



**Criminal Justice Advisory Committee Minutes**  
**Tuesday, May 28, 2024**

**Members Present:** Dawn Baxton, Dr. Angeloe Burch Sr., Nikki Harris, Quanesha Archer, Lao Rubert, Maggie Clapp, Dwane Brinson, Ben Haas, T. J. Cote, Nida Allam,

**Guests:** Syretta Hill , Alexia Stith, Dorothy Hairston Mitchell, Abena Bediako, Irene Lawrence

**Staff:** Roshanna Parker, Ontario Joyner, Janice Williams

**Welcome and Introductions**

Chair, Dawn Baxton called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. Ms. Baxton asked all in attendance to introduce themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Parker stated that the March minutes will be presented at the next meeting for approval.

**NC AOC Treatment Court Update:** presented by Alexia Stith, Court Management Specialist – NC Administrative Office of the Courts

Ms. Stith presented background information on NC Recovery Courts as follows:

- Recovery Courts have been in existence in NC since 1995 and were state funded until 2011. Since the General Assembly eliminated the state-wide funding, the existing courts had to go to their respective counties for assistance in continuing operations. Many of the Recovery Courts are now operating with funds received from grants or county budgets. The AOC does not currently pay for positions in the Recovery Courts. However, there are AOC Directed Grants that the General Assembly will award to the counties for these courts.
- Currently, Chief Justice Paul Newby has an interest in seeing citizens have access to Recovery Courts across the state. As part of a plan to look at courts across the state, the General Assembly funded a study to determine the capacity level and needs of the courts and the feasibility of expansion on a statewide level. Phase II of the study would examine outcomes and the cost benefits of having Recovery Courts in existence. This study will be presented to the General Assembly in 2025.
- Currently, there are roughly 69-70 operational courts, 12 Family Treatment Courts, about 30 Adult Treatment Courts, 1 Youth Treatment Court, 6 DWI Courts, and about 9 Mental Health Courts across the counties.

When starting a court, counties are advised to assemble all stakeholders to see if the population of the county would sustain a fully operational recovery court. Ms. Stith stated that the staff for the Recovery Courts are existing county staff i.e., judges, law enforcement, attorneys and treatment providers where no extra funding is needed except for the employment of a Recovery Court Coordinator. The existing

courts are operating every two weeks with staffing that is put in place sometimes the day before the court is scheduled to be in session. It is understood that Durham needs a Family Recovery Court which would incorporate Child Welfare Court cases to minimize the parents'/family's time spent in the court system.

The AOC is grant-funded to conduct statewide training for judges and other personnel in motivational interviewing. Sanctions & Incentives training as well as Service Response Trainings are requirements for staff.

Ms. Roshanna Parker reported that Maggie Clapp received a scholarship from the NC Administrative Office of the Courts to attend the 2024 All Rise Conference in Anaheim, CA hosted by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. This was a result of reaching out to the AOC inquiring about the potential for a Family Treatment Court in Durham.

Ms. Dawn Baxton stated that a Family Treatment court here in Durham would greatly assist in the reunification of parents with children.

A question was asked, what are Durham's chances of getting an AOC Grant and how long would the funds last. Ms. Stith replied that it is a matter of going to Durham's representatives who have the ability to go to the General Assembly to request the AOC funding. The AOC can/will write letters of support for counties to apply for federal grants/funding as well.

Ms. Stith offered her continued support in Durham's endeavor to establish and fund a Family Treatment Court.

**E-Courts Update:** presented by Ms. Dawn Baxton, Chair

Ms. Baxton reported that E-Courts have been live since April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and unfortunately, it has not been a smooth transition. The system is very heavy in the use of clerks which results in work-overload. The concern is how much work can be covered effectively due to the shortage of clerk staff.

Internet outages are an issue as well where some courts were able to keep going by reverting to the paper process while other courts' proceedings were abruptly halted. Also, this system seems to limit the Pro se litigants' access to services as well. Due to these issues, Ms. Baxton suggested that this committee should revisit the implementation strategy of this plan.

A question was asked if anyone has been detained in jail longer due to E-Courts. Ms. Baxton responded that she does not know of anyone who has; there have been proactive procedures put in place to avoid this problem.

**Familiar Faces Initiative Update:** presented by Abena Bediako, City of Durham HEART Team

Ms. Bediako reported that Familiar Faces was started March 2024 to establish how to service neighbors who are repeatedly justice involved and, diverting neighbors from becoming justice involved. Two (2) neighbors who have had over 30 arrests and multiple engagements with the HEART team have been serviced in this pilot program. Both neighbors have mental illnesses and are being treated for substance abuse.

There are currently three (3) neighbors being served and the goal is to reach five (5) to effectively assist neighbors with housing, food and diversion from justice involvement.

Ms. Parker stated that the pilot is designed to develop a blueprint on how to figure out the details of what it takes realistically to service these neighbors to avoid excessive 911 calls.

**Local Re-entry Council Update:** presented by Ontario Joyner, LRC Council Coordinator

Mr. Joyner reported the following updates:

- April was Second Chance Month where a host of different events were held by the LRC.
  - One was a clothing drive – Mr. Joyner thanked everyone for their donation and requested that anyone who is planning to donate hold off for a little while because the clothes already received are still being sorted.
  - Another was a bookbag drive where 30 bookbags were collected and distributed to LRC clients and donations are still being accepted throughout the year.
- LRC partnered with Go Triangle where clients were taught different bus routes, how to secure bicycles and strollers to buses and how to navigate the app by attending the field trips. JSD staff also participated in Navigating the App training to assist clients as well.
- LRC partnered with Higher Skill where clients participated in a workshop and were able to create a digital resume (video) enabling them to introduce themselves to employers in a more creative way.
- LRC also attended a three-day re-entry conference in Raleigh where Mr. Joyner and his assistant director presented a talk on the topic of Bridging Barriers -Transforming lives through comprehensive re-entry housing strategies.
- Interviews are still being held for a Housing Case Manager position which is listed on the DCO website as 'Case Manager Provisional'.
- Six (6) clients were placed in long-term housing in April.
- LRC is partnering with Step Up Durham and NC works to host a second, Fair Chance Employment Fair at the main library from 11am – 2pm on May 29<sup>th</sup>
- A very successful Re-entry simulation was held

**Specialty Court Judge Vote/Appointment:**

Ms. Baxton invited Judge Dorothy Hairston Mitchell to give a brief introduction.

Judge Mitchell stated that she has been a District Court Judge since 2022. Prior to that, she was a professor at NCCU School of Law, an assistant public defender and ran her own private practice. She also was the defense attorney for the Adult Drug Treatment Court Team for 9 years. She has been and remains committed to the goals of Treatment and Recovery Courts.

Ms. Parker commented that although this is not a BOCC appointed position, Judge Hairston-Mitchell's application was submitted and approved by the clerk's office stating that she meets the standards to serve on this board.

Ms. Baxton entertained a motion to appoint Judge Dorothy Hairston Mitchell as Specialty Court Judge for CJAC. The motion was moved, seconded and unanimously approved.

**Brief Member Updates:**

None presented

**Future Meeting Dates:**

- July 30, 2024
- September 24, 2024
- November 26, 2024

Meeting Adjourned 5:05pm