

Vermont – Prison Research and Innovation Network
Executive Committee Meeting
November 20, 2020

1. Introductions

a. Welcome to Brad, the Prison Research and Innovation Manager (PRIM)

Dr. Lorelei Ammons (VitalCore Health, medical contractor), **Senator Becca Balint** (majority leader in the senate), **Representative Alice Emmons** (chair of house corrections and joint justice committee), **Heather Simons** (head of professional standards), **Mike Lyon** (SSCF superintendent), **Michael Groner** (BSCA union representative, in SSCF), **Karen Tronsgard-Scott** (ED network against DSV), **Linda Weinberg** (Moss Group), **Andie Moss** (Moss group), **Representative Marybeth Redmond** (house HS, joint child protection oversight committee), **Timothy Burges** (advocate for people who under supervision/incarcerated), **Tom Dalton** (ED Vermonters for CJR), **David Scherr** (attorney general chairs)

University of Vermont Researchers: **Kathy Fox**, **Abby Crocker**

DOC: **Bradley Goodhale** (Prison Research and Innovation Manager - PRIM), **Monica Weeber** (administrative services director for DOC), **Jessica King-Mohr** (lead research analyst for DOC), **Al Cormier** (facilities executive), **Judy Henkin** (deputy commissioner), **Jim Baker** (DOC Commissioner)

Urban Institute Researchers: **Jesse Jannetta**, **Rudy Perez**, **Aristotle Jones**, **Lauren Farrell**

2. Overview of the Prison Research and Innovation Initiative

a. Mission

i. Generate transformative thinking and national attention to prisons. Promote awareness about what happens inside prisons and create more transparency from prisons to the public. Infuse humanity into life in prisons.

ii. This project can shape the future of SSCF, the future of corrections in Vermont and across a county.

b. Executive Committee

i. Provide knowledge, expertise, and leverage your position to push forward and act upon recommendations from staff and incarcerated people inside Southern.

ii. Marybeth: Hope that we can take it outside of prisons. Don't want to set our sights too low. End up with a system that truly transforms and rehabilitates.

3. DOC Overlap Projects

a. **Chittenden women's prison project:** Abby and Kathy (UVM) working with staff inside the prison to learn what it's like to work there.

b. **Justice Reinvestment:** Data driven approach to reinvest money from corrections into policies that reduce crime and reduce recidivism. Overlap with this project. Several different policies that were passed in Act 148.

c. **Moss Group:** The Moss group will be providing mission, vision work for the DOC. They will help look at how we move forward. Sexual safety in facilities, they have now agreed to take on a larger scope to look at the mission and strategy for planning for office of professional standards (PREA, retention, training). They work on moving people to commit and work with everyone on the ground.

d. **DOC feasibility study:** Study to understand if a new facility could or should be built to replace Chittenden.

4. University of Vermont – Research Overview

- a. Abby and Kathy are working in the data collection phase
 - i. Focus groups and interviews
 - 1. Underway, in facility and now over virtual technologies
 - 2. 5-10 focus groups and 50 interviews.
 - 3. Better understand what is going on, on the ground and develop themes together. Develop survey with the information.
 - 4. 4 focus groups, 13 interviews.
 - 5. Poised to conduct 2-6 interviews/week through April
 - 6. COVID
 - a. Not onsite, but trying to figure out how to talk with
 - 7. Recruited first community research council members
 - a. Part of participatory research piece, working with folks who work and are incarcerated in the facility. They will be our research partners and advisors throughout the project. As we identify themes, we will go back to them and make sure we are getting everything right. If something looks interesting, they will help us think things through.
 - b. At the end of April/May the information is vetted by people on the inside.
 - ii. Survey interview and analysis
 - 1. Working through survey administration plan, will administer the survey in February – March.
 - 2. How can we get in, in a COVID safe way? Potentially through electronic technologies (tablets)
 - iii. Challenges
 - 1. Keep people engaged and let them know we are still working on trying to interact with them. We don't want people to think we forgot about them. Exploring ways to keep them updated. Through videos or through messages on the tablets.
 - 2. Interacting with people who are willing to do a Teams interview or talk with us over the phone.
 - 3. Literacy level for people who are incarcerated. Want them to be involved, thinking through that with Urban and IRB.
 - iv. Success
 - 1. HR administrative data, staff side
 - 2. Administrative data from DOC is still a work in progress
 - 3. People have generally been very excited to talk to UVM. the fact that it was external they had greater faith in the project, the trust is being built up. Extremely bright people who've given us insights.
 - 4. Folks are very excited about the executive committee and that there are folks that are interested in hearing what they have to say.
 - 5. Excitement that there was going to be innovations tried out. that over the next four years we will be trying different things.
 - v. Administrative data
- b. All sites are moving forward into Phase II.
 - i. Vermont, Iowa, Missouri, Colorado, Delaware.
- c. Phase I

- i. Involves three core research activities
 - 1. Engagement of staff and incarcerated people in shaping the research and change at SSCF. Participatory research is trying to determine how we will reflect the values of humanity and transparency in our practice.
 - a. Interviews and focus groups
 - b. Climate survey
 - i. Staff survey
 - ii. Incarcerated person's survey
 - c. Administrative data
 - i.
 - ii. Key measures that will be made publicly available
 - 2. Data walk
 - a. The staff and incarcerated people, they will see the data first and tell UVM if it is correct. They will be part of analyzing the information and suggesting what kind of changes might be tried.
 - d. Phase II
 - i. Taking the information that we learn, and starting to try out different innovations
 - ii. Re-field the survey and see if anything has changed
 - iii. Vermont should be able to do things collectively, issues that are present right now
5. **Criminology Consortium**
 - a. Lessons learned and challenges along the way in State/UVM partnership
 - b. Executive committee members who viewed enjoyed the presentation and conference as a whole
6. **Vermont Public Radio:** VPR is interested in doing a three-part series on the PRIN
7. **COVID and next steps**
 - a. Intake units are working
 - b. 1 positive case in SSCF
 - i. No staff that were exposed over 15-minute time frame
 - c. This will impact in-person visits until we see a decrease in cases
 - d. Worried about increases after Thanksgiving and Christmas
 - i. Keeping fingers crossed and doing everything we can
 - e. 184 incarcerated people in Mississippi tested positive for COVID. All staff are being tested this week (340 staff). No new positives in MS, only new positive was an old positive.
8. **Questions**
 - a. Where will the recommendations go?
 - i. The recommendations will come to the executive committee
 - ii. have the being that are policy shapers and have the influence to make this happen. Bringing this to the legislature, the data that we find.
 - iii. Low hanging fruit changes immediately.
 - b. VSEA union has a vested interest in making changes, not here to be a roadblock. Depending on the changes, somethings may be bargainable, but some things will

take more time. Intent is to improve workplace environment to improve everyone's experience. Some might have to be bargained at the next contract.

c. Urban can send out the VT SharePoint list of advocates.
i. Add the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. You can email me at karents@vtnetwork.org

d. Humanity already exists, we just need to nurture it. We're one big circle, what impact people who are incarcerated impacts staff, impacts

e. Once the recording is available, Brad can send it to the group

9. **Urban** to send the executive committee the list of advocates on SharePoint

a. <https://vermontgov.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/sites/AHSEXT-DOCPRIN/Shared%20Documents/VT%20local%20advocates%20and%20stakeholders.xlsx?d=w8c59dfe9c61142669be9ebe065b56767&csf=1&web=1&e=bS6tAB>