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**Restrictive Housing Oversight Committee (RHOC) Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 15, 2025**  
*Via Microsoft Teams*  
**DRAFT**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Undersecretary Peck called the meeting to order at 11:06 AM.

<b>Restrictive Housing Oversight Committee - Attendance</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Undersecretary Andrew Peck, Chair	X	
Kevin Flanagan		X
Robert Fleischner, J.D.	X	
Hon. Geraldine Hines (resigned)		X
Tatum A. Pritchard, Esq.	X	
Kyle Pelletier	X	
Dr. Joanne Tsakas Barros, PhD, LMHC, CCHP	X	
Attorney Tenneriello, Esq.	X	
Dr. Henry, PhD, LICSW	X	
Sheriff Cocchi		X
Hollie Matthews	X	

**II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR MEETING**

Dr. Henry proposed a correction to the minutes from the prior meeting. She noted that in the section reviewing the minutes from the December meeting, her name had been incorrectly substituted for Dr. Barros' when the Committee was making a correction regarding the Rappaport program. Dr. Henry placed the corrected language in the chat for reference. The minutes were approved via roll-call vote. Bob Fleischner abstained from voting and all other members present at the meeting voted to approve.

### **III. DISCUSSION OF REPSONSES TO THE COMMITTEE'S RECORDS REQUEST**

Adrian confirmed that all agencies have responded to the committee's records request and that all requested information has been submitted. The materials are accessible via a shared link distributed to committee members. Members acknowledged that the volume of material is substantial.

#### **Synthesizing the Information**

Hollie Matthews reported that she, Dr. Henry, and Attorney Tenneriello plan to meet as a sub-committee to begin discussing the path forward for reviewing and synthesizing the records. Hollie also noted that a co-op student will be joining her office and could assist with the work.

The Committee discussed how the sub-committee would set out goals and focus areas that the co-op student, intern, and Rappaport fellow would use in drafting the Committee's report on the substance of the Sheriff's Office's responses to the Committee's records request. Attorney Tenneriello proposed that the subcommittee could put together a matrix of what the Committee is looking for in each county to ensure consistency.

The discussion returned to the Rappaport Center fellows. Dr. Henry noted that roughly half of the fellows have legal backgrounds and half have policy backgrounds. The program typically runs for 12 weeks over the summer and requires fellows to produce a policy-relevant document. Dr. Henry said that the Committee could use the fellow's skills in drafting the Committee's report, and that would constitute the fellow's report that they need to produce.

Bob Fleischner proposed a distributed alternative to relying solely on one or two summer interns. He noted that with 12 committee members and 14 counties, some of which are small and could be consolidated, each member could take responsibility for reviewing one or two counties, provided that Hollie, Dr. Henry, and Attorney Tenneriello first develop a consistent matrix of items to look for across all county reports. Members with summer staff could delegate their assigned counties accordingly.

He also noted that some programs, including certain fellowship programs he is familiar with, require applicants to propose a project in advance and secure funding before placement. If that is the case with Rappaport or any other program the committee approaches, outreach would need to happen soon.

The committee agreed that developing the matrix is the necessary first step and that the decision on how to distribute the work among interns, committee members, or a combination should follow from the matrix put together by the sub-committee.

### **IV. REVIEW OF PROPOSED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SITE VISITS**

Adrian presented a draft set of interview questions for use during facility site visits, put together by Ryan Mingo, the Committee's Legal Counsel. Committee members provided general feedback and suggested specific revisions.

Attorney Tenneriello and Robert Fleischner both noted the draft was thorough and well-organized. Attorney Tenneriello acknowledged that some questions, particularly those relating to housing placement reviews, may not be relevant for all counties but are appropriate to include.

Attorney Tenneriello suggested adding more specific questions about privileges in restrictive housing and how they compare to the general population, including canteen access and visitation.

Bob Fleischner agreed that discussions about mental health histories can run long but noted that the question about Individual Action Plans (IEPs) is particularly valuable, as nearly all incarcerated individuals have them. He expressed confidence in the committee's ability to manage those conversations respectfully while staying mindful of time.

Attorney Pritchard noted that some individuals the committee will meet with may be school-age and have active IEPs, making that question especially important.

Attorney Tenneriello suggested that the question "How would you describe Restrictive Housing?" be revised to "How would you describe your experience?" to better capture the individual's personal perspective. The committee agreed with this change.

Dr. Henry raised the absence of questions about self-harm and mental health crises. She suggested adding a question focused on service availability and access rather than directly asking about current ideation. For example, asking how an individual would access mental health support if they felt at risk, whether they have accessed such services from restrictive housing, and what their experience was on mental health watch. She noted this framing keeps the focus on what services exist and whether they are usable, which is more aligned with what the committee wants to learn. Dr. Henry also asked about a topic for the corrections officer focus groups, which could be adapted from the interview questions for incarcerated individuals.

### **Site Visit Logistics**

Undersecretary Peck noted that scheduling site visits has been challenging and suggested sending dates for each county and seeing which Committee members were available. Members engaged in extended discussion about visit format and structure, referencing decisions reflected in the December and November minutes.

The committee reviewed and confirmed the following structure for site visits:

- Individual interviews with individuals currently in restrictive housing. Focus groups are not generally feasible for current residents due to privacy concerns and the sensitivity of mental health discussions.
- Conversations with correctional officers and security staff, as a focus group.
- A focus group with individuals formerly in restrictive housing who have returned to general population, if time permits.
- No interviews with mental health staff, education staff, or other specialized personnel during site visits.
- No tours of dedicated health units.

Kyle Pelletier and Kevin Hall from the Hampden County Sheriff's Office confirmed based on their experience with prior visits that all three types of interviews: individual sessions with current residents, correctional staff conversations, and a former-resident focus group can be accomplished in a single day. Kyle added that she believed there was value in speaking to all three groups.

Timing was a major point of discussion. Bob Fleischner reiterated his prior suggestion that the committee not meet with mental health staff during site visits but instead convene them virtually afterward. Dr. Barros proposed that mental health staff from all counties be brought together in a single virtual focus group. Dr. Barros offered to facilitate this through the quarterly mental health directors meeting she coordinates, which includes mental health staff from all Houses of Correction. The group meets quarterly and typically sees 70 to 80 percent attendance. The most recent meeting was in December 2025, with the next scheduled for March 2026. Dr. Barros offered to arrange for committee members to join that meeting, schedule a dedicated session sooner if needed, or pose specific questions to the group via email. The committee expressed strong support for this approach and Dr. Barros agreed to share the upcoming meeting dates.

Kyle Pelletier suggested that committee members attending each visit could divide into smaller groups to conduct different interviews simultaneously, rather than moving as a full group. This would reduce the risk of any planned activity being cut due to time constraints and give facilities more scheduling flexibility. Undersecretary Peck added that in his experience the group on the visit came together for the focus groups with staff.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mary Valerio offered two comments.

First, she noted that the draft interview questions were very well written and comprehensive.

Second, she raised a concern about language access during site visits, noting that a significant share of incarcerated individuals in Massachusetts facilities are Spanish-speaking, and that some may have limited literacy in any language. She asked how non-English speaking individuals in restrictive housing would be able to express their experiences to the committee, particularly those who may have been placed in Restrictive Housing following incidents where language barriers prevented them from explaining their actions to staff.

Attorney Tenneriello noted she speaks Spanish and can conduct interviews directly. Dr. Henry added that she speaks Spanish and that past visits included discussions with Spanish-speaking incarcerated individuals. Kevin Hall explained that facilities use interpretation services to accommodate multiple languages, and that bilingual staff or incarcerated individuals sometimes assist informally in settings like disciplinary hearings.

Mary also noted that Kevin Flanagan had been absent from several recent meetings and expressed hope that union representation would remain engaged with the committee's work. Undersecretary Peck acknowledged the point and indicated the committee would follow up with Mr. Flanagan.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn was made by Kyle Pelletier and seconded by Attorney Tenneriello. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:18 PM.