

2013 Nomination for the South West Region – Franklin County

The Franklin County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) was established in 1999 as a joint effort of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners and the 39th Judicial District Court of Common Pleas Judges, the CJAB is critical to functions of both the Court and the County. Its mission is “to create a forum of leaders that collaboratively addresses the immediate and future needs of the county by researching, planning, and recommending solutions that will integrate and prioritize the best approaches to criminal justice policies and program planning.” Since forming, the CJAB has been responsible for the largest and most important criminal justice initiatives in Franklin County.

As of 2012, Franklin became a fourth class county and the third fastest growing county in Pennsylvania. While considered rural, their urban population continues to grow as more and more businesses have opened in Chambersburg, the county seat, and in their other population centers. With the growth in the county comes more work for the criminal justice system which, as a whole, represents the county’s single largest expense in the general fund. That is where the Franklin County CJAB comes in; they are now known as the “go to” group when stakeholders want to get things done.

The project that arguably put this CJAB on the map was the new Franklin County Jail. CJAB’s Facilities Committee was instrumental in researching options and recommending the new jail size and function. The CJAB engaged national experts who reviewed historic trends and recommended a new facility almost twice the size and budget. The objective was not simply to build a larger jail to house the local inmate population, but to build a program that would allow Franklin County to build a jail smaller, with fewer beds, than what was proposed. The objective was to attack recidivism and reduce the number of bed spaces needed by the criminal justice system.

Instead of taking the recommendation at face value, CJAB reviewed courts and corrections with an eye on how to function optimally while maintaining public safety. As a result, CJAB implemented extremely successful alternatives to incarceration, including Intermediate Punishment, Jail Diversion and a Day Reporting Center, which relieved the burden of the local jail. Both the jail and the Franklin County Day Reporting Center have gained nationwide recognition. Through the efforts of CJAB, Franklin County was able to attract public support for the new jail project and the programs necessary to support the goals of the project. The public support, recognition and the results of the program continue to this date.

As a result of these efforts, CJAB reversed the historic trend. The jail is almost half the size of what was originally recommended and at 80 percent of capacity five years after it was constructed.

An independent evaluation completed in 2010, found that the recidivism rate in Franklin County had been substantially reduced and is also less than most other counties in the Commonwealth and jurisdictions across the nation. This study found that DRC graduates had a recidivism rate of 18.2 percent compared to national figures of 65 percent.

The purpose of the CJAB is to achieve consensus on methods to create efficiencies and improve the effectiveness of the administration of criminal justice in Franklin County. To this end the board established the following subcommittees: Case Flow Management, Technology,

Behavioral Health, Facilities Planning, Central Booking, and Juvenile Justice. Bulleted below are just a few of the committees' accomplishments:

- The **Case Flow Management and Technology committees** work in concert to improve procedural efficiencies. The Case Flow Management committee spearheaded the effort to use video conferencing to minimize transports and maximize safety. With video conferencing units at the Jail, Adult Probation, Magisterial District Judges, and the Courthouse, the technology has increased efficiencies even more than originally anticipated. In addition, the Court is seeing savings related to expert witness testimony and improvements related to victims' testimony. Currently, the Case Flow Management committee is incorporating technological improvements to their jury selection process by integrating a specialized software application and wireless connectivity. The Technology Committee is leading the charge to update our process for obtaining indigent legal defense: they are the core group for the "Public Defender Application Process."
- Franklin County is especially proud of their **Jail Diversion** program. The Jail Diversion program was one of the top initiatives identified as priority by the CJAB during their strategic planning of 2005 through 2008. PCCD awarded Franklin County a grant to establish this program. Jail diversion refers to a program that links individuals with a serious mental illness (and often co-occurring disorders) who have come in contact with the criminal justice system with community-based treatment, services and/or support systems so they can successfully live in the community.
- Another highly effective program is the **Day Reporting Center**. The DRC opened in April 2006 under the direction of Dr. Kimberly Eaton. Clients receive a multitude of Evidence Based Programming, life skills classes and drug testing. The DRC is applying to be the first DRC in the nation to offer GED testing. In 2009, the DRC began accepting clients from neighboring Fulton County. The Franklin County DRC has served as a model of innovative programming that yields high success rates. As a result, Franklin County's DRC has achieved widespread recognition. In 2011, Dr. Eaton visited the West Virginia Senate in the capital of Charleston to discuss features and success of the DRC's Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program. The MAT program, funded through the Adult Probation Department's use of ACT 198 funds, provides funding for medications and doctor visits for drug addicted clients.
- The **Behavioral Health Committee** recently updated the Sequential Intercept Model they created in 2009. The two-day planning resulted in a comprehensive, cross-systems map of the opportunities and challenges presented to individuals exhibiting symptoms of mental illness who intersect with the criminal justice system at the five key intercepts. The Behavioral Health Committee has focused their efforts on the action steps identified because of this planning effort: they implemented a forensic housing pilot program and improved Intercept One by providing two trainings and supplemental resources for law enforcement.

The Franklin CJAB leadership, membership and collaborative spirit has served as a model for CJABs around the Commonwealth to emulate. As a result, PCCD staff is proud to nominate the Franklin County CJAB for the 2013 County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania CJAB Best Practices Award.