



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Juliana Stratton – Lieutenant Governor
Children of Incarcerated Parents Task Force

Date & Time

Friday, February 28, 2020

1:00 – 3:00 PM

Department/ Organization	Name	Present	Phone	Absent
Attorney General	Kathryn Bocanegra			X
Chicago Police Dept.	Vanessa Westley			X
Cook County Public Guardian	Alpa Patel		X	
Cook County Sheriff	Amanda Gallegos			X
Court System	Pending			
Dept. of Children and Family Services	Matt Grey		X	
Dept. of Human Services	Karrie Reuter		X	
Dept. of Juvenile Justice	Erin Johnson			X
Illinois Dept. of Corrections	Alyssa Williams		X	
Illinois House of Representatives	Delia Ramirez	X		
Illinois House of Representatives	Tony McCombie			X
Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board	John Keigher	X		
Illinois Senate	Steve McClure			X
Illinois Senate	Pending			
Illinois Sheriff Assoc.	Sheriff Hartshorn			X
Illinois State Police	Tim Tyler		X	
Public Member	Alexis Mansfield		X	

Public Member	Wilette Benford			X
Public Member	Eddie Bocanegra		X	
Public Member	Michelle Day		X	
Public Member	Terry Harris			X
Public Member	Jada Lesure			X
Public Member	Colette Payne			X
Public Member	Alysia Tate	X		
Public Member	Anita Weinberg	X		
Member of the Public	Sodiqa Williams	X		
Member of the Public	Matt Smith	X		
Member of the Public	Amy Dworsky	X		
Member of the Public	Luis Gonzalez (Rep. Ramirez's chief of staff)	X		

11 members present in person or via phone (Quorum is met).

1. Representative Ramirez calls the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.
2. Alpa Patel moves to approves minutes.
 - A. Eddie Bocanegra seconds and motions to approve last meeting's minutes
3. Representative Ramirez welcomes the group and provides an overview of the purpose of today's meeting, which is to review the latest version of the report and provide additional feedback. Representative Ramirez and CGLA met with young people from the Mikva Challenge to get their feedback as well. Today we'd like to take a closer look at the changes that were made and get additional feedback.
4. Matt Smith from CGLA provided an overview of the recommendations contained in the report. to walk through the report.
 - A. Mikva Challenge is a group that advocates for young people in general as well as youth with incarcerated parents. The group consisted of teenagers who are very steeped in policy issues and are committed to making sure that youth are at the table when decisions are made.
 - B. Part of the conversation we're going to have is, how do you make these things happen? How do you implement these recommendations? The newest recommendation is the last one, which came from a lot of feedback from people in the room and on the phone

saying that we can develop a lot of recommendations but we need to make sure that they are implemented with the appropriate level of staffing and support.

- C. Researchers are subject matter experts, but there are no better experts than those who are impacted. When we look at this from a policy perspective, we need a lens of those who have experienced it. It means focus groups with youth like we have seen here. It also means including wives and girlfriends and partners. We should include all these people when developing the policies as well as the implementation. I would encourage us to do focus groups with families in addition to great groups like Mikva. There are things that I know (as a parent with children with an incarcerated parent) that I can articulate that they may not.
- D. Focus groups that also involve the person incarcerated are important. They too have a lot to offer in terms of what that visit felt like and what happened afterwards. To the extent we hear that good visits have positive effects, hearing from them what a good visit *is* could be really important to developing a good policy.
- E. When it talks about the contact visits at jails, I want to be careful to identify what a small percentage of the kids who are able to visit directly so that we don't give the wrong impression of what is going on.
- F. With the section at the end on establishing a commission, it sounds like what you're presenting here would be identified in statute. Maybe it could be made a little more clear that that's the avenue we're talking about. We might want to include something about a period of sunset or some sort of end-date. If it's larger in scope than that it would need to be a little more clear.
- G. We could say something like at 4 years a comprehensive report can be presented and continued then if necessary.
- H. What about two years with an option to renew? I don't want to stretch it too long. I think there should be some urgency around implementation.
- I. I agree. I think the sense of urgency is important, though I think the way this is written it seems like a long-time monitor.
- J. Representative Ramirez has filed two bills, one which is the bill of rights for children of incarcerated people, and a shell bill that is the extension of the Task Force that could be used for creating a new commission.
- K. The report says "contact visitation between parents and children should be a right." What does it mean for people with security concerns? Is this black and white?
- L. We went back to the guiding principles of the Task Force. We also understand that every institution operates differently and that there are funding concerns that could inform how this happens, but it's aspirational in terms of where we think everyone should be.
- M. Could ILETSB talk about whether working with non-profits is even possible (things like doing focus groups etc.)?
 - i. It's definitely possible. We have a team at UIS that would work for us on this. The key for us is that we'd need a list of people and organizations we could reach out to.
 - ii. We have some transition centers that we could connect people to going forward. We'd also have to go back to Logan and other institutions.
 - iii. We could identify the types of orgs to work with in some sort of legislation.

- iv. We need to engage these folks with specific needs and asks so they don't feel overwhelmed by what we're asking. It's good to hear that STB would be able to do this without too much work and that hopefully maybe other agency partners would be able to get involved this way as well.
- 5. One thing I think is integral to all the elements of the recommendations is the technological infrastructure to make this all happen. I also want to raise the issue of prison nurseries, which didn't come up a lot in our conversations. I am thinking about the importance of preserving a family in this situation. We really didn't talk about pregnant parents and that they have skin-on-skin contact before a child is born. I think this is really important to highlight.
- 6. I think that prison nurseries are really important. There's research out there that suggests that both parents and children benefit from that experience. I know there are some programs with a prison nursery, but looking into how to expand that to be available to more pregnant women would be really important and something we should do.
- 7. I see that the report focuses on interactions at the time of arrest when the child is present. I think it would be beneficial to mention how officers ask or find out if the person they're arresting has a child. There don't seem to be many guidelines around asking this question. For example, it's best practice to find a child and place them with a family member to make sure they're being taken care of.
- 8. Could IDOC tell us if there is a coordinating way of dealing with parents?
 - A. We have to rely on self-reporting unless the child is already in state custody in which case they coordinate with DCFS. In reception we ask a myriad of questions that include this.
 - B. When people self-report, they're less likely to identify all of their children out of the fear that by self reporting DCFS might get involved.
 - C. Absolutely right, we'd love to integrate our data to get more accurate information, but that's a complicated endeavor.
- 9. One question I had is when we're looking at collaboration between state agencies. I noticed that schools aren't specifically mentioned. Not necessarily data sharing, but when we're talking about training and collaboration between state agencies, maybe it would include a set of tools for educators to work with children who have parents incarcerated?
- 10. Visitation is an hour of the week vs. the times they're in schools. What I've learned is that educators are ill-equipped to deal with incarcerated parents.
- 11. We didn't have ISBE in our task force list, but I think it would be really helpful. Would it make sense to add ISBE to the agencies included in the commission and state agencies to involve?
 - A. I think we have to be cautious about involving a school. It depends on the district, but we need to be careful about how the schools use information.
 - B. What I'm hearing is that not necessarily identifying children, but more providing additional training so that teachers have tools to address things when they come up.
- 12. This could go beyond giving skills, but just providing context for people to understand what it's like. We also need to think about how we can engage the TF's work with audiences beyond wonky policy people. We should develop materials related to helping young people understand what we're talking about and how we go forward.

13. The same way we're talking about training and informing correctional officers and LEO's we should be helping teachers engage with students to help them understand and engage with these issues.
 14. I'm wondering if as we talk about interagency cooperation, I don't know if DCFS officers are trained about what it's like to deal with children who have incarcerated parents. I would say that whatever trainings we talk about we should integrate that work into DCFS as well to help them better understand how they interact with children.
 15. When DCFS is training investigators and caseworkers, is there work to help them with children to deal with parents who are incarcerated?
 - A. There are some elements in our basic training program. I developed a training around helping them understand this information better and show the resources available. Knowledge is still limited, I established this in 2018 but it's still ongoing and we have to keep the education flowing. There's a brief mention in the initial training. But every e-mail that is sent out includes links to resources like Sesame Street, Rutgers.
 16. Is there any training that goes into the impact that things like visitation can have on the child and how it should be handled?
 - A. No, not really. What might have not come through is the focus on literature. It focuses on the social-emotional and developmental needs. It focuses on how there's necessity to meet with the parent. It also cites a nationwide study where they watched children who were visiting an incarcerated parent. It showed that only one-in-twenty showed fear because after getting some information. But there could always be more information. That's why I go around and give presentations. Staff needs to know that it goes beyond everything on website.
 17. I thought it might make sense to clarify the recommendations around the government policies and procedures, interagency collaboration, and the commission. There's a liaison in the first. It might be helpful to clarify the distinctions. Also, under best practices for government policies and procedures, there were several ideas that I wondered if we wanted to make as recommendations. For instance, having handbook and resource guides for families. Visitation policies and procedures be available on a website or a hotline. Some of these things seem doable so they seem pretty straightforward to put into place.
 18. Under best-practices, the idea of one-family, one-judge is a bit controversial and there is debate about it. I'm a little concerned about including this as a best practice and am suggesting we be more cautious about including that here.
 19. Maybe we need to be more deliberate about what "best-practice" means. We're not saying these are the things to implement in Illinois, this is national context.
 20. I would recommend that there should be a determination between best practice or national context. Having a baseline of best practices is pretty important.
4. Representative Ramirez thanks everyone for attending and says that she and CGLA met with the Lieutenant Governor on Wednesday. She gave us a couple of places to check-in. One place we wanted to have more input is with some key law enforcement agencies to make sure we have some more conversations with them. The second piece we want to do is to make sure the Commission piece gets sharpened. Where do we see it and where does it go? How do we continue it from a legislative perspective in an effective way? The Representative can bring in experts to Child Welfare Committee. However, once we've completed this report, our goal is to have one last meeting with

you where you will go ahead, look at what you have so you can walk out of here with something you feel comfortable with. We'll send it to CMS to format it and then finalize it so that we can submit it no later than May. At the April meeting we'll talk about the public rollout. Do we want to do a press conference? Do we want to do something online? How do we see this work go beyond the agencies that we've worked with so far. We'll confirm a date for April's meeting in the next few weeks.

5. The meeting is adjourned at 3:00 PM.