

Safety and Crime Reduction Commission

Documentation Compilation Subcommittee

Summary of the subcommittee work of the 2018-19 Task Force on Safety and Crime Reduction

The symbol ► indicates recommendations for next steps.

● Subcommittee on Workforce Training

After developing vision and mission statements, the subcommittee identified the ZIP codes where unemployment is the highest and reviewed many of the opportunities for workforce training available. Through discussions with training providers, the subcommittee identified several barriers that keep people from being able to get training. The barriers most often cited:

- Transportation
- Child care
- Direct and indirect costs, such as tuition and child care
- Lack of academic and employability skills
- Lack of trust in the system
- Lack of awareness of workforce training programs
- Criminal backgrounds
- Access to technology

The subcommittee developed and administered a survey to a small sample of young adults to help understand needs of the target population.

The Workforce Training subcommittee worked with the Business Partnerships and Community Engagement subcommittees to develop action steps to lower unemployment and improve living standards.

Action steps will require partnerships among businesses, educational institutions, community residents and institutions and government agencies.

► Action steps under consideration by the subcommittees:

- **Develop flowcharts and pathways to employment that include and may not be limited to:**
 - 1. GED or other options for people who did not graduate from high school to earn a diploma. Literacy and a diploma or GED are necessary for training opportunities**
 - 2. Employability skills training**
 - 3. Job training with a focus on where jobs are now and where they will be in the future**
 - 4. Interview skill training**
 - 5. Interview opportunities**
 - 6. Case management follow up**

- **Implement a community-based and community-led awareness campaign to inform residents about the opportunities available for employment and training**
- **Develop the concept of an entity to coordinate the work and be accountable for outcomes.**
- **Develop a strategic plan with short- and long-term goals and measurable objectives to drastically reduce unemployment in the areas where unemployment is the highest, improve the standard of living for residents of those communities and reduce crime and violence.**

• Subcommittee on Community Engagement

The staff could not resurrect this subcommittee report, so the following is from Chairman Mark Griffin’s May 6, 2019, report to Council President Aaron Bowman.

The Community Engagement Subcommittee was created to (a) identify community action groups, (b) develop ways to organize and empower communities and neighborhood groups, (c) provide avenues for education and advocacy, and (d) to help neighborhood groups to understand that they are the first line of defense to reducing crime and increasing community safety.

The subcommittee is also responsible for developing an inventory of existing programs that are designed to promote and support community engagement. The subcommittee strongly believes that the principles stated within the Neighborhood Bill of Rights (“the Rights”) should be renewed, revised and reaffirmed to improve community engagement with its local government. Consideration should be given to better implement and publicize the Rights so that all citizens will be fully aware of their ability to access government, thereby increasing trust between our citizenry and our government.

The subcommittee has started the process of preparing an inventory of neighborhood associations and groups, as well as assessing how our various communities interact with city government to ensure proper services are provided.

► **The commission should ask the subcommittee for its recommendations moving forward.**

• Subcommittee on Mentoring

The subcommittee developed a detailed proposal for a City-Wide Mentoring Office to include the hiring of a director and two case managers responsible for monitoring and ensuring that existing programs and activities throughout Jacksonville/Northeast Florida are adequately available. The mission would be to leverage the combined resources of local mentoring programs, while retaining their identity and ensuring the accountability of program activities

The plan of action:

- Immediately release funds to support City-Wide Mentoring
- Hire a Director for City-Wide Mentoring/Liaison to the Mayor and two case managers to implement the citywide mentoring plan.

- Issue a press release to introduce the City-Wide Mentoring Office, housed with Kids Hope Alliance with a reporting line to the Office of the Mayor
- Recruit mentors
- Aid the City-Wide Mentoring Office to implement the mentoring plan, as a measure/resource to reduce youth/juvenile crimes serving ages 10-18. The plan would include a special program assisting ages 19-25, juvenile offenders and Black Male Initiative Programs (STEP Program) and would establish a specialized program for juvenile offenders.
- Use Program Development Funds to begin providing activities/ programs throughout Jacksonville
- Coordinate City-Wide Annual Mentoring Recognition annually
- Provide support for or allow the development of partnerships with local businesses to serve as advisory council members, aiding in the mission to provide every child in enrolled into Duval County Schools a certified mentor
- Focus on an inventory of existing programs, particularly programs involving business and community volunteers and programs that focus on our most needy populations. The subcommittee report included a detailed proposed budget and job descriptions.

► **The task force should discuss the subcommittee’s recommendation and, if approved, submit the plan to the City Council.**

● Subcommittee on Education and Youth Development

In addition to supporting programs that focus on the needs of “at hope” young children, the city needs to expand and have focused programs for middle and high school aged students. Thus, the strategy is two-fold: (1) Prevention through preparing our youngest children to be successful and avoid criminal activity. (2) Better focus on teenagers who may be exposed to criminal activity and provide them constructive, positive outlets and resources.

The City of Jacksonville has for many years devoted millions of dollars to after-school and summer camp programs for children with, most recently, major emphasis on children from the areas most affected by crime. However, historically, there has not been a strategic approach to deliverables in out-of-school programming so as to impact factors that are relevant to criminal activity.

Since a primary factor associated with crime, incarceration and dependency is literacy and since the data shows a majority of elementary students in the most affected communities do not read on grade and, in most instances, do not have the reading skills to learn to their full potential, then all city-funded out-of-school programs should include a high quality, evidence based literacy and character development component with adequate staff training and oversight to assure fidelity of implementation at each and every site. (Concomitant with the seemingly intractable crime problem, DCPS data for the last decades shows there has been a consistently low literacy achievement rate of elementary students in these areas.)

Data now available through a pilot Jax Journey summer camp literacy program demonstrates substantial benefit to participating children as compared to children in traditional

summer camps. Particularly encouraging, the data also shows a high rate of attendance in the literacy enrichment camps.

The principal source of funding for youth programs has primarily been through the Children's Commission, succeeded now by Kids Hope Alliance. Historically, however, most youth funding focused on younger children, and there was relatively little funding for middle school and high school age youth. (To the extent it received funding for this age group, the Jacksonville Journey primarily provided funds for juvenile delinquency and diversion programs). Historical explanations for the dearth of teen programs usually focused on perceived lack of interest by teens and other after school and summer activities (sports, clubs, dating, etc.) which resulted in poor attendance or participation in traditionally offered programs. However, it is these middle school and high school students who are most at risk to be influenced by gangs and negative peer pressure and are in need of constructive outlets for their time and interests.

The subcommittee planned meetings in the most affected communities to talk with teenagers to obtain their input and ideas for programs that would be attractive and beneficial. The Subcommittee will also look to other cities who may have better addressed this issue.

To date, however, it seems clear that this age group would be well served by more workforce opportunities, both after school and in the summer, as well as programs designed to provide workforce development and training. This age group may also benefit from more focused and comprehensive mentoring. Regardless of the "difficulty" in reaching this age group, it is imperative that their needs be attended to and new focus directed to identifying and implementing programming that will be attractive and beneficial to our "at hope" teenage population.

► **The commission should take a strategic approach to out-of-school programs, especially emphasizing literacy.**

The most affected communities should be consulted for their input and ideas, particularly regarding teenagers. Best practices elsewhere should be sought.

For older youth, there needs to be more employment and training opportunities and mentoring. This should be considered by the relevant commission subcommittees.

Considering the city's past episodic engagement and funding through the Jacksonville Children's Commission and the Jacksonville Journey, the necessary level of long-term commitment and funding must be secured to make programs effective and funding guaranteed year-to-year so as to permit maximum effectiveness and maintain gains that are made.

In addition, there needs to be a substantial fund for new and innovative programs to supplement and augment those that have previously been determined to be of significant value.

● Subcommittee on Re-Entry and Juvenile Justice

The subcommittee's interim report contained details and sources on four major issues:

Prison rehabilitation. The Florida Department of Corrections offers very little opportunity for education or vocational training for inmates. Of the 96,000 inmates in Florida in 2017-18, only 16,630 participated in academic education programs, almost half in mandatory literacy programs. Another 6,328 took career/technical classes. Fewer than one-fourth earned GEDs, diplomas or vocational certificates. The DOC spent an average of \$59.57 per day to support the average prisoner, and only \$1.50 was invested in "education services."

RAND has found that inmates who participate in prison education programs have a 43% lower recidivism rate than those who do not. The Florida Smart Justice Alliance: "The warehousing of inmates has created a generation of prisoners whose time behind bars has only taught them how to be better criminals."

The subcommittee report said, if prisons were truly correctional, they would take advantage of their captive audience and apply, or at least offer, treatment to change the anti-social behavior through counseling, education and vocational training to prepare the inmates for reentry into their communities.

► **This is a state-level issue, but with profound impact on local crime rates. The commission can recommend that the city's leadership and legislative delegation push for comprehensive education and training programs in prison. Florida Tax Watch made such a recommendation in 2016.**

How prisoners are released. There are stark differences in how prisoners are released from the Duval County jail and state and federal prisons. Aside from a substance abuse treatment program, jail inmates are simply released downtown, with no money and no plan or preparation, other than referrals to some community-based programs or volunteers. State prisoners generally are released with \$50 and a bus ticket to the nearest location in the county of release. However, inmates who say they are returning to Northeast Florida are transferred to the Baker Re-Entry Center in Sanderson within nine months of release. There, they are helped to get renewed driver's licenses and create release plans. Then they taken directly to the Jacksonville Re-Entry Center (JREC), where they are connected to JREC's range of services. Federal prisoners are almost always released to a federal halfway house.

JREC is the central agency for re-entry of inmates from state and local jails. In 2013, Florida Tax Watch's Center for Smart Justice issued a statewide report on the impact of re-entry programs on recidivism and cited JREC as one of two Florida models. In addition to its own programs, which include wraparound services, JREC refers to other local providers.

The subcommittee heard that JREC's biggest challenges and barriers to more success are: funding and funding consistency; ensuring no incoming client is left alone, not even for a single day; more emphasis on workforce skills; creating support systems for those who have none; overloaded probation officers and making incoming clients aware of available resources.

What would help, the subcommittee heard, would be: incentives to join programs immediately on re-entry, more mentoring, a mental health facility, more and better training for trades and entrepreneurship and a facility to keep people for up to a year as they maneuver through the traps.

► **The commission should fully examine JREC as the community’s key resource for facilitating inmate re-entry from both state prisons and the Duval County jails to ensure that it is adequately funded and functioning.**

Juvenile justice. In a 2018 report, the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform urged a comprehensive rethinking of the entire juvenile-justice system and offered a set of strategies.

For residentially committed youth, the subcommittee noted stage regulations require transition services starting immediately with a treatment team process to help offenders overcome common obstacles, such as finding homes and jobs and continuing their education.

The subcommittee’s consideration of Duval County’s juvenile justice awaited the report of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) in June 2019.

► **The commission should examine the JJAC recommendations in light of the national and state standards above and assess implementation, along with needs for further resources and structure.**

Children’s services council. A 1986 Florida statute allows the voters of any county to create a special taxing district for children’s services and levy a tax of up to 50 cents per \$1,000 of property tax value. So far, eight counties have created such districts.

Studies have shown that, on average, a \$1 investment in quality early care and education provides between \$4 to \$8 in reduced costs associated with such social outcomes as lower rates of grade retention, special education placement, adolescent pregnancy, drug use, and criminal activity.

In 1990, Duval County came very close to approving a referendum creating a tax to support a children’s trust fund. The vote was so close the outcome was not known until all absentee votes were counted.

A trust fund could provide adequate and consistent funding for the Kids Hope Alliance and other programs aimed at helping stay away from crime and build successful lives.

► **The commission should consider recommending such an initiative.**

● **Subcommittee on Business Partnerships**

The task force as a whole saw the need for a trust fund so the City of Jacksonville can receive private dollars, to support recommendations from the task force. The subcommittee found that such a vehicle already had been approved by the City Council. The Mayor’s Education Initiative Trust Fund, hereinafter called the Mayor’s Trust, is an important vehicle to accomplish the task force’s core goals and to advance innovative and evidence-based approaches by fostering civic investments that will stretch tax dollars for greater impact.

By leveraging Jacksonville’s public and private sector resources and forming strategic partnerships, our consolidated government can be a force for good and a catalyst for change. The Mayor’s Trust, established in 2012, is designed to exist beyond a single term of either a City Council or mayoral administration and, if implemented correctly, with proper intent and

cooperation, can be a long-term role model for a framework of collaboration between the public and private sectors. The Mayor's Trust should be an important focal point for businesses to support the efforts outlined in the overall Task Force's list of recommendations.

The Mayor's Trust Fund encourages the promotion, enrichment and enhancement of educational opportunities in Duval County. The Mayor's Trust is a vehicle for individuals, foundations and corporations to contribute to City projects and programs. It stewards private and individual funds with transparency and integrity. The Mayor's Trust does not accept grant proposals or solicitations.

The Mayor's Trust Fund objectives:

- 1) Cultivate strategic partnerships between the City of Jacksonville and the civic and philanthropic community to advance innovation and produce measurable results for critical issues.
- 2) Facilitate citywide community development to fill vital needs.
- 3) Align the reach of government with the innovation of the private sector.
- 4) Link generous donors to current systems.

The trust fund's current purpose is strategic partnerships, including but not limited to Cure Violence, Mayor's Youth at Work Partnership, Homelessness and Mental Health.

It is envisioned that this program will develop a long-term outreach program connecting the public and private sectors to develop on-going trust and successful relationships within the business community. Having an outside firm manage this process, with reporting and accountability processes in place that we well reported, will give this program the attention it needs and remove it from being perceived as being a political arm of government, treating it as a private sector outreach program.

► To make the business and philanthropic communities aware of both the work of the task force and the opportunity to donate to the Mayor's Trust Fund, the subcommittee recommends that a communications and outreach strategy be developed and implemented to provide consistent meetings, presentations, public gatherings and requests for donations. We believe that this would be best accomplished by the Mayor's office issuing an RFP for a communications firm that meets specific, to be determined criteria, set forth by the Mayor's office, and selected to implement the "City of Jacksonville Mayor's Trust Fund Outreach Campaign."

● Subcommittee on Family Engagement

The subcommittee focused on existing funded programs in an effort to conduct an inventory of family engagement efforts. It focused on programs, public and private, connected to reducing crime and with an organizational structure. In addition, it examined two evidence-based research programs with direct family engagement in an early-learning context. The subcommittee wanted to identify programs with direct and face-to-face family engagement and to determine if such engagement could be anticipated to prevent or reduce crime.

The inventory was not complete as the subcommittee encountered some challenges. It had difficulty tracking funding, services and outcomes specific to direct family engagement in a public safety context. For example, many programs support children and families but do not have

direct family engagement. The subcommittee also found it challenging to identify unfunded or private programs that may be providing meaningful service to families. Such factors contribute to an overall confusing roadmap of family-engagement services.

The subcommittee identified four top priorities:

- Survey community members on quality of engagement with top funded organizations
- Focus on programs for youth not in school
- Encourage grassroots solutions through listening and supporting
- Increase partnership with schools, churches and courts

The subcommittee planned to continue program reviews, review Jacksonville Journey recommendations and funding, meet with Mothers of Slain Children, seek a presentation by Cure Violence, engage with JSO's Hammer and Hope program, coordinate with other subcommittees, review relevant census data on family status and seek direction from the full task force.

The subcommittee deferred seeking funding pending more learning. The subcommittee opposed combining with other subcommittees, to avoid diluting the focus.

► The subcommittee recommended comparing offender data to city services, an effort to learn if offenders are actually using funded programs. The subcommittee supported creating opportunities for family engagement through a public marketing program, community meetings and perhaps a centralized office.

The subcommittee wanted to learn more about how family units operate in crime-ridden areas and why many single parents may be uninterested in participating in programs. There are many factors in building trust in these communities.

The subcommittee found a need for criminal justice reform of non-violent offenders when there is a history of disparate sentencing based on race. Concerns were raised that mass incarceration may have negative impact on family units in crime-ridden areas.

● Subcommittee on Neighborhoods

The subcommittee assessed the infrastructure impacts on violent crime, focusing on physical elements, with an effort to find potential areas for improvement. Members agreed that fighting crime is a true community effort, which includes citizens working within their neighborhoods to improve conditions that promote crime. And this effort should absolutely continue. Government, by no means, bears the sole responsibility for providing healthy thriving communities. However, because the subcommittee is indeed an extension of government, its recommendations are solely related to those factors that government can take action.

Studies have shown that healthy and thriving neighborhoods are directly influential in promoting crime reduction. Utilizing these studies, our subcommittee chose to define a healthy neighborhood as having the following characteristics:

- Access to affordable grocery stores
- Adequate street and sidewalk lighting
- Access to public parks and/or libraries
- Minimal abandoned properties
- Access to affordable public transportation
- Vibrant small local business

► The subcommittee believes that further work is needed to *fully* analyze the data and strategize the most effective actions for the city. That said, its initial recommendations are these:

- **Access to affordable grocery stores**
The subcommittee has been informed of current city initiatives to identify and address the 250+ food deserts in Jacksonville. Our initial recommendation is pending further research.
- **Adequate street and sidewalk lighting**
The subcommittee found that “Area Lights” are available at customer request for an additional cost. Our initial recommendation is to invest in installing area lights in low-lit neighborhoods that have experienced high levels of violent crime. Additional research is required to estimate logistics and cost.
- **Access to public parks and/or libraries**
Further research is needed regarding the usage and condition of district parks.
- **Minimal abandoned properties**
Subcommittee research found more than 90 under-utilized properties owned by the City of Jacksonville, many of which are in districts experiencing high rates of crime. Our initial recommendation is to partner with community organizations and local businesses to repurpose these properties into crime prevention resources. In addition, we recommend investing additional funds for code enforcement. More research is required.
- **Access to affordable public transportation**
Additional data and research are required.
- **Vibrant small local business**
Currently, the JSEB program no longer sets aside bids based strictly on race. Our initial recommendation is to re-implement policy to reserve designated JSEB contracts for minority contractors. Further research is required.

• Subcommittee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse

The subcommittee identified this vision: In order to reduce crime and increase safety in Jacksonville, every citizen will have equal access to and the ability to utilize substance abuse and mental health services.

More specifically, the subcommittee wanted to improve the social health and well-being of the citizens of Jacksonville by increasing the early assessment, accessibility, utilization and affordability of mental health and substance abuse services through education and collaboration efforts aimed at reducing stigma and criminalization of substance abusers and the mentally ill.

For short-term goals, the subcommittee wanted to address the stigma and criminalization of mental disorders and substance abuse, create a Trauma Response Plan and provide community-based trauma-informed training for first responders to traumatic occurrences in our city.

► The subcommittee offered these primary recommendations:

1. **Create a city-wide stigma-reduction campaign surrounding mental health.**

- 2. Create a trauma-informed outreach plan to create trauma response teams and trauma-informed communities, including a component to include team members riding with JSO patrol officers on calls involving mental health crises. This would also include an outreach component that follows up on police calls that did not result in arrest but involved mental health concerns.**
- 3. Create a 24-hour mental health crisis center as an alternative to arrest or Baker Act for law enforcement and families.**