

2014 Nomination for the South Central Region – Adams County

The Adams County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) was created in September of 2007 with the assistance of the Pennsylvania Prison Society and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). Prior to the inception of the CJAB, there was little effort to organize the county criminal justice departments and their initiatives. An environment did not exist to bring all the key stakeholders together to address the needs of the county in a collaborative manner. The current CJAB consists of the Chair, the Honorable Michael A. George, Common Pleas President Judge, Co-Chair, Randy Phiel, County Commissioner and 15 voting members as well as 17 CJAB associate members. The sub-committee structure consists of an Executive Committee and four standing committees; Policy, Technology, Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol along with four ad hoc committees; Justice Reinvestment, Warrants, Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and Children of Incarcerated Parents.

In July of 2008, through the successful procurement of a grant from PCCD, Adams County and the Court of Common Pleas hired its first CJAB Coordinator. That Coordinator continues to be an integral part of the CJAB's working order. In January of 2009, the first Strategic Planning Retreat was held and since then, the CJAB has met yearly to revisit the plan and update their priorities for the coming year.

Adams County CJAB has been active for over six years and in that time; they have successfully acquired \$1,129,847 in grant funds. These funds have assisted a variety of county departments in improvements of daily operations and implemented new programs within the county.

One of the many positive attributes that this team possesses is the ability to recognize when there is an opportunity for change, growth or improvement. An example is the implementation of their Assessment and Transformation Project (ATP). In the fall of 2008, it was apparent to the County's three Judges and County Commissioners that the steadily increasing population, additional case volume, and the future addition of a fourth judge, would necessitate a change in current practices. As a result, Adams County became part of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Early Intervention Program and a Government Finance Officers Association Intermediate Management Audit. The ATP focused on identifying opportunities for increased efficiency and performance enhancement on a system-wide basis. Interviews were conducted with staff members in the court, court-related and county offices as well as with members of the Adams County Bar Association, state and local law enforcement and external service providers. The results of the interviews, combined with research and the consultant's experience, yielded recommendations for improvements. One of the immediate changes was the improvement in the hiring and orientation process of new employees.

Through successful grant applications to PCCD, Adams County was able to implement additional recommendations of the ATP and effectuate a significant change in their criminal justice system by merging the Adult and Juvenile Probation Departments. In addition to this merger, Adams County created the Mental Health Partnership Project. This initiative allowed the county to hire an adult probation officer and mental health caseworker that would work at the county jail with the mentally ill offenders. The goals of this effort is to enhance mental health services to the adult corrections and probation population; reduce jail population; provide stability and treatment to offenders; reduce recidivism and improve working relationships among the criminal justice and behavioral health partners.

Due to the extraordinary collaboration between the County Commissioners and the Judges, the ATP initiative received the Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence, Innovative Community/Governmental Initiatives on April 15, 2010.

Another successful project of the Adams County CJAB is the Children of Incarcerated Parents program. The ChIP project originated from the Strategic Planning Retreat of 2011 and was spearheaded by a subcommittee which included members of the Adams County Correctional Facility, Courts, Probation, Children and Youth Services and various other community agencies. Children often suffer emotional and mental distress due to the incarceration of one or both of their parents. This program allows incarcerated parents supervised visitation with dependent children after completing a parenting educational program. Adams County joins four other counties across the Commonwealth that has such a program in their institutions.

Adams County CJAB has been diligent in its efforts to create efficiencies that improve the administration of criminal justice within the county. The level of motivation and collaboration among the CJAB members and stakeholders is evidence that Adams County is committed to providing services to the citizens of the county that are efficient, effective and enhance public safety. As a result, staff respectfully nominates the Adams County Criminal Justice Advisory Board for the 2014 CJAB Best Practices Award.