



Promising Practices in Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) Operations

Introduction:

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) established a set of [CJAB Minimum Operating Standards](#) in 2006 to support the advancement of CJABs across the Commonwealth. “*Promising Practices in CJAB Operations*” serves as a helpful guide for CJABs¹ working to strengthen leadership, expand membership, and boost engagement and planning. The promising practices outlined in this document offer additional suggestions and sample organizational components for successful CJABs across Pennsylvania.

CJAB Bylaws should delineate the name, authority for establishment, pertinent dates of establishment or revisions to the bylaws, as well as the mission of the CJAB. Bylaws should also outline the role of the CJAB, its membership, chair, and leadership structure, meeting logistics, and determination of a quorum. Communication, as well as meeting documentation, decision-making, or voting procedures, should also be included. The establishment of Executive, Steering, or Ad hoc committees and the management of grants should be addressed.

While CJAB Coordinators, Facilitators, Directors, or staff support may be unique to a county’s needs, the role of staff support should be included in the bylaws. Strategic planning, along with provisions for the review and amendments of bylaws² and the maintenance of the CJAB’s strategic plan(s) should be institutionalized in the CJAB’s bylaws and incorporated into regular business meetings to ensure the CJAB’s health, longevity, and sustainability.

CJAB Membership:

Representatives from the required group of justice system stakeholders should receive a formal, documented invitation to join the CJAB and participate in its meetings, projects, and other work. All department heads or representatives who accept the invitation or nomination to serve as a member of the CJAB should serve as a single voting member. CJABs are encouraged to expand beyond the required members to promote cross-collaborative initiatives.

¹ For more information about CJABs and related technical assistance, conferences, and events, please visit PCCD’s [website](#) and select ‘Criminal Justice System Improvements,’ or click [here](#) to be redirected.

Contact Michael Leister at (717) 265-8528 or mileister@pa.gov if you have questions or would like additional information concerning the CJAB Minimum Operating Standards.

² PCCD has developed [sample bylaws](#) to assist counties in establishing or amending CJAB bylaws.

Required Members:

1. County governing body³
2. Judiciary⁴
3. Court Administration
4. District Attorney
5. Public Defender
6. Victims Service Provider(s)⁵
7. Law Enforcement⁶
8. Sheriff
9. Pretrial Services
10. Adult Probation
11. Juvenile Probation
12. Adult Corrections
13. Juvenile Detention
14. Single County Authority
15. County Mental Health and ID Office
16. Reentry Representative(s)⁷

The following individuals are strongly recommended as representatives essential to the operation, planning, and decision-making of the CJAB and the local justice system:

17. Human Services Director
18. Information Technology
19. Clerk of Courts
20. Magisterial District Judge⁸
21. Treatment Court Coordinator(s)
22. State Probation and Parole
23. Children and Youth Services
24. Other groups impacting the justice system, as invited by the CJAB Leadership⁹

Other Suggested Representatives:

25. Stepping Up Coordinator
26. Housing Authority/Provider(s)
27. Domestic Relations
28. Emergency Services
29. Coroner
30. Crisis Intervention Team Coord.
31. Veterans Justice Outreach Coord.
32. Bar Association Representative
33. Member(s) of the State Legislature
34. Schools, Intermediate Units, institutions of higher education¹⁰

³ E.g., A County Commissioner, the County Executive, or appointed designee

⁴ E.g., President Judge, Administrative or Criminal Court Judge

⁵ CJABs should include stakeholder(s) from local organizations that provide comprehensive direct services supporting victims of interpersonal violence. In many instances, proper coverage of services will entail engaging more than one local victim service provider to fulfill these roles (e.g., the Director of the local Child Advocacy Center, or the Executive Director of a domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or other interpersonal violence service provider). Visit the Pennsylvania Office of Victims' Services website for a [map and directory of local victim services providers by county](#).

⁶ E.g., County, city, regional, State, and/or local police stakeholders representing the service and coverage area within your County and metropolitan area. This may include a variety of law enforcement leaders across the City and County, the President of a local Chiefs Association, School Resource Officers, etc.

⁷ Reentry Coalition Chair – In counties where a reentry coalition exists, the Reentry Coalition Chair and/or a designee should also serve as a member of the CJAB.

⁸ E.g., President of the Magisterial District Judges (MDJ) Association or other MDJ(s) representing the justice system.

⁹ E.g., Representatives from local Workforce Development Boards, Veterans' Administration, Area Agency on Aging, Medical Assistance Office, Hospitals, Co-responder or Mobile Crisis Services, local organizations that provide services to justice-involved individuals, and community members with lived experience.

¹⁰ E.g., Superintendents, Dean of Students, Professors

Meetings and Quorum

Meeting frequency and other meeting rules should be outlined in the CJAB's Bylaws. All members must receive timely notifications regarding meeting dates, times, and locations. Additionally, CJABs should establish the quorum requirements for voting and incorporate this definition into the bylaws. Opportunities for virtual meetings and/or attendance are encouraged to maximize turnout and engagement.

As outlined in the [CJAB Minimum Operating Standards](#), CJABs are required to meet at least four (4) times annually. CJABs are encouraged to expand upon their meeting schedule (e.g., including a combination of strategic planning, networking, and educational opportunities). CJABs may establish a subcommittee meeting schedule if desired and are encouraged to offer hybrid/virtual options to enhance participation in meetings and voting.

Agenda:

CJAB agendas should include a broad array of topics that meet the needs of criminal justice stakeholders and align with the CJAB's priorities and strategic vision. PCCD has compiled [sample agendas](#) that address the unique needs of some of the CJABs in the Commonwealth.

CJABs are encouraged to review data points relevant to their local adult and juvenile justice system, behavioral health, and other local sectors. Learn more about criminal justice trends, research, and data through [PCCD's Statistical Analysis Center](#).

Voting:

CJAB Bylaws should specify voting methods and procedures that ensure fair and equitable outcomes and facilitate timely decision-making. This may include refining rules and guidelines for ad hoc in-person or electronic voting at or between special meetings. To address time-sensitive matters that arise between regular meetings (such as requests for letters of support), CJABs are encouraged to implement methods, such as online voting or email polling, to complement and enhance member participation, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive review and response to voting requests.

CJABs are also encouraged to establish a process for abstaining from and disclosing conflicts of interest during voting procedures. Procedures concerning proxy voting or the appointment of designees should also be integrated into the Bylaws of the CJAB. Members of the CJAB representing a department, organization, or their designee should be entitled to a single vote.

Meeting Documentation:

CJABs should establish a process for distributing meeting minutes from the CJAB general meeting and any committee or subcommittee meetings to CJAB members. Establishing a method for collecting and distributing member reports has also enhanced the flexibility of CJAB meeting agendas and promoted thoughtful discussion during meetings.

Committees:

CJABs are strongly encouraged to establish committees that reflect their strategic priorities. Committee membership should encompass a diverse range of perspectives, consisting of a combination of CJAB members and individuals from departments and organizations most relevant to planning and policy development. It is most beneficial to the CJAB's operations for committee chairs to serve as active members of CJAB and/or the CJAB's Steering Committee, if applicable. Non-CJAB members should be invited to serve on committees to enhance insight, collaboration, and shared responsibilities, upon the CJAB's approval.

Committees should be responsible for notifying and documenting meetings. The Chair or designee should provide regular updates to the CJAB membership regarding the progress of priority areas. Priority areas should be reviewed periodically in conjunction with the CJAB's annual strategic planning review process.

Grant Management:

CJABs often serve as a clearinghouse for collaboration to promote the efficient and effective use of resources and refinement of criminal justice policies and practices. To facilitate this role, many CJABs serve as clearinghouses for the review, acquisition, and management of grants that directly impact their local criminal justice systems. CJABs are encouraged to establish a process for reviewing and disbursing grant funding opportunities, identifying those that align with the CJAB's strategic priorities, and developing processes for reviewing grant application plans, managing related data, and accepting and reviewing letters of support.

Staff Support:

CJABs should have dedicated staff support, such as a director, coordinator, facilitator, and/or secretary, to organize meetings, materials, and presenters. CJAB Coordinators are vital for maintaining the Board's health, function, and longevity, ensuring long-term success. Outline the responsibilities of the CJAB's coordinator, Facilitator, or other critical staff support positions.

Strategic Planning and Performance:

CJABs should develop and maintain a strategic plan that identifies the Board's and its stakeholders' goals and priorities. Plans should include input from membership to incorporate strategies across intercept points that impact the justice system (e.g., opportunities for diversion, alternatives to incarceration, and reentry initiatives). Periodic review and maintenance of planning priorities should be incorporated into the CJABs meeting infrastructure to ensure members and committees have the resources and support necessary to complete assigned goals and objectives.

Reviews and Amendment of Bylaws

CJAB Bylaws should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they meet the current organizational structure and policies of the Board.