

VISIONTEAMS

Imagining Allegheny County's Tomorrow

*Larry Davis,
Chair*

Executive Summary

Recognizing that public safety is the most critical function of any government, the County has long served its citizens with dedicated public safety personnel, innovative programs, and strong partnerships with other local, state and federal agencies. However, the County faces the same obstacles that governments across the nation are struggling with - decreases in funding, increases in incarceration and a lack of diversity.

While technological advances have allowed for increased intergovernmental cooperation cost-saving, and consolidation opportunities, the age-old problems of crime prevention and rehabilitation still dominate discussions.

Because of this, the Public Safety Vision Team concluded that recommendations with respect to sustainability, intergovernmental relations and diversity should be crafted to address the three essential elements of the public safety infrastructure: the Allegheny County Police, the Allegheny County Jail, and the Department of Emergency Services.

- **Ensure a Diverse, Transparent, Accountable and Cost Efficient Police Force**

- Create a Diversity Taskforce composed of various departmental heads to focus on data gathering, transparency and accountability; facilitate an increase in diversity through internship programs, classes and workshops, interface with organizations representing constituencies.
- Conduct a financial analysis to measure the feasibility of restructuring and consolidating all Allegheny County municipal police departments under the Allegheny County Police.
- Explore the feasibility of forming a Citizen Law Enforcement Review Board for Allegheny County.

- **Expand Strategies to Address Drug Addiction**

- Acknowledging that drug addiction is of epidemic proportions, implement and/or expand various strategies such as a supplementary prescription drug drop-off program, “Turn your gun in” programs and use the leadership of the County Executive to raise awareness, and educate family members of addicts about existing treatment options.

- **Ensure Appropriate, Efficient and Cost Effective Practices are Used at the Jail**

- Build on the nationally recognized Allegheny County Jail Collaborative and Identify a sustainable funding source to maintain, and increase the scope of existing re-entry programs.
- Enhance the role of community corrections as cost-effective treatment options and safe alternatives to incarceration in the Jail.
- Analyze the organizational design and the variables that contribute to significant turnover in leadership of the Warden; identify and implement policies and best practices that anchor the Jail during times of transition until stability is achieved.
- Evaluate the relationship between the Allegheny County Health Department and the Jail including a review of all procedures and protocols to determine whether there is sufficient accountability, adequate regard for public safety, and whether services provided are cost-effective yet in the best interests of Jail inmates.

- **Assess Opportunities for Shared Emergency Services**

- Recognizing that multiple agencies (Port Authority, Emergency Services, and Airport Authority) have emergency services components, assess the public safety responsibilities of each entity to determine duplication; opportunities to share functions and determine where funding sources can be leveraged to complement other funding sources and public safety service requirements.

Vision Team Charge

The Public Safety Vision Team is charged with reviewing and evaluating the current service delivery of services related to public safety in the county, determining whether the opportunities exist for cooperation or merger, identifying services that need to be improved or expanded upon and making recommendations as to what the county's role is in that plan or implementation may be moving forward.

Scope of Work/Summary of Methodology

Scope of Work

The Public Safety Vision Team addressed issues related to: sustainability, intergovernmental relations and diversity.

The Public Safety Vision Team scope of work included the following areas:

- General public safety
- Allegheny County Police
- Allegheny County Jail
- Department of Emergency Services

The Team's recommendations are within the scope of one of the three fields for which the county has a role: the county performs, or should perform, an administrative function related to the recommendation; the recommendation pertains to a financial interest or financial support of the county; and, the recommendation lends itself to advocacy by the county. Those recommendations that do not fit within one of those three fields will not be a focus of the vision team.

Summary of Methodology

Schedule of Meetings

April 6, 2012

April 19, 2012

May 8, 2012

May 12, 2012

May 22, 2012

May 29, 2012

June 5, 2012

June 28, 2012

July 17, 2012

August 2, 2012

Deadlines:

Final Report due August 6, 2012

Resources Utilized:

The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work hosted the Public Safety Vision Team at its Oakland location.

The School also shared experts Dr. Hide Yamatani, Associate Dean for Research, and Dr. Ralph Bangs, Associate Director of the Center on Race and Social Problems.

The team watched the video: *“Broken on All Sides: Race, Mass Incarceration and New Visions for Criminal Justice in the U.S.”*¹

The Team also met with the following individuals:

- U.S. Attorney David Hickton
- Beth Pittinger, Citizens Police Review Board
- Bill Stickman, Allegheny County Jail Acting Warden
- Alvin Henderson, Allegheny County Emergency Services Chief
- Charlie Moffat, County Police Superintendent

¹ The team recommends watching this video. It is available at <http://brokenonallsides.com/>.

Findings & Recommendations

General Recommendations

Topic of Concern: Although the team had insufficient data to review diversity in all public safety departments, anecdotal evidence suggest that diversity continues to create a challenge for the various departments.

Recommendation: Create Diversity Taskforce¹. A diversity taskforce, composed of various departmental heads, would focus on three items:

- Data gathering
- Transparency
- Accountability

The Taskforce would first establish a baseline of information on the employment process, hiring process, and promotion of minorities in public safety, and then identify where improvement is needed.

Law Enforcement Recommendations

Topic of Concern: Allegheny County and municipal police department structures are an antiquated and inefficient use of resources, and restrict the centralization of information that can assist local, state and federal law enforcement.

Recommendation: A financial analysis should be conducted to measure the feasibility of restructuring and consolidating all Allegheny County municipal police departments under the Allegheny County Police².

Topic of Concern: Allegheny County Police need to increase the number of minority officers.

Recommendations:

- Start internship programs with local schools to encourage law enforcement participation among youth.
- Disseminate information regarding recruit requirements to a wider audience using the internet, social media and other mediums.
- Create a handbook on diversity recruitment that can be shared with all municipal police forces.
- Meet with organizations like the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives to identify strategies.
- Offer classes/workshops for those interested in becoming a law enforcement official.
- Solicit foundation money to help create a coordinated minority recruitment campaign.

¹ Appendix A

² Appendix B

Topic of Concern: Currently, Allegheny County has no independent agency set up to investigate citizen complaints about improper police conduct.

Recommendation: Explore the feasibility of forming a Citizen Law Enforcement Review Board for Allegheny County.

Topic of Concern: Drug addiction has become a problem of epidemic proportions across the country and Allegheny County is no exception. Narco-homicides and other drug related crime have turned some communities into war zones.

Recommendations:

- Institute a prescription drug drop-off program to supplement the D.E.A. National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day that is held only twice a year. The program could occur monthly or quarterly. Collection sites could be set up at the County Courthouse and other locations.
- Increase and expand “Turn your gun in” programs.
- County Executive can raise awareness, and educate family members of addicts, about existing treatment options. The stigma that accompanies drug addiction often prevents family members and loved ones from seeking help for the addicts in their lives. The County Executive could have an important role to play in reducing that stigma. Emphasize that addiction is a disease that can be cured, and that help is available. The solution to the drug problem must be a community solution.

Allegheny County Jail Recommendations

Topic of Concern: The County spends 22% of its tax revenues on criminal justice and corrections. Recidivism, substance abuse, and mandatory sentencing are the major drivers of the County’s high rate of incarceration³. Seventy percent of Jail admissions are readmissions, and 80% of Jail admissions admit to a substance abuse history or issue. High recidivism drains the County’s resources and wide-scale failed reintegration of ex-offenders into the community is a threat to public safety and productivity.

Recommendations:

- Identify a sustainable funding source to maintain, and increase scope of existing re-entry programs. Allegheny County has a program—the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative⁴—that is considered a national model. It has the potential to not only reduce recidivism, but save millions of dollars annually.
 - Enhance the role of community corrections as cost-effective treatment options and safe alternatives to incarceration in the Jail. Governor Corbett recently signed prison reform legislation that will divert nonviolent addicted offenders from state prisons to county correctional facilities for treatment of their addiction issues. The County Executive ought to have a plan for dealing with the influx of additional inmates who will be remanded to this jurisdiction. The plan should address the re-entry needs of these inmates while posing no risk to public safety.
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³ Appendix C

⁴ Appendix D

Topic of Concern: The Jail has had 7 Wardens in the past 8 years. This constant turnover has greatly diminished the Jail’s operational capacity and the effectiveness of its programs. The continuous vacuum in leadership thwarts the Jail’s efforts to reduce recidivism so that, in addition to shouldering increasingly high incarceration costs, taxpayers have also been required to pay repeatedly for recruitment and transition costs.

Recommendations:

- The County Executive identify the factors that have resulted in this pattern and take action to address them; rather than view continued turnover in the top leadership position at the Jail as a “given.”
- The County Executive identify and implement policies and best practices will anchor the Jail during times of transition, and continue to insure its smooth functioning after its leadership becomes more stable. This undertaking should include input from the current Warden and other key stakeholders in local corrections.
- Evaluate the relationship between the Allegheny County Health Department and the Jail with the assistance of key stakeholders-including the Warden. Evaluate all procedures and protocols that inform provision of medical services in the Jail to determine whether there is sufficient accountability, adequate regard for public safety, and whether services provided are cost-effective yet in the best interests of Jail inmates.

Department of Emergency Services Recommendations

Topic of Concern: The current Emergency Services model has multiple agencies duplicating effort without the amount of coordination that would drive efficiencies and interoperability. For example the Port Authority, Emergency Services, and Airport Authority all have various facilities, technology and operations dedicated to aspects of dispatch, Emergency Operations and response.

Recommendation: Assess the public safety responsibilities carried out by each agency related to County government⁵ in order to determine: where effort is duplicated; which assets can be shared across agencies; and where funding sources can be leveraged to complement other funding sources and public safety service requirements.

⁵ Appendix E

Next Steps

GENERAL PUBLIC SAFETY ACTION ITEMS

Immediate Changes

Outline scope of work and appoint members to a diversity taskforce.

Short term Goals

Identify departments lacking diversity and develop an action plan.

Long Term Goals

Implement policies that increase diversity in public safety departments.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION ITEMS

Immediate Changes

Initiate conversations with local officials and the County Police regarding consolidation.

Meet with NOBLEE, Sheriff's office, and others to gather information on increasing minority recruitment.

Initiate discussions with the relevant stakeholders about a Citizen Law Enforcement Review Board.

Meet with US Attorney's office to discuss a prescription drug drop-off program

Short term Goals

Conduct a financial analysis of a police force consolidation plan.

Implement recommendations to improve police force diversity.

Appoint a taskforce to explore feasibility of a Citizen Law Enforcement Review Board.

Organize logistics for collection of prescription drugs and guns.

Long Term Goals

Consolidate Allegheny County Police departments.

Launch a Citizen Law Enforcement Review Board.

Have more frequent collections of prescription drugs and guns.

Create a more diverse police force.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY JAIL ACTION ITEMS

Immediate Changes

Plan County's response to changes in local corrections as a result of recent prison reform legislation in PA.

Identify steps to interrupt the pattern of constant turnover in the Warden's position.

Create a taskforce led by the current Warden to identify and plan implementation of best practices and policies.

Pursue continued foundation support for successful rehabilitative and reentry programs in the Jail and the community.

Initiate evaluation of the manner in which health care is provided at the Jail.

Short term Goals

Evaluate Best Practices taskforce findings

Extend the strategies in the current Allegheny County Jail Collaborative Plan beyond 2013.

Clarify the role of community corrections as an integral part of the Jail Collaborative Plan.

Complete evaluation of manner in which health care is provided at the Jail and issue recommendations.

Long Term Goals

Authorize the Warden to implement policies and best practices at the Allegheny County Jail.

Attract and retain effective leader in the position of Warden.

Create conditions in which the Warden can succeed.

Effectively deal with influx of inmates transferred to County from state prisons.

Accomplish the recidivism reduction goals of the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative

Implement recommendations concerning provision of health care at the Jail to insure accountability, public safety, cost-effectiveness, and appropriateness.

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES ACTION ITEMS

Immediate Changes

Initiate discussions with the relevant stakeholders about Emergency Services functional consolidation

Short term Goals

Assess the various agencies and their funding, operations, facilities, etc...

Long Term Goals

Consolidate ES service functions.

Members

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University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work

Brian Bark
Mission Critical Partners

The Honorable Dom Costa
PA House of Representatives

Bob Cranmer
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