McLean County Integrated Justice System and Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

McLean County developed one of the first completely integrated countywide justice information system (IJIS), and this integrated system serves all county justice agencies.

In 2008, McLean County experienced serious jail-overcrowding, and expended $750,000 in out-of-county housing. A Jail Population Management Task Force brought all of the major stakeholders in the criminal justice system together to examine this issue. The National Institute for Corrections (NIC) conducted an assessment of the justice system in McLean County. A detailed report was presented to the Task Force which noted, among other things, that those interviewed were:

> '...genuinely interested in improving the administration of justice;' that all twelve judges participated in the interview process, local officials acknowledge a need for a systems approach to dealing with jail-crowding, the Integrated Justice Information System is impressive, and serves all of the justice agencies in the county; there is much pride in the community as well as community interest in justice operations as evidenced by participation by League of Women Voters and Alternatives to Jail committee members; and that inviting the consultants is a sign of 'trust, open and good government.'

There were also significant criticisms, which included a lack of a formal planning process and poor handling of data. It was strongly recommended that the Jail Population Management Task Force be converted into a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, which would include the entire justice system, the executive, legislative and judicial branches of county government, including the municipalities. As a result, in July 2009, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) was created by resolution of the Circuit Court, the County of McLean, City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, and Illinois State University.

The McLean County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council fosters collaboration and communication between criminal justice agencies and partners who educate, inform, and explore best practices together in order to continually improve the administration of justice. Our charge is to provide fair and just outcomes, improve public safety, reduce recidivism, and responsibly use resources for the benefit of McLean County residents.

The CJCC examines policies and procedures of the criminal justice system; identifies model practices; identifies deficiencies; and formulates policies, plans, and programs based on well-established research and statistical methodologies designed to promote change when opportunity presents itself. There are 19 permanent members, including the Chief Judge; Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division; Sheriff; State's Attorney; Public Defender; Clerk of the Court; Director of Court Services; Chiefs of Police of Bloomington, Normal, and Illinois State University Police Department; Director of Public Health; Director of Chamber of Commerce; a representative from Illinois State University Criminal Justice Science Department; a League of

Women Voters representative; a representative from social services; and a public member. Ex-officio members include the County Administrator, Trial Court Administrator, and council members from Bloomington and Normal. Care is taken to involve a committed group of citizens who monitor and critique the criminal justice system. The membership of the CJCC includes a League of Women Voters representative, as the League has taken a very active role in promoting changes in the McLean County Criminal Justice. A member of the public and city council members from both municipalities and a social services representative are voting members of the Council. Minutes of all subcommittees and full CJCC meetings are posted to the McLean County Circuit Court website (http://www.mcleancountyil.gov).

The core components of our strategy include collaboration; involving the key participants in the system; and setting goals and meeting dates for all to review the work of the subcommittees. There is a commitment to collecting and analyzing data from the Integrated Justice Information System (IJIS) to assure that change is implemented successfully. McLean County contracted with the Illinois State University's Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development to provide research and analytical services to the CJCC, which primarily consists of extracting data from IJIS to assist the CJCC in developing standardized reports to support management and/or policy decisions related to the justice system.

This data is reviewed quarterly at the full council meetings. The CJCC continues to review average lengths of stay for different categories of offenses (Class M, 1-4 Felonies and traffic, misdemeanor and DUI) in order to assure that these cases are being disposed of timely.

CJCC participants collaborated to develop a very successful Drug Court, which began operations in 2006, a Pretrial Services program in 2008, and a Mental Health Court which began in May, 2010.

Recently, we have tracked the mental health status of inmates and observed an increase in the number of persons with mental health disorders incarcerated and increases in their lengths of stay.   In December, 2012, Sheriff Emery invited the National Institute of Corrections to conduct a Jail Mental Health Assessment. This month, the NIC consultant will return to conduct a site assessment as we are preparing to renovate space in our Jail in order to more appropriately house and provide mental health services to inmates who have mental health disorders.

In November, 2012 the Executive Committee of the CJCC developed a Strategic Plan. As part of that process we developed core values for the Council:

Core Values

The following values are core to the CJCC; they guide our collective work in fulfillment of the mission.

Evidence-based Practices

Central to the mission of the CJCC is a mandate that criminal justice system participants provide data-driven evidence of successful programs and policies. This is about more than monitoring what we do. It is about demonstrating that each enterprise is contributing to the mission and reducing recidivism in McLean County. This strategic plan calls for increased use of evaluative practices demonstrating that a change in policy or expansion of a program is warranted and which is subject to validation

Communication and Education

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council facilitates communication across organizations working within and for the criminal justice system. Communication and education provide the vehicle to address problems before they become serious and, more importantly, to best plan new strategies for improving the system. Communication increases efficiencies by educating others of possibilities, assets, and needs within the system. The CJCC values communication between itself and the community of which it is a part. Reasons for decisions, ideas, and information are to be shared between the CJCC, the residents of McLean County, the County Board, and state legislators

Trust

Communication builds trust between others who interact because of the CJCC's work. Trust is necessary for effective education and action. Without trust, an organization cannot respond to change and often experiences retrenchment. As good leaders know, trust is easily lost and nearly impossible to regain.

Continuous Evaluation

Data are used not only to drive decisions affecting the criminal justice system and its stakeholders, but the evaluation process must be continuous. Monitoring changes in the jail population, the temporal efficiency of case management, effectiveness of the problem solving courts, and reducing recidivism are a core values and central to the CJCC's mission.

Responsibility

The agencies, units, and programs within the criminal justice system have a responsibility to all its stakeholders: alleged offenders, victims, McLean County residents, other staff of our respective organizations, and the State of Illinois. This responsibility includes the judicious use of resources.