

# **THE CJAB DOCKET**

## **LATEST NEWS FROM THE LEBANON COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD.**



Fall 2017 Edition

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### **DAY REPORTING CENTER NOW A PART OF LEBANON COUNTY**

#### **\*ANOTHER KEY ALTERNATIVE TO INCARCERATION\***

After months of discussion, negotiation, and legal hurdles to overcome, the much-anticipated Day Reporting Center (DRC) is ready for business in Lebanon County at the original planned location in downtown Lebanon (632-636 Cumberland Street). An Open House took place in late August, and the official Ribbon Cutting is scheduled for October 6<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m.

Operated by PA Counseling Services, Inc., as part of a contractual arrangement with the County, the DRC offers a practical alternative to prison for eligible offender who meet certain criteria. It is the latest addition to the County's Intermediate Punishment (IP) Plan.

How is the new DRC defined? It is a specialized program for certain persons who have entered the criminal justice or domestic relations systems. The program offers assistance to these individuals with housing, GED, job skills, counseling healthcare, parenting skills, relationship building, financial literacy, to name a few. It is the kind of professional counseling and education that offenders would not receive if incarcerated. The program is slated to last approximately six months per offender and could serve up to 100 individuals.

Who is eligible for DRC services? PA Counseling and Probation Services plan to select participants on a case-by-case basis. Priority will be given to persons who have failed to pay child support, offenders participating in the recently established pretrial diversion program, individuals out on bail, and offenders being released from jail and who need a guiding hand to

ensure a successful return to the community. The DRC does NOT accommodate offenders with a history of violent behavior or who have committed sex-related crimes.

It is equally important to stress that the DRC is NOT a place where offenders stay overnight. Moreover, it is NOT a facility featuring armed guards, though at least one Probation Officer will be present to supervise offenders. The DRC is also not a treatment facility; any offender in need of treatment will be referred to an appropriate provider.



Presenting a viable, cost-effective alternative to prison for non-violent offenders eases any overcrowding at the county prison. More than that, however, the counseling and skills development being offered at the DRC will go a long way toward reducing recidivism. Not returning to the criminal justice system helps not only the offender, but the entire community. According to PA Counseling, counties with DRCs have seen lower re-arrest rates, fewer parole and probation violations, and greater community and parental involvement by offenders upon release. From the taxpayers' standpoint, a decreasing prison population also lowers the county's costs. Housing inmates is an expensive proposition, so it only makes good fiscal sense to establish a DRC and generate savings to the public.

The Day Reporting Center has the full support of the Lebanon CJAB and the Lebanon County Offender Reentry Coalition.

## **JUVENILE PROBATION SAVING MONEY**

### **\*KEEPING KIDS HERE, NOT SOMEWHERE ELSE\***

The Juvenile Unit of Probation Services has been getting a lot of positive attention recently for its efforts to provide juvenile offenders with viable alternatives to costly out-of-home placement—and saving significant tax money in the process. The unit's investment of funds to rehabilitate offenders at home in community-based and after-school programs was the subject of a story aired in mid-September by ABC 27 News that applauded the county for its judicious use of resources.

In 2014, the County contracted with Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) to operate a day-treatment center for certain juvenile offenders. The center is located in North Lebanon Township at the

former Youth for Christ building. At present, seven offenders are participating in the day program, though it can accommodate up to 20 at a time.

Prior to the establishment of the center, the county often had to place offenders in out-of-county facilities since Lebanon County did not and does not have its own residential facility for juveniles. Sending minors to residential (“sleepaway”) establishments can be a genuine budget-buster, costing anywhere from \$140 to \$550 a day per offender. Community-based treatment, on the other hand, costs \$40 to \$85 per day for each child.



Working with YAP to maintain a workable day program to help kids and save the county money is a major endeavor for Juvenile Probation, but not the only one. The unit is also committed to employing Multisystemic Therapy (MST), a community-based, family-oriented treatment program that focus on the environmental factors impacting juvenile offenders. PA Counseling Services, Inc. is the consultant contracted with the county to provide this evidence-based service to offenders referred by Probation Services. MST is a proven intervention that will keep offenders at home while providing them with the guidance needed to make positive behavioral changes. The goal of MST is to provide parents and caregivers with the skills and resources necessary to address the challenges that arise when raising adolescents. It also gives adolescents the skills they need to cope with issues at home, school, and other places. Earlier this year, PCCD awarded the county a \$46,000 grant to provide “bridge funding” for MST services—that is, funding MST before Medical Assistance coverage begins. This enables PA Counseling to provide MST right away, which is a definite benefit to offenders and their families.

Over the past year, the focus on home and community-based services for juvenile offenders has saved the county \$400,000, and that is definitely a good-news bulletin. Sue Christner, Deputy Director of the Juvenile Unit sums it up this way: “We’ve been able to provide community protection, treatment to the juveniles, but still be fiscally responsible at the same time.”

## RENAISSANCE-CROSSROADS UPDATE

Although the specific funding levels have not been determined, financial support for Intermediate Punishment (IP) programs is included in the State Budget, meaning that the county’s highly successful Renaissance-Crossroads program, which has been helping drug and alcohol-addicted offenders since 2001, will continue. Operated by PA Counseling from leased space at the Lebanon VA Medical Center, Renaissance-Crossroads offers short and long-term

rehab/recovery services for offenders who would otherwise be sentenced to costly State incarceration. The long-term program is an intensive 34-month approach that has demonstrated its effectiveness. Very few offenders who make it through the demands and expectations of Crossroads have been arrested on new drug or alcohol charges.



Offenders whose problems with substance abuse have led them to commit crimes do have a viable alternative to incarceration with Renaissance-Crossroads. It is not an easy program to complete, but well worth it for those who go from start to finish. A review team meets regularly to discuss the status of those in the program as well as to recommend to the Court whether certain offenders should be admitted to the program. Also, President Judge Tylwalk holds a monthly court session giving Crossroads participants an opportunity to talk about their progress and plans for the future.

The public definitely benefits when offenders recover from their addictions and do not return to the criminal justice system. Renaissance-Crossroads has been in place for 16 years, and its solid track of record of helping offenders get back on track merits State support.

## **LEBANON COUNTY RESPONDING TO OPIOID CRISIS**

### **\*TAKING EFFECTIVE MEASURES\***

No doubt, the opioid crisis is an epidemic that knows no limits or boundaries. Any city or town can be impacted by this scourge. Lebanon County, sadly, is no exception. What we can say, however, is that the county has not been standing still; rather, the county is doing an exemplary job of being as proactive as possible. The Heroin Task Force and its sub-committees continue to meet regularly to discuss issues and map out strategies for eliminating heroin abuse and overdose deaths, as well as educating the public about this life-threatening problem. This includes distributing naloxone kits to law-enforcement agencies, as well as the public, in the hope that



the availability of these kits will make the difference between life and death when someone has overdosed.

The county also works hard to get addicts into treatment and currently funds methadone treatments for over 60 individuals, something that not many other counties in the Commonwealth are willing or able to do. Earlier this year, the LCCDAA started a “warm hand-off” approach for persons who come to the emergency room with overdose issues. Under this program, Crisis Intervention is contacted immediately and offers assistance BEFORE the person is released. The challenge of combatting opioids never takes a respite, but the active partnership involving the county, private agencies, and concerned citizens will also never stop doing its part to help individuals caught in the trap of addiction.

