

Community Corrections Act (CCA) – 408 Jail Diversion

Summary of Resources

There are currently 110 CCA Jail Diversion Programs in 76 Ohio counties with a projection of 18,784 diversions in FY 07. These programs serve as a vital component in the overall continuum of sanctions available to courts to divert offenders from jail.

When defendants enter the criminal justice system, Pretrial Services Programs provide courts with the necessary information to make bond decisions, provide supervision including referral for substance abuse and mental health treatment and assist in alternative disposition program eligibility determination for non-violent offenders. These activities free up costly jail beds. In addition, defendants who demonstrate the ability to be safely supervised in the community and be linked to the appropriate treatments during the pretrial phase are much more likely to be placed on probation if convicted. As a result, defendants are not only diverted from jail but prison diversions are also positively impacted.

CCA Probation Services provide intensive supervision for offenders placed on direct supervision by the court as a diversion from county jails to address the probationers' needs and thereby affect positive behavioral change. When these misdemeanor offenders are supervised in the community in lieu of jail, bed space is available for felons and more serious offenders as a residential sanction in lieu of prison.

Other services provided by CCA Jail Diversion include: day reporting, electronic monitoring/house arrest, work release, domestic violence programs, counseling services, and community service.

Capability for Enhancement/Expansion

CCA Jail Diversion Programs have the potential to further reduce recidivism for offenders thereby reducing possible commitments to prison and benefiting the community overall. This can be accomplished through the recruitment and retention of qualified staff, trained in the elements of Evidence-Based-Practice with caseloads low enough (based on the assessed level of risk and needs) to effectively implement these strategies. Staff must be trained to conduct a validated screening tool to determine services for defendants and a validated assessment tool to use in the development of a supervision plan. The supervision plan, along with the use of motivational enhancements, will assist offenders in succeeding under supervision to make long-term behavioral change.

Research has shown that treatment in conjunction with supervision is also vital to behavioral change. Treatment must not only be available, but it must be specific to the offender population and address criminogenic needs. Contracting with local community and private treatment agencies and/or CBCFs and Halfway Houses at each level of supervision can provide these necessary services.

CCA Programs could expand to assist with initiatives proposed in the DRC Omnibus Legislation to address offender's issues on a local level. CCA representatives could also offer assistance to communities who are experiencing jail over-crowding, where offenders could be diverted with the proper resources. This can be accomplished in partnership with ODRC.

Summary of Needs

Current salary levels in CCA Jail Diversion Programs make it very difficult to attract and retain the level of staff necessary to effectively implement Evidence-Based-Practices. Current funding levels have caused programs to go without filling vacant positions, thereby increasing caseloads in addition to overall increases in the number of offenders placed in CCA programs. These high caseloads make effective implementation of Evidence-Based-Practices much less attainable. Continuous training of staff requires additional funding to maintain the level of expertise to implement program standards.

Resources are also needed to contract with agencies to provide services specific to the population we supervise. Treatment agencies are unlikely to change current practices without funding to implement these changes. Contractual services could also be developed with Halfway Houses and CBCFs to serve this CCA offender population. In addition, continued cost of living increases for salaries and treatment would be necessary to maintain these services to further reduce recidivism.

As indicated above, the three priority areas identified by CCA include: 1.) Cost of living increases, 2.) Resources for training, and 3.) Resources for treatment. These components are all of equal importance in providing effective supervision services for offenders to lead to a further reduction in recidivism.