

Over 30 Years Promoting and Supporting Effective Community Corrections

Mission:

To bring together stakeholders to promote and support effective community corrections that enhance public safety.

www.ojacc.org

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President’s Message

By: Kysten Palmore, OJACC President

Welcome to Summer everyone. At the time I wrote this message, it was Spring. There is a saying in Nichiren Buddhism, Winter Always Turns to Spring. Spring is known as the season of renewal and birth. It is the chill of winter that sparks the development of the leaves and buds on a tree and enables it to bloom fully and beautifully. Animals such as chicks and lambs give birth to their young with the arrival of spring. So, it is befitting that the pandemic is beginning to ease its toll on this nation as winter turns to spring.



Kysten Palmore, J.D., MSW, MA, Deputy Dir. Community Engagement & Reentry

As the majority of Ohio starts to return to pre-pandemic life, we must first reflect on the loss of life. As of June 15th the United States has lost a total of 600,000 lives to the Coronavirus. Second, we must be mindful of the unprecedented year and a half, the lessons learned, challenges, adaptations and successes that informed and improved our practices, policies, and procedures.

Albert Einstein said, “in the middle of difficulty, lives opportunity.” The criminal justice system’s response to the pandemic certainly underscores his belief. Courts, parole, probation, community corrections, and state and local correctional facilities once averse to the use of online platforms to conduct business have come to recognize virtual engagement via online platforms offer convenience, improve efficiency, increase productivity, and enhance opportunities for the exchange of information from across the state, nation, and globe. Virtual engagement within the criminal justice system is here to stay. Hybrid is no longer only associated with motor vehicles.

Virtual engagement kept OJACC in lock step with our calendar of events for 2021. Our biennial Legislative Reception known for its great in-person evening networking event was transformed by our dedicated Executive Director and the Policy & Advocacy Committee to an informative and educational 45-minute virtual luncheon. We had a full agenda which included: a brief agency/organization overview from our event sponsors, a brief explanation of the history and purpose of our policy platform, an overview of our budget position and finally, presentations with questions and answer period from Senator Manning, Representative Seitz, Director Gies, and Chris Galli representing Director Chambers-Smith.

Our overarching theme for this year’s reception was the importance of community corrections within the criminal justice continuum. Each presenter provided high quality information relevant to the work our Trustees and members undertake each day to improve services and operations in pre-trial, community corrections, and reentry.

Enormous gratitude and thanks to our featured speakers who were willing to pivot and adjust to the time change and virtual format to create a successful event. Finally, the key to the sustaining success of OJACC lies in how well we overcome challenges and how wisely we use that time to create positive change.

Submissions:

The OJACC Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections. Subscription is free to all members.

The OJACC Newsletter encourages submission of articles relating to community corrections. Articles must be relatively brief, and OJACC reserves the right to edit articles for space considerations and to select which articles to publish.

Points of view expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJACC.

OJACC accepts paid advertising.

Article

Submission

& Advertising:

Gayle Dittmer

Executive Director

OJACC

P.O. Box 79

New Albany, OH 43054

(740) 420-6444

dittmergr@gmail.com

OJACC Board of Trustees Highlight

The OJACC Board of Trustees welcomes Judge Kari Bloom as the newest member representing the Ohio Association of Juvenile Judges.

Judge Kari Bloom was elected in 2020 to serve as Judge of the Hamilton County Juvenile Court for a six year term commencing February 14, 2021. Prior to coming to the Juvenile Court, Judge Bloom worked in public service, first as a contract negotiator for the United States Air Force at Wright Patterson Air Force Base before starting her tenure at the Hamilton County Public Defender's Office.

In between service as a public defender, Judge Bloom worked at the Office of the Ohio Public Defender (OPD) for several years as a legislative liaison and parole attorney, where she testified in the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate on behalf of juvenile justice issues. She also investigated, prepared, and represented clients in front of the Ohio Parole Board, focusing on people seeking parole who had been transferred to adult court as teenagers.

While at OPD, Judge Bloom served on several statewide boards and commissions, including the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission, Ohio Recodification Committee, Ohio Supreme Court Bail Committee, and Ohio Supreme Court Juvenile Justice Committee. She participated in systemic policy work to increase access to courts, reconcile conflicting laws, collect and disperse criminal sentencing data, and rectify the lasting effects of tough-on-crime legislation.

Life-Saving Work Highlighted in National Drug Court Month Video

Court News Ohio (CNO) May 2021

Medina County Common Pleas Judge Joyce Kimbler is using alternative ways to recognize treatment court participants and spread awareness about drug courts during the pandemic.

Every May, a northeast Ohio court with a specialized docket does something unique to celebrate National Drug Court Month. This year, it's the participants who are lending their voices.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions preventing traditional in-person celebrations throughout the community, the Medina County Common Pleas Drug Court program produced a public service announcement video. The minute-long compilation features program graduates sharing how the court rescued and reshaped them. "If it wasn't for them, I think I'd be dead right now," said Shelli W.

Judge Joyce Kimbler, who's presided over the drug court since 2015, felt the video was a good way to praise participants while "increasing public awareness and understanding of the work done by drug courts." The video, which is posted online, emphasizes the positive outcomes of treatment courts that help change individuals and communities, including by saving lives, reuniting families, reducing crime, and cutting taxpayer costs. <https://fb.watch/6tEBMu7LF4/>





Data Corner

To advocate for meaningful, uniform data collection and sharing, Data Corner highlights the importance of data and efforts where data has been utilized successfully.



In May 2021, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) published the 2019 and 2020 three-year recidivism reports for individuals who were released from prison in calendar years 2015 and 2016.

Ohio uses the most comprehensive measure of recidivism by including any person returned to prison within 3 years of their release, including new crimes and technical violations. For purposes of cross-jurisdictional analysis, it is important to note this same method is not used by all correctional agencies. The method by which correctional jurisdictions calculate recidivism varies substantially, with some agencies not including returns to prison for technical violations, as well as other potential differences.

In 2020, the 3-year recidivism rate for those who were returned to prison because of the commission of a new crime was 20.8%, down from 21.7% in 2019. This represents the lowest recidivism rate for new crimes in over 15 years. When violations of supervision are factored in, the overall recidivism rate was generally stable from 2019 to 2020 with rates of 32.4 and 32.7, respectively.

Recent criminal justice reform efforts in Ohio were designed to divert low-level and first-time offenders into community alternatives. These reforms have resulted in a 17-percentage point increase in high-risk prison commitments between 2012 and 2019, as lower risk individuals are diverted. This has, in turn, reshaped the makeup of DRC's release population, resulting in a higher percentage of high-risk offenders under mandatory supervision as required by law.

Despite this, ODRC has continued to achieve our long-term vision to reduce crime in Ohio as evidenced by the continuing reduction of those returned to prison for the commission of new crimes.

The total number of technical returns has dropped to its lowest level since 2017, 2,462 in 2020 as compared to 2,790 in 2019. These changes reflect efforts to reserve prison returns for only the most serious violations. In addition, a greater percentage of those returned are because of violations related to public safety, such as violence and weapons possession.

For example, from 2016 to 2019 the share of technical violators returned for threat related reasons (primarily domestic violence related) and weapons/firearms reasons increased considerably. For threat related violations, the proportion of violations grew from 8.6% of all violations in 2016 to 12.5% in 2019. As for weapons, this proportion grew from 12.1% to 17% during the same time.

DRC continues to refine supervision practices to focus on the individuals who pose the greatest threat to public safety. These, and other criminal justice reform strategies, are key to achieving the agency mission of reducing recidivism and vision of reducing crime in Ohio. With the current new crime recidivism rate being the lowest in over 15 years, the agency is succeeding in fulfilling our mission.

To view the entire report, please visit <https://drc.ohio.gov/reports/recidivism>

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Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission to Study House Bill 1

Components of House Bill 1 include the modification of requirements for intervention in lieu of conviction and for sealing records of conviction and provides for deposit of some of the sealing application fee into the Attorney General Reimbursement Fund to use for expenses related to sealing and expungement. It also modifies the law regarding use of a prison term as a sanction for a community control violation and modifies the drug and alcohol abuse civil commitment mechanism as well as expanding duties of the State Criminal Sentencing Commission.



As a part of House Bill 1, which took effect April 12, 2021, the Ohio Criminal Sentencing Commission is required to study the impact of the legislation. The Commission convened a workgroup comprised of a diverse group of prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, court administrators, court clerks, academics, and other criminal justice practitioners to aid in the impact analysis. The group began meeting in February of 2021, and will continue to meet until the first report is due in December. The Commission must continue to monitor the impact and produce a report every two years thereafter. The study is primarily broken into four categories: 1) Intervention in Lieu of Conviction; 2) Sealing a record of conviction; 3) Prison term for community control violation; and 4) Involuntary court-ordered treatment for alcohol or drug abuse.



Save the Date - 34th Annual OJACC Conference

The Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections (OJACC) is pleased to present its 34th annual conference to be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel North in Columbus, Ohio, September 30, and October 1st 2021.

After over a year of virtual events, we are very pleased to have the opportunity to come together again to network and learn about the latest in the field and how to continue to improve community corrections in Ohio!

Conference planning is in the works to address expanding what we have learned in the area of evidence-based practices. We will also address the issues of bias and trauma with a focus on how these issues affect the field of community corrections.

We are applying for credits in the area of Changing Offender Behavior (COB) CLE, RCHs.

Please make plans to attend this highly informative conference.

Conference registration information will be available at ojacc.org upon completion of the registration packet.

Please find enclosed in this newsletter the OJACC Achievement Awards Nomination Form. Take the time to nominate a professional who has positively impacted the field of community corrections.

Achievement Awards will be presented at the conference awards luncheon.

Community Corrections Virtual Legislative Reception

On April 21, 2021 OJACC hosted a virtual community corrections legislative reception along with Stepping Up Initiative, The Ohio Community Corrections Association, the Ohio Chief Probation Officers Association, CorJus, Oriana House, Inc., and the Ohio Association of Local Reentry Coalitions. This event is normally held at the Statehouse. However, as with most other events this past year, the event was held virtually with great attendance.

The purpose of this joint legislative reception was to demonstrate the collaborative working relationship of the involved associations/agencies within the community corrections system and the effectiveness and efficiency that result from that relationship, while expressing the importance of effective community corrections and reentry strategies in reducing recidivism.



Senator Nathan Manning

Senator Manning, Chair of the Senator Judiciary Committee, addressed the attendees virtually. He discussed the challenges of implementing criminal justice reforms and indicated it is not about being soft on crime, it is about being smart. It costs a lot of money to incarcerate people and most people will be coming back out to the community and we want them to be productive members of society. He commented that funding community corrections is important because, not only is it the right thing to do, but it saves money in the long run.

Representative Bill Seitz also spoke to participants and discussed some recent accomplishments such as the bill addressing juvenile life without parole, which he sees as an improvement in juvenile justice. He thanked former Justice Stratton for her work with the legislature on the Serious Mental Illness bill. He also commented on HB 1, which broadens the use of Intervention in Lieu of convictions and the number of offenses that can be sealed.

Representative Seitz stated that sentencing reform is hard work, but so important given the money we spend on incarceration and the lives lost and ruined from collateral consequences. He indicated there are great dividends to be paid by pursuing criminal justice reforms. It is time to move forward on criminal justice reform and keep working on it until we get it right.

Ryan Gies, Director of the Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS), spoke to the delicate balance between protecting public safety and holding offenders accountable, while also investing in the long term public safety of communities of Ohio by facilitating law-abiding productive citizens and strong families. It is important to meet needs early on and invest in communities.



Director Ryan Gies, ODYS

He indicated one of the hardest things to do is to remove someone from the community, put them in an artificial environment or secure setting then teach them how to make correct decisions in difficult situations. The place to learn is in the communities where they live. The community is the place kids can develop skills to be law-abiding citizens.

He stated that community corrections have had an incredible impact on Juvenile Justice in Ohio. In the early 1990s, ODYS had 2,600 incarcerated and currently there are about 308. County juvenile courts have seen fewer kids reaching the delinquent level of felony status through a system-wide effort to meet needs as early as possible and keep kids from progressing deeper into the system.

Director Gies indicated that we all need to work together. We are not successful until we stop looking at kids as just juvenile court kids, but look at them as kids that are in families in the communities we live in.

Chris Galli, Chief Bureau of Community Sanctions, represented ODRC Director Chambers-Smith for the virtual reception. He indicated Director Chambers-Smith thanks all the agencies and courts for their work to keep those we supervise safe during the pandemic. The ability to manage this past year's challenges are heroic and appreciated.

Ohio is seen as a national leader in community corrections thanks to relationships and partnerships of agencies and their hardworking employees. We need to continue to support community corrections that provide people the chance to make changes in their lives. He encouraged utilizing the entire community corrections continuum to its fullest as some people need multiple opportunities to make pro-social changes.

Mr. Galli indicated ODRC continues to support community corrections in the State Budget. ODRC has requested additional treatment opportunities through the expansion of the substance use disorder program (Treatment Transfer). The proposed language would allow more people to be eligible to receive substance use disorder treatment in halfway house facilities and access to community linkage to better transition into the community from prison.

He stated ODRC is also looking to modernize parole and community services based on the recommendations of the Post Release Control Working Group. Budget requests will support parole operations to reduce caseloads for parole supervision to 50 to 1. This support will allow the appropriate level of services to increase public safety and confidence in the system.

OJACC President Kysten Palmore closed the program by thanking the speakers for their time, commitment and dedication to improving community corrections. She also thanked the co-sponsors for their commitment to community corrections and fellow members and colleges for taking the time to join us for this legislative reception.

The Work of OJACC Committees Makes a Difference in Community Corrections!

Policy/Advocacy Committee: The Policy/Advocacy Committee studies legislative bills, resolutions and matters relevant to advocacy, development, and implementation of public policy related to community corrections and make recommendations to the General Assembly of the State of Ohio, the Congress of the United States and policymakers upon approval of the board. The committee reports to the Board of Trustees on proposed legislation that may be of interest to OJACC. Co-Chairpersons: Phil Nunes and Ro-Ellen Sinkewich

Conference Committee: The Conference Committee is responsible for planning, supervising, and implementing the community corrections annual conference. The conference chairs and committee are responsible for managing the content of the annual conference and work in conjunction with the Executive Director. The committee gives input on site selection, keynote speakers, scheduling and programming of the annual conference that is consistent with OJACC's objectives. Co-Chairpersons: Molly Gauntner and Linda Janes

Juvenile Justice Committee: The Juvenile Justice Committee supports OJACC's mission and goals of Ohio's juvenile justice system, with a focus on policies and services that impact juvenile community-based programs. The committee seeks to: 1) promote policies that will improve Ohio's juvenile justice system, 2) gather data that will promote improved policies and programs, 3) create linkage between juvenile organizations, 4) develop resources for community-based training, 5) educate policy makers and practitioners on principles of effective community correctional-based practices for juveniles, and 6) create a juvenile workshop track for the annual conference. Co-Chairpersons: Brooke Burns and Shannon Crabtree

Public Outreach Committee: The Public Outreach Committee is responsible for the creation of a newsletter to be periodically distributed to the members/interested parties of OJACC to promote and support effective community corrections and provide current, relevant community corrections education. The committee works with a designer to update the OJACC website and create other social media platforms to increase the visibility of OJACC and increase the ability to disseminate current, relevant information important to the field of community corrections. Chairperson: Veronica Perry

Adult Community Corrections Collaborative: The Adult Community Corrections Collaborative develops and maintains communication and interacts statewide between entities representing adult community corrections, and with ODRC, state legislators and other interested parties for the overall effectiveness and efficiency of adult community corrections. The committee develops recommendations, positions and/or proposals that are presented to the OJACC Board, ODRC, the Ohio Legislators and other interested parties that represent the mutual interests and concerns of the committee. The goal of the committee is to provide a unified voice for the continual improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of adult community corrections in Ohio. Co-chairpersons: Phil Nunes and Veronica Perry



OJACC Achievement Awards

OJACC created four awards to be given to Ohioans whose work has contributed to the improvement of community corrections. Please consider nominating someone you feel is deserving of one of these awards. Below are the descriptions of each award. An Achievement Award Nomination Form is located on the reverse side of this page. The awards will be presented at the OJACC Annual Conference on September 30, 2021.

Representative C.J. McLin Award

The late Representative C.J. McLin, Jr., during his tenure in the General Assembly, actively worked to improve community corrections through funding and legislative change. The award is given annually to an elected official in Ohio who has worked towards the improvement of community corrections in Ohio.

Dr. Bennett J. Cooper Award

Dr. Bennett J. Cooper was the first Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction in Ohio. During his lifetime he has created many improvements in public policy towards corrections. He has worked on a national level to try to institutionalize needed changes. This award is given to a correctional administrator or policy maker who has shown a lifetime commitment to the improvement of community corrections.

Dr. Simon Dinitz Award

Dr. Simon Dinitz, through his work at the Ohio State University, has dedicated his life to improving the knowledge base of corrections. He has served on state and national commissions whose purpose was to improve corrections. As an educator he has also been responsible for training many correctional practitioners in the state. This award is given to a community correctional practitioner who has made contributions to the improvement of community corrections in Ohio.

James Wichtman Award

Jim Wichtman was one of the founders of the Ohio Community Corrections Organization, now known as the Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections. Jim dedicated his career to the progressive development of community corrections with great passion and commitment. In 2006, the OJACC Board of Trustees voted to create an award in Jim's name to honor OJACC Board Members who have dedicated themselves to OJACC's mission.

To see a list of former recipients go to ojacc.org/awards.



Hamilton County Launches Effort to Improve Juvenile Justice System

Council on State Government (CSG) Justice Center

Hamilton County is the latest jurisdiction, and the first site in Ohio, to join the CSG national initiative to launch a comprehensive, data-driven review of its juvenile justice system. The effort will identify strategies to improve outcomes for youth involved with the system while enhancing public safety.

The project is part of the Improving Outcomes for Youth (IOYouth) initiative, which helps states and local jurisdictions align their policies, practices, and resource allocations with what research shows works to reduce recidivism and help young people succeed. The CSG Justice Center will perform the review, which will examine the system from diversion through reentry.

Nearly 3,000 youth are referred to the Hamilton County Juvenile Court each year, and they are disproportionately youth of color. Theft, disorderly conduct, drug possession, and assault are the most referred offenses to the court, but a key area of concern for the county is the prevalence of youth charged with gun-related offenses.

CSG Justice Center staff will analyze case-level juvenile justice and fiscal data, examine county policies, and convene focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders. These activities will shed light on how the system currently operates, identify challenges, and determine what can be done to improve it. Additionally, CSG Justice Center staff will help develop a sustainable community engagement strategy that integrates impacted youth and family voices into the assessment and decision-making process.

The effort will be conducted under the direction of the Hamilton County Juvenile Task Force, a group established by the Hamilton County Juvenile Court and composed of stakeholders including law enforcement officials; representatives from the county prosecutor's and public defender's offices; the juvenile probation chief; leaders from the education, children's services, and behavioral health systems; and community-based providers, among others. Hamilton County Juvenile Court Administrative Judge Melissa Powers will chair the task force.

The Hamilton County Juvenile Court has a history of initiatives and partnerships that have improved how it delivers services to youth and their families. Over the past five years, the Hamilton County Juvenile Court has seen a 35 percent decrease in the number of delinquency and unruly (status offense) filings it processes, and there has been a 24 percent decline in admissions to the county's juvenile detention center.

The Hamilton County Juvenile Court will also partner on this project with the Ohio Department of Youth Services, which provides overall guidance, training, and funding support for county juvenile justice systems statewide. The department will document and share lessons learned from Hamilton County's assessment process with all Ohio counties so that the project benefits recidivism-reduction initiatives statewide.

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Crowne Plaza Hotel North in Columbus, Ohio

September 30-October 1

OJACC Annual Conference

Save the Date

Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections

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New Albany, Ohio 43054