

The Willamette Criminal Justice Council

Promoting a fair, effective, and coordinated criminal justice system in Benton County through expansion of cooperation and collaboration

WCJC PROFILE

What is the Willamette Criminal Justice Council?

■ The Willamette Criminal Justice Council (WCJC) coordinates criminal justice plans for Benton County. It provides the structure to promote communication among agencies and creates opportunities for more efficient service delivery. The WCJC continually reviews its priority strategies and defines new ones to meet evolving community needs. The WCJC was formed in 1993 to take a closer look at criminal justice planning. It was designed to promote and facilitate fair, efficient and coordinated criminal justice services in Benton County; provide long-range planning for delivering criminal justice services in the county; and to provide timely information about important criminal justice matters to government agencies and the public.

Why should we have a WCJC?

■ The WCJC is a unique forum where law enforcement, courts, city and county officials, interested parties, and citizen representatives come together to discuss local public safety issues. These types of councils also remain unique in their willingness and ability to take on significant projects that improve public safety.

What does the WCJC do for you?

■ WCJC efforts have saved money, improved accuracy, and increased efficiency in the delivery of criminal justice services in Benton County and Oregon. Recent projects include promoting restorative justice through the Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants (DUII) Victim Impact Panel of Benton County; encouraging coordination and cooperation among law enforcement agencies; supporting the adult and juvenile Benton County Drug Treatment Court; enhancing relationships between OSU students, law enforcement, and the community; and assisting with a Methamphetamine Education Seminar for real estate agents and rental owners.

Who sits on the WCJC?

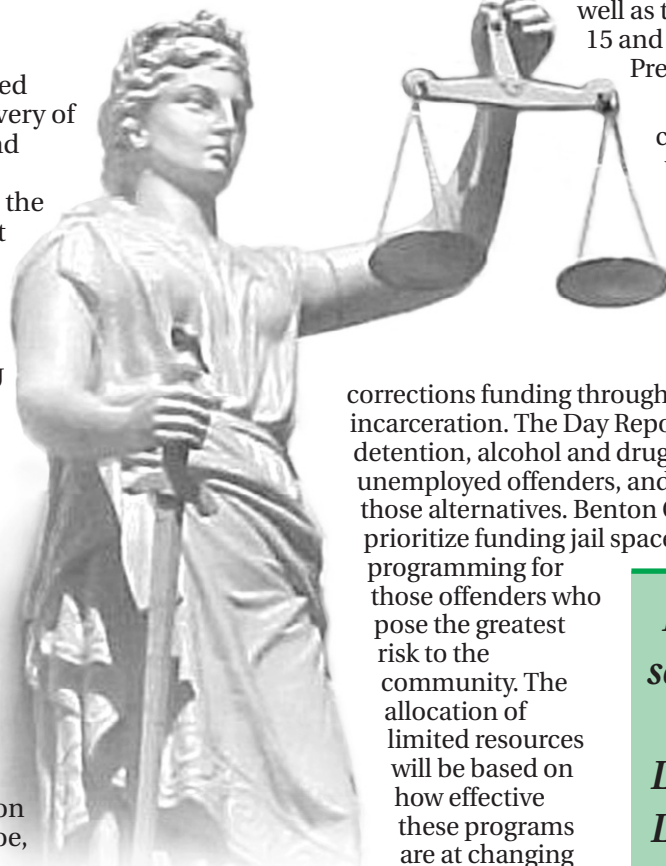
■ The WCJC was formed by a group of criminal justice providers led by former Benton County District Attorney Pete Sandrock. It is a policy-oriented council composed of concerned citizens, elected officials, criminal justice service providers, and providers of juvenile, health, and social services. The WCJC was created by an intergovernmental agreement between Benton County, Adair, North Albany, Corvallis, Monroe, Philomath, and Oregon State University.

Are there any other Criminal Justice Councils in Oregon?

■ When it was formed, the Willamette Criminal Justice Council was unique in Oregon. In 1995, the WCJC served as the model when the Oregon Legislature created Local Public Safety Coordinating Councils (LPSCCs) in every county. Following passage of the LPSCC legislation in 1995, the Benton County Board of Commissioners designated the WCJC as Benton County's LPSCC.

As Benton County's LPSCC, is the WCJC required to do anything?

■ In addition to coordinating local criminal justice policies, LPSCCs are required to develop and recommend plans for using State funds for treatment of the local adult offender population (Community Corrections Plan), as well as those who are between ages 15 and 18 (Juvenile Crime Prevention Plan).



The Plans must provide for coordination of community-wide services involving prevention, treatment, education, employment resources, and intervention strategies. The Plans also seek to maximize the effectiveness of limited community

corrections funding through alternatives to incarceration. The Day Reporting Center, home detention, alcohol and drug treatment, jobs class for unemployed offenders, and work crews are examples of those alternatives. Benton County continues to prioritize funding jail space and rehabilitative programming for those offenders who pose the greatest risk to the community. The allocation of limited resources will be based on how effective these programs are at changing offender behavior and reducing repeat offenses.

As a result of Senate Bill 133, LPSCC's are also required to establish Early Disposition Programs (EDPs) for first-time offenders who have committed a non-person offense and for persons charged with probation violations. The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission receives reports on EDPs every two years from each county.

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A decade ago, the WCJC broke new ground in Oregon. It was the first organization created by local governments to promote and plan for the delivery of coordinated, efficient, and effective criminal justice services at a regional level. It had the right mission. It had the right membership — not just agency leaders, but citizens, elected officials, and city managers. It had funding and independent staff to support the work of the Council and its committees. It had influence. WCJC's endorsements carried substantial weight with grant administrators. By developing the District Attorney Case Management System for 30 or more counties, WCJC saved Oregon taxpayers millions of dollars and earned national recognition from the Bureau of Justice Assistance as one of the seven model Adjudication partnerships in the nation. WCJC can be rightfully proud of its accomplishments.

— **Pete Sandrock**, former District Attorney