



Milwaukee Community Justice Council

Working collaboratively to ensure a fair, efficient, and effective justice system that enhances public safety and quality of life in our community.

Community Justice Council Decisionmaking

The CJC is an umbrella organization of criminal justice agencies and local governments that was created to foster collaborative efforts to bolster the justice system's fairness, efficiency, and effectiveness. To advance the organization's mission, the Council funds a full-time staffer that serves at the pleasure of the CJC Executive Committee. A 17-member Executive Committee collectively dictates the direction of the Council.

I. Council Overview

The mission of the Milwaukee Community Justice Council (CJC) is to work collaboratively to ensure a fair, efficient, and effective justice system that enhances public safety and quality of life in our community. The CJC has pursued its mission by convening local government and criminal justice agency heads on a regular basis to encourage and oversee various collaborative efforts. Milwaukee County District Attorney John T. Chisholm serves as the Chairperson of the CJC. First Assistant Public Defender Thomas Reed serves as the Vice Chairperson.

The CJC is an umbrella organization created by county resolution¹ that utilizes city and county resources to employ one full-time staffer through the Public Policy Forum. The staffer is charged with planning, coordinating, and creating substantive work products for collaborative efforts in pursuit of the CJC's mission. The staffer is also asked to facilitate internal system communications, pursue policy research and analysis, and engage in outreach and public relations with the larger community. To aid in some of these responsibilities, the CJC is using resources provided by the Courts to fund a Public Ally, who assists in bolstering the organization's community engagement efforts and administratively staffing CJC subcommittees. The Public Ally is limited term, serving for approximately 10 months.

II. Council Direction

Council direction is determined by the CJC Executive Committee,^{2,3} a group of 17 local government and criminal justice leaders.⁴ Establishing the Council's direction is a complex task, as Executive Committee members have individualized and occasionally competing priorities when it comes to the focus of the CJC. The staff utilizes a number of sources for direction to determine staff priorities. Those sources include:

¹ Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr., Chairperson, Committee on Judiciary, Safety and General Services, report on File No. 07-223 (Journal, May 17, 2007).

² See Public Policy Forum, "Milwaukee County Community Justice Council Seeks Full-Time Coordinator," January 10, 2013. "The Coordinator will serve at the pleasure of the Council's Executive Committee..."

³ See CJC Executive Committee Guidelines (adopted 1/18/2012). "All members have equal status for the purposes of input and decision making."

⁴ The Executive Committee members are: Milwaukee County Circuit Court Chief Judge Jeffrey Kremers, Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke, Jr., County Executive Chris Abele, Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm (Chair), Inspector Richard Schmidt from the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, County Supervisor Willie Johnson Jr., City of Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, City of Milwaukee Chief of Police Edward Flynn, First Assistant Public Defender Tom Reed, Department of Corrections Regional Chief Niel Thoreson, Community Member Kit Murphy McNally, Director of the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission Mallory O'Brien, US Marshall, Eastern District of WI Kevin Carr (Ex Officio), Milwaukee County House of Correction Superintendent Michael Hafemann, Director of Health and Human Services Héctor Colón, Milwaukee County Corporation Counsel Paul Bargren, and US Attorney James Santelle.

A. The CJC Mission Statement

In the broadest sense, the charge of the staff is to assist in carrying out the mission of the CJC. The existing mission statement was created after considerable thought and discussion by the Executive Committee and represents a truly shared perspective on why the CJC exists. Any staff activities should be in pursuance of the CJC mission, which centers on criminal justice fairness, effectiveness, and efficiency. Although pursuing the mission statement can conceivably encapsulate an unlimited number of staff activities, it sets the overall direction of the staff and establishes the outermost boundaries of staff activities.

B. Past and Current Strategic Planning Documents

Periodically, the Executive Committee gets together to have to have a facilitated discussion about the CJC, its standing, and its priorities. The outcome of these sessions are summary documents produced by the Public Policy Forum that outline the Executive Committee's collective sense of the CJC's strengths and weaknesses and what the CJC's strategic priorities should be. These documents are produced based on the collective input of all participating Executive Committee members and represent what the Executive Committee as a whole considers to be objectives of the CJC.

In 2013, staff activities were based on the last strategic planning session. A summary of this session was finalized in December of 2011.⁵ The strategic initiatives listed in this document were the following:

- *Conduct Statement*
A conduct statement outlining an expectation of collaboration amongst Executive Committee members.⁶ The conduct statement is not consistently followed.
- *CJC Scorecard*
The Executive Committee expressed its desire to have a data scorecard that "includes data elements from the broad range of justice system activities" that would be a "regular agenda item at all Executive Committee meetings."
- *Measuring Recidivism*
"A single recidivism measure or a set of measures" that the Executive Committee can continually look at to monitor trends.
- *CJC Coordinator and Committee Restructuring*
The CJC staff is to be a conduit between the Executive Committee and the other CJC committees and report on possible areas of committee restructuring.

The summary also described "Other Issues Covered," which included major issues that at the time of the strategic planning were discussed but not placed into the category of strategic initiatives. These include:

- *Behavioral Health*
There was a common interest among Executive Committee members to monitor this area to determine whether further action should take place.

⁵ Public Policy Forum, "Summary of Milwaukee County Community Justice Council Strategic Planning Session." December 20, 2011.

⁶ See FN3: "Members of the Executive Committee agree that in order to ensure a fair, efficient and effective justice system they will bring to the attention of appropriate members of the Council, for input and consideration, any policy changes which are likely to impact other parts of the criminal justice system."

- *Communications/Public Relations/Community-Wide Convening*
The group discussed the need to enhance the visibility of the CJC.

CJC staff planned for, organized, and presented at a new strategic session in February of 2014. For that session, Executive Committee members completed a survey that asked members to rank, among other things, the organizational challenges of the CJC.⁷ The need for enhanced data collection/synthesis for justice programs was the top vote getter.⁸

By the end of the meeting, Executive Committee members decided on a set of one-year objectives, which included progress in the area of data, public relations, and programmatic priorities. The programmatic priorities listed were mental health, the juvenile system, and reinvestment initiatives.

C. Executive Committee Meeting Votes and Discussions

The Executive Committee meets every month and discusses various issues related to criminal justice generally and interagency collaboration in particular. From time to time, the Executive Committee will make decisions by vote. These decisions represent the will of the Executive Committee as a group and are followed by staff. Additionally, the general tenor of group discussions can provide a source of direction to the staff, although this is not necessarily dispositive.

Subsequent to a presentation from the Coordinator at the February 2014 CJC Executive Committee Strategic Planning session and a robust discussion following the presentation, the Executive Committee voted in March⁹ to change the name of the organization to the Milwaukee Community Justice Council (removing “County” in order to emphasize the intergovernmental collaborative nature of the council) and to adopt a purpose statement that further provides direction to staff. It reads:

“The purpose of the CJC is to function as an independent entity governed by key justice system leaders that is empowered to define broad justice system goals, monitor/analyze justice system performance, facilitate collaboration among justice system agencies, provide technical assistance and research, and act as a conduit between the justice system and the larger community without impacting in any way the autonomy or decision-making authority of any criminal justice agency.”

D. The Staff Position Description

The Executive Committee and members of other CJC committees worked collaboratively to create the Coordinator job description. The description is extensive, and can be taken as representing the array of activities that the Coordinator may be responsible for doing. The job description was a group-created document and represents a collective vision of what the Coordinator should be doing in pursuance of the CJC mission. Further discussion of job duties and related activities is included in Section III.

⁷ Public Policy Forum, “Summary of Milwaukee County Community Justice Council Strategic Planning Session – February 21, 2014.”

⁸ See CJC Survey 2.18.14 Excel Spreadsheet. Executive Committee were asked “What are the most important organizational challenges facing the CJC that you hope are addressed at strategic planning?” Members were given a variety of options and were asked to rank those options with a #1 ranking being “the challenge you consider most important.” Six out of nine respondents ranked “Need for enhanced data collection/synthesis for justice programs” as their #1 choice (no other option was ranked #1 by more than one respondent). Two respondents gave the data option a #2 ranking. One respondent gave the data option a #3 ranking. No other response had anything approaching this degree of unanimity in terms of its being an important organizational challenge.

⁹ CJC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, March 19, 2014.

E. Individual or Small Group Meetings with Executive Committee Members

Input from individual members of the Executive Committee provides an additional source of direction for staff. As a member of the Executive Committee, each individual can provide their own personal direction to staff. It has been the staff's responsibility to synthesize the various directions and priorities given by the various members. When many members provide similar feedback, this gives a strong indication of appropriate direction. However, member feedback is often inconsistent and sometimes in direct conflict. In such cases, staff relies on the group-produced directions outlined above to provide guidance on his priorities and activities.

In individual meetings with most Executive Committee members, some common themes arose out of those discussions include the following:

- Organization/Committee Restructuring: Executive Committee members wanted staff to enhance the level of organization in the CJC, get a sense of how the committees are functioning, and improve the usefulness of committees in need of improvement.
- Data Scorecard: The importance of data was mentioned frequently and several Executive Committee members asked about having a data scorecard presented at each Executive Committee meeting to enhance the utility of the meetings.
- Public Outreach: In one way or another, virtually all Executive Committees stressed the importance of burnishing the CJC's public image and engaging more with the community.
- Mental Health: Many Executive Committee members mentioned the importance of mental health in the criminal justice system and improving the system's interaction with the county's behavioral health system.
- Increasing the level of city involvement in the CJC: Members expressed a clear desire to get the city more involved in the CJC.