

Justice Reinvestment Initiative at the Local Level

Getting to Know

Delaware County, Ohio

Delaware County is located in the north-central portion of Ohio, just north of the city of Columbus. The County is home to approximately 184,979 people, and it is the fastest growing county in the State – more than doubling its population during the past twenty years. The racial makeup of the county is 94% white and the median income for a household is \$80,526. The County was selected to participate in the JRI initiative in January of 2012.

JRI Phase I in Delaware County

Delaware County sought inclusion in Phase I of JRI to engage key county stakeholders in a strategic planning process to incorporate evidence-based practices into their justice system. When the county joined the JRI initiative, it was facing a number of challenges. In 2010 the county reported spending more than \$41 million annually on criminal justice related services (law enforcement, court administration, probation, and jail and prison costs). Costs incurred at the Delaware Municipal Court in 2010 for the issuance and service of 1,958 arrest warrants was \$131,736; the Municipal Court also devoted 18,720 employee hours to criminal and traffic matters in 2010.

The county jail had been recently expanded with a new 96 bed addition, and at the time the JRI effort began, had a capacity of 286 (the average daily population was approximately 220). Much of the burden associated with the County's criminal justice population and related crime increase had fallen directly on this facility.

The cost per day to house an offender at the Delaware County Jail was \$65. More than 50% of these individuals were between the ages of 18-40 years old, and the Delaware County team was hopeful that targeted and specific

intervention and rehabilitation services could have a significant impact on this population. The team also found that the majority of individuals in community corrections were dually diagnosed with mental health and substance abuse issues, posing additional challenges to the county's overburdened systems.

In order to build a strong foundation for their work, the JRI Leadership Team, with assistance from their JRI technical assistance provider, developed a vision to guide their efforts. The team's vision was, and is, to encourage a: "collaborative, cohesive and integrated criminal justice system that promotes public safety by employing evidence-based approaches, and utilizes information to inform decision-making regarding the best use of available resources." The team also developed a specific mission statement in support of their work. They would:

- Understand and appreciate the current operation of the criminal justice process;
- Develop, review and analyze key criminal justice data and information;
- Identify and prioritize critical areas of focus; and
- By engaging in evidence-based approaches and in consideration of available resources, make recommendations concerning specific JRI strategies.

The JRI Leadership Team carefully examined data concerning jail admissions over the previous four years, and other pertinent information, and determined that it would:

- Explore the length of time it takes to complete court cases, identifying the barriers in each step of the process;
- Explore the types of services already available in the community, investigate evidence-based programs that might be utilized, and evaluate the success of the programs currently being offered; and

Justice Reinvestment Initiative at the Local Level

- Review and analyze in more depth jail data and statistics.

JRI Phase II in Delaware County

A thorough review of cost and population drivers led the team to develop a Phase II strategy that would focus on developing specific responses to three significant issues:

- Reducing the number of probation violations each year by employing evidence based strategies, and developing a violations and incentives response matrix;
- Reducing the length of time that lower level felony cases take to reach a disposition; and
- Developing and implementing an OVI (DUI) court.

Delaware County was accepted into Phase II of the JRI project, and their proposed Phase II budget was approved by BJA in September of 2014. Delaware County's JRI Leadership team continued to meet on a quarterly basis to further its work on Phase II. Details regarding these efforts are described below.

OVI Court. The JRI Leadership Team decided to create an OVI Docket within the Delaware County Municipal Court. It was determined that OVI Court would be reserved for higher risk individuals, and the following goals, objectives and performance measures were created:

Goal 1: Reduce future drunk driving offenses for Docket graduates.

Objective: Recidivism decreases by 15% for Docket graduates over a ten year period when compared to multiple-OVI offenders not in the Docket.

Performance Measure: The number of OVI offenses committed by a Docket graduate measured from the date of graduation for a

period of ten years.

Goal 2: Reduce jail bed days for Docket participants.

Objective: Reduce jail bed days for Docket participants by 25% from original sentence.

Performance Measure: The number of jail bed days ordered at the time of sentencing plus any additional jail days ordered for impairment while an individual is in the program compared to the total jail days that would have been otherwise imposed for an OVI offense.

Goal 3: Reduce the financial cost of incarceration of Docket participants.

Objective: The incarceration cost of Docket participants will be reduced by 25%.

Performance Measure: The number of jail bed days actually spent plus any additional jail days ordered for impairment while an individual is in the program multiplied by the daily cost of a jail bed day compared to the total jail days spent by a multiple OVI offender not participating in the program.

Goal 4: To increase the number of Docket participants who complete the substance abuse treatment program as recommended by the treatment provider, not including participation in a support program such as AA, within one year of program engagement.

Objective: 80% of Docket participants will complete treatment within one year of program engagement.

Performance Measure: The number of Docket participants who complete treatment within one year of program engagement compared to the total number of Docket participants receiving treatment within one (1) year of program engagement.

The OVI court received its certification from the Ohio Supreme Court on August 11, 2015. The goals, objectives and performance measures stated above will be closely monitored by the court over the next 18 months so that the value and impact of this approach can be determined.

Justice Reinvestment Initiative at the Local Level

Case Expedition. A system was created that allows defendants charged with lower level felony offenses – after consultation with their counsel – to participate in an expedited case disposition process. It took longer than expected to generate the criteria, create this process, and have cases accepted into this program. At this point, relatively few arrestees have been able to participate. However, those cases in which the eligible defendants did elect to participate yielded a fifty percent reduction in the direct costs in each case. Moreover, the delay between the date of offense and date of disposition was also substantially reduced.

Efforts to place more individuals in this program will be examined over the next few months, and determinations will be made concerning whether this particular initiative should be continued.

Probation Violation Arrests. As a result of the data collected in Phase I, the JRI Leadership team determined that a reduction in the number of probation violations, and a reduction in the number of probation violators placed in the jail, could have a very significant positive impact on jail bed space, and resources, without negatively impacting public safety. The team established an overall goal of reducing the number of probation violation arrests by 10% each year over a four year period. This would create a potential cost savings of \$530,686, which could then be reinvested into “behavior change” services, including substance abuse and mental health programs.

The probation office (Adult Court Services) began moving forward with a variety of new initiatives and changes in its operation, and the following activities/accomplishments have occurred in the past year:

- In November 2014, an Evidence-Based Practice Coach was hired and the job was merged into the Program Specialist duties
- A sanction and incentive grid has been developed
- Judges and local attorneys have been trained in specific evidence-based practices
- A warrant staffing policy/procedure was implemented
- All probation staff received training from a JRI team consultant on evidence based approaches to supervision
- Monthly training sessions have occurred and are ongoing
- Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) manuals were created for all staff
- The agency mission statement has been updated to reflect the use of EBPs
- A Behavior Management System software package was purchased
- A coaching observation form has been adopted and is being used
- Data collection has begun
- Coaching training was delivered

Specific objectives, goals, and performance measures were developed in each of the following areas:

1. Use Evidence Based Strategies (EBS) to effectively supervise moderate and higher risk cases
2. Create a system to record the use of EBS
3. Meet program goals associated with reduced jail admissions, reduced recidivism, costs savings, and reinvestment of savings

Justice Reinvestment Initiative at the Local Level

Under its JRI effort, a considerable amount of progress has been made in Delaware County. The OVI court is up and running, an effort to expedite lower level felony cases was created, and specific efforts to reduce the number of probation violations is moving forward.

Delaware County is committed to using evidence based approaches to the management of individuals in the future, and has also developed a foundation for gathering information and tracking client outcomes to help inform future decisions and directions. The initiatives put in place have not been active long enough to produce meaningful outcome data at this time. However, data collection and analysis will continue to be an important part of the county's continuing efforts to meet its goals.

Key to Success: Broad-Based Support from Local Leadership

Delaware County's JRI team enjoyed a varied range of membership, which was a key to addressing the issues facing the county that extend beyond the criminal justice system. In 2016, the JRI Leadership team was merged with the newly created Delaware County Community Corrections Board, and that Board has continued the involvement of numerous partners in the consideration of broad system issues. The team's members include representatives from:

- Adult probation and parole
- Judiciary
- Prosecutor's office

- Local defense attorneys
- Jail and Sheriff's Office
- Local Police Departments
- Community-based correctional facility
- Victim services
- Job and Family Services
- Work Force Development
- Recovery Services Board
- Mental Health Center, Recovery and Prevention Services
- Nonprofit treatment providers
- Juvenile probation
- Housing programs
- Clergy/faith-based community
- Legal aid
- Incarcerated and former offenders

One of the most important issues being faced is the cultural change that goes along with introducing new methods of doing business. Gaining buy-in from officers and their continued training and coaching will be a very important future part of this work.

Delaware County created a robust and effective leadership team during its JRI work, and benefitted from the use of technical assistance and meaningful data to inform the focus and scope of its efforts. It is anticipated that this team will continue to meet, in order to monitor outcomes associated with the actions taken, and to determine steps that can be taken to resolve issues and continue making progress towards their goals.