

A Proposal that the Task Force Create Subcommittees to Advance the Work (April 2022)

Dear RDA Facilitators and Dr. Tribble:

We propose that the Care First Jails Last Task Force establish two or more subcommittees to advance its work between and during task force meetings, in the following areas:

Budget Subcommittee: In order to develop recommendations to advance Care First policies, the task force must be well informed about existing budgetary structures, spending, and revenue opportunities (including state and federal grants), across several departments. Moreover, we must consider how budget allocations impact the goal of racial equity. Such work cannot be done, nor can knowledge be shared, solely in monthly task force meetings. This subcommittee will be charged with studying the County's budget and revenue opportunities as they impact persons in the County with justice involvement, mental illness or substance use disorders, including racial disparities in those impacts.

Data Subcommittee: This subcommittee will be charged with gathering and analyzing data on the needs of people in Alameda County with justice involvement, mental illness, and substance use disorders, in order to fill the gaps in the continuum of care and to advance the Board of Supervisors' resolution for the Care First Jails Last policy.

The Board's resolution instructed "all Alameda County agencies that can contribute to advancing a Care First Jails Last policy [to] gather and share data with [ACBH], where permitted by health privacy and confidentiality and not prohibited by other applicable laws, for the purposes of 1) coordinating the systems of criminal justice, behavioral health care, and wraparound services including public benefits, social services, and housing; 2) identifying and measuring the unmet needs for behavioral health and other wraparound services, and 3) reducing the number of people with mental illness, substance use disorder, or co-occurring disorders in our jail." Similarly, the Justice Involved Mental Health Taskforce recommended "prioritiz[ing] data collection on racial and cultural risk factors for behavioral health."

The Budget and Data Subcommittees, and other subcommittees that the Task Force may create in the future, should be grounded in a commitment to eliminating racial, ethnic, and gender inequities, including the multiple strategies using a racial equity lens identified by the Justice Involved Mental Health Taskforce. To implement this commitment, we recommend that the subcommittees, RDA, and the task force utilize the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Toolkit.

We propose that these subcommittees be made up of both Task Force members and representatives whom the subcommittee may decide to invite for support and expertise, and that the subcommittees have administrative and facilitation support from RDA. One or two Task Force members should be appointed to co-chair the subcommittee. We believe the meetings of these subcommittees should be open to the public, but need not be Brown-Acted.

Several of us stand ready to participate in such committees.

Sincerely,

Brian Bloom
Margot Dashiell
Kimberly Graves / Tash Nguyen
Curtis Penn
Peggy Rahman
Jason Toro