

2014 Nomination for the Western Region – Beaver County

The Beaver County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) was formalized in May 2008, drawing its core membership from their longstanding Criminal Operations Committee (COC). The Beaver County COC continues to meet monthly to address the intricacies within the courts and criminal justice system. The Beaver County CJAB is comprised of 18 core members of criminal justice, behavioral health, and victim's services, including local and state representatives to ensure a collaborative approach to addressing issues such as crime trends, truancy, reentry, housing, mental health, substance abuse, and victims' rights.

Beaver County CJAB has been active over the last several years undertaking an array of projects, including, but not limited to: the establishment of one of the most successful and sustainable Regional Booking Center (RBC) operations in Western PA, working toward the unification of records management systems within the county, courts, and among law enforcement, as well as addressing difficult topics such as housing for justice-involved individuals, sexual offender treatment, including treatment and identification of sexual offenders with intellectual disabilities.

The CJAB's Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) sub-committee incorporates the majority of the CJAB's core membership, picking up consumers, local and faith based service providers and organizations to provide a collaborative approach to identify and divert individuals with substance abuse and/or mental health concerns from the criminal justice system. The work of the Beaver County CJAB and SIM sub-committee has been recognized across Pennsylvania with presentations at statewide conferences and events. Most recently, Beaver County discussed their Comprehensive, Continuous, Integrated System of Care (CCISC) program including supportive housing and employment, cognitive behavioral therapies, and their Forensic Assertive Community Treatment Team at the 2013 Homes within Reach Conference presented by the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania. Similarly, the forensic treatment programs in Beaver County were featured in publications in the American Correctional Association (ACA)'s "Corrections Today" in 2005 and again in 2012.

CJAB and SIM sub-committee members continue to collaborate on the development and refinement of programs and services to ensure that Veterans and individuals with special needs are identified throughout the criminal justice system and are provided with a continuum of care from initial assessment through re-entry and community integration. As part of this process, Mental Health First Aid training for law enforcement, corrections, and first responders was brought into Beaver County and subsequently offered to surrounding counties.. In the Fall of 2013, initial assessments began occurring at the Regional Booking Center, prior to the preliminary arraignment. It is the hope of the CJAB and SIM sub-committee that the incorporation of these early interventions, coupled with an assessment and identification process available within the Central Court and Common Pleas case processing will ensure that individuals are identified for diversionary or alternative programming as appropriate.

One example of Beaver County's diversionary efforts is the Beaver County Veteran's Court. The Veterans Court, a recent collaboration between CJAB members and the Veteran's Administration, was featured in the Beaver Times in January 2013. Supreme Court Justice Seamus McCaffery shared his own past experiences with veterans who attended the introduction to this new 12-month diversionary program that offers "a chance at redemption through mentoring, mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment."

CJAB members have also continued to expand upon reentry services available to individuals within the Beaver County Jail as well as those under the supervision of Probation and Parole. The ChancesR: Reentry, Reunification, and Recovery program utilizes a collaborative approach to address the challenges faced by individuals with mental health needs, substance use or co-occurring disorder. ChancesR provides individuals with services from pre-release screening, assessment, through treatment, case management and vocational/educational services. Post release pro-social activities and sponsorship services, peer and family mentoring, case management, treatment, and housing have also been incorporated into the program. In addition to the individuals served under ChancesR, the jail and adult probation have worked together to establish a collaborative training program where life skills coursework, such as financial management, resume building, etc. begin within the jail, and are offered as a continuum of services through probation and parole.

In late 2013, the Beaver County CJAB updated their strategic plan and goals to enhance court technologies, public safety, conducting cross systems training, and increasing communication and collaboration among the CJAB and corresponding agencies were identified. In addition to having a strong and very actively involved membership, the Beaver County CJAB is continually progressing and systematically addressing one key initiative after another, while providing much needed technical assistance and support to surrounding counties. It is because of these accomplishments and collaborations that PCCD Staff nominates the Beaver County Criminal Justice Advisory Board for the 2014 CCAP CJAB Best Practices Award.