



Over 30 Years Promoting and Supporting Effective Community Corrections

Mission:

To bring together stakeholders to promote and support effective community corrections that enhance public safety.

www.ojacc.org

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President's Message

By: Kysten Palmore, OJACC President

When I began writing this address, I believed I was speaking for most people -woman, man, child, and pet-kids-2020 could not end too soon. Our lives and the nation were upended in a myriad of ways, from COVID-19, its spotlight on racial disparities in society, to civil unrest, the death of hundreds of thousands due to the rapid spread of infections, to political division and divisiveness to local financial crises and national economic decline affecting tens of millions. It was my utmost pleasure to say farewell to double 20.

Our nation is experiencing tumultuous and unprecedented times. However, I do not want to leave you with only doom and gloom. In Ohio, the criminal justice system weathered the tempest that was 2020. Criminal justice leaders had to empower their staff to use critical skills such as agility, communication, resiliency, and empathy.

In 2020, the criminal justice system leapfrogged years in a digital world that was already quickly changing our patterns of learning, working, and socializing. State and local courts, jails, and correctional facilities had to quickly adapt and find new ways to take their processes and procedures online to continue the business of public safety while protecting the physical safety of staff and individuals in their custody.

I am delighted that the passionate and committed trustees of OJACC chose to continue our schedule of events with a few tweaks and variations in the manner and form of our presentations. However, we maintained our quarterly meetings and schedule of events. OJACC and the Adult Community Corrections Collaborative partnered to produce an informational webinar. In October, we conducted our biennial strategic planning retreat. It was a hugely successful planning session. Twenty-three participants engaged in thoughtful and thought-provoking discussions focused on three strategies (1) continually update and strengthen the Policy Platform that advances and reflects the mission of OJACC; (2) advocate for meaningful, uniform data collection and sharing; and (3) share evidence-based information with judges, prosecutors, and other criminal justice decision-makers to advance the OJACC mission. There was also considerable discussion regarding exploring opportunities to advocate for increased recognition of the intersection of social determinants of health and public safety.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter issued this summer, we updated and finalized our policy platform to reflect new education, reform, and advocacy priorities. OJACC can proudly say where we lead, others follow. For example, our policy platform draft



Kysten Palmore, J.D., MSW, MA, Deputy Dir. Community Engagement & Reentry

Submissions:

The OJACC Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections. Subscription is free to all members.

The OJACC Newsletter encourages submission of articles relating to community corrections. Articles must be relatively brief, and OJACC reserves the right to edit articles for space considerations and to select which articles to publish.

Points of view expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJACC.

OJACC accepts paid advertising.

Article

Submission

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proceeded the Executive Order directing various federal agencies to take steps to advance the adoption and availability of telehealth. The October newsletter for the Coalition for Juvenile Justice highlighted the November 20th vote by the Council of State Advisory Groups to adopt a Racial Equity Policy Platform.

It is my sincere hope that many of the solutions outlined in our policy platform, strategic plan, and those implemented to ensure the fair, efficient, and effective justice system workflows are recognized as improvements and later incorporated into routine operations when the coronavirus crisis is over.

2020 was a challenging year for the world. It was especially challenging for the men and women working in the criminal justice system. It forced our members to pivot in ways we could not have imagined. These decisions, often made out of necessity and frequently long overdue, come with bittersweet lessons that allowed our foundational values and strengths to shine through in the toughest circumstances.

To the men and women who lost their lives to COVID-19 while ensuring the wheels of the criminal justice system continue to churn, we dedicate this first issue of the OJACC newsletter for 2021 in memoriam to you.

CBCFs and Halfway Houses Continue to Accept Referrals during COVID-19 and Take Steps to Provide a Safe Environment

Experience has shown the risks that COVID-19 poses for congregate settings. As a result, it is imperative that those involved professionally or personally in community corrections or the court system know that steps have been put in place to ensure everyone's safety. Reentry services are essential and providers have implemented new policies that allow them to safely continue to help people get well and change their lives, using evidence based practices that reduce recidivism.

During these unprecedented times, Halfway Houses and Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCF) have remained open, adapting quickly to state and federal guidelines, and evolving local community risk levels. That is crucial because the need for these services, especially treatment for substance use disorders, has increased during the pandemic due to factors such as isolation, fear, unemployment, access to sobriety support, and the ongoing opioid epidemic. The criminal justice population needs safe facilities where offenders can receive services that prepare them to succeed in a world that is challenging, even for those of us who do not face reentry barriers.

To address these challenges of congregate living during the pandemic, Halfway Houses and CBCFs have kept clients and staff safe by instituting many new practices. While there were a few outbreaks at some CBCFs and HHs in Ohio in the spring, practices are now in place to safely address anyone who is symptomatic and minimize the risk of another outbreak.

As you work with individuals who are in need of rehabilitative services and substance abuse and behavioral healthcare treatment, you can be confident that the state's halfway houses and CBCFs are operating in as safe a manner as possible. Our teams of community correction professionals, cognitive behavioral experts, licensed counselors, education and employment specialists, and case managers are ready, as always, to partner with the criminal justice system to achieve the best outcomes for everyone during these challenging times.



OJACC Holds Virtual Symposium

Fall of 2020 was the first time in 34 years OJACC has not held an in-person annual conference. Instead, we held a virtual symposium entitled, *COVID-19 Challenges and Opportunities*. Representatives from the Court, probation, residential community corrections facilities, ODRC, and jails shared adjustments they have made as a result of COVID-19, lessons

learned, and innovative practices they put in place to function in an era of COVID-19 that are productive that may continue as general practices after COVID. Thank you to our presenters and facilitator for sharing this wealth of information and special thanks to The Supreme Court of Ohio Judicial Services for hosting the event.

Continued 2021 Conference Uncertainty

We hope to get back to our in-person conference this year. If we can move forward with the annual in-person conference, it will be held on September 30th and October 1st, 2021. We will continue to monitor the situation and consider other alternatives if necessary. Possible alternatives may include one-day regional workshops or a virtual conference. More information will be provided as it comes available.

OJACC Planning Retreat a Success

Every two years the OJACC Board of Trustees participate in a retreat to plan for the work of the organization for the next two years. Historically the board has met for a two-day retreat. Like everything else in 2020, we had to rethink our retreat strategy. With assistance from our facilitator, the board held a very productive Zoom Retreat with an initial October meeting to identify goals. Committees then worked to clarify those goals and presented to the full board in December.



After much valuable discussion, the board established the following goals:

- Continually update and strengthen the OJACC Policy Platform that advances OJACC's Mission. The Policy Platform is a dynamic document that speaks to the focus of the work of OJACC. That document and subsequent changes/updates will be shared with policymakers, stakeholders, legislators, service providers, and interested parties. The most recent version of the OJACC Policy Platform can be found at: <http://ojacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OJACC-Policy-Platform-Updated-9-2020-.doc>
- Advocate for meaningful, uniform data collection and sharing. OJACC will stress the importance of meaningful, uniform data collection and sharing and will look to more effectively share data.
- Share evidence-based information with judges, prosecutors, and other criminal justice decision-makers to advance OJACC's mission. OJACC will seek to work together with stakeholders to find common ground on important issues that improve community corrections emphasizing outreach and advocacy.

We look forward to continuing to increasing the effectiveness of OJACC as a result of this renewed focus and planning.

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Felony Sentencing Database

The establishment of a felony sentencing database not only is an investment in an evidence-informed public policy decision—making process, it is an investment in a safer, fairer, and more cost-efficient criminal justice system. Felony sentencing data in Ohio is a complicated web of independent state and local systems with their own structure, organization, data, and sharing protocols and we can't produce statewide or aggregate data statistics on adult felony sentencing, procedures and outcomes.

The complex, intricate process of felony sentencing in Ohio makes ensuring clear, comprehensible sentences of the utmost import for the administration of justice and promoting confidence in the system. Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor asked the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission (Commission) 1 to convene a Uniform Sentencing Entry Ad Hoc Committee. The Ad Hoc Committee developed a Uniform Sentencing Entry that prescribes the most clear and concise minimum language required to comply with Criminal Rule 32 and existing case law and establishes standardized, common data essential for identifying relationships and trends common to all felony courts. 2

It is important to highlight that the Uniform Sentencing Entry, Method of Conviction entries and "Good Civics" index of forms and notices will evolve as they are implemented and as such, are therefore "living" documents. Throughout the process Administrative Judges, Court Administrators and Clerks were asked to help guide the work by providing detail on their respective courts' approach to the use of a method of conviction (plea or trial) form or entry and the sentencing entry in felony cases. The iterative process will continue as the documents will be widely shared among judicial associations, court personnel, and practitioners and posted on the Commission's website. The Commission will monitor legislation and Supreme Court case decisions to keep the documents current, notify practitioners of those changes, and work with jurisdictions to provide implementation support and ongoing training.

The adoption of this package of felony sentencing documents is our best opportunity to begin standardized, aggregate felony sentencing data collection in Ohio through a thoughtful, mindful, and intentional approach to benefit all users. Its development includes mapping the case flow processes to confirm all points are appropriately and accurately identified and included. Copious examination to develop such a system and the local nuances and details involved is nonnegotiable for success.

The Commission has long contemplated the collection of sentencing data and this is a pivotal time in Ohio and across the country. There is a reckoning to confront systemic inequities and to achieve social and racial justice. The near three-decade-long sentencing data deficit must be addressed as recommended in the still unrealized data collection goals of the Ohio Commission on Racial Fairness Report. 3

We are working with pilot courts to create a felony sentencing database, the Ohio Sentencing Data Platform, which can and will enhance public confidence and trust in the system by making information accessible, consumable and reportable. It will help inform decision-making and give judges the tools and information needed to do their jobs in accordance with the purposes and principles of felony sentencing. We believe we can do this in a way that is efficient, reduces duplication and does not fiscally burden local government.

Essential to the effort will be the modernization of the Commission's statutory authority and transition to the Ohio Criminal Justice Commission. 4 The modernization of the enabling statutes of the Commission includes both changes in membership and duties. Importantly, the changes in duties for the Commission are robust and support the indispensable role of sentencing commissions to assemble and analyze all the data about the criminal justice system needed to make sensible cost-benefit decisions; promote smart, effective use of resources; and ensure measured, proportional responses.

The modernized Criminal Justice Commission and the development of the Ohio Sentencing Data Platform will give us the ability to tell the comprehensive story and illustrate the deep intricacies of felony sentencing. It will move us toward a data-informed environment that allows for the thorough understanding and analysis of the criminal justice system by its own actors and those making policy decisions while increasing transparency to the public. It allows examination of sentencing patterns and trends, yet realizes we are talking about case and people-specific fact patterns, weaving them together to inform and engage others in development of sound state policy, enhanced public safety, reduced recidivism, and an equalized application of justice.

For more information, please contact Sara Andrews, sara.andrews@sc.ohio.gov.

1 <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/Boards/Sentencing/default.asp>

2 For details email sara.andrews@sc.ohio.gov

3 <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/Publications/fairness/fairness.pdf>

4 For details email sara.andrews@sc.ohio.gov



CSG Announces: Justice Counts, A New National CJ Effort

The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center has convened the inaugural national steering committee meeting for Justice Counts, a first-of-its-kind coalition of 21 leading criminal justice organizations. Justice Counts is the largest, most comprehensive consensus-building initiative designed to help policymakers make better decisions with criminal justice data that's timely, less disjointed, and as useful as possible.

In the coming months, Justice Counts will embark on a scan of public, aggregate, criminal justice data, which will provide policymakers in every state with timely information about their criminal justice systems, existing gaps in data collection, and opportunities to do better. The initiative is led by the CSG Justice Center and made possible by the support of the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

But in criminal justice systems across the country, actionable data and information can be hard to come by. Critical data is often collected but not analyzed, analyzed but not shared, or shared but not acted upon. The result is a criminal justice system with a widespread desire to make data-informed decisions, but individual agencies lacking the time, ability, or organizational mandate to do so. Policymakers need precise, consistent, and useful data metrics that enable them to quickly and easily understand how people move through the criminal justice system and how related policy and financial changes may impact public safety. Justice Counts, a new initiative led by The Council of State Governments Justice Center and supported by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, is designed to help policymakers and criminal justice practitioners make better decisions using data. The initiative centers on intense collaboration to provide policymakers with data and develop a set of criminal justice metrics that are attainable and impactful for any state or agency. Justice Counts establishes a large network of partners with connections in all 50 states and thousands of counties and cities across the U.S., representing key officials in the areas of policymaking, law enforcement, courts, corrections, behavioral health, and more. Justice Counts will collaborate to:

1. Broadly scan public, aggregate-level criminal justice data in all 50 states to provide policymakers with timely information about their criminal justice systems, existing gaps in data collection, and opportunities for improvement;
2. Develop and build consensus around a set of key criminal justice metrics that drive budget and policy decisions;
3. Create a range of tools and resources that will enable policymakers and criminal justice practitioners to examine current practices and adopt the data metrics; and
4. Encourage states and localities to make the new data metrics part of their day-to-day operations and provide selected states with technical assistance.

For more information go to: <http://www.justicecounts.csgjusticecenter.org/>

Note: The following articles are from the Stepping Up Ohio Newsletter



Psychotropic Drug Reimbursement to County Jails

By: Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, Retired Justice & Program Director of Stepping Up, with assistance from the Attorney General Task Force Subcommittee on Medication Reimbursement.

Is your county taking full advantage of reimbursement for the expanded list of medications for the county jail reimbursement program?

1. THE \$2.5 MILLION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM IS FOR ALL COUNTIES, EVEN IF NOT PART OF STEPPING UP. The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) provides reimbursement to counties for the cost of certain drugs that are dispensed to inmates of county jails in Ohio. The amount of \$2.5 million has been allotted this fiscal year (SFY 2021). Currently, eligible drugs include antipsychotic (including all FDA approved long-acting injectable formulations), antidepressant, anti-anxiety, and mood-stabilizing medications that are currently available on the Ohio Medicaid Unified Preferred Drug list. Stimulants prescribed for the treatment of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are specifically excluded from the definition of psychotropic drug for the purposes of this program.

2. \$1.25 MILLION AVAILABLE NOW. The total reimbursement amount available for SFY 2021 is \$2,500,000. Of the total amount, \$1,250,000 is available semiannually. A county jail will receive reimbursement based on their jail's percentage of the total amount of reimbursement requested across all jails participating in the program. For example, if a county jail accounts for 1% of the total amount requested for the reporting period, the jail would receive \$12,500. OhioMHAS will notify the jails and the local ADAMHS Board of the amount that each jail will receive for the reporting period. **OhioMHAS will reimburse jails after payment information is uploaded in the Grants and Funding Management System.** Once processed, the ADAMH Board will receive the funds and then pass them on to the jails. For jails located in multiple ADAMH Board counties, the payment upload will be processed to the Board in the county where the jail is located.

3. LONG-ACTING INJECTABLES ARE NOW REIMBURSABLE AND HAVE LONG TERM BENEFITS. The usage of long-acting injectable (LAI) antipsychotic medications in county jails was the focus of a recent survey conducted by the Attorney General's Task Force on Mental Illness. LAI antipsychotic medications have been shown to be safe and particularly effective at enhancing medication adherence as well as reducing decompensation, hospitalization, arrest, and incarceration. Results of the survey revealed that about 60 percent of county jails routinely utilize LAI antipsychotics and that their usage was associated with various benefits, including increase adherence and better symptom control.

While it is encouraging that over half of county jails use LAI injectables, there remains sizable opportunity for the remaining 40 percent of jails to take advantage of their benefits. Again, LAI antipsychotics alleviate the need for daily medication checks, they are effective at controlling symptoms, and the significantly decrease the likelihood of re-arrest and incarceration, thereby stopping the "revolving door" of severe mental illness and criminal justice involvement. **Some thought they were too expensive so are not using them, which shows that they are unaware these costs can be reimbursed.**

4. MORE EDUCATION AND A WEBINAR ON THEIR USE IS BEING PLANNED. Utilizing feedback from the survey, the Task Force is exploring opportunities on clinical education as well as best practices for LAI administration, the prescription of other psychotropic medications in jails, and enhancing linkage with community-based treatment. These efforts are expected to enhance knowledge of the benefits and cost-effectiveness of LAI usage in county jails, resulting in positive outcomes for multiple stakeholders.

PLEASE CHECK WITH YOUR JAILS AND PROVIDERS TO BE SURE THAT

1. YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THE COUNTIES NOT GETTING ANY REIMBURSEMENT, AND
2. YOUR JAIL MEDICAL STAFF ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE NEWER DRUGS AND LTI's NOW REIMBURSABLE.

Veterans Re-entry Search Service

By: Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, Retired Justice and Project Director for Stepping Up, with appreciation to Tisha Hardin, Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator, Chillicothe VA Medical Center.

1. THIS SYSTEM HELPS IDENTIFY VETERANS WHO MAY NOT SELF-IDENTIFY EVEN IF YOU HAVE A VETERANS SCREEN ON INTAKE. The VA developed an automated system called Veteran Re-entry Search Service (VRSS) to locate Veterans who are currently incarcerated in federal, state, city and county correctional facilities, or who are represented as defendants on court dockets. VRSS is used to identify Veterans incarcerated or under supervision.

2. ONCE IDENTIFIED, THE VJO CAN CONNECT THE VETERAN TO MANY SERVICES. This is done under a major Initiative is to Eliminate Veteran Homelessness (EVH) which aims to eradicate homelessness among Veterans. Information about charged, convicted, and/or incarcerated Veterans provided by VRSS will be used by VHA Veterans Justice Programs' (VJP) Specialists in either the Healthcare for Re-entry Veterans (HCRV) Program or the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program as part of their outreach activities to prevent Veteran homelessness.

The HCRV Program is designed to address community re-entry needs of charged, convicted, and/or incarcerated Veterans being released from prison, including addressing their housing needs. HCRV works to reduce the impact of medical, psychiatric, and substance abuse problems upon community readjustment and decrease the likelihood of re-incarceration for those leaving prison.

3. THE VJOs CAN FAST TRACK LINKAGES TO FEDERAL AND VA SERVICES. The VJO Program provides outreach and linkage to VA services for Veterans at early stages of the justice system, including Veterans courts, drug courts, and mental health courts. VJO's goal is to reduce extended incarceration among Veterans with substance abuse or mental illness. This is done by providing treatment alternatives to incarceration. VRSS will provide automated identification of charged, convicted, and incarcerated Veterans to greatly accelerate Veteran enrollment and reduce delays in accessing VA services once these individuals are released from custody.

4. IDENTIFYING AND CONNECTING VETERANS EARLY WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR JAILS AND COMMUNITY. Veteran identification automation will improve data accuracy, reduce cycle times in the provision of VA services, and give the VA a tool to help target the correct programs to the Veterans in need of services.

Currently, Homeless Program Office Justice Programs Specialists use a variety of manual methods to identify incarcerated Veterans including: self-reporting, word of mouth referrals, informational sessions, contact with correctional staff, re-entry and parole staff, chaplains, mental health and physical health staff in correctional institutions, and justice professionals in the courts.

4. THE VRSS WILL FIND VETERANS THAT ARE OFTEN MISSED THROUGH OTHER METHODS. Correctional Facilities and Court Systems will use the VRSS website to upload their current population or census listings. VA will run the data through the VADIR database to search for inmates who have served in the U.S. military. Then an output file will be transmitted back to the originating Correctional Facility or Court System and the VJO and HCRV social worker to facilitate outreach for charged, convicted, or incarcerated Veterans.

IF YOUR COUNTY IS NOT USING THIS SYSTEM, AND MANY ARE NOT, YOU ARE LOSING VALUABLE FEDERAL AND VA DOLLARS AND RESOURCES THAT COULD BE BENEFITING YOUR COMMUNITY AND FREEING UP RESOURCES FOR OTHERS WHO ARE NOT VETERANS. PLEASE CHECK TO SEE IF YOU ARE DOING THIS IN YOUR COUNTY.



The Positive Impact of Housing with Services on People with Mental Illness Who Cycle In & Out of Incarceration

By Sally Luken, President Luken Solutions and housing consultant to Stepping Up Ohio; Editors include Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, retired Justice and Stepping Up Ohio Director, Michael Daniels, Franklin Co Justice Policy & Programs Director, Katie Kitchin, CSH Director, Terri Power, CSH Senior Program Manager and Kassie Neff, Delaware Co Criminal Justice Program Manager

“The continued incarceration of mentally ill and addicted individuals in county jails places an undue burden of risk and of cost upon these facilities and is clearly outside the purpose for county jails. Jail employees are not trained to manage or treat individuals suffering from mental illness or addiction. This population is at high risk for injuring themselves or others. The health care costs for these individuals are excessive, and the housing of these individuals in a jail threatens public safety by taking up scarce bed space that was designed for and should be used for housing real criminals.” (CCAO Legislative Platform – 134th General Assembly Justice and Public Safety)

Housing is a Major Barrier for Persons With Mental Illness Involved in the Criminal Justice System

Funding is needed to expand HOUSING options for this population. Stepping Up Ohio project counties, focused on reducing the incarceration of this population, have identified HOUSING among the top three barriers counties face in addressing the needs of people with mental health issues in their jails.

Yet, we know that:

- HOUSING coupled with behavioral health and tenancy supports reduces jail days and recidivism.
- HOUSING with supportive services is a less costly public investment than having a person cycling among public systems and in and out of homelessness.
- HOUSING and healthcare is the humane response to Ohioans with mental health issues.

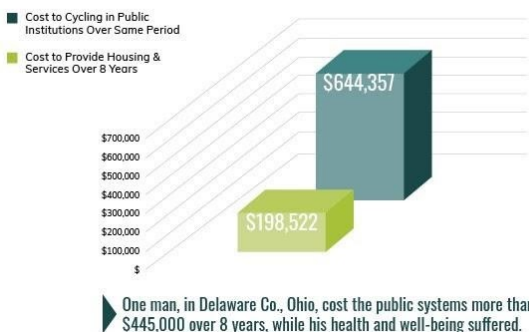
Research and People's Lives Bear This Out

In the County of San Diego pilot, *Project 25*, housing and services were provided to 28 people who frequented county jail. Their three-year study concluded that the “total number of arrests across the group plummeted from 82 to 18, or 78%...” (Fermanian Business & Economic Institute at Point Loma Nazarene University 2015) What's more, jail days for these 28 people was reduced by 63%. But we don't need a California study to prove the effectiveness of housing and services to incarcerated people with behavioral health issues.

We Have Evidence Right Here in Ohio of the High Cost of Not Dealing With the Problem

Your colleagues, Franklin County Commissioners and their Justice Policy & Programs are funding with T-CAP, a similar intervention. The Franklin County FUSE initiative is using a randomized trial to place former jail inmates in housing with services. Jail days *following* release is half, 235 days total, for all those housed compared to the control group of 521 days. (Franklin Co FUSE Initiative, Quarterly Report 6/30/2020) Cuyahoga County's Stepping Up Team, began a similar project this year, called Returning Home Cuyahoga County. Twenty people with mental illness who are frequent users of public systems will be housed with robust service supports.

PUBLIC COST COMPARISON



In Delaware County, your colleagues with the support of their Stepping Up team lead by the Sheriff's Office computed the cost of one Delaware County man cycling among jail, state prison, and psychiatric hospitalization. Over an eight-year period, public institutions forked over more than \$445,000 than was necessary before placing him in appropriate housing and with a robust team of support.

And people's lives tell the real story of the impact of housing instead of incarceration on their health and well-being. Brent, the Delaware County man whose cycling was calculated above, was known in the county jail for his bizarre behavior. Brent's severe mental illness and development disability went undiagnosed and unmanaged for too long. Delaware County's

Multi-Agency Crisis Intervention Team (MACIT) program intervened and wrapped safe housing, intensive case management, guardianship, and mental health treatment/medication around Brent. According to MACIT coordinator, “Brent lives a safe and content life in our community - for over 4 years now, with no arrests, re-hospitalization, drug or alcohol use. We are all so proud of Brent!”

For more information on how Stepping Up Ohio can help your county, contact sally.luken@lukensolutions.com

For more information on the power and impact of housing and services on reducing incarceration:

Ohio's Community Transitions Program: https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CTP_Annual-Report-Final-2020.pdf

BCS Uses Innovation to Address the Needs of Community Partners

By Krista Burke, ODRC



2020 brought many new challenges for community corrections professionals, including the inability to complete required trainings in a traditional setting. Historically, training opportunities have been delivered in-classroom, on-the-job, or during breakout sessions at professional conferences. The COVID-19 pandemic has made many agencies re-evaluate current methods for delivering training and expand opportunities to deliver trainings in a virtual environment.

At a time when innovation is more important than ever, the Bureau of Community Sanctions (BCS) began exploring the use of technology to provide mission-critical training opportunities to community corrections partners throughout the state. In cooperation with Alvis Inv., BCS successfully delivered the first-ever virtual ORAS 2-day training in June 2020 via the Microsoft Teams meeting platform. This innovative approach to virtual learning filled an identified gap in training opportunities at a time when traditional methods for delivering trainings were discouraged. Feedback following the rollout of the virtual ORAS training was positive and has resulted in BCS offering several other such trainings, and developing other courses for the virtual learning environment.

On the heels of the success of the ORAS 2-day virtual training, BSC transitioned the BCS Standards Academy to a virtual learning experience via the Microsoft TEAMS platform. The BCS Standards Academy is designed to assist program directors and other staff with understanding each standard, the correlation of standards, and how requirements support mission-critical operations of community corrections programs. Additionally, BCS plans to soon offer virtual trainings in Core Correctional Practices, Success Planning which is our coursework designed to promote effective case planning.

BCS is also excited to announce a new training option to expand the offerings available to community correction staff. BCS collaborated with Intelligrants software developers to begin offering short virtual videos that reinforce desired core correctional practices, supplement COB training hour requirements, and provide other operational instruction. The first set of videos is produced by the University of Cincinnati and illustrate core correctional practices such as role-playing, skill-building, and the ideal case management session. These videos are free and available 24/7. BCS appreciates the collaboration with the University of Cincinnati and Intelligrants software developers to make this project a success and is currently working with other agencies to develop additional content for future virtual learning opportunities.

Community Corrections will one day return to offering in-classroom learning experiences; however, it is important to maintain, grow, and expand the catalog of training options. By offering a wide range of learning opportunities, we can be assured our staff will continue to develop and refine skills to help our organizations function better and grow.

For more information on available virtual learning courses offered by BCS, please contact us at 614-752-1188.

Board Member Highlights

Welcome to New Board Members:

Melissa Pierson is the Deputy Director of Justice Services with the Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs. She has served with this office for 20 years, serving in previous roles as a Justice Program Evaluator and Grants Administrator. In addition to policy formulation and budget oversight, she oversees the Franklin County jail MAT program, launch and implementation of Franklin County's Rapid Resource Center, administration of annual federal formula grant funding totaling \$10 million-plus, and has secured multiple large-scale discretionary grants supporting a range of smart justice programs. Prior to her tenure with OJPP, Melissa was a Programs Manager with the Franklin County Common Pleas Adult Probation Department and is credited with launching the first-day reporting program in Franklin County while also overseeing a myriad of specialized probation caseloads.



Melissa attended Ohio University for her undergraduate degree in Sociology/Criminology and the University of Dayton where she obtained a Master's Degree of Science in Education.

Burma Stewart represents the Ohio Association for Court Administration on the OJACC Board of Trustees. She serves as Deputy Court Administrator for the Toledo Municipal Court. She joined the court as Assistant Chief Probation Officer in October 2013. She also served as the Chief Probation Officer from 2015 to 2018. She was appointed to Deputy Court Administrator in February 2018. Burma began her career as a Probation Officer for Cleveland Municipal Court in 1991. In 1998, she was promoted to Probation Unit Supervisor where her assignment included supervision of the department's Westside satellite office and Veteran's Court Coordinator.

Burma holds a B.A. in Government from Cornell University and an M.S. in Urban Studies from Cleveland State University. She is a member of the Ohio Association for Court Administrators, the American Probation and Parole Association, and the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice. Burma completed the Certified Court Management Program through the Supreme Court of Ohio in November 2017. Currently, Burma is a candidate for the Class of 2021 Certified Court Executive (CCE) program.

Congratulations to Anne Connell-Freund and Jim Slagle on their retirements after years of service on the OJACC Board of Trustees.



Anne Connell-Freund's successful career began in 1989 at Oriana House in Akron, Ohio. Anne started with the agency as a caseworker coordinator, then progressed through various positions leading to Executive Vice President of Operations where she was responsible for overseeing the operations and management of residential, non-residential, and diversionary community corrections programs; cognitive skills, substance abuse treatment, employment and education services, developing and implementing new programs; and continuous quality improvement. During Anne's tenure, Oriana House expanded its footprint beyond Summit County to the following Ohio counties: Cuyahoga, Erie, Huron, Sandusky, Seneca, Stark, and Washington.

For the past 32 years, Anne has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of those we serve in community corrections. She spearheaded the What Works initiative at Oriana House and was a progressive visionary into the future of community corrections. She dedicated her time to assist a staff of more than 700 employees with implementing programs that were proven to reduce recidivism. Anne's knowledge and passion for research and evidence-based programming is well known and serves as the foundation of her work in developing and expanding community corrections and addiction treatment programs.

Anne's dedication and commitment span beyond Oriana House. She has graciously given her time and talents to many friends and colleagues across the state and has served in leadership roles with many professional organizations including the International Community Corrections Association (ICCA); the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC); and the Ohio Community Corrections Association (OCCA). Additionally, Anne serves on numerous statewide coordinating and collaborating committees for community corrections and is also Board Chair of Summit County Children Services. Throughout her career, she has worked closely with legislators

and local, state, and national leaders to affect changes that increase opportunities for returning citizens who have criminal records, while still protecting public safety.

Anne is highly regarded in the field of community corrections and has been honored to receive many professional awards including the 2003 Professional Achievement Award from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, 2008 Leadership Award from the Ohio Community Corrections Association, 2008 Simon Dinitz Award, 2016 James Wichtman Award from the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections, and the 2018 Arthur McDonald Leadership and Service Award from the International Community Corrections Association.

Anne's long-term participation on the OJACC Board of Trustees and service as OJACC President are much appreciated.

Jim Slagle was elected as Judge of the Marion County Common Pleas Court in 2012. As judge, he understood that in order to truly hold offenders accountable, he must continue to be involved even after imposing sentence. He established Marion's first felony drug court so that defendants could receive the support necessary to recover from the disease of addiction, while also facing immediate consequences if they failed to follow treatment requirements. He also established a reentry docket, so that offenders who return to the community after being released from a correctional facility appeared before him regularly to ensure compliance and increase their potential for success in the community. He worked with treatment providers to ensure that drug treatment began before release from jail and chaired the local community corrections planning board.



As a result of this work, in 2015 Jim Slagle was selected for the C.J. McLin award which recognizes public officials in Ohio who have worked to improve community corrections. In 2016, the Marion County Common Pleas Court Probation Department was selected for the Cliff Skeen Award, presented to programs in recognition of excellence in community corrections.

Prior to serving on the bench, Jim Slagle served for 24 years as Marion County Prosecuting Attorney. He is a former president of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorney's Association, and in 2008 was selected Ohio's Prosecuting Attorney of the Year. As Prosecutor, Slagle joined with the Sheriff and Police Chief to establish the MARMET drug task force, resulting in the prosecution of hundreds of drug dealers. Slagle also obtained grant funds to establish a victim advocacy program within the Prosecutor's Office to ensure that the rights of crime victims were protected.

In 2009, Slagle was named Chief of the Criminal Justice Section for the Ohio Attorney General, where he led a team of 35 lawyers who handled criminal and civil litigation in the state and federal courts. He also represented the Attorney General on multiple statewide bodies and advised the Attorney General on criminal justice issues.

In his lengthy and valued tenure on the OJACC Board of Trustees, Jim Slagle represented the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Attorney General of Ohio's Office, and as a common pleas judge. He also led as OJACC President.

We wish both Anne and Jim great happiness in their much-deserved retirement.



OJACC HISTORY

The vision for OJACC resulted from a group of community corrections professionals coming together with involved state agencies to address the rising prison population in the early 1980s. This group saw real value in bringing together all aspects of community corrections to work toward common goals.

The association began with an initial advance of \$1,000 from the OHHA (OCCA) and, in addition to the officers, included committee representation from Secure Facilities, Residential Facilities, Victim Witness, CCA Programs, and Probation. It did not take long to realize there are many more influences to community corrections than those initially involved and, over the years, additional representatives from associations and state agencies have been added to truly represent the big picture of community corrections. With this diverse representation, we have not always agreed on everything. But it has truly provided an understanding and respect of the work that goes into all areas of community corrections. Over the years we also identified the need to include Juvenile Justice issues.

This type of association is not something that happens in many other states. Our ability to work together among community corrections agencies, DRC, DYS, other state agencies, and stakeholders has assisted Ohio in becoming a leader in community corrections. By focusing on our common goals of improving community corrections, we learn from each other and learn to work together.

The original name of OJACC was OCCO (Ohio Community Corrections Organization). In 2005 the board voted to change the name of the association from OCCO to OJACC. This came as a result of OHHA changing its name to OCCA to reflect the name change of IRCA to ICCA. To reduce the confusion between OCCO and OCCA the board decided on a name change.

In the early years, the administrative tasks required to keep the organization going were completed by board members. As the organization grew the board realized the need for administrative assistance and hired an Executive Director in 1990, which has greatly enhanced the professionalism of the organization.

There have been so many extremely dedicated professionals involved in OJACC over the years. Highlights from comments made by the first and second president of the association from one of our very early newsletters exemplify the original goals of OCCO – OJACC that continue today. First president, Richard Billak wrote, “It was only three short years ago that a group of us came together and asked, how can we take control of our own destiny? Some thirty-six months later, the answer seems obvious – by collectively working together.” The second president, James Wichtman wrote, “We have learned that we use our clearest voice and receive attention to what we have to say when we present our message together. This unity is the very purpose of the Ohio Community Corrections Organization’s existence. Though we recognize the importance each stakeholder plays in the delivery of correctional services, we have experienced true strength when we stood together.”

For over 30 years, OJACC has brought together Ohio's criminal justice stakeholders to include judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, pre-trial and probation officers, law enforcement officials, corrections officials from adult and juvenile systems, treatment providers, reentry practitioners, and victims' representatives to promote and support effective community corrections that enhance public safety. Few other states have achieved this type of umbrella organization which represents Ohio's collaborative efforts that have led to Ohio's place as a leader in Community Corrections.

Together we:

- *Work with state agencies, legislators, and other stakeholders on policy/issues affecting community corrections.*
- *Hold a biennial board retreat to focus efforts of the organization and guide our mission.*
- *Host a biennial legislative reception with OJACC member organizations to educate legislators on issues vital to the improvement of community corrections. OJACC also takes positions throughout the year on pending legislation affecting community corrections and provides input on the development of legislation.*
- *OJACC's Adult Community Corrections Collaborative, comprised of associations providing state-funded community corrections services, works with the ODRC for the overall improvement of these services and highlighting the benefits and cost savings of community corrections.*
- *Hold an annual conference or virtual learning opportunities for personal development/networking, to educate and inform service providers and stakeholders on issues of importance to community corrections and provide tools to enhance services. Individuals and agencies are also recognized through achievement awards.*
- *Provide newsletters throughout the year highlighting evidence-based-practices, promising practices, and issues important to the field of community corrections.*

Please consider membership in OJACC to help support these efforts.

2021 OJACC Membership Application

Agency/Dept.: _____ Name of Agency Representative: _____
 Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____
 Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Type of Membership (Please Check One)

___ **Individual Membership \$25** - Allows an individual in the field of criminal justice or interested citizens to join. Individuals representing private for-profit corporations are excluded from this category.

___ **Government or Private Agency** – Allows governmental or private, not-for-profit agencies to join. Examples of private agency members are halfway houses, private correctional agencies, and child-caring agencies. Examples of Governmental Agencies include state agencies, courts, CBCFs, probation departments. **For agencies with a budget of less than \$500,000, membership is \$150, and for agencies with a budget of \$500,000 or greater, membership is \$250.**

___ **County Membership** – Allows **county commissioner, judge, prosecutor, chief probation officer, and sheriff** from a county to join. These offices may designate an employee from that office to represent them but are specific to the listed positions. **For counties with a population under 150,000, membership is \$150, and for counties with a population of 150,000 or greater, membership is \$250.**

Make check payable to OJACC and mail to PO BOX 79, New Albany, Ohio 43054

Or Charge Membership to: ☐ Visa ☐ Master Card

Name on card: _____ Address on card: _____

Card # _____ Expiration Date: _____ 3 #s from back _____ Zip Code _____

OJACC Federal Tax ID Number: 31-1255020

For questions contact dittmergr@gmail.com or 740-420-6444

Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections



Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections
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