

MINUTES
2026 WCJC - Executive Committee Meeting
July 22, 2026 at 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Gabe Shepherd, Chair; Jason Harvey, Vice Chair; Ryan Joslin, District Attorney; Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff; April Holland; Damien Sands, Health Services; Marilyn Smith, City of Albany; Fred Edwards; Luis Maciel, Oregon Youth Authority; Derik Hering, Juvenile Services

Guests: Leanna Linville, Health Services; Holly Drexler, CHANCE Recovery; Scott Smith, Neighbor2Neighbor; John Gotchall, The Arc; Kari Kingslover; Johannah Hamilton

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Shepherd called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

2. Deflection Program Discussion – Ryan Joslin, District Attorney; Leanna Linville, Deflection Program Coordinator; Holly Drexler, Program Director at CHANCE Recovery

Joslin stated it has been approximately one and a half years since staff began putting together its Deflection Program. Joslin provided an overview on crimes regarding possession of controlled substances in Benton County. The motivating factor on how the District Attorney's (DA) Office resolves a case is dependent on the driving factors and/or causes of a case. For example, crimes resulting from addiction may be routed to deflection, whereas crimes where the individual is motivated by financial gain will be held accountable. Senate Bill 4002, which is codified, promotes treatment in many cases before a jail sentence is imposed. The sentencing options for an Unclassified Misdemeanor include Deflection, Conditional Discharge, and Standard Sentencing. Standard Misdemeanor crimes are not eligible for Deflection; sentencing options are Conditional Discharge or Standard Sentencing. Crimes involving a substantial quantity of controlled substances or a commercial drug offense are charged as a Felony; sentencing options include Conditional Discharge, Adult Treatment Court, and Standard Sentencing. To be considered for the County's Deflection Program, a person must be

charged with an Unclassified Misdemeanor crime; but can also have an accompanying crime, excluding violent crimes, crimes where a victim is owed a restitution, or driving offenses. The individual that qualifies for the program is obligated to show up for formal acceptance and engage in 60 days of continuous treatment. If the individual successfully completes the program, their case is not charged or is dismissed. Originally, the plan involved Law Enforcement referring individuals to and educating about the program in the field. This method was not as successful as anticipated, so similarly to Linn County's process, the individual can now be referred to the Deflection Program when appearing in court in addition to the Law Enforcement engagement process. Conditional Discharge, allows a person charged with Possession of a Controlled Substance to formally plead guilty to the charge, or admit to facts that lead to a guilty conviction, to be placed on formal probation and undergo treatment. If the individual successfully completes treatment, their charge is dismissed without conviction. Joslin reviewed the possible course of a Drug Enforcement Misdemeanor.

Shepherd requested a flowchart or visual representation on a typical start to finish process when an individual is arrested in Benton County for crimes involving controlled substances; and what happens within the Deflection Program.

Joslin agreed.

Drexler's role within the Deflection Program includes meeting with clients at arraignment, building rapport and trust, completing a needs assessment, coordination, providing transportation and ongoing support, and removing barriers to recovery and to basic needs. CHANCE Recovery joined the Deflection Program after implementation began. Drexler discussed issues with the original implementation plan, such as a potential clients inability to utilize QR codes if the person did not own a phone. Meeting clients before arraignment at the courthouse allows Peer Support specialists to explain Deflection, answer any questions the client has, reduce uncertainty, build rapport, and help clients make informed decisions before seeing the Judge. Drexler reviewed the typical process for a Deflection Program client, what is involved in the first appointment with a client, and system challenges; certain delays can affect recovery despite a client's willingness to participate in the program. Drexler provided an example of a client's journey with the Deflection Program. Drexler collaborates with the DA, the courts, Judges, Law Enforcement, Peer Support Providers, Treatment Providers, and community partners. Future opportunities include transitional housing, increased treatment capacity, transportation assistance, communication resources, flexible client assistance funds, and continued collaboration. The program currently does not have additional funds for those in need of housing, a phone, or medication.

Linville provided the current data for the County's Deflection Program: 54 referrals over the last 18 months and 25 active referrals. Linville discussed the gap in access to Deflection services between September 2024, when the law changed and December 2024 when Deflection services actually began. Those individuals who were affected by the gap in access were contacted by DA Joslin and given the opportunity to participate in Deflection on their past citations. Linville discussed low engagement when the program was in its beginning stages and the adjustments that were made that increased engagement. Ten participants had timed out of the program, five individuals were

ineligible, and three individuals declined to participate in the program. Seven individuals have graduated the Deflection Program in 2026, and many graduates continue to receive follow-up services through CHANCE and Family Tree Relief Nursery. Deflection currently receives three to seven new referrals each month, and participation is expected to double in the next six months.

Shepherd asked about the Deflection Program's capacity.

Linville stated that capacity varies and is dependent on the needs of current program participants. CHANCE will take on unhoused participants who join the program, and Family Tree Relief Nursery will sometimes help and/or assist with differently needed individuals. If the program had many high-needs participants, it would meet capacity at approximately 40 participants; more lower-needs participants would allow the program to take on more than 40 individuals.

Shepherd asked if diverting more individuals to the Deflection Program reduces the time and burden put onto the County's judicial system.

Joslin believed money is being saved for every case that is not filed. The DA's Office involvement changes; a Deputy DA is not dedicated to prosecuting the case and a Defense Attorney is not appointed to handle the case.

Shepherd mentioned that although the DA's Office is saving on costs, the Health Department might be more involved financially.

Linville discussed long-term cost saving outcomes for the community when individuals become more stabilized.

Holland discussed partnerships and grant funding to help mitigate some of the costs.

Sands discussed long-term benefits with intervention and reduced recidivism rates.

Van Arsdall stated it costs approximately \$300 a day per individual sent to the County's jail and it costs significantly more at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

Shepherd asked about an individual's eligibility for Deflection if, for example, the person were caught stealing a bike.

Joslin stated that with a property crime, the individual would not be eligible for Deflection, but there would not be an opposition to the idea, as long as the theft case was still accounted for.

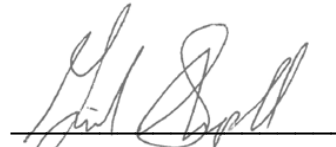
Linville added that Deflection Programs across the State are county designed, and Benton County has a robust program in comparison to other counties; better standards are going to be implemented in the future, which may benefit the County's funding status.

3. Other

No other business was discussed.

4. Adjournment

Chair Shepherd adjourned the meeting at 3:57 p.m.



Gabe Shepherd, Chair