

Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight
Presentation on Adult and Juvenile Community Corrections
October 26, 2021, 1:00 P.M.
Testimony by Randy Regehr, Director of Reno County Community Corrections

Slide 1:

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing us this time. My name is Randy Regehr and I'm the Director of Reno County Community Corrections in Hutchinson and the President of the Kansas Community Corrections Association.

Slide 2:

Community Corrections agencies are County departments funded by the State through grants from the Department of Corrections. We are County employees working under the direction of our local Boards of County Commissioners. While some Counties help financially support their agency this isn't the case for most agencies. Community Corrections supervises higher-risk adults and youth who have been assigned by the Court for intensive supervision probation. Our focus is on public safety, helping people make changes to reduce criminal behavior, and reduce admissions to prison facilities to save the State tax dollars.

Slide 3:

In this diagram you can see how Court Services is separate and under the Judicial Branch. They do similar work but supervise a large population of lower-risk people. State Parole is under the Department of Corrections and their staff are State employees. While the Department of Corrections provides funding and oversight for Community Corrections, the agencies are operated by the Counties. Court Services, State Parole, and Community Corrections Officers do similar work but with slightly different populations.

Slide 4:

There are a few things which make Community Corrections unique and different. Because we are embedded in our local County governments we're focused on the issues in our individual counties. We focus on the crime causing risks and needs of the population in our communities. Each Community Corrections agency has an Advisory Board of local experts who help guide the agency to better address the needs of those on supervision. Working with our Boards of County Commissioners also keeps us focused on local issues rather than problems in other parts of the State.

Community Corrections Officers are working with justice involved people living in their own communities and neighborhoods. These Officers are invested in helping people make changes in their lives to prevent further criminal activity and to become contributing members of their community. We work with our Advisory Boards and County Commissioners to find unique solutions for our communities to prevent future crime and meet the needs of justice involved people.

Slide 5:

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the national turnover rate is 4%. The rate for State and Local Governments is lower at only 2%. However, for Community Corrections here in Kansas the turnover rate is 12%. Agencies are losing well-trained, talented staff because the agencies can't pay a competitive salary. This turnover is very expensive. Finding, hiring, and training officers is reducing the efficiency of agencies. The agencies who try to keep up with the current market pay rates are forced to reduce the number of supervision staff. Flat and reduced funding for Community Corrections is causing agencies to be stretched so thin they're forced to reduce supervision, reduce drug testing, and reduce the number of contacts they're making with high-risk individuals. This is reducing the overall effectiveness of intensive supervision. The people we supervise suffer from drug addiction, mental illness, and trauma and have a history of committing felony crimes. They need the assistance of talented, well-trained supervision staff to help them make the changes needed to be successful in your communities. Truly intensive supervision is at risk and so is the safety of your communities.

Slide 6:

Earlier this year the Legislature approved \$16 million to support field supervision by approving new positions and a wage increase based on a wage study. Some Legislators believed this was intended to help all levels of field supervision, but this wasn't the case. This increased funding paid for wage increases and new positions specifically for Court Services. While both Court Services and State Parole have received salary increases in recent years Community Corrections did not receive additional funding. The raises for Court Services actually hurt Community Corrections by creating a larger salary gap.

Slide 7:

We're here today to ask for your assistance and support in providing competitive pay for Community Corrections staff. Supervision Officers with these three agencies do similar work and deserve comparable pay. Through an in-depth analysis, we've determined \$14.3 million is needed to move all Community Corrections staff to the current Office of Judicial Administration pay scale based on the pay study OJA completed. Our analysis looked at every individual Community Corrections position across the State, taking into account their current salaries and benefits and their years-of-service. We then moved all these positions to the OJA scale to determine the amount needed. This additional funding will also add fifty new officer positions to reduce caseload sizes to the recommended level.

The Department of Corrections will be conducting a wage study, but agencies can't continue to wait for increased funding. Another year of flat or reduced funding will result in more qualified staff leaving, decreases in supervision and services for the people we supervise, and ultimately a decrease in public safety.

Slide 8:

Between 2014 and 2022, Court Services Officers have received a 28% salary increase while the funding for Community Corrections programs has remained relatively flat. Staff salaries are our primary expense so when funding remains flat there isn't room within our budgets to raise salaries. Additionally, the cost of benefits, specifically health insurance, continues to rise.

The current job market is competitive, and agencies are already stretched too thin to keep up with similar agencies or other employers. Community Corrections Officers have been tasked with the difficult job of changing the behavior of the highest risk individuals while keeping your community safe and reducing crime. Yet for many of them, they could receive similar wages by working at Hobby Lobby or Walmart. The flat funding of Community Corrections does not achieve our goals of increased successes, reducing the prison population, and improving public safety. Rather, flat funding will result in the continued decrease in supervision, drug testing, and programs needed to effectively and efficiently meet the outcomes our communities desire.

Slide 9:

The contact information for your local adult and juvenile Community Corrections agencies can be found on the Department of Corrections website. The Community Corrections Directors in each of your individual communities would be happy to talk to you about how flat funding has impacted their agency and your community. You can also follow-up with Stuart Little if you would like more information. Thank you for your time.

PRESERVING AND PROTECTING COMMUNITY SAFETY

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS FUNDING CHALLENGES IMPACT LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY

KANSAS COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ASSOCIATION (KCCA)

OCTOBER 2021

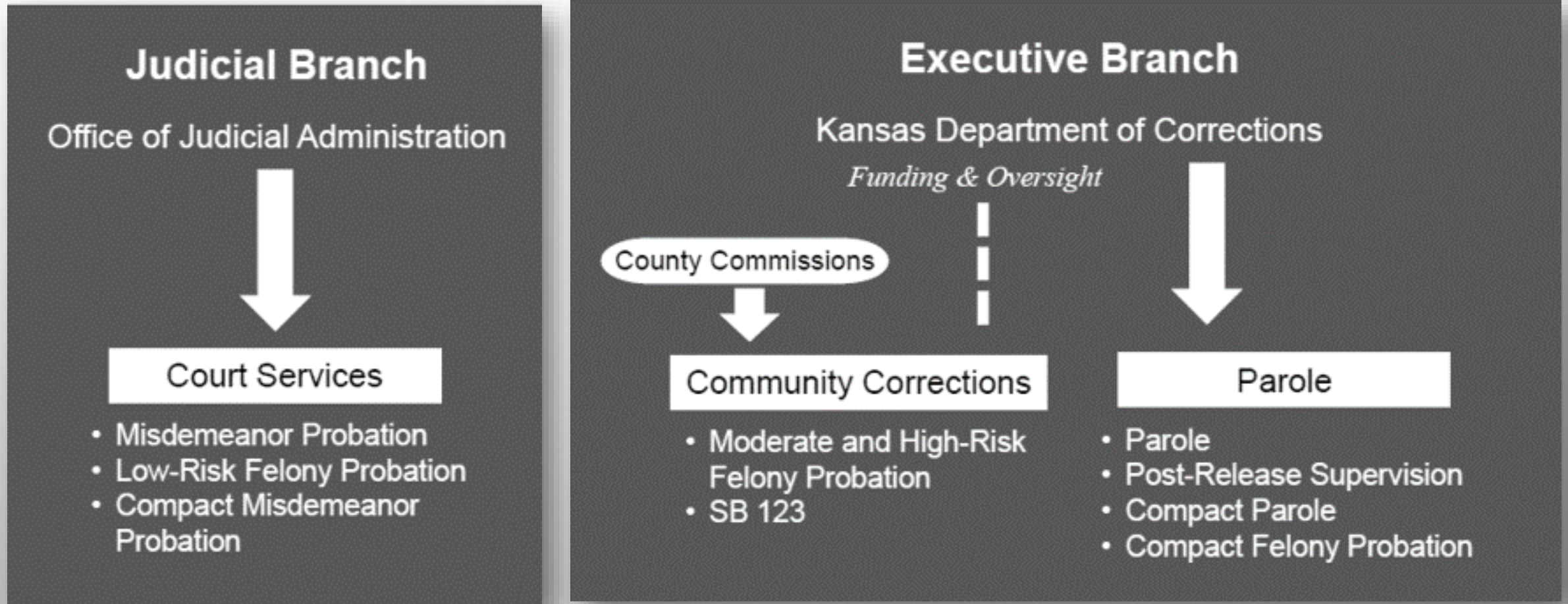
KCCA OFFICERS:

- Randy Regehr - Director, Reno County Community Corrections
- Melody Pappan - Director, Cowley County Youth Services
- Steve Willis - Director, 5th Judicial District Community Corrections
- Peggy Pratt, Director, Northwest Kansas Juvenile Services

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS QUICK OVERVIEW

- State funded through grants to county government.
- County employees.
- County government may provide additional operational supports.
- Community supervision of higher-risk offenders (based on evaluation) who are not incarcerated.
- Field services provides supervision of adult offenders and correctional services not in a facility but in our communities. Juveniles receive community-based supervision, services, and programs.

CURRENT COMMUNITY SUPERVISION STRUCTURE



WHAT MAKES COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS UNIQUE?

Community Corrections responds to specific local issues and needs. Local stakeholders create local plans to address their specific needs.

Uniquely positioned to evaluate and recommend early intervention and prevention programming for adults and juveniles as recommended by local advisory boards.

Able to examine systemically and holistically the complex and interconnected roots of crime.

We are charged with ensuring people re-enter their community better than when they came to us.

Our goal is to prevent future crime by using solutions unique to each community.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

- The retention of a talented workforce tasked with managing high-risk and high-needs offenders.
- Quality, evidence-based service delivery. We are required to provide intensive supervised probation but resources not sufficient. Post-COVID labor market instability has increased the loss of talent to peer organizations or other entities.
- While State grant funding for adult supervision has decreased, offender caseloads are increasing.
- Increased caseloads, particularly with higher risk offenders, means increased workload without increased compensation; greater risk to the community; lowered employment satisfaction, and a failure to retain staff. High turnover increases employment costs.
- Our goal is to retain and build our staff, not solicit and disruption other fields.
- **Public safety.**

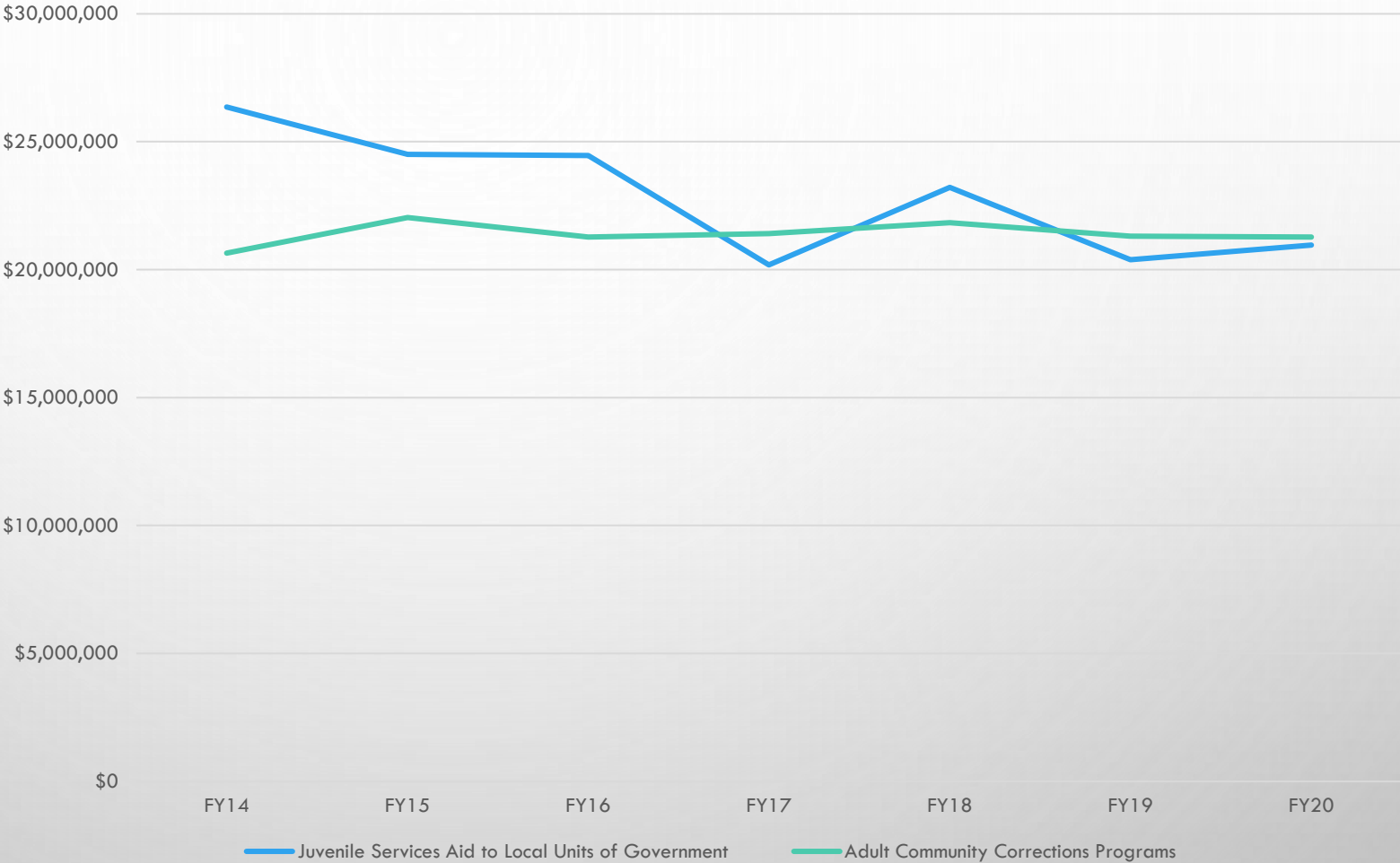
THE PROBLEM: FLAT FUNDING

- Eight years of flat or reduced funding for salaries while both Parole (KDOC) and Court Services (the Court system) have received increases, including starting salary increases, in recent years.
- 2021 Legislature approved \$16 million for increased Court Services salaries and 70 new positions statewide.
- **Community corrections agencies do not receive any of the \$16 million in approved new funding.**
- Salary increases for other agencies in the community supervision system impacts community corrections' ability to maintain its own workforce and as a result, public safety.

THE SOLUTION

- Support a Governor's recommendation to add State General Fund resources to increase community corrections grants to local community corrections agencies.
- Internal community corrections agencies' assessment suggests \$14 million is needed for a comprehensive solution.
- Kansas Department of Corrections is conducting a salary survey that will be available soon.
- Salary challenges match the Kansas Courts concerns about pay issues for Court Services.
- The new funds will mitigate staff departures and provide some balance for very specific and targeted wage disparities.

KDOC State Grant Funding to Local Government for Adult and Juvenile Services



CONTACT INFORMATION

- ADULT COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS PARTNERS CAN BE FOUND HERE:
 - [HTTPS://WWW.DOC.KS.GOV/CCMAP](https://www.doc.ks.gov/ccmap)
- JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMUNITY PARTNERS CAN BE FOUND HERE:
 - [HTTPS://WWW.DOC.KS.GOV/JUVENILE-SERVICES/PARTNERS/#HOW%20WE%20PARTNER](https://www.doc.ks.gov/juvenile-services/partners/#HOW%20WE%20PARTNER)
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