



Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections

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Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC)

POLICY PLATFORM

(Rev. 6/5/2026)

OJACC Mission:

To lead and unify Ohio's community corrections by promoting innovative, effective practices and policies that enhance public safety, improve lives, and strengthen communities.

OJACC Vision:

To be the cornerstone and voice of community corrections in Ohio.

About OJACC

In the mid-1980s, a group of community corrections practitioners and interested parties came together with state agencies to address the problem of a rising prison population outpacing prison capacity. This group of dedicated professionals saw real value in coordinating all aspects of community corrections to work toward common goals and formed The Ohio Community Corrections Organization (OCCO) in 1986. In 2005, the non-profit organization changed its name to The Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC).

OJACC serves as an umbrella organization representing 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.

OJACC focuses on collaborating with all stakeholders to educate policy makers and legislators on issues affecting community corrections. OJACC also provides education to community corrections practitioners to enhance services throughout the state.

Adult Community Corrections in Ohio:

Since the passage of the Community Corrections Act in 1979, Ohio has been committed to creating the most comprehensively funded community corrections system in the nation.

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC), through the Bureau of Community Sanctions (BCS), funds Community Based Corrections Facilities (CBCF), Halfway House Programs (HWH), and Jail and Prison Diversion Community Corrections Act (CCA) programs for Ohio's Courts. In Fiscal Year 2024, these programs served 47,192 individuals at a substantial cost savings to taxpayers <https://drc.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odrc/systems-and-services/1-parole/community-sanctions/community-sanctions>

Diverting appropriate individuals from prison to a residential or non-residential community corrections program often translates to cost savings for Ohio's taxpayers. CBCFs and HWHs also provide intensive programming designed to change offending behavior and improve public safety.

The cost savings are even greater when individuals are supervised on community control sanctions (probation) in a non-residential placement, rather than incarceration. Research demonstrates that programs designed to change offending behavior are most effective when supervised in the community.

Additionally, these programs can serve as step-down release mechanism for Ohio's prison system to provide effective reentry services that help individuals convicted of criminal offenses become law-abiding citizens. The University of Cincinnati has conducted extensive studies of Ohio's community corrections programs. These studies demonstrate that, when used appropriately, community corrections programs can be highly effective in reducing recidivism and promoting public safety.

What are adult community corrections?

Community corrections are alternatives to prison that include a full range of local sanctions imposed by the courts. These may include a local jail sentence, supervision by a probation officer, drug or mental health treatment, required programming, curfew, electronic home monitoring, community service, drug testing, as well as many other sanctions designed to help change offender behavior. The sanctions are individualized based on the seriousness of the crime committed, the risks posed by the offender, and the specific needs to be addressed.

Prison sentences protect the community from dangerous and violent offenders while the offender is in prison but do little to prevent offenders from committing crimes after they are released from prison. Moreover, 95% of offenders sent to prison are eventually released, and nearly half are released after serving less than one year.

Effective community corrections address the underlying issues that lead to criminal behavior. This may include drug or mental health treatment, addressing criminal thinking, as well as educational and vocational needs. Effective community corrections also provide opportunities to hold offenders

accountable, tailoring sanctions to the individual offender. For some, this includes a locked-down residential sanction, such as a CBCF. For others, it may include a HWH program, and, for many, it may include outpatient programming and supervision by a probation officer.

Juvenile Community-Based Alternatives (Community Corrections) in Ohio:

The juvenile justice system in Ohio has reduced the number of youths in custody in Ohio's Department of Youth Services, (ODYS). In 1992, ODYS had nearly 2,600 youth in its facilities. - As of March 2, 2026, there were 503 youth in an ODYS facility – a sign of the increased need for community programming.

Funding for alternatives to youth incarceration is provided by ODYS through several programs, including the Youth Services Grant, RECLAIM (Reasoned and Equitable Community and Local Alternatives to the Incarceration of Minors), Targeted RECLAIM, Competitive RECLAIM, and Behavioral Health and Juvenile Justice (BHJJ). Each of these programs encourage juvenile courts to develop or invest in a range of community-based options to meet the needs of youth who are at-risk of or involved in the juvenile court system. These funds aim at preventing first contact or subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system in Ohio. ODYS funded programs offer services to four categories of young people: felony adjudicated youth, misdemeanor adjudicated youth, status-offending youth, and youth with no court history. By diverting felon adjudicated youth, that jurists deem safe and appropriate, from commitment to ODYS and into meaningful community programming, courts have greater subsidy dollars to allocate as jurists see fit to prevent future justice system involvement.

These alternatives to incarceration provide a more successful, and cost-effective solution than youth prisons. The children in these facilities often have significant mental health needs and special education needs. RECLAIM, Targeted RECLAIM, and BHJJ prove effective while saving Ohio taxpayers dollars. As an example, in FY 2025 RECLAIM funded 81,717 admissions to community-based programs, with a 83.32% successful completion rate.

Youth justice dispositions should include a collaborative and data-driven approach that relies on research, best practices, and includes input from all relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to: defense counsel, prosecuting attorneys, victim advocates, probation and diversion staff, behavioral health providers, guardian ad litem (where appointed), youth and their families, and any mentors, credible messengers, or other community partners involved in the life of the young person.

Youth Population Trends & Community Investment

Recent data show continued fluctuation in the number of youths placed in DYS facilities, reinforcing the need for strong, well-funded community-based alternatives.

Ongoing investment in diversion, prevention, and community programming is critical to avoid unnecessary out-of-home placement and deeper system involvement.

What are juvenile community-based alternatives (community corrections)?

Juvenile community corrections include: CCFs, detention, supervision by a probation officer, drug or mental health treatment including placement in a residential facility, respite placements, required programming, curfew, electronic home monitoring, community service, drug testing, as well as many other sanctions designed to help change offender behavior.

OJACC Policy Positions:

OJACC supports appropriate funding for local adult and juvenile community corrections/community-based alternatives.

Community corrections save state tax dollars by helping reduce the state prison population and preventing the need to build additional prisons. Further investment and funding are necessary so that local communities have adequate options to avoid sending low-level felony offenders to the state prison system. As Ohio focuses on sentencing reform and justice reinvestment, further monetary investment is needed in community corrections to assist in a safe prison reduction strategy.

- **OJACC supports the continuation of the Affordable Care Act.**
- **OJACC encourages Ohio jails, prisons, CBCFs and Department of Youth Services (DYS) to follow established protocols to enroll those eligible for Medicaid 30 days before release.**
- **OJACC urges Ohio Medicaid to apply for an 1115 Waiver for inmates leaving prison, allowing for Medicaid paid services 90 days prior to release, inclusive of community corrections. Additionally, this waiver request should also include other correctional settings such as DYS and county jails in Ohio.** Establishing Medicaid eligibility and service access before release is essential to ensure continuity of care, reducing costly disruptions in treatment, supporting successful reentry, and improving both individual outcomes and public safety.
 - As most are aware, because Ohio is an expansion state, Ohio pays 10% of Medicaid cost and the federal government pays 90% of the cost. Therefore, Ohio institutions, who bear 100% cost for inmates, would only be required to pay 10% of the Medicaid match for the last 90 days stay in prisons, jails, and juvenile detention facilities. This will result in significant general revenue savings for the state of Ohio and local governments.
- **As Ohio looks toward the next biennium budget, further investment is needed to raise salaries to a competitive level, promote innovation and sustain quality programming and services to Ohio citizens needing community correctional services.**

OJACC supports the careful consideration of the 2017 recommendations of the Ohio Criminal Justice Recodification Committee and particularly the following concepts in their report:

- Include reducing recidivism and rehabilitating the offender for the purpose of criminal sentencing. [substantially accomplished by S.B. 66 of the 132nd GA, effective 10/28/18]
- Require indeterminate sentences for offenders sent to prison.
- Encourage treatment, rather than incarceration, for low-level drug offenders.

- Eliminate residency restrictions for sex offenders that do not enhance public safety and give judges some discretion to remove registration requirements.

OJACC supports legislation to encourage the uniform collection and sharing of meaningful data across the criminal justice system.

- Adopting data standards and building a strong data infrastructure is vital for criminal justice practitioners in Ohio. This is one of the most impactful changes that can shape and guide the field.
- Improving data collection in the criminal justice system is crucial for enhancing quality of life and services. A statewide, standardized criminal justice database can provide Ohio with the following:
- Greater efficiency in the delivery of services, through the decrease in redundancy and greater targeting of effective interventions.
- Improved recidivism rates and increased public safety through data driven interventions and the improvement of outcomes because of the comprehensive evaluation and improvement of existing programs.
- Increased trust and confidence in the criminal justice system through improved transparency and accountability including identification of program effectiveness and areas of improvement through data evaluation.
- Enhanced resource allocation and cost-effectiveness through data analysis.
- Reduction in racial and socioeconomic disparities using data to inform decision-making.

OJACC Supports Criminal Justice Drug Reform, which includes the following principles:

- Recognizing that drug addiction is a disease and relapse is part of recovery.
- Ensuring that treatment, instead of incarceration, is the primary purpose around any sentencing considerations for personal drug abuse.
- Differentiate between petty trafficking and aggravated trafficking to clarify treatment needs.
- Set presumptive sanctions, rather than mandatory terms, to support judicial discretion.
- Reduce the life-long collateral sanctions that result from a drug abuse conviction.
- Support earned credit for positive program participation while incarcerated.

OJACC stands with local and national experts in supporting the utilization of validated risk and needs assessment at all levels of the criminal justice system, including pretrial/pre-adjudication, and the continual validation and updating of the tools. Despite our diverse representation, OJACC shares many common beliefs. At the forefront of this is our dedicated support of evidence-based practices throughout the criminal justice system. Evidence-based practices have routinely proven effective in promoting public safety and reducing recidivism. At the foundation of evidence-based practices is the utilization of actuarial risk assessments to help inform bail, sentencing, and supervision decisions. This includes consideration of the length of supervision based on the risk level.

Assessments are a tool utilized at all levels of the criminal justice system to enhance the goal of reliable, objective decision-making. While risk and needs assessments do not predict with perfect accuracy,

they provide guidance toward the most accurate and equitable decisions available for safely managing justice-involved individuals.

OJACC supports avoiding altogether or stringently limiting collateral sanctions to lessen barriers for reintegration. This includes the reform and repeal of laws and regulations that impose restrictions or limitations on rights, services, benefits, or opportunities beyond those imposed by the courts unless necessary for public safety. Specifically, OJACC encourages the immediate review and reform, or repeal of collateral sanctions impact a justice-involved person's ability to obtain housing, employment, professional licensure, business licensure, voting, education, loans, and public assistance of any kind.

OJACC supports intentional anti-racist interventions, remediations, and policies focused on the elimination of racism and racial inequity across Ohio's criminal justice system. OJACC specifically acknowledge that racism is a root cause of poverty, chronic illness, fractured families, and damaged communities. Furthermore, racism is a public health crisis that causes people to be over incarcerated and underserved. OJACC further supports systemic study of and commitment to the elimination of racial disparities, the prioritization of racial equity, and the acknowledgement that communities of color have borne the burdens of inequitable social, environmental, economic, and criminal justice policies practices and investments which have caused deep disparities, harm, and mistrust. OJACC encourages executive, legislative, and judicial leaders across Ohio to commit to the uncomfortable and often painful process of dismantling systemic injustice across the justice continuum.

OJACC strongly supports continued reforms to Ohio's pretrial/pre-adjudication system that prioritize public safety while ensuring fairness, equity, and access to justice. Pretrial practices play a critical role in determining whether individuals are detained or released before trial, impacting not only court outcomes but also long-term community and individual well-being. Research demonstrates that unnecessary pretrial detention contributes to higher rates of guilty pleas, longer sentences, diminished employment and housing prospects, and increased new arrest rates, even among those ultimately found not guilty or charged with low-level offenses.

- **OJACC advocates for: Maximizing release: Encouraging** presumptive release that is individualized and the least restrictive to reasonably assure court appearance and public safety for all individuals.
- **Limiting Detention: Supporting** reserving detention for those individuals for whom no conditions of release exist that can reasonably assure successful pretrial outcomes.
- **Expansion of non-detention alternatives:** Utilizing cite-and-release protocols, summonses in lieu of warrants, recognizance bonds, pretrial supervision programs, electronic monitoring, and other community-based options to safely reduce reliance on incarceration.
- **Equitable access:** Ensuring all qualifying individuals have access to representation and pretrial release options regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or geography.
- **Evidence-based risk assessment:** Encouraging the use of locally validated actuarial risk and needs assessments to guide pretrial decisions, ensuring objective, data-driven determinations of flight risk and public safety concerns.

- **Bail reform:** Continuing the shift away from cash-based pretrial detention for low-risk offenders, emphasizing judicial discretion and individualized evaluation over punitive and wealth-based monetary conditions.
- **Minimizing collateral consequences:** Reducing the long-term barriers caused by pretrial detention, including housing instability, employment disruption, and loss of public benefits, which can otherwise increase risk of reoffending
- **Data-driven practices:** Supporting uniform collection and sharing of pretrial data across Ohio courts to evaluate program effectiveness, enhance public safety, and identify areas for improvement.

Innovative alternatives: Encouraging community supervision innovations and diversion programs to address technical violations or minor infractions without resorting to incarceration. Through these measures, OJACC seeks a pretrial system that balances accountability and safety with fairness, reduces unnecessary incarceration, and strengthens community trust in the justice system. Pretrial reform is a key component of Ohio's broader strategy to safely reduce prison and jail populations while promoting successful reintegration and rehabilitation.

OJACC supports the enhanced use of technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness of supervision to reduce costs and increase the success of those on supervision thus improving public safety.

OJACC encourages finding a solution to the administrative problem of ensuring complete and accurate accounting of jail time credit before a person is confined to DRC; OJACC encourages the enforcement of current legislation requiring the calculation of detention time prior to commitment to DYS. The exact amount of jail time should be determined before commitment.

OJACC supports the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) proposed regulations that will ensure that criminal records are not automatic disqualifiers to HUD housing and programs for people with conviction histories. An individualized review process will give people a fair chance at housing, a human right that should not be denied solely as a result of a past criminal record. Barriers to housing increase housing insecurity and homelessness, which lead to an increase in recidivism. As a result, excluding people with a conviction history makes our communities less safe.

OJACC supports a daring imagination of prison bed utilization in the future.

This includes:

- Working in earnest, via policy and legislation, to reduce prison populations by transitioning from arrest to cite-and-release.
- Implementation of innovative alternatives to incarceration for technical and minor violations of probation and parole.
- Accelerating credit or "good time" for participation in programming and maintaining proper behavior.
- Reevaluation of compassionate release and the effectiveness of incarcerating low-risk individuals over the age of 65 or with severe and debilitating health conditions.

OJACC supports eliminating Ohio’s mandatory bindover provisions and restoring full judicial discretion.

This is especially important in cases involving firearm specifications, where mandatory policies can override individualized assessments and developmental considerations. Judicial discretion allows courts to better balance accountability, public safety, and youth rehabilitation.

OJACC supports the use of school safety funding in ways that do not lead to increasing student involvement in the court system.

This includes the use of threat assessment protocols as recommended by the FBI, use of school climate grants as approved in H.B. 318 of the 132nd G.A., and improving student access to staff trained to work with students, such as counselors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges have recognized that students who become court involved through a school referral are less likely to remain engaged in school or become productive citizens as adults.

OJACC Supports Findings of the Ohio Juvenile Justice Working Group (JJWG), to include:

- The Department of Youth Services (DYS) should engage in a “system transformation” with respect to the design and size of its correctional institutions by replacing its current three large facilities with numerous smaller facilities.
- In addition to the 11 existing Community Correctional Facilities (CCFs) in Ohio, DYS should establish CCFs in the three counties that commit the highest number of youths to DYS, specifically Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton counties.
- The state should hire outside consultants to review operations in the three DYS facilities and a sampling of local juvenile detention centers and community correctional facilities.
- Relevant state agencies should develop a coordinated master plan to enhance efficiency and enable better outcomes for youth.
- The Ohio General Assembly should enact legislation to increase the minimum age for youth commitments to DYS from 10 to 14.
- The Ohio General Assembly enact legislation to allow juvenile judges to use their discretion when sentencing youth adjudicated of gun specifications.
- The Ohio General Assembly enact legislation similar to the adult system, prohibiting first-time non-violent fifth-degree and fourth-degree felony offenses from being adjudicated to DYS state facilities.
- Avoiding out-of-home placement for low-level offenses whenever possible.
- Provide juvenile judges with the discretionary power to place youth in alternative facilities if out-of-home placement is necessary, such as CCF. The Juvenile Justice Committee of the Ohio Sentencing Commission evaluate Ohio’s statute on bindover, specifically to evaluate and determine the appropriateness of eliminating Ohio’s current mandatory bindover provisions.
- Juvenile judges commit youth with special needs, such as total blindness, profound deafness, wheelchair confinement, and other similar disabilities and/or factors to alternate placement facilities.
- DYS and CCF governing boards, or their representatives, should establish uniform and consistent criteria for CCF admissions. Once established, DYS should formally memorialize established uniform standards, criteria, and rules, which will promote uniform practices across CCF environments and ensure optimum utilization of CCFs across the state.

- The Ohio Association of Juvenile Court Judges (OAJCJ) and the Ohio Juvenile Detention Director's Association (OJDDA) should be prepared to implement the JCD and CCF training recommendations to be made by the juvenile justice consultant pursuant to JJWG Interim Proposal #2.
- DYS should implement a reentry continuum that improves linkage to local resources, such as OhioRISE which can address wraparound, home, and community services. Linking to local resources better equips youths with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to successfully reintegrate back into their communities.

OJACC supports the expanded use of alternative placement options for youth with special needs but notes that the JJWG recommendations do not clearly define the services that should be available in these settings. At a minimum, OJACC encourages:

- Individualized assessments for each youth.
- Clear alignment between assessed needs, level of care, and placement decisions.
- Developmentally appropriate, trauma-responsive services across all alternative placements.

OJACC also encourages greater clarity around what constitutes “special needs,” including explicit consideration of developmental disabilities such as autism, to ensure placement decisions and services are appropriately matched to each youth.

OJACC encourages the development and expansion of appropriate alternative placement options for youth with complex needs, recognizing that in many communities these options simply do not exist. From a court perspective, judges are often left with no viable alternatives and may commit youth to DYS not because it is the preferred option, but because no safe, appropriate placements are available—particularly for youth who are low functioning, have serious behavioral health needs, or present community safety concerns.

OJACC notes ongoing workforce challenges within DYS facilities and community-based placements, including shortages of qualified clinicians. OJACC supports:

- Increased investment in recruitment and retention of youth-qualified behavioral health professionals.
- Training facility and supervision staff in adolescent development and trauma-informed care.
- A collaborative approach that includes additional training and support for OhioRISE Care Management Entities and Care Coordinators, with a focus on serving system-involved youth and families (including justice- and child welfare-involved families) and encouraging the development of innovative practices to better meet their needs.
- A skilled, developmentally informed workforce is essential to achieving positive outcomes for youth and public safety.

OJACC explicitly supports the inclusion of system-impacted youth and families in policy design, program evaluation, and reform efforts. Meaningful youth and family engagement helps ensure that reforms are responsive, effective, and grounded in lived experience. OJACC considers aligning on this principle as part of its commitment to evidence-based and outcome-driven practice.

OJACC encourages disaggregated juvenile justice data by race, geography, offense type, and system decision point (arrest, detention, bindover, commitment). This level of data transparency is critical to identifying and reducing disparities and ensuring equitable access to diversion and community-based options. Youth-specific data should be fully integrated into any statewide criminal justice data modernization efforts.

OJACC also supports a statewide needs assessment that examines juvenile justice data through a Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) lens, including housing stability, education access, behavioral health needs, family support, and community resources, as they relate to system-at-risk and justice-impacted youth.

OJACC supports a reentry continuum that begins at the earliest point of system involvement, not only at release. Early planning should include family engagement, education continuity, behavioral health linkage, and community support to reduce recidivism and promote long-term stability. These recommendations are intended to strengthen youth-centered implementation, improve outcomes, and advance public safety through developmentally appropriate, equitable, and evidence-informed approaches.

In addition to supporting legislation to raise the minimum age for commitment to DYS, OJACC encourages the concurrent development of age-appropriate treatment and placement options that also address community safety. Raising the minimum age without expanding appropriate alternatives risks leaving courts without the tools they need to respond safely and effectively to serious behavior involving younger youth.

Recent funding shifts, including the availability of Multi-System Youth (MSY) funding, have increased placement of lower-needs youth in residential settings, making it increasingly difficult to secure appropriate treatment placements for youth with higher or more complex needs. Intentional planning and investment are needed to ensure the right youth are matched to the right level of care.

In summary, OJACC urges Ohio's leaders to advance policies that strengthen adult and juvenile community corrections, expand effective community-based alternatives, improve data-driven decision-making, and reduce unnecessary reliance on incarceration. By investing in evidence-based practices, treatment, reentry supports, workforce capacity, and equitable access to services, Ohio can enhance public safety, improve outcomes for individuals and families, reduce long-term system costs, and build stronger, healthier communities across the state.