

2020 Nomination for the Central Region CJAB Best Practices Award (Centre County, PA)

I hereby nominate Centre County for the 2020 CJAB Best Practices Award.

The Centre County Criminal Justice Advisory Board's (CJAB) was formed in 1999. Its mission is to provide an ongoing communication and collaboration among stakeholders in their County to evaluate, analyze, plan, and recommend ideas to improve the Criminal Justice System of Centre County and its citizens. The CJAB Board only makes suggestions and recommendations to elected officials, the Courts and criminal justice agencies in regard to juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. The current chair of the Centre County CJAB is Judge Brian Marshall. Center County's CJAB has focused on their community's opioid epidemic as well as other substance abuse issues throughout their county.

One way they have accomplished their tasks of combating opioid addiction and substance abuse is with the Centre County HOPE Initiative. This initiative is made up of various community agencies working together to try and eliminate substance abuse and address the opiate epidemic and its overdoses. The HOPE Initiative and its members work to make this a reality through community outreach, education as well as making sure that sufficient treatment and recovery options are available to their community.

The Centre County Criminal Justice CJAB also has a strong Reentry Coalition that was formed in 2012, this Coalition is a subcommittee of the CJAB. This coalition seeks to enhance the return of individuals to the community and help them to reintegrate into society, hopefully reducing recidivism.

Another program developed through CJAB collaboration, is the Centre County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT). In 2010, the CIT was established and since then over 350 members have been trained. Trainings take place twice a year for law enforcement officers, sheriff's deputies, correction officers, probation/parole officers, 911 telecommunicators, mental health professionals, emergency medical services staff, and other related first responders. The 40-hour comprehensive training emphasizes mental health-related topics, crisis resolution skills and de-escalation training, and access to community-based services. The format of the training consists of lectures, on-site visitation and exposure to several mental health facilities, intensive interactions with individuals with a mental illness, and scenario-based de-escalation skill training.

In 2019, the Centre County Board of Commissioners signed a resolution in support of the Stepping Up Initiative which is a national initiative to reduce the number of individuals with mental illnesses in jails/prisons. A Stepping Up work group was formed in Centre County to try and develop a localized action plan that can hopefully help achieve their goal of not incarcerating offenders with mental illness who would be perhaps better suited for treatment through the appropriate supervision by the Court or at a minimum having the Court address the issue of criminal charges and then recommending treatment for the individual; although this initiative is still evolving in counties to best suite their individual needs.

Centre County also has two specialty courts a Drug Court and a DUI Court. The Centre County Adult Drug Court is a specialty treatment court targeting nonviolent individuals having criminal offenses that are drug related and/or driven by substance use disorders.

The Centre County DUI Court is a specialty court for repeat DUI offenders. It is a post plea/post-conviction court where offenders are sentenced to a five year term of Intermediate Punishment beginning with a period of Restrictive Intermediate Punishment.

Due to Centre County's CJAB being so active in adopting treatment programs and initiatives in their county which is proving successful, I feel it necessary that they be recognized for their strong, focused efforts.