

2016 Nomination for the Eastern Region CJAB Best Practices Award – Chester County

I am nominating the Chester County CJAB for the 2016 Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) Best Practices Award to be awarded by the County Commissioner's Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP). The Chester County CJAB finds its strength in its long-standing history supporting the CJAB concept, its role in statewide CJAB efforts, its collaborative spirit among members and its strong leadership team.

The Chester County CJAB formed in 2008. In the following year, the CJAB created a strategic plan – arguably one of the first of its kind in the state. Since that date, the strategic plan has been updated twice, one in 2011 and the most recent being in January 2016. Additionally, when the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) began promoting the idea of doing re-entry planning, Chester County successfully secured funding to hire a facilitator to work with its re-entry subcommittee and community partners to develop an impressive plan. The county's commitment to planning is just one example of how this CJAB has adhered to the promising practices suggested by PCCD and its statewide Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC). Additionally, the CJAB has been instrumental in creating an impressive treatment court with tracks for drug and alcohol, mental health and veterans, a program that was developed and folded into treatment court using no additional resources through the support of the CJAB and its members. In this vein, Chester County is truly dedicated to the CJAB concept.

The Chester County CJAB members have a rich history of participation in important statewide initiatives. Judge William P. Mahon presides over the Chester County Treatment Court but also has served on PCCD's committee. Jen Lopez-Cerrato, Deputy Director of the Adult Probation Department, has served on PCCD's Criminal Justice Advisory Committee and its Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee. Additionally, she has presented at various PCCD conferences and events. Chief Adult Probation Officer Chris Murphy was instrumental in the creation of best practices for the mandated Adam Walsh Act and Sexual Offender Registration and Notification Act and continues to provide mentorship to other counties. Human Services Director Kim Bowman is also very involved in the state level and as a presenter on human services issues.

During the CJAB's most recent planning session, key criminal justice stakeholders such as judges, the district attorney and other leaders dedicated their time to attend the day-long planning session. Each member was fully engaged in the discussion. Unanimously, the group felt that one of its greatest strengths is the long history of collaborative spirit and level of immense trust and camaraderie between CJAB members. This is not always the case with some CJABs.

What makes Chester County CJAB so strong is that it traditionally has had a judicial leader with the authority and respect to bring members to the CJAB table. Beginning with President Judge Paula Francisco Ott, who fully committed herself and the courts to the CJAB concept back in 2008, to the current CJAB Chair, President Judge Jacqueline Cody, the judicial leader has set an example of the importance of investing county personnel resources in CJAB's continued success while paying great deference to the team of support he/she has from certain CJAB members. The county has a dedicated CJAB Coordinator to do much of the CJAB footwork. The Chester County Adult Probation office has dedicated much of its

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resources to CJAB – from staff involvement in various state committees and initiatives to excellent grant-writing that has enabled the CJAB to be very successful in obtaining funding for important projects.

Chester County has served as a role model for creating initiatives that increase the effectiveness of criminal justice systems and that promote public safety. Examples of these initiatives include a successful Intermediate Punishment program, the creation of a multi-track problem solving court and special programs to address drug addiction, mental health issues and trauma for special populations such as veterans and women who are breaking the cycle of victimization and criminal involvement. Many programs in this county began with a vision and the dedication of existing resources to create successful results, always with CJAB at the lead. It is the strong leadership, vision and mission-achieving efforts that set this CJAB apart from the others.

As a result, Staff respectfully recommends the Chester County Criminal Justice Advisory Board for the 2016 CJAB Best Practices Award.