



**Dallas County Criminal Justice Advisory Board
General Membership Minutes for Monday, June 26, 2023**

Welcome & Introductions, Co-chair of CJAB, Ellyce Lindberg called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. All in attendance made customary introductions.

Membership & Infrastructure:

Ellyce Lindberg introduced Judge Valencia Nash and provided an overview of Judge Nash's biography as outlined in the CJAB packet. A motion was put forward to approve Judge Nash as the chair of the Justice of the Peace committee, with Jeff Segura seconding the motion.

Meeting Minutes:

The minutes from the CJAB General Membership meeting held on March 27, 2023, were made a part of the packet. A motion was made to approve minutes by Jeff Segura; the motion was seconded by LaShonda Jefferson and approved.

Presentations:

Opioid Response Grant and Pretrial Diversion Assessments Crystal Garland, Laura Edmonds, and Maegan Westbrook

Ellyce Lindberg introduced the speakers and read their biographies included in the CJAB packet.

Laura Edmonds began the presentation by giving an overview of two of the programs. One is the Opioid Response grant program and the other is the Pretrial Diversion program. On the Dallas County Criminal Justice Department side, there is a program manager and two clinical assessors.

The opioid response is a grant that was awarded through the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The aim of this grant was to target individuals entering the criminal justice system who have an opioid use disorder. The original goal was to identify individuals early, provide assessments and link them to treatment, and then also increase access to medication assisted treatment.

As the program has progressed over the course of nearly three years, the team has achieved numerous notable successes. A significant portion of their achievements can be attributed to their collaborative partnership with Parkland

Jail Health, responsible for providing medical and psychiatric care within the jail. Early in their collaboration, they established a notification and consent process, enabling the identification and swift referral of individuals with a history of opioid use disorder as they entered the jail. This facilitated the initiation of attorney outreach services. In addition to their collaboration with Parkland Health, they also successfully formed a partnership with APA, the association representing individuals affected by addiction. Through this partnership, peer recovery coaches with lived experience were able to engage with incarcerated individuals offering motivation, addressing concerns, and fostering their commitment to recovery.

Furthermore, their efforts extended to exit planning and care coordination, ensuring that individuals who may have initiated their journey toward recovery while in jail received comprehensive support as they transitioned back into the community. It is worth noting that this grant is scheduled to conclude at the end of September. As the evaluation of the grant program for the Criminal Justice Department unfolds, the team has been actively exploring future directions. Their commitment to maintaining a strong collaborative partnership with Parkland Jail Health remains a central focus, necessitating ongoing communication. Weekly updates are provided to Parkland Jail Health to keep them informed about the status of different defendants' cases. This enables the team to determine whether exit planning is required or if the defendants will be released to a facility where their treatment can continue.

Notably, there is an observed overlap in cases, where individuals are also eligible for the pretrial diversion program. They find that these two initiatives are closely intertwined. Despite undergoing a transitional phase in the work associated with the opioid response grant, the team expresses eagerness to continue these efforts alongside their pretrial diversion program. The pretrial diversion program specifically targets first-time felony offenders facing nonviolent charges. Crystal Garland shared a cornerstone of this program is the comprehensive assessment process, which focuses on evaluating risks and needs. "Risk" in this context pertains to the likelihood of reoffending, while "needs" encompasses various treatment and community support requirements for successful reintegration into society. Their assessors employ the Texas Risk Assessment System (TRAS) to determine risk levels, treatment needs, and the most suitable program for individuals.

Before the launch of this program in July 2021, limited opportunities existed for individuals to access felony diversion courts for the dismissal and expungement of their cases. The team sought to expand access to this avenue, particularly for low-risk individuals with their first encounter with the criminal justice system. This emphasis on early intervention aims to provide them with the opportunity for case dismissal and expungement, aligning with their assessment-based approach.

The team has recently standardized the referral process, including cases involving specialty courts, pretrial interventions, and prostitution offenses. They

also endeavor to identify cases early in the process, placing them on grand jury hold for potential pre-indictment resolution. Standardized expunction language is employed across all specialty programs, and a process is in place for indigent defendants to apply for fee waivers or reductions.

Maegan Westbrook shared that referrals can originate from defense attorneys, prosecutors, or defendants themselves. The team actively monitors daily jail lists and first-time nonviolent offender lists to identify potential candidates for the pretrial diversion program. This approach led to fluctuations in referral rates as outreach efforts evolved.

Assessment rates also increased over time, with the team using the TRAS tool to categorize individuals into different risk and need levels. Low-risk, low-need individuals typically receive referrals to pretrial intervention programs with treatment recommendations. In contrast, those with moderate to moderate-high needs are recommended for pre-adjudicated specialty court programs.

The program's success prompted them to apply for and secure a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant for peer recovery support. This two-year grant, ending in September 2024, funds full-time recovery support peers who focus on engagement and providing support to individuals in the pretrial diversion program, aiming to enhance their chances of staying in treatment and achieving success.

In conclusion, both the opioid response and pretrial diversion programs are grant-driven, with current grant funding set to conclude in September. The team has applied for additional grants to sustain these programs and address the growing need, including the hiring of a third assessor to manage the increasing referral rate. The duration of participation in the programs varies, with pretrial intervention agreements typically spanning 6 to 9 months and specialty courts varying from 13 to 18 months.

Chiefs of Police Panel- Chief Roberto Arredondo, Chief Daniel Scesney, Chief Mark LiVigni and Chief Derick Miller

Ellyce Lindberg introduced Chief Bryan Sylvester and read his biography that was made part of the CJAB packet.

Chief Bryan Sylvester introduced the speakers, Chief Roberto Arredondo, Chief Daniel Scesney, Chief Mark LiVigni and Chief Derick Miller. He informed the CJAB membership he would ask a question and allow each chief to answer based on what they see going on in their respective city.

Chief Arredondo was asked by Chief Sylvester regarding the Fentanyl crisis impacting Carrollton, with Chief Sylvester seeking insights into the specific community impact. Recognizing the forthcoming legislation aimed at intensifying

punishment for combating this issue and collaborating with school districts, Chief Arredondo expressed his concern, mentioning the heartbreaking fact that children have lost their lives due to this drug. He acknowledged the increasing challenges they face and the dedication of their skilled police officers in addressing the drug trade. They are actively working with school districts and federal agencies, seeking assistance from any available sources. Chief Arredondo highlighted discussions with the DA and Dallas County officials regarding potential new legislation to enhance charges related to Fentanyl-related deaths. While the challenge remains to deter youth from using this dangerous drug, they continue their relentless efforts to combat the crisis.

Chief Miller responded that enforcement has become exceedingly challenging, with struggles faced across the board. The pervasiveness of the issue has reached alarming levels, as evidenced by a recent article documenting widespread fatalities. To address this, the primary focus has shifted toward education. In response to the question about their efforts, Chief Miller emphasized the critical importance of their collective efforts. They are actively engaged in advocacy with school districts, promoting the message "one pill can kill" to raise awareness and foster involvement in combatting the crisis.

The Chiefs on the panel had open dialogue about their agreement and elaborated on the points made by their colleagues. Some confirmed that their departments are on track to double their efforts this year. They have been addressing steady overdose rates through similar strategies, including school outreach and awareness initiatives. However, a significant challenge arises from the remarkably convincing counterfeit pills that are often mistaken for genuine medication. In response, they have taken the proactive step of introducing Narcan into schools. On the enforcement side, they have taken a more assertive stance. Their teams are now closely collaborating with the DEA, extending their efforts beyond street-level offenders. This approach aims to mitigate the ongoing crisis effectively.

Chief Sylvester asked about another crucial subject of concern for the board, the mental health trends within Dallas County. There has been extensive discourse and dedicated efforts aimed at giving greater attention to this specific issue. It's worth emphasizing that each member of the board represents communities that regularly interact with individuals facing mental health challenges daily.

The Chief's openly discussed the efforts of various regional care teams, such as Chief LiVigni's team, to address mental health-related issues in their communities. These teams consist of clinicians, mental health peace officers, and paramedics who respond to calls and provide follow-up care. While there may not be enough data to measure their impact conclusively, there is anecdotal evidence of some success in diverting individuals away from the criminal justice system. Chief Scensney and Chief Miller also employ similar models in their regions, emphasizing the importance of providing mental health resources to police officers and avoiding a "revolving door" approach of placing individuals in

jail. They express a commitment to allocating resources to support this approach in future budgets, seeing it as the way forward in policing.

Chief Sylvester concluded the panel discussion by posing a final question: "What constitutes the most urgent concern within your department?" The responses highlighted several key concerns:

Funding: One chief discussed the challenge of dealing with unfunded mandates, particularly in areas like school safety. While there's a commitment to ensuring public safety, limited resources can make it difficult to meet these demands effectively.

Mental Health of Police Officers: Another concern raised was the mental health of police officers. The exposure to the news and the stress of the job can have a significant impact on their well-being. It was emphasized that officers need support and care, just as they are expected to show dignity and respect to the community.

Public Perception and Recruitment: A third chief pointed out that the public often fails to differentiate between local police departments and misconduct by officers in other regions. This can deter potential candidates from considering careers in law enforcement. Lowering recruitment standards to fill positions can lead to a cycle of unethical conduct, which is detrimental to the profession's reputation.

Staffing and Career Development: Another chief discussed the challenges related to staffing shortages and the need for career development opportunities within the department. Balancing the needs of the community with limited resources and addressing community safety concerns without creating fear were also mentioned as ongoing issues.

In summary, the panel's responses highlighted various complex challenges faced by police departments, including funding constraints, officer mental health, public perception, recruitment difficulties, staffing shortages, and community safety concerns. These issues underscore the evolving nature of law enforcement and the need for innovative solutions to address them effectively.

During the panel discussion, a question arose concerning the Deflection Center and whether all the agencies have been adequately informed about it. The chiefs acknowledged having some information but expressed a desire to learn more. They indicated their intention to reach out to a representative from the District Attorney's office to gather further details and insights.

LaShonda Jefferson inquired, "Are there any case filing delays due to staffing shortages?" The panel responded that they are not encountering any delays.

Committee Project Updates:

Criminal Justice Administration & Jail Population Management Update:

LaShonda Jefferson provided the update. The Jail Population committee meeting was held on Friday, June 16. The Jail Population packet was distributed. Excerpts from that packet can be found on pages 34 through 41 of the CJAB packet. The jail population for today is 6,222, which is 86% of our total jail capacity. The average jail population for May 2023 was 5,827 and our yearly average for 2023, so far, is 5,990. The Criminal Justice Department continues to collaborate with stakeholders to manage our jail population.

Justice of the Peace:

Judge Valencia Nash provided a brief update on Justice of the Peace regarding the transition to Odyssey and working on the technical issues mentioned. She concluded with reporting that they now have a JP analyst.

Law Enforcement/Jurisprudence:

Ellyce Lindberg delivered the update, stating that the electronic disposition reporting achieved a 90 percent completion rate. They successfully met the August 1st deadline for this year's reporting. Now, their focus shifts to the upcoming five-year reporting cycle due in August of the following year.

Pretrial:

Jeff Segura presented the update, sharing the following statistics for Pretrial Services: Alcohol monitoring registered at 1,713, Electronic Monitoring at 572, Mental Health at 241, and General Pretrial at 152 cases. Mr. Segura noted that the averages for alcohol monitoring reporting were higher. Nevertheless, Pretrial Services remains committed to collaborative efforts with various agencies.

Reentry:

Christina Crain was unable to attend the meeting and had no report to provide.

Program Update:

Rebekah Chenelle is in the Affairs division under Charles Reed and the Commissioners Court Administration, holds the privilege of representing Dallas County to the 88th Texas Legislature. To provide context, she shared some noteworthy statistics regarding the legislative session. A total of 8,580 bills were filed during the session, with only 1,357 passing. Among them, Dallas County tracked 2,648 bills, of which 341 made it to the governor's desk. Ultimately, 323 of these bills became new laws, as some were vetoed by the governor.

Rebekah proceeded to offer a succinct overview of the legislative process. She noted that it is an intricate and demanding process, starting with bill filing, which commenced on November 14th, 2022. The legislative session itself began on January 10th, 2023, as newly elected officials could only file bills after their

January 1st swearing-in. Stakeholders, including Dallas County, required this time to review and prepare for the session.

After a bill's filing, it may proceed to a committee hearing, but this necessitates the author's request, and the committee chair has discretion in granting or denying it. Testimonies can be presented during public committee hearings, either in person or virtually. If a bill is voted out of committee, it goes to the Calendars Committee, which determines which bills reach the chamber floor.

On the House side, the bill undergoes a second reading before progressing to the Senate, where it often passes in a single day. If it clears the first chamber, it repeats the process in the second chamber. Any changes made in the second chamber prompt a return to the originating chamber for concurrence.

Rebekah also highlighted an important bill, House Bill 2620, signed by the governor, which allows the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to compensate Dallas County for individuals committed to TDCJ after 45 days, covering costs of confinement beyond that period.

She then turned to the key legislative topics that emerged during the session, including mental health funding, competency restoration, and loan repayment programs. The legislature allocated significant funding to mental health initiatives, introducing a new grant program incentivizing local mental health authorities. Furthermore, SB 30 allocated funds, directing 75% of a 200-bed unit at the Dallas State hospital to be dedicated to forensic patients.

Regarding specific bills impacting Dallas County, Rebekah informed the audience that they would receive department-specific information. She highlighted several bills, such as those streamlining processes for peace officers transferring individuals to competency restoration entities and bills aimed at incentivizing mental health professionals through loan repayment programs. Rebekah concluded her presentation, acknowledging both the complexity of the legislative process and the significance of the legislative outcomes for Dallas County.

Public Comments:

None.

Announcements:

The next CJAB meeting will be held on September 18, 2023, at 2:30pm.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:14PM.