



**Dallas County Criminal Justice Advisory Board
General Membership Minutes for Monday, September 23, 2024
Amended on 12/17/2024**

Welcome & Introductions: Commissioner Dr. Elba Garcia called the meeting to order at 2:32 PM. All in attendance made customary introductions.

Membership & Infrastructure:

There were no changes to membership or infrastructure at this time.

Meeting Minutes:

The minutes from the CJAB General Membership meeting held on June 24, 2024, were made a part of the packet. A motion was made to approve minutes by Duane Steele; the motion was seconded by Paul Blocker. The approval of the meeting minutes was unanimous.

Presentations:

Reentry Housing and Support Services

Ellyce Lindberg introduced the speakers and gave a synopsis of their biographies. The speakers' full biographies are included in the packet.

Kimberly Rawls and Maria Herrera are part of The Dallas County Criminal Justice Department (CJD). CJD is responsible for managing the jail population, using various jail diversion strategies to help get individuals out of jail, and then linking them to the necessary services after release to help reduce recidivism rates.

Mrs. Herrera provided an overview of the Reentry housing and support services, which aim to assist "familiar faces." This term, as defined by the Council of State Governments, refers to individuals frequently interacting with jails, hospitals, and shelters, making them well-known to county and city workers. These individuals often face persistent health and behavioral health challenges, leading to repeated use of costly services without effectively improving their circumstances. Additionally, they contend with legal issues, limited education and job skills, financial instability, lack of transportation, and an absence of both a support system and self-confidence.

To address these barriers, the Criminal Justice Division (CJD), in collaboration with community partners, has developed innovative partnerships aimed at

restoring confidence and fostering hope, ultimately helping these individuals reintegrate as productive members of their communities.

Ms. Rawls oversees three housing and reentry service programs, which are the Frequent User System Enhancement Program (FUSE), the St. Jude Project, and then the Housing Services for Homeless Criminal Justice Involved Clients (HSH CJC) program. Kimberly Rawls, the housing program manager, and Maria Herrera, jail-based housing navigator, make up the Frequent User System Enhancement (FUSE) program team within CJD.

Mrs. Rawls provided an in-depth explanation of the FUSE program, a collaborative effort involving local shelter partners such as Austin Street Center, The Bridge, and The Salvation Army, alongside Dallas County, Parkland Health Hospital, the Dallas Deflection Center, and the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority. The program aims to assist self-reporting unsheltered individuals upon release by connecting them to shelters and case management services. The ultimate goal is to facilitate permanent housing placement within 12 months while linking participants to essential support services.

The FUSE program successfully housed or placed over 140 individuals on the housing priority list. However, some challenges include the voluntary nature of participation, leading to turnover and difficulty maintaining engagement. Data collected over three years, from July 2020 through June 2023, shows of those released into the program, approximately half connected with shelter partners, while the other half either disengaged before entering a shelter or left the program after connecting.

Despite these challenges, a cost analysis indicates significant savings for Dallas County, particularly highlighted in the program's ability to reduce incarceration costs. For instance, the data reveals that the average 10-day cost savings per participant in FUSE, compared to jail incarceration, exceeded \$77,000. This demonstrates that providing access to shelter and support services not only benefits participants but also leads to substantial public service cost reductions.

Several community partners play vital roles in supporting the FUSE program by providing comprehensive services to help individuals transition from homelessness to stability. Melissa Clay from North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (NIPA) manages The Living Room, a crisis center in Dallas County, which conducts assessments, coordinates care, and offers same-day services such as medication, housing referrals, and peer support. Clients are then connected to designated shelters.

Austin Street Center supports older male and adult female clients by offering shelter and resources, while The Bridge provides emergency shelter, case management, and assistance with housing documentation and essential needs. Lastly, The Salvation Army delivers case management, transportation assistance, employment support, and access to basic services, working toward

placing clients in permanent housing and achieving long-term stability. Each partner's efforts collectively enhance the success of the FUSE program.

Mrs. Herrera shared the FUSE program eligibility requirements. The individuals have to be 18 years and older, self-reported unsheltered, two or more bookings within the last four years and no registered sex offenders.

Mrs. Rawls highlighted their innovative projects, including the Dallas Connector Project, which provides daily transportation for program participants. She also discussed the St. Jude Project, which repurposes vacant buildings into supportive housing, offering designated beds for eligible individuals. Dallas County collaborates on this initiative, utilizing 13 county beds at the Forest Lane location.

Additionally, Mrs. Rawls introduced the upcoming Housing Services for Homeless Criminal Justice-Involved Clients (HSH CJC) program, which has not officially launched. This program will complement the FUSE program by potentially partnering with the Criminal Justice Department (CJD) and local boarding home providers to house up to 14 individuals annually for stays of up to six months. The program aims to support individuals requiring higher levels of care upon release, such as outpatient or inpatient mental health or substance abuse treatment.

Any criminal justice housing referral requests can be submitted to the CJDHousing@DallasCounty.org email with the subject line possible housing candidate. Please include the individual's full name, date of birth, the last four of their social, and if applicable, their Dallas County booking number. Also, interviews can be conducted in Spanish, if necessary.

Commissioner Garcia and attendees praised the program's impact while discussing ways to enhance capacity, particularly increasing available beds to meet growing demand. They encouraged collaboration with additional organizations, such as the Dallas Housing Authority and Unlocking Doors, to expand resources and refine strategies.

Mrs. Rawls closed with a call for feedback to improve future presentations and expressions of gratitude to all partners and participants, highlighting the importance of continued collaboration to support vulnerable populations in Dallas County.

Committee Project Updates:

Criminal Justice Administration & Jail Population Management Update:

Charlene Randolph provided the update. The Jail Population committee September 18th meeting excerpts can be found on pages 41 through 48 of the CJAB packet. The current jail population is 6,765, which is 95% of the reduced

maximum capacity of 7,119. In August 2024, the average population was 6,733, and the yearly average is 6,398.

The Criminal Justice Department's Jail Population Management Team continues to take a proactive approach to the review of individuals in custody. They conduct thorough research among individuals across multiple systems to determine who is in custody, why, and they work tirelessly to bring awareness to our criminal justice partners when it appears action is needed for a criminal case or individual movement. These efforts continue to assist with bridging gaps to prevent justice late, and to ensure individuals do not linger unnecessarily in jail.

The Jail Population Management Team has reviewed 21,554 cases in 2024, reaching out to stakeholders in 7,875 cases to address delays. These efforts led to the release of 3,700 individuals, reducing their average jail stay from 92 days to 33 days and saving approximately \$18 million. Ms. Randolph credited coordinators Adrianna Lawson and Jennifer Corona, along with Assistant Director LaShonda Jefferson for these achievements.

To enhance efficiency, two temporary workers approved by the Commissioner's Court will join the team shortly, increasing capacity to process cases and reduce delays further.

Fair Defense:

Mr. Blocker provided the update. After extensive collaboration with Melissa Schank, Executive Director of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, the annual Indigent Defense Seminar has been finalized. Scheduled for February 22, 2025, at the Aloft Dallas Downtown, the event will cater to attorneys involved in indigent defense, including court-appointed lawyers, public defenders, and social workers. Open to all defense attorneys, the seminar is funded by a grant from the Supreme Court.

Justice of the Peace:

Judge Valencia Nash provided the update. Judge Valencia Nash reported on the ongoing transition to the Tyler Odyssey system, with the constables now beginning their transition as well. She noted that connectivity issues had been identified and significantly improved.

Law Enforcement/Jurisprudence:

Ellyce Lindberg provided an update, reporting that by August 2025, the EDR compliance rate must reach 90%, requiring the closure of approximately 40,000 cases to meet this target. Commissioner Garcia inquired whether this was comparable to the previous year. Ms. Randolph explained that a mechanism is now in place to transmit the necessary information from Dallas County to the state that was not available previously.

Pretrial:

Jeff Segura from Pretrial Services reported that they are currently monitoring approximately 2,286 individuals. This includes 1,338 in the alcohol monitoring unit, 539 in electronic monitoring, 273 in the Smart Justice Unit (which handles individuals with mental health issues), and 136 in the general pretrial committee unit. Mr. Segura reported they are currently working to adjust people on ARP funding.

Reentry:

Rex Gerstner provided the report in Christina Crain's absence. He shared that Unlocking Doors continues to collaborate with the District Attorney's office and educate employers about hiring individuals returning to the community. Additionally, they are preparing for the upcoming legislative session to advocate for improved employment opportunities for those reentering.

Research:

Dr. Noyes provided an update, sharing that he had spoken with his colleagues about reviewing their research to determine its relevance to the Criminal Justice Advisory Board. They are considering presenting research on the broader impact of policing and criminal justice, as well as exploring how it could specifically apply to Dallas County. As more information becomes available, there are plans to have someone present the research at an upcoming meeting.

Program Update:

Judge Kim Nesbitt provided the update which centered around efforts to address challenges within the judicial and pretrial systems in Dallas County, especially concerning bond conditions and jurisdictional processes. A meeting held in August at the Arts District Mansion involved a wide array of stakeholders, including judges, law enforcement, and pretrial services, to discuss jurisdictional complexities tied to bond conditions. Despite the law governing these processes being in place since 1977, issues have arisen due to inconsistencies in implementation and misunderstandings, particularly following litigation in 2018. Participants emphasized the disconnect between jurisdictions and the enforcement of bond conditions, which has left some offenders unmonitored, highlighting the need for streamlined procedures.

One significant issue discussed was the handling of cases involving repeat offenders and the lack of bond conditions being set or enforced in municipal jurisdictions. A common scenario occurs when individuals bond out of municipalities without proper supervision or conditions. The absence of consistent communication and oversight among various municipal and county offices was likened to a "wild, wild west" environment. Some municipalities, like Irving, were noted for their proactive approach, but many lack the resources or processes to handle noncompliance effectively. This disparity creates challenges for pretrial services and law enforcement.

Efforts to address these gaps included developing educational materials, such as a flowchart to simplify the understanding of jurisdictional rules and bond conditions. Municipal judges in Travis County contributed by authoring an article, Clear as Mud, that traced jurisdictional complexities back to 19th-century legal precedents. Proposed solutions also involve legislative fixes, aiming to codify clearer procedures that ensure continuity of oversight from municipalities to the county level. Such reforms would enable prosecutors, defense attorneys, and pretrial services to work cohesively within a unified system.

The discussion concluded with plans to advocate for legislative changes that build upon existing legal frameworks rather than introducing entirely new laws. Stakeholders stressed the importance of coordination among Dallas County officials, law enforcement, and legislative representatives to address these issues comprehensively. The goal is to bring consistency and efficiency to a fragmented system, benefitting all involved parties and ensuring better adherence to legal processes.

Public Comments:

None.

Announcements:

The next CJAB meeting will be held on December 16, 2024, at 2:30 PM.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 3:42 PM.