

**THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL  
REGIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE FORUM – TENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT (ATHENS)  
SUMMARY REPORT**

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) is statutorily charged with the responsibility of convening stakeholders statewide to assist in the development, prioritization and publication of state and local policy agenda for the criminal justice system. To this end, on February 23, 2012, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council hosted its first Regional Criminal Justice Forum for part of the Tenth Judicial District in Athens, GA. Local participants at the forum represented the following agencies:

- Clarke County Sheriff's Office
- Oconee County Sheriff's Office
- Alcovy Circuit Superior Court (Newton & Walton)
- Athens-Clarke DUI /Drug Court
- Newton County Juvenile Court
- Western Judicial Circuit Felony Court
- Western Judicial Circuit District Attorney Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP)
- Public Defender's Office
- Victims' Services Organizations
  - The Cottage
  - Harmony House Child Advocacy Center
  - Project Safe
  - The Tree House
- Monroe Probation Office

In addition, the following state agencies were represented:

- Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)
- Department of Corrections (DOC)
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)
- Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI)
- State Board of Pardons and Paroles (SBPP)

CJCC staff, along with the guidance and assistance of Kay Chopard Cohen, Deputy Director of the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA), facilitated the forum and recorded this event. Attendees provided expertise and practitioner perspective to the forum to establish a dialogue of ideas and identification of issues affecting the Athens region.

**Identifying Regional Priorities**

Forum participants identified the region's top priorities<sup>1</sup> and in group discussions further detailed the challenges and barriers that inhibit resolutions. After exchanging issue perspectives, participants were encouraged to offer possible solutions for each priority identified. The following table provides a summary of the issues and potential solutions<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Each participant used the three stickers provided by CJCC staff to identify their top three priorities. Items with the most stickers were then selected for detailed discussion. For a complete list of all identified issues in the region, refer to Attachment A.

<sup>2</sup> For program descriptions, refer to Attachment B.

**Regional Priorities Identified by Athens Forum Participants**

<i>Regional Priorities:</i>	<i>Issues:</i>	<i>Suggested Solutions/ Potential Funding Opportunities:</i>
<p align="center"><b>LACK OF RESOURCES FOR MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of funding for mentally ill offenders</li> <li>• Jails are overcrowded with mentally ill offenders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide funding for mental health courts and supportive housing</li> <li>• Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of jail versus mental institution services</li> <li>• Provide jail personnel with the training and support necessary to assess and manage mentally ill offenders</li> <li>• Employ mental health counselors to conduct need-assessments on mentally ill offenders</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>INDIGENT RESOURCES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local agencies lack the assistance of certified personnel</li> <li>• Backlog in available RSAT beds</li> <li>• Employers are reluctant to hire convicted felons</li> <li>• Offenders are chronic 'users' of criminal justice resources</li> <li>• Policymakers are hesitant to support additional programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research to determine means of addressing and providing services for nonviolent offenders</li> <li>• Develop effective programs for offender populations based on research</li> <li>• Fund and support efforts by: Drug Courts, Day Reporting Centers, Family Protection Centers, and Multi-Agency Task Force Organizations</li> <li>• Employ Moral-Reconciliation Therapy and RSAT</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>BROKEN JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient number of beds in detention centers</li> <li>• Deficiency in reentry transition for juvenile offenders</li> <li>• Lack of communication among state agencies</li> <li>• Delinquents are disengaged to programming opportunities and available services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide alternative funding options for juvenile justice system</li> <li>• Increase the number of programs for juveniles</li> <li>• Encourage the Department of Families and Children, the Mental Health System, and the Juvenile Justice System to make collaborative efforts in enhancing services for juveniles</li> <li>• Improve follow-up on risk assessments</li> </ul>

**Regional Priorities Identified by Athens Forum Participants (Cont.)**

<i>Regional Priorities:</i>	<i>Issues:</i>	<i>Suggested Solutions and Potential Funding Opportunities:</i>
<b>LACK OF CROSS-AGENCY COORDINATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of protocols at the state level to help transitions at regional level (Athens)</li> <li>• Statutory constraints on day-to-day operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic collaboration.</li> <li>• Ensure agencies oversee systematic collaborations and structure protocols</li> </ul>
<b>VOCATIONAL TRAINING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gap in state services for offenders</li> <li>• Training needs to be expanded to include a comprehensive curriculum (not just one class)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide funding for vocational programs</li> </ul>
<b>ALTERNATIVES FOR PROBATION REVOCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lengthy program wait lists</li> <li>• Shortage of advisory boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ a collaborative/hybrid approach between DOC and Parole, to address probation revocations</li> <li>• Include consultation by local experts to determine community needs</li> <li>• Introduce local planning teams for the management of adult and juvenile offenders</li> <li>• Encourage collective use of agency resources</li> </ul>

**Recurring Themes**

After review of forum dialogues, CJCC discovered recurring themes among the issues within the region. Themes included:

1. Offenders need greater support services (e.g., employment opportunities, supportive housing, residential substance abuse treatment, vocational education etc.), not just punitive action to end the cyclical nature of offenders recidivating. Services should be tailored to high risk, high need offenders and be given more non-punitive opportunities to end the revolving door of reoffending.
2. Services for offenders should be specialized, particularly for mentally ill offenders and those who have high rates of recidivism. A key to creating specialized services are improved risk needs assessments for both juvenile and adult offenders.
3. Collaborative efforts at both the state and local level of government are of great significance to establishing effective and sustainable improvements to the criminal justice system. As shown above, the need for a collaborative approach was a plausible solution to almost every issue identified.
4. Local criminal justice agencies are willing to take ownership of the problems specific to their region and should be entrusted with working to resolve them. Participants stated that issues vary in each region and thus the approach to resolving these issues should as well. Local agencies are more informed of regional needs and should be an integral part of the resolutions.

5. Even with state and local regional coordination, statewide policies can be inconsistent with local policies and issues causing a need for better control in area offender management.

### **What's Working**

At the end of the forum, participants provided further insight by identifying the following cost-saving, innovative practices<sup>3</sup>:

- Task force concept – The task force concept utilizes a multi-agency approach in an effort to find an effective and comprehensive solution to regional problems.
- Local Interagency Planning Teams (LIPT) – The multi-county teams, which have been established in the region to address juveniles with emotional disorders and addiction issues, may be an effective model for adult offenders, and for use statewide.
- Reentry Housing Partnership Program (RHP) – RHP is a cost-effective program designed to provide housing to work-ready felons.
- Community Impact Program (CIP) – CIP provides offenders access to services and treatment.
- Georgia Fatherhood Program – The Office of Child Support Services created the Georgia Fatherhood Program to ensure paternal involvement in children's lives and that financial responsibilities are met.
- GoToMeeting – GoToMeeting is a web conferencing tool used to host online meetings of up to 15 people. Parole uses the tool for its regional meetings as a cost-saving measure.
- Voice Recognition System (VRS) - VRS is a tool utilized by Parole to further cut costs by allowing low risk offenders to dial in rather than meet their parole officer in person. The VRS is 99.9% accurate and allows parole officers to focus on more high risk offenders.

The issues, challenges and possible solutions identified are a result of CJCC's staff discussions with the state and local agency representatives who voluntarily participated in the Athens forum. CJCC staff acknowledges that the information obtained is not a complete list of all of the criminal justice issues in the region, but a representation of the region's priorities.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on each program, please refer to Attachment B

## **Attachment A: Regional Needs Identified by Athens Forum Participants**

### ***Training:***

- Law enforcement training relative to juveniles
- Law enforcement training on mental health issues

### ***Programs:***

- More effective programs
- More domestic violence shelters

### ***Indigent:***

- Referral services
- Indigent resources (e.g., housing)
- Substance abuse treatment/beds
- Intensive community programs to prepare ex-offenders for successful reentry to society
- Community-based partnership for vocational training with Department of Labor

### ***Mentally Ill:***

- Referral services
- Life skills programs for mental health offenders
- Mental health facilities
- Community-based programs
- Trained personnel in mental health, specifically in the criminal justice system
- Education and home life support for mental health offenders

### ***Crime Lab:***

- Crime lab resources
- More expedited crime lab services

### ***Facilities/Equipment/Personnel:***

- Increase in DOC beds

### ***Communication/Collaboration:***

- Increase in state agency collaborations
- Increase in communication at local level on new funding opportunities

### ***Home Life/Parenting:***

- Co-parenting guidance needed for divorced parties
- Broader education across state on parenting issues
- Programs and practices to effectively target the issue of single-parent homes

### ***System In Need of Alternatives:***

- Alternative resolutions for juvenile court judges
- Alternatives for probation/parole revocations

### ***Other comments:***

- Independent analysis on whether alternative courts are effective
- Continued funding for programs and practices that are working

### Attachment B: Program Description Table

<i>Program</i>	<i>Program Description</i>	<i>Program Goal(s)</i>
<i>Community Impact Program (CIP)</i>	The Community Impact Program (CIP) is modeled after the existing Savannah Impact Program, which has a focus on supervising on high risk offenders. Based in the local probation office, the CIP program is designed to assist with the offender’s return to society by providing drug treatment and counseling. It also leverages collaboration with other law local enforcement agencies, such as the police and parole, to “shadow” current and ex-offenders through the reentry phase. <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help offenders successfully reenter society by providing access to wraparound services</li> </ul>
<i>Day Reporting Center (DRP)</i>	Day Reporting Centers (DRC) provide intensive substance abuse treatment for offenders who have not responded to more traditional supervision and treatment efforts. The program includes components such as substance abuse counseling, cognitive restructuring, adult basic education, employment enhancement, intensive supervision, and community service. An aftercare component follows the on-site programming. <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce offender recidivism and improve the ability of offenders to conform to community norms</li> <li>• To provide effective programming to help offenders succeed in the community</li> </ul>
<i>Drug Court</i>	Drug courts are special courts with jurisdiction over cases involving drug-using offenders. They provide treatment-based alternatives to prisons, youth-detention facilities, jails, and probation. These courts make extensive use of comprehensive supervision, drug testing, treatment services, immediate sanctions, and incentives. <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce the revolving door of crime and drugs by providing treatment to drug-addicted criminal offenders</li> <li>• To require strict accountability from program participants through frequent in-person court hearings and intensive monitoring</li> <li>• To assure program participants abstain from alcohol and drug use</li> <li>• To reduce court, jail, and prison overcrowding and costs</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Department of Corrections, “Enhancing Public Safety, Holding Felons Accountable,” dcor.state.ga.us, <http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/Divisions/Corrections/ProbationSupervision/ProbationSupervision.html>, March 12, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Department of Corrections, “Day Reporting Centers,” dcor.state.ga.us, <http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/Divisions/Corrections/ProbationSupervision/DayReporting.html>, March 23, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, “Defining Drug Courts: The key Components,” ncjrs.gov, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/205621.pdf>, March 23, 2012.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Program Description</i>	<i>Program Goal(s)</i>
<i>Family Protection Center</i>	Family Protection Centers are facilities which provide collaborative services between multiple agencies that work with child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence cases. The Athens-Clarke facility houses forensic medical examinations, protective services, interview rooms, counseling rooms, a victim/witness services, administrative services, and other public spaces. <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide shelter for victims of child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence and offer support and help in the form of medical, psychological, social and legal consultation, conflict resolution and hosting special cases</li> </ul>
<i>Georgia Fatherhood Program</i>	The Georgia Fatherhood Program, created by the office of Child Support Services (OCSS) in 1997, works with non-custodial parents who owe child support through OCSS but are unable to pay. Georgia's Fatherhood Program is the largest state-operated fatherhood program in the country. <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide program participants with assistance in obtaining sustainable full-time employment to take care of their daily expenses and pay child support</li> </ul>
<i>Local Interagency Planning Teams (LIPT)</i>	A Local Interagency Planning Team (LIPT) may be a single or multi-county team (dependent upon the size of the community and the geographic availability of needed resources) established to improve and facilitate the coordination of services to children with severe emotional disorders (SEDs) and addictive disease. <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assure that children with severe emotional disorders (SEDs) and addictive disease (AD) and their families have access to a system of care in their geographic areas</li> <li>To ensure access to an array of community services</li> <li>To decrease fragmentation and duplication of services and maximize the utilization of all available resources</li> <li>To facilitate effective referral and screening systems that will assure that children have access to the services they need to lead productive lives</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Athens-Clarke County Unified Government, "Project 38: Family Protection Center," ga-athensclarkecounty.civicplus.com, <http://ga-athensclarkecounty.civicplus.com/index.aspx?NID=2267>, March 23, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Department of Human Resources, "Georgia Fatherhood Program," ocse.dhr.georgia.gov, [http://ocse.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR/DHR\\_FactSheets/Fatherhood\\_program\\_06.pdf](http://ocse.dhr.georgia.gov/DHR/DHR_FactSheets/Fatherhood_program_06.pdf), March 12, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Georgia Department of Human Resources, "Local Interagency Planning Teams: Collaborating for Successful Communities," kidsnetgeorgia.org, [http://www.kidsnetgeorgia.org/kidsnet/uploads/collaboration/LIPT%20Leader%20Guide\\_FinalDoc\\_TTT\\_10\\_20\\_08.pdf](http://www.kidsnetgeorgia.org/kidsnet/uploads/collaboration/LIPT%20Leader%20Guide_FinalDoc_TTT_10_20_08.pdf), March 12, 2012.

<i>Program</i>	<i>Program Description</i>	<i>Program Goal(s)</i>
<i>Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRP)</i>	Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) is a unique, cognitive-behavioral treatment approach initially designed to be utilized within a prison-based drug treatment therapeutic community, but later expanded to include DWI treatment, domestic violence, educational uses and various problem-specific versions. <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To foster moral development in treatment-resistant clients by providing treatment that combines education, group and individual counseling, and structured exercises.</li> </ul>
<i>Re-Entry Housing Partnership (RHP)</i>	RPH is designed to provide housing for work-ready convicted felons who remain in prison after the Parole Board has authorized their release due to solely to having no residential options. Housing service provider applicants selected to participate in the RPH program must provide (directly or through written agreement with third parties) parolees with stable housing and food (room and board). In return, the RPH program will provide short term financial assistance; generally \$1,800.00 for three months of assistance. <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide stable housing and reduce the likelihood that a released offender will commit a crime after reentering society.</li> </ul>
<i>Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT)</i>	The Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) for State Prisoners Program assists states and local governments in the development and implementation of substance abuse treatment programs in state, local, and tribal correctional and detention facilities, as well as the development of community-based aftercare services for offenders. <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide the best possible treatment services for eligible clients, counseling in specialized areas, periodic drug and alcohol testing, preparation for integration back into the community, and aftercare services and monitoring after release.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Correctional Counseling, INC, "Moral Reconciliation Therapy," ccimrt.com, <https://www.ccimrt.com/mrt>, March 23, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Department of Corrections, "Reentry Partnership Housing Program," dcor.state.ga.us, <http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/NewsRoom/Publications/pdf/ReentryPartnershipHousing.pdf>, March 12, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. "Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners (RSAT) Program," ncjrs.gov, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/206269.pdf>, March 23, 2012.