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CHARLESTON COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL

# MIDYEAR REPORT 2019

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Criminal justice is not the easiest topic on which to engage people. Most of us would like to avoid the topic just as we would like to remain outside of the system itself! And those of us who have been affected, either due to victimization or loved ones having been arrested or incarcerated, are often reluctant to talk about it much, and certainly not publicly. Other people might not understand.

The efforts of Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) to begin community discussions on the local criminal justice system have been an attempt to overcome these barriers. Those unfamiliar with the system have been given a primer: some history, some facts, the results of ongoing research, an idea of what those working in criminal justice would like to change. Those familiar with the system through incarceration have been given a forum: a way to share their hard-earned (and sometimes shocking) experiences so that, as some speakers have put it, they can “at least help people in the future.” And, those concerned about racial equity in the criminal justice system came together, discussed the challenges and expressed strong desires to do more.

It’s been wonderful to see the discussions happen, to see our community do what we expect it to when our expectations are highest: talk and negotiate and explain to each other. We hope that the continuing discussion groups this fall, which are located throughout the Charleston area and focused on generating suggestions for positive change, will have the impact we think they should. The summer informational meetings resulted in citizens knowing more and caring more about our criminal justice system. These upcoming meetings might result in even more than that, as it seems clear that leaders in criminal justice are listening.



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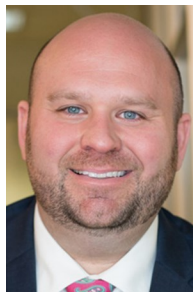


Representatives voice the diverse needs and concerns of Charleston County residents within the CJCC. Community segments represented include:

- Faith Community
- Nonprofit Community
- Healthcare Community
- Business Community
- Defense Bar Community
- Crime Survivor Community
- Previously Incarcerated Community
- Civil Rights Community
- Hispanic Community
- Graduate Program Community in related fields of study
- Community-at-Large
- Designated liaison from any other entity deemed appropriate by the Executive Committee



**DOT SCOTT**  
*President*  
NAACP Charleston Chapter



**IAN SCOTT**  
*SVP Government Affairs*  
Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce



**KEITH SMALLS**  
*Electrical*  
H.R. Allen

**LUCIANO SOTO, JR.**  
*Pastor*  
El Lugar de Su Gloria



**SANDRA STEADMAN**  
*Resource Development Director*  
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**LAUREN E. WILLIAMS**  
*Partner*  
Williams & Walsh, LLC



# ABOUT THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL (CJCC)

## MISSION

The mission of the CJCC is to assist in making sustainable, data-driven improvements to Charleston County's criminal justice system (CJS) and thereby improve public safety and community well-being. The CJCC strives to achieve a local CJS that improves public safety, upholds justice, and cost-effectively uses taxpayer dollars.

## OBJECTIVES

- Improve data systems for more efficient and effective data sharing and analysis
- Ensure similarly situated individuals are treated consistently and work to reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and/or disparity (REDD) in the CJS
- Enhance capacity to address root causes of behaviors that bring people into the CJS and reduce the likelihood of repeat offending
- Expand options of law enforcement to inform discretionary decisions to use jail on low-level charges and improve police and community relations
- Enhance the availability of effective treatment options in the community
- Reform the management of pretrial populations to uphold justice, institute mechanisms to sort high risk from low risk, and prioritize jail use accordingly
- Improve the timeliness of case processing in General Sessions, including assignment of counsel, receipt of discovery, and court scheduling practices

## MEMBERSHIP

- Charleston County Council
- Charleston County Sheriff's Office
- Charleston Police Department
- North Charleston Police Department
- Ninth Circuit Defender
- Ninth Circuit Solicitor
- Charleston County Clerk of Court
- Judiciary, including Circuit, Specialty, Magistrate and Municipal Court Leadership
- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Carolina (ex-officio)
- Charleston Center
- Charleston Dorchester Mental health Center
- Probation, Parole and Pardon Services
- Victim Advocacy
- Veterans Justice Outreach (Veterans Affairs)
- American Civil Liberties Union
- Twelve diverse community representatives

In 2015, the CJCC formed and conducted an extensive and innovative analysis of the CJS, reviewed relevant research, and created an ambitious plan. In 2016, the CJCC secured funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) to implement the plan, grew in size and capacity, and began to make progress in several areas. The CJCC has actively advanced these efforts in the years since through the work of diverse implementation teams with related expertise. As each of these strategies advances, the CJCC continues to learn, grow and adapt to achieve its mission.

In October of 2018, the Charleston County CJCC was one of 13 sites from across the country selected for additional funding from the SJC based on the promise and progress of work to date, bringing the total SJC investment in Charleston to \$4.95 million from 2015 to 2020. The CJCC continues to utilize this funding to advance local criminal justice system improvements and safely reduce Charleston County's jail population.

The CJCC has accomplished several notable milestones to date including:

- Built a robust data warehouse combining data from across the criminal justice system to provide ongoing analysis and identification of areas for improvement;
- Supported law enforcement's use of jail alternatives, such as citation-and-release for individuals charged with five, low-level non-violent crimes, including simple possession of marijuana, open container, misdemeanor shoplifting, trespassing, and public intoxication;
- Collaborated with multiple local agencies to reopen the Tri-county Crisis Stabilization Center with a triage line for law enforcement. The center provides an immediate connection to treatment for those living with mental illness, substance use disorders, and/or homelessness rather than placing them in jail or costly emergency departments;
- Started providing text message reminders to defendants with upcoming court appearances to help improve the use of valuable court time and reduce bench warrants for missing court;
- Implemented a pretrial services report to inform bond-setting judges and provide better information regarding the risks of re-arrest and/or failing to appear;
- Accelerated key aspects of case processing with the implementation of cost-effective technology for more efficient discovery; improved the timeliness of assignment of prosecution and defense counsel; and implemented the first-ever initiation of public defender representation in Centralized Bond Court for poor defendants that qualify;
- Provided funding for personnel to support implementation of the Circuit Court led docket management;
- Issued several comprehensive reports to inform and update the community about the local criminal justice system, progress to-date, and areas for further improvement.
- Launched an expanded community engagement effort to ensure an inclusive process in forming the CJCC's next set of goals.



*May 22, 2019— CJCC Monthly Meeting*



## 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2015, the CJCC developed its initial plan based upon an innovative and exhaustive data-guided review of the local CJS and best practices in the field. The CJCC began implementing the plan in 2016 with funding support from the SJC. In the years since, the CJCC grew data capacity to track trends, identify areas in need of improvement and made the data readily available in CJCC reports and publications. Data indicates the local CJS experienced fewer arrests, greater uses of diversion from jail and deflection to treatment when possible, more informed bond setting, and improved front-end efficiencies in the time it takes to bring cases to justice since development of the last strategic plan. In addition, the local jail population was reduced by over 20%. Findings to-date also indicate a compelling need to further improve pretrial justice, lower recidivism and advance efforts to reduce the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in the local CJS.

The CJCC's next strategic plan will build on progress to-date and identify further areas for improvement. Data findings, regularly published in reports, and related best practices in the field will inform the foundation of the plan. The CJCC is also working to raise awareness of its efforts within the Charleston community and better understand community priorities in improving our local justice system. Collectively, data findings and community priorities will inform development of the next strategic plan and sharpen its focus in the areas that need the most attention.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement has always been a core aspect of the CJCC's efforts. For example, the inaugural group of community representatives heavily influenced the initial strategic plan. Over the last few years, the CJCC utilized its limited resources to grow community engagement through community representatives (assigned through annual calls for applications), open meetings, technology (website and social media), partnerships (e.g., Illumination Project), and various events (e.g., listening sessions, speeches, and conferences).



*February 12, 2019— Concerned Citizens of John's Island*

Community engagement is also vital to the CJCC's efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparity (REDD) in the local criminal justice system. The CJCC's 2018 Midyear report explored the array of racial and ethnic disproportionalities that exist locally and nationally and included in-depth analysis for a variety of local REDD trends in the local CJS (i.e., bookings, bonds, CJCC related strategies and enhanced analysis by gender and age). The report identified the need for collaborative community and criminal justice system (CJS) problem solving to address the complexities and challenges of REDD. It also noted several recommended best practices for reducing REDD in local jails already in practice here in Charleston. In addition, the report laid out a series of next steps in REDD reduction which included expanding community engagement.



## COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE COALITION

The CJCC also recognized a need to more effectively engage the community in addressing our most pervasive and long-standing safety and justice challenges. In 2019, the CJCC set forth to engage with 1,000 community members through a series of events, surveys, and recurring roundtable dialogue sessions. The goal is to identify community priorities for improving our local justice system to be incorporated into the development of the CJCC's next three-year strategic plan in 2020.

The comprehensive community engagement effort, led by a CJCC community representative coalition with technical assistance from Everyday Democracy and CJCC staff, includes three distinct phases known as the "Dialogue to Change" process: Organize, Dialogue and Action.

The purpose of the Organize phase is to build the infrastructure for outreach and meaningful engagement. During the Organize phase, the core, or initial, coalition of CJCC community representatives worked together with CJCC staff to develop the comprehensive community engagement plan. This plan included a project timeline, shared goals, engagement strategies and event planning. They met regularly, learned about local criminal justice system trends, and applied principles for inclusive engagement to the development of the comprehensive community engagement plan. For example, they identified community segments not yet engaged in the discussion and strategized how to include them. This phase also included survey development, logistical coordination, and preparations for community engagement events.

In the next phase, Dialogue, community concerns surrounding safety and justice are collected. In the Dialogue phase, coalition members grow to include other diverse members of the community, including local community leaders, grassroots leaders, students, parents and community members that participate in CJCC community engagement activities. There have been four large events with a cumulative attendance of approximately 460 participants through August 2019. There will also be a month of concurrent facilitator-led roundtables in various locations across the county, starting in September of 2019. The roundtables provide community members a forum to come together weekly and have in-depth discussions on issues of safety and justice. This phase also includes efforts to reach

individuals unable to attend CJCC events with surveys available on the [CJCC website](#) and/or in paper surveys where necessary.

The Action phase will occur at the conclusion of the Dialogue phase. This phase includes a culminating community action forum with participants from the large and roundtable events. During the forum, coalition members will review ideas developed in the Dialogue phase. Ultimately, the results of the action forum will identify community priorities that the CJCC will use in the development of the 2020 strategic plan.



*April 22, 2019— Community Representative Meeting*

## LARGE EVENTS

Through August 2019, there have been four large events, including one preparatory event in the winter that helped to shape the planning and development for the three events in the Summer Event Series.

### Okra Soup

The CJCC collaborated with the Charleston Illumination Project, Episcopal-AME Tuesday Book Study and Okra Soup: Unite! for a community engagement event known as Okra Soup. There were approximately 150 participants. The subject of the evening was criminal justice reform with a particular emphasis on the [CJCC 2018 Midyear Report: Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality and/or Disparity in Charleston County's Criminal Justice](#)



January 29, 2019— Grace Episcopal Church

[System](#) (report infographic). The event was led by Rev. Dr. Kylon Middleton of Mt. Zion AME and featured four speakers: Ninth Circuit Solicitor Scarlett Wilson, City of Charleston Chief of Police Luther Reynolds, Charleston Branch President of the NAACP Dot Scott and CJCC Project Director Kristy Danford.

The evening included presentations as well as facilitated table and large group discussions on race and ethnicity in the local criminal justice system. Assigned facilitators led the table discussions using provided questions to include: 1) What are your top concerns about the role of race and ethnicity in the criminal justice system and who would you look to for addressing them? 2) What can the CJCC do to further examine and/or address the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in the CJS? 3) What can the community do to further examine and/or address the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in the CJS?

**OKRA SOUP SUPPER**  
**TUES. JAN 29, 5:00 PM**

Join local leaders in discussing Criminal Justice Reform! Featured speakers include:


- ❖ Ninth Circuit Solicitor – Scarlett Wilson
- ❖ City of Charleston Chief of Police – Luther Reynolds
- ❖ Charleston Branch President of the NAACP – Dot Scott
- ❖ Project Director for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council – Kristy Danford

A word on Okra Soup's significance: "Okra soup, as it spans continents and centuries, is about endurance and strength and the sharing of one's heart and soul – even facilitating understanding, unity, and healing – in a constantly changing and at-times confusing world.

A \$5 donation for the Okra Soup supper is welcome!

To register please email Bunny Martin at [bmartin@gracesc.org](mailto:bmartin@gracesc.org) or call 843-723-4575

*"A pot of okra soup is not a melting pot. It is a retaining pot. A contributing pot. A mutually enhancing pot."*



Sponsored by:

Charleston Illumination Project

Episcopal-AME Tuesday Book Study

Okra Soup: Unite!

HOSTED BY:

Mt. Zion AME & Grace Church Cathedral

LOCATION:

98 Wentworth Street

## SUMMER EVENT SERIES

The Summer Event Series included three distinct events rooted in the most challenging areas for improvement: pretrial justice, reentry and recidivism and the over representation of racial and ethnic minorities in the local justice system. During each event, participants were encouraged to stay engaged, recruit others to come to subsequent events, and participate in shaping the development of the CJCC's next strategic plan.

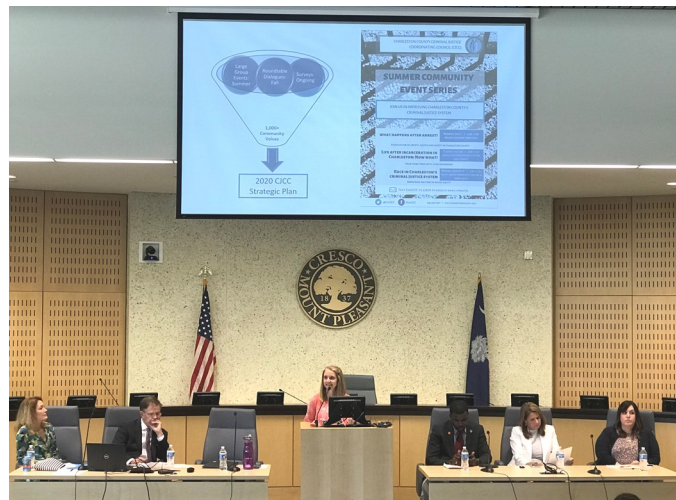
The series included information on the subject matter, various forms of participant engagement and structured feedback gathered through surveys and note taking, as well as question and answer segments. Local media covered each event; links to coverage can be found on the CJCC website.



### What Happens After Arrest: A Discussion of Liberty, Justice and Safety

This event kicked off the Summer Event Series and dove into matters of pretrial justice. The objective for the evening was for attendees to leave with a stronger understanding of pretrial foundations, challenges and improvement efforts, inclusive of bonding practices, pretrial detention, pretrial outcomes (i.e., flight or re-arrest while the case is pending), and time to disposition. The event, moderated by Deputy Chief Stan Gragg of the Mount Pleasant Police Department, featured six speakers: CJCC Project Director Kristy Danford, Supreme Court Justice George C. James Jr., CJCC System Utilization Manager Christina Parnall, State Representative JA Moore of House District 115, Ninth Circuit Solicitor Scarlett Wilson and Charleston County Chief Public Defender Meghan Ehrlich. There were approximately 65 participants.

Speakers provided an overview of pretrial justice data findings for Charleston County and the legal foundations of pretrial justice in the United States and South Carolina. Discussions include the roles of judges, defense and prosecution in pretrial justice as well as improvements underway in Charleston County. In addition, discussion included a legislator's perspective on improvements in the state's criminal justice system. Particular points of emphasis included the presumption of innocence and prohibition of excessive bail, impacts of pretrial detention, pretrial outcomes, access to representation, and timelier case processing. For more information on the state of pretrial justice in Charleston County, please see the pretrial and case processing sections, pages 20 to 39, of the [CJCC 2018 Annual Report](#).



July 1, 2019— Mount Pleasant Town Hall



## Life after Incarceration in Charleston: Now What?

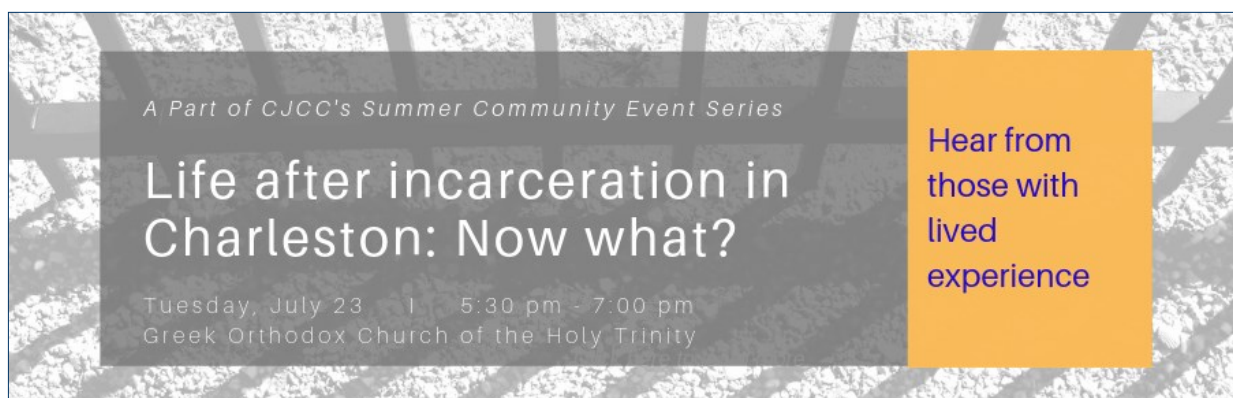


July 23, 2019— Greek Orthodox Church of The Holy Trinity

The CJCC collaborated with the Turning Leaf Project and Fresh Start Ministries to have community conversation about the challenges one faces when re-entering the community from incarceration. Data about reentry and recidivism scrolled across the screen as participants settled in for the evening. CJCC Community Representative for the formerly incarcerated, Keith Smalls, led the night. The event also included brief remarks by Charleston Police Chief Luther Reynolds and CJCC Project Director Kristy Danford noting the importance of reentry

and recidivism reduction for public safety. There were approximately 130 participants.

Throughout the night, eight formerly incarcerated speakers shared their experiences with reentry, durations of their incarceration, and what they are doing now. The individuals ranged in their time since reentry, some years past the initial struggles of reentry and others in the midst of them. The formerly incarcerated individuals moved from table to table every ten minutes to share their stories and answer questions from participants. Guiding questions included 1) What sticks with you about the time between initial arrest and when you went to court? What is/was your biggest hurdle(s) coming out of the criminal justice system? 3) What kind of supports do/did you have? What is/was missing? Key points discussed included the importance of having a plan for reentry and the need for supports in place upon reentry. For example, housing and a way to make a living legally as well as having the support of a role model or mentor. Speakers also emphasized the amount of hard work required to change risky thought patterns, behaviors, people and places in their lives.





## Race in Charleston's Criminal Justice System: Unpacking Matters of Racial Equity

The objective for this event was for participants to leave with a greater understanding of how racial and ethnic disproportionality and/or disparity (REDD) data connects to aspects of life in Charleston County, and discuss past progress and future steps to improve racial equity in the local justice system. The event, led by the Executive Director of the YWCA LaVanda Brown, featured four speakers. North Charleston Police Chief Reggie Burgess, Charleston Police Chief Luther Reynolds, LaTisha Vaughn of Tri-County Cradle to Career and Ninth Circuit Solicitor Scarlett Wilson. CJCC Director Kristy Danford also made brief remarks about the purpose of the event and expanded community engagement effort to shape the CJCC's 2020 strategic plan. There were approximately 115 participants.



August 12, 2019— Felix C. Davis Community Center

The event included large and small group discussions. The panelists provided historical context to the overrepresentation of racial minorities in the justice system drawing on information contained in a series of related reports, discussed related efforts underway in the local justice system and encouraged community engagement in shaping the next steps. Guiding questions at the individual tables included: 1) Who are you and where did you grow up? 2) What was your first, if any, experience with the criminal justice system? 3) Why did you come here today? 4) What are your hopes or suggested actions for improving racial equity in our criminal justice system?

Discussions throughout the night noted the importance of history and the need to be sensitive to past issues when addressing current challenges. Participants reflected upon widespread interactions with the criminal justice system and various perspectives on those interactions. Law enforcement and prosecution also noted strides made to increase racial equity in the work they do, and a desire to do more. In addition, there was discussion about the need to continue analysis, increase engagement of minorities, and foster more preventative efforts in related areas such as education that could limit the need for involvement in the justice system.

The reports referenced included:

The [CJCC's 2018 Midyear Report: Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality and/or Disparity in Charleston County's Criminal Justice System](#);

[The State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina 2000 – 2015](#) by the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture

The [Minimally Adequate series](#) by the Post and Courier

## SUMMER EVENT SERIES SURVEY RESULTS

There were 102 event surveys completed throughout the Summer Event Series. Of those who completed the survey:

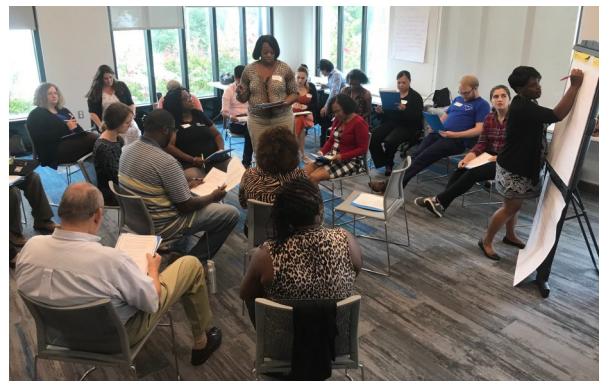
- 93% rated their likelihood of attending a subsequent event as “Very High” or “High.”
- 47% of survey participants rated their knowledge of the event topic as “Low” or “Moderate” prior to the events. Following the events, this number fell to 27% with no one rating their knowledge as “Low.”

## NEXT STEPS

Following the Summer Event Series, the CJCC is hosting a series of facilitated roundtable dialogues starting in September of 2019 that will conclude in October. Then, the culminating action forum will occur before the end of the calendar year, incorporating feedback from all phases of the community engagement effort. The results of the action forum will inform the development of the CJCC’s 2020 strategic plan.



The poster features the CJCC logo at the top, which is a circular seal with a figure holding a scale and the text 'CHARLESTON COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL'. Below the logo, the text reads: **BE HEARD**, **GET INVOLVED IN IMPROVING YOUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**. It then states: 'The CJCC is seeking community members to participate in roundtable dialogues held throughout Charleston County starting the week of September 16th. Small groups will meet weekly for in-depth dialogue about safety and justice.' It continues: 'Feedback and key themes identified during these sessions will be used in shaping future CJCC goals.' The call to action is: **RESERVE YOUR SPOT:**, followed by the URL <http://bit.ly/countmein2019> or call (843) 529-7307. It also notes 'Registration closes September 15th'. At the bottom, it says 'Text ChsCJCC to 22828 to receive email updates' and includes social media handles for @chscc and /chscc.



*August 26, 2019— Facilitator Dialogue training lead by Everyday Democracy*



This report was created with the support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of the Safety and Justice Challenge, which seeks to reduce over-incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. Core to the Challenge is a competition designed to support efforts to improve local criminal justice systems across the country that are working to safely reduce over-reliance on jails, with a particular focus on addressing disproportionate impact on low-income individuals and communities of color.



Supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation



