



Justice Project

PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND JUSTICE FACILITY
NEEDS ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT - WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 7, 2023

www.whatcomcounty.us/justice

AGENDA

- Why we are here
- Overview of the Needs Assessment
 - How it was created
 - What we learned
- Vision, Values, & Goals
- Summary of the Needs & Recommendations
- Next Steps
- Appreciations
- Questions?

Why we are here

On August 7, 2019, the Whatcom County Council approved [Resolution 2019-036](#), adopting a statement of **public health, safety, and justice facility planning principles** for Whatcom County; and

On December 3, 2019, the Whatcom County Council established a **Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC)** to guide the development of a public health, safety, and justice facility **needs assessment**.

On January 20, 2022, the SAC met for the first time.

The SAC has now completed its work.

About the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC)

- This was a distinctively **new approach**
- Diverse 38-member committee, including 20 citizen members
- 10 SAC Meetings: January 2022- January 2023
- Close coordination with the **IPRTF**
- Extensive **community engagement**

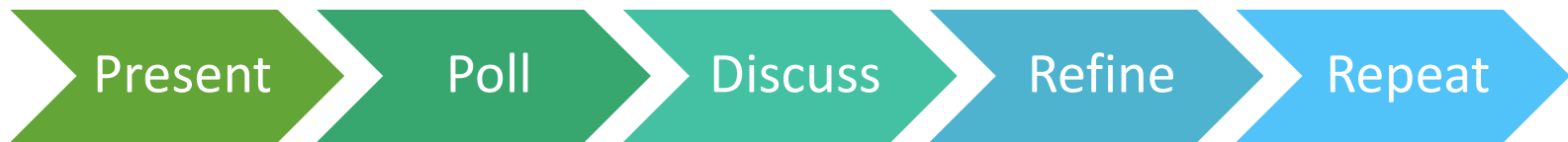
The Public Health, Safety, and Justice Facility Needs Assessment

- 1. Establishes a vision, values, and goals** for the criminal legal system in Whatcom County.
- 2. Examines data.**
- 3. Identifies gaps** in current community response to health and public safety needs, inside and outside jail.
- 4. Considers what it would take to fill those gaps.**
- 5. Makes recommendations** to address community's public health, safety, and justice concerns.

SAC Members

Teresa Bosteter	Daniel Hammill	Kara Mitchell Allen
Barry Buchanan	Kristin Hanna	Perry Mowery
Chad Butenschoen	Stephen Gockley	Jon Mutchler
Kendra Cook	David Goldman	Darlene Peterson
Atul Deshmane	Deborah Hawley	Eric Richey
Bill Elfo/ Doug Chadwick	Anthony Hillaire/ Rosalee Revey- Jacobs	Satpal Sidhu/ Tyler Schroeder
Brooke Eolande	Jack Hovenier	Daron Smith
Heather Flaherty	Scott Korthuis	Roman Swanaset- Simmonds
Arlene Feld	Cliff Langley	Eve Smason- Marcus
Seth Fleetwood/ Brian Heinrich	Erika Lautenbach	Mary Lou Steward
Starck Follis/ Maialisa Vanyo	Michael Lilliquist	RB Tewksbury
Peter Frazier	Harriet Markell	Eli Wainman
Brel Froebe	Rebecca Mertzig/ David Crass	

SAC Process



Key Questions:

“What additional information is needed?”

“Do you agree with this?”

“If not, what would you suggest?”

Community Engagement

Website and email list of over **400 subscribers**

Survey of **109 incarcerated individuals** and **28 jail staff**

Town Hall Listening Session – **100 attendees**

Communications consultant, The Vida Agency, conducted:

- Public Survey with **1,704 respondents**
- Focus groups with priority audiences:
 - Tribal Nations
 - Latinx communities
 - People who had previously been incarcerated and their families



What did we learn?

Key Insights from Focus Groups & Interviews with Priority Audiences

Concern re: unfair treatment of people with mental illness and non-white people.

Non-white participants do not believe the criminal legal system is fair.

Most usually feel safe by avoiding certain areas.

Want strategic partnerships between criminal legal system and community-based organizations to provide consistent support services during & after incarceration.

Want investment in incarceration prevention.

Some believe a new jail is needed, while others do not, regardless of current conditions.

Some believe that short-term behavioral health investments are largely ineffective; long-term services are needed.

Polarized Perspectives were seen in both the SAC and in the community at large

From the Community Engagement Survey
1704 Respondents

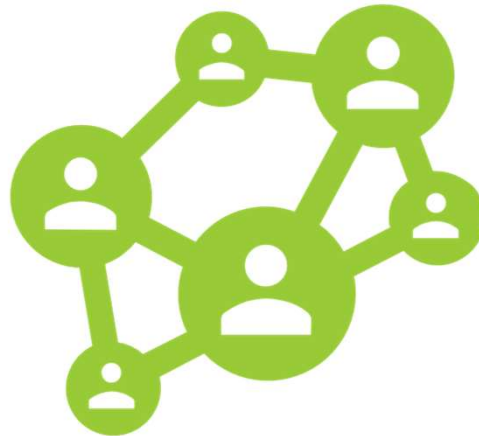
Feel safe in my community	37%
Don't feel safe	48%
No opinion	14%
Trust I will be treated fairly by County's criminal legal system	49%
Do not trust I will be treated fairly	22%
No opinion	30%

However,
there is
common
ground
about the
importance
of...

Prioritizing investment in incarceration prevention (support for mental health and substance use disorders, homelessness).

The need for a new jail that includes adequate spaces for beds and services.

Improving mental health & substance use disorder services in community, in jail, post-incarceration.



And ultimately, through learning, dialogue,
and feedback... the SAC established
shared vision, values, and goals

In the final poll of
SAC and IPRTF

97%

Support the
final Vision
Statement

Whatcom County will uphold and promote community safety, health, and justice. To accomplish this, we will reduce crime and reduce incarceration through early interventions and long-term investments in people and programs that support prevention, restoration, and accountability in the community and within the criminal legal system...

Vision Statement, continued

Prevention: We will invest in children and families and address social, educational, economic, and racial disparities that are known risk factors for involvement with the criminal legal system and can lead to incarceration and re-incarceration.

Restoration: We will devote sufficient resources to a variety of evidence-based behavioral health, housing, and re-entry support services that will reduce crime and minimize future interactions with the criminal legal and crisis systems.

Accountability: To protect public safety and hold people accountable for their crimes, it is necessary for Whatcom County to operate a well-equipped, well-maintained, humane, and adequately staffed jail. For lower-risk offenders, we will utilize a range of alternatives to incarceration that also require personal accountability.



Values Statements

THE CORE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE
OUR DECISION-MAKING AND
INVESTMENTS OF TIME & RESOURCES.

Support for Values Statements

1. Protect and promote the public health, safety, and rights of all people within Whatcom County. **100%**
2. Prioritize timely and early interventions. **100%**
3. Practice wise stewardship of public resources by using evidence-based decision-making, and evaluating if current programs, interventions, and processes are working as intended. **97%**
4. Facilitate public engagement in transparent decision-making processes that reflect community priorities. **97%**

Support for Values Statements

Continued

- 5. Ensure systems, services, and facilities are adaptable to changing circumstances and needs. **95%**
- 6. Openly and actively address inequities and discrimination. **95%**
- 7. Respect the dignity, human rights, and civil rights of all parties involved in the criminal legal system. **100%**



Goals Statements

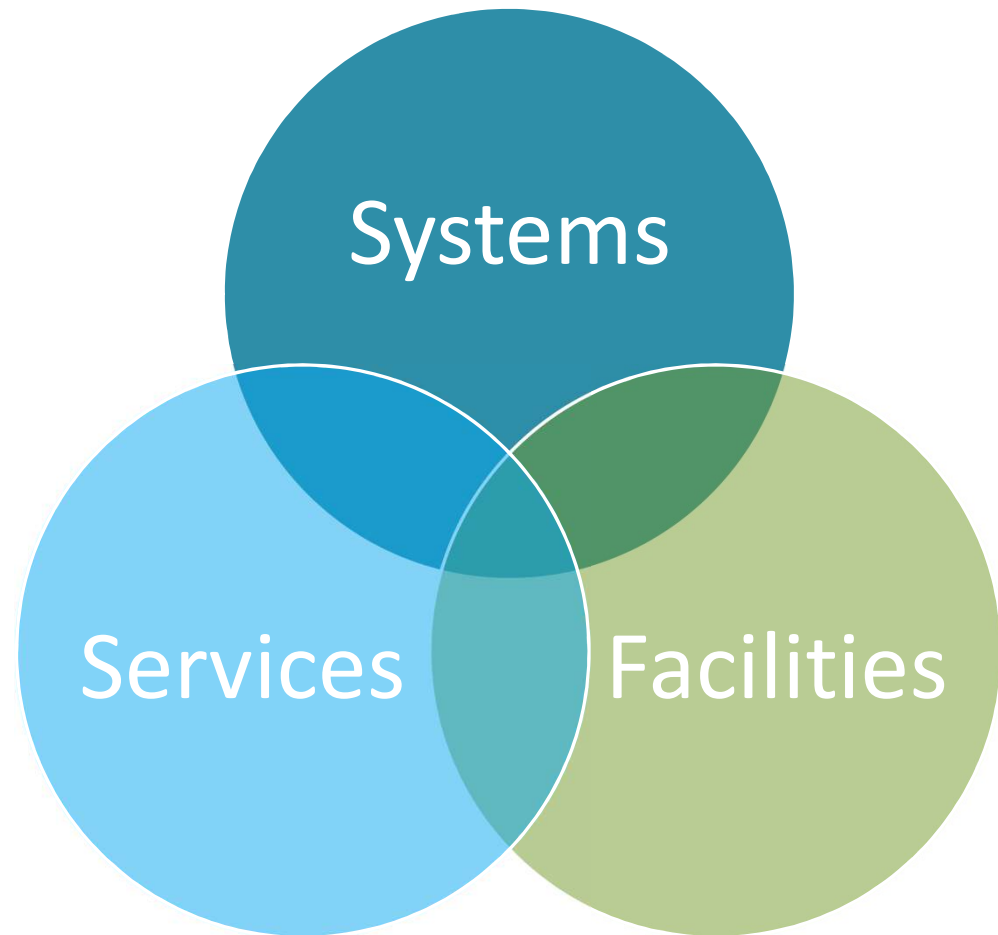
WHAT WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH:

SYSTEMS GOALS

SERVICES GOALS

FACILITIES GOALS

The SAC
focused on
three
interrelated
elements of
the public
health, safety,
and justice
system:



“More than any other factor, including the economy and crime rates, jail size is a function of system policies and practices.”

– VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE, REPORT TO
WHATCOM COUNTY STAKEHOLDERS ON JAIL
REDUCTION STRATEGIES

To be successful, we need a balance between investing in a new jail and investing in services & facilities that keep people out of jail.

– SAC MEMBER, JANUARY 30, 2023

Jack Hovenier

Summary of the Needs & Recommendations

SYSTEMS NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to inpatient and outpatient competency restoration services.
- Reduce the number of people in jail pretrial, and amount of time they spend in jail before case resolution.
- Address the disproportionate incarceration of BIPOC individuals.
- Include BIPOC communities, victims of crime, and people with lived experience in decision-making about policies and practices.
- System for collecting consistent data, and a public dashboard to track trends in criminal legal system, racial disparities, and incarceration prevention & reduction efforts.

SERVICES NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase number of behavioral healthcare providers in the community and providing services in jail.
- Increase coordination between providers to ensure seamless transitions between jail & community.
- Increase number and diversity of jail staff.
- Ensure stable funding to enable expansion of effective diversion programs

FACILITIES NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A new jail. The size and design should be based on:

- Fair analysis of population growth, & strategic investments to avoid unnecessary incarcerations.
- Providing space & equipment to offer needed services.
- Affordability.
- Best practices for safety, efficiency, technology.
- Versatility to respond to changes in population size and needs.
- Ensuring safety for people who are incarcerated and those who work and visit.
- Accessibility by all jurisdictions and proximity to important resources.

FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS (cont'd)

Additional community facilities:

- Facilities to enable increased community behavioral health treatment capacity.
- Housing with support:
 - Additional permanent supportive housing with on-site clinical support and intensive case management.
 - Safe, supportive housing for people engaged in diversion and therapeutic court programs.

Needs Assessment Approved



The IPRT members attending the Jan. 23rd meeting voted unanimously to endorse the Needs Assessment report.



It was approved by the SAC on Jan. 26th with 86% majority vote of support.

NEXT STEPS



**Resolution accepting
Needs Assessment
(Feb. 21)**

NEXT STEPS



Implementation Plan

(Feb-June 2023)

Identify Specifics:

- Site location and building concept for new jail
- Additional facilities concepts
- Services and Systems
- Planning level costs
- Project leaders
- Funding approach

NEXT STEPS



Feedback/Engagement

(Feb-June 2023)

Input from:

- County staff and key stakeholders
- Law and Justice Council (IPRTF)
- Focus Groups
- General Public, Town Hall Event

Why this Needs Assessment Matters



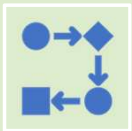
It represents a wide range of diverse community perspectives, and our common ground.



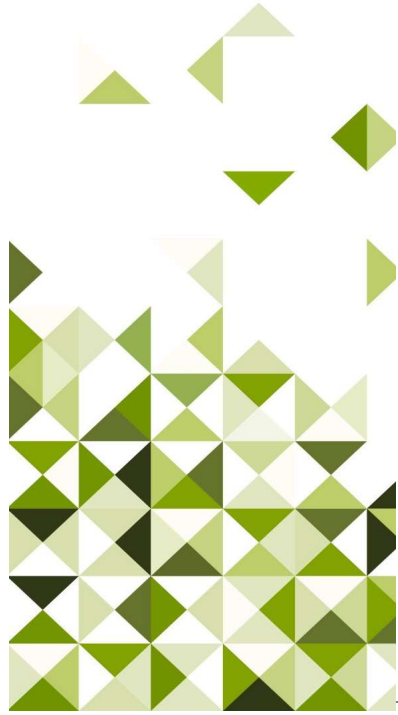
It is comprehensive, specific, and data driven.



It provides community leaders with a road map for moving forward.



It enables planning and preparation to act quickly when opportunities become available.



We wish to commend the work of all the people who helped with this community-informed, community-driven Needs Assessment:

STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)

(Member Name, SAC Position)

Teresa Bosteter, *Individual with lived experience in the criminal justice system*

Barry Buchanan, *Whatcom County Councilmember, SAC Chair*

Chad Butenschoen, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

Kendra Cook, *Individual with lived experience in the criminal justice system*

Atul Deshmane, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

Bill Elfo / Doug Chadwick, *Whatcom County Sheriff's Office*

Brooke Eolande, *Behavioral Health and Social Service Provider*

Arlene Feld, *Behavioral Health and Social Service Provider*

Heather Flaherty, *Behavioral Health and Social Service Provider*

Seth Fleetwood / Brian Heinrich, *City of Bellingham Administration*

Starck Follis / Maialisa Vanyo, *Public Defender's Office*

Peter Frazier, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

Brel Froebe, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

Stephen Gockley, *Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force*

David Goldman, *Jail Resources / Service Provider*

Daniel Hammill, *Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force*

Kristin Hanna (defense attorney), *Individual with lived experience in the criminal justice system*

Deborah Hawley, *Citizen – Criminal Justice*

Anthony Hillaire / Rosalee Revey-Jacobs, *Tribal Nations, Tribal Nations*

Jack Hovenier, *Citizen – Behavioral Health Advocate*

Scott Korthuis, *Small Cities Partnership*

Cliff Langley, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

Erika Lautenbach, *Whatcom County Health Department*

Michael Lilliquist, *Bellingham City Councilmember*

Harriet Markell, *Behavioral Health and Social Service Provider*

Rebecca Mertzig / David Crass, *Bellingham Police*

Kara Mitchell Allen, *Individual with lived experience in the criminal justice system*

Perry Mowery, *Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force*

Jon Mutchler, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

Darlene Peterson, *Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force*

Eric Richey, *Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney*

Roman Swanaset-Simmonds, *Tribal Nations*

Satpal Sidhu / Tyler Schroeder, *Whatcom County Administration*

Daron Smith, *Teamsters Local 231 Whatcom County Corrections Business Unit*

Eve Smason-Marcus, *Individual with lived experience in the criminal justice system*

Mary Lou Steward, *Small Cities Partnership*

RB Tewksbury, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

Eli Wainman, *Citizen – Criminal Justice Advocate*

INCARCERATION PREVENTION AND REDUCTION TASK FORCE

Barry Buchanan, *Whatcom County Councilmember*

Bill Elfo, *Whatcom County Sheriff / Jail Administrator*

Arlene Feld, *Concerned citizen*

Heather Flaherty, *Concerned citizen*

Seth Fleetwood, *Bellingham Mayor*

David Freeman, *Superior Court Judge*

Stephen Gockley, *Task Force Co-Chair, Health and Social Services*

Daniel Hammill, *Bellingham City Councilmember*

Deborah Hawley, *Consumer of services or family member of consumer*

Mike Hilley, *Whatcom County EMS Manager / Emergency medical services representative*

Jack Hovenier, *Task Force Co-Chair, Consumer of services or family member of consumer*

Raylene King, *Blaine Court Administrator / Small Cities Municipal Court representative*

Scott Korhuis, *Lynden City Mayor*

Jenn Lockwood, *Health and Social Services*

Jason McGill, *Health and Social Services*

Rebecca Mertzig, *Bellingham Police Chief*

Perry Mowery, *Human Services Division Supervisor, Whatcom County Health Department*

Eric Petersen, *Representative of the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Corrections*

Darlene Peterson, *Bellingham Municipal Court Administrator*

Dave Reynolds, *Juvenile Court Administrator / Superior Court Clerk*

Eric Richey, *Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney*

Satpal Sidhu, *Whatcom County Executive*

Donnell Tanksley, *Small City Police Chief*

Bruce Van Glubt, *District Court Administrator*

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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH GAP ANALYSIS TEAM

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Mike Hilley, *Whatcom County Emergency Medical Services*

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Wendy Jones, *Whatcom County Sheriff's Office*

Jeremy Morton, *Whatcom County Emergency Medical Services*

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Bill Elfo, *Whatcom County Sheriff's Office*

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Wendy Jones, *Whatcom County Sheriff's Office*

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Rusty Noble, *Whatcom County Facilities*

Jackie Mitchell, *Whatcom County Health Department*

Tyler Schroeder, *Whatcom County Executive Office*

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Satpal Sidhu, *Whatcom County Executive*

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Jack Hovenier, *Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force Co-Chair*

Tyler Schroeder, *Deputy Executive Whatcom County*

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Lydia McClaran, Glossary Development



Questions?
