

HANDOUTS

- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting Minutes 04/16/13

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Welcome

Michelle Lancaster opened the meeting. Members approved the April minutes by consensus.

Announcements

Kevin Tully announced the Public Defender's Office will host a Community Resource Fair; an opportunity for community service providers to meet criminal justice stakeholders and share information about the services which are available. It will take place at the Public Defender's Office from 10am to 2pm, on Thursday, June 20th.

Tom Eberly updated members on several items of interest:

Magistrate Video Phone Project – The Magistrate Video Phone Project will provide law enforcement agencies the capability to link directly with the magistrate from different locations; likewise, it allows magistrates to communicate with law enforcement from locations other than downtown. Recently, representatives from local law enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, and magistrates observed a demonstration of the equipment. The technology offers utility, particularly for the processing of warrants and criminal summonses. Both the Chief District Court Judge and Chief Magistrate are favorable towards implementation. The group's only reservation was adopting the technology during the period which the arrest processing center transition occurs. It was determined that such action was best taken in the Fall.

Combining Multiple Charges – Effort is underway to combine up to three charges under a single case number in the various criminal justice information systems. Presently, in Mecklenburg, each charge filed receives its own case number. The remainder of the state's jurisdictions assigns multiple charges to one case. Early discussions raised a number of local issues that must be addressed before the new approach can be adopted. Visits to locations that have adopted the multi-charge system will be planned so that stakeholders can observe the process, including handling of cases at first appearance. Aligning ourselves with the State's practice will allow meaningful comparisons of workload and outcome measures to be drawn against other counties.

Juvenile Delinquency Process – Dr. Shelley Listwan, of UNCC, has been invited to assess juvenile delinquency case processing. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the best approach for conducting juvenile needs assessments and connecting juveniles to appropriate services. Ultimately the goal is to match the services needed to Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) funds; approximately \$1.4 million is available annually. Members who would like to share their concerns about the juvenile delinquency process are invited to participate in a stakeholder meeting scheduled for June 27. The information developed through this process will be shared with CJAG.

Race Matters – The county is funding a program titled *Race Matters*, which brings together stakeholders from the criminal justice system, CMS, and community groups to explore how race, gender, and ethnicity impacts treatment within the criminal justice system. UNCC has been hired to work with the group to challenge existing thought processes and establish new ways of thinking, with the goal of ensuring equitable treatment of those involved in the system. Michelle Lancaster briefly highlighted one area of specific interest which is how juveniles are charged with crimes.

Frequent User Service Enhancement (FUSE) Project

Stacy Lowry discussed with members the evolution of the FUSE project underway in Mecklenburg County. FUSE is a national model that seeks to end the cycle of incarceration and homelessness among the highest users of our jail, medical facilities, and other crisis systems. Its function is to break the pattern of use by offering affordable housing coupled with supportive services. Communities that have implemented FUSE have experienced increased housing stability, reduced recidivism, and reduced use of multiple crisis systems among their target populations.

Lowry discussed the reliance on data analysis to determine who services should be offered. Locally, it was decided services would be directed to those who have had four or more visits to both the jail and homeless shelters in a five year period. Forty-five high utilizers of jail and homeless shelters will be selected and proactively “in-reached” to extend offers of assistance. Once housing has been established, then supportive services will be provided. Urban Ministries has been selected through an RFP to be a scattered-site housing provider.

Tom Eberly highlighted the 2007 Sheriff’s Office report on chronic offenders, which revealed the extent of mental illness, homelessness, and substance abuse among the jail’s most frequent users. Data analysis conducted more recently in support of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative confirms those findings. It is these individuals, Eberly says, who will be the beneficiaries of the FUSE program.

Justice Reinvestment Phase II

Richard Stroker reminded members that CJAG submitted a letter of interest to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in May, stating it was ready to move forward to Phase II of the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. After answering some follow-up questions from BJA, we are waiting formal acknowledgement of approval, which is expected any day. In anticipation of that approval, Stroker says we want to move forward with the three implementation groups– Re-entry, DWLR, and Low-Level Offenses.

In regard to a driver’s license restoration clinic, Kevin Tully advised that he has been in contact with representatives at Charlotte School of Law, who have indicated interested in collaborating on the issue, and is waiting for them to get back with him. Tully and Todd Nuccio briefly discussed proposed changes in legislation currently being considered by the General Assembly which, among other potential outcomes, will reduce the severity of DWLR charges and change sentencing options. Tully points out that if charge severity is reduced to a Class 3 misdemeanor the state is not required to provide the defendant an attorney. This change will likely increase the need for a license restoration clinic as individuals lose access to legal advice.

Stroker informed members that Gary Kempker of The Center for Effective Public Policy will visit in July to assist the discussion of how to address low-level offenses.

Tom Eberly advised Recovery Solutions has identified a location for a mental health crisis center off of Billingsley and that the committee would like a representative of the towns to participate in the process. Chief Rob Hunter volunteered to participate.

Open Discussion

Michelle Lancaster advised the city had adopted its budget and the county would adopt their budget today. Brief discussions took place regarding state legislation that would close some juvenile facilities and the AOC and Indigent Defense Services budgets.

MEETING ADJOURNED