



State of Illinois
Circuit Court of Cook County

Timothy C. Evans
Chief Judge

Information Services
Department

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January 19, 2022

Hon. Dennis Deer
Chair, Criminal Justice Committee
Cook County Board of Commissioners
118 N Clark St
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Commissioner Deer:

I write to respond to Board Resolution # 22-0618 calling for a joint meeting of the Health and Hospitals Committee and the Criminal Justice Committee “to discuss county-wide strategies and progress combating the recent surge in violent crimes”. The Office of the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County is committed to enhancing public safety through effective evidence based practices that reduce community harm. While the judiciary of Cook County maintains a steadfast commitment to its constitutional obligation as a neutral arbiter of cases brought to bar, departments such as probation and pretrial services that supervise criminal justice involved individuals fall under the authority of the Office of the Chief Judge. It is through these departments that the Office of the Chief Judge effectuates programing that strikes a balance between respecting the rights and needs of victims of crime and addressing the needs of people accused of, or convicted of criminal offenses, in order to reduce violence in our community.

Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS)

Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS) is a Risk-Needs-Responsivity model that trains probation officers to implement a structured approach to their interactions with probationers, with an emphasis on translating principles of effective cognitive behavioral based interventions into practice as well as using core correctional practices during these interactions. The EPICS model strives to fully utilize the time officers spend with probationers and ensure probationers receive a consistent message throughout their term on probation. EPICS targets high-risk probationers, as determined by an Adult Risk Assessment, and probationers with a history of violence. Interventions are based on strategies used in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which have been shown to be most effective when trying to change a probationer’s

behavior. The EPICS model is not intended to replace other treatments such as therapy, substance abuse treatment, etc. but to act in conjunction with outside treatments

Problem Solving Courts

Problem-solving courts, also known as specialty or therapeutic courts, seek to help low-level criminal defendants suffering from an underlying mental health, social or substance abuse problem from becoming repeat offenders. Problem-solving courts achieve this goal by providing treatment and intensive supervision. The Cook County Circuit Court has a countywide network of problem-solving courts that includes Drug Treatment Courts, Mental Health Treatment Courts, and Veterans' Treatment Courts. Problem-solving courts coordinate efforts between members of the court system and organizations outside of the court system. Team members from the court system are: prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, social workers, clinical case managers, and other justice system affiliates. Team members from organizations outside of the court system include: substance abuse and mental health treatment providers, community partners, and VA representatives. A judge assigned to each specific problem-solving court leads these teams.

Restorative Justice Community Courts

Restorative Justice Community Courts are aimed at young adults, aged 18-26, charged with non-violent felony or misdemeanor crimes. Part of the court's mission is to end the harmful cycle of revenge and recidivism. The courts resolve conflict through restorative conferences and peace circles involving participants, victims, family members, friends, others affected by the crime, and the community. The purpose of the circle process is to ultimately reach an agreement between the participant and members of the community called a Repair of Harm Agreement, in which the participant agrees to complete certain tasks, such as perform community service, write a letter of reflect to a loved one, undergo substance abuse treatment, and other tasks. The Repair of Harm Agreement is a contract between the participant and the community. If the participant successfully completes all the tasks set out in the agreement, his or her case will be dismissed, the offense expunged, and the participant will be invited to attend a graduation ceremony celebrating this milestone in his or her life.

Supporting Employment and Education Development (SEED)

The Supporting Employment and Education Development (SEED) program was created for individuals charged with felony drug distribution. The program offers comprehensive services to help these individuals seek employment at a living wage and ultimately prevent actions that harm communities. Through an external service provider, participants receive job training and employment services, educational programming, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy sessions.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Pretrial Defendants

Cognitive behavior therapy for pretrial defendants is a new, enhanced supervision strategy applied to higher-risk defendants who are in the community awaiting trial. This program aims to change behavior of higher-risk individuals in addition to ensuring compliance with pretrial release conditions. Supervision includes reporting to cognitive behavioral therapy classes twice-weekly for 10 weeks or until case disposition (whichever comes first). Defendants are assigned a

pretrial officer to monitor conditions and report to court. Defendants are required to report in-person after court.

Juvenile Probation Partnerships

The Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department collaborates with the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), the SCaN program, and the Courage to Change program to access additional programming for young people involved in our court system. The court's Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department has referred more than 200 youth to SCaN providers since March 2021. DFSS's One Summer Chicago program has been an integral component of summer programming for court-involved children for at least the past five years. An aspect of DFSS programming that was referenced during the meeting is the Juvenile Probation also coordinates with the Trauma-Informed Centers of Care Network of clinics and behavioral health providers to respond to the trauma affecting most court-active young people. We welcome the opportunity to continue and strengthen these partnerships.

Summary

The Office of the Chief Judge actively looks for ways to partner with federal agencies to achieve the mutual goals of serving justice and enhancing community safety. To this end, we look to partners such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the US Department of Justice to support evidence based initiatives that specifically target root causes of violent crime. The Office of the Chief Judge will continue to collaborate at the state, county, and city-levels of government to further our shared goal of a safe and peaceful community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Lyons", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas Lyons, Ph.D.
Director of Research
Probation and Pretrial Operations