

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY  
COMMUNITY JUSTICE TASK FORCE**

**JUNE 21, 2013**

## **Recommendation #7 Create a Council for System Coordination**

### **I. The Current Criminal Justice Planning “Structure” in Champaign County**

Criminal justice officials in Champaign County have pressing day-to-day work obligations related to the processing of criminal cases. Nonetheless, as noted in earlier sections of this report, they have periodically worked in concert to implement improvements in the criminal justice system. Institution of a drug court is an example of one such collective endeavor. But unlike in many other jurisdictions, there presently is no structure in place within this county to facilitate, on an ongoing basis, the kind of systemic planning, coordination and oversight for which there is an evident need. Without such a structure, the goals of operating the criminal justice system most cost-effectively, reducing reliance on incarceration, diminishing recidivism and facilitating the reentry of inmates returning to the community cannot be fully realized.

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**A CHAMPAIGN COUNTY  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
COORDINATING COUNCIL  
SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED  
TO IDENTIFY AND  
COORDINATE STEPS THAT  
CAN BE TAKEN TO REDUCE  
RECIDIVISM IN THE  
COUNTY AND ENSURE  
THAT THE CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE SYSTEM  
OPERATES COST  
EFFECTIVELY.**

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### **II. A Key Step to Facilitate Criminal Justice-Related Planning, Coordination and Oversight in Champaign County: Establishment of a Restorative and Criminal Justice Coordinating Council**

Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils (CJCCs) have now become commonplace across the country.<sup>47</sup> Their names may vary, but they share many core aims, including the institution of comprehensive system wide planning in lieu of fragmented, ad hoc and sometimes resource-wasting decision making. CJCCs often initially focus on the development of alternatives to incarceration but then branch out to address other criminal justice-related problems and issues.

When properly structured and implemented, Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils produce innumerable benefits. Just a few examples of benefits that have been identified by those who have studied and worked with CJCCs include:

- Improved communication and coordination, both between the different components of the criminal justice system and between criminal justice officials and the service providers who work with individuals who are in, or at significant risk of being in, the criminal justice system;
- Augmented efficacy of diversion programs, community sanctions and programs and services for individuals in the criminal justice system;

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<sup>47</sup> Aimee Wickman et al., The Justice Mgmt. Inst., *Improving Criminal Justice System Planning and Operations: Challenges for Local Governments and Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils* 4 (2012).

- Identification of the most cost-effective ways to allocate limited resources;
- Cost savings and cost containment through other steps, such as the identification of ways to avoid duplication of efforts;
- Accountability to the public in the operations and funding of the criminal justice system and criminal justice-related services; and
- Greater public support of the criminal justice system.<sup>48</sup>

The National Association of Counties, Justice Management Institute and Pretrial Justice Institute have been working together to develop a National CJCC Network.<sup>49</sup> In sharing insights about how to optimize a CJCC's effectiveness, a report that is part of this network-developing endeavor observes: "While CJCCs have a wide variety of approaches to membership, those that seek to take a genuinely systemic approach to addressing criminal justice issues are often county/city collaborations – typically independent from direct control by either the county or city administrations but closely linked to general government through membership and liaison functions." This report furthermore explains why CJCCs should not be comprised solely of criminal justice officials: "The breadth of representation on such a council will help to bring a comprehensive system-wide perspective to the work of the CJCC." its membership must be quite diverse, including not only key criminal justice officials.<sup>50</sup>

### **III. Recommendations for the Champaign County Board, Criminal Justice Officials and Public**

So that criminal justice sanctions, programs and services are addressed systemically and most cost-effectively, the Task Force proposes that the Champaign County Board should initiate, perhaps through an intergovernmental agreement, the establishment of a Champaign County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. In order for the Coordinating Council to be able to achieve the goals for which it was formed, the Council would need to be comprised of a diverse array of individuals. Some examples of individuals (or, perhaps in some instances, their designees) who could constitute the CJCC include: (1) the state's attorney; (2) the public defender or a defense attorney appointed by the local bar association; (3) a circuit judge who handles criminal cases; (4) a judge who oversees a problem-solving court, such as the drug court; (5) the head of Champaign County Probation and Court Services; (6) the court administrator; (7) the sheriff; (8) a police chief in the county; (9) the chairperson of the County Board, other member of the County Board who has criminal justice-related oversight responsibilities and/or county administrator; (10) a local mayor; (11) the chair of the Mental Health Board or other expert on mental illness; (12) an expert on substance abuse; (13) an expert on educational and employment services, including vocational training, for at-risk adult populations; and (14) at least two representatives of the public. Some jurisdictions further specify the qualifications of the public

<sup>48</sup> *Id.* at 4, 6; Robert C. Cushman, *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee* 4-6 (2002).

<sup>49</sup> The Justice Mgmt. Inst., *Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils*, <http://www.imijustice.org/current-projects/criminal-justice-coordinating-councils> (last visited May 22, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Wickman et al., *supra* note 1, at 10.

representatives. For example, as has been done elsewhere, the agreement forming the Restorative and Criminal Justice Coordinating Council might (or might not) require that one public representative live in a high-crime neighborhood or that one have a prior felony conviction.

Several points bear emphasizing regarding the composition of the Champaign County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. First, it is imperative that the individuals selected to serve on the Council be open-minded – that they be willing to consider new ideas, research and evaluation findings – as they work collectively to improve the operations of the criminal justice system in Champaign County.

Second, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council should be diverse in terms of the race, ethnicity and gender of its members.

Third, the Council could establish linkages with the University of Illinois and Parkland College, both of which can bring needed expertise to the work of the Council and assist, in other ways, in the identification and implementation of steps to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system within the county. These linkages could be established, for example, by having a representative from each of these higher-education institutions serve as *ex officio* members of the Council, by having a faculty member or university or college official fill at least one of the slots on the Council, or through service on subcommittees established by the Council.

Fourth, members of the Coordinating Council who, for a designated term, fill a slot reserved for a person with a certain elected or appointed position would be responsible for eliciting feedback from other individuals in the county who hold a similar position and for then funneling that feedback to the Coordinating Council. If, for example, the Urbana police chief initially filled the slot designated for a local law-enforcement official, he would need to coordinate with his counterparts in other cities and towns throughout the county.

Fifth, other slots on the Coordinating Council, such as the slot for an expert on substance abuse, could be filled through a process of nominations, applications and interviews. The selection of who would fill these slots might, as in a number of jurisdictions, be parsed out between different entities.

Sixth, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council could and most likely would, establish some subcommittees to assist the Council in its work. These subcommittees could delve more deeply into various facets of the criminal justice system, develop recommendations for the Council's consideration and conduct other tasks assigned by the Council. These subcommittees would not be, nor need to be, comprised solely or even primarily of Council members. The subcommittees would therefore be a means of bringing additional expertise and public input into the work of the Council and the collective countywide endeavor to improve the criminal justice system in Champaign County.

#### **IV. Preliminary Cost Information**

There is much work that lies ahead for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The ability of the Coordinating Council to perform its responsibilities will hinge, in part, on whether it is provided the requisite staffing assistance. Staff members perform a number of vital functions for a Coordinating Council, many of which are detailed in *Guidelines for Staffing a Local Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee*, a very helpful resource published last year by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC).<sup>5</sup> A few examples of these functions include: (1) data collection and analysis; (2) assistance in the development of outcome measures for sentencing options and criminal justice-related policies and programs; (3) the performance of outcome evaluations; (4) the conducting of research; (5) ensuring that decisions are based on data, evidence-based protocols and best practices; (6) drafting planning documents and reports; (7) coordinating the planning of projects spearheaded by the Coordinating Council; and (8) grant writing and the drafting of RFPs.

The Task Force is recommending that, at a minimum, three staff persons be hired to facilitate the system-wide work of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. The first staff member, the staff director, would play a key role in policy and programmatic planning and coordination and would perform other tasks, such as the drafting of requests for proposals and grant submissions. The second staff member would serve, in part, as the Coordinating Council's data analyst and expert on outcome measures. A secretary would also be needed to provide support services to these two staff members and the Coordinating Council.

Based on feedback received from a member of our Task Force who performs planning and coordination work in other realms for the Regional Planning Commission, the estimated costs of hiring these three individuals are as follows:

1. Staff Director: Overall costs of \$100,000 to \$120,000 (salary of \$50,000 to \$60,000 x 2 for fringe benefits, travel expenses and office expenses).
2. Data Analyst and Outcome Measures Expert: Overall costs of \$80,000 (\$40,000 salary x 2).
3. Secretary: \$50,000 to \$60,000 (salary of \$25,000 to \$30,000 x 2).

In sum, staffing the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council would cost \$230,000 to \$260,000. It is important to remember, though, that the incursion of these costs will help ensure that public funds expended on sentencing options and other criminal justice-related programs and services are being well used, are not being wasted and are reaping maximal benefits. As the NIC study on CCJC staffing reported:

Over time the cost savings to local government can be significant; jurisdictions that allocate funding for planning functions, including staff, rather than directing the funding toward increasing the existing operational infrastructure (e.g., more jail facilities, law enforcement, prosecutors, or judges) often discover that they have more flexibility and

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<sup>5</sup> Michael R. Jones, Nat'l Inst. of Corr., *Guidelines for Staffing a Local Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee* 21-26 (2012).

are more effective in allocating limited government funds. A few hundred thousand dollars spent on strategic planning and coordinating infrastructure can save millions of dollars annually.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, when a local government has a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, coupled with staff assistance, it is more likely than other jurisdictions to receive grants that can, in turn, assist in planning and system-improvement endeavors.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 11.  
<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at xi.