

## Justice Reinvestment Memorandum

To: Representative Alice Emmons, Chair, House Committee on Corrections and Institutions  
Representative Tristan Roberts, House Committee on Corrections and Institutions  
Representative Martin LaLonde, Chair, House Committee on Judiciary  
Representative Karen Dolan, House Committee on Judiciary  
Representative Diane Lanpher, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations  
Representative Trevor Squirrel, House Committee on Appropriations

From: Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence  
Community Justice Centers

Date: March 20, 2023

Re: Justice Reinvestments

We are writing to you collectively to express our continuing support for Justice Reinvestment Initiatives (JRI) in the state of Vermont – and to ensure that the foundation and principles of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative are maintained and not lost in the coming years.

Beginning in FY20, the State of Vermont has made investments to address the recommendations of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative Working Group. As the General Assembly set forth in the FY 20 budget, these investments pursue policies which “create a smarter criminal justice system that prevents avoidable incarceration, returns people to communities without risking public safety, and reduces or eliminates the need for out-of-state prison placements or new prison bed capacity in Vermont”. In the FY 21, 22 and 23 budgets, the Legislature directed that Justice Reinvestment savings be spent with the intent to “support community-based service programs”.

Funding for community-based domestic violence accountability programming and investments in restorative justice and re-entry programs were highlighted as recommendations of Justice Reinvestment I and Justice Reinvestment II. In order to achieve the goals of Justice Reinvestment, we cannot scale back any investments that have been made. These investments have developed entire service delivery systems that, if defunded, will have immediate and significant impacts that will eliminate the work that has been accomplished to date.

**In order to promote the goals of JRI, we are asking the legislature to:**

- **Ensure that previous investments in domestic violence accountability and restorative justice are carried forward as base investments.**
- **Determine how to spend any remaining savings in FY24 in accordance with the goals of Justice Reinvestment.**

The General Assembly has previously allocated the following investments in domestic violence accountability and restorative justice:

## **Domestic Violence Accountability Programming (DVAP)**

Investment in community-based domestic violence accountability programming has been a primary recommendation of Justice Reinvestment and the Council of State Governments. Investments have been made to allocate funding to the 13 community-based domestic violence accountability providers who provide treatment to individuals who use violence in their relationships. This funding has been used to fund community-based providers, move to a system based on risk and needs and eliminate participant fees.

- FY 2022 - \$200,000
  - FY 2023 - \$300,000. This funding was accompanied by legislative language which required that participant fees be eliminated for domestic violence accountability programs and LGBTQ programming be developed. This funding was allocated in addition to the \$200,000 that was appropriated in FY 2022 and was granted FY 2023, for a total of \$500,000.
  - FY 2024 - \$350,000 (currently in the FY 2023 Budget Adjustment Act, intended to be carried forward for FY 24 disbursement)\* **TOTAL DVAP INVESTMENT: \$850,000**
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TOTAL ANNUAL DVAP INVESTMENT: \$850,000

\* In December of 2022, the Joint Justice Oversight Committee recommended an additional \$350,000 for FY24. These funds have been included in the FY 23 Budget Adjustment Act with the understanding that they will be carried forward to FY24 and granted by the Department of Corrections in FY24. **The Joint Justice Oversight Committee was clear in their intent that this investment was to supplement an existing \$500,000 base and result in a total investment of \$850,000.**

## **Restorative Justice Investments**

In FY 2023, using justice reinvestment funds appropriated the following:

- Community Justice Centers - \$317,030
  - Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) -- \$204,450
  - Orange and Addison County CJC Parity -- \$20,000
  - Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training - \$85,000

These funds need to be appropriated, again in FY 2024 and carried forward as base investments to ensure there are no reductions in services provided by Community Justice Centers.

## **FY 2024 Investments**

In the FY24 budget, we ask that the General Assembly:

- Ensure that previous and current investments in domestic violence accountability and restorative justice are carried forward as base investments in FY 24. We suggest policy language that identifies these as base investments.

- Spend any remaining savings from FY 2023 in FY24 in accordance with the goals of Justice Reinvestment. Though we support updating the DOC Offender Management System (OMS) IT system, it is not a community-based investment. It is our understanding that a total of \$350,000 has already been allocated from JRI investments over the past couple of years to fund the OMS. We request that the General Assembly designate any remaining JRI funds accordingly:
  - Restorative Justice
    - \$300,000 additional to Community Justice Centers
      - \$95,640 for 3% COLA increase for FY 2024
      - \$204,360 in grants to be distributed equitably to the 17 Community Justice Centers
  - Re-Entry Services - \$400,000
    - To support the re-entry services for incarcerated women as provided by the Lund, Mercy Connections, Vermont Works for Women, and the DIVAS program.
  - Substance use treatment services
    - Per the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee memo to House and Senate Committees dated December 11, 2022 – “the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee... recommends that your committees prioritize spending the money on transitional services and discharge planning for individuals in the custody of the Department of Corrections who are subject to medication-assisted treatment. The Committee feels that prioritizing the expenditure of the remaining funds this will assist these individuals as they transition back into the community and supports Justice Reinvestment II initiatives.”
    - Serenity House has requested a \$300,000 allocation for offender re-entry/substance use services. The Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee briefly mentioned the possibility of funding for Serenity House in one of its meeting in the fall of 2022, but did not further discuss the issue or develop a plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.