## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 8 | **Name:** | Lauren MathisenScarlett Aldebot-Green |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2016-0198 | **Date:** | April 12, 2016 |

**SUBJECT**

A MOTION requesting that the executive develop a report for council review and acceptance on the status and sustainable continuation of the department of adult and juvenile detention veteran housing pilot and veterans-focused programming at the Norm Maleng Regional Justice Center, and requesting a supplemental appropriation to support the pilot and programming.

**SUMMARY**

King County is home to an estimated one hundred fourteen thousand former members of the United States military, reserves and National Guard who have served in active duty, which represents an estimate of between five and six percent of King County’s total population. In response to research showing significant higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD) in veterans and an awareness that veterans coming into contact with the criminal justice system often have unmet service needs including mental health issues, homelessness issues, povery, unemployment, substance abuse issues, and other issues related to PTSD or traumatic brain injuries, the King County Council passed Motion 14125 in May 2014. That motion recognized that incarcerated veterans have unique needs and required the Executive to develop and submit a report on improving programs and services for incarcerated veterans in the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD) facilities. The Executive submited its recommendations as required and the council passed Motion 14301 accepting the department’s report.

Proposed Motion 2016-0198 asks the Executive to report on the status of specific programing recommended in that report, the dedicated veteran housing unit and veterans-focused programming at the Norm Maleng Regional Justice Center, report on options for sustainable continuation of this programming and requests an appropriation of at least $75,000 (or whatever greater amount is deemed appropriate) either in the executive’s second-quarter ombibus or in a stand-alone appropriations ordinance to support the program for the remainder of 2016.

**BACKGROUND**

King County is home to an estimated 114,000 former members of the United States military, reserves and National Guard who have served active duty.[[1]](#footnote-1) This population of veterans represents an estimated five to six percent of the total King County county population.[[2]](#footnote-2) In 2013, the Department of Community and Human Services Report, *Status of Veterans and Veterans Services in King County,* noted that, as of the time of the research conducted to author that report, there were likely more than 20,000 veterans in King County who had experienced PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Military Sexual Trauma (MST).[[3]](#footnote-3) That report further estimated that, based on national trends, there were as many as 12,000 King County veterans with PTSD who were reluctant to seek treatment or support.[[4]](#footnote-4) Veterans in King County also face a range of other needs including homelessness,[[5]](#footnote-5) poverty and/or unemployment;[[6]](#footnote-6) these are issues that—along with mental health issues, substance use disorder issues and issues related to PTSD or TBI—might be unresolved and represent unmet need at the time a veteran might come into contact with the criminal justice system.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In 2014, the Council adopted Motion 14125, which asked the Executive to establish a work group of county, state and federal representatives to review the county's current methods for identifying veterans in detention, inventory all county services available to incarcerated veterans and identify best and promising practices in other jurisdictions as models for the provision of services to incarcerated veterans. The motion further requested that the Executive submit for Council review a report, based on the their analysis, on improving programs and services for incarcerated veterans in the department of adult and juvenile detention jail facilities.

The executive’s report in response to Motion 14125, the *Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* [attached], was developed by the Incarcerated Veterans Motions group in collaboration with DAJD, the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), the Behavioral Health and Recovery Division (formerly the Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Service Division), and criminal justice agencies and veterans service providers. The *Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report,* which included a range of recommendations was accepted by the Council with Motion 14301.

***Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* Recommendations**

**Pilot Housing Unit and Veteran-Specific Programming.** The advisory and work groups recommended that the DAJD establish a pilot project for a dedicated veteran housing unit. It was proposed that the dedicated veteran housing unit be piloted within an existing therapeutic-community housing unit at the Maleng Regional Justice Center (MRJC). As recommended, the pilot housing program would dedicate eight to ten beds for incarcerated male veterans and an additional one to three beds for incarcerated female veterans. It was recommended that the participating veterans be housed in the units that were already housing individuals participating in the Transitional Recovery Program (TRP), which is a 60-day evidence-based treatment program for substance use and co-occurring (substance use and mental health) disorders. The report also recommended that veterans who would be included in the pilot project, were to be detained for a period of 60 days or longer and met the criteria for the TRP program be able to request a referral to the program through Jail Health Services (JHS) release planning staff. In addition to access to the TRP program, the report recommended that veterans in the dedicated housing unit have regular access to federal, state, and local veterans justice partners[[8]](#footnote-8) for reentry support and linkage to behavioral health and social services.

**Better Data and Identification of Qualifying Incarcerated Veterans.** *The Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* also made recommendations designed to improve data on justice-involved veterans. According to the report, a review of best or promising practices for collecting veteran status data in jails, therefore enabling linkage with services for qualifying veterans, suggested that DAJD’s practice of asking the question, “Are you a veteran?” from individuals to elicit veteran self-identification, was possibly ineffective because individuals who have served in the military may misunderstand the term “veteran.” Additionally, individuals who served in the National Guard or Reserves and individuals who served in the Coast Guard may not identify as “veterans,” but would endorse having served in the military. The motion advisory and work groups recommended modifying the question to eliminate the use of the term veteran and to include all components (Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard) and branches (Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard) of service with the aim of increasing data accuracy and furthering veteran identification efforts. The report further recommended that DAJD begin using a combination of self-report and objective data gathering methods, which other jurisdictions have determined to be the most effective method for identifying veterans in detention; this combined approach was considered optimal as incarcerated veterans may be reluctant to self-identify because they feel ashamed of their criminal justice involvement or they are afraid that identifying as a veteran will result in loss of Veterans Administration (VA) benefits.

**Raising Awareness of Programs Serving Justice-Involved Veterans.** The advisory and work groups also recommended that all veterans incarcerated in King County jail facilities, including veterans who are court-ordered to partial confinement in Work Education and Release (WER), and Electronic Home Detention (EHD), have access to federal, state, and local programs designed to serve justice-involved veterans.[[9]](#footnote-9) Further, the report recommended that DAJD ensure that veterans justice partners obtain special and priority access to incarcerated veterans in order to initiate supportive services and advance successful veteran reentry into the community after incarceration. That recommendation would flow from the DAJD process already in place at the time of the report whereby DCHS served as a liaison between DAJD and veterans justice partners—an arrangement that helped streamline the jail application process, ensuring veterans justice partners have access to the jail in order to see incarcerated veterans. The report also recommended that DAJD continue to partner with DCHS staff to ensure veterans justice partners have rapid and priority access to justice-involved veterans.

**Notice and Advertising of Veteran-Specific Programming.** The advisory and work groups recommended signage advertising veteran resources be strategically placed throughout the jail facilities (including the booking and intake areas) to ensure all veterans, regardless of length of stay, receive information on available resources and access to veterans programming. According to the report, the WDVA, working with DAJD, had already implemented this recommendation in the general housing units of the jail facilities. According to the report, implementation in the booking and intake areas was planned to occur during the first quarter of 2015.

**Specialized Training on Impact of Incarceration on Veterans Benefits.** In the report, the work group recommended that all criminal justice partners receive training on the impact of incarceration on benefits available to veterans and potential alternatives to incarceration that allow veterans to maintain their VA benefits and services while also ensuring public safety. The report noted that staff familiar with these considerations would be better able to leverage extensive federal, state and local resources that are designed to promote employment, housing and health for justice-involved veterans. The advisory and work groups also recommended that the county should work with the state to study the feasibility of including veteran-specific training in the curriculum offered during the state Corrections Officers Academy.

**Specialized Training on Veterans-Specific Needs and Military Culture.** Finally, the advisory and work groups recommended DAJD partner with the Veterans Training Support Center (VTSC) to provide release planning staff and the staff supervising the dedicated veteran housing unit with training opportunities on working with veteran populations and understanding military culture and trauma-informed care. The VTSC, funded by the King County Veterans and Human Services Levy and the WDVA Behavioral Health Program, offers free training in King County to individuals and institutions providing direct service to veterans and their family members. Trainings are designed to educate direct service providers and institution staff about issues specific to veterans and to encourage individuals working with veterans to establish practices that will support and empower veterans during their reintegration into their families and communities.

**Work Plan.** As required by the motion, the advisory and work group developed a work plan and implementation timeline detailing when the recommendations would be implemented.

**Implementation Status of Recommendations from the *Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report***

According to DAJD and DCHS staff, the Maleng Veterans Program at MRJC was officially launched in June 2015. Executive staff indicate that the Maleng Veterans Program serves veterans who are housed in the dedicated veterans‘ unit as well housed elsewhere at Maleng. DAJD indicates that while veterans classified as different custody levels (minimum, medium, ultra-security, closed security) are not allowed to be housed together for security reasons, medium and minimum security classified individuals are allowed to program together in a multipurpose room external to the housing unit. At program roll-out, the Maleng Veterans Program served only minimum security classified individuals. Executive staff indicate that some medium security classified individuals are beginning to be served. Per regulation, those medium security classified individuals are not housed in the dedicated unit.

Executive staff report that between June 2015 and February 2016 the Maleng Veterans Program served 51 verified veterans.[[10]](#footnote-10) Out of these 51 veterans, ten participants did not reside in the veteran-specific unit. Among the participants of the Maleng Veterans Program, Executive staff report that there have been no women who have participated in the veteran housing program. Executive staff cite the following reasons for the limited female inmate participation in the program:

1. Since the establishment of the program, there has not been sufficient qualifying veteran inmate population to meet the one to three woman program goal;
2. The average length of stay for women who have been identified as qualifying for the program has been less than a week;
3. The veterans status for some some female inmates who self-identified as veterans could not be verified; and
4. The department reports that there has been a lack of interest by verified female veterans to participate in group programming.

While verified female veterans have been offered reentry services, executive staff indicated not having data to report on this population at this time.

DAJD and DCHS staff report that while there are a set number of designated veteran beds for men (the number recommended in the report), the total unit capacity in the therapeutic unit within which the veteran-dedicated beds are located is 64. Staff note that because of this, no qualifying veterans have been turned away since the number of designated veteran beds can be expanded to house veteran program participants on an as-need basis. DAJD staff indicates it has the ability to house inmates who are not in the Maleng Veterans Program in other units within the facility to accomodate the Veterans Program participants.

**Preliminary Data**

**Veteran Status.** Executive staff report that improving rates of veteran self-identification and subsequent verification of veteran status is still in-process in terms of instituting all of the changes recommended in the report. Executive staff note that the number of individuals self-reporting veteran status increased from three percent, when the report was completed, to 18.9 percent from June 2015 through January 2016, once the new question regarding veteran status recommended in the *Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* report was adopted. While executive staff indicate that there is no independent verification of all of these self-identified individuals, this is the best estimate presently available on the number of veterans in King County jails, which , represents 372 individuals for the period.

**Preliminary Recidivism Data.** Executive staff report that a prelimnary analysis of available data seems to indicate a 14.8 percent recidivism rate for incarcerated veterans who have received programming through the Maleng Veterans Program from June 2015 through January 2016. This data specifically applies to veterans who have been released to the community and have received veteran-specific programming at MRJC, excluding veterans who are still incarcerrated.

**Preliminary Reentry Linkages Data.** Executive staff report that a preliminary analysis of available data on participants in the Maleng Veterans Program from June 2015 through January 2016 shows the following reentry linkage numbers:

Mental Health, Substance Use or Physical Health

* 46 veterans were referred for mental health, substance use or physical health services
* 42 veterans confirmed engagement/linkage with services
* 2 veterans had not engaged/linked with services
* 2 veterans’ services engagement/linkages was unknown

Education, Employment or Training Resources

* 34 veterans were referred for education, employment or training resources
* 21 veterans confirmed engagement/linkage with services
* 11 veterans had not engaged/linked with services
* 2 veterans’ services engagement/linkages was unknown

Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, or Permanent Housing

* 41 veterans were referred to housing resources (emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing)
* 22 veterans confirmed release to housing
* 9 veterans were not yet placed, or housing resources were reserved but the veteran failed to follow through
* 9 veterans were not yet released from incarceration
* 1 veteran’s status was unknown

**Identified Capacity Challenges**

Executive staff indicate a range of challenges to continuing the Maleng Veterans Program, especially to providing programming and services that are tailored to the sometimes intensive and diverse needs of the incarcerated veterans the program serves. These include:

* **Volunteer-Based Programs and Servces.** Many of the current services and programming offered to veterans, both in and outside of the dedicated housing unit, rely on volunteers. Consequently, services and programming are subject to the posibility that a volunteer may not be able to continue his or her work or that a volunteer’s schedule may shift making continuity of services or programs difficult. Furthermore, in seeking to serve the complex and highly individualized needs of many of the participating incarcerated veterans, Executive staff note that they have begun to exhaust the capacity of volunteer-based programming and service delivery, both in quantity and intensity.
* **Growing Interest in the Program.** In addition to the above, Executive staff report strong interest in the programming from male incarcerated veterans, particularly in light of the recent decision to serve medium security classified individuals; this has the potential of further exacerbating the strain on the volunteer-based services and programs.
* **Training Needs.** Executive staff note that volunteers as well as other staff working with veterans should be trained in a range of veteran-specific topics; this goal is consistent with the *Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* recommendations. The continual training needs of the program, especially given the high needs of some of the veterans served, along with the frequent changes in best practices for program and service delivery of some programs and services sought by incarcerated veterans, are also presenting a strain on staff time.

* **Other External Constraints.** Executive staff also identified challenges related to housing resources for reentry purposes that accommodate families (incuding pets) if needed.

**ANALYSIS**

Proposed Motion 2016-0198 would request that the Executive transmit to the Council a report on the status to-date of the Maleng Veterans Program undertaken pursuant to the work and implementation plan included in the *Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* recommendations that were accepted by Motion 14301. Proposed Motion 2016-0198 requests the status report summarize the work to-date, provide recidivism data on program participants, and provide options and recommendations for sustainable continuation of the Maleng Veterans Progam.

Proposed Motion 2016-0198 further requests that the Executive transmit an appropriation ordinance adding at least $75,000 for the Maleng Veterans Program either as part of the the Executive’s second-quarter omnibus appropriation ordinance or as a separate appropriations ordinance. Should the executive, in preparing the report requested in Proposed Motion 2016-0198, deem that an amount greater than $75,000 is needed to support and continue the Maleng Veterans Program for the remainder of 2016, Proposed Motion 2016-0198 requests that the Executive request appopriation of that higher amount.

Proposed Motion 2016-0198 requiresthat the Executive , , develop the report in collaboration wiht DAJD, DCHS and the Department of Public Health by May 31, 2016 and transmit the report to the Council. The motion asks that the Executive include the status of the work described in the work and implementation plan in *The Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* recommendations, a summary of the number of unduplicated program participants who have participated in the Maleng Veterans Program to-date—within and outside of the dedicated housing unit—any data or information available on recidivism of program participants or successful referrals to other services after program participant release, aggregate, non-identifying demographic information about the veterans incarcerated during the period analyzed and the same for program participants, suggestions for improving coordination and program delivery (including increasing participation by female veterans), and options and recommendations for the sustainable continuation of the program including consideration of funding for program staffing, training and other needs for the remainder of 2016.

Council staff has identified two potential issues. First, *The Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report* noted that the report’s recommendations for the pilot Maleng Veterans Program could be undertaken without additional program-specific costs. The appropriation requested in Proposed Motion 2016-0198 would likely shift funding from other sources to cover the cost of moving from a pilot phase toward greater program sustainability. Second, the pilot program does not yet have a full year of data, making its efficacy in terms of recidivism and linkages difficult to ascertain due to both limited quantity of data and limited data longitude.

**INVITEES**

1. Chelsea Baylen, Project/Program Manager III/Veterans Justice Coordinator, DCHS
2. Nancy Garcia, Corrections Program Manager & Inmate Welfare Fund Manager, DAJD

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Motion 2016-0198
2. Improving Programs and Services for Incarcerated Veterans Report
1. <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/socialServices/CSD/documents/Status_of_Veterans_and_Veterans_Services_in_King_County.ashx?la=en>, pg. i [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. Note that this figure is extrapolated from what DCHS estimated were 127,000 veterans in King County at the time of the report’s writing. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/socialServices/veterans/documents/130412_Status_of_Veterans_and_Veterans_Services_in_King_County.ashx?la=en>, pg 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Bureau of Justice and Health, *“Veterans in Prison and Jail, 2011-2012,”* available <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/vpj1112.pdf>.

Vessels, Tracy. "Trauma-Informed Correctional Care: Promising for Prisoners and Facilities." Trauma-Informed Correctional Care: Promising for Prisoners and Facilities. National Institute of Corrections, 9 Sept. 2013. Web. 08 Apr. 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A range of individuals and social service agencies that serve veterans in King County’s jail facilities and veterans at risk of incarceration and include: the King County District Court Regional Veterans Court, the Seattle Municipal Court Veterans Treatment Court, the King County Superior Court Drug Diversion Court Veterans Calendar, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Justice Outreach Program, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Reentry Case Management Program, the Northwest Justice Project Veterans Project, and the King County Veterans Justice Initiative. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. At the time of the report, these programs included the following: King County District Court Regional Veteran’s Court (VTC), Seattle Municipal Court VTC, King County Superior Court Drug Diversion Court (Veterans Calendar), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program, Washington State Department of Veteran’s Affairs (WDVA), Veterans Reentry Case Management (VRCM) program, and Northwest Justice Project Veterans Project. There are also over 180 additional behavioral health and social service programs for veterans in King County as identified in the Regional Veterans Initiative. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. According to staff, the Washington Division of Veteran Affairs verifies the status of self-identified veterans in King County jails and identifies verified veterans interested in the program at other King County correctional facilities. Qualifying veterans have the opportunity to be transferred to Maleng to be part of the program. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)