

**MINUTES
LEGISLATIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERSIGHT TASK FORCE
MEETING**

September 13, 2016

The Legislative Criminal Justice Oversight Task Force met at 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 13, 2016, in the Multi-Complex Building (MAC Room B) in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: Representative Matthew Shepherd, Co-Chair; Senator Joyce Elliott, Representative Dwight Tosh, Judge Gary Arnold, Kenton Buckner, Tjuana Byrd, Ken Casady, Brooke Cummings (John Felts), John Wesley Hall, Wendy Kelley, Robin Raveendran, and Kevin Murphy (Sheila Sharp).

Other legislators present: Representative Bob Ballinger and James Sorvillo.

Representative Tosh called the meeting to order.

E-Career Counseling for Offender Re-entry [Exhibit B]

Dr. Brian Bolter, Dr. Femina P. Varghese, and Dr. Elson M. Bihm, Associate Professors in Psychology and Counseling, University of Central Arkansas (UCA), were recognized and presented a PowerPoint presentation titled, “*E-Career Counseling for Offender Re-entry*” (see Handout 1 for full report). Dr. Varghese stated that according to the Council of State Governments (CSG) report, Arkansas has the highest rate of recidivism in the United States with parole violators as the largest contributor therefore; CSG recommended more community based programs in Arkansas. She proposed an online career counseling program that Arkansas Department of Corrections parolees would access through Good Grid to interact with trained and supervised Ph. D. and M.S. students in the Department of Psychology and Counseling at UCA. Sessions are tailored to the risk level of each offender ensuring personalized treatments and needs. Psychologists are highly sought-after in the federal prison sector, but not on a state level. Providing more accessibility to career training and re-entry guidance is vital to reducing recidivism. The goal of the program is, after three years, to develop a manual to be replicated throughout the state. If it reduces recidivism in just 5 parolees, the state would save \$115,445 per year in incarceration costs and over 1 million dollars in 10 years.

Mr. Bolter added that there aren't any programs in the state to train Psychology students in providing supervised career interventions to parolees and this program would encourage more specialized training as well as cost-effectively reducing recidivism.

Criminal Justice Institute Training [Handout 2]

Dr. Cheryl May, Forensic Anthropologist, Director, Criminal Justice Institute (CJI), presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding the *Criminal Justice Institute Training* (see Handout 2 for full report). Dr. May stated CJI was established in 1993 and in 1997 became a part of the University of Arkansas Education system as well as a part of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. The institute's mission is making communities safer by supporting law enforcement professionals through advanced training, education, resources and collaborative partnerships. Dr. May expounded on the many different programs offered. Due to online access, since 2010 the number of officers and communities that are able to take CJI courses has more than tripled. All courses are approved through the Arkansas Commission of Law Enforcement Standards and Training.

Next Meeting

Representative Shepherd announced that the next task force meeting is tentatively set for October 4, 2016, at 9:30 a.m. CSG will provide a full report of their recommendations at least one week before the meeting in anticipation of an overview and discussion on further action.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.