

**THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL
REGIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE FORUM – THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT (MACON)
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 Friday, April 27, 2012, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council hosted its second Regional Criminal Justice Forum for part of the Third Judicial District in Macon, GA. Local participants at the forum represented the following agencies:

- Bibb County Drug Court
- Bibb County Sheriff's Office
- Bibb County Superior Court
- Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit
- Houston County District Attorney's Office
- Macon Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office
- Macon Police Department
- Macon Probation Office
- Macon Regional Crime Stoppers
- Muscogee County Juvenile Court
- Southwestern Judicial Circuit Court Services
- Southwestern Judicial Circuit Superior Court
- Warner Robins Police Department
- Warner Robins Probation Office
- Victims' Services Organizations and Treatment Centers:
 - Central Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
 - Crisis Line and Safe House
 - Rainbow House Children's Resource Center
 - River Edge Behavioral Health Center

In addition, the following state agencies were represented:

- Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG)
- Department of Corrections (DOC)
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)
- Georgia Sheriffs' Association
- State Board of Pardons and Paroles (SBPP)
- State House of Representatives

CJCC staff, along with the guidance and assistance of Lisa Nine Accordini, Staff Associate of the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA), facilitated the forum and recorded this event. Attendees provided expertise and practitioner perspectives to the forum to exchange ideas and identify issues affecting the region.

Identifying Regional Priorities

Forum participants identified the region's top priorities¹ 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 solutions².

Regional Priorities Identified by Macon Forum Participants

<i>Regional Priorities:</i>	<i>Issues:</i>	<i>Suggested Solutions and Potential Funding Priorities:</i>
ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more focus on juvenile drug courts • Insufficient funds available for both court start-up and sustainability • Clients return to their home base often with no support system and no place to live 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize funds to support juvenile drug courts • Assign probation officers to a specialty • Improve collaborative efforts between accountability courts and Department of Corrections • Provide funds for local area support
COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication between district attorney's office and victim service providers • Resources are utilized exclusively by certain agencies • Lack of collaborative efforts results in an increase in staff workloads and diminished information sharing • Delay in service delivery to victims due, in part, to an inability of agencies to share information, resources • Laws restrict information sharing and, thus, progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication amongst stakeholders • Streamline processes to ensure timely and appropriate response to the client • Research alternatives that will enable to agencies to coordinate client needs and treatment without jeopardizing confidentiality and safety
CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation places additional burden on support services (e.g., housing, mental health and substance abuse) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize funding to enhance available support services to ensure a comprehensive plan
MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowding in jails largely attributable to a lack of available mental health services • Existing programs do not have the resources available to meet demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund programs that work (e.g., Assertive Community Treatment) • Mandate alternative treatment outside of the hospital • Training for law enforcement to respond to mentally ill offenders • Establish “one stop shop” to include Probation, the Sheriff’s Office, the Department of Juvenile Justice and mental health treatment providers

¹ 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 regional needs, refer to Attachment A.

² For program descriptions, refer to Attachment B.

Regional Priorities Identified by Macon Forum Participants (Cont.)

<p align="center">SPECIALIZED TRAINING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized training (e.g., mental health, domestic violence, child abuse, media communications, and active shooter situations) is either unavailable or inaccessible for the majority of local law enforcement agencies • Existing training is outdated and “one step behind” best practices implemented in other states • Instructors for statewide training are used exclusively for particular training sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding to support law enforcement training at the local level • Research innovative, state-of-the-art trainings provided in other states and offer trainings to Georgia’s law enforcement agencies • Allow local law enforcement agencies to utilize state facilities for training purposes
<p align="center">TREATMENT FOR ADULT AND JUVENILE OFFENDERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of conflict resolution skills taught in schools and homes • Lack of parental involvement for children • Treatment for mental health and substance abuse is very expensive • Transportation to/from treatment is problematic in rural areas • Available treatment services are not affordable (e.g., victims cannot afford the upfront costs to receive treatment) • Lack of treatment results in increased recidivism rates, jail overcrowding and increased inmate on inmate crime • Law enforcement is not equipped to handle mentally ill offenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more accessible treatment in rural counties • Research ways to utilize technology to make treatment more accessible (e.g., counseling via Skype) • Coordinate treatment amongst facilities to maximize resources and provide individualized care • Involve parents/guardians in the treatment process • Offer specialized training to law enforcement • Make membership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) a mandate • Reopen state mental health facility • Establish a Local Interagency Planning Team • Provide funds to expand the availability of treatment services and skilled staff
<p align="center">LEGAL ASSISTANCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for more civil legal services • Budget cuts limit the types of cases that can be worked • Staff attorneys are no longer available to handle cases • Indigents do not have the funds to pay for services needed • Lack of law enforcement access to temporary protection order (TPOs) registry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnerships at the local level to make legal services available
<p align="center">SEX OFFENDER HOUSING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited facilities /shelter • Law makes it difficult to place offenders (e.g., proximity to schools, libraries, churches, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a housing complex/area specifically for sex offenders • Assign a social service provider facilitate reentry

Recurring Themes

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

1. Mental health, as in the Athens and Augusta forums, were discussed at length. Participants described the lack of treatment options available for mentally ill offenders as highly problematic. As seen above, mental health issues were not only identified as a priority, but were also related to other identified priorities. Participants largely attributed the inability to properly assess mentally ill offenders and provide them with long-term, effective treatment to the closing of mental health facilities. Participants also emphasized in this forum that training should be provided to all facets of the justice system to effectively deal with this subset of the community and that treatment in a long-term facility should be a viable option.
2. The availability of support services and treatment for offenders was integral to forum discussions. Participants stated that more treatment options are needed, particularly with regard to substance abuse, mental health and for sex offenders. Also, services for victims, including legal and housing assistance, are very limited. Existing services often have long waitlists which can deter and/or delay treatment. While funding of treatment facilities and services was the primary solution, effective collaboration and sharing of resources was duly noted.
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. Collaborations in some form (e.g., partnerships, information-sharing, sharing of facilities, etc.) were offered as solutions to the lack of legal assistance services, the need for specialized law enforcement training, the need for enhanced support services for accountability courts and the lack of treatment options for offenders. Regional planning was also an identified priority.

What's Working

At the end of the forum, participants provided further insight by identifying the following cost-saving, innovative practices¹:

- *Day Reporting Centers (DRCs) Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)*
- *Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program (RSAT)*
- *School-Based Probation Officer Program*
- *Sex Offender Training for Juvenile Officers*
- *Drug Courts*

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 Macon 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.

¹ For more information on each program, please refer to Attachment B

Attachment A: Regional Needs Identified by Macon Forum Participants

Accountability Courts

- Integrate family drug courts into the accountability court system
- Provide support of ancillary and treatment services

Collaborations

- Improve collaborations between state and local agency service providers
- Increase regional planning before grants are implemented

Juvenile Justice System

- Establish truancy programs
- Determine ways to effectively address homelessness among children

Mentally Ill Offenders

- Enhance treatment options for mentally ill offenders

Programs

- Provide more collaborative programs and services
- Increase targeted offender reentry programs
- Provide on-the-job training for offenders
- Provide anger management, family violence intervention, and substance abuse services prior to reentry into the home
- Increase legal assistance services for indigent and indigent population
- Increase residential treatment options, particularly for females

Sex Offenders

- Expand housing options for sex offenders
- Expand treatment options for sex offenders

Training

- Expand specialized training opportunities for law enforcement
- Increase local law enforcement's accessibility to state-of-the-art, specialized trainings

Victims Services

- Accountability and consistency for 5% funds
- Collaboration on victim services and notification between service providers and victim advocates
- Provide supportive services and treatment for child victims, including family services

Attachment B: Program Description Table

<i>Program</i>	<i>Program Description</i>	<i>Program Goal(s)</i>
<p align="center">Assertive Community Treatment</p>	<p>Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) is an evidence-based team treatment approach to mental illness. A team of professionals whose backgrounds and training include social work, rehabilitation, counseling, nursing and psychiatry provide ACT services. Among the services ACT teams provide are: case management, initial and ongoing assessments; psychiatric services; employment and housing assistance; family support and education; substance abuse services; and other services and supports critical to an individual's ability to live successfully in the community. Clients served by ACT are individuals with serious and persistent mental illness or personality disorders, with severe functional impairments, who have avoided or not responded well to traditional outpatient mental health care and psychiatric rehabilitation services. Persons served by ACT often have co-existing problems such as homelessness, substance abuse problems, or involvement with the judicial system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide comprehensive, community-based psychiatric treatment, rehabilitation, and support to persons with serious and persistent mental illness such as schizophrenia.
<p align="center">Day Reporting Centers (DRCs)</p>	<p>Day Reporting Centers (DRCs) is an alternative drug treatment program comprised of substance abuse counseling, cognitive restructuring, adult basic education, employment enhancement, intensive supervision, and community service. An aftercare component follows the on-site programming. Offenders assigned to the program are required to be employed as soon as they have completed the initial orientation, assessment, diagnostics, and programming. There are 13 DRCs currently in operation throughout the state. Failure at a DRC results in revocation proceedings against the offender. Although the cost is more than field probation, it is only a fraction of the cost of providing a residential alternative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an opportunities for offenders to change criminal behavior through behavioral interventions as an alternative to incarceration • To provide intensive substance abuse treatment for offenders sentenced by the Courts or who have not responded to more traditional supervision and treatment efforts.
<p align="center">Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)</p>	<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To foster moral development in treatment-resistant clients by providing treatment that combines education, group and individual counseling, and structured exercises
<p align="center">National Association of Mental Illness</p>	<p>NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization. NAMI advocates for access to services, treatment, supports and research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise awareness and provide essential and free education, advocacy and support group programs for people living with mental illness and their families

<p>Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for State Prisoners (RSAT) Program</p>	<p>RSAT fosters a partnership between correctional staff and the treatment community to create programs in secure settings that help offenders overcome their substance abuse problems and prepare for reentry into society. RSAT programs are structured to deal effectively with substance abuse problems, work with inmates so they may focus on their recovery, and provide staff and resources to address all aspects of substance abusing behavior.¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide inmates with substance abuse treatment and skills to obtain employment so they can return as productive members of their communities
<p>School-Based Probation Officer Program</p>	<p>As officials of the juvenile court, school-based probation officers provide control, supervision, and incentives that delinquent youth often need to attend school regularly and comply with rules and regulations. School-based probation officers can also intervene in crisis situations involving juvenile probation clients and can assist schools in handling disruptive behavior by clients. Juvenile probation officers are assigned to children who attend specific schools so that the officers work in a small geographic area. Officers visit with youth offenders at a variety of places, including home and school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help young people acquire knowledge and develop skills that lead to positive and productive lifestyles

¹ U.S. Department of Justice. (2005). *Residential substance abuse treatment for state prisoners (RSAT) program*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/206269.pdf>.