

**Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women  
Report to Mayor Dewey Bartlett  
Action Plan Regarding Identified Gaps in Road Map for  
Nonviolent Justice-Involved Females in Oklahoma  
May 17, 2016**

The Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women has completed a road map designed to identify gaps in current services and programs available to women in Oklahoma incarcerated for nonviolent crimes. We chose female incarceration as our mission, hoping to shed light on the issue and to lend support to the work of existing social service organizations. Oklahoma has the highest female incarceration rate among all states (almost double the national average) with Tulsa County leading as the State's largest contributor. To better address this issue, we created a road map tracking the various steps on the typical path of women incarcerated for nonviolent crimes. In creating such a road map, we hoped to identify gaps in the process for which potential solutions could be developed.

As a result of our work, numerous gaps in the process were identified through interviews and meetings with previously incarcerated women in Oklahoma. We also interviewed volunteers at the Tulsa County jail and representatives of non-profit agencies in Tulsa working on the same issue. Each subcommittee of the Commission was assigned road map gaps in order to create an action plan with possible solutions. This action plan is a culmination of all of the action plans developed by each subcommittee.

**Legislative Change**

1. The Commission endorsed, advocated and supported the following criminal justice reform bills which were signed into law by the Governor on April 27. These bills were the result of the recommendations from the Governor's Oklahoma Justice Reform Sentencing Subcommittee:

(a) House Bill 2472 -- Gives district attorneys discretion to file misdemeanor charges under certain circumstances.

(b) House Bill 2751 -- Increases felony property crime threshold from \$500 to \$1,000.

(c) House Bill 2753 -- Expands availability of community sentencing and drug court.

(d) House Bill 2479 -- Adjusts mandatory minimum and maximum sentences for felony drug possession, but it will not change the laws regarding fines, fees, drug trafficking or drug possession near schools.

2. At this time, many female nonviolent offenders must be in prison a certain period of time to even be eligible and to take advantage of offered programs. We plan to talk to local legislators to advocate for their support and promotion of reduction of time served for these females so that they can be eligible for the various programs offered.

## **Resource Lists and Information**

1. Work with the Tulsa County jail and other community partners on a meaningful resource list (not just a list of names and phone numbers) to provide to inmates, counselors and case workers. The Tulsa County jail is currently working on an initiative to provide resource lists on the kiosks in the Tulsa County jail and they are also working on “exit packets” for those who need them which will include a one page resource list of legal, health and social services. As a service project for 2018, the Junior League of Tulsa is considering providing volunteers to work with the Tulsa County jail in assisting with providing such resource lists.
2. Advocate for increased access of a resource list and access to the informational video for those arrested, specifically in the jail holding area in the Tulsa County jail.
3. Work with the Tulsa County jail and other community partners on communicating the resource list during each stage in the process (i.e., communicate various programs available at a certain stage such as New Hope Oklahoma and Girl Scouts Beyond Bars).
4. Provide the resource list that we will create to existing churches with prison ministries and prison centered organizations.
5. Continue to promote to incarcerated females the local diversion programs and resources such as Resonance for Women and Women in Recovery.
6. Work with the Tulsa Fire Department and community partners who are in the planning stages of developing an “app” that can be utilized by all of the First Responders. The “app” consists of a list of resources in the community that could be helpful for the individual whose need sparked the initial response. This “app” could also be utilized by providers, probation officers, case managers, and others in contact with women and children who may be somewhere along the timeline from the initial arrest for a crime, coping with the judicial system, continuing through the incarceration or diversion program, through release and the aftercare. A member of the Commission plans to provide a list of the health resources to the group developing this “app”.

## **Jail Programs**

1. Talk to the Tulsa County jail about requiring mandatory (rather than voluntary) resource classes.
2. Add other types of resources classes in the Tulsa County jail covering gambling addictions and financial counseling.
3. Work with the Tulsa County jail and other community partners to implement mandatory trauma informed training for employees across the criminal justice spectrum (arrest through reentry).

## **Health Initiatives**

1. A program known as “A World Fit for Kids!” has been utilized and is successful in Los Angeles, California. This initiative provides afterschool programs and exemplary healthy behaviors and personal empowerment approaches and trainings in low-income neighborhoods. The result has been a triple bottom line for young people this program serves: obesity reduction, increased graduation rates and work readiness, all of which results can help to reduce the high rates of incarceration in Oklahoma. We believe that such a program could be successful in Tulsa and propose that a member of the Commission work with those currently trying to implement this program, including a possible partnership with New Hope Oklahoma (which currently provides similar afterschool programs).
2. Partner with the “Stepping Up Tulsa” initiative which is currently identifying options for those with mental health issues that have contact with the legal and justice systems. A member of the Commission will be attending meetings of this organization.
3. In health care delivery, a new model entitled the “Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative” or “CPCI” is implemented in various counties in Oklahoma. Case managers are provided to the primary care physician to help with the coordination of the particular individual/patients’ needs to remain healthy, resilient and out of the hospital. A similar model is used in for the management of patients who are chronic and persistently mentally ill, called the “Program for Assertive Community Treatment” or “PACT” which has been implemented throughout the nation. A model similar to CPCI and/or PACT may be helpful for women and their children involved with the justice system. A “coordinator/social facilitator” is assigned to each woman to help with the challenges facing her in the navigation of the legal, social, economic, transportation, education and health issues confronting her. This coordinator could help each female to avail themselves of resources and programs that are available to her in an individualized manner to provide maximum benefit to obtain her and her children’s goals and needs to prevent re-incarceration. A group of Tulsa leaders are currently attempting to submit a request for proposal and a member of the Commission will meet with them regarding their attempts to obtain funding.

## **Support of Other Groups**

1. Offer support to the “Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform” which group is working on ways to help low-level offenders turn their lives around. This group supports a more effective approach to reducing crime and keeping communities safe. They are currently working on an initiative to place State Questions 780 and 781 (seeking to address prison overcrowding and community health and to reduce sentences for future offenders convicted of low-level, nonviolent crimes) on the ballot for voters in November 2016. We plan to advocate for these State Questions and will invite a representative from this group to speak at a Commission meeting.
2. Partner with over 30 non-profit providers in the community working on the initiative known as the “Outside Inside Collaboration for Justice”. The goal of this initiative is to reduce incarceration by maximizing alternatives to jail or prison. The membership includes leaders

from the Mental Health Association, the Sheriff's Department, the Fire Department, EMSA, and Family and Children's Services. Commission members will be attending the monthly meetings that are being held by these various non-profit providers in the community.

### **Navigator/Liaison**

1. OK CURE is the Oklahoma Chapter of the National CURE which provides errands and their families with information about rehabilitative programs. Their mission is to ensure that prisons are used only for those who absolutely must be incarcerated and the prisoners have all the resources they need to turn their lives around. OK CURE already has a successful program in place in the prison system. One of the programs in the prison system is an Ombudsman that provides a list of services to the women in prison. We plan to work with OK CURE to see if its Ombudsman program could be offered in the Tulsa County jail so that these women have someone to "navigate" them through the system. We plan to invite the local director of OK CURE to come speak to the Commission about its programs.

2. Work with non-profit agencies and other service providers about the assignment of a person to every female arrested in Tulsa County similar to the model used by CASA. This person would provide support to the female and help her "navigate" from the point of arrest and then throughout the process. The Women's Justice Team has already developed a similar model in Tulsa County and works with the Tulsa County Public Defender's Office. We plan to work with the Women's Justice Team to ensure its vitality if the funding for its attorneys, social workers and case managers is no longer provided.

3. Explore and facilitate a collaboration with the University of Tulsa College of Law that allows law students to act as liaisons between clients and their attorneys and provide information on how to access services and alternative sentencing opportunities. We would also explore the possibility of designing similar programs with those students obtaining degrees at the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University regarding medical, social work and psychology. To facilitate these programs, we would need to seek funding for a coordinator.

### **Employment Issues**

1. Continue to hold roundtables with company CEOs and identify speaking opportunities for those CEOs with second chance friendly hiring policies.

2. Talk to employers about a matching program for payment of fees and fines (i.e., give the employee the option to pay fines and fees and the payment made by the employee would be matched by the employer).

3. Continue to advocate for the "Ban the Box" initiative for job applications for public (including jobs with the City of Tulsa) and private employers. The State of Oklahoma has already initiated "Ban the Box" with respect to applications for State jobs.

4. Create public awareness and showcase the various agencies in the City of Tulsa that assist females with a successful reentry into society.

## **Neighboring States**

1. Work with other community partners for solutions in neighboring states that have been successful regarding items such as the intake process, imposition and payment of fines and fees and the lack of case managers in the jails.

## **Summit**

1. The Mayor (in coordination with the Commission) is planning to have a summit in the fall of 2016 to cover this action plan. Details about this summit will be provided at a later date once the planning is completed.