

Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice

Survey and Interview Results

The Survey Questions

- What are your top three objectives for the CCJJ?
- What do you think are the five most pressing problems facing the juvenile/criminal justice systems in Colorado?
- What additional groups - besides those represented in the commission's membership – does the CCJJ need to reach out to?

The Survey Questions

- What data and/or information would you find helpful as the CCJJ begins its work?
- Please complete this sentence: "We will be successful if..."
- What do you see as the greatest challenges and/or barriers to the CCJJ successfully accomplishing its mission?

The Survey Questions

- Please list a few specific areas of interest to you so that we might learn about the scope of possible CCJJ subcommittees.

The Survey Questions

- The Commission is authorized to hire an executive director to ensure that the work of the Commission and its subcommittees remains timely and focused. We would very much appreciate your thoughts regarding the qualifications and expertise that should be sought in an executive director. Please respond to the following:

It is most important for the executive director to:

- Have subject matter expertise in criminal justice issues
 - or
- Have excellent skills as an administrator and facilitator

The Survey Questions

- For the Commission to effectively operate as a group, it is important to identify, and agree upon, certain core values that are shared by the members. Then you were provided with a list and asked to select and rank five of those values.

CCJJ Objectives

- Reduction of Recidivism was #1 objective
 - Integrate Mental Health & Substance Abuse Treatment.
 - Use evidence-based practices.
 - Use of therapeutic models.
 - Create alternative sentencing options.
 - Create limitations for habitual criminal filings and sentences.
 - Use of education.
 - Rehabilitate DOC inmates.

Other Objectives

- Reform sentencing and parole laws
 - Address outdated provisions.
 - Reform laws related to direct transfer filings for juveniles.
 - Determine if sentencing laws are a reflection of who really needs to be in prison.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of parole, probation and community corrections.
 - Develop performance measurement process.

More Objectives

- Focus on crime prevention programming.
 - Balance community and victim safety.
 - Adult and juvenile programs and policies.
 - But keep the non-metro area in mind!
 - Enhance the state Witness Protection Program
- Evaluate the fiscal management of state resources.
 - Management needs to be improved.
 - Unfunded mandates to local communities should be avoided.
 - Funding should be provided to ensure that outcomes can be evaluated.

Problems facing the Juvenile/Criminal Justice System

- The #1 problem is the high level of recidivism.
 - Due to technical violators returning to prison.
 - Also due to a lack of employment opportunities.
 - There is a need for improved transition programs for parolees.

Other Problems

- Lack of Resources
 - Existing services being under funded.
 - Especially in rural areas.
 - Not having the personnel, programs (proven), or physical capacity to handle the demand.
- Mandatory sentencing
 - There is a need for sentencing alternatives
- Special needs groups:
 - Mentally ill, drug/alcohol abusers
 - There is a need for integrative treatment
 - The mentally ill should be considered for diversion as means of receiving needed treatments and interventions.
 - A misunderstanding of the causes of crime and violence and the expectation that the CJS can "solve" the problem.

More Problems

- An over-burdened system
 - Court congestion and high case manager case loads
 - Over populated prisons
 - Unwillingness of state to build more beds.
- A lack of sanctions for habitual drunk driving.
- Overrepresentations of minorities in the system.
- Lack of a computer system to smoothly share inmate information across agencies.
- A need for integration of service delivery across the state.
- Underutilization of Evidence Based Practice
- Case load volume throughout the system.

Other Groups CCJJ Should Attempt to Reach

- Victims and their families
 - Including victim/witness advocates
- Offender advocate groups
 - Including the families of the incarcerated
 - C.U.R.E., C.C.J.R.C.
 - Former and current offenders
- School districts
- Those doing research on crime, and recidivism, etc.
- Business community
- General public
 - Including public service agencies
 - Grass roots community activists
- Homeless advocates
- Immigration enforcement and advocates
- Justice system coordinating commissions
- Treatment providers
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental health
 - Medical
- Churches
- Experts
 - Literacy
 - Early childhood development
 - Local educators
- Criminal Justice Practitioners
 - From all over the state, region, country and world

Helpful Information: Inmate Description

- Profile of inmates (prison and DYC)
 - Demographics
 - Crime trends, gang activity, drug use
 - High school dropout rate
 - Family incarceration patterns
 - How often do individuals commit the same crime.

Helpful Information: Background Information

- Research on effective alternatives to prison.
- What programs exist across the state and what is their available capacity?
- Background information on Colorado sentencing structure.
- What effect does plea bargaining have on the Criminal Justice system?
- List of violations that require a person to go back to DOC.
 - What is the rate that each occurs?
- Facts and figures of caseloads across state.

Helpful Information: Recidivism

- Recidivism rate by age, crime, mental health status and drug/alcohol abuse.
- Background research on ways to prevent recidivism.
- How are parole and probation typically violated?

Other Helpful Information

- Commission research and program implementation from other states.
 - Where has the concept of Restorative Justice been implemented? What is it's success rate?
- Research on Evidence Based Practice that have a solid success record.

Success

- We will be successful if....
 - "we have a positive impact on the juvenile and adult CJ system to include increasing public safety, reducing recidivism and creating sustainable results and partnerships for stakeholders."
 - "we not only reduce recidivism but also reduce 1st time offenders and overall incidents of crime."
 - "all CCJJ members set aside their biases and pre-conceived notions and instead work together to make progress."

Challenges and Concerns about the CCJJ

- Major concern about the political divide that may exist within the commission.
 - Focus on control vs. Focus on innovation
 - Society's willingness to spend money on prisons rather than programs.
 - Felt by some that there is an overrepresentation of pro-prosecution commission members.
 - Some worry that they will not be elected if they are not tough on crime.
 - Therefore, they are unwilling to take programmatic risks.

Other Concerns/Challenges

- Having unrealistic expectations about reducing the prison population.
- Having unrealistic expectations about drug law reform.
- The number of years it will take to see real statistical benefits of any changes.
- Lack of commitment of resources to true change.
- Lack of funding
 - Including an awareness of the commission that extensive money may be needed to make the necessary changes.
 - Disagreement on where funding should go.

Member Interests

- The #1 interest was related to an increase in education opportunities.
 - Including parenting programs and innovative reentry programs.
- Sentencing alternatives
 - Mandatory sentencing reform
 - Sentencing reforms that have been made in other states
 - Diversion from prison to treatment instead for MH population.
- Renovations to the juvenile justice system.
 - Rehabilitate their behavior rather than forcing them into the adult system.
 - Evidence Based Practice juvenile treatment alternatives.

Various Other Interests

- Various target populations (e.g., habitual criminals, gangs, mental health inmates)
- Diversity – including racial/class disparity
- Use of the CCJJ in non-metro areas.
- A mental health court system.
- Recidivism
- Case management
- Truth in sentencing
- Rehabilitation
- Interactive treatment
- Change in attorney attitude to focus on mediation and restorative justice.
- Legislation
- Enhancing witness protection
- Victim's rights enforcement
- Community partnerships

Executive Director

- When asked what trait is most important for the executive director to have
 - 6 (40%) said "expertise in criminal justice issues."
 - 9 (60%) said "excellent skills as an administrator and facilitator."

Other Skills of the Executive Director

- Speaking/presentation/leadership skills.
 - Including the ability to express the extreme need for reform.
 - Negotiation and conflict skills
 - And an awareness of the issues and resources involved.
- Knowledge of the criminal justice and legal system.
 - Including knowledge and involvement in other state commissions.
- Organization and management skills.
- Open-minded with respect for all sides.
- Research skills

Core Qualities

- From a list of 33 core qualities the following items were chosen as the five most important (by frequency of times chosen):
 1. Innovative (7 times)
 2. Accountability & Respect for Diversity (6 times each)
 3. Competence, Result Oriented, & Visionary (5 times each)
 4. Commitment & Fairness (4 times each)
 5. Ethical, Honesty and Integrity, & Teamwork (3 times each)

Your Suggestions On How To Get Started To Ensure Success

- Develop a big picture vision and then break that down into pieces to determine how we get there
- Take advantage of this unique opportunity to look at things from top to bottom
- Engage in serious conversation about the mission of the commission
- Clarify expectations

Your Suggestions On How To Get Started To Ensure Success

- Find out who is around the table - their backgrounds – develop a comfort level – understand where people are coming from
- Create a sense of trust
- Get buy in up front that there must be give and take
- When we are here, take off you hat and commit to the work

Your Suggestions On How To Get
Started To Ensure Success

Go slow before you go
fast

Your Suggestions On How To Get Started To Ensure Success

- Identify common ground
- Determine what we would like to achieve and what is achievable
- Determine our tasks, do they make sense, are they in the correct order

Your Suggestions On How To Get Started To Ensure Success

- Find out what we are doing now
- Take time studying data and information
- Obtain offender profiles
- Determine what communities want in the criminal and juvenile justice systems
- Look beyond the commission to see what resonates with other key stakeholders

Your Suggestions On How To Get Started To Ensure Success

Identify major
problems and trends -
prioritize - develop
roadmap

Your Suggestions On How To Get Started To Ensure Success

- Focus on recidivism
- Focus on funding
- Look at sentencing and try to make it logical
- Explore methods for lawyers to work together – the divide between prosecution and defense may destroy the system

Common Ground

- The people on this commission have the passion to make a difference
- Reality test our discussions – rely on good data and information
- My favorite question: “What data or information do you have that leads you to that conclusion”

Common Ground

The criminal and juvenile
justice systems cannot
solve all the problems

Common Ground

Identify things that
need to be dealt with
and fix them

Common Ground

- There must be a focus on reducing recidivism and impacting initial entry into the system
- Reentry is a critical issue to pursue
- There are changes that need to be made to our sentencing structure
- Mental health and substance abuse are key issues to deal with

Develop and/or finalize the team:

1. Determine and discuss roles and responsibilities
2. Establish operating norms
3. Develop the vision and mission of the team

Develop a:

- System map
- Population profile
- Resource inventory

Assess Current Practice

Understand Evidence Based Practice

Identify gaps

Prioritize the identified gaps

Identify and develop strategies to fill the prioritized gaps

Develop an implementation plan including goals, objectives, a budget, and a monitoring and evaluation plan

Monitor and evaluate

Characteristics of Successful Teams

- A clear and elevating goal
- A results-driven structure
- Competent team members
- Unified commitment
- A collaborative climate
- Standards of excellence
- External support and recognition
- Principled leadership