



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
BELLINGHAM REENTRY CENTER

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12/26/23

CUP2014-0006 Conditional Use Permit for 1127 N. Garden St., Bellingham Reentry Center

On 9/24/2014, the Hearing Examiner approved a conditional use permit (CUP) to expand an existing non-conforming service care facility at 1127 N. Garden St., Bellingham, WA. At this time, Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) and Community Work Training Association (CWTA), partnered to operate a 25-bed work release/reentry center at 1127 N. Garden St, Bellingham, WA.

Bellingham Reentry Center (BRC), as currently named, was initiated in 1973 and has been operating in its current location since about 1986. On 1/6/2016 a building permit was issued to expand BRC to a 50-bed facility, with two houses operating side-by-side at 1125 and 1127 N. Garden St. From 2017 to May 2022, BRC was jointly operated by CWTA and DOC. On 5/31/2022, CWTA terminated its contract with DOC due to recruitment and retention issues. The remaining residents were transferred to Reynolds Reentry Center in May 2022 and BRC has been in warm closure since then.

In the spring of 2023, the Washington State Legislature funded BRC to become a fully state-staffed operation. BRC is currently hiring several staff. Currently, we have hired a new Sergeant and 5 Correctional Officers. Our staffing model includes: 1 Reentry Center Manager; 1 Sergeant; 2 Community Corrections Officers; 12 full-time Correctional Officers; 2 on-call Correctional Officers; 1 Food Service Manager; 1 Administrative Assistant 3; 1 Construction & Maintenance Project Lead; and 4 cooks. Our goal is to reopen by spring 2024, once training and hiring is complete. Our staffing ratio, 2 Correctional Officers (COs) on graveyard, 2 COs on days and 3 COs on swing shift, is established by the Federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) guidelines.

Regarding specific CUP requirements, BRC has provided an anti-harassment program since 2017. Between 2017 and our warm closure in May 2022, residents have been provided with a copy of the anti-harassment program, signing for receipt of these rules. These anti-harassment rules are provided shortly after residents arrive at BRC, at intake. At orientation, residents are provided with a copy of the Statewide handbook. In 2023, the 13 State Reentry Centers created a statewide handbook to create consistency, as opposed to individual handbooks for each Reentry Center. A copy of the current Statewide Orientation Handbook has been provided to the Hearing Examiner.

Building 1127 houses up to 25 men and building 1125 houses 16 men and 8 women, and one room for either gender that may be experiencing a disability. Prior to accepting residents, the Reentry Center Manager reviews/screens all non-violent applicants. All violent and sexual offenses are screened by our screening committee, which always includes a representative from Bellingham Police Department, per our citing agreement. We continue to give great weight to BPD's recommendations. Detective Craig Johnson is currently a member of our committee, with Detectives rotating on our committee every 2-3 years.

I, Vicky Neufeld, have been the Reentry Center Manager at BRC since July 2014. I do not recall receiving complaints from the public about our program or residents. Conversely, there have been many times that our staff have aided the public when they are involved in accidents or need assistance near BRC. BRC staff are CPR/First Aid trained and the facility is equipped with several first aid and Narcan kits, AED units and numerous cameras inside and outside of the facility.

Bellingham Police Department provided Planner II Sara Ulman with a list of complaints received by BPD from 2007 to 2023. Without the police reports, I am unable to speak to each situation. Some of these incidents have include theft of resident bikes by community members, vandalism/graffiti by community members, and unknown drugs being found and turned over to police. The forgery from 2019 may have been when a contract staff forged his paycheck. That staff was terminated from his employment. In 2019, one of our residents assaulted another resident, with limited injury to my recall. In 2019, I responded to an attempted suicide by hanging. That resident was taken to hospital and returned to prison for mental health support and monitoring. In 2018, one of our residents called a victim on the facility phone in violation of a no-contact order. This resident was returned to prison because of this violation.

11 incidents, primarily with BRC placing the call, from 2007 to 2019 suggests that BRC has managed our residents and facility well. Given we have an internal disciplinary process and the ability to arrest and return residents to prison when there are safety or security issues, I believe we have been effective in managing problematic behavior swiftly and justly. I would not be surprised if the number of calls from BRC from 2007 to 2019 are less than calls coming from an equivalent sized building or population in this neighborhood.

Attached you will find BRCs current fact sheet which provides a general overview of our program. Our goal is to provide support to residents as they transition from prison back to their communities so that they become better neighbors. I plan to attend the 1/10/24 hearing to respond to any additional questions from the Hearing Examiner or community members.

Sincerely,



Vicky Neufeld
Reentry Center Manager
360-201-2626

BELLINGHAM REENTRY CENTER (BRC)



FACT SHEET



ABOUT

Custody Level:

- Minimum Security Classification Facility

Capacity:

- 42 men, 8 women

Annual Operating Budget:

- \$1,456,804

BRC is temporarily closed, with an anticipated reopening date in early 2024. BRC is located in the northwest corner of Washington state, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It operates in two side-by-side buildings in a downtown college area of Bellingham. BRC has operated since 1976 and has been in its current location since 1981. BRC's primary goal is to improve public safety by positively changing lives by supporting residents' reestablishment of positive family ties, access to employment and education and other services that aid in their transition back to the community.

Residents who meet the screening criteria may be transferred to BRC 12 months before their earliest release date. The facility is leased and operated by the Washington State Department of Corrections and provides 24/7 safety and security, food services, case management and maintenance.

BRC TEAM

- **Facility Contact:** Vicky Neufeld, Reentry Center Manager
 - 360-201-2626, vneufeld@doc1.wa.gov
- Jeri Reid, Community Corrections Officer 3
- Evan Lee, Community Corrections Officer 2
- Long Nguyen, Administrative Assistant 3
- Michael DeAnnutis, Sergeant
- Food Service Manager (Vacant)
- Const. and Maint. Project Lead (Vacant)
- Correctional officers, food service staff

COVID-19 Operations: In May 2023, federal and state COVID-19 emergency declarations ended, and DOC transitioned to a new normal operation. DOC continues to follow DOH and CDC guidelines for managing and preventing infection control.

Individuals with Disabilities: The Reentry Centers meet applicable American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and DOC policies regarding ADA. We will coordinate with the statewide ADA coordinator prior to the arrival of residents requiring ADA accommodations to ensure the facility has the necessary items. We will ensure the facility continues to meet the accommodated residents' needs during their incarceration.

1125 & 1127 N. Garden St., Bellingham, WA
360-676-2150

FACILITY INFORMATION

Community Resources:

- Family-friendly activities
- Goodwill and WorkSource employment counseling agencies
- Substance abuse recovery programs (self-help, outpatient treatment and Medically Assisted Treatment)
- Western Washington University
- Whatcom Community and Bellingham Technical Colleges
- YWCA Back to Work Boutique

Employment Opportunities:

- 360 Modular Express
- An Employment Solution
- Bellingham Grocery Outlet
- Bienvenido's Restaurant
- Dairy Queen
- Denny's Restaurant
- Express Employment
- Professionals
- Final Touch Auto Spa
- Five Guys Burgers
- Four Points by Sheraton
- Goodwill
- Hempler's Foods
- Homeport Seafoods
- Maaco Auto Body
- Manpower
- Mount Baker Products
- Northwest Chevrolet
- Port Of Subs
- People Ready
- Smith Gardens
- Specified Fittings

Community Partners:

- Catholic Community Services
- Christ the King Community Church
- Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services
- Goodwill
- Lummi Tribe
- Sea Mar Community Health Programs
- Unity Care NW
- Whatcom Community College