



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Douglas County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

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On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Douglas County CJCC

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I. Introduction to the 2025 Annual Report

In the introduction to the 2025-2027 strategic plan, we shared the milestone that the adoption of the strategic plan represented: the end of a two-year journey wherein the Douglas County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) completed an assessment, developed recommendations, and began implementing those recommendations to better align our Council with the National Standards for Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils. Implementing the recommendation to revise the bylaws that strengthen the structure, governance, and tasks of the Council were the beginning of the next phase for the CJCC.

As outlined in those bylaws, this is the first annual report of the CJCC. Readers will find that the focus is on the foundational groundwork laid by the CJCC during 2025. It is our hope that as we work through the objectives outlined in the strategic plan, we learn the necessary lessons to build a strong foundation for the future work of the council and our jurisdiction. We appreciate your joining us in this season of growth as we continue to work towards a brighter Douglas County.

II. Background Work of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC; Council)

In 2023, Douglas County contracted with the Justice Management Institute (JMI) to strengthen the CJCC through an assessment against best practice standards for CJCCs. In May 2023, the JMI, in partnership with the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) published the National Standards for CJCCs, which were developed to formalize best practices for CJCCs and to assist Councils with forming and maintaining productive Councils. An additional companion document, The Essential Elements, which represent the core characteristics of high performing CJCCs, was also published at this time. The CJCC Essential Elements Assessment Tool provides a framework for a council to compare itself against and discern the degree to which the council is aligned with the National Standards best practices and characteristics of high-performing councils. This assessment tool was utilized by JMI in the fall of 2023 to assess the Douglas County CJCC against these standards and to provide recommendations for how to bring the CJCC into further alignment with the National Standards. Each of these reference documents are linked on the JMI webpage and can be found here: [National Standards for CJCCs Revised September 2025 TE](#) and [CJCC Essential Elements Revised August 2025](#).

The final report of Douglas County's CJCC by JMI was presented to the Council in January 2024. The full report can be found on the CJCC webpage here: [Draft Douglas County CJCC assessment report | Douglas County KS](#). The summary of the assessment results is provided in the table below, although readers are encouraged to read the full report with commentary.

CJCC Essential Elements Ratings for Douglas County CJCC

Essential Element	Overall Rating
Systemic Focus	Somewhat Compliant
Participation	Mostly Compliant
Leadership	Somewhat Compliant
Consensus Building	Somewhat Compliant
Organized Meetings	Mostly Compliant
Committees and Workgroups	Mostly Compliant
Strategic Planning	Not Compliant
Data and Research	Somewhat Compliant
Community Engagement	Somewhat Compliant
Director and Staff	Mostly Compliant

As included in the report by JMI, the following priority areas were identified:

1. **System Focus**- The CJCC needs to establish well-defined vision and mission statements to guide its activities, unify membership, and convey its role to the community.
2. **Leadership**- The CJCC must strengthen its leadership structure to include officers from different disciplines and a small executive committee.
3. **Strategic Planning**- The CJCC needs a data-guided, community-informed strategic plan to guide its work and produce desired outcomes.

The most immediate recommendations for the Council to implement as outlined by JMI's report were:

1. Establish mission and vision statements.
2. Align the CJCC's leadership structure with National Standards.
3. Recalibrate CJCC membership and clarify member expectations.

This assessment and the resulting recommendations from JMI outlined the steps the CJCC has taken since receiving this report in January 2024. The remainder of this annual report presents the work of the Council to implement these recommendations and increase the alignment of the CJCC with best practices. Readers are encouraged to review the full report for the commentary and further detailed information on the assessment and recommendations from JMI, which is linked on the previous page.

III. Springboarding into 2025: Highlights from 2024

Following the receipt of the assessment report and recommendations from JMI, the Douglas County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council spent much of 2024 developing a new framework within which to operate and which is more aligned with the National Standards for Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils. This resulted in a significant revision to the bylaws of the Council and the development of a three-year strategic plan driven by data and grounded in goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART).

The most notable changes to the bylaws adopted by both the CJCC and the Douglas County Board of Commissioners were:

- Reduced, streamlined membership
- Clarity around the authority and guiding principles of the Council
- Defining the establishment of workgroups and committees
- Establishing an Executive Committee
- Establishing the process for strategic planning and annual reports

The revised bylaws were adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in June 2024 and went into effect on January 1, 2025. The current bylaws of the CJCC can be found on the CJCC website and are linked here: [CJCC Bylaws | Douglas County KS](#).



Pictured above, left to right, are Katy Fitzgerald, Criminal Justice Coordinator; Aimee Wickman, Program Manager at The Justice Management Institute; Pam Weigand, Director, Criminal Justice Services; and Kristy Danford, Special Consultant with The Justice Management, during an October 2024 site visit.

Following the completion of the revised bylaws, the CJCC continued to address the recommended priority areas by spending the last half of 2024 in the strategic planning process. With the continued technical assistance of the Justice Management Institute, the CJCC gathered feedback and data to inform a two-day strategic planning retreat. The full timeline of the process to develop and adopt the 2025-2027 strategic plan is pictured below:

<p>August 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and adoption of a workgroup charter to guide the strategic planning process.
<p>October 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person focus groups facilitated by JMI with 42 participants across six separate stakeholder groups.
<p>November 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration of an online community survey informed by key findings from the focus groups, including 196 respondents. • System data gathering and analysis, including metrics from the Jail, District Court, District Attorney's Office, Treatment Courts, Pretrial, Probation, and Court Services.
<p>December 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a briefing presentation to ground the strategic plan, including the key qualitative and quantitative information gathered through the system data analysis, focus groups, and community survey. • One-and-a-half-day strategic planning retreat with 12 current and past CJCC members and staff on December 3-4.
<p>January 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iterative drafting of the strategic plan.
<p>February 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final adoption of the strategic plan by the CJCC on February 11.

Strategic Planning Focus Groups

IV. 2025: Year in Review

A. 2025 Officers

A primary change in 2025 for the CJCC was the establishment of an Executive Committee. Outlined in the revised bylaws, the CJCC is now guided by an Executive Committee that consists of a Chair, Vice Chair, and Member at Large. The inaugural Executive Committee was elected in the December 2024 CJCC meeting and included:

- Chair, Jessica Glendening, Chief Defender, Board of Indigents Defense Services
- Vice Chair, Susan Benkelman, Chief Court Services Officer
- Member at Large, Brad Finkeldei, City Commissioner, City of Lawrence



Pictured above is the first Executive Committee of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, left to right: Susan Benkelman, Jessica Glendening, Brad Finkeldei, and Katy Fitzgerald.

The CJCC meetings returned to the historic courthouse in 2025, following the completion of renovations to the County Commission Chambers. In its February meeting, the CJCC welcomed two of the three community member seats with Doris Ricks and Timothy Shoulderblade.

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Pictured above are the members of the CJCC present at the February 11, 2025 meeting in the newly renovated County Commission Chambers.

B. 2025-2027 Strategic Plan

Also in its February 2025 meeting, the CJCC formally adopted a three-year strategic plan. This plan outlines 4 priority areas of focus that aim to improve the understanding, outcomes, and communication of our local criminal justice system. These priority areas are:

Priority #1

Data

Enhance existing system data metrics: Collect, analyze, and share data to identify trends, guide strategic discussion, and inform decision making.

Priority #2

Pretrial

Assess and strengthen pretrial processes to maximize pretrial outcomes.

Priority #3

Programs

Improve public safety outcomes by more deliberately providing a continuum of criminal justice program options to intentionally reduce crime-contributing factors.

Priority #4

Communications

Develop a strategic communications plan.



Pictured above is a screenshot of the CJCC officially voting to adopt the 2025-2027 strategic plan during their February 11, 2025 meeting.

Enhancing System Data Metrics Priority:

Following adoption, the CJCC set to work on the implementation of the strategic plan objectives, beginning with the first priority area related to systemwide data. Council members focused this work on decision points beyond law enforcement contact, which included pretrial, prosecution, and the District Court. Many of the desirable data fields from these decision points have been challenging to define and capture consistently; however, slow progress has been made. The use of data to assess system performance is foundational to any future reform efforts we wish to undertake. It is imperative that system stakeholders can define, know, and trust the metrics that are both produced by and reported about their agencies. The process of building this infrastructure and the development of key performance measures continues.

Strategic Communications Priority:

The fourth priority area, developing a strategic communications plan, began in late Spring 2025. This work was guided by the work group members:

Karrey Britt, Public Information Officer, Douglas County	George Diepenbrock, Public Information Officer, Douglas County Sheriff's Office
Laura McCabe, Public Information Officer, Lawrence Police Department	Captain Jack Campbell, Public Information Officer, University of Kansas Police Department
Alex Wiebel, Public Information Officer, DCCCA	Shannon Reid, Douglas County Commissioner, CJCC Member
Timothy Shoulderblade, CJCC Member	

Develop a strategic communications plan

Goal:

- By October 2025, develop a comprehensive communications plan that outlines how the CJCC will strategically convey information to member agencies, the public, and the media, in a coordinated, consistent, and effective manner.

Objectives

- Publish and disseminate Strategic Plan
- Develop strategic communications plan
- Intentional and ongoing updated information sharing

Workgroup members spent the summer crafting, receiving feedback, and revising a communications plan to establish coordinated, consistent, and effective communications about the council, the criminal justice system, and council member agencies. The strategic communications plan was formally adopted by the CJCC in its October 2025 meeting. With the adoption of the communications plan, this priority area has been achieved, as the remaining objectives are related to the ongoing use of the communications plan and community engagement.

V. Our CJCC Beyond Douglas County

As a member of the National Network of Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils (NNCJCC), which is supported by the Justice Management Institute, staff and members of the Douglas County CJCC have access to a broad reach of peer councils and audiences. JMI staff often highlight the work of NNCJCC member councils as examples to other CJCCs.

In 2025, Douglas County's CJCC was highlighted by JMI for:

- *View from 100: Episode 2.* In early 2025, Douglas County Sheriff Jay Armbrister started a podcast called View from 100. Katy Fitzgerald, Criminal Justice Coordinator, was a guest on the second episode. The article highlighting the podcast and this episode from JMI can be found here: [What We're Watching: Spotlight on CJCCs: A Sheriff Interviews a Criminal Justice Coordinator in this Must-Listen Podcast Episode | JMI Justice](#)
- *Communications Plan:* In the 2025 NNCJCC conference, Douglas County's communications plan was shared as an example for other CJCCs and Katy Fitzgerald, Criminal Justice Coordinator, served on a panel discussing the development of the plan from Douglas County.