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Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission: Moving Forward in the Era of Evidence-Based Policy

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Outline

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I – Introduction

- ◆ **The current state of national, state, and local criminal justice policy**
- ◆ **The evidence-based criminal justice policy movement**
- ◆ **Cost effectiveness, a growing urgency given ever present conditions of financial scarcity**
- ◆ **How to prioritize evidence-based policies with scarce resources?**



II – Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission

- ◆ **Past efforts at evidence-based criminal justice policies**
 - **Reentry, Law Enforcement Exchange, Drug Courts, Youth Empowerment, jail medical services, jail population forecasting, Weed and Seed**
- ◆ **Clearly, Palm Beach is ahead of most local jurisdictions by its recognition, since the early 90's, of the value of evidence-based CJC policies and practices**
- ◆ **Nonetheless, Palm Beach, like the rest of the country is experiencing a crisis in law enforcement with multiple lawsuits over police shootings as well as ongoing public safety challenges such as elder financial fraud, and gangs and delinquency**
- ◆ **Clearly, the ongoing challenge lies in the ultimate prioritization and selection of which evidence-based policies can be implemented given the financial scarcity to deal with policing issues and ongoing efforts to increase public safety**
- ◆ **Potential solution – Determining the magnitude of a given evidence-based policy upon, for example, increasing community support for law enforcement and overall public safety with subsequent prioritization as determined by funding capacity**



III – Some of Palm Beach County’s Crime and Policy Challenges

- ◆ **Policing and Community Relations**
- ◆ **Elder Financial Fraud**
- ◆ **Gangs and Delinquency**



IV – Policy Challenges and Response

- ◆ **Effectively using evidence-based policies with ever present financial scarcity is the challenge (i.e., how to prioritize)**
- ◆ **The recommended response involves three steps**
 1. **Identify the potential magnitude of impact upon confidence and public safety regarding specific criminal justice and crime problems by employing specific evidence-based policy solutions**
 2. **Identify the cost of the evidence-based policy solution alternatives**
 3. **Determine the county's crime policy priorities that optimize overall public confidence and safety given funding capacity**



IV – Policy Response & Model

Problem Identification	Examine criminal justice issues and/or official statistics on crime trends, arrests, delinquency, incarcerations, etc. Survey local leaders, criminal justice professionals, and/or citizens to inquire what they believe are the most critical crime and justice problems in Palm Beach County.
Evidence-Based Options	Review the relevant research and evidence-based practices. Bring in external researchers who are experts in the problem areas of interest to inform what the best options are to address the particular problem based on the highest quality studies. As you are now doing with the Urban Institute.
Cost of Options	Estimate what new initiatives will cost relative to the personnel, equipment, expenses, etc. required to implement the interventions. This should be done across different levels at which the intervention would be implemented.
Estimated Public Safety Benefits	Measure the changes in criminal justice practice and public safety outcomes (i.e., reduced crime, reduced victimization, reduced jail population, better community police relations, decreased fear of crime, cost savings for law enforcement, courts and/or corrections).
Estimated Cost Savings/Avoidance	The amount of cost savings/avoidance will be determined by comparing the level of additional expenditures that resulted from the initiative to the cost reductions derived from the initiative.
Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation	The outcomes of interest to be derived from the initiative will be closely monitored to determine if the outcomes change over time and, if so, what has caused these results. Determine if any unintended consequences have occurred.



IV – Policy Response: Policing & Community Relations

Problem Identification	National Perspective, budget cuts, race relations, erosion of moral authority
Evidence-Based Options	SMART Policing, Community Policing, Problem-Oriented Policing, Hot-Spots Policing, use of body cameras, independent review board to investigate police shootings
Cost of Options	Evidence-based community policing training programs (initial training courses and annual refreshers), community outreach initiatives (Institute for Community Peace, Town Hall meetings, etc.), staffing, equipment, scale/type of program
Estimated Public Safety Benefits	An increase in police officer legitimacy and accountability, improved relations between the local community and police department, an increase in public trust of local police department, decreases in crime rates, a reduction in the amount of police involved shootings of unarmed citizens
Estimated Cost Savings/Avoidance	Will be determined through an analysis of changes in police officer involved shootings, and community perceptions of the police and police officer perceptions before and after the implementation of the evidence-based community policing initiative
Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation	Community perceptions of the local police and police officer perceptions will be continuously monitored through news media content analyses and resident and police officer surveys or focus groups



IV – Policy Response: Elder Financial Fraud

Problem Identification	Identify the prevalence of reported elder financial fraud in Palm Beach County and understand the risk and protective factors of financial fraud victimization
Evidence-Based Options	Create an agency task force with experts trained in a variety of domains (social work, law, financial management, etc.), train police officers regularly to identify risk factors and interview elderly victims, improve reporting mechanisms, institute better screening for caregivers, educate residents
Cost of Options	Task force staffing levels, training courses, community outreach initiatives
Estimated Public Safety Benefits	An increase in the reporting of elder financial fraud and associated prosecution, a reduction in elder financial fraud victimization, increased citizen awareness of common frauds targeting the elderly
Estimated Cost Savings/Avoidance	Will be determined through an analysis of changes in elder financial fraud incidents before and after initiatives are implemented
Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation	The reported frequency and prosecution of elder financial fraud will be monitored closely and community awareness of fraud-related topics will be measured through surveys and focus groups



IV – Policy Response: Gangs and Delinquency

Problem Identification	Identify the prevalence of youth joining gangs and committing delinquent acts in Palm Beach County
Evidence-Based Options	Placement of more police in schools, anti-gang educational initiatives in schools and in the media at large, gathering and sharing more information about gangs, tattoo removal programs
Cost of Options	Staffing levels, equipment, supplies, and the scale of program
Estimated Public Safety Benefits	A reduction in the number of gangs and gang members, decreases in delinquency in schools and communities, and reductions in the level of fear experienced by citizens
Estimated Cost Savings/Avoidance	Will be determined through an analysis of changes in delinquency levels before and after the gang reduction initiatives and cost of delinquency estimates will be applied to these levels and cost savings/avoidance will be determined
Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation	The frequency of delinquency, especially violent delinquent acts, will be monitored closely and the prevalence of serious incidents in the schools being monitored as well



V – Recommendations for Moving Forward

- 1. Identify and prioritize crime and justice policy/practice areas where research and/or evaluation could be useful**
- 2. Consider contacting appropriate Criminology or other University College/Departments and/or research entities (i.e. The Urban Institute) that could assist you in addressing your policy/practice research and/or evaluation needs**
 - **Formal partnerships, partnership grants, internships**
- 3. Consider collaboration with the interested research unit upon the development of a partnership plan**
 - **Including required funding and strategies for acquiring funding. This may include seeking federal funding to support initiatives**
 - **Develop a dissemination plan and partnership actions that will result in the utilization of the research/evaluation findings. These actions could include collaborative presentations of the findings and policy/practice recommendations to the County Commission or other appropriate audiences**



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VI – Concluding Comments

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Thank You!

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