

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMUNITY OF INTEREST OVERVIEW

County Mandated Responsibilities and Services

Public Safety and Justice account for the majority of costs for the County – most of which fund mandated services. These include the majority of the criminal and civil case processing of the District and Circuit Courts, criminal prosecution and public defense, and the operation and maintenance of the jail. Many of these mandates can be found in the U.S. Constitution as well as the Michigan Constitution. A large variety of statutes and case law also determine what functions are mandated and the level at which they are mandated.

The Board of Commissioners has established policies to fund several public safety functions. Several criminal justice leaders also demonstrate through their operations a dedication to the County Guiding Principle #6: “focus on the root causes of problems that affect the quality of life of County citizens by aggressively pursuing prevention strategies.” Examples of these non-mandated but essential services include:

- Sheriff Police Services – townships and villages who do not have their own police force may contract with the Sheriff for provision of police services. The Board of Commissioners has dedicated .5 mil for this purpose.
- Alternative Sanctions – Heavy utilization of alternative sanctions by the judiciary, including Community Corrections (supervision and programming elements designed to correct an individual’s substance abuse or anger management issues) is a recognized characteristic of Washtenaw County.
- Public Defender – while public defense is mandated, having a Public Defender Office is not. However, organized public defense reflects a priority for both the Board of Commissioners and the community.
- 800 MHz Radio Communication – emergency communication is an essential part of police and fire protection but sharing resources to promote interoperable equipment is not. Local chiefs have identified a plan to allow for all police, fire, and EMS radio equipment to be interoperable.
- Many other services are not mandated but have been proven to reduce the demands on the system include jail programming, community outreach, Sheriff’s community work program, and public education.

The Transition to a Focus on Community Impact

The criminal justice system is designed as an adversarial system in order to protect an individual’s rights to due process. An effect of this system is that many of the players are discouraged from cooperating with one another on a case-by-case basis which can make system-wide policy discussions difficult.

In recent years, leaders in public safety and justice have met to develop and implement system-wide policies that address system-wide needs. Washtenaw County has been recognized both state-wide and nationally as leaders for initiating the discussions and managing the outcomes of those discussions. Specific efforts to move toward collaboration and system-wide management include:

1. Centralized Preliminary Examination – Washtenaw County courts have changed felony criminal proceedings which have significantly reduced the average trial time.
2. Domestic Violence Grant – Through the leadership of the Prosecutor and the Trial Court, Washtenaw County was one of three demonstration projects nationally to receive funding to help reduce the incidence of domestic violence.
3. 15th District Court Sobriety Court – Although associated with the City of Ann Arbor and not Washtenaw County, the Sobriety Court seeks to address root causes of substance abuse requiring the collaboration of all facets of the criminal justice system.
4. 800 MHz Consortium – All local police chiefs, fire chiefs, and EMS leaders have identified a common communication platform that will enable all public safety officers to communicate with one another in times of emergency.
5. Jail Overcrowding Task Force – Under the leadership of the chief Circuit Court Judge, this group identified strategies to reduce the jail inmate population and better manage jail overcrowding.

Major Players Needed to Implement the Business Plan

Recently, many of the discussions have been through the Criminal Justice Collaborative Council (CJCC) which has become the forum through which the major players come together. The members of the CJCC include 15 elected and appointed leaders in criminal justice as well as 2 appointed members from the community. The main focus of the CJCC has been to develop multi-disciplinary strategies to alleviate jail overcrowding and making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners about how to implement and fund those strategies. Future efforts of the CJCC include a focus on reintegrating inmates into the community in order to reduce recidivism and developing common technology solutions that will enable criminal justice agencies to operate more efficiently and effectively.

The members of the CJCC include the elected offices of Sheriff, Prosecutor, and County Clerk; the elected Chair of the Board of Commissioners and Chair of the Community Corrections Advisory Board; the Chief Circuit Court Judge and Presiding District Court Judge; appointed positions of County Administrator, Trial Court Administrator, Public Defender and Washtenaw Community Health Organization Director; as well as representatives from local units of government, police chiefs, and the Bar Association.

While not all issues in public safety and justice come to the CJCC, this body has served as a valuable sounding board for justice-related proposals. The CJCC's mission is to provide a forum for systems discussions while maintaining a level of respect for the various mandates of the elected and appointed offices.

Community Needs Assessments

Several assessments have been completed to identify the community's needs. At the request of the Sheriff, the National Institute of Corrections visited Washtenaw County and completed an intensive assessment of the justice system. At the same time, County Administration partnered with the Sheriff and an architect to examine jail and court facilities and the need for services to expand as the County population and needs expand. Two other groups met to discuss targeted opportunities in the justice system: the jail mental health diversion task force identified strategies to divert mentally ill offenders from jail and the University Of Michigan Ford School Of Public Policy studied the feasibility of developing a probation residential center in Washtenaw County.

The overlap between the criminal justice system and human services has become more apparent in recent years and many of the community assessments that have been developed for the Human Services Collaborative Council and the Blueprint to End Homelessness impact the criminal justice system. As such, many elected and appointed officials within the criminal justice system have worked on developing and implementing strategies identified in the other communities of interest.

MAJOR LONG TERM GOALS

In response to these community needs assessment processes the CJCC has identified seven long term goals that will assist us in reaching the vision. These goals were incorporated into recommendations made to the Board of Commissioners which were then included in a millage on the February 2005 ballot. While the ballot failed, these goals remain intact:

- Develop a local probation residential center, which could be used as an alternative sanction for judges to sentence non-violent offenders. PRCs have proven to be a lower cost, more effective sanction for many offenders.
- Provide training for law enforcement officers to recognize and safely respond to offenders with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities.
- Provide additional crisis bed alternatives to stabilize offenders with serious mental illness and addiction disorders who are at risk to themselves or others.
- Secure in-home, intensive supervision and treatment for people with serious mental illnesses and addiction disorders.

- Incorporate a secure 14A District Court into the jail, reducing security risks for victims, defendants, Court staff and the public at large.
- Bring the existing jail up to current codes and standards.
- Increase the capacity of the jail to 532 jail beds and develop an assessment center that would create the capacity for more diversions from jail.

In addition, the CJCC has established three goals related to internal systems management with the overall purpose of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system. These goals, which will be further developed through committees of the CJCC, include:

- Improve information systems by exploring ways in which the 30+ data systems can share data to improve data quality, reduce redundant data entry, and better identify and track important system-wide data.
- Develop strategies to reduce recidivism.
- Research and establish policies related to arraignments with an effort to ensure that the information used at arraignment hearings is more thorough.

Plans Developed to Address the Needs

As noted earlier, there are a number of planning efforts that have been adopted by the CJCC and other criminal justice officials. These are summarized in two plans: the Administrator's Recommendations on Public Safety and Justice and the Jail Overcrowding Task Force Final Report and Recommendations.

JUSTICE MANDATED RESPONSIBILITIES

Mandated Services	Source of Mandate	Additional Services
SHERIFF		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate County jail • Make available various inmate services (religious, health, legal access, etc.) • Marine safety • Court security • Maintain records of investigative and correctional activities • Concealed weapons permitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State constitution • Various statutes and case law • State statute • State statute • State constitution • State law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work release program • Operate Central Dispatch • Police service contracts with nine townships, including arrests and tickets for civil infractions • Enhanced inmate services • Inmate work release • Jail diversion programs • 800 MHz Consortium
PROSECUTOR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appear for the State in criminal prosecutions • Appear for the County in civil infraction prosecutions • Provide services for victims of adult offenders • Authorize warrants for arrest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance to victims of domestic violence
WASHTENAW COUNTY TRIAL COURT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjudicate felony criminal cases • Adjudicate civil cases involving more than \$25,000 • Hear appeals from lower courts • Sentence according to State sentencing guidelines • Maintain a law library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes • State statute • State statute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement community-based alternatives to jail and prison (Community Corrections) • Jail population management

14-A DISTRICT COURT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjudicate misdemeanor criminal cases • Process small claims cases • Conduct felony preliminary examinations • Adjudicate civil cases involving less than \$25,000 • Adjudicate civil infractions • Process payments for tickets and fines associated with traffic and ordinance violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes • State constitution and statutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Court probation • Utilize other alternative sanctions through Community Corrections
COUNTY CLERK		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as Clerk of Circuit Court • Collect all court-ordered assessments • Receipt, record, and disburse bail bond funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State constitution • State constitution and statute • State constitution and statute 	
PUBLIC DEFENDER		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer indigent defense system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State constitution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While providing public defense is a mandate, having a public defender's office is discretionary
PROBATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide office space and equipment for Probation • Develop pre-sentence investigations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State statute • State statute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise felons on probation
WCHO		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divert mentally ill offenders from jail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State statute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other services can be found in Health Com. Of Interest section

