

Jurisdictions Served: Allegheny County

Mission Statement: The Allegheny County Jail Collaborative aims to reduce recidivism and thereby improve public safety, restrain the growth in Jail costs, and prevent the disintegration of communities and families impacted by crime and incarceration.

Allegheny County is an urban county with well over one million residents; the county seat is Pittsburgh. The Allegheny County Jail, located in downtown Pittsburgh, holds about 2,200 to 2,300 inmates. Over the course of a year, approximately 18,000 men and women spend more than 30 days in the Jail, and on an average day, approximately 100 arrestees come through the Intake Department. Additionally, the jail receives inmates from Constables, federal authorities, and Sheriff's Deputies. The Allegheny County Jail Collaborative (ACJC) has been a joint effort between the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ), the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS), the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), and the Allegheny County Courts since 2000. The Collaborative was established at this time to address public safety, recidivism, successful reintegration. In particular a County Executive had raised concerns that the county was duplicating services and could reduce recidivism and increase public safety by forming a collaborative body to work on these issues. The Collaborative focuses on comprehensive reentry planning that includes family reunification, housing, substance abuse and mental health treatment, employment, and community engagement. This group has utilized screening tools to identify the needs of inmates and to develop creative solutions to address these needs. The Collaborative has built an infrastructure specifically to provide the supports and services to fill the gaps and remove the barriers that relate to the high rate of recidivism. The partners of the Collaborative meet monthly and work to plan all in-jail, transitional, and post release services in order to achieve their goals of increasing public safety and reducing recidivism.

Collaboration and Future Goals

The ACJC partners meet monthly with departmental management as well as at least one official from each partnering agency. Their 2010-2013 plan selected three strategies for reducing recidivism:

- Starting a new reentry program
- Encouraging system changes
- Establishing alternatives to incarceration

Starting a New Reentry Program

In 2010, the Jail Collaborative launched a reentry program designed to evaluate the inmates' needs, link them with necessary supports both in the Jail and in the community, and prepare inmates for release. The reentry program has the following main elements: a risk and needs assessment to identify appropriate services; expanded services (courtesy of grants and the reallocation of some funds collected by the inmate commissary

fund); a 6,000 sq. ft. Reentry Center with new classrooms and meeting rooms; a Reentry Pod to create a structured living environment; and the linking of jobs in the Jail with the reentry program.

The Collaborative begins reentry planning as soon as an individual enters the jail. Inmates are screened upon intake and referred to jail-based programs and treatments such as GED preparation and testing, job training, life-skills class, mental health treatment, and in-patient substance abuse. Allegheny County's Department of Human Services works with the county jail, the District Courts, Service Coordination Units, and other community providers to assist these offenders with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders prior to their preliminary hearing. They provide coverage at jail intake for processing involuntary or emergency commitments, divert the appropriate individuals from incarceration or extended jail stays, and create and present service plans to the court.

Several programs within the Allegheny County Jail provide reintegration supports and services to inmates. Intensive case management during incarceration and after release involves building a service plan with the inmate along with service providers and court officials, coordinating services and applying for medical assistance inside the jail, and beginning to facilitate supports for release. The intensive case management is also responsible for contacting any pre-existing community supports, spiritual supports, or family members to include in the transition planning. The Collaborative has built an infrastructure specifically to provide the supports and services to fill the gaps and remove the necessary barriers that directly relate to lowering the rate of recidivism in Allegheny County. ACJC has implemented reintegration programs, drug and alcohol treatment, GED programs, family counseling, and the intensive programs that the county provides such as mental health forensics, Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and HIV/AIDS prevention and education. Forensic Services also runs the Community Reintegration of Offenders with Mental Illness and Drug Abuse (CROMISA) initiative, a separate facility that provides a therapeutic community for men who suffer from co-occurring disorders and are on probation or parole.

Encouraging System Changes

The Collaborative has worked to improve system changes by addressing the following four areas: the discharge process; the information/referral process; contact visits; accountability and community involvement. A new center in the Jail is designed to ensure release is made more predictable, during reasonable hours of the day and evening, and ensures all who leave the Jail have medications, appropriate clothing, a way to return home, and a plan to access other services needed. In order to accommodate these changes, the release instructions given by judges were uniformly changed in order to provide 48 hours of advance notice of release to ensure proper planning and a physical discharge center with two full-time staff members was established. In addition, opportunities for family visits and family telephone calls have been added, a common computer application allowing staff to streamline and coordinate their work has been launched, and extended hours for the Jail's information and referral line have helped respond to almost 40,000 calls from family members and others.

In addition, a major focus of ACJC is family reunification. Nationally, over 2.7 million children currently have at least one incarcerated parent. In Allegheny County, 8,500 children representing every zip code and school district in the county have a parent in jail or prison. Studies have found that these children were significantly more likely than their peers to fail out of school, suffer emotional distress, commit serious delinquent acts, and be incarcerated themselves as adults. In response to these findings, in April, 2007 the Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation, in partnership with Lydia's Place, Inc., the Allegheny County Bureau of

Corrections, and by over 100 other community organizations and individuals, created Family Activity Center in the lobby of the Allegheny County Jail. The Center assists children and caregivers waiting to visit loved ones who are incarcerated and helps to keep the link between the incarcerated individuals and their family when they leave jail.

Establishing Alternatives to Incarceration

The Jail Collaborative has expanded its alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders to include therapeutic alternative housing and has further expanded its jail diversion programming for individuals with substance use disorders.

Sustainability

ACJC receives funding from numerous different sources including federal, state, and local agencies, and private foundations. ACJC receives federal funding support from the U.S. Department of Justice; the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and other state resources; locally, from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services; and from a multitude of different foundation, including but not limited to, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Heinz Endowments, and the Pittsburgh Foundation.

Results

According to a 2008 University of Pittsburgh study, participants in Collaborative-backed programs were half as likely to return to jail within a year compared to residents not participating in a Collaborative-backed program. Hidenori Yamatani, associate dean of research at Pitt's School of Social Work, has also found that for every \$1 invested in the Jail Collaborative, Allegheny County saves \$6 in jail-related expenses and cost to the victims.