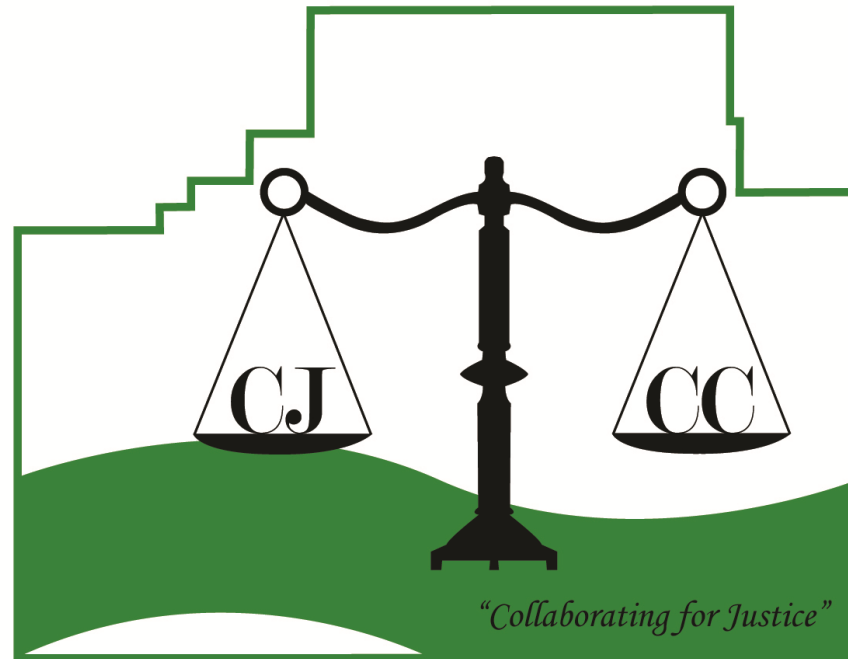


McLean County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Strategic Plan

September 12, 2013



**McLean County Criminal Justice
Coordinating Council**

CJCC Draft Mission Statement

The McLean County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) fosters collaboration and communication between criminal justice agencies and partners who educate, inform, and explore best practices together to continually improve the administration of justice. Our charge is to provide fair and just outcomes, improve public safety, reduce recidivism, and responsibly use resources for the benefit of McLean County residents.

Core Values

The following values are core to the CJCC; they guide our collective work in fulfillment of our mission.

Evidence-based Practices

Central to the mission of the CJCC is a mandate that criminal justice system participants provide data-driven evidence of successful programs and policies. This is about more than monitoring what we do. It is about demonstrating that each enterprise is contributing to the mission and reducing recidivism in McLean County. This strategic plan calls for increased use of evaluative practices demonstrating that a change in policy or expansion of a program is warranted and subject to validation.

Communication and Education

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council facilitates communication across organizations working within and for the criminal justice system. Communication and education provide the vehicle to address problems before they become serious and, more importantly, to best plan new strategies for improving the system. Communication increases efficiencies by educating others of possibilities, assets, and needs within the system. The CJCC values communication between itself and the community of which it is a part. Reasons for decisions, ideas, and information are to be shared between the CJCC, the residents of McLean County, the County Board, and state legislators.

Trust

Communication builds trust between others who interact because of the CJCC's work. Trust is necessary for effective education and action. Without trust, an organization cannot respond to change and often experiences retrenchment. As good leaders know, trust is easily lost and nearly impossible to regain.

Continuous Evaluation

Data are used not only to drive decisions affecting the criminal justice system and its stakeholders, but the evaluation process must be continuous. Monitoring changes in the jail population, the temporal efficiency of case management, effectiveness of the problem solving courts, and reducing recidivism are core values and central to the CJCC's mission.

Responsibility

The agencies, units, and programs within the criminal justice system have a responsibility to all its stakeholders: alleged offenders, victims, McLean County residents, other staff of our respective organizations, and the State of Illinois. This responsibility includes the judicious use of resources.

History

In June 2007, the McLean County Circuit Court, Administrative Office of Illinois Courts, Court Services Department, Catholic Charities, and the Illinois Wesleyan University Political Science Department sponsored a seminar entitled “Evidence-Based Practices—What Works in Reducing Offender Recidivism.” Attorneys, counselors, court services officers, DCFS caseworkers, domestic violence treatment providers, judges, social workers, state’s attorneys, psychologists, public defenders and others attended. The purpose of the seminar was to enhance the professionals’ understanding of the need to embrace evidence-based practices in order to better sentence, treat, and supervise offender populations. The expectation was that professionals and agencies who work within the criminal justice system would become more effective by adopting evidence based practices, including conducting a risk and needs assessment, providing cognitive-behavioral programming, and assertive case management to offenders.

The judges in McLean County concluded that they should collaborate with others in the criminal justice system to assure that best practices were implemented. Judges, state’s attorneys and public defenders, court services officers, treatment providers, and educators from our two local universities attended an “Evidence-Based Practices Collaboration” meeting. The judges expressed a desire to ensure that treatment providers adopted programs to treat offenders which research proved were effective in reducing recidivism and changing behavior. A more systematized method of communication between services providers, court services and the Court was established.

In 2008, McLean County experienced serious jail-overcrowding and expended \$761,000.00 in county funds for out-of-county housing of McLean County inmates. A Jail Population Management Task Force brought all of the major stakeholders in the criminal justice system together to examine this issue. The National Institute for Corrections (NIC) conducted an assessment of the justice system in McLean County. A detailed report was presented to the Task Force which noted, among other things, that those interviewed were:

‘...genuinely interested in improving the administration of justice;’ that all twelve judges participated in the interview process, local officials acknowledge a need for a systems approach to dealing with jail-crowding, the Integrated Justice Information System is impressive, and serves all of the justice agencies in the county; there is much pride in the community as well as community interest in justice operations as evidenced by participation by League of Women Voters and Alternatives to Jail committee members; and that inviting the consultants is a sign of ‘trust, open and good government.’

There were also significant criticisms, which included a lack of a formal planning process and poor handling of data. It was strongly recommended that the Jail Population Management Task Force be converted into a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, which would include the entire justice system - the executive, legislative and judicial branches of county government, including the municipalities. As a result, in July 2009, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council was created by resolution of the Circuit Court, the County of McLean, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, and Illinois State University.

Current Status

The CJCC examines policies and procedures of the criminal justice system; identifies model practices; identifies deficiencies; and formulates policies, plans, and programs based on well-established research and statistical methodologies designed to promote change when opportunity presents itself. There are 19 permanent members, including the Chief Circuit Judge; Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division; Sheriff; State's Attorney; Public Defender; Clerk of the Court; Director of Court Services; Chiefs of Police of Bloomington, Normal, and Illinois State University Police Departments; Director of Public Health; Director of Chamber of Commerce; a representative from Illinois State University Criminal Justice Science Department; a League of Women Voters representative; a representative from social services; and a public member. Ex-officio members include the County Administrator, Trial Court Administrator, and council members from Bloomington and Normal.

The core components of our strategy include collaboration; involving the key participants in the system; and setting goals and meeting dates for all to review the work of the subcommittees. There is a commitment to collecting and analyzing data from the Integrated Justice Information System (IJIS) to assure that change is implemented successfully. Additionally, two universities are partnering with us to perform the analyses, assist in research and grant-writing, and supply student resources (primarily through internships). Many of the CJCC participants collaborated to develop a very successful Drug Court, which began operations in 2006. The collaboration led to a Pretrial Services program in January 2008, and a Mental Health Court which began operating in May, 2010. The CJCC provides a more formalized structure for its members to work collaboratively in the future.

Care is taken to involve a committed group of citizens who monitor and critique the criminal justice system. The membership of the CJCC includes a League of Women Voters representative, as the League has taken a very active role in promoting changes in the McLean County criminal justice system. Including a public member as a voting member, assures accountability to citizens of McLean County. Including city council members from both municipalities and a social services representative broadened opportunities to collaborate and share information. The Executive Committee committed to developing a website for the CJCC, which will include minutes of all subcommittees and the CJCC meetings and will be linked to the McLean County Circuit Court website and other county and municipal government websites.

In hindsight, the CJCC should have been established well in advance of the jail overcrowding crisis. If it had, spending so much on out-of-county inmate housing could have been avoided; but sometimes it takes a crisis to create an opportunity to change. In the past four years, there has been a significant reduction in the costs to house inmates outside the county (from \$761,000.00 in 2008 to \$0.00 in 2012). However, the CJCC was formed to do more than respond to a jail overcrowding problem. More importantly, the collaboration with additional agencies and individuals focuses on improving all aspects of the criminal justice system by mining the data to grow proven successful programs.

McLean County contracted with the Illinois State University's Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development to provide research and analytical services to the CJCC, which primarily consists of extracting data from IJIS to assist the CJCC in developing standardized reports to support management and/or policy decisions related to the justice system.

It is still very early, but it appears that the key partners to the CJCC are committed to furthering the mission and have assigned the appropriate staff resources to do the work. There are no "turf" issues; we recognize during these very lean times in Illinois that we need to share resources and funding opportunities to adequately serve the public. McLean County recently began operating a mental health court, called Recovery Court, and is exploring how to expand services to veterans. McLean County partnered with a local treatment provider in applying for a grant, and it is anticipated that members of the collaboration will continue to jointly seek federal and state funding, citing the strong collaboration within the system as a significant benefit.

The right people were at the table planning for the CJCC and they continue to attend our quarterly meetings, which is a good indication that the strategy is working. In addition more agencies have approached the CJCC members asking to partner with the CJCC, which suggests to us that the CJCC is viewed as a positive force for change in McLean County.

Central Concerns of the McLean County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Organization of Organizations: The CJCC serves as an umbrella for organizations in the criminal justice system. It will be the “glue” for the organizations. The CJCC serves as a forum to discuss differences, facilitate communication, and assist with the pursuit of external funding and technical assistance. The CJCC will be a conduit for information sharing between the Council and others like it. The CJCC will also be consulted regarding new programs developed by the CJCC partners.

Steps to be taken

- Evaluate and invite appropriate members to sit on the CJCC and its committees
- Use the committee structure for reporting on action steps and sharing information
- Assess the possibility of hiring a staff person to coordinate CJCC activities, new programming, and external funding of projects

Data-Driven Analyses and Evidence-Based Practices: The CJCC will evaluate processes and business practices to improve efficiency in relevant programs. The CJCC will monitor trends and demographics of the jail population by charge severity and inmates’ pre-trial, convicted, or sentenced status. These data will be made available to committees and departments. Whether managed by the CJCC or departments themselves, this data will be used to evaluate programs and agencies.

Steps to be taken

- Use IJIS as an information system for monitoring the jail population in real-time
- Standardize the recording of events within IJIS
 - Provide education and training for this purpose
 - Standardize daily jail reports such that there can be real-time communication between the jail and the courts
- Monitor and make available to committees and departments data on trends and demographics of the jail population by charge severity; mental health status; and pre-trial, convicted, or sentenced status
- Existing and new programs will provide **data-driven** evidence of effectiveness
 - Establish data standards and terminology for reporting and evaluations
 - Evaluate current and new programs, adjusting existing programs and eliminating ineffective programs based on data
- Acknowledge and publicize the success of programs that develop performance-based measures or exceed their goals
- Continue coordination and analysis of data with resources external to the County (e.g., Stevenson Center, Illinois State University)

Committees Responsible: Executive and Data Management

Case Processing

Goal 1: The CJCC will identify factors that affect case-processing time and work to shorten case processing time. The CJCC will assess whether the case disposition standards are appropriate and being met. The CJCC will examine the length of time a person is in custody as a portion of his or her overall processing time and track outcomes.

Commentary:

Action Steps

- a. Develop a data feedback loop for departments to evaluate performance
- b. Report on the timing of case management processes
- c. Educate Assistant State's Attorneys, Assistant Public Defenders and judiciary on administrative sanctions
- d. Consult the National Center for State Courts regarding disposition standards
- e. Evaluate the effectiveness of specialty courts (e.g., the Juvenile Court) and facilitate the expansion of them

Measurable Outcomes

- a. Reduce the time it takes a case to reach full disposition
- b. Reduce continuances and bed days
- c. Develop a range of options to expedite cases
- d. Identify problems and a range of solutions
- e. Reduce the number of Petitions to Revoke (PTR) probation filed for technical violations and misdemeanor offenses
- f. Review outside evaluation of specialty courts and incorporate recommendations to enhance programs as needed

Committee Responsible: Best Practices

Jail Usage

Goal 2: The CJCC will develop a template/model for the effective use of the jail. This includes developing appropriate housing for those who have mental health disorders, and adjusting jail use in addressing work release, periodic imprisonment, and sentenced individuals. The CJCC will continue to support the use of pre-trial supervision as an alternative to incarceration when appropriate.

Commentary:

Action Steps

- a. Define the purpose of the jail and include law enforcement agencies in the discussion
- b. Create alternatives for low-risk populations (work release and weekenders)
- c. Create alternatives for those with mental health issues
- d. Examine the use of citations for criminal misdemeanors rather than arrests
- e. Examine recommendations of National Institute of Corrections study

Measurable Outcomes

- a. Provide training and education to agencies to foster understanding and acceptance of the jail's purpose
- b. Establish a continuum of appropriate housing options
- c. Reduce the number of criminal misdemeanors housed in the jail
- d. Review outside evaluations of the jail and incorporate recommendations as needed

Committee Responsible: Jail Utilization

Community Knowledge of the Criminal Justice System

Goal 3: The CJCC will be the conduit of information about the McLean County criminal justice system to the general public.

Commentary:

Action Steps

1. Appoint members to develop a Community Relations Committee
2. Develop a separate website
3. Enhance the visibility of the criminal justice system
4. Regularly report to the McLean County Board

Measurable Outcomes

1. Established Community Relations Committee by December 1, 2013
2. Measure web traffic
3. Gather feedback on issues and concerns
4. Begin reporting to the McLean County Board

Committee Responsible: Executive (at first) then Community Relations

Legislation

Goal 4: The CJCC should serve as a conduit of information regarding the criminal justice system in McLean County to the state officials that represent us.

Commentary:

Action Steps

- a. Track pending legislation
- b. Report on adopted legislation
- c. Provide information to area legislators on issues/bills impacting the criminal justice system

Measurable Outcomes

- a. Examine the impact on the McLean County justice system
- b. Inform the McLean County justice system and community
- c. Help craft better legislation

Committee Responsible: Community Relations