

"LET'S TALK JUSTICE"

A Report Back to Community Pisgah View Apartments - November 2019

EVENT BACKGROUND

As part of the Safety + Justice Challenge, Buncombe County Government is creating opportunities for increasing community engagement in local criminal justice improvement efforts.



EVENT SUMMARY



"Let's Talk Justice," a series of listening sessions hosted by Buncombe County Government with the purpose of gathering community input on their experiences to inform change within the criminal justice system. There are two sessions in each "Let's Talk Justice" event.

11.05.19 - FIRST SESSION

Community members at Pisgahview Apartments shared their experiences, envisioned aspects of a safe community, and identified what is not working well within the criminal justice system.

14 key improvement areas were identified by participants.



IMPROVEMENT AREAS

The following is list of themes based on the key improvement areas. The comprehensive list of improvement areas can be found on the Pisgah View Apartments "Let's Talk Justice" Executive Summary.

- Systems of poverty that are drivers of crime
- Reintegration back in the community
- Community safety
- Lack of positive role models
- Limited knowledge of the justice system
- Law enforcement culture with negative policing behaviors
- Lack of supportive resources



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11.19.19 SECOND SESSION

The community members participated in a discussion regarding identified problems from the previous session and processed the contributing causes. Participants narrowed down the 14 items to 3 top priorities.



TOP 3 PRIORITIES

- Police mindset and behaviors
- Lack of job and resources
- Needing more positive role models

SOLUTIONS

- Better training for law enforcement on racial equity
- Understanding to the communities traumas and triggers (Training on Trauma and Resilience)
- Diversity in law enforcement officers
- Policy changes-prosecute police for criminal police practices The community needs to demand this shift in mindset and behaviors
- Need access to education, diversity in peer support, and resources (mental health support; transportation; internet; job training including not having access to resources)
- Groups within the community to support community building (mentorship programs for youth; investing in positive role models that are already in the community)
- Access to legal wealth and employment; earning income legally



NEXT STEPS

Input received from community at "Let's Talk Justice" is being shared with other members of workgroups and the Buncombe County Justice Resource Advisory Council. These groups include members of local law enforcement, elected officials (e.g. Sheriff, Judges, District Attorney), defense attorneys, and Buncombe County Government leadership.

The information shared at PisgahView will be communicated to other communities in an effort to discuss important changes within the local criminal justice system.



UPCOMING "LET'S TALK JUSTICE" EVENTS:

Buncombe County Detention Facility, 12/17/19 & 12/18/19

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

buncombecounty.org/SJC



“Let’s Talk Justice” Listening Session Report Back to Community

PisgahView Apartments

November 5 & 19, 2019

Introduction: In September 2019, the Community Engagement Working Group from the Buncombe County Safety and Justice Challenge Grant conducted two “Let’s Talk Justice” Listening Sessions at the Pisgahview Community Center. Here is a summary of what we heard and how we plan to carry it forward.

Session I on November 5th

Sharing our Experiences, Identifying Visions & Problems:

The facilitation team gave a brief summary of the Safety and Justice Challenge Grant and the 7 strategies that are in place to work on improving the justice system and reducing the jail population in ways that support equity, justice and community safety.

Storytelling: Community residents shared their stories of encounters with the criminal justice system and how it operates.

Safe Community Envisioning: Residents shared what they believe makes a community a safe place to live and then identified positive things in the criminal justice system that they currently see occurring.

Learning and Improving: Residents then discussed the negative things in the criminal justice system that have kept the community from being safe. They identified aspects of the criminal justice system that are not working well and need to change. This included additional storytelling from personal experiences and observations. The list of identified problems or areas for improvement included the following:

1. Systemic Poverty, lack of jobs and resources as a root cause of criminal activity
2. Outsiders, non-residents, especially bringing in and using drugs
3. Violence, shootings
4. Peer pressure, especially on youth
5. Lack of understanding of the justice system, example: the point system
6. School to prison pipeline and not valuing education
7. Police mindset and behaviors (don’t give respect, violate rights, “us vs. them” attitudes, armed and ready for conflict)
8. Internal problems and politics within the police department that impact our community (“get training, get their act together before they come into the community”)
9. Lack of mental health support
10. Lack of positive role models
11. Consequences of being involved in “the system”, kids in jail, feeling it is inevitable, stigma that follows jail
12. Failure to build together, isolating issues, not policing our own community
13. Failure to listen to the concerns of the community
14. Challenges of Reentry, especially finding employment, and “coming back into the community” is a challenge

Note: A community member emphasized the importance of addressing all of the problems identified during the Listening Session despite only being able to focus on a few of them within the scope of this Listening Session.

Session II on November 19th



“Let’s Talk Justice” Listening Session Report Back to Community

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November 5 & 19, 2019

Prioritizing Problems, Generating Solutions, and Prioritizing Critical Solutions for Action:

The facilitation team reviewed with the community the previous week’s session, the Safety and Justice Strategies, and the identified problems that call out for solutions. After discussing the identified problems further, the participants were given an opportunity to “vote” using color stickers for the three highest priority problems to be addressed. The top three priority problems became a basis for deeper exploration for root causes and generating solutions.

Note: The Community members linked all of the fourteen problems identified with the prioritized problems selected.

Prioritize Problems: The three identified problems receiving the highest priority from the community were:

1. *Police Mindset and Behavior**
2. *Lack of Jobs and Resources**
3. *Lack of positive role models*

**These two were tied with the number of votes*

Dig Deep for Root Problems: For each of these three problem areas we kept asking Why? Why? Why? Digging deeper and deeper to discover the root problems that need to be addressed.

Generate Solutions: We brainstormed as many solutions as possible for these three top priority problems that had been identified.

Prioritize Solutions and Rate them for Easy (E) or Hard (H) to implement: The top three solutions were the following:

1. *Education and Training of Officers (Racial Equity and Resiliency); need for Policy Changes and better practices within Law Enforcement Departments (Accountability)*
2. *Education and helping people get jobs:*
 - a. *Having access to support (resume building, computer/internet access, job coaches, mentors)*
 - b. *Reducing stigma of Criminal Justice involvement among employers*
 - c. *Transportation*
3. *“Access to legal wealth” - Earning income legally*
 - a. *Positive opportunities for personal and professional growth for adults in the community*
 - b. *Supporting adults in being role models*

Next Steps: The information provided by Pisgahview participants is already being communicated to the working groups of the 7 strategies for the Safety and Justice Grant, and the key summaries and recommendations are being sent to the Buncombe County Justice Resource Advisory Council. As additional Listening Sessions of “Let’s Talk Justice” are held throughout the county, the Pisgahview information will be added to other communities to reinforce the push for important changes.



***“Let’s Talk Justice”* Listening Session Report Back to Community**

PisgahView Apartments

November 5 & 19, 2019

More Information Available Online:

Safety and Justice Challenge Grant and Strategies: <https://www.buncombecounty.org/law-safety/community-initiatives/safety-justice-challenge.aspx>

Buncombe County Justice Resource Center:

<https://www.buncombecounty.org/law-safety/community-initiatives/justice-resource-center.aspx>