



OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF THE ST. LOUIS JUSTICE CENTER

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Operational Review of the St. Louis Justice Center

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Introduction

When contracted to review the jail it was with the following eight areas to examine:

1. Assess current emergency incident responses related to the health and wellbeing of inmates within the Justice Center.
2. Recommend improvements related to coordination between the Sheriff's Office, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, and the Health Department within the facility.
3. Review protocols regarding emergency incidents and provide recommendations.
4. Review training protocols regarding emergency incidents and provide recommendations.
5. Recommend improvements with incident tracking and staff engagement with inmates.
6. Evaluate current jail population trends and recommend protocols for housing and how to improve options.
7. Analyze staff culture and make recommendations to leadership to improve staff culture.
8. Review Justice Center operations as needed.

Work started for this review in the Justice Center on December 10, and over the next six weeks operations were observed throughout the building.

The Policy and Procedures manual was reviewed in its entirety, as was the Inmate Handbook. In total well over 150 people were interviewed, and the audit that was conducted on the jail by Missouri State Auditor Scott Fitzpatrick was helpful. I am appreciative to all of those who took time to share their experiences, observations, concerns and thoughts on the operations of the jail. This includes citizens who have served time in the facility. On occasion people interviewed also shared what was working correctly at the Justice Center. In addition to interviewing more than 50 detainees and a similar number of corrections officers and jail staff, I also had conversations that were enlightening and helpful to me with the following professionals who have work related to the jail on a regular basis:

- Private attorneys who have years of experience working with clients housed at the Justice Center
- Contracted vendors, including the educational program
- Contracted medical staff
- Contracted food services employees
- City officials within the Mayor's Office and the Department of Public Safety
- Michael Burton, Founder and Executive Director of St. Louis Survivors Legal Support
- Health Department staff, including Dr. Matifadza Hlatshwayo-Davis

- Courtney Dohnal from Places for People
- St. Louis Circuit Prosecutor Gabe Gore and First Assistant Steven Capizzi
- Detention Facilities Oversight Board Chairman the Reverend Darryl Gray and board member Pamela Walker
- Representatives from the St. Louis Public Defender's Office, including Public Defender Matthew Mahaffey
- Sue McGraugh, St. Louis University Law School Professor and Supervisor of the Criminal Defense Clinic
- St. Louis Librarian Waller McGuire
- Pretrial officials including Supervisor Sarah Phillips
- Michelle Smith, founder and Director of the Missouri Justice Coalition
- St. Louis Metropolitan Police Chief Robert Tracy and officials from his department who have assigned responsibilities related to jail intake operations.

What I learned from these individuals, and in my own observations at the facility, is that the St. Louis Justice Center needs immediate change as it pertains to staffing, operations, policies and procedures. Some of these changes can be easy and quick, but others will take time and investment. Additionally, an assessment of the building's functions such as heating, air, and plumbing appears warranted.

While there are concerns about how the jail is not meeting best practices protocols, there are some positives I observed that are worth noting. For example, the professionals and officials listed above who I talked with were solution focused and clearly communicated a desire to work together to improve the Justice Center. The various conversations with these people left me inspired when nearly across the board they shared their ideas on how to better operations at the facility and their wanting to work in unison to make the jail safer and more functional. These people were extremely generous with their time and did not want to rehash past decisions or relationships. They shared wanting to spend time moving forward so that the facility will improve.

One significant highlight was working aside current Acting Commissioner Tammy Ross. I've been in the criminal justice profession for 40 years and have been in numerous correctional institutions throughout the United States. During my lengthy career I've observed operations ranging from rural facilities with one staff member per shift, to gang members in overfilled institutions in California, and a facility on the east coast so large that it has a licensed and accredited hospital as part of their operations. I can say that Tammy Ross is one of the three best leaders at any correctional facility that I've been to. She has the needed skills of empathy and control and can immediately adjust her approach as needed. The respect that Ms. Ross has from those residing in the jail is at a level rarely seen for a corrections leader. Amazingly Ms. Ross has a similar level of respect from much of the staff. Further, most of the individuals from the various agencies and departments mentioned above gave significant unsolicited praise for Ms.

Ross's work and problem-solving abilities. They referred to her as the go-to person when assistance was needed in the jail. St. Louis University Law School Professor Sue McGraugh, who is also a noted practicing attorney and Supervisor of the Criminal Defense Clinic, spoke at a Board of Aldermen meeting regarding the jail. Professor McGraugh referred to Ms. Ross's work at the facility by stating, "...Tammy has been the one consistent person who has kept it (the jail) from developing into complete chaos."

Another positive occurred during my observations of operations at the facility when I witnessed and interviewed some jail staff who were dedicated, knowledgeable, had high standards and utilized excellent communication skills. This was despite being under near constant pressure they currently endure in their positions at the facility. These employees were proud of their work, and their interactions with detainees were professional, and these staff could thrive if employed at any corrections facility in the country. They are bitter about some past decisions but work hard every day.

This professionalism was not constant in what I observed, and there is a need for improvement with many of the staff. A number of the professionals listed above who were interviewed, as well as residents of the jail, expressed the same. Some Corrections Officers and managers were overly demanding and rude to detainees and others at the facility. Some staff were too lenient or dismissive. Communication skills were lacking with some of the interactions witnessed, as was providing respect. Again, these staff members needing to adapt their approaches were not across the board in the jail, and it was pleasing to witness and work with the staff who demonstrated high standards. Other jail staff who are not so professional need to receive training to meet the higher standards that the jail should require.

A positive experience was the responses I received when sharing information with officials from the mayor's office regarding some of my findings as they developed. I was impressed and appreciative with the manner in which solutions came from those officials and the resulting actions. This ranged from repairing internal windows that had been broken for extended periods to arranging for inoperable televisions in pods to be fixed. Several times I sensed from staff within the mayor's office a strong commitment to provide needed support, fixes and improvements.

The above experiences help guide the recommendations that follow in this report to fix problem areas. The experiences are also a possible sign of opportunity for future positive change in the jail. Hopefully positives can be enhanced and negatives eliminated. There are opportunities to make the jail safer, more justice-based and even reduce recidivism. However, there is much that needs to be done.

One area of particular concern is how the Corrections Department has become the last resort for housing people with mental illness. More than one in four of the residents at the Justice Center

are prescribed psychiatric medication(s), and I witnessed detainees in the facility show clear signs of severe struggles related to their illness. Many of these people would be better served with proper community mental health services, which the state of Missouri sorely lacks. When these people are released without a proper safety net of services to assist them, a significant number will experience a revolving door back to the jail. Earlier this year the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice issued a report went suggesting that the state of Missouri is likely in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act because of the lack of mental health services made available in the community. This included assertive community treatment, permanent supportive housing, supported employment, peer support, crisis services, and outreach and engagement.

Corrections officials have no control over who is admitted to the Justice Center. Employees at the jail must deal with a variety of people every day, some who are extremely dangerous. While in years past there were a higher percentage of people detained in the Justice Center who were charged with nonviolent offenses, the recent growth in the jail's population can be mostly attributed to people being charged with violent crimes. For example, currently there are 287 detainees facing trial for assaultive crimes and 128 charged with murder. Others are detained on charges that include kidnapping, firearms, and sex offenses, including rape. This compares to 22 people detained for trafficking drugs and nine for first degree property damage.

In contrast, there are likely people incarcerated who could be safely and appropriately supervised in the community as they process through, and possibly out, of the court system. While a number of people are admitted to the jail because of a failed community mental health system, there are others who develop mental health issues because of what they experience in the jail, including unreasonably lengthy stays. It is with hope that the observations and suggestions in this report are helpful in advancing the jail and bettering the conditions of the facility for both staff and detainees, while also leading to greater justice in the city.

Item One:

Analyze staff culture and make recommendations to leadership to improve staff culture.

The culture at the Justice Center is one of regularly being overwhelmed because of the lack of Correctional Officers staffing available to operate the facility safely and appropriately. This problem of staffing issues is not unique to the St. Louis Justice Center, it is occurring across the region and the country. There have been numerous press reports, including from CBS News, that the state of Florida was forced to activate National Guard Troops to perform the duties of Corrections Officers in their state prisons because of ongoing staffing issues. The need for additional officers in the St. Louis Jail is dire. While the jail has increased in detainee census significantly over the last three years, the number of Corrections Officers has decreased at alarming levels over the same time. One of the major contributors to this was when so many

staff left during COVID, which occurred nationally at a significant number of businesses and operations. With the facility so full and the limited number of Corrections Officers so stretched, problems develop that could be diverted if proper coverage of a well-trained staff was available. A few employees, Corrections Officers and others, told me that they wanted to quit their jobs for a variety of reasons, including the lack of staff, feelings of being disrespected for a variety of reasons, intermittent support and danger, as well as a belief that their pay is low.

In what was the most frequent complaint voiced, residents of the facility complained about not being let out of their cells enough. Some of these detainees volunteered they understand this is caused by Corrections Officer staffing shortages. The residents of the jail further complained that programming, access to communication devices and recreation opportunities were intermittently or rarely taking place. An additional comment voiced by detainees was a feeling that they were disrespected and treated inappropriately by some of the staff. Also shared and documented have been problems with visitation, both professional and personal, of which many of these problems can be attributed to a lack of Corrections Officers being available.

While there has been some success in hiring new staff, a substantial number of newly employed officers continue to quit their jobs within 180 days of starting their first day of work. Additionally, the process to bring on new Corrections Officers is lengthy, and it is not uncommon for someone who has passed the interview process to wait more than a month to be drug screened through the contracted provider. Applicants can find and accept employment elsewhere during this delay.

Existing staff complained of too much overtime and being forced to work in unsafe situations. They also voiced frustration at being required to assist with training of new officers while already feeling overwhelmed and overworked. Some of the experienced staff resent this assignment when they already have so many responsibilities.

Recommendations:

1. To ensure more Corrections Officers are employed at the jail, it is recommended contracting with a professional corrections recruiting agency to secure more candidates for employment. This has been a successful strategy to add staff in other corrections facilities.
2. Training and financial incentives are recommended for experienced staff to act as mentors for new hires. Training should be developed for senior staff regarding how to be effective mentors. Should a new officer complete 120 days of employment with the guidance of the mentor, a \$500 reward can be issued to the mentor, with an additional \$1,000 at the six month and one year period. These financial amounts and time frames serve only as examples.

3. In what will be a repeated suggestion throughout this report, it is recommended that the Justice Center contract with the American Correctional Association (“ACA”) to establish assistance in the jail becoming an accredited institution. This will allow the Justice Center to have standards and procedures that are nationally accepted. Meeting national standards would likely reduce the stress of staff and result in longer tenures of employees.
4. Until an initial review by the ACA is completed, postponing the current plan to go from eight-hour shifts to twelve-hours seems appropriate.
5. Training for new Corrections Officers should be updated and improved, perhaps even lengthened. Some of what is being taught to incoming staff is based on outdated policies, procedures and manuals. New methods of more effective training are likely available. The officer over training is enthusiastic and the ACA could assist her in helping her advance training.
6. It is recommended that additional training for existing staff be brought forth regarding how to more effectively and professionally communicate and work with employees and detainees. This includes line officers and managers.
7. There is a need for officers to be available to respond to an emergency literally every minute of the day. Many staff leave the facility during mealtimes. For safety reasons foremost, as well as to help keep employees and show respect for their need to respond immediately to emergency issues at the facility, it is recommended that meals be provided to corrections staff during their shifts. These meals should be through a contracted vendor, and detainees should not be utilized to prepare this food. Supplying meals for staff is a standard practice in other correctional facilities in the region and throughout the country.
8. It is recommended that solutions be found to speed up the process to hire applicants once they pass the interview stage. One idea is to contract with a vendor that accepts walk-ins for the drug screen, as opposed to waiting for a specific appointment.
9. A regular complaint from staff is their desire for higher pay. The city is currently conducting a pay study to examine this. It is recommended that once completed that the study be shared with staff. Should any adjustments be justified it is recommended that they be done quickly.
10. Case Workers, who provide vital services to the detainees and the jail, are often the lifeline to the families and needed services. The Case Worker position requires a degree and history of specialized experience, yet the pay for these positions is less than that of a Corrections Officer. It is recommended that the pay study include Case Workers.
11. To improve the culture staff requested more communication from administration rather than hearing information secondhand or through rumors. A weekly email update from the Commissioner, handouts at staff briefings and other opportunities for communication are recommended.

Items Two:

- **Emergency incident responses related to the health and wellbeing of inmates within the Justice Center.**
- **Review protocols regarding emergency incidents and provide recommendations.**
- **Review of the training protocols regarding emergency incidents.**

Nearly every day I was at the facility a smoke detector was activated, likely caused by detainees utilizing contraband that was brought into the facility or dipping paper in coffee and smoking it after it dries. Electrical outlets exist in many of the cells with no purpose, and there is clear evidence that detainees have found a way to break into them to create sparks that lead to fires. There is no need for these outlets to be active and they should be removed. One day over a six-hour period the smoke detectors were activated on three occasions. Construction taking place may also contribute to some of the smoke detectors activating, but certainly not all of them.

Separately there was an emergency in the medical unit where a man detoxing and under observation in the medical unit had to be transferred to a hospital via an ambulance for what was a suspected overdose. Concerns remain about drugs being brought into the facility, thus causing danger to detainees and staff.

As detailed later, most of the policies and procedures in the department's manual were signed off by a prior Commissioner who left employment from the facility in May of 2021. Incidents that occurred in the past would have been excellent opportunities to update policies regarding responding to emergency incidents. St. Louis Police officials reported that procedure and protocols related to past events at the jail appeared confusing.

As mentioned previously it was not uncommon for staff to leave the facility during their meal breaks, which could cause issues with not having enough personnel to respond to emergencies. Expanding the monitoring of detainee phone calls and emails, as well as employee emails, appears worth further examination.

It was refreshing to work with the new physician assigned to the facility, Dr. Dans. I found her very open to ideas on improving services and creating policies to ensure better cohesion. She offered well-reasoned suggestions. There is a learning process taking place with the new provider. While there has been frustration when dealing with the previous medical provider, there appears to be positive change going forward.

The American Corrections Association can assist with training protocol needs regarding emergency incidents going forward.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended to contract with the American Corrections Association (ACA) to adopt nationally accepted policies and procedures regarding emergency responses and all aspects of effectively operating the jail, and work towards full accreditation through ACA.
2. Teaming with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department in the designing of policies and examine the need for memorandums of understanding is recommended.
3. It is recommended to assign police officials at the jail to conduct independent investigations regarding suspected illegal activity and policy issue violations, with costs of the salaries being the responsibility of the Corrections Department. Additionally, charges should be filed on detainees who engage in assaults, property damage, possessing illegal contraband and other serious offenses.
4. Examining how to expand monitoring of communications that take place in the building is recommended.
5. While the medical department is accredited through an independent organization, there is a separate accreditation medical process available through the American Corrections Association. It is recommended that the Health Department examine the ACA accreditation process and requirements to see if there are benefits to what ACA offers as opposed or in addition to what is already in place.

Item Three:

Improvements related to coordination between the Sheriff's Office, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, and the Health Department.

The timing to meet with the Sheriff's Department was not ideal due to the change in leadership brought forth by the recent election. As a result, numerous Sheriff's officials in leadership positions were given notice of their positions being eliminated, and the new Sheriff was not yet in place to discuss operations for this review.

Pretrial professionals made it possible for me to observe the process of residents of the facility being transferred from the jail to Sheriff's officials for initial court appearances. What observed went fairly smoothly, although employees with the Sheriff's Department reported being understaffed. This was during the time of substantial change with the Sheriff's Department post election.

I toured the police space at the jail established to transfer custody to the facility from law enforcement, and met with police officials with assigned responsibility over this function and area. This space was in need of repair and substantial cleaning (as were a significant number of other places throughout the building). Because this specific area is that of the Metropolitan Police to perform their assigned functions, police officials previously requested remote access for the police supervisor to the video cameras that oversee this unit. Police staff had suggestions to

improve relationships and functions related to how the jail and police intake areas work and processing arrestees over to the custody of the jail.

Some defendants brought into the police area are housed there for days at a time, and on occasion people are forced to stay there for possibly more than a full week. The detention cells used in this area are not designed for placement this long. Further, policy dictates that these defendants are forced to stay in their personal clothing for this entire stay. There are no televisions for those housed here, nor access to books or tablets. Sleeping space is nearly nonexistent. The same is true with the jail's intake area. In what is beyond an inconvenience, bathrooms are not readily available for these detainees in the jail's intake area, while bathrooms are available in the police intake area.

Previously it was suggested that the Corrections Department work with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department to design policies and examine the need for memorandums of understanding as to responding to emergency issues. Not all interaction with police or the sheriffs involves emergencies. With police officials having demonstrated their desire to evolve their relationship with the jail and a new Sheriff in office, now would be a good opportunity to jointly review operations that involve these agencies.

A great concern is how contraband is being brought into the facility, likely smuggled in by detainees, staff and contractors.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the request by police officials regarding a police supervisor being granted video access be reviewed by the new administration at the jail.
2. In the intake area it is recommended that ACA standards be utilized to establish best practices and police officials be involved in the entire process of creating a more efficient and humane policy.
3. When seen by medical officials at the intake stage it is recommended that intake forms be reviewed and releases of information be created to obtain and share information with pretrial officials, and defense intake forms be reviewed by attorneys for reporting to the Court to help with decision making regarding community releases. This would also assist in developing supervision strategies and provide the medical department and case workers more information. Pretrial, Department of Health, and Public Defender officials should be involved in this process as to deciding what information is needed. Additionally, it is recommended that policies be developed to start the process of medical discharge planning at admission. Officials from the Department of Health and defense attorneys should be consulted in this process regarding what information is obtained at intake.

4. As to the holding area operated by the police and the intake area ran by the jail, it is recommended that providing televisions be explored and new policies be discussed regarding the detainees who are placed in these areas. Allowing books provided by the library should be reviewed. The books are free from the library and the televisions could be paid for out of the Inmate Fund.
5. It is recommended that an examination be conducted on the facilities infrastructure, including plumbing, electrical and heating and air.
6. Construction is needed to access nearby bathroom access in the jail intake cells and is recommended.
7. Painting and refinishing of floors is recommended throughout much of the facility.
8. The St. Charles County Jail has an “amnesty box” in their intake area. This is a secure and locked metal box that is similar in size to that of a postal drop box as placed on streets. Upon admission to the jail in St. Charles incoming admittees are told if they have any drugs on their person, they give the immediate opportunity to deposit the contraband into the amnesty box. Those who drop off contraband are informed that no new criminal charges regarding the material will be filed. This process has proven to be quite successful and has substantially lowered contraband being smuggled into the jail in St. Charles and lowered overdoses occurring at the facility. The contraband placed in the box is removed at regularly scheduled intervals and destroyed. It is recommended that similar boxes be installed at the intake areas at the jail. St. Charles Director of Corrections Dan Keen has offered his assistance to help establish policies for this innovative practice.
9. It is recommended that the Corrections Department contract with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department or the Sheriff to provide screening services for those entering the jail, with said costs to be at the expense of the Corrections Department. An additional option would be to contract out to have a private security company for this function.
10. Obtaining a narcotics detection canine was in the process, and it is recommended that this moves forward.

Item Four:

Evaluate current jail population trends and recommend protocols for housing and options to improve housing options.

At the start of this review the population at the facility was 765. This compares to 546 at the end of 2021, 538 in 2022, and 657 detainees in 2023. These numbers represent a 40 percent increase in just three years.

The current number of Corrections Officer at the end of 2024 was 103. This compares to 157 officers in 2021, 114 in 2022 and 106 in 2023. Over a three-year period, the number of

Corrections Officers on staff *decreased* by 32 percent while facing a 40 percent *increase* in detainees housed at the Justice Center. As mentioned previously, COVID contributed to the loss of staff, both at the jail and nationally in countless organizations and businesses.

The growth in the detained population continues at alarming rates. In just three weeks after this formal review began on December 10, the jail census increased by 22, placing the population at 787. The jail is incapable of sustaining this kind of continued growth.

Of the 765 people incarcerated on December 9, 705 (92%) were male and 60 (8%) female. A total of 597 (78%) have been in the facility less than a year, 122 (16%) have been incarcerated for one to two years, and 45 (nearly 6%) have been at the jail for two to four years. One resident of the facility has been detained for more than five years awaiting trial. Movement at the jail is extremely lacking with little physical or mental stimulation, and detainees have no ability to go outside. Research has found that one year of incarceration takes two years or more off a detainee's life.

One of the contributions to the jail population increase is because there are more prosecutions taking place compared to recent years. Many prosecutors of the St. Louis office under prior administration left their positions, resulting in fewer cases being filed. Since taking office St. Louis Circuit Prosecutor Gabe Gore has been able to add staff more in line with the number of prosecutors the office historically had. More prosecutors have resulted in more cases being filed. Prior to Mr. Gore taking office the previous administration refused to prosecute cases brought forth by certain law enforcement officers. This policy has been eliminated and has resulted in additional prosecutions, as well.

Mr. Gore has fixed a major concern by eliminating a practice which resulted in an increased population at the jail and substantially longer lengths of stay. Previous administration at the prosecutor's office had regularly used the practice of dropping charges of defendants when they were about to face trial, then quickly refiled the charges before the person could be released from incarceration. Once the charges were refiled, the clock started anew for defendants and resulted in unnecessary lengthy stays at the jail. Mr. Gore has made a strong and concentrated effort to eliminate this practice and should be commended for this.

St. Louis Metropolitan Police Chief Robert Tracy has brought forth successful efforts to address violent crime in the city. Because of the success of Chief Tracy's efforts more people are being detained with serious and violent charges. These detainees are likely not going to be released quickly and their cases processing through the courts can be lengthier than less violent and lower profile cases. This has caused an increase in the population at the jail.

The legal requirements regarding youthful detainees' incarceration standards can be overwhelming for the jail. These detainees must be separated from any other incarcerated

groups, causing staff to be dedicated to overseeing small numbers of individuals (currently two, soon to be one) while also taking up considerable space.

Recommendations:

1. Recreation and physical exercise opportunities are very limited, as are the opportunities for mental stimulation. To house people at the facility in excess of a year likely exacerbates mental health issues for detained people already afflicted. It also could create mental health issues for those who previously had none. It is recommended that cases of people incarcerated at the jail for the longest periods of detainment be examined to see if they can be prioritized for court proceedings, targeting those with the longest length of stays first. This will require teamwork with the jail, the court, prosecutors and defense attorneys.
2. The continued census increase with a decreasing number of staff is not sustainable. It is recommended that a plan be developed to contract out with other correctional facilities to house people who would normally be detained at the St. Louis Justice Center. This would not be a first in Missouri, as many inmates from Kansas City are being detained outside the area.
3. Contracting to detain youth offenders should take place if an appropriate facility can be found.

Item Five:

Review of Overall Operations

Please note that the following part of this review has a significant emphasis on adding programming to better assist and control detainees in the jail. Programming can help take the jail to higher levels of professionalism and create more positive outcomes, as well as make the facility safer. However, it will be nearly impossible to add programming until more Corrections Officer are hired and trained.

The copy of the Policies and Procedures Manual that was supplied from the training department was freshly printed from the internal webpage of the Corrections Department. In reviewing the manual, it was more than 1,100 pages in length and comprised of 201 policies. No index was attached to the manual, which made it difficult to find a specific policy. Of the 201 total policies, eight have been updated since a previous Commissioner of the facility left employment at the agency in May of 2001.

The Use of Force Policy was updated March 3, 2023, and is in line with other policies that I've seen. It is thorough and specific. However, these policies can evolve rapidly based on changes in case law.

There have been ongoing problems with security at the jail. In addition to contraband being smuggled in, there have been occasions of staff being able to work and converse with detainees who are relatives, friends, or significant others, all in violation of policy. Confidential administrative decisions have been shared with staff and residents of the facility, as well. These are serious security issues.

When attempting to review incidents that occurred in the jail the video system uses outdated computer technology. The computers are in need of replacement with similar technology that is utilized by the police department. The number of cameras and their placements should be reviewed.

It was concerning to witness some of the youngest Corrections Officers in the jail assigned to oversee the two areas where the detainees who caused the most problems are housed. These officers were very inexperienced and ill-suited to be over this stressful and dangerous assignment.

The Inmate Handbook that is given to detainees was last updated several years ago. The booklet lists the corrections commissioner, two superintendents and a mayor who are no longer with the city. Much of the information in the booklet is outdated and contradicts current policy.

While there is a diversion program in place operated by the Prosecutor's Office, the program's criteria are limited when compared to similar programs elsewhere.

When observing pretrial services in action it was clear that their leadership is excellent, and their operations run smoothly. It was impressive to see the pretrial employees and partner agency, Places for People, work so hard and witness their professionalism in action.

There have been prior reports of some insulin dependent detainees not receiving their medication at the jail, with one report having tragic results. I met with all but one of the residents of the jail who were listed as requiring insulin. Every one of these people reported receiving their required medication and most were satisfied with the medical care they received for diabetes. However, three of the detainees reported that the insulin can come at various hours as opposed to being delivered consistently. One man shared that his personal physician prescribed the insulin to be injected before bed, but it was usually administered in the morning hours. Two people stated that when they complained about the inconsistent timing of their insulin being delivered, they were told that it was due to staff shortages. One man complained that when given snacks to detainees, they are often provided sweets. He requested that education be provided to jail staff, including medical personnel, to ensure the diabetics housed in the jail have an alternative to the sugar-based snacks. The Health Department is addressing this.

I observed that the St. Louis Department of Health (STLDOH) officials take supervision of the contracted health provider seriously. There has been a reported increased emphasis on audits and improving communication by STLDOH regarding the medical provider. STLDOH Health Services Manager Beau Richmond is dedicated, professional and makes a valuable addition to the team to better healthcare. Mr. Richmond is working to establish protocols so that more information is gathered at Intake and shared. He also is working towards receiving better communication from the provider, particularly when detainees are removed from the facility for hospital stays.

Health Department Director Dr. Matifadza Hlatshwayo Davis proactively put together a well-reasoned Corrective Action Plan to address issues with the medical provider, which is greatly responsible for evolving healthcare at the jail going forward.

When discharging detainees to the community it is possible to help some of these people needing mental health and/or general healthcare once released. Although done so in the past there currently are no efforts being made at the facility to help them enroll in Medicaid and/or Medicare. Enrollment allows these people to become eligible for services upon discharge. National research has found that correctional facilities enrolling inmates in Medicaid and/or Medicare so they can receive services and medicine when released to their home communities lowers readmissions to the facilities by 20 to 30 percent. A process to accomplish this has been crafted by Missouri Appleseed, a nonprofit established to create impactful change that builds stronger families, reduces recidivism, and creates safer communities. Utilizing the program developed by Missouri Appleseed, the St. Louis County Jail has brought forth this enrollment years ago and found it to be quite successful. This is also the program that was utilized in the St. Louis Jail before being discontinued.

The jail incarcerates people with mental issues who are awaiting competency examinations and restoration. The exams are provided at a state institution, and it is not uncommon to wait a year for these services. During the waiting time the mental condition of these people often worsens. To help with this issue Missouri Legislators have provided funding for jail-based competency restoration programs at five locations, including the St. Louis Jail. This funding will provide funding for the staff to conduct this service at the Justice Center, while also contributing to the costs of housing the individuals at the jail while this process takes place.

Medical discharge planning for detainees is lacking. As stated previously STLDOH Health Services Manager Beau Richmond has identified this issue and is working with other officials to correct this issue. While it is true that the Courts regularly release some people without any advance communication, a system could be established where the discharge planning begins at admission and the medical facility adopts policies to better prepare for detainees leaving. Part of this process could include preparing for medication to be distributed when they are released, or at least prescriptions provided for needed medications.

One of the concerns expressed by detainees was the wait times for needed emergency dental care. Jail employees shared that this is a legitimate complaint. The contracted dentist usually works at the facility after standard business hours, when there are less correctional officers available to provide prisoner movement. Additionally, when the dentist is not available or on leave there is no backup dentist to provide this service.

When visiting the area utilized for those needing medical detoxification the unit was at full capacity. One of the more common requests made by detainees was for drug treatment, particularly for opiate addiction. The most effective and recognized way to treat this is Medication-Assisted Treatment (“MAT”). This form of treatment is the use of FDA-approved medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of substance use disorders. MAT is effective in helping people overcome opioid addiction and operates to normalize brain chemistry, block the euphoric effects of opioids, relieve physiological cravings, and normalize body functions. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (“SAMHSA”) has funding available to establish and maintain MAT programs, including in jails. However, the open application process to apply for the most recent SAMHSA MAT funding expired in September 2024. It is believed that a funding opportunity will again open in 2025 through SAMHSA. The largest existing MAT program in Missouri found that SAMHSA funds did not fully cover the costs of running the program and utilizes other funding sources.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance has a grant opportunity open with the goal to improve clinical stabilization at the pretrial stage and is worth exploring.

Many residents at the jail lack experience to obtain and maintain meaningful employment opportunities once released. With unemployment being one of the top predictors of recidivism, partnering with an organization to provide classes on resume building, interviewing skills and related services appears to be one of the greatest programming needs at the jail.

The jail has contracted with Unlocked Labs, an educational and management organization which provides services to facilitate learning and educational progress for incarcerated individuals. This contract was effective November 1, 2024, but has not been activated. It calls for Unlocked Labs to provide technology that enhances access to education, rehabilitation, and reentry resources for detainees at the facility. This program is titled "Unlocking Opportunity: Technology to Support Education and Reentry Resource Access." Over a twelve-month period, the services involve assessment and consulting, customization development, and pilot implementation. The contract calls for two to three computer labs within the jail. Each computer lab is to be equipped with ten specialized devices designed for correctional education environments. Unlocked Labs has been successful implementing this program in other correctional facilities as far away as Alaska. This appears to be an innovative and exciting

opportunity. In what is a great story of rehabilitation, the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of Unlocked Labs is someone who had previously been incarcerated at the St. Louis Jail.

Detainees who are Veterans of the Armed Services admitted to the jail are tracked but no specialized services are offered in the jail for this group.

Another mental health service lacking at the jail is trauma counseling. This was recommended by both professionals and detainees who were interviewed.

The availability of tablets for jail residents is notably lacking, on one occasion detainees reported that only seven tablets were operable in a cell housing more than 40 people. Material that is available on the tablets is limited and the use could likely be less. Detainees also shared that the lack of tablets is responsible for a notable amount of violence at the facility, as well as created communication issues with family members and others.

Residents at the jail reported an inability to take complaints about the jail forward and believe that the complaints are often ignored.

Currently books are not allowed in the cells or pods.

A related matter is the phones utilized by detainees at the jail. In addition to standardized stationary phones, the facility uses phones that are mobilized on wheels for the residents. Phone calls cost residents 23 cents per minute. It is believed that a new contract could be arranged that provides better services and at a substantially reduced price. The same might be true with the commissary, as well.

There is an Inmate Fund to provide non-standardized services and items for residents of the jail, but the funds in this account are lacking.

The city offers to employees an expansion of the Family Medical Leave Act benefit, and there is a suspiciously high number of corrections employees utilizing this frequently, resulting in staffing shortages.

Complaints about food provided to detainees were something voiced before and during this review. When observing the meals being prepared for the residents, they were similar to well-run correctional facilities I have visited. This was a variety of items, and all but one meal seemed to have appropriate servings. There are some detainees who complained about receiving cold meals in a sack, mostly limited to those in holding areas who will not be detained for long periods of time. Some complained about the prepared meals being served cold. Food is prepared in a centralized area and transported to various floors, and I do not know of a way to ensure that the meals are delivered hot. Unlike some other jails in the area, the detainees who work in the kitchen and other areas are compensated for their labor. On the occasions that I

visited the kitchen and the laundry facilities, they were both clean, well ran and the residents were working very hard. The workers complained that after completing their work shifts, they often are not allowed to shower. This is due to staff shortages. The functions that these residents provide is invaluable to the facility.

There are more than 25 detainees charged with domestic violence (DV) offenses and national research has found programing for these offenders can be effective in reducing recidivism. One report analyzed data that included initial arrest, program placement information and re-arrest rates for 17,999 individuals convicted of this offense. The study found that participants who completed DV programs when compared to those who did not complete programming had re-arrest rates that were substantially lower than are generally found in the literature on DV recidivism. Additionally, there are likely a number of women incarcerated at the Justice Center who have been victims of DV and they could likely benefit from DV counseling.

Some detainees requested regular access to a Chaplin.

The contract with St. Louis Public Schools to provide GED training is ran professionally and the instructor has excellent interaction with the detained students. The number of participants in the program could increase significantly. No formal college opportunities are currently being offered at the jail. Recent published research reported that participation in an educational program decreases the odds of recidivism by 17 to 19 percent on average. Specifically, the research concluded that Adult Basic Education and secondary education reduce recidivism by 11 to 12 percent, vocational training lowers it by 16.1 percent, and college classes reduce recidivism by 42.5 percent.

A corrections official over laundry services shared how the quality of towels issued to inmates is of such a low quality that the towels start to fall apart in about ten washings. Medical staff also reported that there is a need for more suicide prevention blankets and towels.

During an inclement weather event several staff called in to report that could not make it into work. This stretched the employees in the jail even thinner, causing additional issues with detainees not being let out of their cells.

Recommendations

1. Should the jail contract with ACA to obtain accreditation, it is recommended that a position of an Accreditation Specialist be created to ensure that a Policy and Procedures manual is regularly updated, and policies are hand-signed by the Commissioner. This Specialist will also need to ensure that the policies are fully implemented and kept up to date. This is true across the board, with special emphasis

- regarding regulations and policies related to Use of Force and the Prison Rape Elimination Act. This Specialist will likely need ongoing training through the ACA.
2. It is recommended that the Corrections Department contract with a correctional security specialist organization to review and help address security concerns, and that Deputy Commissioner Darnel Spear be a participant in this assessment. Eliminating the electrical outlets in assessment is one of the items that should be included in the review, as is examining the key system, needed additional security equipment, tamper proofing lighting in the cells and other opportunities to better run the jail and ensure safety.
 3. A total of 15 computers are needed to update the facility for security needs, and it is recommended that they be supplied. Should a security review be conducted it is recommended to examine how cameras are utilized and what improvements can be made.
 4. Employing a second locksmith is recommended.
 5. The placement of young and inexperienced Corrections Officers, Case Managers and all other staff in the most difficult housing areas causes significant issues. This likely also contributes to staff turnover, and more use of force incidents. It is recommended that only experienced officers and other staff be assigned to these troubled areas, and jail management consider placing more officers in these areas as compared to other housing units at the facility. Based on the danger in these areas, there may be a need to create specialist positions with higher pay for this assignment in the jail and this possibility should be examined.
 6. The Inmate Handbook is outdated, and a new handbook should be created and distributed.
 7. There may be an opportunity to bring forth greater efficiencies and opportunities to help prevent appropriate, lower risk defendants from being confined in the Justice Center. The Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) has a program available to evaluate and assist organizations at the initial stage of the justice process. They can make recommendations as to operations utilizing the most evidence and research-based information, ranging from pretrial evaluations to opportunities expanding diversion programs. Additionally, CEPP provides this service at no cost to the assisted agencies. Working with CEPP appears to be an excellent teaming opportunity for the jail, pretrial services, the courts, prosecutors, public defenders and defense attorneys. It is recommended that the jail and other agencies take advantage of this no-cost assistance.
 8. Regarding detainees who are insulin dependent, it is recommended that jail officials and the Department of Health work with the medical provider to ensure the medical provider distributes insulin as appropriate, and that staff who provide snacks to diabetics are provided ongoing training regarding what snacks are appropriate. I have full faith that Health Department officials will ensure that this is done.

9. To help those who will be released to the community with ongoing mental health and medical needs it is recommended that the facility prioritize the process to enroll eligible people in Medicaid and/or Medicare programs.
10. The timing is excellent for jail officials, the Department of Health and the contracted medical provider to team with the state in providing on-site competency and restoration mental health services and is recommended.
11. It is recommended that the Health Department and the Acting Commissioner work together and select someone to be appointed to serve as a liaison with the court. This would allow addressing any concerns from judges regarding court orders for healthcare that allegedly are not being followed. Defense attorneys should also be granted access to this assigned liaison.
12. When programming starts to be implemented a program providing trauma counseling should be offered.
13. Should a new tablet contract be brought forth and more tablets are made available to detainees it is recommended that it include a method for when residents believe that their medical needs are not being met by the contracted provider, they can send an email to a box that is made accessible to a STLDOH designated person in the Health Department to request review.
14. The tablets should also have a method that allows detainees to file complaints on the tablets regarding jail issues that go directly to the Commissioner for investigation. Policy should be developed to establish a timeframe for the complaints to be investigated and the results reviewed with the person who filed the complaint.
15. During my tours of the jail I witnessed the Acting Commissioner going from cell to cell checking on any issues that detainees had and taking detailed notes. I also saw her take action on some of the complaints discussed with her. This is an excellent practice and I recommend that it continues.
16. It is recommended that dental care services be altered to allow the services to be provided during standard work hours. A backup plan for services should be developed for when the primary dentist is not available.
17. If as expected applications again open for Medical Assisted Treatment funding through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration becomes available in the new year, it is recommended that the Health Department consider applying for said funding and team with the jail and contracted medical provider to fully implement a MAT program.
18. It is recommended that the Health Department review the Bureau of Justice Assistance grant opportunity (Opportunity O-BJA02025-172294), which is being offered to better clinical stabilization at the pretrial stage.
19. The St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) has an excellent reputation for providing employment related services. With the need to offer resume building, interview skills training and other services to residents of the jail, it is

- recommended that the Corrections Department partner with SLATE to provide these services.
20. The contract with Unlocked Labs appears to be an innovative opportunity to bring forth educational opportunities, and it is recommended that this move forward as soon as staffing allows.
 21. The Veterans Administration (“VA”) offers outstanding services for justice involved individuals who have served in the Armed Services. It is recommended that a Case Worker be assigned all the Veterans at the jail and develop a formal relationship with the VA to assist in providing services for these individuals.
 22. Contracted tablet and phone services are lacking, outdated and expensive, with the costs going to detainees who often have limited or even no funds available. It is recommended that a request for proposals process begin to seek competitive bids for these services. It is further recommended that the contract include the availability of tablets for all residents, with backups available at the facility. Additionally, it would be appropriate for part of the fees of this service to go to the Inmate Fund. The contract should include the ability for the Commissioner to offer free calls for those involved in prosocial activity. For example, the Commissioner could allow three free phone calls weekly to detainees who work in the kitchen and other areas, as well as people successfully participating in educational and other programming.
 23. When the commissary contract is up it is recommended that a new contract include a percentage of items purchased go to the Inmate Fund.
 24. With the need for more mental stimulation of residents when they are in their cells, it is recommended that the jail work with the St. Louis Library so that books can be provided and create a process to screen the books. St. Louis Librarian Waller McGuire reported that he could supply books almost immediately. Obtaining and distributing board games for the pods would also allow some stimulation with the detainees and could possibly help keep them from acting out and is recommended.
 25. It is recommended that Case Workers make a stronger push to increase the number of participants in the GED program. A proctor should be added to allow GED testing. When programming is more available at the jail, it recommended that referrals to educational and other programs be part of the Case Workers’ performance evaluations.
 26. The expanded Family Medical Leave Act benefit is misused by some corrections staff and it is recommended that the expansion of this act be reviewed.
 27. It is recommended that the jail work with the contracted food services provider to see if mobile holding ovens or other devices are available to help the food be delivered warm to all detainees who receive them.
 28. The residents who prepare meals and do the laundry for 800 people should be allowed to shower after work in all but extreme situations. If Correction Officers are not

- available to allow worker showers, it is recommended that a policy be developed calling for a supervisor go to the pod area so the showers can take place.
29. It is recommended that a television be placed in the area where the detainee workers take their breaks and eat their meals. This could be paid for out of the Inmate Fund.
 30. It is recommended that officials at the jail work with St. Louis Survivors Legal Support and other domestic violence organizations to establish such programming for men and women detainees.
 31. Educational programming should expand as currently there are only five participants in the GED program. Further, the program has not arranged for a proctor to do the actual testing to obtain a GED. Obtaining such a proctor is recommended.
 32. Dr. Jeff Pittman, Chancellor at St. Louis Community College, and Hart Nelson, Chief Operating Officer at the college, have dedicated incredible efforts to helping with the education of justice involved individuals. This includes providing college classes in a jail setting, which has produced phenomenal success. When staffing increases at the City Jail it is recommended that a formal relationship be established with the college to bring forth advanced education opportunities to people housed at the jail. This will require the creation of a specialist position who could help with this and other programming.
 33. Creating a Chaplin position to be employed at the facility is recommended.
 34. Because of the lacking quality of what is currently being utilized, options for towels issued to detainees should be reviewed for replacement and the inventory for suicide prevention towels and blankets should be increased.
 35. During inclement weather events hospitals and other organizations provide nearby hotels so employees can stay locally and report to their next shift. It is recommended that the jail do the same for corrections employees.

Closing Recommendation

As stated previously, the professionals who I worked with in seeking feedback and knowledge regarding the jail went above and beyond to help develop this report. More importantly, they voiced commitment to assist in making the jail better moving forward. I again thank them for their incredible insight and willingness to do more in the future. To evolve the facility will take teamwork and assistance from many out of the Corrections Department. For that help to happen transparency will be needed. In fact, transparency will need to be prioritized.

There has been a significant focus on bringing forth corrective behavior at the Justice Center. If the facility is to evolve there will need to be a greater focus on justice as opposed to such a strong focus on correcting behavior. Should a commitment be made and efforts be brought forth to make the facility more just, I recommend changing the name of the department from the Corrections Division to that of the Department of Justice Services.