

## **Vera Briefing**

Partnership with WADOC and the Vera Institute of Justice's new initiative, "Safe Prisons, Safe Communities: From isolation to Dignity and Wellness Behind Bars."

We are one of two corrections departments Vera is partnering with to provide technical assistance over the next 18 months. The goal of the overall partnership will be to help WADOC design and implement innovative reforms that build on the department's past efforts, in order to achieve additional, significant progress in safely reducing the use of restrictive housing, working towards becoming a national model in restrictive housing reform.

### **Overarching Goals:**

- Eliminating the use of restrictive housing in response to non-violent, low-level behaviors, and for particularly vulnerable populations—including youth under 18 and people with serious mental illness.
- Significantly reducing the length of time people spend in restrictive housing, moving towards a long-term goal of ending prolonged restrictive housing.
- Improving conditions in restrictive housing units, including but not limited to a less isolated environment, additional out-of-cell time, opportunities for meaningful human contact, and access to programs and services.
- Addressing any racial and ethnic disparities present in the use of restrictive housing.
- At least a 20 percent decrease in the department's total restrictive housing population by the end of the partnership in September 2020, putting the department on the path to reach a long-term goal of reducing the population in restrictive housing by at least 50 percent in the next four years.

### **Status of Project:**

- ✓ Kicked off project – May 13, 2019 at Evergreen State College
- ✓ Communication with DOC (HQ, facility leadership, selection of facility staff) – May – July 2019
- ✓ Communication with external stakeholders (Ombuds, DRW) initial was June 2019 and is ongoing.
- ✓ Implementation structure set-up (RHSC and sub-committees) May-July 2019
- ✓ Finalization of Memo of Understanding -- September 2019

- ✓ A WADOC Restrictive Housing Guiding Principles document has been completed – September 2019
- ✓ Restrictive Housing Steering Committee (RHSC) Facility Sub Committees have formed and are meeting to implement reforms.
- ✓ VERA has observed MAX committee, Direct Release Committee and several other RH staff activities.
- ✓ VERA has participated in three RHSC and is aware of the departments numerous competing resources (capacity, violators, transgender etc..)
- ✓ VERA is very interested in the results DOC process and has been provided information.
- ✓ RH data points are being evaluated and enhanced as needed.
- ✓ An initial 16 month work plan has been approved.
- ✓ VERA has reviewed the Restrictive Housing Policies, they are currently with the Policy Office.