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Internal Auditor's Report

The County Council and County Executive of Wicomico County, Maryland:

Pursuant to Section 305(D) of the Wicomico County Code and Council Resolution No. 99-2019, the Office of the Internal Auditor has conducted a consultation of Community Corrections at the Department of Corrections. A report submission is herewith. The purpose of the consultation was to assist Management in gauging the appropriateness of staffing levels for the Community Corrections program.

We extend our appreciation to Management and Staff from Department of Corrections and the Executive Administration for their timely cooperation and assistance during the audit.

Respectfully submitted,

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Audit Report

Background

Community Corrections at the Wicomico County Detention Center is a team responsible for assisting clients enrolled in various supervised release programs. Enrollment in the programs is an alternative to unsupervised release, holding without bond, or incarceration. The main objective of Community Corrections is to help assure public safety and client compliance by assisting in the form of routine check-ins and drug screenings while the client awaits trial or completes their program. The most populated programs are “pre-trial” and “pre-trial electronic monitoring”, where clients are in the community while awaiting trial. Considering a wide variety of factors, recommendation of placement into the programs comes during a bond hearing or during the court trial. Assignment of the first three programs occurs at bond hearings while the other three are a result of court hearings. The programs are as follows:

Program	Brief Overview
Pre-trial	Client has to check-in weekly by phone until their trial is resolved.
Pre-trial electronic monitoring	Client has location tracker anklet, has to check-in weekly in person. Location restrictions may exist and staff performs daily location review.
House Arrest	Home confinement except for special circumstances. Has to check-in weekly by phone and accept weekly home visits from case managers.
Community Service	Placement of client with a non-profit to perform community service duties. Check-ins weekly by phone until required hours are completed and verified.
Drug Court	Placement of client into program in lieu of incarceration. On-demand and frequent drug testing. Weekly phone check-ins.
Home Detention	Sentencing of client to home confinement in lieu of prison. Similar parameters to ‘house arrest’ above.

Detention Center Management believes Community Corrections could use more team members. The purpose of the consultation was to assist Management in determining whether an appropriate level of staff exists in effectively administering the Community Corrections programs.

Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to:

1. Gain an understanding of the daily duties for Case Managers that are responsible for clients enrolled in the program
2. Calculate and evaluate the amount of time needed for each task and the frequency of completion
3. Assess whether reasonable staffing levels exist during duties
4. Make recommendations (if applicable)

Scope and Methodology

The audit periods that were examined are for FY 2016 to FY 2019. Scope was open ended. Observations and inquiries with appropriate personnel were conducted, as well as examination of various documents and system information pertaining to the management and accounting for Community Corrections.

Overview

Routine Responsibilities

We obtained an understanding of the routine responsibilities for case managers and supervisors in Community Corrections. We reviewed several weeks of scheduling and counted seventeen unique job tasks. A few examples of duties are: conducting research and preparing background information for bond reviews, holding appointments with existing clients (in person or on phone), reviewing GPS information for electronic monitoring, performing drug screenings, and enrolling new clients into the programs. Once certified, case managers are cross-trained and able to perform all tasks associated with Community Corrections. Recently, a new policy has been implemented which requires pre-trial clients to report in person for the first three weeks into the program versus only having to report via telephone, which will increase the workload.

Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA)

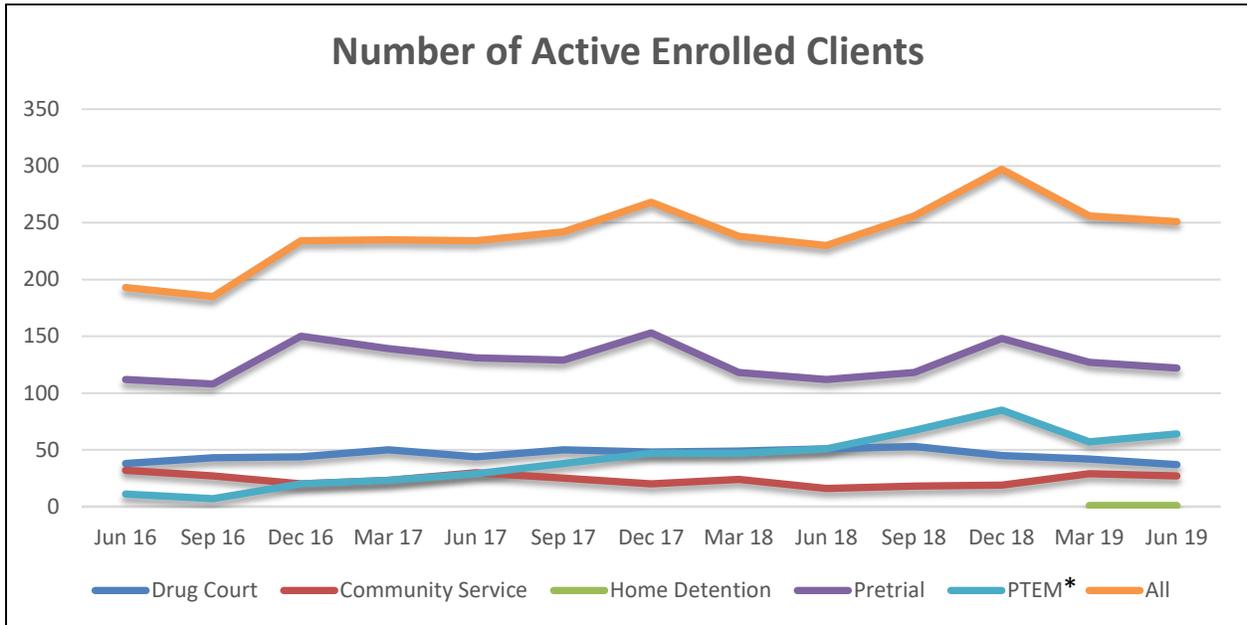
The JRA program, which went into effect in October 2017, encourages further development of a number of programs, including providing for services to reduce pre-trial detention. The JRA provides a Performance Incentive Grant, which is based upon savings that are realized by the initiatives set forth in the JRA. The JRA allows allocation of up to 50% of the savings to fund the grant; however, there is no mandate for a specific distribution amount. In FY 2019, Wicomico County received \$50,245 to enhance pre-trial services and used part of this funding to assist in paying a portion of the salary and benefits of a case manager.

Trend Analysis

We performed a trend analysis on the number of clients enrolled into the various programs in Community Corrections (*Chart 1*). The data is based on the last day of the month for each month listed. Electronic monitoring requires more staff time than the other programs (other than home confinement) because clients have to schedule weekly office visits for the duration of the program and client travel is reviewed daily to confirm compliance. Clients are in this program because of a higher risk rating as determined by the risk assessment tool; as a result, electronic monitoring clients require contact with case managers at a higher frequency.

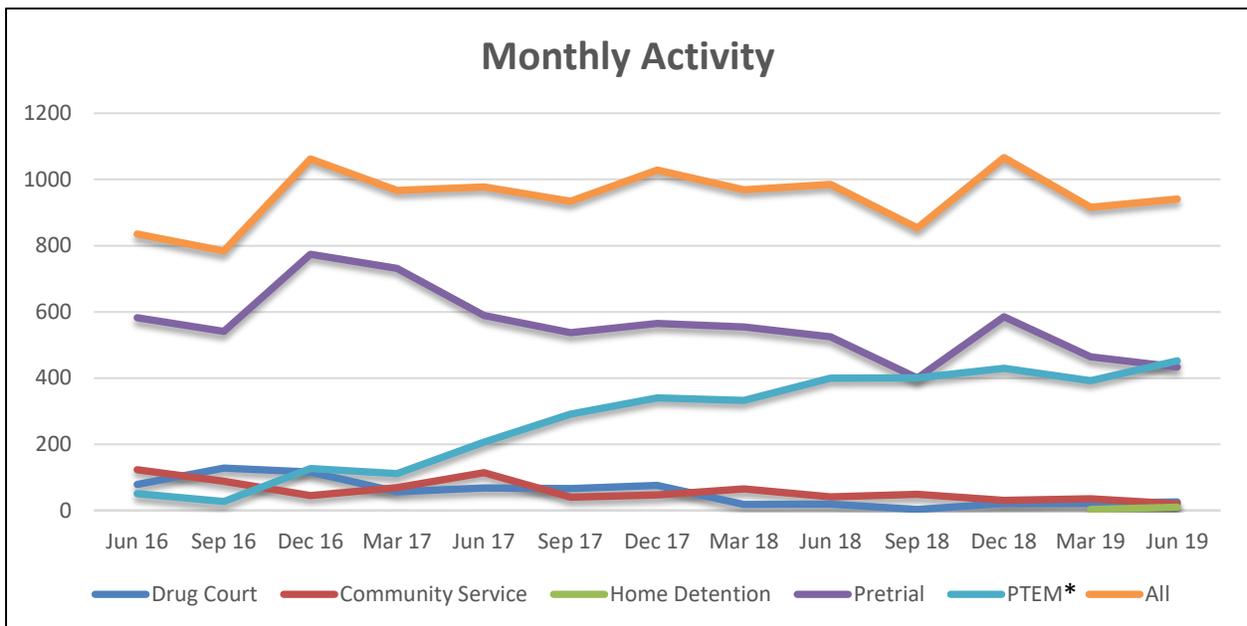
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Chart 1



We also performed a trend analysis on case manager activity for the same period. In *Chart 2*, we displayed the number of client activities entered in the Jail Management Software, Zuercher. For this sample, the data represents the entire month’s activity for each month listed.

Chart 2



*PTEM = pre-trial electronic monitoring

Recordkeeping constitutes a fair portion of the time spent by case managers, updating Zuercher as well as adding any necessary paperwork to physical client files. Like all recordation processes, not all activity can be accounted for as the time entering data could outweigh the time and benefit of entry. Staff does not input certain duties into Zuercher, such duties are drug screenings for the drug court program, GPS review, and research for bond hearings. We do see a trend upwards in the population as well as the number of activities over the three-year period. Since duties are diversified, on-demand, and require multitasking, it is difficult to quantify the amount of time dedicated directly to each task.

Observations

We visited the office several times and interviewed four members of the team. During our many hours in the office, we observed at times clients coming and going at a busy rate. The case managers were at their desks actively working most of the time or performing drug screenings on-demand as clients reported for the walk-in service (clients are informed without notice the day they need to show up, so a time cannot be set). Observed in person and on the schedule, the Community Corrections Supervisor spends time assisting the team in performing duties normally assigned to case managers.

Program Fee Income

There are fees charged to clients for various services, such as enrollment, drug screening, and use of the electronic monitoring device. Below is a breakdown of fees passed onto the County’s general fund:

Fiscal Year	Fees Collected
2017	\$17,455
2018	\$16,540
2019	\$39,073

The increase seen in the table is reflective of the increase in electronic monitoring participants.

Recommendations

Recordation of Activity

There were several types of activities happening less frequently than we would have expected given the upward trend of program participants. It was outside of the scope of this consultation to test completeness of activity recordation; however, we do recommend the staff consider recording as many activities as reasonable into Zuercher to provide the most accurate measurement of activity.

Office Visit Days

Each case manager is assigned one or more days per week in which they schedule client phone calls and office visits. Monday is by nature the busiest day for bond review (because of the weekend). We would recommend Management to consider scheduling “office days” on other days especially for case managers that are performing bond review duties.

Summary and Conclusion

There are many factors to consider when attempting to quantify staffing levels. Some of the key takeaways of this project are:

- Electronic monitoring population is trending upward
- Revenue collected from participants is trending upward
- The Supervisor is spending time performing case management duties
- The department works toward daily deadlines, both administratively for the court system and for the safety of the general public
- Staff is not easily replaced because of required certifications to manage client information

We would recommend that Management consider the feasibility of adding an additional case manager to the Community Corrections team. Management should combine our observations of the operation with any industry knowledge and future trend projections.

We would like to thank the Community Corrections team for their candid and timely participation during this project.