

Pennsylvania's Eastern Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) region consists of twenty-three counties ranging in size from the first class City of Philadelphia to the rural eighth class counties of Montour and Sullivan. The CJABs of the Eastern Region are as varied in terms of their development as the size of the counties they occupy. But no county in the Eastern Region as experienced such impressive growth and sustained success as the Bucks County CJAB.

Created on March 23, 2005, the Bucks County Board of Commissioners and the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas agreed to establish the CJAB with a mission to assist all county and municipal agencies "in exploring and developing short term and long plans in order to facilitate the efficient delivery of public safety services to the citizens of Bucks County". In its thirteen years of operation, it has done just that.

The CJAB was originally under the leadership of former District Attorney David Heckler until he retired in 2016 and turned over the reins to the new District Attorney, Matthew Weintraub. In the years since Weintraub has been in charge of the CJAB, several new subcommittees have been created, based upon issues that have arisen in the criminal justice and behavioral health systems, such as the Opioid Task Force. Membership has also swelled to nearly 30 members who routinely attend and participate in active discussions during the CJAB quarterly meetings. The CJAB boasts of several members who are recognized at the state and federal level for their areas of expertise, making this a very powerful and motivated CJAB.

In 2009, the CJAB supported the formation of a Central Booking Center program. To date, the Central Booking Center Subcommittee has a permanent place on quarterly CJAB meeting agendas, when information is shared about successes and challenges of the program, including a routine report-out of statistics regarding number of people processed and disbursements made from fees collected. The most recent statistics available from PCCD showed that from January to June, 2017, the total amount of disbursements was an impressive \$344,249.51, which gets funneled back into the Central Booking Processing program to cover operational fees.

Recognizing the many criminal justice and behavioral health issues these systems were facing, and the constant strain on financial resources to effectively address both, the Bucks County CJAB developed its first strategic plan in 2012. In 2017, the CJAB formed a Strategic Planning Subcommittee to engage in a lengthy review of the original strategic plan. The group acknowledged the need for collaboration and operational respect for the fact that CJAB member agencies operate under different independent electoral and governmental mandates including the Constitutionally independent Judiciary, the elected County Commissioners together with a number of administrative agencies ultimately under the direction of the Commissioners, at least three independently elected public officials whose offices fall generally within the executive branch of government as well as various private entities, and non-profit and for-profit organizations ultimately answerable to their own boards of directors. With this in mind, the group noted that there existed a substantial need for the various criminal justice entities to work collaboratively to provide the critically important services essential to maintaining the safe and orderly communities which Bucks Countians have historically enjoyed, a challenge easily met by this collaborative group.

In 2010, the CJAB underwent its first Sequential Intercept Mapping process through the Center of Excellence. In 2015, the CJAB authorized a re-mapping of the county, allowing the group to update the narrative and the gaps and opportunities at each intercept, devise a new set of priorities, and develop an associated action plan.

Recognizing a need to address the substantial drug and alcohol issues of many of its residents, members of the CJAB sought to re-establish the former Behavioral Health Subcommittee, now renamed the Human Service Subcommittee, or HSS. Interested members presented a compelling PowerPoint presentation with information and statistics to substantiate the need for the specifically focused advisory subcommittee, which was immediately approved by a unanimous vote. Other CJAB Chairs may have just ordered the formation of a subcommittee, but this group utilizes a democratic process in virtually every decision they make, which allows members to have a voice, a vote and ultimate buy-in for any proposed project. The HSS includes representatives from the Division of Human Services (BCDHS), Department of Corrections, Public Defender Office, Mental Health/Developmental Programs (MH/DP), Behavioral Health (BCBH), Adult Probation and Parole, Court Administration, Drug and Alcohol Commission (DAC) and Children and Youth. The group meets regularly and works to identify program needs throughout the criminal justice system using the Sequential Intercept Model. This is the only county in the Eastern Region, and arguably the Commonwealth, to continue mapping and addressing gaps in the system. Further, the group now uses the sequential intercept map to address overcrowding in the prison.

Noting a particular gap in Intercept 2, which encompasses initial detention and first court appearance, the HSS developed a survey for the Magisterial District Courts (MDJs) to complete, which resulted in a finding that a substantial number of individuals with behavioral health issues come in contact with MDJs, and that community policing and court systems are ill-prepared to address accompanying behavioral health issues. This led the group to create the Magisterial District Judge Mobile Engagement Pilot, through a PCCD grant, to create a mobile crisis unit that will respond to any of the twenty MDJ offices when an individual appears before the MDJ with behavioral health issues. The crisis unit will do an assessment and triage the individual to several partner treatment providers, as well as provide follow-up.

The Bucks County CJAB was the first county in the Commonwealth to sponsor a drug take-back program. The Bucks County Medication Give Back leads the Commonwealth in the volume of medications collected - since 2010, nearly 100,000 pounds of unused medication have been collected. To date, there are 34 permanent medication take back boxes throughout the county. The Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission is also arguably one of the only of its kind in the Commonwealth to provide access to a training on Narcan for community members – on a regular basis, community members can come into a center, be trained on the use of Narcan and leave with a supply. At their January 2018 meeting, a report was given by CJAB members who attended the Stepping Up Initiative in December and, recognizing that Bucks County was already doing the work, agreed unanimously to support a motion for a Stepping Up Resolution, which was to be presented to Commissioners this month.

Bucks County is unique in that it lacks an urban municipality, yet it suffers from the same types of criminal justice and behavioral health issues as are seen in neighboring Philadelphia to the southwest and Trenton, New Jersey to the northeast. Despite this, the county leans heavily on the resident experts who comprise the CJAB, many of whom are inspirational leaders in their fields, as well as their strong sense of collaboration and dedication to create a seamlessly strong partnership between the criminal justice and behavioral health systems. As a result of the thriving membership, dedication of members and excellent leadership, the Bucks County CJAB has enjoyed much success in ensuring the effective delivery of public safety services to the residents of Bucks County. Mission: Accomplished.

Therefore, I hereby nominate the Bucks County CJAB to receive the CCAP Best Practices Award for 2018.