



Crime and Justice Institute at
Community Resources for Justice

Ventura County Public Safety Realignment Plan

2012-2015



This document serves as a blueprint of the Ventura County Public Safety Realignment Implementation Plan. The following realignment plan outlines specific strategies and policies to modify, amend, and improve current systems.

Executive Summary

Background and Impact

As the result of AB 109, the Public Safety Realignment Act, the California criminal justice system fundamentally shifted on October 1, 2011. The law changed the definition of a felony, shifted housing for lower level offenders from prison to local jails, and transferred supervision of designated parolees from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to Ventura County Probation.

Felons who have committed non-violent, non-serious and non-sex offenses (N3) will now be housed in Ventura County's local jails. Those released from state prison, Post Release Offenders (PROS), will be supervised by Ventura County Probation. Estimates indicate this will result in two new offender populations for Ventura County, approximately 380 N3s over the next two years and 774 PROS through July 2013. These new offenders will require the services of Ventura County Probation, Ventura County Sheriff's facilities and community resources such as treatment, housing, and employment.

This shift by the State of California will require Ventura County to manage their criminal justice populations more effectively and efficiently in order to 1) maintain jail capacity with the additional influx of offenders previously described and 2) maintain high standards of public safety. The stakeholders on the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) agree that in order to effectively incarcerate and supervise the new offender population, a continuing stream of state funding is needed. The CCP has concerns that current or future funding could be jeopardized if the state's revenue fails to meet projected expectations.

The outline below provides the four components of the long-term realignment plan in Ventura County that will maintain jail capacity and high standards of public safety.

Realignment Plan

Reduce the recidivism rates of AB 109 offenders in Ventura County

By defining recidivism of offenders for stakeholders and the community of Ventura County, realistic goals can be set by the CCP for long term reductions in reoffending. Once recidivism goals are set, accomplishing the other targets listed below will make reducing recidivism a reality.

- Develop and implement effective forms of evaluation, treatment, support and outreach/engagement for AB 109 offenders
- Increase alternatives to incarceration and services for offenders
- Develop a graduated responses matrix for violation behaviors and incentives for those doing well
- Incorporate risk/needs information at front end of the system and at sentencing

Develop effective forms of evaluation, treatment, and support services in Ventura County

Focus groups of community members and service providers have identified areas for focus to improve the availability and quality of services for offenders.

- Provide education and training to service providers in Ventura County on evidence-based practices in effective interventions with criminal offenders
- Identify and fill gaps in services in Ventura County for criminal offenders, including housing, employment, and life skills
- Convene annual meetings of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and County/Municipal entities to share information and data regarding realignment

Increase alternatives to incarceration and services for offenders

By increasing the alternatives to incarceration, fewer low risk offenders will be utilizing jail beds and thus, beds will be freed up for higher risk offenders.

- Develop a graduated responses matrix for probation violators
- Maximize use of alternatives to custody for eligible offenders
- Home confinement/electronic monitoring/GPS
- Visit and network with other jurisdictions to explore new and effective approaches

Use risk and needs assessment in the pretrial process and at sentencing

By including risk assessment in the pretrial processes, information that is available to judicial officers can assist in making quality release decisions and enhance the public safety concerns of this population. Sentencing decisions can also be enhanced with risk and need information made available for the court and both legal parties.

- Collaborate with Court partners and develop joint training opportunities
- The Public Welfare Foundation is looking for sites to provide free technical assistance to develop pretrial services programs
- Develop a pretrial risk instrument for use with the Bail Schedules for improved and more informed release decisions
- Analyze current jail population to inform decisions
- Develop procedures within the Probation Department to conduct full assessments of defendants prior to sentencing

How the Plan was Developed

Prior to identifying realignment goals and objectives, Ventura County spent significant time gathering information regarding their criminal justice system and community to inform the development of goals to achieve. This work included an analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats (SWOT), the construction of a system map of Ventura County's criminal justice system, four focus groups of Ventura County community members and providers (Appendix A), and individual interviews with CCP members. Individual reports summarizing the SWOT analysis, System Map, and focus group findings are attached to this document. This and other information provided by numerous individuals within Ventura County led the CCP to develop the realignment goals, objectives and action plans which follow and are attached. The individuals who offered their valuable time to this process and provided information to the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) at Community Resources for Justice are recognized below:

- Chief Mark Varela
- Chief Ken Corney
- Sheriff Geoff Dean
- Catherine Duggan
- Steve Lipson
- Stanley Mantooth
- Cecil Argue
- Hon. Vincent O'Neil, Jr.
- Michael Powers
- Caroline Prijatel-Sutton
- Meloney Roy
- Hon. Brian Back
- D.A. Greg Totten
- Patrick Zarate
- Barry Zimmerman
- Comm. Guy Stewart
- Cheryl Kanatzar
- Todd Howith
- Patricia Oliveras
- Comm. Mark Stadler
- Frank Chow
- Kevin Drescher

The identified goals will be listed and discussed below.

Goals of Public Safety Realignment in Ventura County

1. To reduce the recidivism of AB 109 offenders.

CCP members in Ventura County are unified in their belief that for realignment efforts to be successful they must measure the re-offense rate of the new population of offenders. Defining recidivism in the county will be important and must be done in a transparent and honest manner so that all members of the system can accept and commit to achieving the recidivism goals.

Multiple measures of recidivism should be developed rather than relying on only one. The CCP discussions of measures can be informed by what other jurisdictions are using to define recidivism and set benchmarks. Appendix B contains a list of a number of different jurisdictions' recidivism measures as a reference for future discussion in Ventura County.

Within each of the recidivism measures, a refining of the definition, variables to collect and calculating formulas is urged and needed for the collection of necessary data to ensure accurate measures. A CCP work group is currently identifying and developing a phased approach to enhancing the Ventura County Integrated Information System (VCIJIS) system to collect the needed data moving forward. In the realignment plan that is attached, steps are identified that the CCP can take to begin the process of defining recidivism and identifying measures for Ventura County.

Once defined, a baseline recidivism rate for the AB 109 population needs to be established to set achievable goals of reducing recidivism. Ventura County currently does not know the recidivism rate for its criminally-involved population, including the AB 109 offenders. This information is essential to determining if efforts to reduce recidivism are successful and where adjustments to strategy are needed. Hypothetically, if Ventura County defines recidivism as the number of new felony convictions while under supervision, it will be important to know that the current baseline in Ventura County for this measure is 10 percent or 5 percent or some other percentage. From this figure, a goal of reducing recidivism by a specific percentage could be realistic.

2. To develop and implement effective forms of evaluation, treatment, supports and outreach/engagement for AB 109 individuals with Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse Needs and their families.

To accomplish the recidivism goal above, Ventura County will need a comprehensive system of effective treatment services available for offenders with needs both while incarcerated in the County jail and upon release into the community. The Sheriff's Office has started to develop programming to address the re-entry needs of the offenders under its custody. These programs include community-based services that identify the needs of some offenders and assist with education or employment services upon release.

Community-based providers are in need of training and education in understanding criminal offenders and interventions that will effectively change their behavior. In focus groups of providers, participants overwhelmingly indicated a lack of knowledge in this area and reported the desire for an agency to take the lead in providing this training. The use of risk and need information in treatment settings along with what constitutes effective treatment for offenders are the focus of this training need. Without a quality treatment system in place, efforts by the criminal justice system will be limited and may impede internal progress stakeholders do make. With some modest planning and implementation funds, objectives within this goal can be accomplished relatively quickly.

CCP workgroups are established and working to inventory the services and programs available for offenders in Ventura County. Work has also been under way to facilitate a means to maintain the information of available services and provide an easy-to-use electronic method of referrals for offenders through the County's 211 service provider.

3. To increase alternatives to incarceration and services for offenders by fiscal year 2014.

Ventura County currently has capacity in its county jail; however with the increase in AB 109 offenders entering the jail, CCP members would like to maintain capacity without having to construct new facilities. The objective is to maximize current jail capacity through the use of cost effective alternatives. Identifying offenders through the use of an actuarial risk assessment tool to determine both flight risk of pretrial defendants and the likelihood of re-offense of sentenced offenders is critical for each of the recommended strategies listed below.

- To address technical probation violators without increasing the jail population, develop a graduated responses matrix to provide additional, less costly responses to violations. A graduated responses matrix serves as a decision-making tool to guide officer responses to violation behaviors. These models emphasize the importance of swiftness and certainty in imposing an increasingly severe schedule of penalties for non-compliance with program rules or conditions of supervision. The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has strongly advocated that empirically-based risk assessment be incorporated into graduated response systems to develop more targeted and structured decision-making tools. Risk profiles are usually aligned with broad categories of violation severity to help guide officers in imposing appropriate responses, which may range from verbal reprimands to filing petitions for revocation.
- States and jurisdictions across the country are using electronic monitoring in a number of settings including as a pretrial alternative to jail, as an alternative to jail for sentenced offenders to reduce over-crowding, and as a mandated supervision requirement for certain offenders. Electronic monitoring can take the form of home detention devices, alcohol monitoring devices which identify when an offender consumes alcohol, and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for pre-trial defendants and technical probation violators in lieu of jail. Ventura County should consider the use of electronic monitoring devices of this nature as a tool for controlling jail population.

4. To use risk/needs information at front end of system and at sentencing by July 1, 2015.

To accomplish the three goals previously discussed above, it will be critical that the Ventura County CCP consider utilizing risk and needs information both at the pretrial process and at time of sentencing. The CCP also has an opportunity to benefit from the Public Welfare Foundation's desire to provide free technical assistance to several sites in California to establish pretrial service programs. This goal requires the CCP to commit to the following action steps:

- Developing a pretrial risk assessment instrument to provide information at initial bail determination and at the bail review hearing to allow the Court to consider reducing bail for low risk offenders, saving jail beds for higher risk defendants. Research has suggested that bail decisions have often been made arbitrarily and that little information other than previous criminal history and current charges has been provided to judicial officers to help in their determination of bond amounts and bail conditions.¹ Objective research-based tools have been and continue to be developed that assess defendants' flight risk, as well as their likelihood of danger to the community, in an effort to present impartial information to judges. With the availability of such tools, judges are better equipped to assign more rational conditions of release or detention.
- Probation providing the results of a full risk and need assessment to all sentencing judges and to the legal parties prior to sentencing. These assessments will inform the Court regarding possible choices for sentencing terms, custodial sanctions, and appropriate levels of supervision, treatment and conditions of probation.
- Encouraging judges to utilize assessment information at sentencing to identify candidates with high criminogenic need who will benefit from case management and supervision in the community upon release from serving their custodial sanctions (split sentences).

Performance Measures and Outcomes

Performance measures and a mechanism for the reporting of outcomes can be developed based on the goals stated above for public safety realignment. Performance measures can include process, implementation, and cost/benefit measures. As noted earlier in this realignment plan, the shifting of responsibility for housing and supervising offenders from the state to the county mandates enhancing the county's criminal justice system to effectively leverage available resources for all criminal offenders.

CCP members in Ventura County all agreed that performance reports of realignment efforts should be shared with criminal justice system stakeholders. It is further recommended that information on outcomes and the AB 109 population be shared with members of the community and provider network in Ventura County, not only to engage the community but to inform the providers on the profile and needs of this population and their role in the system.

Acknowledgement

The Crime and Justice Institute at Community Resources for Justice would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude for the chance to learn from and about the County of Ventura and its criminal justice system and community partners. We have found the

¹ Maxwell, S.R. (1999) Examining the Congruence between the predictors of ROR and failure to appear. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27: 127-141.

key stakeholders in the system to be concerned with the impact this new population of offenders will have on the community and willing to consider changing the system to ensure offenders are provided opportunities for success and community members remain safe. Stakeholders want to develop an effective system to address this population and are willing to tackle the difficult issues involved. CJI is confident that through focus, collaboration and measurement of progress and outcomes, the long range goals identified in this plan can be achieved.

Ventura County Realignment Action Plan

Goal #1: Reduce the recidivism rate of AB 109 offenders by __ % by the end of Fiscal Year 2015.

Objectives	Tasks/Activities	Timeline	Lead Role	Strategies Used	Measure Document	Resources Needed
Define recidivism for Ventura County	Establish workgroup to begin developing definition	June 20, 2012	CCP Exec.	Definition should include multiple measures and consider definitions from other jurisdictions	Presentation of recommended definition	
	CCP commitment to definition	August 22, 2012	CCP Exec.	Workgroup presentation to CCP and vote from Executive Committee to approve	Agreed upon definition of recidivism	
Establish baseline recidivism rate and rate to achieve	Establish baseline recidivism rate in Ventura County	Dec. 31, 2012	CCP	Using agreed upon definition, use retrospective approach to analyze recidivism data	Baseline measure of recidivism in Ventura County	Historic data and ability to analyze
	Develop realistic rate to achieve in reducing recidivism	Jan. 31, 2013	CCP	Based on baseline rate of recidivism, identify rate	Agreed upon rate to reduce	

Goal #2: To develop and implement effective forms of evaluation, treatment, supports and outreach/engagement for AB 109 individuals with Mental Health and/or Substance Abuse Needs and their families.

Objectives	Tasks/Activities	Timeline	Lead Role	Strategies Used	Measure Document	Resources Needed
Identify the needs of AB 109 offenders in order to develop effective treatment	Obtain a list of AB 109 offenders since Oct. 1, 2011 with relevant information	July 1, 2012	Probation CBOs Behav. Health	Information is need by providers on the needs of the offenders they will provide services to. This	Information needed to assess scope of treatment and services needed	Case information and data from CJ information

				includes offenses, risk & needs, geographic and other information		
	Develop a process to regularly obtain this information from CJ agencies	December 1, 2012	CBOs Probation	In order to be proactive in providing needed services, regular information will be needed	Regular process of data sharing	
	Mapping current referral system in Ventura County	September 1, 2012	CBOs Behav. Health Probation	For understanding by all parties, mapping the offender referral to services process will assist in effective processing	Map of current referral system	Staff time and mapping software or consultant contract
Identify treatment and support services for offenders available in Ventura County	Public/Private Partnership work group currently addressing this	June 6, 2012	CBOs Behav. Health	Work group is identifying services available in order to identify gaps in services for offenders	Inventory of services	Staff time
Identify services not currently available to address offender population needs	Compare needs of population to current available services	August 1, 2012	CBOs Behav. Health	Services to develop will be identified by comparing current services to those needed	List of services to be developed	Staff time
Identify evidence-based strategy for each area of service	Group services by areas in order to identify EBP strategies for each	December 1, 2012	CBOs Behav. Health	Grouping services areas will allow strategies to be identified for each	EBP strategies for each area of service	Research on EBP
Workshop on evidence-based practices for CBO's and Behavioral Health agencies	Identify funds to sponsor conference for providers on effective interventions for offenders	December 1, 2012	CCP	First training event for providers to both introduce EBP and to further identify strategies to use	Conference Held	Funds to hold conference, site, presenters
Identify process to procure services for offenders using AB 109 funds	Determine process for treatment/services funds for providers	August 1, 2012	CCP	Funds are allocated for services to offenders by CBOs but a procurement process has yet to be defined.	Process in place to procure treatment funds	Finance staff time

Establish outreach and engagement services	Document the services and process available for offenders and agencies	December 1, 2012	CCP Probation Behav. health	Document the services and processes developed within the County to provide services for offenders	Documented process	Staff time
	Publish materials and outreach vehicles to educate public and offenders	December 1, 2012	CCP	To engage the public in how the County and providers are treating the needs of offenders, education and outreach is needed	Published material on services available	Staff time and funds
Evaluate services provided to AB 109 offenders	Funding of evaluation and data collection efforts	January 1, 2012	CCP CBOs Behav. Health	To learn of services that are having an impact and those which need to improve, a process and outcome evaluation is needed	Evaluation Plan	CCP funds Contracted Evaluator

Goal #3: To increase alternatives to incarceration and services for offenders by fiscal year 2015.

Objectives	Tasks/Activities	Timeline	Lead Role	Strategies Used	Measure Document	Resources Needed
Develop a matrix of graduated responses to violation behavior	Convene a workgroup of representatives to develop matrix	June 20, 2012	Probation Department	Review what other jurisdictions have developed	List of options other jurisdictions have used	Access to other jurisdictions/contacts with knowledge based agencies
	Analyze current Ventura County responses to violations	September 19, 2012	Probation Department	Inventory violation options, conduct case reviews, conduct focus group of Court and probation officers	List of existing violation options	Probation and Court staff
	Develop new responses to fill gaps identified in current system	December 1, 2012	Probation Department	Using what other jurisdictions have developed, identify what gaps in Ventura Co. system could be filled by similar responses	Comprehensive matrix of graduated responses that could be implemented	Staff time and resources

Develop incentives for offenders to be successful	Identify work group to discuss new potential incentives for offenders	September 1, 2012	Probation Department	In conjunction with the graduated responses matrix, providing offenders with incentives can be a strong motivator to be successful	Document of available incentives for offenders	Staff time and potentially funding
Develop new ATIs including the use of electronic monitoring, GPS and supervision for the pretrial population	Convene workgroups to brainstorm additional alternatives for pretrial and sentenced jail populations	January 1, 2013	CCP Workgroup	By developing ATIs, low level offenders can be safely supervised or monitored in the community	List of potential ATIs	Staff time and resources

Goal #4: To use risk/needs information at front end of system and at sentencing by July 1, 2015.

Objectives	Tasks/Activities	Timeline	Lead Role	Strategies	Measure Document	Resources Needed
Consider requesting Pretrial technical assistance through Public Welfare Foundation (PWF)	Discuss technical assistance request at CCP meeting	June 20, 2012	CCP & CJI	Public Welfare Foundation will provide funds for technical assistance through CJI to develop pretrial program recommendations and instrument	Formal request from CCP to PWF for technical assistance	Agenda item on CCP meeting
Conduct review of literature and pretrial risk instruments in use	Read literature, conduct site visits to jurisdictions that have pretrial programs	September 1, 2012	CCP	Become familiar with both current state of the art in pretrial and resources available	Understanding of pretrial programs	Access to pretrial TA providers, websites, jurisdictions, etc.

Conduct analysis of current jail population	Obtain data on jail population from VCJIS to include pretrial population	September 1, 2012	CPP	Analysis of jail population will assist in identifying which offenders can be targeted for pretrial release and services	Descriptive report of pretrial jail population	Data and analytic capabilities
Develop pretrial risk instrument to be used in conjunction with Bail Schedule	Identify research partner with expertise to develop and validate instrument	January 1, 2013	CPP	Assistance will be needed from pretrial providers to construct and validate instrument	Pretrial instrument to implement	Funds and contract with provider
Include risk/needs information for judicial consideration at sentencing	Discussion with criminal bench on uses and value of information	September 1, 2012	Probation Dept. & Court	Having this discussion will both identify Court's questions and concerns with using risk & needs. And inform implementation efforts	Identified list of issues to address in implementation	Time to meet
Revise presentence procedure to include full assessment of risk/need and include in presentence report	Probation workgroup to identify steps needed to conduct full assessment prior to sentencing	September 1, 2012	Probation Department	Internal work group of presentence staff will identify procedures and resources needed	Plan to implement full assessment in presentence process	Probation staff time

Appendix A

Ventura County Community Focus Groups Recognition

We would like to thank the following individuals for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend the community focus groups in Ventura, Oxnard, Simi Valley, and Santa Paula, as well as those individuals who allowed us to host the groups in their agencies:

- Karol Schulkin, Ventura County Human Services Agency
- Marty Estrada, Ventura County Human Services Agency
- Cathy Brudnicki, Ventura County Homeless & Housing Coalition
- Terry Sapp, Ventura County Human Services Agency
- Scott Walker, Ventura County Law Enforcement Crisis Intervention Team
- Eileen Tracy, Community Advocate
- Michael Kaufman, Westlake Village Family Services
- Fiona Kilner, Many Mansions
- Rosalinda Vint, Women of Substance & Men of Honor, Inc.
- Jennifer Frank, Partnership for Safe Families
- Elaine Martinez Curry, Partnership for Safe Families
- Rob Orth, Project Understanding
- Susan Luckey, Ventura County Behavioral Health
- Barbara Marquez-O'Neill, Consultant
- Tim Hawkins, Community Action of Ventura County
- Carmen Fraser, Goodwill Industries of Ventura & Santa Barbara Counties
- Carolyn Briggs, Ventura County Behavioral Health
- Jeff Campbell, Coalition to End Family Violence
- Caroline Prijatel, Coalition to End Family Violence
- Martin Hernandez, Supervisor Kathy Long's Office
- Erik Sternad, Interface Children & Family Services
- Virginia Tapanes, Interface Children & Family Services
- Chandra Penderland, Ventura County Sheriff's Department
- Jose Romero, Interface Children & Family Services
- Denise Castillo, Ventura County Behavioral Health
- Meloney Roy, Ventura County Behavioral Health
- Pastor Greg Runyon, Gold Coast Fellows
- Ratan Bhavnani, National Alliance of Mental Illness, Ventura County

Appendix B

In an effort to provide assistance to Ventura County work groups, the following list of potential recidivism measures other jurisdictions are using is offered with additional resources from Pew Center on the States:

Recidivism Measures in Connecticut,

Within three years of their release or discharge:

% of offenders were rearrested

% were convicted for a new criminal offense

% were returned to prison with new charges, for either technical violations or to begin a new prison sentence

Oregon Public Safety Recidivism Measures

Reconviction for any felony within 3 years of release from prison or being sentenced to probation

Re-arrest for any person felony or class A person misdemeanor

Re-arrest for any property crime

Maricopa County Adult Probation, Arizona

New felony convictions during period of supervision

Revocation to Department of Corrections

Texas Statewide Recidivism Measures

Revocation to state jail, or prison from community supervision

Re-incarceration rate to state jail or prison within three years of release

Re-arrest rate within three years of release

Bureau of Justice Statistics Definition

Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in the re-arrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release.

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC) Definition

Recidivism is defined as the first return to a DRC institution within 3 years of release.

Indiana Department of Correction Definitions

The Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) defines recidivism as a return to incarceration within three years of the offender's date of release from a state correctional institution.

Pew Center on States resources:

Pew provides an interactive map of the U.S. with each state's data on recidivism measures of return for new crime, return for technical violation and not returned at the link below:

http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/Flash_Library/PCS/Interactives/Recid_2011/recidivism_3_29_final.swf

Ventura County CCP SWOT Analysis

April 3, 2012

As a part of collecting information for the development of a long-term Phase II realignment plan in Ventura County, a SWOT analysis was conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as an aid in strategic analysis and a logical framework to guide strategic discussions. A SWOT analysis helps an organization to see itself for better and for worse. Organizations are inherently insular and inward looking; SWOTs are a means by which an organization can better understand what it does very well and where its shortcomings are. A key element of developing strategic options is the matching of organizational strengths and weaknesses with opportunities and threats which exist in the environment.

The figure to the right depicts the four categories in a SWOT analysis and identifies the nature of the factors listed, i.e. whether they are internal to the organization or externally controlled. Strengths should be capitalized upon, weaknesses should be shored up, opportunities should be invested in, and threats should be identified.

Strengths (<i>Capitalize</i>)	Opportunities (<i>Invest</i>)
Weaknesses (<i>Shore Up</i>)	Threats (<i>Identify</i>)
<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>

The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) at Community Resources for Justice asked the Ventura County Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) members to complete a SWOT analysis worksheet over a two-week period. A total of six worksheets were completed by members. These worksheets were then collated, and items identified by more than one member in each category were considered potential strategic priorities. CJI also conducted in depth interviews with each member of the CCP and included items identified in those interviews in the SWOT matrix. The attached SWOT matrix identifies the priorities in the above categories in Ventura County.

Strengths

A strong collaborative nature among the Ventura CCP members is a key strength. Partners have a history of access to each other and have a high level of commitment to making realignment work. Ventura County has a solution-focused approach to criminal justice system issues. There is a re-entry planning process for those returning from jail, and numerous community services available for offenders in need. A centralized data system is seen as a strength that can assist in measuring the performance and success of system partners and realignment.

Weaknesses

Ventura County is a conservative county, by members own admissions, with a history of sending offenders to prison, which is seen as a weakness. There is no agreed upon definition of recidivism commonly used within the county, which will be important to address for the long-term realignment plan. The County lacks a pretrial program and there are limited services available in the jail. Though

the number of offender services is seen as a strength, eligibility gaps also exist in services for offenders who are in the community.

Opportunities

There are opportunities in Ventura County to define success and identify performance measures for realignment. Realignment also provides an opportunity to use a risk instrument at the pretrial assessment stage to inform release decisions along with the bail schedule currently in use. It is also an opportunity to include offender risk and needs in the information the Court considers at time of sentencing. Further, there is an opportunity to develop a continuity of treatment and services from jail to the community.

Threats

The largest threat CCP members identified were the perceived or potential reduction or elimination of realignment funding. In addition, a perceived threat is bad publicity, law suits or legal action based on the new population of offenders coming to Ventura County. A current threat is the high level, serious offenders coming back into the local system.

Matching Strengths to Weaknesses & Opportunities

SWOT analysis should be more than a list - it is an analytical technique to support strategic decisions. Strategy should be devised around strengths and opportunities. Therefore the utility of conducting a SWOT analysis is in matching the strengths of the organization to the weaknesses and opportunities.

The overwhelming strength in Ventura County is the collaborative nature of the criminal justice partners. This, above all other items, was repeated by most of the CCP members that responded as the one area that makes Ventura County unique. This strength should not be taken for granted as a collaborative approach allows many of the weaknesses to be addressed and for investment in opportunities to make the system stronger. As an example, a weakness identified is not having a definition of recidivism or success in the County. This need has not been addressed by the CCP and whether it will be through the work of developing the long-term realignment plan or as a separate agenda item, a collaborative approach to completing this task is necessary in order to adopt a functional definition.

Another weakness identified is not having a good pretrial program in place. With potential funding available through realignment, should the CCP identify this as a strategic objective or goal, the nature of CCP collaboration would greatly enhance the County's ability to implement such a significant addition to the system.

Two opportunities were reported that focus on the use of risk information, including risk in pretrial release decisions along with the bail schedule and use of risk information to inform sentencing. This information is widely used in these settings throughout the country, and Ventura County's strength of a centralized data system will assist in both implementing and measuring the use of this information.

The opportunity of creating continuity in treatment and access to services from jail can be coupled with the strengths of having a number of services available in the community and good re-entry planning in the jail to begin creating this continuum of treatment.

Conclusion

The Ventura County CCP members can identify and use the information collected and analyzed in this SWOT report to assist them in developing strategic objectives and goals for inclusion in the long-term realignment plan. The environment in Ventura County is conducive to beginning this work, and in fact some work has already begun with the creation of an inventory of community-based organizations and services to identify gaps that exist for the offender population.

STRENGTHS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key issues	OPPORTUNITIES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key issues
Strong collaboration √√√√√√	√	Opportunity to define measure of success √	√
High level of commitment √		To develop a risk instrument to use with Bail schedule √	√
Access to all the partners √		Court to use risk assessment information at sentencing √	√
CCP understands realignment √		Create a continuity of treatment/ access to resources upon release (successful reentry) √	√
Numerous services available √			
Solution focused √			
Centralized data system √			
Reentry planning from the Jail √			
WEAKNESSES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key issues	THREATS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key issues
No definition of recidivism or success √√	√	Funding being reduced √√√√√√	√
Not a good pretrial program in place √		High level (serious) offenders coming into the system (violent/SO) √	
Not enough programming for inmates (limited medical/psych beds) √		Bad publicity, Lawsuits / Legal Actions √	
Eligibility gaps in services √			
Conservative county that is used to sending people to prison √			

Ventura County Community Focus Groups Summary

April 30, 2012

The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) at Community Resources for Justice conducted four focus groups in Ventura County on April 16, 2012 and April 17, 2012. The focus groups were conducted in order to:

- 1) gauge the community's understanding of Ventura's Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) and receive suggestions regarding ways the CCP can better engage the community in their work;
- 2) identify gaps in services for offenders returning to the community and;
- 3) to inform the CCP of the knowledge base of community providers in evidence-based practices in changing offender behavior.

The groups were held in Ventura, Oxnard, Simi Valley, and Santa Paula. A total of 61 participants from non-profits, community-based organizations and faith-based agencies were invited to attend the groups; 24 attended and 2 participants responded to the focus group questions via email. The following questions were asked of the participants and a summary of the results follow:

1. *What is your understanding of the Community Corrections Partnership's roles and responsibilities?*
2. *How would you describe the current relationship between the Criminal Justice System and the provider/social services system in Ventura County?*
3. *How could the community of Ventura County play a more significant role in how the CCP carries out its responsibilities?*
4. *Describe your knowledge and/or understanding of the research or evidence-based practices in changing criminal behavior.*
5. *What gaps in services exist for offenders in Ventura County?*

Results

Question 1: What is your understanding of the Community Corrections Partnership's roles and responsibilities?

In all four focus groups, participants noted varying levels of understanding of the CCP. Most participants reported they had never heard of the CCP and therefore were unaware of their roles and responsibilities. Responses included:

- CCP is all law enforcement
- Part of AB 109- Board of Supervisor action that established the CCP that has many county agencies involved. Focus is on reentry- population and how to do that is a work in progress. CCPs are throughout the State. To obtain the grant money, the counties need to begin planning process that is currently being undertaken by Ventura County.
- CCP's responsibility is to look at who is coming back to the community and where they will be sent for treatment (in particular batterers).
- Varying levels of understanding of the CCP. Aware of the partnership and working for half a year and working on reentry. Understand there is a subcommittee tasked with engaging community providers. Haven't seen any minutes, been invited to meetings, or seen any products.

- They are to bring together community based programs, corrections (state and county level) to discuss the realignment population and how to handle it.
- If it is at the county level, we tend not be invited to the meeting.
- Because there are funds available for counties for prisoners coming back to counties- role is to look at funding, partner with people to spend the money, and come up with a plan for offenders coming back to the community to reduce recidivism. Made up of law enforcement, designated voting members.
- Identify gaps in services in regards to reentry.

Question 2: How would you describe the current relationship between the Criminal Justice System and the provider/social services system in Ventura County?

Participants noted an increase in collaboration between the criminal justice system and service providers but indicated additional work needs to be done in this area.

- Relationship is fragmented as there are specific programs that Ventura County and community providers work together on, but not uniformly.
- Some think the criminal justice system is coming late to the world of partnerships while service providers have historically been collaborating.
- Some see this as an opportunity to build stronger relationships.
- There is a lack of communication on both ends between CJ and non-profits
- Some recognition by criminal justice that they cannot do this on their own.
- Meeting quarterly (domestic violence) with providers, Judges, PO's, DA's, victim support system. Also meet monthly with providers and PO's regarding tx, etc. Collaborative relationship around domestic violence.
- Many Mansions- good relationship with the Sheriff after reaching out to them- not formalized process but more informally. Because of shifts in staff, this is an ongoing process. Sheriff's Department has been responsive and helpful.
- Strong relationship with Todd Road Jail.
- The CJ system set up a coordinated effort 4 yrs ago among non-profits- come to the jail along with perspective employers before the offenders are released so they are connected with services before release. Have not seen anyone from behavioral health as part of this collaborative. Known as Inmate Expo- run by inmate services.
- Working with Ventura PD to address the homeless population- homeless to homeless program.
- Sheriff Dean is more open to input from agencies aside from CJ system.

Question #3: How could the community of Ventura County play a more significant role in how the CCP carries out its responsibilities?

All of the focus group sites indicated they would like more information regarding the CCP purpose, meetings and work, including when they meet and the location.

- Participants expressed a sense of skepticism whether the CCP truly intends to engage the community and if they do, it will take a concerted effort to convince those agencies.
- Educate the community on who the Post Release Offender Supervision (PROS) population is so they can better serve those offenders.
- If the agencies were informed about the CCP plan, they felt they could identify how they could fit into that plan.
- More information about the population coming into the community and what they're needs are
- Increase communication- as example- there are stats on homeless population- would it be helpful for Ventura County to have this information for that population?
- In order to better understand the population- implement instrument that identifies the offender's needs/personality profile. If assessment is being completed, community providers would need this.
- Understand that the CCP may not have the information which is why they are not sharing it. (Don't want it to be incorrect).
- Different organizations could educate the CCP about what is available to the reentry population- possibly a forum- a scheduled meeting
- Database to hold demographic information which would then identify the programs the offender qualifies for. This would be a shared database system.
- Currently receiving direct referrals from probation through a jointly developed referral form- this provides pertinent information on the offender being referred. Identified person on the CCP who the community agencies can go to who is reaching out to the community. A public face to CCP.
- Educate the housing community about the realignment population and who these individuals are. Particularly around non, non, non and what that means.
- Formal connection with the area housing arena, as the new population will be returning to affordable housing. Need more information from the Probation Department about the offenders (establish their criminal history). Homeless divisions also need to be involved in this as well.
- Need to involve residents of the community, not just community providers.
- Systems issue- this is not just a CJ issue but is a community/county issue. There needs to be a holistic approach and training around utilizing this approach would be very helpful. To help this process- important to keep the community involved to remind them of this holistic approach.

Question #4: Describe your knowledge and/or understanding of the research or evidence-based practices in changing criminal behavior.

The majority of the participants knew little of the research or evidence-based practices and provided few concrete examples. There was, however an overall interest and desire to provide the best services possible to their clients.

- Participants would like education around what the CCP is and does. The CCP should also be interested in understanding the information the agencies collect to better inform their referrals.
- There is more knowledge in the juvenile system than in the adult.
- There are pockets of providers trying to develop EBP.

- There is no real coalition or agency leading the way for community based organizations to learn and utilize EBP.
- Some knowledge of cognitive-behavioral programs.
- Need to find positive reinforcements to motivate the offender for “good” behaviors.
- Punishment is the negative enforcer- if taking away the punishment need to replace it with something else. Need to teach clients coping skills and positive reinforcement.
- Functional family therapy as a way to engage partners in the community.
- EBP is a huge gap for the realignment population (adult). Unprepared in terms of services for this population. Lack of understanding around criminogenic needs, what works to treat offenders. The approach is very supervision heavy. This is a new chapter.
- Lack of building blocks for EBP. Unable to think of agency that is looking at EBP for offenders.
- Behavioral health has had several years of adopting EBP and is now utilizing those programs. They are the most prepared to provide training around this however is this correct agency to provide this is a different question.
- There are pockets of providers who are trying to develop EBP.
- There has been a bit of struggle between behavioral health and the community and the way services are being implemented.

Question #5: What gaps in services exist for offenders in Ventura County?

Participants identified the following as gaps in services available for offenders:

- Affordable housing
- Employment/services
- System navigation skills
- Basic life skills
- Transitional living
- Reentry planning
- Eligibility issues related to criminal history
- Lack of public transportation
- Wait lists for programs
- Funding for treatment
- Homeless and transitional shelters
- CCP should have a conference for agencies that work with realignment population so there is education among the providers. The conference would need a good networker- someone who is open minded, already aware of some of the services.
- How to navigate the system- life skills. How to locate services such as housing, transportation, etc.
- Subsidized employment is important for offenders reentering community (employers essentially “test-driving” the individual). Program is no longer in place.
- Better coordination between local law enforcement and jail. (IDs are destroyed if not picked up within a certain amount of time but the person is in custody).
- Access to detox programs



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