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**Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to implement strategies to improve criminal justice system**  
*CJCC releases baseline findings and three year transformation plan*

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Charleston, S.C. – The [Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council \(CJCC\)](#) has developed six bold, credible and feasible strategies to transform the local criminal justice system over the next three years.

In the last several months, the CJCC performed a massive data analysis, through the collaboration and partnership of its members and community representatives. A \$150,000 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation [Safety and Justice Challenge](#) grant, awarded in May 2015, assisted in this effort and provided technical assistance by experts from the Justice Management Institute.

The data analysis identified jail use in Charleston is most frequently driven by bookings for low level charges, lengths of stay pending trial, and frequent and chronic offenders. The analysis also highlighted areas to reduce the overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in the local justice system. The findings pinpointed critical opportunities to assist in improving community relationships, consistency in decisions across similarly situated individuals, efforts to reduce repeat offending, and overall effectiveness and efficiency across the local criminal justice system.

Six core strategies will be implemented over the next three years. The strategies include:

- Implementing a risk assessment instrument for law enforcement officers enabling them to have a uniform approach during decisions to arrest.
- Identify and create appropriate real-time alternatives to jail for individuals presenting substance use, mental health, medical and/or social issues.
- Launch an automated court date reminder system to reduce the need for criminal bench warrants.
- Enhance the bond setting process to be more risk-based and provide bond setting judges comprehensive information about defendants.
- Significantly reduce the time it takes for General Sessions cases to be resolved.

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- Create a centralized database where all agencies can share information and store data used for study and implementation of future improvements and projects.

“The pledge of the CJCC to bring key people, agencies, and communities together to strategize ways to make significant impacts to the criminal justice system is exciting,” said Dr. Chanda Brown, Director of Charleston Center and CJCC Co-Vice Chair. “As a group, we know we cannot continue to consciously operate under the current system. We are dedicated to implementing meaningful changes that are both comprehensive and sustainable. These changes have to occur at the system level, the community level and at the individual level.”

The transformation plan was part of the CJCC’s application for the highly coveted phase two Safety and Justice Challenge grant. If awarded, the grant could fund salaries, training, technical assistance and equipment to support implementation efforts. The announcement of phase two grant recipients is expected in April. The CJCC remains committed to implementation of these strategies no matter the outcome of the grant. In the interim, the CJCC has already started implementation efforts and will explore alternative funding sources and/or modify the plan if needed within available resources.

“I never thought we would have the opportunity to improve our local criminal justice system to this extent. This effort is allowing us to improve our local criminal justice system to a degree we could not have imagined before,” said Charleston County Sheriff’s Office Assistant Sheriff and CJCC Chair Mitch Lucas.

For more information on the CJCC and its transformation plan, visit <http://cjcc.charlestoncounty.org>.