

Board of Visitors

Annual Report

Franklin County Detention Center
Farmington, Maine
March 2023 (Report for Year 2022)



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Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 2
Statement from the Board of Visitors	Page 3
Recruitment and Retention of Staff	Page 4
Infrastructure	Page 6
Inmate Access (Communication, Visitation and Computer Access)	Page 9
Female/Trans/Nonbinary Inmates	Page 12
Inmate Classification and Segregation	Page 13
Medical and Mental Health Services	Page 14
Education	Page 17
Re-Entry Resources	Page 19

Introduction

Franklin County Jail Board of Visitors is an oversight and advisory committee of citizens identified by the Sheriff to represent the interests of the people in Franklin County. It is mandated by law (Chapter 13, Title 30-A, 1607) The Board of Visitors (BOV) are chosen for their varied orientations, interests and expertise in the field of corrections and rehabilitation issues. The BOV focus in this capacity will be regarding public safety and security, jail staff safety, as well as inmate health and safety.

-from FCDC Policies and Procedures Manual 10/17

As noted by the MDOC, the mission of corrections is to reduce recidivism while holding the offender accountable. The ultimate goal is to rehabilitate, ensuring that the inmate is able to maintain themselves upon release as part of the outside community. Priority must be given to inmate and staff safety in order to accomplish these goals.

“The goal of the Franklin County Detention Center is to provide a safe, sanitary and secure place of detention for all persons committed to this jurisdiction for detention or correction.”

-from the 2020 [Inmate Handbook, Rules and Regulations](#)

In looking at the words “detention” or “correction” it is important to consider the humane and respectful treatment of all inmates as core values. Basic needs and services consistent with a physically and emotionally healthy environment should be considered essential during their tenure at the Center. Beyond the standard custodial “clean and safe” considerations, we suggest that there are deeper needs to embrace that contribute to the fulfillment of the mission of the FCDC. The concept of “punishment” should not go beyond what the courts have delivered as a sentencing condition.

The Board of Visitors Annual Report for 2021 can be found [here](#).

Statement from the Board of Visitors

Each year, the Board of Visitors is tasked with writing a comprehensive report on the status of the county detention center. During the year, we strive to learn what practices, procedures and methods are used at the facility to meet the goals of providing a safe, sanitary, and secure location for our residents. We also try to educate ourselves on new methods, new laws, and the culture of incarceration in Maine and the United States. We want to provide the best services for our clients with the resources available.

With this in mind, several community members have asked the Board of Visitors to review various options for our detention center. There is concern that other detention center options with more services might be available at a lower cost to our taxpayers.

In response to this, as a board, we have researched the possibility of a Re-Entry Center similar to Waldo County and visited the Somerset Detention Center. These learning opportunities have helped us increase our knowledge of options and prepared us for further conversations. We believe this conversation needs to continue with all parties involved, including possible collaborative partners, to help make informed decisions about the future of our facility.

At this time, we remain committed to maintaining and improving our current facility and continuing to provide comprehensive services for all residents, including education, mental health, access to medical care and peer recovery, treatment for substance use disorder, and reentry services.

Recruitment and Retention of Staff

Description:

A corrections officer is responsible for the supervision, safety, and security of persons in the custody of the Franklin County Jail. The position requires a great deal of knowledge, training, physical activity, compassion, and the ability to relate to people from all walks of life. There is a value to having experienced and well-trained corrections officers providing stability in the correctional facility.

Recruitment and retention of staff at the Franklin County Detention Center (FCDC) is very challenging. Stress and working conditions contribute to this issue. Recent contract negotiations have resulted in a more competitive salary, but have not alleviated staffing shortages. Regular staff rotations are short two positions with a third going on medical leave late in January 2023. This has led to staff overtime. Two recent applicants did not meet standards and were not hired.

In addition, to create safer conditions for both residents and staff by fully staffing the facility, Sheriff Nichols recommends adding one additional corrections officer to all shifts. This recommendation may need to be balanced with medical and reentry program needs.

Facility and equipment issues have been addressed which improve safety, reduce stress, and allow for effective functioning on the job.

Recommendations:

Recruitment

- Continue to actively partner with schools that offer criminal justice programs, such as Central Maine Community College, Thomas College, University of Maine at Augusta and Husson University to recruit candidates for corrections officers' positions.
- Continue participation in job fairs and advertising in places such as the Career Center.

Retention

- Continue to offer competitive salary, benefits, and retirement to offset the stressors of this work.
- Continue to offer Employee Assistance Programs to provide support for corrections officers.

- Continue to provide education regarding self-care which builds off of the “Correctional Officer Stress, Substance Abuse, and Suicide” training provided by the Maine Criminal Justice Academy.
- Offer specific ongoing training on de-escalation methods, substance use disorder, domestic violence, mental health first aid, and mental illness.
- Ensure debriefing process for critical incidents.
- Ensure, as far as possible, adequate staffing to allow for sufficient contracted vacation and leave time. The Board of Visitors acknowledges that the current economic and pandemic situation makes recruitment a challenge.
- Continue the staff recognition program that acknowledges the good work and positive contributions of staff members.

Infrastructure

Incarcerated persons are entitled to a standard of living that is consistent with an environment that promotes and supports a culture of rehabilitation and correction. The jail is Franklin County's largest investment. After 39 years of existence, investments in infrastructure are essential to the longevity of the facility. The HVAC (Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning) was replaced in 2021 at a cost of \$55,000. Without this upgrade, the interior of the facility could have reached lethal temperatures. In 2022, the ventilation duct system was also cleaned and serviced. These investments were not only necessary to maintain the jail's daily functions, but they were also critical to ensure the safety of the jail's residents and staff.

Franklin County received funds as a result of The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which was a Federal Stimulus Package related to COVID-19. The funds have provided one-time expenditures to address the following problems:

- The septic tank and leach field, which service both the jail and the Sheriff's Office, were replaced in 2022. The jail and Sheriff's Office have been sharing the same sewer system for 38+ years.
- The drainage area of the fuel pumps has been reconfigured, a water runoff tank was added for water diversion, and the disturbed areas repaved.
- Beginning in late January, 2023, Minuteman Security and Life Safety will replace the now-obsolete control room switching panel and the jail's door lock systems. The security system/control panel, wiring, and associated camera systems will also be upgraded as part of the project.
- Previously-exposed wiring that runs from the existing control panel to the ceiling will be replaced or repaired, so it is no longer exposed.
- In 2023, a new medical wing, which has been approved by the County Commissioners, will be added. The new wing will include two negative air pressure cells, which can house residents with communicable diseases and/or residents who need regular medical supervision. The room adjacent to the medical wing will house an examination room, files, and a desk area for the nursing staff. The current medical area is too small, has no ventilation, and is outdated.
- The vacated medical area will serve as a pantry for the kitchen's canned and dry goods. These items have been stored upstairs, necessitating a climb up and down the stairs to access the kitchen's storage, often with heavy loads. This storage space will also have a desk to allow for the

completion of paperwork, which had previously been accomplished through a shared office space at the other end of the building. Both changes will increase efficiency and safety.

- Grease traps will be located outside the building instead of inside the kitchen, which provides greater security and safety in the building while also allowing more efficient cleaning.
- A new hybrid transport vehicle has been purchased to use for court appointments or to transport someone on a hold in another county. Franklin County works with other counties to collaborate on transport, when possible.
- Maine Pretrial Services, which shares an office space in the jail, has purchased new furniture. The jail has also provided a new desk for the nursing staff and has upgraded furniture in the control room.
- Use of the recreation area is rotated and each resident is offered one hour per day. There are separate recreation areas for male and female residents, which are on opposite sides of the building and entirely out of view from one another and both areas have basketball hoops. The recreation area is cleared with a snowblower during the winter, but the addition of an overhead canopy above the outdoor recreation area would better allow inmates to recreate outside during adverse weather. The jail currently does not have adequate indoor recreation equipment for residents to utilize during inclement weather.

Recommendations:

Building and Grounds

- A dedicated conference room should be identified.
- Dedicated office space for DHHS, Maine Pretrial Services, and a private space for mental health evaluation and individual counseling is desperately needed. Although, as part of the work on the new medical wing, a divider will be placed in the current Maine Pretrial Services/Remote Courtroom/Case Management room to divide it into two rooms, it will not be adequate to meet the demands for space.
- A visitation area that would accommodate contact visits by children and families of minimum and medium custody residents as provided for by state regulations would help maintain the community relationships that facilitate reentry and ease the trauma and anxiety experienced by children

with incarcerated parents. See further discussion of this in the “Visitation” section below.

- Indoor exercise equipment is needed until a canopy is built over the outside recreation area.

Record-Keeping

- Records and files are currently stored as paper files. Electronically stored information is more secure, efficient, and accessible. A unified corrections records software options should be investigated and adopted.
- Data file-merging options should be identified and adopted.
- A protocol should be developed and action taken to begin scanning or otherwise digitizing paper files.
- Medical software should be compatible with community and hospital practices, and maintained separately from corrections files.

Inmate Access (Communication, Visitation and Computer Access)

Phone

- Access to telephones is an important tool to maintain contact with family and loved ones while incarcerated. The jail contracts with Securus Technologies for its phone services, which also contracts with most of Maine's county jails. However, each county negotiates its own contract costs with Securus. Though the cost of inmate phone calls is higher than the public costs, the FCDC is compliant with legislation passed in the last Congressional session.
- It is also important to note that Securus has been the subject of controversy in Maine. [The Maine Monitor](#) issued a several-part series of articles detailing several occasions where Securus had recorded inmates' phone calls with their attorneys, which are considered privileged communication and are not to be recorded. [Franklin County](#) was among several county jails that had confirmed instances of such calls being recorded. A Maine class action lawsuit in Federal Court against Securus was [dismissed](#). Despite this controversy, the majority of Maine's jails continue to contract with Securus.

Recommendations:

- Costs of phone access should be reviewed regularly to evaluate the impact on families and reentry, as high costs can serve as a barrier to an inmate's ability to communicate outside of the jail. The jail should ensure that attorney-client phone calls are not being recorded.

Computer Access

- Computer access must be expanded to include the ability for inmates to review files from their attorneys. Attorneys can provide their client with hard copies of much of the "discovery" for their case, which consists of things like police reports, witness statements, and other documents. However, there are often video or audio recordings as part of the discovery, such as dashcam footage, recorded interviews, etc. Currently, the only way an inmate can review the audio or video discovery is if their attorney visits the inmate at the jail, in person, and the attorney brings their own laptop or other equipment. This is inherently problematic because it limits the inmate's ability to review the evidence in his or her own case and gives them only limited access to this evidence.

Recommendations:

- An external CD player could easily be obtained, either at a low cost or perhaps by donation, which should be compatible with the computers in the library. This would allow inmates to have expanded access to the information that they have a right to access. Alternatively, a laptop with a built-in CD player and disabled access could be obtained and available for such usage.

Visitation

- Non-contact visits are allowed for 30 minutes per day, with up to two people at a time, for up to four days per week. Children are allowed to have non-contact visits with a parent, but they must be accompanied by a guardian and a copy of the child's birth certificate is required. Non-contact visits limit bonding especially between a parent and visiting child. Additionally, there is very limited space for visits.
- Contact visits are required by statute and per [Detention and Correctional Standards for Maine](#), subject to limitations for safety purposes. There are no contact visits allowed at FCDC, under any circumstances. This is due to drug trafficking concerns and staffing issues.
- There are currently no Zoom visits allowed, due to staff shortages and lack of officers to supervise.

Recommendations:

- Improve ease of use of the visitation space, including allowing adequate time, instructions for using the intercom, adequate seating, and accommodation of contact visits-especially between parents and children per [Detention and Correctional Standards for Maine](#).
- The number of visits allowed per week is generous. However, thirty minutes is a short period of time especially if the visitor is traveling a long distance. The jail is very flexible in accommodating people who have traveled a long distance.
- The jail should also broadly facilitate Zoom/remote visitation. Zoom allows video chats to be time-limited and recorded, which could provide a simple solution to the staffing issue.

Tablets

- The jail provides inmates with tablets for personal use, which are also part of the contract with Securus Technologies. The tablets can be used to watch movies, send texts, and send letters for the same as the cost of a stamp. For a one-time fee of five dollars, an inmate can "reserve" their own

tablet, so the tablet has their own libraries of saved materials. There are also community tablets available for use, if the inmate has not reserved their own. The revenue received from the phones and tablets goes into the Inmate Benefit Fund. Every jail has their own Inmate Benefit Fund, and makes decisions about how to use the funds. Soon, residents will be able to order commissary items on the tablets as well. FCDC will be able to track funds through the software.

Female/Trans/Nonbinary Inmates

Inmates at FCDC are not housed together if one inmate has the capacity to impregnate the other inmate. The majority of the jail housing area is for male residents and there is a smaller area for female residents. There is one cell in the female area, which can house three. The jail reports that it very rarely has three female residents, or even more than one.

Female and male residents are kept entirely separate from one another. Meals are always served in the cells, and generally, most of the programming at is done on a one-on-one individual basis, with the exception of AA meetings and church. Female and male residents must be kept separate for these services. Almost all of the same programming and services is offered for males and females, with the exception of parenting classes. Male residents can take a “Nurturing Fathers” parenting class, female residents can take a “Nurturing Skills for Families” class, and these two classes have a different focus on the skills and materials covered. These classes are by Zoom and are being offered again this year after a short break, which was initially due to a grant running out but was then due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, while female residents have access to the same groups, their stays tend to be shorter on average so the female residents are sometimes less involved in the services and more guarded.

There is not a separate section available to house transgender and nonbinary residents. The jail has a 72-hour holding cell and a 12-hour dry cell that could be used. Trans and nonbinary residents would also be kept separate from the male and female residents for recreation time and services. This practice mean that if the jail has only one female, transgender, or nonbinary resident, that resident cannot interact with any other resident. The only other people with whom that the inmate would interact are the jail staff and service providers. FCDC does not plan to transfer female residents to other jails because most other jails are reportedly overbooked in their female units and often ask Franklin County to accept transfer of their female residents.

National statistics for incarcerated women as of 2020 are available [here](#). As of 2022, Maine has one of the lowest national rates, ranking 42nd on the list of all 50 states, with an average of 17 incarcerated women for every 100,000 female residents, compared to a national average of 42. However, incarceration rates of women continue to rise, and the United States has far higher rates than other countries. Maine’s individual incarceration rate alone is higher than other countries, which can be seen [here](#).

Recommendations:

- FCDC should develop gender responsive policies to counter the isolation and inequities experienced by female, trans, and nonbinary residents.

Inmate Classification and Segregation

Every inmate must be classified as either minimum, medium, or maximum security within 72 hours of entering jail. To start, there is a preliminary classification, and then the FCDC Classification Specialist does a full assessment within 15 days to officially classify the inmate. Classification depends on factors such as prior convictions, the conduct or alleged conduct they are being held for, whether the inmate has had prior probation violations, etc.

Each level of security classification must be housed separately. There are three maximum security cells, which are all individual cells. The medium security area has six rooms. The rest of the housing area is dormitory-style housing for the minimum security inmates. The highest percentage of inmates are usually medium security. Maximum security is not usually at capacity.

After an inmate is initially classified, FCDC does a Classification Review after 15 days to determine whether the classification has changed. FCDC does an additional Classification Review within 30 days, which is not a Department of Corrections standard but is an extra level of review offered by FCDC. After that, Classification Reviews every 90 days by DOC standards. Every inmate's classification is reviewed according to the same schedule, regardless of their current classification. The jail will also do additional Classification Reviews at an inmate's request. An inmate can appeal their classification to the jail's Classification Committee, which consists of three members.

Every inmate, regardless of their classification, has the same access to recreation, programming, and services, except for inmates in administrative segregation.

The jail does not subject inmates to "solitary confinement". However, an inmate could be placed in administrative segregation and removed from the general population as a disciplinary measure or to investigate a potential infraction. If an inmate is in administrative segregation as a disciplinary action, they do not have access to the tablets. However, they continue to have the same access to commissary, programming, services, etc. It is not clear whether current staffing supports the implementation of this access as it is described. More information is needed regarding administrative segregation and/or protective custody.

Additionally, an inmate may be housed separately as a protective custody measure, meaning that they are removed from the general population for their own safety or the safety of others. This is sometimes at the request of the inmate.

Medical and Mental Health Services

Medical Services

It has been a year of change for medical services at the jail. MedPro is still the contracted provider, though there have been problems with their ability to respond to the needs of staff and inmates. The current medical staff full-time on site is a single nurse, Pamela Walp, LPN, who has been employed since July. Greg Ellis, PA, continues as the medical provider, on site once/week. A second nurse, Elizabeth Blake, RN, provides coverage 3 hours/week. There is a critical need for more staffing and for more support for Pamela, as both paperwork and the acuity of medical problems have increased considerably.

The physical space will be significantly upgraded with ARPA funding, to include two negative-pressure holding cells, administrative space, and a larger examination area. The ventilation and heating/cooling systems will likewise be brought up to code. Deteriorated furnishings are gradually being replaced; a new desk and filing cabinet are the most recent acquisitions. These improvements are vital to the safety and effectiveness of medical personnel and inmates alike.

Technological deficiencies remain unaddressed. The phone line is often occupied by the fax and is unavailable for actual contact with medical staff from outside the jail. There is more use of computer technology, but it still may not allow for communication with hospital or physician practices or the efficient organization and security of medical records as required by HIPAA. It is expected that the new construction of the medical office will address the wiring problems that plague the phone communication, and that the contracted medical provider will be willing to begin the digitization of medical data and otherwise ensure HIPAA compliance.

Medically assisted treatment (MAT) with buprenorphine for opioid use disorder remains available, including induction of treatment for jail residents with a history of this illness. Since substance use disorder affects a large proportion of jail residents, provision of this treatment is critical for reducing the risk of relapse and overdose deaths upon release. A new method of providing this treatment has become available in the community, involving the use of depot injection of buprenorphine. One dose lasts approximately 28 days and its use would reduce the workload of medical personnel who now have to administer daily doses under strict protocols to ensure compliance and prevent hoarding or diversion. Although expensive per dose, savings may be realized in the reduction of staff time and improved efficacy of treatment. Sheriff Nichols and the Healthy Community Coalition have applied for a grant to cover the up-front costs. The Board supports

this plan and appreciates the Sheriff's initiative and the unanimous support of the County Commissioners for pursuing these funds.

Naloxone is available and accessible in several locations at the jail in case of overdose. Naloxone kits are offered to all residents upon release. The Healthy Community Coalition has been an invaluable partner in providing this life-saving medication and the training and education to use it most effectively.

Mental Health Services

Mental health services have also evolved in the past year. Dalene Sinski, LCSW was contracted to provide mental health services and support groups at the jail through her independent practice, Clearwater Counseling. She is joined by David O'Donnell, LCPC, who provides evaluation and counseling for substance abuse and general mental health for 16 hours over two days/week. Dalene is no longer on site but takes calls for crises after-hours or when David is not available. In addition, there is an intern from a master's program in counseling who is supporting a trauma group.

David has revamped the mental health offerings to provide several psychoeducation groups for jail residents. He also meets with residents individually on an as-needed basis. The groups have been well received and attendance is generally high, with sometimes as many as 14 attendees, depending on census and court obligations of residents. They meet in the library, which is truly a multi-purpose room, also used as a conference room, staff training room, and education site. Groups may not meet due to these other uses. It is also difficult to maintain privacy, since jail staff can walk through the library at any time. Consistency and privacy are important factors in creating an atmosphere where group members can speak openly and participate fully; these conditions guarantee neither.

Space for intake and individual counseling is very limited.

Recommendations for Medical and Mental Health Services:

- A concerted effort must be made to put out a competitive RFP for medical services, evaluating the agency's ability to ensure quality (including medical record handling), sufficient staffing, and responsiveness to problems as they occur. (NOTE: Alternative Correctional Healthcare provides medical services at both Oxford and Somerset County and may be particularly appropriate for our facility).

- Medical staffing is an urgent problem. In the past, medical responsibilities have been shared between an RN and an LPN. Finding an RN to complete the staffing of the medical office is of the highest priority.
- Upgrade information handling to include a second dedicated phone line for the medical office.
- Use of electronic medical records to document ongoing care and digitization of existing medical information.
- Investigate the use of Sublocade (depot buprenorphine) for treatment of opioid use disorder.
- Consider expanding or revising counseling hours to cover more of the week. Another part-time counselor may be needed to accomplish this.
- Review services for female and transgender residents with the goal of reducing isolation while incarcerated and facilitating reentry.
- Provide secure, private space for mental health intake, individual counseling and group therapy.
- Increase access to the library so jail residents can obtain books that complement the counseling work.

Education

Educational services are contracted with Franklin County Adult Education. The program is a part of the RSU #9 or Mt. Blue School District. The year started off with the longtime detention center instructor, Sue Knight, retiring from the position. The part-time position was posted for several months with no applicants submitting paperwork.

During this time, the Adult Education Director (and member of the Board of Visitors), Nancy Allen, personally supplied educational programming at the detention center. This was a wonderful opportunity for the Director to experience firsthand the workings of the detention center and the needs of students. At that time, the census was very low and most of the population had high school credentials. Instead of providing basic skills tutoring, students worked on obtaining their OSHA 10 certification to improve employment options.

We were fortunate to have Anstiss Morrill provide one-on-one instruction to a student wanting intense writing instruction for several months. She was a great asset and would like to continue to help in the future.

In previous years, the teaching position had been a joint position with Skowhegan Adult Education. When their instructor left in the spring, both adult education programs felt it was time to revisit this collaboration. The change to a full-time shared position Franklin County Adult Education to hire Cassidy Marsh in June. Cassidy has a Master's in English and previous teaching and tutoring experience.

Cassidy took quickly to learning all the ins and outs of teaching in two detention centers. This requires mastery of reading, writing and math for HiSET (high school equivalency tests) prep and providing all the record keeping that goes along with the position. Cassidy has also found that many students are interested in obtaining their OSHA 10 credentials for future work.

In November, the company overseeing the HiSET changed ownership. This meant a lengthy and chaotic change in computer interfacing and training. Shortly afterwards the local person in charge of carrying out this switch for our program resigned. We have not yet completed the switch at the jail, but hope to in early 2023. This change only requires one computer for testing, allowing an additional computer to become available for student use.

With this change, when no one is testing, two students could use the two computers at the same time, under the direction of an instructor, which would

allow more students would be able to access services for longer periods of time. It also allows for more group learning experiences such as book groups.

One issue that seems to plague the educational services at the detention center is the shared use of the library. With limited space in the building, the ability to deliver all the services needed is a challenge. Often our instructor will arrive, only to learn that the space is occupied for the day or several hours. This impacts the ability to learn, by interrupting continuity and brings frustration to the students and staff. A shared calendar has been created to help reduce wasted trips to the detention center, but providing more dedicated space to counseling, zoom court meetings, and other activities would help the jail provide required instruction to its residents clientele.

Adult Ed has been working hard to update the book selection in the library. Many copies are worn beyond use and some genres are limited. Adult Ed has received various donations from Twice Sold Tales and local community organizations that have helped refresh the library offerings. Adult Ed has also used local funding to buy additional educational materials and reading materials. The library cart is a lifeline for many in the facility and keeping it rotating with interesting material is crucial.

During the Board's visit to Somerset Detention Center, Mike Welch mentioned the community volunteers that provide additional programming at their site. This program provides everything from yoga, to creative writing, to religious studies. We could duplicate a similar program in our center with minimum cost.

Recommendations:

- Allow more than one student in the education/library room at a time.
- Change over the HiSET system by April to allow for more computer use by students.
- Develop a volunteer list of interested citizens to provide classes to increase options

Re-Entry Resources

- A trifold brochure is being developed by the Healthy Community Coalition staff to summarize the resources in Franklin County in a concise, easy-to-access manner, replacing the rather cumbersome folder that was previously available on release.

The following sections are some of the significant barriers that individuals may experience when re-entering the community after incarceration:

Barrier 1: Shortage of Treatment Services.

- The entire state is struggling with a shortage of providers of all kinds and Franklin County is no exception. There are long waitlists for counselors, substance use counselors, case managers, and psychological evaluations for members of the community. There is only one psychiatrist and two psychiatric nurse practitioners in the hospital network area. Not only does this delay or prevent individuals from receiving necessary treatment, but it also can be problematic for individuals that are no longer detained at the jail but are still subject to a pending criminal case that may require them to receive these services. Delay in services can very well mean a delay in the resolution of their court case and expose them to risk of incarceration as a result of not engaging in these services.
- The Intensive Case Manager helps sign residents up for MaineCare when needed. There is a specific MaineCare application for incarcerated persons. Coverage is supposed to take effect immediately upon release.

Barrier 2: Transportation.

- Franklin County is a very large, very rural county, yet the options for public transportation are exceedingly limited. The Western Maine Green Line bus has limited hours and makes limited stops. MaineCare recipients are eligible to access Community Concepts and ModivCare for transportation. ModivCare is only for medical care related transportation.
- Also very concerning is the fact that Community Concepts and ModivCare are very short on drivers—sometimes drivers can only provide one way of transportation to an appointment. Obviously, this is unworkable. One-way transportation is of no value if there is no transportation for the other end of the trip. There are also frequent issues with Community Concepts suspending someone's transportation for "no shows" even when the person appropriately canceled the ride. It is a struggle to get drivers to pick

up someone at the jail when they are released, which could be at any time during the day/evening.

- Western Maine Transportation (WMT) is another option. They offer the Green Line, a regular bus line with trips to Auburn and Lewiston. Their local bus can also do individual pick-ups with 24 hours' notice for medical appointments and shopping between 8 am and 4 pm. There is a fee for all rides. More information for WMT services can be found [here](#).
- Transportation is important for so much more than medical appointments. It is necessary for other court-ordered services, such as educational classes, employment, legal services, as well as daily needs like grocery shopping, laundromat, etc. Since the pandemic, many court-ordered programs such as individual counseling and educational classes are being conducted online. This helps alleviate some transportation concerns but can cause other problems because it requires access to the internet.

Barrier 3: Housing.

- There are very limited housing options for short or long-term housing. There is no homeless shelter in Franklin County. Shelters in other counties often have restrictions such as background check requirements and prohibitions against felony convictions or sexual/domestic violence charges, sobriety requirements, and sometimes employment requirements. This is particularly problematic for individuals with domestic violence related charges who cannot return to their home because they likely have no-contact conditions with the alleged victim. Some shelters also require the residents to leave the shelter for several hours each day, which is problematic during cold months if the resident does not have a place to go during those hours, especially if the resident has a child with them. Landlords are often unwilling to accept housing assistance vouchers and/or individuals with case managers. Extensive housing applications and limits on housing assistance eligibility present additional barriers. There was previously some emergency funding available during the pandemic for using hotels as housing but that funding is no longer available.
- Note: Farmington will soon have a secure shelter for those who are fleeing domestic violence. Safe Voices is expecting to open this shelter soon, potentially in March 2023. The shelter will have four bedrooms, two of which will have bunk beds. There will be a four-adult maximum capacity, and the rooms with the bunk beds can each accommodate a child. The rooms with single beds may accommodate an adult with an infant. The entire shelter is pet friendly. Residents do not need to be from or currently in Franklin County to be considered for the shelter.

Barrier 4: Other resources.

- Drug court is available on a limited basis, Level 1 recovery housing will be available soon in Farmington on a limited basis. A recovery center with limited hours is now available at St Joseph's Catholic Church on Middle St in Farmington and at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Jay. Many services are not currently available in Franklin County. These are an important part of a successful reentry program. Local government at all levels must prioritize development of these resources.

Recommendations:

- Include information about Western Maine Transportation's local bus service (as distinguished from WMT's Green Line bus) in the re-entry packet. County Commissioners should recognize the importance of transportation in helping formerly incarcerated individuals navigate to appointments, court dates, etc.
- Advocate for transitional housing/housing for homeless
- Increase access to mental health services and SUD treatment by forming relationships with community providers so there is a warm hand-off between jail services and community services, i.e. no gaps in care. (This is already happening with SUD treatment.)
- Maintain and improve communication with OPTIONS program staff and Peer Recovery programs
- Last year, FCDC began working in closer connection with the local branch of the domestic violence non-profit organization, Safe Voices. Part of this working relationship included adding Safe Voices to the jail's email list of agencies to send daily lists of the inmates, and designating a direct contact person at FCDC for Safe Voices to contact when needed. The jail should continue this working relationship. Safe Voices also has domestic violence training and programming that could be offered for both staff and inmates, which should be explored and encouraged by FCDC.
- Expand peer coaching for recovery treatment.
- Contact information for Adult Education in reentry packet
- Include contact information for Board of Visitors in reentry packet (franklin.county.me.bov@gmail.com)