

## Monroe County Comprehensive Criminal Justice Review

### Opening Statement for Community Conversations

- Earlier this year, Monroe County Government leaders – *including the County Commissioners, County Council, Sheriff, Prosecuting Attorney, and Board of Judges* – committed to reviewing and reforming the Monroe County Criminal Justice System in order to positively affect the Monroe County Correctional Center population and the community, and to reflect Monroe County values.
- The Board of Commissioners entered into an agreement with Dr. Kenneth A. Ray of Justice Services and his colleague, Dr. Allen R. Beck, and Eve Hill and Regina Kline, former Department of Justice attorneys, who started Inclusivity Strategic Consulting, focusing on civil rights and inclusion for persons with disabilities.
- This is a big task and an important one. Monroe County’s leaders want you to understand what we are doing and why, so let’s unpack that statement:
- First, what is the criminal justice system?
  - The larger criminal justice system can be defined to include any public employee from any public agency, who interacts with a person from the time of an initial arrest or interaction with law enforcement to the end of a person’s term of probation, if convicted – and everything in between.
  - The Monroe County Criminal Justice System includes the Sheriff’s Department, the Correctional Center (a.k.a – the jail), the Prosecutor’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, the Circuit Court, Probation, and Community Corrections, all their employees, and those who support those offices.
- The Monroe County Commissioners are in charge of all County buildings, including the Correctional Center.

- The Correctional Center is an aging facility (built in the 1980's). It was originally built to house 128 people. Renovations have increased the maximum capacity, so that there are now 284 permanent beds. The population, or number of people in the Center, often exceeds the number of permanent beds.
- No Monroe County leader wants to spend taxpayer dollars to, simply, build a bigger jail with more cell space to house more people.
- Monroe County leaders DO want to give meaning to and emphasize the word CORRECTION in the name CORRECTIONAL Center, because human lives are at stake. Those lives include not only the people in the Correctional Center, but also their families, friends, co-workers and neighbors.
- The criminal justice system affects not just the lives mentioned above, but affects anyone who lives, works or visits Monroe County. The criminal justice system, truly, affects the quality of life in Monroe County, and how well it works really matters.
- With that in mind, Monroe County leaders intend to look at everything we do related to criminal justice, to identify strengths and gaps in our services. Essentially, Monroe County is going to take a good, long look at our criminal justice system to identify what we are doing well and on what we can improve.
- We want your input, because we want to reflect Monroe County values.
- We believe Monroe County values people.
- We believe Monroe County strives to be a progressive community where compassion, collaboration, and efficient use of taxpayer resources leads a stronger community.

- Monroe County leaders want to build the most resilient community we can, wisely using taxpayer dollars towards that end.
- Monroe County leaders need your input and your help. So many of the issues which result in people being incarcerated are community-wide problems, problems which need community-wide solutions.
- Issues including addiction, poverty, housing, education, employment, and access to transportation and services all play a role in the larger issue of crime, and Monroe County leaders cannot solve those issues alone.