

THE TEXAS JAIL ASSOCIATION KEY ISSUES

Vol XXIX, No. 1

Winter 2025



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Message from the President



As we usher in another quarter, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the unwavering commitment of our membership to the mission and values of the Texas Jail Association. Your dedication to professional excellence in corrections inspires our collective progress and drives us forward.

This year, we have been laser-focused on enhancing meaningful connections between the Texas Jails Association and the broader corrections community. One of the recent highlights has been the production of promotional videos centered on officer mental health and the impactful programs we implement in our facilities. These videos are more than just outreach; they are a testament to our commitment to supporting the well-being of our officers and showcasing the transformative programs that make a difference in the lives of those we serve. These videos have fostered partnerships with organizations such as the American Jail Association (AJA) and the American Correctional Association (ACA). These collaborations not only broaden our reach but also provide valuable opportunities to exchange ideas, learn from one another, and elevate the standards of our profession. It's time that we take the lead, and ensure the public and stakeholders are well informed, rather than leaving the narrative one-sided and ill informed.

I am also pleased to announce the formation of the new TJA Programs Committee. This committee, composed of dedicated and innovative members, will focus on identifying and expanding programmatic opportunities that enrich our facilities and positively influence outcomes for staff and inmates alike. Their work will be instrumental in advancing our strategic vision and ensuring that our programs continue to reflect the best practices in corrections.

Looking ahead, we are actively exploring future conference sites to ensure that our annual gatherings remain accessible, engaging, and impactful. These conferences are vital for professional development, networking, and celebrating the achievements of our peers, and we are committed to delivering experiences that uphold the high standards our members expect.

As always, I encourage you to remain engaged with TJA, whether by attending conferences, contributing to initiatives, or reaching out with your insights and suggestions. Our strength lies in our members' collective expertise and passion, and I am honored to serve as your President during such an exciting and transformative time. Thank you for all you do to make our association and profession exceptional. Together, we will continue to build a stronger, more innovative future for Texas jails.

Past President's Passage



A Decade of Service: Reflections on My Time with TJA

As I reflect on my journey since being appointed to my first position on the Texas Jail Association (TJA) Board as Secretary in 2015, I am humbled to conclude this chapter as Immediate Past President after ten years of service. Over the past decade, we have faced incredible challenges—mental health crises, overcrowded facilities, staffing shortages, the impacts of COVID-19, public perception issues, and, more recently, security concerns such as the alarming rise in contraband smuggling through mail systems.

Through these challenges, we have grown stronger—not just as individuals, but as a profession. As an Association, we have learned from one another's mistakes and celebrated one another's victories. What I've always admired most about those in Corrections is our collective willingness to share knowledge and support each other. Whether through conferences, social gatherings, or listserv discussions, the opportunities to collaborate and problem-solve together are invaluable.

It is my hope that my legacy reflects a commitment to improving training, enhancing the conference experience for our members, raising scholarship funds through golf and fishing tournaments in collaboration with the 100 Club of Central Texas, and fostering an environment that encourages networking and meaningful professional relationships. I encourage each of you to continue fostering this spirit of collaboration and growth. This profession is not one we navigate alone—it truly takes a dedicated team to achieve success.

Being a part of the Texas Jail Association has been one of the most rewarding decisions of my personal and professional life. The friendships I've built—friends who feel like family—and the lessons I've learned have been invaluable. I urge you to consider lifelong membership in the Association, and if you aspire to serve on the Board, take that leap. Get involved, put your name forward, and embrace the experience. Before stepping into Board service, I also recommend reaching out to your current Board of Directors to explore opportunities to serve on committees and gain insight into the work we do.

Lastly, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for entrusting me with the privilege of leading this incredible Association. It has been an honor I will carry with me forever. To my agency, my supervisors, peers, Sheriff, and family—thank you for your unwavering support throughout this journey.

As I step into the next chapter, I look forward to seeing many of you at trainings, conferences, and other opportunities where our paths may cross. I wish you all continued success.

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Call for Articles!



Key Issues invites all members to send articles, photographs, presentations, papers, announcements, challenges, creative solutions or any submission that may be of interest to the TJA membership.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Summer Issue
June 1, 2025

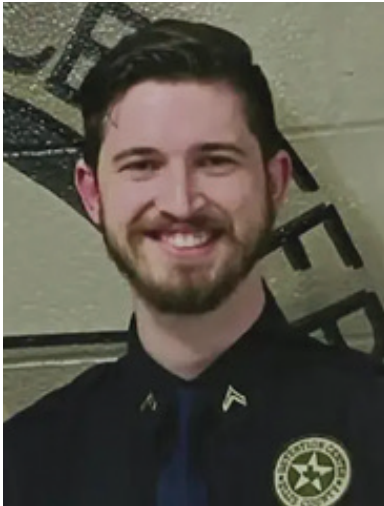
Fall Issue
October 1, 2025

Winter Issue
December 1, 2025

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In Memoriam



Detention Officer Isaiah Bias

Detention Officer Isaiah Bias, 28, tragically lost his life following an assault by an inmate at the Wayne McCollum Detention Center in Waxahachie. On the afternoon of the incident, December 15, Officer Bias was transferring an inmate to his cell when he was attacked. Despite being rushed to a local hospital, he succumbed to his injuries. The inmate responsible has been charged with capital murder.

Officer Bias dedicated nearly seven years to the Ellis County Sheriff's Office. He initially joined in 2010 through the Explorer program and later left in 2016 to pursue a degree from Navarro College. He returned to the agency, resuming his commitment to service, and was promoted to Corporal in Detention Services in 2022.

Sheriff Brad Norman shared his connection with Officer Bias, recalling knowing him since he was 14 years old and witnessing his passion for law enforcement from a young age. Isaiah Bias was the eldest sibling in his family and had just experienced the joy of becoming an uncle one week before his passing. He is survived by his mother, two sisters, nieces, and nephews. Officer Bias will be remembered for his dedication, leadership, and the positive impact he made on those around him. His loss leaves a deep void in his family, community, and the Ellis County Sheriff's Office.



Corrections Officer Patricia "Patty" Jakubowski

Corrections Officer Patricia "Patty" Jakubowski passed away on December 10, following a medical episode while on duty the previous day, December 9. Despite receiving immediate medical care and being transported to Ascension Seton Williamson Hospital, she passed peacefully, surrounded by her family.

Officer Jakubowski served the Williamson County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) with dedication for 17 years. Known for her quick smile, joyful attitude, and infectious laugh, Patty left an indelible mark on her colleagues and community.

"Patty served in many roles with a quick smile, joyful attitude, and infectious laugh. Along with her family and friends, we grieve the loss of a dedicated friend and coworker," the WCSO said in a statement.

All who had the privilege of knowing her will deeply miss her contributions and presence.



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A CALL TO ACTION:

Expanding the Reach of the Texas Jail Association

ABIGAIL BELANGERI,

3rd Vice President/Membership Chair, Texas Jail Association

As your Membership Chair, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the vital role you play in strengthening our community of professionals. Together, we represent a unified voice advocating for excellence, professionalism, and collaboration in the operation and administration of local jails throughout Texas. Our shared mission unites us in purpose: to ensure that every corrections professional, from jail administrators to support staff, is equipped with the resources, training, and support they need to succeed.

However, while our association has grown tremendously since its founding in 1986, there remain countless counties across Texas that are not yet reaping the full benefits of the Texas Jail Association (TJA). These counties house dedicated corrections professionals who face the same challenges we do—overcrowding, staff shortages, mental health crises, evolving regulations—without the support, training, and network that TJA provides. It is time for us to act.

Why Recruitment Matters

TJA was established to serve as a distinct and unified voice for corrections officers working in local jails. The more voices we have, the louder and more impactful that voice becomes. Each new member strengthens our association, not only in numbers but also in diversity of experience, perspective, and ideas. By growing our membership, we expand the reach of our resources, enrich our professional community, and enhance our ability to advocate effectively for the needs of local jails across Texas.

Additionally, recruitment isn't just about adding names to a roster—it's about extending the benefits we enjoy to others. From invaluable training opportunities and professional development to technical assistance, publications, and conferences, TJA equips its members with the tools they need to succeed in their vital roles. Every county deserves access to these resources, and every corrections professional deserves the chance to be part of this community.

Opportunities to Recruit New Members

Recruiting new members starts with outreach and connection. Many counties, particularly rural ones, may not be aware of what TJA offers or may not see how membership aligns with their daily needs. It is up to us to bridge that gap.

Leverage Regional Trainings

Regional training events are an ideal platform to connect with non-member counties. Invite professionals from neighboring counties to attend as guests. Show them firsthand the value of our training sessions and the wealth of knowledge TJA offers.

Share Success Stories

Every one of us has benefited from being part of TJA. Whether it was a training that changed the way you lead, a resource that solved a problem in your facility, or a connection made at a conference that inspired new practices, your story matters. Sharing these successes with others helps illustrate the real, tangible impact of TJA membership.

Partner with Sheriffs and Jail Administrators

Many sheriffs and jail administrators are natural allies in recruitment. They understand the value of professional development and networking for their staff. Partner with them to encourage enrollment and demonstrate how TJA aligns with their department's goals.

Engage in Personal Outreach

Nothing is more effective than a personal invitation. Take the time to reach out to colleagues in neighboring counties. A quick phone call, email, or visit to introduce TJA and its benefits can make a lasting impression.

Promote at Local and State Events

Use events like county meetings or statewide law enforcement gatherings to spread awareness of TJA. Having a presence at these events, even informally, can spark interest and plant the seeds for future memberships.

A Shared Responsibility

Recruitment is not the responsibility of one person or committee—it is a shared responsibility. Each of us has the power to inspire others to join. By taking small, intentional actions, we can collectively expand our reach and ensure that every corrections professional in Texas has access to the tools and community that TJA provides.

I challenge each of you to think about your neighboring counties. Who do you know that would benefit from membership? Which agencies would find value in the training



and support TJA offers? Start a conversation, extend an invitation, and be the advocate they need to see the value in joining our association.

The Benefits of a Growing Membership

By bringing new members into the fold, we don't just grow our numbers—we grow our impact. A larger, more diverse membership strengthens our ability to achieve TJA's goals:

Enhancing Professionalism

More members mean more opportunities to share knowledge and best practices across counties.

Improving Standards and Services

With input from a broader base, we can refine and expand our programs to meet the evolving needs of our profession.

Expanding Advocacy

A larger membership base gives us a stronger voice when advocating for corrections professionals at the local, state, and national levels.

Moreover, a strong membership reinforces the sense of unity and shared purpose that has defined TJA since its founding. It reminds us that we are not alone in our challenges and that together, we can achieve more than any of us could alone.

Answer the Call

Members of the Texas Jail Association, I call on you to take up this challenge. Let's work together to expand our reach and bring the benefits of TJA to every county in Texas. Our association is only as strong as the commitment of its members, and I have no doubt that each of you is ready to rise to the occasion.

Together, let's grow TJA into an even stronger, more inclusive, and more impactful organization—one that truly represents the unified voice of all Texas corrections professionals.

LET'S GET TO WORK!

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LEADERSHIP

RICHARD REISER, FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Leadership is a topic we are all familiar with. If you are reading this, chances are you have been through at least one leadership course. With that in mind, how difficult is it for you to think back to your last, or even your first, leadership course and remember exactly what you learned?

Being dual certified (Peace Officer and Correctional Officer), I recently had the opportunity to attend the National Jail Leadership Command Academy. While some of it overlapped with previous leadership training, there was quite a bit of new material for me. Even if it was not new, it felt as if it was. We as humans tend to forget what we've learned over time, and need to keep leadership at the forefront of our minds. Whether you are a supervisor or not, you can bring value to your agency in your leadership skills. The most important leadership capability is realizing the value of networking. The ability to learn from a variety of agencies from across the nation was impactful.

I went into this course thinking I was just some young Lieutenant who had no business being surrounded by others in leadership status' such as Chiefs and Directors. How quickly I realized I was wrong. Dr. Randy Garner with Sam Houston State University had a story that helped me realize many things about myself. He brought up the story of Moses from the Bible (Exodus

4:1-5) and how God turned his 'common' rod into a serpent. God wanted Moses to use this rod to prove to others that He appeared to him. The

idea here was that what may seem common may serve a higher purpose. The rod, albeit a common rod, was anointed by God in this story. The knowledge we have very well may be passed on to someone who no one knew needed it. The knowledge we believe to be 'common' may be new and innovative to others.



That is what prompted me to write this article. To be a reminder to each of you never to sell yourself short. Your ideas, knowledge, and skills may be the impactful push someone needs to spring their careers and lives forward. As my pastor would say, it is not about 'everyone,' it is about every 'one.' Live life outside your comfort zone. Grow. Do the thing you're afraid to do. Become an instructor. Mentor someone. Be proud of who you are, what you bring to the table, and remember your 'why.' On behalf of everyone, we ask you to be the 'one' we need. You may not have all the answers, but you can always listen to the problem.



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The Chaplain's Corner

Travis Sterling, Account Executive, Correct Solutions Group

"Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." Psalm 25:4-5 KJV

Life brings many challenges our way from many directions and the wisdom of man has a way of trying to convince us on how we should navigate such challenges. There's the wisdom of man then there's the heart of the father. So often we desire to respond swiftly when God is desiring us to sit silently. To seek his face, hear his heart, and to be taught his ways. The creator of Heaven and earth the very one who we were created in the image of is also our perfect father the author of all truth who knows us better than we know ourselves. How can one know when God is desiring restoration over justice if one does not sit and wait to hear HIS heart with the complicated challenges that are set before

us? Does it not make sense that the one who created us and knew us from the beginning of time is also the best counselor in the time of need? I encourage not only myself but all those who may read this if you are currently facing something that seems more than you can handle or simply needing guidance on a daily decision to stand tall on your knees before your creator and wait to hear his soothing voice. It's not about today but the rest of your life!

Father continue to lead us in all truth and may we clearly hear your voice as we silently seek your face. In Jesus name...Amen.

"Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time" Abraham Lincoln

— **Travis Sterling**

Chaplain of the Texas Jail Association

Nominations Report

It is that time of year that the Texas Jail Association will put out Board Call for Nominations. Have you ever considered running for the board? This is a fantastic opportunity to serve the membership and represent the Texas Jail Association. Please consider running for one of the positions. Successful nominees should have the support of their Sheriff because the positions require significant time and travel away from the office. The duties may include teaching throughout the State, conference preparation, speaker introduction, class moderation, registration, reconciliation of monies and inventory. If you possess the skillset, knowledge, dedication and commitment to service, the Texas Jail Association wants you.

Frances Dembowski, Chair

Rowdee Edwards

Michael Everil, At-Large

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Legislative Update

Through the end of November Texas lawmakers submitted over 1,900 bills as the filing period opened on November 12th, and setting a new record for the greatest number of bills filed on the first day. Some staffers even camped out in the hallway behind the Senate chamber to secure their spot in line — more of a symbolic move than a strategic one, as there is no real advantage to filing a bill early.

Last year, fewer than 15% of bills filed became law, but we are already monitoring 27 bills that affect corrections and/or first responders. There is still a long way to go with the last day to be able to file a bill is not until the 60th day of the session which is March 14, 2025.

Your Legislative Committee will keep you updated as the session winds it's way to closing on June 2nd.

Billy Bryan, Chair	Kelly Rowe	Abby Belangeri	Shane Sowell
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Training Committee Report

Thank you to everyone who attended the Jail Management Issues Conference in Galveston, Texas! The conference was a tremendous success, thanks to the hard work of our Training Committee, which has been dedicated to providing outstanding training opportunities for our members. If you were not able to attend, we hope you will join us at the 39th Annual Conference in San Marcos, Texas. It is an event you do not want to miss!

The Texas Jail Association has been on the move, hosting regional training sessions across our great state every month this year. We extend our gratitude to the counties that have partnered with us to host these trainings. We're excited to continue offering regional training opportunities and look forward to seeing you at an event soon!

Rowdee Edwards	Aimee Crockett	Ryan Braus
Jason Davis	Jason Jouett	Jess Christensen

UPCOMING REGIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Negotiations/De-Escalation with Jess Christensen

March 11, 2025 • 8:00am-12:00pm • Panhandle, TX

Texas Commission on Jail Standards - Hot Topics with Jason Jouett

March 11, 2025 • 1:00pm-5:00pm • Panhandle, TX

Texas Association of Counties - Effective Communication & Inmate Suicide Prevention with David Whitis

March 12, 2025 • 8:00am-12:00pm • Panhandle, TX

Leadership for Jailers with Rowdee Edwards

March 12, 2025 • 1:00pm-5:00pm • Panhandle, TX

Visit www.texasjailassociation.com for more information and to register.

These trainings are free to TJA members. Non-members will pay a \$30 registration fee. Once paid, he/she will receive a complimentary TJA membership. No refunds will be granted for Regional Training.

Contact Kalee Massey at 806-279-0568 for questions.



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THE 2ND OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM: TRANSFORMING REENTRY EDUCATION IN TEXAS JAILS

AUGIE GHILARDUCCI, MBA

For individuals incarcerated in Texas jails, the path to successful reentry often begins with gaining essential life skills and employment readiness. Augie Ghilarducci, President of 2nd Opportunity, experienced these challenges firsthand and turned his insights into action. Recognizing the gaps in education and preparation among those in custody, he founded 2nd Opportunity, a program now operating nationwide that addresses critical reentry needs such as financial literacy, trauma recovery, and career development.

While serving time, Augie observed how many inmates struggled with fundamental skills like budgeting, understanding legal documents, and preparing for life after incarceration. These gaps left individuals unprepared to reintegrate into society, contributing to cycles of recidivism. Drawing from this experience, Augie developed practical coursework that resonated with incarcerated audiences. These workbooks and lesson plans became foundational to correctional education programs, demonstrating that success requires tailoring materials to the unique needs of this population.

After his release in 2017, Augie expanded his efforts beyond prison walls. Within months, he was invited to speak at Cook County Jail, igniting a new chapter for 2nd Opportunity. Partnering with businessman Dan Effrein, who brought his own experience of overcoming adversity, Augie formalized the program's mission to empower individuals impacted by incarceration, ad-

diction, and trauma. Together, they reached beyond prisons to include at-risk youth, recovery center residents, and halfway house participants.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a new challenge as correctional facilities restricted in-person visits. Undeterred, 2nd Opportunity transitioned to a digital platform, producing professional video courses filmed on Johnny Cash's farm. These courses, available in both English and Spanish, allow self-paced learning via tablets within facilities and online access for those on the outside. The program's adaptability also accommodates individuals with literacy challenges by integrating facilitated group discussions.

With a focus on sustainability, 2nd Opportunity offers post-release support through referrals for employment, housing, and education. The program's reach now spans 20 states, including collaborations with technology providers to serve correctional facilities across Texas.

By equipping individuals with tools for financial independence and personal growth, 2nd Opportunity continues to break cycles of incarceration and rebuild lives.

Augie's journey underscores the transformative power of lived experience and targeted education. As the program grows, 2nd Opportunity reaffirms its commitment to expanding access, inspiring hope, and creating lasting change for justice-involved individuals.



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Jerry Baggs Memorial Scholarship

The scholarship is for tuition to a class of the National Jail Leadership Command Academy.

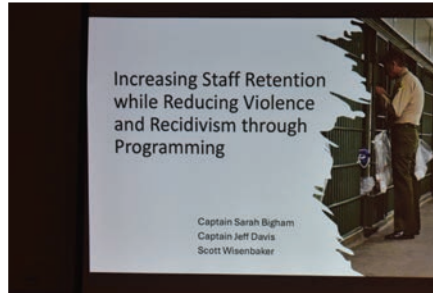
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Spring 2026 Semester Deadline

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2024 JAIL MANAGEMENT ISSUES



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Becoming a Coffee Bean:

DAMON WEST SPEAKS TO INMATES AT THE COLLIN COUNTY JAIL



OFFICER ARISHA HAMMONDS, COLLIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

About the Author

Officer Arisha Hammonds is an Officer with the Programs Department at the Collin County Sheriff's Office, where she works to develop, and implement programming aimed at reducing recidivism and promoting rehabilitation and education. Officer Hammonds is passionate about helping individuals incarcerated within the justice system obtain their GED's, and find hope, direction, and motivation in their lives upon release from jail/prison.

For many who are, or have been previously incarcerated, they know that the feeling of hope and happiness can be scarce, and time can seem to stand still. One man, Damon West, hopes to make a difference in this environment, and did just that when he visited the Collin County Jail on November 7th, 2024, and spoke to our female population, and our newly opened Addiction Recovery Pod.

Damon West is a former college quarterback turned motivational speaker, who delivers a powerful message about redemption, personal responsibility, and the possibility of change. West's story is one of hope and transformation, and the one thing that makes him stand out from other speakers? Damon West was once a TDCJ inmate.

Once a promising football player with a very bright future, West found himself incarcerated for his involvement in a series of crimes which was the result of his addiction to methamphetamines. His fall from grace was swift and shocking to all who had known him, but what followed was an inspiring journey of recovery and personal reinvention. It is this journey that West shared with inmates at the Collin County Jail when he visited.

While speaking, West introduced the concept of the "coffee bean"--a metaphor for resilience and transformation. West asked his audience to imagine three objects being placed into boiling water, which symbolizes incarcerated life. The three objects are: a carrot, an egg, and a coffee bean. In boiling water, the carrot becomes soft and weak, the egg becomes hard and brittle, but the coffee bean transforms the water itself into something rich and inviting. He challenges the inmates to ask themselves: "When life gets tough, what do you become? A carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?" He encourages them to

choose resilience, to be the coffee bean that changes their environment, instead of letting their circumstances change them.

The main takeaway from West's visit is clear: it's never too late to change. He speaks with raw honesty about his past, his mistakes, and the struggles he has faced. For many inmates, hearing someone who has walked through the same path as them, struggling with incarceration, the pain of letting down your loved ones, and incarceration is a beacon of inspiration. They see a person who was once in their very own shoes—who made decisions that landed him behind bars—but who currently stands before them as the possibility that this one day can be them, too.

Damon West's visit was more than just an event at the Collin County Jail, it was a lifeline of hope for the attendees. Watching the faces of the audience members; the smiles,

the tears, and the roar of applause when he finished, it was very clear that West's words created a spark of possibility and hope within everyone in the room.

West's story serves as proof that even those who are lost can find redemption, but it requires effort, determination, and a willingness to change.

Author Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Damon West and his team for his generosity in sharing his story, traveling six hours to come to the Collin County Jail, and for inspiring change within our facility.



“In a recent surprise jail inspection from the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, our inspector stated, “while most of the jails around the state are providing adequate levels of care. CorrHealth is doing it right.” He went on to say, “Their program is spectacular and it’s one the rest of the state should be following.””



**Zena Stephens, Sheriff
Jefferson County, Texas**



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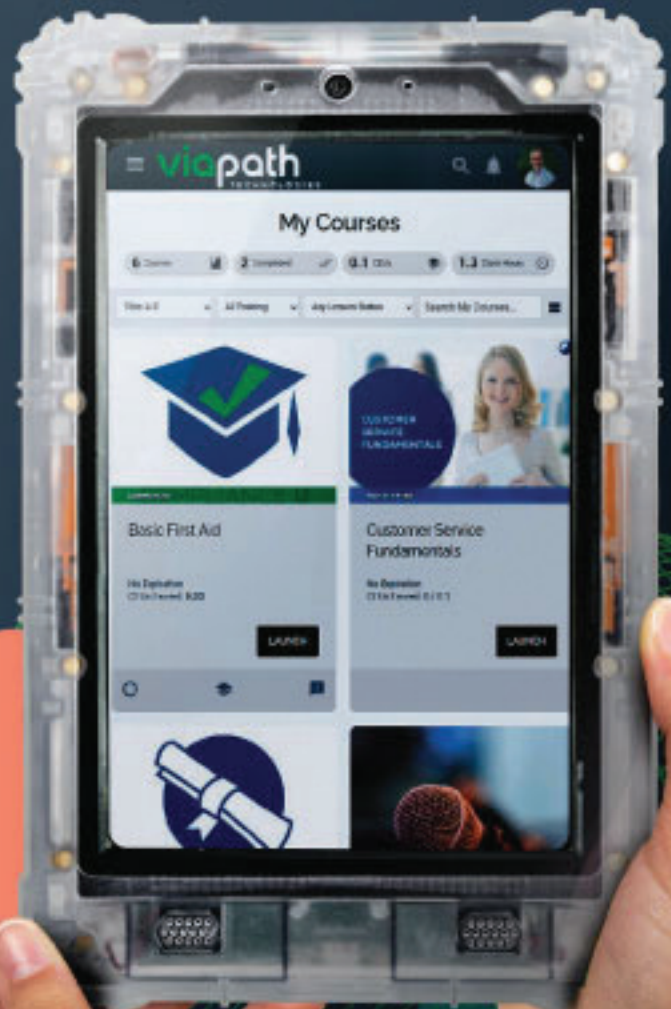
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Breaking Down Silos: The Power of Collaboration in the Criminal Justice System

ABIGAIL BELANGERI,
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Collaboration in the Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system is a complex network of interdependent agencies, each with unique responsibilities and expertise. Its effectiveness depends on these agencies working together to uphold justice, protect citizens, and address societal needs. However, the system has often struggled with collaboration, resulting in inefficiencies, missed opportunities for systemic improvement, and erosion of public trust. This article examines the historical roots of collaboration in criminal justice, the rise of specialization and its unintended consequences, and the ways in which collaboration can be revitalized to create more effective and community-focused outcomes.

The Criminal Justice System: A Collaborative Foundation

Collaboration has been integral to the criminal justice system since its inception. Early justice systems relied on collective efforts from the community, law enforcement, and courts to maintain order. In medieval England, for example, the system of tithings—groups of ten households responsible for each other's behavior—illustrated the communal nature of justice. Similarly, the shire reeve, a precursor to the modern sheriff, worked closely with citi-

zens to address local disputes and crime.

In colonial America, the criminal justice system was similarly collaborative. Townsfolk played an active role in law enforcement and judicial processes, often through volunteer roles like constables or militia members. Early courts worked hand-in-hand with these law enforcement bodies to address crime swiftly and equitably within tight-knit communities. This collaborative approach was vital in small settlements where resources were limited and social cohesion was paramount.

As populations grew and societies became more complex, the need for professionalization and specialization arose. Specialized roles emerged to handle the increasing sophistication of criminal behavior, but these changes, while necessary, marked the beginning of fragmentation within the system.

The Rise of Specialization and Siloing

The professionalization of criminal justice brought numerous benefits, such as improved expertise, accountability, and technological innovation. Specialized roles like forensic scientists, victim advocates, and parole officers enhanced the ability of the system to address complex challenges. However, this specialization often

came at the cost of inter-agency collaboration.

Siloing developed as agencies focused inward, prioritizing their specific mandates over shared goals. Each component of the system—law enforcement, judiciary, and corrections—began to function as a standalone entity rather than as part of a cohesive framework. Law enforcement concentrated on arrests, prosecutors on convictions, and corrections on managing facilities, often with little regard for how these actions influenced the system as a whole.

For example, over-policing in certain neighborhoods led to higher arrest rates, which overburdened courts and jails without addressing root causes like poverty or lack of education. Specialized silos also hindered the flow of information, as agencies failed to share critical data that could have informed more effective and equitable practices. These operational divides created inefficiencies, redundancies, and gaps in service delivery, eroding the effectiveness of the system.

The “Not My Job” Era: A Barrier to Justice

The siloed nature of the criminal justice system culminated in what some describe as the “not my job” era. This period was marked by a rigid adherence to narrowly defined roles, where agencies focused on individual performance metrics rather than collective outcomes. While this approach allowed agencies to claim efficiency within their domains, it often exacerbated systemic inefficiencies.

For instance, law enforcement agencies might prioritize arrests as a measure of success, neglecting the downstream consequences for jails and courts. Similarly, corrections facilities often operated without sufficient input from community reintegration services, leaving released individuals without the support needed to avoid reoffending. The lack of coordination between agencies resulted in a fragmented

system that struggled to address the complexity of modern crime.

The consequences of this mindset were significant. The system became reactive rather than proactive, with agencies often duplicating efforts or working at cross-purposes. Public trust in the justice system eroded as communities saw it fail to deliver fair and effective outcomes. Meanwhile, systemic challenges like overcrowded prisons, high recidivism rates, and untreated mental health issues persisted, further highlighting the need for a more collaborative approach.

Community-Specific Collaboration

A one-size-fits-all approach cannot meet the diverse needs of different communities. Rural areas face challenges such as limited resources and vast geographical coverage, while urban areas must address dense populations and higher crime rates. Community-specific collaboration offers a way to tailor solutions to these unique needs by bringing together a variety of stakeholders.

For example, in rural areas, collaboration might focus on pooling resources across county lines to provide specialized services like drug courts or mental health facilities. In urban settings, efforts could involve bridging divides between law enforcement and diverse communities through initiatives like neighborhood policing and cultural competence training.

Effective community-specific collaboration extends beyond traditional criminal justice agencies. Schools, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, healthcare providers, and local businesses all have roles to play in addressing the root causes of crime. For instance, schools can implement early intervention programs to keep at-risk youth out of the justice system, while healthcare providers can address addiction and mental health issues that often lead to criminal behavior.

Starting the Collaborative Process

Building collaboration within the criminal justice system requires intentional strategies and structures. One effective approach is forming a criminal justice advisory committee composed of representatives from key stakeholders. This committee can identify shared goals, such as reducing recidivism or improving public safety, and develop strategies to achieve them.

Essential entities for such a committee include:

- **Law Enforcement:** Police chiefs, sheriffs, and deputies who understand front-line challenges.
- **Judiciary:** Judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys to provide insights into court operations.
- **Corrections:** Jail and prison adminis-

trators, probation officers, and reentry specialists to address post-incarceration needs.

- **Community Services:** Social workers, mental health professionals, and victim advocates to tackle underlying issues.
- **Education and Youth Services:** School officials and juvenile justice specialists to prevent delinquency.
- **Public Health:** Healthcare providers to address addiction, trauma, and mental illness.
- **Community Leaders:** Faith-based organizations, neighborhood associations, and civic groups to foster trust and engagement.

Committees should meet regularly to review

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data, assess progress, and adjust strategies. Technology can play a key role, facilitating real-time data sharing and communication across agencies.

The Benefits of Regular Collaboration

The benefits of collaboration in the criminal justice system are profound and far-reaching. Regular communication and cooperation among agencies lead to:

- **Improved Efficiency:** Agencies can share resources and eliminate redundancies, ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.
- **Enhanced Public Safety:** Coordinated efforts enable proactive crime prevention and swift responses to emerging threats.
- **Better Outcomes for Offenders:** Integrated services help individuals address underlying issues and reintegrate into society successfully.
- **Greater Community Trust:** A transparent and unified justice system fosters confidence among citizens, who see agencies working together for their benefit.
- **Holistic Problem-Solving:** Collaboration allows agencies to tackle systemic issues, such as poverty and addiction, that drive criminal behavior.

An excellent example of collaboration is the co-responder model, where law enforcement officers work alongside mental health professionals to handle crises.

These programs reduce arrests, divert individuals to appropriate care, and improve out-

comes for both communities and the justice system.

Conclusion

Collaboration is not a luxury but a necessity in the modern criminal justice system. The challenges of crime, public safety, and justice require a unified approach that brings together diverse expertise and perspectives. By dismantling silos, fostering regular communication, and engaging community stakeholders, the criminal justice system can evolve into a truly collaborative framework. This evolution will not only improve efficiency and outcomes but also restore public trust, ensuring the system serves all citizens equitably and effectively.

Central to this collaborative effort is the importance of understanding and respecting the roles of various criminal justice entities. Law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, corrections officials, and community organizations each bring critical expertise to the table. However, without a clear understanding of how their roles intersect and influence one another, the system risks inefficiencies and missed opportunities.

For example, when police officers understand how their investigative processes affect prosecutors' ability to build a case, they can work more effectively to gather and preserve evidence. Similarly, when courts are aware of the constraints faced by jails, they can make sentencing decisions that consider alternatives to incarceration, reducing overcrowding and focusing on rehabilitation. Corrections officials, in turn, can work with probation officers and community services to ensure that reentry programs are aligned with broader public safety goals.

Effective communication across these roles is the glue that holds the criminal justice system together. Regular dialogue about how actions

in one area impact others allows for proactive problem-solving and prevents bottlenecks. For instance, sharing data about mental health crises can help law enforcement and social services coordinate responses that prevent unnecessary arrests and reduce strain on the courts and jails.

By understanding and integrating each other's roles, criminal justice professionals can accelerate processes, reduce redundancies, and focus on outcomes that benefit the entire community. This collaborative mindset not only enhances the system's efficiency but also ensures that justice is delivered in a fair, timely, and compassionate manner. In a world where the challenges facing the criminal justice system are increasingly complex, fostering this level of understanding and communication is no longer optional—it is essential for meaningful progress.

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Celebrating Women in Criminal Justice at the Jail Management Issues Conference

Marcy Calnan, JD, MEd., Editor, Texas Jails Association

At this year's Jail Management Issues Conference, a special gathering of women from across the state highlighted the strong and supportive community of women working in criminal justice. This event, known as the Women in Corrections Dinner, brought together individuals from various roles within law enforcement and corrections, creating a unique opportunity for networking, sharing experiences, and fostering professional and personal connections.

This cherished tradition began four years ago, spearheaded by Serina Greene, whose vision for a supportive and empowering event has continually evolved. From its origins as happy hour gatherings to formal dinners, the tradition reflects the dynamic and growing network of women in corrections. Serina hopes to expand these events beyond Texas, creating opportunities for women in criminal justice to connect across state lines.

One attendee, Courtney McKinney, a relatively new jailer with nearly a year of experience, expressed how impactful the event was for her. "The ladies' dinner was awesome," she shared. "Seeing how supportive everyone was and talking about their experiences was amazing. It was exciting to make connections with other





dining seafood restaurant in Galveston, Texas. What was not evident was that these joyful, smiling, beautiful women don a uniform and walk the corridors of county jails each day. As they took their seats and greeted one another, strangers began to chat, and barriers came down."

Aimee recounted how the dinner provided an opportunity for women to shed the bravado often required in their professional roles and embrace vulnerability and open communication. "In this environment, we felt celebrated and appreciated," she said. She proudly brought two new female officers to the event, intentionally encouraging them to step outside their comfort zones. "After almost two decades of jail conferences, I know how we stick to those we know and miss out on opportunities to network," she added. "Protectively, I watched as the obligatory introductions gave way to smiles followed by laughter."

women from all over the state." The event provided a space for women to be vulnerable, relatable, and empowered. Conversations ranged from professional challenges to personal stories, fostering a sense of sisterhood that transcends the often tough and isolated environment many women face in the criminal justice field.

Aimee Crockett, a training lieutenant from Smith County Jail, shared her reflections on the transformative evening. "Sisterhood is not a word that conjures an image of law enforcement or criminal justice professionals," she remarked. "But on September 11, 2024, sisterhood was evident as a group of women, mostly strangers, took their seats around tables in a fine

The evening's atmosphere fostered connections that transcended professional titles. "It was refreshing to be among sisters," Aimee reflected. "We are not related, but we are so very relatable. This setting allowed us to be





honor to host these events,” she said. “The women who attend are warriors—impressive in grit, perseverance, and strength. They’re creative problem solvers working in difficult environments, and these dinners offer them a chance to connect, share, and uplift one another.” The dinner is more than just a networking opportunity; it’s a space for women at all stages of their careers, from new jailers like Courtney to seasoned professionals, to learn from each other. “Women just beginning a career in corrections are at the table with sheriffs serving at the pinnacle of law enforcement,” Serina added.

vulnerable and supportive. As women, we have instincts; we are nurturers, maternal, mothers, and daughters. I saw women giving such supportive energy to younger members of our group and women who had suffered great tragedy lifted up in song as one sister celebrated her birthday for the first time since the tragic loss of her daughter years earlier.”

Serina Greene, reflecting on her four years of hosting these events, emphasized the importance of these gatherings. “It’s been my great

Her hope is that these gatherings will continue to foster leadership and bring about positive change within the field.

These Women in Corrections Dinners have become a cherished tradition at conferences, creating a lasting positive impact on all who attend. Misty Diaz, a Jail Administrator at the Lamb County Sheriff’s Office, recalls how the tradition began when she and Serina first collaborated. Their shared vision for a women-focused event has grown into a supportive



network that spans counties and brings women together, reinforcing the idea that in criminal justice, the sisterhood of women is strong and unbreakable.

As these gatherings continue to grow and evolve, the Texas Jail Association looks forward to more opportunities to celebrate and uplift the women working in corrections, criminal justice, and law enforcement. With Serina Greene's leadership and the dedication of participants, the hope is to expand the tradition across state lines, creating an even broader network of support and empowerment for women in criminal justice.



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What's Happening Around the State?

BROWN COUNTY

TJA Regional Trainings

Brown County Sheriff's Office hosted a Texas Jail Association (TJA) Regional Training on November 5th and 6th, 2024. We were honored to have **Johnny Jaquess, President of TJA**, teach the Leadership For Jailers class. We had all Brown County Sheriff's Office Jail employees in attendance along with employees from Comanche, Llano, and McCulloch counties. Thank you all for your participation in making this a fun and educational class!



COLLIN COUNTY

Collin County Detention Center Hosts Successful Officer Appreciation Event

This week, the Collin County Detention Center held its annual Officer Appreciation event, recognizing the hard work and dedication of its officers and staff. The two-day celebration, held on October 24th and 25th, featured a BBQ lunch provided by local community sponsors, offering a well-deserved break for those who serve in one of the most challenging areas of law enforcement.

The BBQ lunch was generously sponsored by Freedom Church, Anchor Church, and The Winning Edge, all of whom have been long-time supporters of the event. Robert Smith, from The Winning Edge, has been organizing the Officer Appreciation event for the past three years, ensuring that the team at the Detention Center feels the gratitude of the community.

In addition to the BBQ lunch, a number of local businesses and organizations contributed snacks and prizes to make the event even more special. Sponsors included IC Solutions, Well Path, Aramark, and Trinity Services Group, INC.

Adding a personal touch to the event was the Thirst No More Coffee Truck, which made a stop at the center to provide fresh coffee and keep staff energized throughout the day.

This annual event serves as a reminder of the community's appreciation for the dedication and professionalism of the officers and

What's Happening Around the State?

staff at the Collin County Detention Center. The continued support from local churches, businesses, and individuals ensures that these hardworking men and women know their efforts do not go unnoticed.

The Collin County Sheriff's Office extends its heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to the success of this year's Officer Appreciation event and to the community members who continue to show their support.

COLLIN COUNTY

VALOR/Collin County Sheriff's Office Equine Therapy Program

This past week marked a significant moment as we officially launched our VALOR/Collin County Sheriff's Office Equine Therapy Program, an effort to support the Justice-Involved Veterans in the Veterans Accessing Lifelong Opportunities for Rehabilitation (VALOR) program.

The VALOR Program was founded in 2018 by Judge John Roach in Collin County, the VALOR Program is an innovative in-patient, lockdown rehabilitation facility dedicated to helping justice-involved veterans from across Texas. Tailored to the unique challenges veterans face, VALOR provides a safe and structured space for participants to focus on overcoming substance abuse, trauma, and mental health struggles. The program offers not only intensive mental health and substance abuse treatment but also a strong work program designed to promote personal growth and stability.

Recognizing the potential to enhance further its already impactful approach, VALOR's

stakeholders, Judge John Roach and Collin County Sheriff Jim Skinner sought to take the program to new heights by introducing an equine therapy program to be located on the grounds of the Collin County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Skinner is leading the charge to bring a groundbreaking equine therapy program to VALOR—making it the first of its kind in the United States. This addition brings a powerful new dimension to the program, offering veterans an innovative path to healing and recovery.

Throughout the week, these inmates had the opportunity to work directly with renowned cowboy and master horseman Pat Puckett with The Disciplined Ride, learning horsemanship skills while developing trust, emotional resilience, and key coping strategies. This program offers them a unique path toward recovery, allowing them to become fair leaders and reconnect with themselves and others.

We also took a moment to recognize Collin County's own Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame and NCHA Hall of Fame member Punk Carter for his enduring support of both the Sheriff's Office and this equine therapy program. His contributions have been instrumental in building the program and making the launch a success.

A heartfelt thanks goes out to Dr. Mark Quinn, Caleb Quinn, David Costello, and their team at the WES Arena for allowing us to use their magnificent facilities and for being such wonderful hosts. Their generosity throughout the week provided the perfect setting for this transformative program.

What's Happening Around the State?

We are also extremely grateful to Collin County Commissioners Cheryl Williams, Susan Fletcher, and Darrell Hale for their unyielding support in championing this program. We also want to thank Texas State Senator Angela Paxton and Congressman Keith Self for their incredible support of the program and for participating in the luncheon and formal kickoff of this new initiative.

We look forward to sharing the continued success of this equine therapy program and the lasting impact it will have on the lives of these Veterans and their families. What we witnessed this week under Pat Puckett's expert tutelage is that horses can help make us better people in every respect!

KENDALL COUNTY TJA Regional Trainings

Kendall County Sheriff's Office hosted a Texas Jail Association (TJA) Regional Training on October 22nd and 23rd, 2024.



KENDALL COUNTY Promotions

Sheriff Al Auxier promoted **Joshua Henthorne** to Detention Administrative Sergeant, where he will be overseeing kitchen operations, inmate transports, medical services and quality assurance audits for the Kendall County Detention Facility. Henthorne has served with the Kendall County Sheriff's Office for 12 years. Prior to working for KCSO, Josh worked at the Coleman Unit in Lockhart, Texas.





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