

CARES (Corrections and Recovery Saves) Committee

Blount County Criminal Justice FY20 Proposed Plan

“Moving forward for our neighbors, friends, and family”

The CARES Committee was established by the Blount County Commission with the support of both the Mayor’s office and the Sheriff’s office, and endorses the Mission and Objectives of the Community Justice Initiative. The CARES Committee has taken an exploratory approach to addressing the Blount County jail overcrowding problem. This tactic has led the committee to conduct site visits, collect data, review best practices, and listen to state consultants. Ultimately the goals of the Committee are as follows:

- Protect the community (incarcerate the dangerous)
- Create alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders
- Release rehabilitated offenders with skills and employment

In order to properly protect the community, the criminal justice system needs to properly assess and classify offenders. Differentiating violent from non-violent offenders with reliable assessment tools will provide the pathway to aligning offenders with program(s). Establishing community based alternatives to jail immediately is essential for beginning to make an impact on the “flow” of inmates through the “system”. Preparing offenders for community transition and offering employment skills is the final strategy for reducing recidivism thus impacting jail overcrowding.

The Committee is suggesting a multi-phase approach to addressing the crisis confronting our community. Phase I will seek to address the Blount County jail facility improvements to make the current jail optimally functional. Needed jail maintenance and upgrades will foster better utilization of the facility by BCSO that if remedied would improve jail operations. Concurrently Phase II initiates the expansion of community based services to advance alternatives to incarceration and build momentum for the final phase. Phase III planning/development will be conducted to launch the centerpiece of the jail overcrowding strategy- a Transitional Center- in year two.

Phase I- make needed maintenance and facility improvements to the current jail to improve operational function to allow for classification, maximum utilization, safety

- Review facility needs and cost TBD
- Review and/or create policies and procedures to maximize inmate processing, classification, and release planning

Phase II – make services available to avoid incarceration, limit incarceration length of stay, and transition inmates to the community successfully.

- Expansion of Recovery Court- the goal is to provide alternative sentencing for judges in lieu of incarceration for drug related offenses (treatment instead of jail)

The TDMHSAS FY20 budget has \$1.7 million statewide recurring funds to expand recovery courts AND expand existing recovery court capacity. Look for Announcement of Funds in late spring/early summer 2019. Blount County should plan on applying (no match required). ***Proven model of care in Blount County*** AND endorsed by judges.

- TN ROCS- Tennessee Recovery Oriented Compliance Strategy- the goal is active judicial monitoring for any adult eligible for probation.

The TDMHSAS FY20 budget has \$600,000 recurring funds. An Announcement of Funds should be released in summer of 2019. This is a ***Tennessee proven model in the 4th judicial district*** under Judge Slone's leadership. The program provides for frequent structured contact with probationers actively involved in community treatment programs. Monitored by a mental health professional.

- Pre-Arrest Diversion services- the goal is to offer an alternative to law enforcement incarcerating low level non-violent offenders

The TDMHSAS FY20 budget has \$1.5 million statewide to expand pre-arrest diversion programs. Historically a 25% match is required. This is infrastructure funding (start-up) and should only be used in year one. Blount County should plan for local governmental funding for sustaining the project in subsequent years. Several ***promising models developed across Tennessee*** in 2017. Noteworthy is the co-responder model (law enforcement and mental health liaison) that has demonstrated success in Memphis, Knoxville, and Denver. Match in year one \$100,000.

- Post incarceration (Jail to Work) - the goal is to successfully transition inmates to work and paying taxes.

A service model that transitions inmates out of jail to a community based residence. Graduated opportunity for early release to a community based home/facility with structured treatment for substance use disorder while working. A key element is offering a safe, affordable, sober living environment. Additionally a vocational supported employment model is essential for employer participation. Inmates would wear monitoring anklets. This funding would be from Blount County, inmates would be charged fees once employed to subsidize the program costs. ***The Morristown model has emerged as a promising practice model.*** The benefits include paying back restitution, court fees, etc. prior to program completion. Annual cost estimated to be \$350,000.

Adding an array of services across the criminal justice continuum is a key strategy to impacting jail overcrowding. While the offender is the target audience, the impact will touch families as most offenders have children, spouses, etc. Additionally the types of citation and arrests need to be examined through classification in the jail to ascertain the appropriate use of the most restrictive placement (jail).

Phase III- build upon the success of Phase II and invest in expanding the continuum based on available data and funding.

Add the centerpiece of the initiative, ***Transitional Facility***, to maximize the flow of offenders through the system. By initiating Phase I & II, systems and procedures can be worked out thoroughly while the facility is being developed. This multi- phase plan allows for the initiation of the project without waiting on the capital development of the facility which will take a minimum of 18-24 months from land acquisition.

- Transitional services (while incarcerated) - the goal is to provide pre-employment skill building, behavior modification, counseling, and job placement/shadowing.

The Transitional facility will serve inmates and provide these adults with the necessary rehabilitation services which will include employment to allow them independence upon release to the community. Mental health and drug abuse professional services are fundamental services. Drug screening and monitoring are key components of the service design. The goal is to reduce recidivism. The participants will gain skills become tax paying, law abiding citizens. ***The Dyersburg model has gained much acclaim as well as the Rutherford county model.*** Cost TBD.

- Utilize consultants (UT/state) to inform the design as the initiative evolves