across the state and those on interstate compact from other areas of the nation. All levels of custody (minimum, medium, close, maximum) are housed in separate units on this single campus. Approximately 300 women may also reside at Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW) in Belfair, Washington, if their custody classification allows. These women are generally engaged in work crews with municipalities, Department of Natural Resources, and other entities that contract with the DOC.

Over the past several years, the space confinement at WCCW has resulted in overcrowding and the inability for some incarcerated women to receive the programming they require, such as substance use disorder treatment in a Therapeutic Community (TC). Several years ago, DOC contracted with the Yakima County Jail (YCJ) to house approximately 40 minimum security incarcerated women to relieve the overcrowding. The aging YCJ facility could not meet the needs of this population, many of which suffer from mental and physical health conditions related to trauma. Living space was dormitory style with several women in a large room. Though the agency contracted for health services at YCJ, the availability of mental health services was minimal and those housed there were struggling. Finally, with support from the Legislature in 2019 (ESHB 1109) the agency contracted with Yakima County to move our incarcerated individuals from the aging jail to the newer jail and implement a TC for up to 60 women. Staffing the TC and filling the program with women that met the criteria for relocation to YCJ took some time, but now YCJ provides a safe place for women to live together, learn together and hold each other accountable to the tenets of their recovery.

Report Overview

In the 2019 Legislative Session, the Biennial Budget (ESHB 1109) provided additional funding to DOC solely to contract for the costs associated with use of offender bed capacity in lieu of prison beds for a Therapeutic Community Program in Yakima County. The Legislature mandated that DOC provide a report outlining the program, its outcomes, and any improvements made over the previous contracted beds by December 15, 2019.

Background

Due to capacity levels for the incarcerated female population sentenced to DOC, the agency requested and the Legislature provided funding in the 2017-19 Operational Budget for a 60-bed Substance Abuse Recovery Therapeutic Community (TC) located in the new Yakima County Jail (Y CJ). The first group of women were transferred to the new Y CJ facility in December 2018, with the TC in place January 2019. This program allows eligible incarcerated women to experience a new environment with evidence-based programs to work on the skills needed for a successful reentry back into the community. Prior to this funding the women were housed at the old Y CJ in a dorm style cell that offered very little time out of the cell and no programming. The new jail offers a setting that is filled with light, programming space, opportunity for fresh air and sunshine, and better suited for a TC program.

Implementation of the Therapeutic Community

The move of the Department's incarcerated female population from the old Y CJ to the new Y CJ took place in December 2018. The Substance Abuse Recovery Unit developed strike teams to screen the women at the Y CJ and at WCCW to identify individuals that met the criteria for the TC program. There was no problem identifying individuals in need of this service and they were able to fill the unit with 59 program participants by January 21, 2019; any non-TC individuals were transferred back to WCCW.

Nine women from Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW) TC Program volunteered to transfer to the Y CJ to assist in the development of the TC. These women were all volunteers and committed themselves to role-modeling for the therapeutic framework of a community dedicated to change. It was a difficult time for the individuals, but they committed themselves to this process and were able to learn a higher level of peer leadership through this new challenge.

Program Improvements

Since the move was made in 2018, DOC has worked in tandem with Y CJ staff to make continuous improvements to align living conditions at the jail with living conditions at WCCW.

Screening of Program Participants

The women are transported to Y CJ after going through screening criteria to assure they meet program needs and they do not have medical, dental, or mental health holds on them. We also do not send women if they have a Pell Grant for education that would be put at risk if we moved them.

Commissary

The women sent complaints that the commissary available at the jail was expensive and did not consider different skin and hair types. WCCW worked with Correctional Industries and the Superintendent at Airway Heights Corrections Center to create a process for women to order from DOC commissary. They are now able to place orders and get regular deliveries from the source they are familiar with. Additionally, WCCW staff regularly deliver hygiene items to the jail for those who are indigent.

Fresh Fruits & Vegetables

The women asked for more fruits and vegetables for their diet, claiming that the diet they received from the jail was not adequate. DOC now makes regular deliveries of fresh seasonal fruit to complement their diet.

Exercise Equipment

Because this is a jail setting the women do not have access to a large gym. WCCW purchased exercise equipment and set it up in the day room for their use.

Gender Responsive Training for Staff

DOC recognized that Jail staff may benefit from the same Gender Responsive Training that DOC prison staff are required to take at the women's prisons. WCCW sent instructors to the jail to deliver Pathways and Perspectives, curriculum developed by DOC to address female incarcerated individuals pathways to prison and how to achieve the best results with this population. The jail staff were excited to get the training. The Superintendent then identified next level training conducted by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) called "Safety Matters". This training is next level Gender Responsive training that gives staff more strategies and a deeper understanding of how to build trust with women and assist them. NIC provided the course to jail and prison staff and then trained trainers to assure sustainability.

Clinical Staffing

DOC had hired and trained the TC Manager, but the program had clinical staffing challenges and the contract provider was unable to fill the clinical positions, thus no clinical staff were on site. DOC began to rotate DOC clinical staff from around the state to provide clinical services throughout the week. This posed several problems and did not lend itself to the consistency of care, but it did provide foundational treatment services and initiated the therapy the individuals needed. After several months, DOC was able to establish project positions and hire clinical staff. As of this report, DOC is fully staffed at the YCJ with consistent clinicians.

Mental Health Needs

DOC is actively working with the YCJ medical staff to ensure that individuals have access to prescribed medications that the YCJ does not stock in their pharmacy. There were instances where medication was changed by the YCJ Pharmacist from what was prescribed by DOC because the prescribed medication was not in the YCJ pharmacy formulary. Changing medications increases the risk of individuals decompensating and having to return WCCW. DOC Health Services is also exploring a tele-medicine service for the individuals when at YCJ to assist with medication changes and providing the medications to YCJ for the individuals. In addition, the Substance Abuse Recovery Unit recently changed the YCJ TC program from a 1 year program to a 6 month program which would alleviate the concerns of mental health and make them more likely to clear the individuals for transfer.

Future Capacity Solutions

Currently the construction of a 2nd fence around the minimum campus at WCCW is underway. Upon completion of this project and the simultaneous opening of the 128 bed female minimum security prison at Maple Lane, if caseload projections are accurate, we will be able to bring women back from the YCJ to a prison facility. This is the ideal situation for prisons because it offers more programming and better overall management of our population's needs.

Program Outcomes

The TC program at YCJ has stabilized and in September 2019, the first group of 8 individuals promoted, thus completing the program. A promotion ceremony and celebration was held to include a day filled with activities and games along with cake and beverages.

The TC has made significant progress and has worked to hold each other accountable and take ownership for their community of healing. The majority of community members that began the program in January were initially negative, but are now grateful for the program. Many presented letters that spoke to that transition and disclosed feelings of gratitude because they now have the opportunity to be successful. (See Appendix A – Program Participant Letters).

While the YCJ facility has had challenges, it has also provided a positive environment that lends itself to a true inpatient treatment program where the individuals are able to practice setting boundaries in a safe environment and begin to assert themselves in ways they never have before. They also have been able to have hard conversations with others and make their way through different outlooks and views. The facility also offers the opportunity to have limited distractions which allows them to focus primarily on their treatment and recovery. Individuals are able to learn more about who they are and how they want to grow moving forward. Many hope to return to a prison facility with goals and a plan on how to better their lives and take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Appendix A – Program Participant Letters

Collette Pierce

I chose to spend the last 8 yrs of my sentence in denial not wanting to live in reality just keeping everything buried deep inside, to me, that was easier than living in reality it was painful there. Everytime I did think about it I would force myself to think about something different it seemed like the only way I could manage my day to day life. I lost all goals in life + didn't think I'd ever have any ever again. That is until I was hired in Braille. I ended up loving it + slowly started having goals in life. I finally felt like my life had a purpose, helping the blind. I ended up getting pulled for this TC program. I was so mad + had the worst attitude but what I didn't realize was yeah I have all these plans for when I get out + all these goals but what about all my real problems that I've kept buried deep down inside? I had no other choice then to give this program a chance. But what I didn't want people to know was that I didn't have any self-worth. I had so much hate + anger inside + it was all directed at me. I was involved in an incident where someones life literally flashed before my eyes. I cant even begin to tell u how that feels. But the worst part about it is the damage that was done to the family. They will never be reunited, all those memories that still could have been made will no longer be an option. No matter what I do I will

never be able 2 make it right + that hurts. I truly believed I didnt deserve a 2nd chance, or 2 be happy, or really anything. In this program I was always getting put out of my comfort zone + having 2 deal w/ all my problems that I wasnt ready to deal with but the question is would I ever be ready? I didnt realize how much this was actually helping until 1/2 way through 2nd phase. I was still too mad to notice. But I started 2 change. I wasnt so angry + I started to have a better attitude. As I progressed in the program the more I realized that I was growing into a better person. My self-worth has improved + I actually believe that I do deserve a 2nd chance at life. Through my experience here I've met alot of amazing people, some I truly consider my friends. So Ms. Horn + Mr. Ramirez + Ms. Williams thank u 4 always being there 4 me + never giving up on me. This experience means the world to me. I will miss u. + 2 the community I just want to say please give this program a shot u will be so thankful in the end. I wish u all the best. u know how everyone says this program breaks u down well I dont know about that but what I do know is that it definetly builds u back up.

Ms Boo Heggum
SB
ms. Horn
A2-4

T.C. Letter

I'm not going to lie, when I first got to this program, I didn't feel like I needed to be here. Now that I am almost done with this program I am very thankful for my TC experience. I am proud of myself for sticking it out even when it's been uncomfortable. I have learned a lot of amazing skills to make sure that I have and continue being successful in my journey of recovery. I am almost done with this program and I must say now that I believe in it. It has taught me about somethings I never would have guessed about my addiction, let alone myself. Today I know how to use my coping skills to handle stress or emotions, I can walk away from situations that I never could before. Dangerspotting tool I will use in my recovery. I've learned how to set personal boundaries with my loved ones even when it's been hard. I am definitely more assertive than I was when I got here. Focusing on myself and my recovery is the most important thing to me now. I've learned who the real me is and am pretty comfortable with the person I am

today because of my experience here. I ~~can~~ believe this program has changed me into a better person than I would have been without it. Its exciting to me to be able to use all the things I've learned here when I get outside of prison. I want to say thank you Mr. Ramirez and Ms. Horn for helping teach me everything I ~~learned~~ now ~~to~~ know so I have a better chance at my recovery. Thank you TC for giving me the tools that I need to ~~be~~ ~~able~~ succeed.

Sincerely

Ms. Bob Heggum

msStrong
SB
msHorn
A-6-4

Dear TC,

When I first got assessed way back when, I was angry and terrified of joining a "cuet". When they told me I would just do IDT because I wasn't JOST I was relieved. Then God intervened and plucked me from Junit to bring me to Sunny Yakima. I had my plans. I'd be back just in time for organic/bee keeping and everything would be just fine. That's when you found me TC. On a brand new program, in Yakima where if something doesn't change daily then nothing's happening at all. If change made me uncomfortable before then it never will again. I promised myself when this started I would approach all things with an open-mind and the best possible attitude. I didn't want to make it hard on myself and figured it's better to go with the flow. I dove in head first and have been on structure board and worked every ISP to its fullest potential. I have grown a lot and am way more comfortable in my own skin. I walk taller and with more confidence. I have let go of a lot of resentments and have come to realize that will be a life long process which is a big step in itself. While I have found a lot of curriculum repetitive because this isn't my first time in treatment, I

do my best to get what I can from it. What's helping me the most is my relapse prevention and I am hoping it will be what keeps me free. It could go on and on about everything I've learned since starting this program. Whether its programming hours or not, there's always room for personal growth. So even though I'm grateful its coming to end and I am ready to move on. I thank you for all the tools you've given me and for the better chance to not come back again. I hope to never need you again. So this is a goodbye as well as a thank you.

Sincerely,

Ms Strong

TC Letter

wow what a ride! I can't believe it's almost over. We've been through so many ups and downs, left right and side to side. Once I opened my eyes and my life to the possibility of change and this was the best decision I could have ever made. I will not lie, at times we have had a love/hate relationship. I think one of the bravest but hardest things to do is take a good hard look at oneself and realize that changes need to be made. I have gained so much from being here, learning myself and who I am. I have grown so much confidence in myself and my capabilities. I have pushed past my limits time and time again, breaking out of my comfort zone continuously. I have learned to be assertive, not passive aggressive or aggressive. I am no longer scared to speak in front of people, no longer shy. I know how to make conversation with new people and to use my voice and resources for the things I need. I learned how to be organized, prioritize my time and not procrastinate, meeting, maintaining and achieving goals ~~that~~ has done wonders for my self esteem. I have pride now, maybe not for the things I've done in my past but who I am now, helping people is my passion and loving myself is a priority. This program is what you make it. Be different. Be nice. just smile. This gonna change your life.

