

1/2/09 Working Draft 3

CCJJ Public Education Outline

The Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) was created to review the operations and outcomes of the justice process, and to make recommendations to improve the delivery of justice.

Purpose of this presentation:

1. To provide Coloradans an overview of the working assumptions and preliminary conclusions reached thus far;
2. to outline the general direction planned for the future;
3. to summarize the initial specific recommendations for the short term; and
4. to obtain feedback from individuals and groups to inform our upcoming efforts.

Overview of conclusions and problems thus far:

Members of the CCJJ generally agree that Colorado's justice system faces specific problems that must be addressed. There also is general consensus among members of the commission on several policy-related areas.

The policy-related areas of agreement are:

1. Public safety is a priority of the Colorado justice system. The CCJJ will give strong consideration to keeping dangerous, violent criminals in prison when making any recommendations to policy makers. At the same time, there are alternatives to prison that would be less costly when used carefully: electronic home monitoring, breathalyzers to prevent drunk drivers from starting their cars (interlock devices), intensive community supervision, etc. These options should be considered and used where appropriate.
2. Drug and alcohol abuse and mental health problems contribute to many crimes. Treatment for these problems should be part of the sentences for offenders who have those contributing problems and who will either remain in the community or return to it.
3. All corrective measures should provide the best "bang for the buck" to ensure the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Corrective measures – placement in a halfway house, substance-abuse treatment, prison or anything in between – should be likely to succeed based on scientific study.
4. Colorado criminal justice agencies must have a wide range of options available to make sure that the purpose of each offender's sentence is carried out (i.e., the prevention future crimes through deterrence, punishment of offenders, help victims, or for treatment of mental health problems that contributed to criminal behavior). Those options should have a range of intensity so criminal justice authorities can move offenders up or down the scale depending on each offender's behavior and perceived risk to the community.
5. Justice agencies should explore more initiatives that involve community members and victims more directly in the justice process. These types of restorative community justice programs can increase the public's and victims' satisfaction with the justice process.
6. The CCJJ should review sentencing policies and processes. The goal should be to make improvements to ensure public safety and efficient use of taxpayer dollars while providing offenders with the types of treatment or other programs they need to safely remain in or return to the community.

Given these assumptions and general conclusions, there are evident problem areas that must be addressed:

1. Colorado's justice system does not have a seamless range of options for carrying out sentences based on the purpose of the sentence, such as substance-abuse treatment. The rules for movement up and down a scale of intervention options are not well developed. The lack of this range of options leads to greater taxpayer expense in putting offenders in prison when they and the community might be better served by putting them in some kind of supervision outside prison. This lack of options also can contribute to offenders failing to meet the requirements of supervision.
2. The state justice system must provide its employees more training on which corrective options (such as community placements or drug-abuse treatments) work based on national research,

must make sure those options are working as they're supposed to, and must study those programs to measure their effectiveness here in Colorado.

3. Victims of crime don't always get the support they need from the state justice process. Their needs – and if they want, their involvement in the process – should get more attention.
4. Over time, and partially by design, many different government agencies have been involved in writing and using laws, punishments, treatments and all manner of justice policies. They must come together and focus our future laws and policies to greater effect and efficiency.

Specific short term recommendations:

(We could then list here in general summary form the recommendations of the Commission thus far.)

Feedback

We know we can do better. We need your feedback now to refine our specific recommendations and to help direct future conclusions.

1. The budget is strained – we are trying to build up options to prisons, which are costly. This is a sensitive issue. Are you willing to pay more for prisons, taking it from other areas like roads and education? Are you willing to hold offenders accountable in other ways that cost less and are likely to reduce future repeat offenses by those offenders?
2. You may have been a victim. Were you treated fairly and kept informed? Was that important?
3. You may have had family or friends involved with the justice process due to substance abuse or mental health problems. Was the sentence helpful in moving them toward a crime-free lifestyle? What worked and what didn't?
4. As a citizen, you want your government to be well-managed. Many of the recommendations thus far relate to improving the overall management of the system. Do they make sense to you? Is the overall direction reasonable?
5. Any additional comments you want the full CCJJ to hear?
6. Keep informed as we go forward by reviewing the website for future reports.