

SJC Pennsylvania Network 2025 Convening Highlights

The Pennsylvania Network, which included partners and system actors from Philadelphia and Allegheny County, convened in Pittsburgh, PA, in October for two days to exchange ideas, share strategies for justice reform, and explore ways to strengthen their collaboration. This convening was especially reverent and reflective for Pennsylvania's two largest counties as the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) winds down and sites confidently transition their strategies and partners. Now entering the final year of the ten-year SJC, this convening provided space for reflection, learning, and forward planning at a pivotal time. Participants shared innovations, discussed challenges, and identified ways to sustain reform efforts and make their local systems fairer and more equitable.

Convening Highlights

- Deepened cross-county collaboration on court processing efficiency, racial equity, behavioral health strategies, out-of-county hold challenges and competency restoration.
- Shared strategies on data-driven decision-making—both counties presented tools for monitoring jail populations, case processing, and disparities.
- Fostered strong engagement across roles, from judges and defense attorneys to data analysts, behavioral health staff, and policy leaders.

- Emphasized peer learning and open exchange as a critical strategy to navigate grant funding and political climate shifts.



Participants listening to Brandi Harrison of Allegheny County's Department of Human Services discuss initial outcomes of the mobile competency team. This approach helped to reduce hospital admission wait times by five weeks per person in 2025.

Strategies Discussed

Allegheny County

- Developed a new "docket health" dashboard integrating court, pretrial, and probation data to monitor efficiency and backlog trends.
- Expanded use of expedited dockets while reassessing their post-pandemic effectiveness.
- Advanced racial equity work through the Racial Equity Working Group, disparity analyses, and a new Community Advisory Committee with strong participation from residents.
- Launched a mobile competency team and competency court to reduce state hospital wait times and support

continuity of care for people found incompetent to stand trial.

- Built a new program to screen individuals pre-arraignement for behavioral health needs and services to inform diversion options at arraignment.

Philadelphia County

- Strengthened data integration across Municipal, Common Pleas, and Family Courts, producing and sharing new dashboards and public jail population snapshot reports.
- Continued implementation of the Philly Learning place-based racial equity experiential learning program and the Community Advisory Committee to center lived experience in system reform.
- Embedded behavioral health navigators and clinicians throughout pretrial and probation processes to connect people to care and reduce violations.



Ayanna Lyons of the City of Philadelphia presented on the development of the Philly Learning Program.

- Shared progress and challenges on addressing out-of-county holds, including a lack of standardized timelines for holds across counties and a presumption that other counties assume the larger ones can handle the additional individuals.

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

Participants emphasized that both counties share common challenges and opportunities to make data actionable, center people in policy, and improve strategies across systems. Key takeaways included:

- Peer learning is an effective approach to facilitate discussions among counties facing similar obstacles but using different strategies. These exchanges also helped participants reflect on their own practices—recognizing areas where strong existing approaches could be strengthened or adapted based on what they learned from one another. Participants felt hopeful and reinvigorated to explore new strategies to get unstuck and, moving forward, hope to continue collaborations through additional in-person convenings and incorporating new Pennsylvania county partners.
- The importance of sustaining racial equity and behavioral health initiatives beyond SJC funding.

- A commitment to continued collaboration, including virtual follow-up meetings before the holidays and potential joint data requests to state partners.
- Utilizing a network of local and national experts, including unique technical assistance providers, promotes creative problem solving and actionable/accessible/reliable inspiration.
- Formalize policy collaboration moving forward, through a shared policy and legislative workgroup to develop joint recommendations and priorities.



These are members of the teams from Philadelphia and Allegheny County.



These are members of the Pennsylvania Network technical assistance team from the Center for Justice Innovation and Justice System Partner.

Together, Philadelphia and Allegheny County demonstrated how open dialogue, creativity, and shared purpose can continue driving progress toward a fairer, more effective justice system in Pennsylvania.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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