



Criminal Justice Advisory Committee Minutes **Tuesday, May 31, 2022**

Members Present: Deborah Williams, Ben Haas, Lao Rubert, Satana Deberry, Dawn Baxton, Eric Johnson, Tom Cote, Ben Rose, Syretta Hill, Robbie Breitweiser, Nida Allam, Walter Tate, Celeste Kelly, Patrice Andrews, Elaine O'Neal, DeDreana Freeman, Omar Taylor, Gudrun Parmer

Members Excused: Judge O'Foghludha, Melinda Thompson-King

Staff: Roshanna Parker, Marc Strange, Kelley Waggy, Alex Resney, Beth Steenberg

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Ben Haas called the meeting to order and asked that all members take a moment to introduce themselves.

Review and Approve March Minutes

Vice Chair Deborah Williams asked those in attendance to review the minutes. Satana Deberry made a motion to approve the March minutes, Gudrun Parmer seconded, and a unanimous vote approved the minutes.

Local Reentry Council Update

Roshanna shared that the Criminal Justice Resource Center has served as the intermediary agency for the Local Reentry Council (LRC) for the last 5 years and funds two positions within CJRC. The Board of County Commissioners agreed to pick up a portion of the coordinator's salary allowing more funds to be utilized for clients. Roshanna shared that the LRC team recently received training on NC360 and is moving towards a seamless platform along with the State. This new way of entering data and connecting clients should provide a higher level of efficiency overall. Roshanna asked that she be emailed directly with any questions pertaining to the LRC.

What I'd Like you to know: Perspectives from CJAC

Chair Ben Haas shared that he and Deb Williams had conversed about what this committee really does, and their hope is to open intentional space for reflecting and educating within this committee. The hope is to utilize this space for introspection and growth.

Vice Chair Deborah Williams shared that after meeting with members of the group it was decided that refreshing the committee on what each member does and how it effects the community as a whole and open the floor to understanding their needs from the committee.

Office of the Public Defender

Dawn Baxton, Chief Public Defender, shared a PowerPoint about the Durham County Public Defender's Office.

In 1963, the Supreme Court ruled that indigent persons charged with criminal offenses are entitled to legal counsel in federal and state courts and thus public defenders offices were born. NC currently has 18 Public Defenders Offices serving 37 counties. In the 63 counties where there are no Public Defenders Offices, private attorneys are assigned.

The Durham County Public Defenders Office is comprised of a Chief Public Defender, 2 Sr. Assistants, 11 Superior Court Attorneys, 2 Investigators, 10 District Court Attorneys, 6 Legal Assistants, 1 Social Worker and 1 Interpreter.

Public Defenders provide representation in the following areas: all traffic offenses, all misdemeanor and felony offenses, juvenile offenses, as well as Abuse, Neglect and Dependency cases. Additionally, they appear at first appearances, Mental Health Court, Drug Treatment Court, IVC's, Post Release Violations, Military child support and domestic cases, and maintain lists for private assigned counsel.

Deborah Williams asked how can CJAC assist the Public Defenders Office? Dawn shared that they are often overlooked when it comes to funding. There also needs to be more lobbying around diversion programs. Dawn stated that more resources needed to be provided to Drug Treatment Court (DTC) and she felt the criteria for admittance to DTC needs to be re-examined as the current criteria eliminates individuals who would benefit the most. Lao Rubert asked "do we need to add more resources to what we already have or are we speaking on specific resources that are not currently available?" Dawn replied the need was a mixture of both. DA Deberry shared there was a wider range of individuals who could benefit from both DTC and Mental Health Court. Her office has been working to expand recommendations for higher level individuals be accepted. Roshanna shared there was a team that reviews each case individually and selects individuals based on their review.

Omar Taylor shared his concern admitting higher level offenders to programs when we are not able to service those already in programs. He opined that while Durham could certainly benefit from additional resources, we need to better utilize the resources we currently have.

Robbie Breitweiser shared his appreciation for this discussion and asked about the utilization of maintenance programs as a resource for recovery treatment. Roshanna shared that DTC does allow individuals on Medication Assisted Treatment to participate and that recent research shows maintenance programs benefit recovery.

Ben Rose stated that while Medicaid expansion is coming, it will not necessarily expand capacity. Medicaid expansion would provide additional funding and that may motivate providers to expand capacity. Currently, North Carolina's approach to Medicaid expansion is vastly different than the norm and it remains to be seen how Medicaid expansion will address the communities needs.

What We do Together: CJAC as Place for Shared Work

Ben Haas shared that his hope for CJAC was to find ways to collaborate and work together. He asked that each member answer the following questions:

I would work with CJAC on...

I think CJAC could work together to...

Deborah stated one of the topics they wanted to think about was Person First Language and how the committee is creating a ripple effect by supporting the resolution. Deborah explained the importance of Person First Language: words matter, they hold power, and our utilization of these words can mold the individual we are speaking to. Not utilizing Person First Language obstructs integration, inclusion, participation, and respect. Utilization of Person First Language creates successful outcomes and reduces recidivism. Deborah shared that a good place to start utilizing Person First Language is in our correspondences and evaluating the language we use.

Gudrun shared that a number of years ago Durham moved away from using the term "Offender" and began using "Justice Involved Individual". Moving away from this term and replacing it with more

affirming words becomes easier the more we utilize People First Language. The conscious use of words will result in a ripple effect and a slow shift throughout the community. Syretta Hill stated that she and her team utilize the term “system impacted” because “justice involved” was often seen as triggering.

Ben Haas circled back to his previously proposed question/conversation: Satana stated that CJRC has been a wonderful partner for the DA’s office. CJRC understands the needs, resources, diversion and the general needs of the justice system. Satana shared she felt it would benefit the committee to have a deeper understanding and collaboration with CJRC. Marc mentioned CJAC would be an excellent place to look at Racial Inequity within the community and facilitate open conversations with Durham as a whole. Gudrun professed her interest in diversion and deflection, and that she hoped CJAC would support exploring reaching persons sooner and prevent them from moving through the criminal justice system in the first place.

Ben Haas and Deborah Williams thanked the committee for their time and continued commitment to working towards a brighter future for Durham.

The meeting adjourned at 5:28pm.

Remaining Meeting Dates for 2022

July 26, 2022

September 27, 2022

November 29, 2022