

# THE WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## WA JAIL MODERNIZATION TASK FORCE Initial Status Report



June 30, 2024

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## ABOUT THE WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS CENTER

The William D. Ruckelshaus Center is an independent and impartial resource for collaborative problem solving in the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest, dedicated to assisting public, private, tribal, non-profit, and other community leaders in their efforts to build consensus and resolve conflicts around difficult public policy issues across sectors and industries. The Center is a joint effort of Washington State University (hosted and administered by the WSU Provost) and the University of Washington (hosted by the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Policy and Governance). For more information, visit:

[www.ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu](http://www.ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu)

## PROJECT TEAM

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### DISCLAIMER

This following report was prepared by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center. University leadership and the Center's Advisory Board support the preparation of this, and other reports produced under the Center's auspices. The information, findings, and policy recommendations in this report are intended to reflect the perspectives of project participants. The findings do not represent the views of university leaders, the Advisory Board members, or the Center's faculty and staff.



## **Acknowledgements**

As this important project begins, the Ruckelshaus Center would like to thank the Jail Modernization Task Force members in advance, for their dedication, interest, enthusiasm, and willingness to work collaboratively to recommend real change. In addition, our Ruckelshaus Center project team would also like to thank those with lived experience, tribal and community leaders, legislators and subject matter experts who take the upcoming opportunity to engage with the Task Force to add their diverse perspectives and experience to this process.

## Introduction and Purpose

The Washington State Legislature has requested that the William D. Ruckelshaus Center (the Center) design a collaborative process and facilitate a 2024/25 Task Force to recommend options for jail modernization. The legislature specifically directs this Task Force to:

*“Develop a set of statewide jail modernization recommendations to include, at a minimum, identifying existing facilities in need of upgrades or remodel and any need for building new facilities, and potential funding sources or mechanisms to make the recommendations feasible.”*

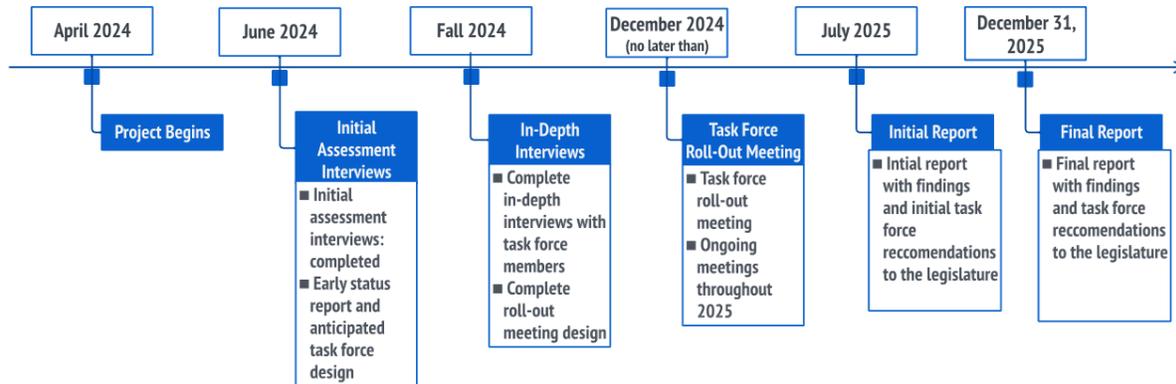
The authorizing proviso language asks the Center to facilitate individual interviews with Task Force members and others to assess goals, expectations, perspectives, interests and desired Task Force outcomes, including, but not limited to:

- (A) What key components and issues should be included in a statewide jail modernization plan, what existing facilities are in need of upgrades or remodel, and any need for building new facilities;*
- (B) Identification of any additional key stakeholders;*
- (C) Employee retention issues and potential solutions;*
- (D) The impact of overtime, jail atmosphere, emergency response time, inexperienced corrections officers, and how to overcome these challenges;*
- (E) The type of and design of facilities needed to house those with behavioral health needs and associated costs of these facilities;*
- (F) Available diversion programs and their costs;*
- (G) Types of existing behavioral health facilities for those involved in the criminal justice system, the costs of building and running these facilities, how these facilities vary by location, the viability of offering facilities in every county, and potential system improvements to the types of services and supports offered and delivered to those with behavioral health needs;*
- (H) The types of services and supports provided to those exiting the jail system; and,*
- (I) Reforms necessary to create and enhance a seamless transition back to the community following jail confinement.*

Following initial assessment interviews, the Center’s project team (project team) will convene the Task Force group in a series of participative meetings or other types of collaborative sessions, to share views, interests, and develop prospective short and longer-term options. These convenings are expected to include additional input from other parties.

In addition, the proviso language directs the Center to conduct periodic check-ins with the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC), to coordinate with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) and engage with others to help inform Task Force members. Existing and upcoming reports and data from WSIPP, the Jail Standards Joint Legislative Task Force, the Criminal Sentencing Task Force, and other relevant workgroups will help inform this Jail Modernization Task Force’s collaborative efforts.

## Timeline and Tentative Workplan



The legislative proviso language requests this status report (due June 30, 2024), a first Task Force roll-out meeting (no later than December 1, 2024), a draft findings and recommendations report (by July 1, 2025) and a final report (by December 31, 2025).

The project team initiated this work in April 2024. 75-minute initial assessment interviews of identified Task Force members began in May 2024 (as of this report date, 21 Task Force members have been identified. Four remaining positions still need to be filled by their respective organizations). A roster of identified Task Force members and proviso-listed organizations is attached as Appendix A. Initial interviews continued into June 2024.

These initial spring interviews gave the project team the opportunity to virtually meet nearly all the Task Force members, and learn about the breadth of their backgrounds, history with the issues, initial expectations of Task Force outcomes, priorities and interests, and willingness to be part of a collaborative process. The project introduction and framing questions for those interviews are attached as Appendix B. Additionally, the project team met several times with WSAC officials, as well as separate context meetings with WSIPP and one interested legislator. The project team expects to continue conversations with other interested parties throughout the project duration.

The project team will schedule subsequent in-depth interviews with each individual Task Force member throughout the summer and into fall of 2024. These visits may include several trips to jails and meetings with local officials and staff, to acclimate the project team to a brief sampling of diverse sites. In addition, the project team will dive deeper into some of the issues raised during the initial spring interviews. The summer and fall interviews will give the project team a better understanding of the commonalities and differences between member perspectives, positions, and interests to inform and frame the design of the future Task Force group meetings.

The Task Force roll-out meeting will convene later in the fall, at a place and time informed by Task Force member input and scheduled by the project team. This initial roll-out meeting is expected to include both process and content discussions, to give the Task Force members the opportunity to reach agreement on how to effectively engage, as well as learn each other's backgrounds and expectations of Task Force outcomes. In addition, the group's input will help determine the frequency, timing, and other logistics of the 2025 Task Force meetings.

2025 Task Force meetings are expected to include a combination of collective learning and participatory exercises that will focus on both the immediate proviso goals, as well as the larger systemic context and challenges that create barriers to progress. Diverse lived experience, data, other information, and external subject matter expertise will be shared to help Task Force members learn together, expand perspectives and create collaborative and creative options for solutions.

### **Examples of High-Level Themes To-Date**

The following are several common themes that emerged during the initial spring interviews. The project team has split these themes into three basic categories, for ease of reading. These themes will continue to be expanded, fine-tuned and focused as the project team engages in deeper interviews prior to the task force roll-out meeting.

#### **Jail Infrastructure and Workforce**

- *Jail design standards based on needs; design barriers and constraints; unfunded mandates.*
- *Short versus long-term lengths-of-stay impacts on jail design and programs.*
- *Workforce capacity and needs-based competencies; employee quality of work life and access to supports.*
- *Pros/cons of statewide jail standardization.*
- *Small versus large county jail characteristics, limitations, and impacts on outcomes.*
- *Relationships between jail governance and operations, personnel competencies, emergency medical services, and accessible social/medical/behavioral services.*
- *Tribal jails, sovereign relationships, county contracting, logistical gaps, and impacts on outcomes.*
- *Opportunities to learn from other systems including juvenile detention and prison systems.*
- *Other state/country models and practices.*

## **Population Characteristics and Needs**

- *Medical/behavioral health resource availability and proximity.*
- *Changes in jail populations, including demographics, co-occurring behavioral/physical/other health issues, and impacts on physical design limitations.*
- *Community resources and assets related to diversion/deflection/re-entry program potential; resource gap ripple effects on lengths-of-stay and recidivism rates.*

## **Systemic Issues**

- *Different perceptions of public safety, incarceration, restorative justice, rehabilitation, and links to recidivism rates and other outcomes.*
- *System impacts and outcomes on inmate and family quality of lives.*
- *Regionalization concepts.*
- *Lack of community behavioral health treatment options and impacts.*
- *Sentencing challenges and criminal justice system changes over time and impacts on outcomes.*
- *Funding options and public support and resistance.*
- *Lack of standardization and oversight across Washington State.*

The project team noted the interconnectedness between many of these initial themes. Additionally, other themes will emerge throughout the collaborative Task Force work. This should create meaningful discussion to help construct tangible options and recommendations to the legislature.

## **Additional Context**

Potential gaps in Task Force input became apparent, as the project team completed this initial round of interviews. For example, the suggested Task Force representation and additional reports and data may not fully provide the information needed to create the best possible options and recommendations. The Ruckelshaus project team will accommodate additional input, experience and information, as it becomes available in many formats. This may include diverse experience from additional people with lived experience, people from underserved communities, people with city jail backgrounds, and people with prison and juvenile justice backgrounds, among others. The project team's facilitative goals include providing diverse and relevant information and experience to the Task Force, to help them reach their proposed options and recommendations.

### Appendix A: Task Force Members

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Amber	Leaders	Governor's Office
Barbara	Serrano	Governor's Office
Dan	Griffey	Representative (R)
Lauren	Davis	Representative (D)
Matt	Boehnke	Senator (R)
		Senator (D)
Sean	Murphy	Department of Corrections
Esther	Matthews	Sentencing Guidelines Commission
Samantha (Sam)	Anderson	Department of Social and Health Services
Tyron	Nixon	Health Care Authority
Christine	Rickert	Criminal Justice Training Commission
		Superior Court Judges Association
Pamella	Nogueira	District and Municipal Court Judges Association
Paula	Olsen	Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers/Washington Defender Association
Norma	Tillotson	Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
André	Peñalver	Washington State Minority and Justice Commission
Beth	Leonard	Disability Rights Washington
JanRose	Ottaway Martin	North Sound BH-ASO
Cathy	Mulhall	Washington State Association of Counties (East)
Wayne	Fournier	Washington State Association of Counties (West)
Eric	Peter	Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (West)
Clay	Meyers	Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (East)
		Case Load Forecasting Council
Norrie	Gregoire	WA Association of Juvenile Court Administrators
		An individual with lived experience
<b>Indicates Task Force members who still need to be identified</b>		

## Appendix B: Project Introductions and Framing Questions

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### Washington Jail Modernization Ruckelshaus Center Assessment Interviews

#### Brief Overview

Washington's legislature has asked the Ruckelshaus Center to conduct an initial convening assessment and provide subsequent independent facilitation of a statewide Jail Modernization Task Force. The Center will schedule upcoming on-line or in-person interviews with organizations and individuals identified in the authorizing legislative proviso language<sup>1</sup> in May 2024.

#### Proviso Language Issues

The legislature expects that the Task Force will discuss and provide eventual recommendations that address (at least) the following issues:

- (a) Employee retention issues and potential solutions;
- (b) The impact of overtime, jail atmosphere, emergency response time, and inexperienced corrections officers, and how to overcome these challenges;
- (c) The type of facility needed to house those with behavioral health needs and associated costs of these facilities;
- (d) Available diversion programs and their costs;
- (e) Types of existing behavioral health facilities for those involved in the criminal justice system, the costs of building and running these facilities, how these facilities vary by location, the viability of offering facilities in every county, and potential system improvements to the types of services and supports offered and delivered to those with behavioral health needs;
- (f) The types of services and supports provided to those exiting the jail system; and
- (g) What reforms are necessary to create and enhance a seamless transition back to

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<sup>1</sup> 2023 and 2024 proviso language links at <https://lawfilesexxt.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5187-S.SL.pdf> (pages 660-662) and <https://lawfilesexxt.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/5950-S.PL.pdf?q=20240403124324> (pages 799-800).

the community following jail confinement.

### **Purpose, Scope and Timing**

A 'convening assessment' includes a set of individual interviews that help us scope out and design effective collaborative methods to eventually engage people. Interviews are conversational, and typically last approximately 75 minutes. These conversations are meant to help us begin to understand your and your organization's beliefs, experiences, needs, and history with the issues, your relationships with other involved parties, and your prior participation in effective collaborative workgroups. The questions that follow are starting points for our conversation. Please consider these questions prior to our interview, to make the most of our time together.

These initial May interviews are limited in scope – we look forward to deeper conversations with you, including the issues noted in the proviso language, between July and September 2024. We plan to convene a Task Force roll-out meeting before December 1, 2024, based on member's schedules. This roll-out meeting will help establish the schedule for our subsequent Task Force meetings in 2025.

Thank you for your interest, time, and agreeing to be an important member of this Washington Jail Modernization Task Force. We look forward to our initial interview to learn more about you and your experience!

More information about the Ruckelshaus Center is available at:  
<http://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/about/>.

## **Washington Jail Modernization Interview Questions**

1. What does the term 'jail modernization' mean to you?
  - a. What are your biggest concerns related to new investment in the county jail system?
  - b. What would key characteristics of a 'successful' modern county jail look like?
  - c. What are some of your short-term and longer-term priorities, including investment?
2. What does the term 'jail modernization' mean to you when addressing juvenile justice facilities?
  - a. What are your biggest concerns related to new investment in the county juvenile justice system?
  - b. What would key characteristics of a 'successful' modern juvenile justice center look like?
  - c. What are some of your short-term and longer-term priorities, including investment?
3. What outcomes do you hope to achieve by collaborating on this Jail Modernization Task Force?
4. In discussions around jail modernization, what is often overlooked or left out of the conversation?
5. Are there key participants/organizations missing from the proviso language that need to engage to achieve diverse perspectives?
6. Are there questions we should have asked you that we didn't?
7. Which of the documented proviso issue areas would you like to focus on in our next individual interview with you (between July and September 2024)?