

The monthly meeting of the Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board was held on Thursday, October 6, 2016, in Conference Room #1 of the Courthouse in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at 4:00 PM.

Members present:

The Honorable Judge Joseph Williams
Lynn Griffin representing County Controller Chelsa Wagner
Austin Davis representing County Executive Rich Fitzgerald
Joe Catanese representing County Council President John DeFazio
Kevin Kraus representing Sheriff William Mullen
Rev. Earlene Coleman
Terry Klein

Also Attending: Warden Harper, Marion Damick, Deputy Wainwright and other interested parties.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Marion Damick, representing the Pennsylvania Prison Society, presented the following:

- County health care is improving, but there is remaining need for more mental health nurses. Mental health issues are prevalent in the Jail. Opioid abuse cases, of which one recent overdose case was fatal, are becoming a challenge for intake.
- The conditions in female intake should be improved. Overall, intake at ACJ has grown and modernized, but female intake has not improved. The intake area for women is small, and the facilities are lacking. Male prisoners, because they are a majority of the Jail population, have more space and better access to Jail facilities than the women. The solution to this problem is unclear as space to increase room for female intake while keeping male and female inmates separate is limited.
- Ms. Damick passed out news articles to the Board regarding Jail healthcare and the challenges of addiction and mental health among inmates.
- Ms. Damick expressed hope that the Allegheny County Health Network was able to fill its open positions at the September 13th Job fair. Using an outside agency to fill these open positions is much more costly than hiring people directly and gives the Jail less control over the quality of workers hired.
- In August, the Jail admitted one new female under the age of 18. Ms. Damick inquired if females and males were held together in the new juvenile pod. Upon confirmation that this was not the case, she inquired if the juvenile female was being held in an area by herself. Warden Harper deferred his response until his report.
- There has been a significant increase in offsite specialty referrals up to 84 in the last month. Mental health referrals at intake have also increased significantly to 352 in August including two restraints and four suicide attempts.

2. REVIEW OF THE MINUTES FOR SEPTEMBER 1, 2016:

One correction made by Warden Harper in the Allegheny Health Network report on page four second sentence, first paragraph. The reference to hiring a new "Mental Health Director" was corrected to

"Assistant Director of Nursing." With consideration of this exception, a motion to approve the minutes of September 1, 2016 was approved by the Board.

3. PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

Judge Williams mentioned his term as head of the Board would be ending after December and he reflected on what he has seen as head of the board over the last three years. Historically, society has tended to write off incarcerated populations. Although improvements have been made in humane treatment of inmates, work remains to improve the ability of those who have been incarcerated to return to and reintegrate with society. Last month's four suicide attempts are evidence of the challenges of despair that being incarcerated can bring about when inmates feel that the community has given up on them and there is no path to work their way back into society. The costs of those inmates who have given up are borne by the county which spends upwards of 80 million a year on incarceration. A primary goal should be to rebrand reentrance, working creatively in partnership with community elements (employers, unions, faith based initiatives, etc.). The root of the problem is that society, having written off the incarcerated population, is hesitant to dedicate resources to aid reentry. Too often the only way individuals released from jail can reclaim any esteem is through participation in illegal or black market activities. This feeds into the interconnected challenges that the County and City face over gangs, guns, and addictive drugs. These problems are allowed to stagnate in part because the victims of drugs and violent crime have been disproportionately black. Drug policy in our society is far from altruistic. Rather it is a product of racial politics, including who is in power and who the victims of drug related devastation are. Our values as a society are reflected in what problems we ignore and those we choose to solve.

4. WARDEN'S REPORT:

Warden Harper Stated:

- The Jail began offering Narcan to inmates upon release from the facility on October 1 in response to epidemic of opiate overdoses and deaths in the County.
- In response to Ms. Damick's earlier question, a location in the Jail has been secured for female juveniles that offers all programming that male juveniles receive while keeping the two populations separate. The new location will be complete by October 31.
- Two job fairs have been held in the last month and seven or eight individuals have been hired. Future job fairs will be used to increase open staff positions. Additional outside agencies are being used to staff the Jail's medical department.

In response to a question from Rev. Coleman regarding how Narcan is distributed to inmates, Warden Harper stated that upon their release, inmates are offered Narcan. They can accept or refuse.

Judge Williams remarked that Narcan distribution is a progressive move for the County, reminiscent of needle exchange programs offered in Europe to reduce contagious diseases spread through needle sharing. Should society punish drug users or treat the problem as a public health challenge by offering treatment through harm reduction strategies?

Rev. Coleman remarked that Narcan distribution shows to the person that county cares about them, which is an important first step in building trust and helping former inmates find a way to heal.

Laura Williams, Director of Drug and Alcohol Programming at the Jail reported that Narcan training videos are shown to inmates upon release which teach them how to administer the drug to individuals suffering from and overdose. Statistics have shown that the formerly incarcerated population is at an increased risk of opiate abuse and overdose. She shared the story of Narcan training program participants who were able to recognize another individual's potentially fatal overdose and administer Narcan to save this person's life.

5. DEPUTY WARDEN'S REPORT:

No Report.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

No Report.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

No Report.

Judge Williams asks how people feel the County is acting toward inmates.

Deputy Warden Wainwright remarked that the County is making progress by treating drug abuse as public health issue as opposed forty years ago when drug use was treated as a criminal issue and millions were spent of militarized drug surveillance and enforcement. Drawing on his experiences living in Baltimore forty years ago, Warden Wainwright recalled that Kurt Schmoke, mayor of Baltimore during this period had his political career ended by advocating a progressive, harm reduction approach toward drug abuse. The changing racial makeup of the drug epidemic has played a role in bringing about increased compassion towards drug users, and acceptance of the idea that society cannot police its way out of drug use.

Judge Williams reflected on past drug policies with reference to the Nixon administration's use of the "war on drugs" crackdown as a means of political and racial suppression.

8. ALLEGHENY COUNTY JAIL MEDICAL SERVICES:

A. ALLEGHENY HEALTH NETWORK

Dr. Joseph provided the Healthcare Services Oversight Report, including a report of open healthcare staff positions.

In response to a question from Judge Williams about how the above discussion influences health work in the Jail, Dr. Joseph responded that the approach to healthcare in the Jail is a holistic one. Drug addiction and drug problems are the number one health issue in the Jail. More education could be given to inmates to dispel myths and misinformation surrounding drug use and addiction. In response to Judge

Williams' questions as to what services would be added or expanded if money were not an issue, Dr. Joseph responded that with increased funding, drug programming could be expanded to reach more people in the Jail. Drug related programming has expanded significantly in the past year, but there is still room to grow.

Judge Williams remarked that he would recommend urine drug testing for all incoming inmates rather than using things like questionnaires and interviews to get clear information of potential drug abuse. Results from the urine tests could then be used to automatically direct inmates to the appropriate drug treatment and counseling programs.

Concerned citizen Callie Stull objected that urine testing doesn't tell you why someone is using a drug, and that it is a punitive approach that reduces someone to the content of their urine and does not take them at their word. Discussion ensued between Judge Williams and Ms. Stull over the issues of drug addiction and drug testing within the community. Judge Williams emphasized the seriousness and consuming nature of opioid addiction. Ms. Stull stated that there are differences between drug use and drug addiction and it is up to the drug user to define addiction and determine what help they need to use the drug in a manner that is safe for them. Ms. Stull stated that she had several friends who used heroine but were not addicted. Drawing on his experience working with drug using populations in treatment clinics, Judge Williams challenged the notion that a heroine user could use the drug regularly and not be addicted.

9. COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS REPORTS

A. THE PROGRAM FOR OFFENDERS

Amy Kroll, administrator of jail re-entry services reported that the Program for Offenders is in the process of licensing the new West Homestead Center for Drug and Alcohol Treatment.

B. THE RENEWAL CENTER

Frank DeClair, manager at the Renewal Center stated:

- The Renewal Center has been selected as one of six Drug and alcohol and mental health providers in Allegheny County to participate in a co-occurring disorders evaluation by consultants at Case Western University. The evaluation finished yesterday (October 5th) and their recommendations should arrive in the next six weeks.
- The Renewal Center was selected to participate in a survey of prison inmates through the Bureau of Justice. The survey will take place the week of October 16th.

C. ELECTRONIC MONITORING

Jackie Piatt representing Steve Esswein, manager of adult probation and parole stated:

Numbers have remained stable through August. At the end of August 833 individuals were under some kind of electronic monitoring supervision. 98 people successfully completed with 18 removed for violations with one absconder. Retention rates are stable with about a 90% retention rate at end of year.

D. GOODWILL

Cindi Owoc introduced Whitney Miles from the RISE program, a construction and workforce training program for at risk youth who have barriers to employment (i.e. criminal background, lack of GDE, etc.) In the 14-week program for construction training, much of the training comes from the Homebuilders Institute, and upon completion participants are given state recognized certificates. The program also assists youths with obtaining their GDE and drivers licenses as well as pursuing their next career steps upon completion of the program. RISE is funded through Workforce Investment Board and they are accepting applications for 60 individuals. Not all participants are residents, many are from the community.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Stull acknowledged issues with suicide at the Jail, asks if inmates are screened for depression, if they are given time outside or if they are treated with dignity and respect.

Ms. Damick mentioned an inmate who had not been attending scheduled court dates. He has been in the Jail since June on probation violation. No probation officer has been in to see him. She wonders if others are stuck in a similar situation.

Judge Williams responded that he is aware of the problem and Judges have started to work more closely with probation officers and liaisons between the courts and the Jail. The problem is costly for both the prisoners and the county. Judge Williams hopes to bring his replacement to the next meeting to begin the transition to the position. He hopes that Ms. Damick will keep talking about conditions at the Jail continue to work with his successor to keep the conversation open.

A motion to adjourn was submitted by Judge Williams and approved by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,



Chelsa Wagner
Secretary