

Statewide Steering Committee Cooperative Community Alternative Sentencing Project

Common Themes

At the inaugural meeting on March 17, 2008 of the Statewide Steering Committee for the Cooperative Community Alternative Sentencing Project (CCASP), members of the Statewide Steering Committee shared their thoughts on what was working well in the Alabama criminal justice system and what needed improvement. Despite the diversity of stakeholders represented, the group shared a number of common concerns and ambitions.

Collaboration

Collaboration among all stakeholders in the criminal justice system is essential to achieve the goals of promoting public safety, reducing recidivism and utilizing limited correctional resources efficiently and effectively. Members of the Steering Committee acknowledged that they are working well together and expressed the need and desire to continue doing so. It was also noted that there is a willingness, which wasn't present in the past, to engage in the "hard" conversations.

Leadership

Effective leadership is emerging at all levels – state to local, management to line officers – within the criminal justice system in Alabama. With this leadership, and the enthusiasm of those providing services, success can be achieved.

Evaluation of Criminal Justice System

Many members expressed the desire to evaluate the criminal justice system and distinguish among the many agencies and services provided. They noted the need to create a continuum that is accountable and predictable. This includes implementing new programs, evaluating them and maintaining and expanding the programs that prove effective. Many recognized that the system could be improved, and such improvement may result in jobs and responsibilities changing. A required piece of any such evaluation or improvement is the need to improve the ways in which data is collected and analyzed by each part of the criminal justice system. There is a need for a unique identifier to follow an offender through the system.

Improved Services for Offenders

Most members agreed that the criminal justice system should provide appropriate offenders with treatment (substance abuse, mental health etc). However, members expressed a concern that the treatment currently provided was not effective and that some offenders are being sent to prison but for available or effective treatment in the community. It was also noted that some participants in the system (even offenders themselves) are not as interested in treatment programs. However, there is a joint goal of reducing the recidivism rate, and most members believe that effective treatment would contribute towards achieving this goal.

