

Lebanon County Criminal Justice Advisory Board

Minutes of the Meeting of April 8, 2024

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Place: Second Floor Conference Room, MH/ID/EI, 220 East Lehman St., Lebanon, PA, 17046

Present

Pier Hess Graf, District Attorney and CJAB Chair; Holly Leahy, MH/ID/EI Administrator and CJAB Vice Chair; Honorable John C. Tylwalk, President Judge; Robert J. Phillips, County Commissioner; Jamie Wolgemuth, County Administrator; Stephanie Axarlis, Court Administrator; Audrey Fortna, Director of Probation Services; James Donmoyer, Director, Drug and Alcohol Commission; Jeffrie Marley, Sheriff; LeAnne Burchik, Executive Director, Domestic Violence Intervention; Stephanie Hamersky, Domestic Relations; and, John P. Shott, CJAB Planner.

Absent

Tina Litz, Warden; Megan Tidwell, Chief Public Defender, Jonathan Hess, County Police Chiefs Representative; Karen Raugh, Executive Director, County Housing Authority; Erin Moyer, Director, Children and Youth Services; Carla Cyr, Veterans Justice Outreach; and, Kim Mackey, PCCD Regional Representative

Guests

Lori Burrus, Lebanon Branch 26AA of the NAACP; Glenda Folsom, P.R.O.B.E.; Norma Gonzalez, SARCC.

Proxy entered for the record: Stephanie Hamersky, Assistant Director, for Michael Anderson, Director of Domestic Relations.

CJAB Chair Pier Hess Graf called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Presence of a quorum noted.

Minutes of February 5, 2024, CJAB Meeting—Approved on a motion by Ms. Leahy, seconded by Ms. Fortna.

Requests from Organizations for Non-Voting Membership on the CJAB—Following the adoption of the amendment to the CJAB Bylaws at the February 5 meeting, three organizations—Potential Reentry Opportunities in Business and Education (P.R.O.B.E.), Lebanon County Branch #26AA of the NAACP, and Sexual Assault and Resource Counseling (SARCC)—applied for non-voting membership. All three organizations submitted letters of intent along with the required documentation. The Chair recommended that the Board vote separately on each request.

On a motion by Ms. Axarlis, seconded by Ms. Fortna, the members approved the application and accepted **P.R.O.B.E.** as a non-voting member. On a motion by President Judge Tylwalk, seconded by Ms. Fortna, the members approved the application and accepted **Lebanon Branch #26AA of the NAACP** as a non-voting member. On a motion by Ms. Leahy, seconded by Ms. Fortna, the members approved the application and accepted **SARCC** as a non-voting member. The Chair welcomed all three organizations to the CJAB.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

D.U.I. Court—At present, 38 offenders are participating in the program, with three applications pending. Participation levels have been rising steadily in recent months.

Prison Reduction—Average Daily Population (ADP) at the LCCF as of April 1 was 302. The ADP for Jan-March was 297. The average length of stay for the Jan-March period was 42.84 days, though it was 22.42 at the end of March. The average cost per day per inmate is \$145.87. The ADP level of 302 does not necessarily mean that the ADP will continue to rise. It should be noted that the ADP had been almost twice that figure several years ago and that keeping the ADP below 500 was the accepted benchmark. The fact that the County has now kept the ADP at or below 300 on a consistent basis underscores the effectiveness of alternative sentencing.

Mental Health—Since the inception of Team M.I.S.A., the following transitions have taken place: 1) two individuals in need of mental health care at a State Hospital were transferred from the LCCF to Wernersville State Hospital; 2) two persons transitioned from the LCCF into the County-owned cottage; 3) one person was released from the LCCF into a community setting with short-term housing support and community mental health services.

Team M.I.S.A. has also identified barriers to assistance: 1) individuals do not have appropriate home plans for release due to a lack of housing or housing support within the county; 2) many persons currently in the LCCF are not county residents, have no natural supports within our county, and want to return to their home counties; 3) many individuals who are released from the LCCF and referred to MH/ID/EI often state that they do not need services and do not disclose enough information to allow case workers to assess their needs effectively.

MH/ID/EI has begun collecting daily prison-log data to note the number of persons whose cases are open or have been closed within MH/ID/EI. This information allows MH/ID/EI to keep track of inmates with serious mental-illness diagnosis and collect data for recidivism rates.

As of February 8, the County reported three suicides. Statistical breakdown: two male, one female; average age, 56; one by firearm, one by overdose, one by asphyxiation; no veterans; all three from the 17042/17046 zip code; all white.

Three females currently reside (full capacity) in the County-owned cottage behind MH/ID/EI

Veterans' Court—At present, 18 offenders are participating in the program, with three pending. The fourth annual Veterans' Court softball tournament is slated for July 13 at South Hills Park in South Lebanon Township.

Drug Court—27 offenders are currently participating in this specialty court, with four pending. The President Judge noted the increase in participation rates. This specialty court offers a viable option for offenders who would otherwise be sentenced to an SCI for two years or longer. The Administrative Office of PA Courts (AOPC) strongly advises counties with specialty courts to apply for official AOPC certification. Lebanon County’s DUI Court already has such certification. The Court plans to take steps to do the same for the Veterans’ and Drug Treatment courts. Members of treatment court teams also need professional credits.

CJAB DEPARTMENTS: REPORTS AND ISSUES OF INTEREST

Heroin Task Force Report—The County reported 33 overdose deaths in 2023. Statistical breakdown: 25 by fentanyl, three by xylazine; 20 males, 13 females; 25-75 age range; 75 percent from 17042/17046 zip codes, two out of county. No updated stats for 2024.

Offender Reentry—The County has posted the position for a part-time (15 hours per week) Reentry Coordinator.

Intermediate Punishment (IP) Grant Modification—PCCD approved the revisions to the original FY 2023-2024 IP grant budget of \$278,708. The modified budget is now \$236,665 (a decrease of \$42,043). Taking this step gives PCCD an opportunity to reallocate the \$42,043 to other counties possibly needing additional funding for their IP programming between now and the end of the fiscal year. An audit of IP expenditures from the Oct-Dec 2023 quarter determined that the County had reported \$80 more in lodging expenses than allowed under GSA guidelines for the two members of the Probation staff who attended last October’s Treatment Court Professionals Conference in State College. Since the County has already received reimbursement for the Oct-Dec. quarter, PCCD will deduct \$80 from the Jan.-March 2024 IP payment.

ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS—Nothing on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

IP Treatment Plan for 2024-2025—IP funding is once again available for counties. Under PCCD guidelines, Lebanon County is eligible to apply for up to \$500,000 for IP-related programming. The application process requires the county to attach an updated IP Treatment Plan to the grant application, which is due no later than May 1. On a motion by Ms. Fortna, seconded by Ms. Axarlis, the Board approved the new plan with the understanding that Mr. Shott will continue to update the information and narratives between now and the May 1 deadline.

IP Funding and Letter of Support from CJAB Officers—On a motion by Ms. Leahy, seconded by Commissioner Phillips, the Board authorized Mr. Shott to prepare and submit a grant application to PCCD for IP funding for FY 2024-2025. Mr. Shott will attend the April 18 Commissioners’ meeting to secure their authorization. The application also requires a letter of support from the CJAB officers. On a motion by PJ Tylwalk, seconded by Ms. Fortna, the Board authorized Mr. Shott to prepare such a letter to be signed by the officers and attached to the IP grant application.

CJAB Strategic Plan for 2024-2025—The members reviewed the draft of the plan. The President Judge requested that the document include applying to Susquehanna Service Dogs (SSD) for a service dog for offenders in treatment court, or for others on Probation who are experiencing anxiety or depression. Securing approval to use a service dog entails a two-year application and review process. It is possible that IP funds in FY 2024-2025 could cover the cost of a service dog. Ms. Fortna requested that the plan also include working toward AOPC certification for all three treatment courts. On a motion by Ms. Fortna, seconded by Mr. Wolgemuth, the Board approved the new Strategic Plan, with the requested additions. Mr. Shott will finalize the plan and submit it to PCCD. An updated plan means that Lebanon County will remain in compliance with Minimum Operating Standards for CJABs in Pennsylvania.

ADJOURNMENT—With no further business to conduct, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m. on a motion by Ms. Axarlis, seconded by Ms. Fortna.

NEXT CJAB MEETING—Monday, June 10, 2024, 9:00 a.m., MH/ID/EI.