

THE BENEFITS, OBJECTIVES, and STRUCTURE of CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCILS

Welcome to the Douglas County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Congratulations and welcome to the newly formed Douglas County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The information that follows is intended to serve as a general introduction to the benefits, purpose, and structure of a CJCC, and is a compilation of ideas gathered from several resources helpful to the process of getting started.

There is no one right way to form and operate as a CJCC but over time, the productive, successful CJCC is one that integrates into its functions and reflects in its decisions, the values and priorities of the community it serves. How the CJCC operates and is supported aids in achieving that success.

Benefits of Local Justice Planning and Coordination¹

A CJCC performs systemwide coordination and policy planning, and it generally is comprised of the principal elected and appointed officials of justice system agencies and general government within a given region, regardless of the level of government for which they work (municipal, county, or state) (GSCJCC; p. 3).

The CJCC uses a structured policy planning process to analyze and understand the issues and dynamics affecting the workload, goals, and outcomes of the local justice system and makes policy recommendations to address those issues (GSCJCC; p. 3).

Good planning at the local level can be expected to result in:

- **Improved analysis of problems.** Planning produces the data and analyses needed by elected officials and justice administrators to improve their decisionmaking.
- **Improved communication, cooperation, and coordination.** Planning provides a mechanism for improving communication, cooperation, and coordination among police, courts, corrections, and private service agencies as well as between different levels of government and the three branches of government. Improved coordination is a *result* of planning.
- **Clear goals, objectives, and priorities.** Planning permits more precise articulation of purposes, and links goals, objectives, tasks, and activities in more meaningful ways.
- **More effective allocation of resources.** Planning provides a framework for resource allocation decisions. It simplifies setting priorities for the use of resources to achieve justice goals and objectives.
- **Improved programs and services.** Planning produces a clearer understanding of problems and needs. Planning also makes it easier to formulate goals and objectives and to evaluate and compare alternative programs and procedures.
- **Improved capacity and quality of personnel.** Planning focuses organizational efforts and provides agency personnel with new knowledge and information (GDCJCC; p. 4).

Purpose and Goals of the CJCC (from Douglas County's Establishing Resolution)

Purpose: The purpose of the Council is to provide a working forum to support communications and collaborative coordination between and among key criminal justice system officials, advisory bodies,

¹ Highlights from: "Guidelines for Staffing a Local Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee" (GSCJCC) and "Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee" (GDCJCC).

This at-a-glance view of CJCCs was created by KU Professors Jason Matejkowski and Margaret Severson to serve as an introductory explanation of the CJCC composition, structure, and purpose. The documents from which this information is culled will be made available to CJCC members on the County Commission's web site.

agencies, departments and community leaders to promote both public safety and an effective, fair and efficient criminal justice system in our community.

Goals: The goals of the Council shall be to establish clear goals, objectives and priorities for community-wide public safety programs and policies related to the administration of justice; to maintain public safety through the creation of alternatives for long-term offender success; to improve identification and analysis of problem issues in our local correctional facilities; to improve communication, cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders in the criminal justice system; and to ensure the effective allocation of resources amongst the inter-related programs.

An Ideal Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee

The ideal CJCC has the following characteristics:

- Encompasses broad representation, recognized authority, and adequate staff support.
- Includes representation of city, county, and state levels of government operating within the geographic boundary of a county or region.
- Includes representatives of all functional components of the justice system.
- Involves citizens on the CJCC, committees, or both.
- Is established by an intergovernmental agreement; its role is spelled out in a written statement of purpose.
- Receives funding and/or in-kind support in part, from each member agency to ensure a political and financial stake.
- Enjoys the support and willing participation of all members, who collectively carry great weight and prestige.
- Remains administratively independent so that no one jurisdiction or justice system component controls the organization.
- Ensures that the staff includes a sufficient number of professionals with criminal justice experience, technical skills, and analytical capabilities (GDCJCC; p. 21).

Structure

Most CJCCs with advanced practices are city/county collaborations. They may be independent from the city and/or county administrative structure. The staff, too, is responsible to the CJCC, although they may be housed in a city or county office building.

All CJCCs have a chairperson and many also have a vice-chair. Normally, these two individuals also serve on a steering committee or executive committee that is required when the total CJCC membership is large. In addition, most CJCCs have both standing and special purpose committees. For example, some have standing committees that mirror the police, courts, and corrections components of the justice system. CJCCs also may form interdisciplinary committees to consider specific problem areas, such as jail crowding or juvenile matters. These may be standing committees or committees formed for a specific duration. CJCCs often establish subcommittees that pull staff from several agencies. For example, some subcommittees include a particularly knowledgeable middle manager and technical experts who serve at the will of CJCC members (GDCJCC; p. 25).

- The structure of the CJCC will be determined by the Douglas County CJCC early in its formation process

Representation and Membership

The CJCC should include four categories of members: (1) justice officials, (2) officials of general government, (3) officials of related nonjustice agencies, and (4) statesmen—one or two community

leaders who are not justice system experts and have no special interest in any portion of the justice system. A broad base of support is important (GDCJCC; p. 26).

Executive Committee and Standing Committees

Larger boards almost always need an executive committee, but this structural decision will be made by the CJCC as a whole. The purposes and composition of an executive committee (if established), and of standing committees and task forces will be determined by the CJCC. It is important to recognize that the need for staff support will increase as the CJCC forms committees and task forces (GDCJCC; p. 28).

Personnel

To be successful, a CJCC requires the consistent participation of the principal decisionmakers (e.g., attendance at meetings, engagement in discussions, contribution of resources), collective agreement on priority issues, adherence to a structured policy planning process, and regular measurement and documentation of achieved outcomes. CJCC planning staff facilitates the accomplishment of all these functions (GSCJCC; pp. 4-5).

Criminal justice planning staff must have the talents and skills needed to perform the difficult and complex activities associated with coordinated policy planning. Because the systemwide policy planning that CJCCs perform is very different from the single agency policy, programmatic, or operational planning (Cushman, 2002) to which most principal decisionmakers and their staff are accustomed, the talents and skills of planning staff are typically outside of the purview of existing criminal justice or other local government personnel who specialize in programs or operations. Planning staff convert data into information that the principal decisionmakers use to make coordinated policy decisions. Moreover, planning staff often facilitate the convening of these decisionmakers to focus on problems that have systemwide effects and to keep the momentum of worthwhile initiatives going when principal decisionmakers lose the sense of urgency that accompanies a crisis. In addition, the presence and successful performance of sufficient, competent, neutral, and objective staff for the CJCC can make the CJCC more resistant to dissolution and thus enable a jurisdiction to preserve a local culture of collaboration, increased effectiveness, and efficiency (GSCJCC; pp. 4-5).

- The CJCC will discuss and identify staffing needs and the resources from which staff can be recruited. A separate “highlights” document, similar to this one, will be made available to the CJCC to facilitate this discussion.

Selecting the Chair

Selecting the CJCC chair has to do with keying in on the requirements of leadership. Staff and members of CJCCs observe that a chair must have integrity, focus on leading “for the good of the group,” ensure that all voices are heard, and earn the respect of every member.

Establishing “an air of altruism” promotes the workings of the CJCC. The leader must possess certain skills and take on specific responsibilities, including:

- Articulating the current problem.
- Setting forth a vision for how the local justice system will tackle the problem.
- Convincing other key people of its value so it becomes a shared vision.
- Building partnerships to achieve the envisioned change.

The leader also must be able to motivate and inspire people to commit their time and effort to the program and participate as equals around a table, despite real or perceived differences between members in power and status (GDCJCC; p. 27).