

The Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI)

Operational Guidelines

January 2016

*Collaboration is working with others to do a task and to achieve shared goals. It is a recursive process where two or more people or organizations work together to realize shared goals. Most collaboration requires leadership, although the form of leadership can be social within a decentralized and egalitarian group. In particular, teams that work collaboratively can obtain greater resources, recognition and reward when facing competition for finite resources. **Wikipedia***

INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI) is a broad-based, statewide, non-partisan collaboration representing individuals, non-profit, faith-based, advocacy, grassroots and service organizations united to end mass incarceration in Michigan. **The Collaborative seeks to create and restore healthy communities.**

As detailed in MI-CEMI's Resolution to End Mass Incarceration in Michigan, we believe that incarceration must be regarded as a measure of last resort for all criminal justice involved persons. Our objectives are to achieve a major reduction in the number of persons entering jail and prison, reducing the length of stay when persons are imprisoned, ensuring conditions of confinement that are conducive to genuine rehabilitation and training, and increasing the number of persons who are safely released from jail and prison facilities, as well as their preparation and support when returning to their communities.

We believe there is power in numbers and in developing a collective strategy where member organizations unite around a common agenda. That agenda will elevate the priority of ending mass incarceration for the public and policy-makers. It will create an opportunity for a common message that will both enhance the individual work of member organizations and amplify that message. It will provide an opportunity for member organizations to share information and knowledge. And it can extend the collective reach of each member organization, reduce duplication, and create resource efficiency.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

- Members can be criminal justice advocacy 501(c)3's, non-profit/educational organizations, associations, and grassroots groups, or individuals who are interested in criminal justice reform, and who agree to sign and/or support the Resolution to End Mass Incarceration in Michigan.

MEMBER OPPORTUNITIES

- Attend or send a representative to attend Collaborative meetings as often as possible.
- Read minutes and other documents generated by the Collaborative, in order to stay informed about our work together.
- Participate in a Work Group as time allows.
- Share information about your individual or organization's areas of expertise, goals, and capacity.
- Contribute time and other resources, based on opportunity, timing, and availability.
- Communicate important information and knowledge, based on your or your organization's area of expertise, which is pertinent to ending mass incarceration.

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- Encourage individuals and organizations to sign and support the Resolution to End Mass Incarceration in Michigan.
- Seek support from the Collaborative, whenever practical and desired, for your or your organization's related work.
- Participate in consensus decision-making, and actively engage in problem solving.
- Help develop and promote a shared vision of priorities and messaging.
- Provide requested input/support, when possible, for other members' work.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

- The members, through consensus-decisions, determine the goals, priorities, action plans and messaging of the Collaborative.
- The Resolution to End Mass Incarceration in Michigan is the document that results from the members' and supporters' determinations on the problems that have led to mass incarceration and ideas and aspirational goals on how to end it. The Collaborative will periodically update the Resolution.
- The MI-CEMI Work Groups are the forum through which members work to achieve the aspirational goals embedded within the Resolution.
- Materials for consideration by members will be circulated at least one week in advance.
- Whenever possible, Collaborative meetings will be professionally facilitated.
- If approved by the members, the Steering Team may seek funding with the host organization serving as the fiscal agent if possible, or in-kind donations from members for internal operations. Examples include professional facilitation, the development of a website and the printing of materials.
- The Collaborative does not intend to seek 501(c)3 tax exempt status.
- Meetings times/dates/locations will be posted in advance and the location and timing of meetings are established at the will of the group.
- The Collaborative helps support its members in their work toward ending mass incarceration

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- The Collaborative is "self-governed" by its members through a consensus decision-making process.
- Decisions are made during business meetings.
- Work groups complete projects that are submitted to the membership for discussion, revision and approval.
- Workgroups will have a Chair to ensure that the group meets and assigned tasks are completed, a designated facilitator (who may be the Chair) and a recorder to take and distribute meeting notes.
- A Steering Team provides strategic guidance for the Collaborative. The Steering Team sets Collaborative meeting agendas, and develops documents for review/revision/approval by the Collaborative members. The Steering Team is comprised of up to 9 members, elected by consensus, who represent the following:
 - The convening organization for the Collaborative

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- The chairs of each Workgroup: Reduced Admissions/Diversion, Conditions of Confinement, Length of Stay, Post Release and Reentry, Public Education and Investments/Reinvestments in Neighborhoods
- A person who has been previously incarcerated who may or may not represent a former prisoner organization
- A Grassroots Capacity-Building/Advocacy Organization

DECISION-MAKING

Issues/Proposals are brought before the group for discussion and decision. After a facilitated discussion(s) where any questions or concerns are addressed, the facilitator calls for consensus. Group members have 3 options:

Agreement, or “Thumbs Up” – this signals full agreement and support of the decision.

Standing Aside, or “Thumbs Sideway” – this signals that while the member organization may not be in full agreement with the issue/proposal, there is no concern that the decision will be harmful to the Collaborative, and the member organization can support the final decision.

It is expected that any member organization that stands aside will have already brought up any questions/concerns during the discussion. The facilitator will make every attempt to ensure that questions are answered and concerns addressed. When a minor question or concern still remains at the point of decision, those who stand aside will be asked to state their concerns formally to be recorded in the meeting minutes. Typically, if there are 4 or more stand asides, the Facilitator will ask the group to continue the discussion so a proposal can be modified to achieve more support.

Blocking, or “Thumbs Down” – this signals that a member believes a decision would be harmful for the Collaborative or that their organization could no longer participate in the Collaborative if the decision were approved. In this case a block would be appropriate.

As with a “stand aside”, it is expected that any member organization who feels the need to block a decision will have already brought up any questions/concerns during the discussion. When there is potential for a group decision to be blocked, both the group and any dissenters in the group are encouraged to collaborate in a facilitated discussion until agreement can be reached. Simply vetoing a decision, without discussion and/or without helping to find a solution that is agreeable to everyone, is not considered a responsible use of consensus blocking.

Approved unanimously by MI-CEMI, January 8, 2016