**Field Services Meet and Confer**

**11/03/2021**

Present for MAPE: Tabitha Schacht, Samantha Caraway, Deanna Bothma, Shannon Marks, Emily Reich, Aarah Saugen, McKay Karl, Debbie Prokopf

Present for DOC: Al Godfrey, Dayna Burmeister, Jake McLellan, Jackie Sovick Lonne, Ken Lombard

1. New Hearings and Release Unit (HRU) Process (MAPE)

MAPE shared concerns about the new HRU process for obtaining warrants. The process limits flexibility and puts additional strain on agent resources. Agents felt blindsided by the new process and would like to have additional training on it. An opportunity was missed to communicate the why of the process and how the process came about.

DOC explained that the HRU process started a year ago and was based on the Commissioner’s review of the promulgated rules that requires a report prior to issuing of warrant. This is an administrative rule which can be found at Minnesota Rules 2940.3000 – 4500 on the Office of the Revisor of Statues website. This is not a new rule, but an existing rule.

A two-part process was put into place, one for emergency warrants and one for non-emergency warrants. HRU worked with Strategic Technologies Inc. (STI) to help develop the process within CSTS Web because agents already use that system regularly. Other stakeholders were involved as well to develop functionality based on the promulgated rules.

MAPE requested more communication about the promulgated rules. Management agreed to provide that information in a future Friday call and suggested that this topic may be appropriate for further discussion at the statewide Meet and Confer level.

1. Communication about CSTS changes (MAPE)

Management stated that testing for CSTS Web began around May/June 2021. Technical difficulties were revealed in testing, which pushed back the roll-out until mid-August. Once it became available in mid-August, agents were provided with information about it. Al Godfrey mentioned it on iShare and a Friday call. Two staff were designated as support people for agents with questions. One person left that position, which put a lot of pressure on the other.

MAPE stated that it would have been helpful to lay the groundwork for the CSTS changes earlier to obtain buy-in from staff.

Management stated that the Citrix-based CSTS will eventually end. Starting with the warrants process allows agents to get used to the CSTS web system. Agents have found glitches in the system. Tracking revealed that these were not just getting use to the new system. Management will soon announce that DOC is going to ease off the roll-out of CSTS web for now while additional testing is completed. CSTS web will still be used for warrants.

MAPE stated that agents were asked for feedback on CSTS Web. They gave feedback about the problem of not being able to see older Chronos in the web version. However, they were told that the system had performance issues and that couldn’t be changed. Agents felt frustrated.

Management explained that there is a trade-off between functionality and speed. Adding older Chronos caused the whole system to slow down. STI is trying to strike a balance between agent requests and optimal functionality. DOC is concerned about server capacity and is pushing MNIT to install fiber optic internet for all field offices.

MAPE stated that agents appreciate management hitting the brakes on the CSTS web roll-out until some of these issues are addressed.

MAPE asked why procedures keep changing even when they’re working.

Management responded that changes are made through the CSTS executive committee, not just DOC Field Services. Stress points were added to this process, and it was not the natural type of roll out DOC would have preferred. The roll-out got compressed. Enhancements from STI are usually more seamless.

MAPE pointed out the strain the new HRU process adds to agents’ workload, which is already stretched thin. Burnout is high and morale is low.

Management responded that DOC recognizes the additional things that have been added to agents’ plates, particularly over the last 18 months. Funding has not followed accordingly. DOC is hopeful that the Council of State Government study will result in improved funding for supervision.

1. Minnesota Office of the Ombuds for Corrections report (MAPE)

MAPE shared a [report](https://mn.gov/obfc/assets/Appendix%20A%20Ombuds%20for%20Corrections%20COVID%20Report_tcm1157-470275.pdf) that was released by the Office of the Ombuds for Corrections in December 2020, which highlights some agent concerns that we are consistently hearing. A number of issues were addressed in the report, but two that stand out are (1) the need for additional staff to provide supervision in the community; and (2) agents’ concerns about safety, given the push to limit revocations in order to manage the prison population. It seems that each new initiative falls on the backs of agents, who are already stretched to their limits. MAPE is interested in hearing management’s reaction to this report and any steps that have been taken to address it. MAPE is also interested in partnering on solutions to the problems identified in the report.

Management clarified that the safety concerns stem from agents’ feeling that they don’t have all the accountability tools they need, which leads to clients feeling emboldened to continue violating.

Management stated that justice reinvestment comes into play. More options must be developed, such as CD treatment and mental health treatment in order to stabilize people in the community. Short returns to prison do not make sense in terms of impact and cost. A continuum of options could include resources such as inpatient and outpatient treatment; cognitive interventions; options for further accountability such as short stints in jail or revocation centers for programming and assessment; and housing. Supplemental funding for such options was requested the legislative session before last.

1. Council of State Government – Justice Reinvestment (Management)

Management stated that the Council of State Governments plans to issue its draft report on funding equity in December 2021 and its full report to the legislature by February 2022.

MAPE asked whether this timeline will be too late to inform the agency’s budget request this session. Management stated it would be too late for the coming session, but there may be statutory language changes that could be worked on this session, with the funding formula to change in the 2023 session.

Adjourn