

**Rachel Jolly, CEDO Assistant Director, CJC
Joint Justice Oversight Testimony – September 28, 2022**

For the record, my name is Rachel Jolly. I am the Director of the [Burlington Community Justice Center](#) for the City of Burlington.

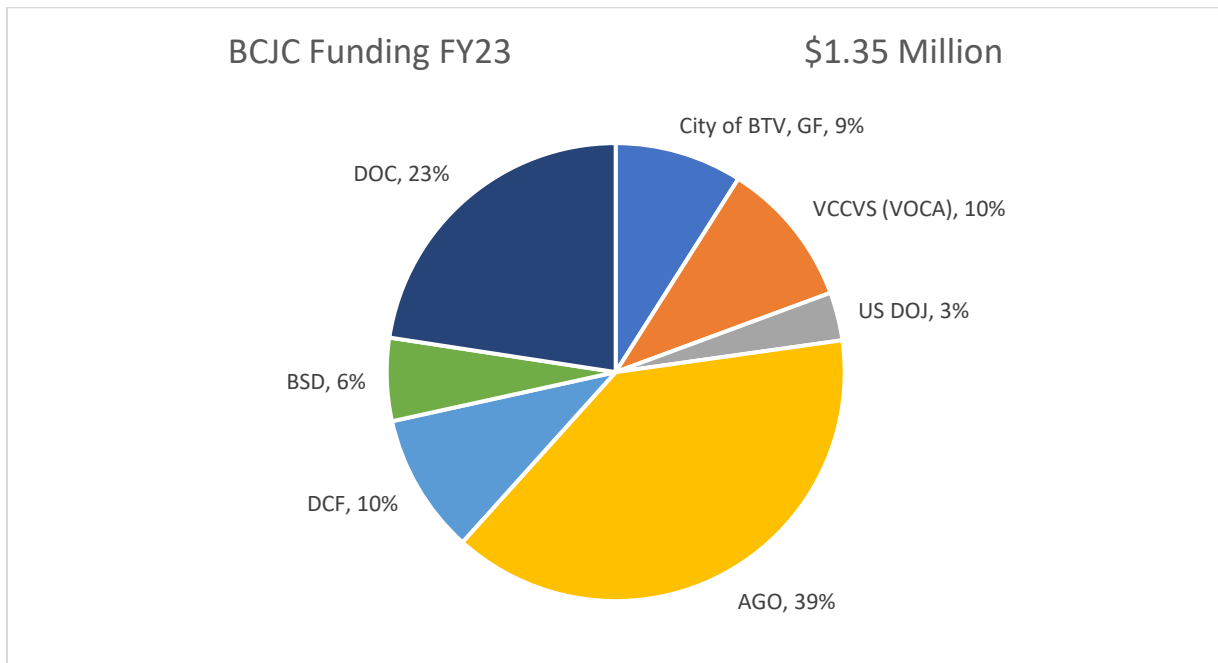
BCJC Info

BCJC was established in 1998 (24 years ago) and is a division of the Community and Economic Development Office and part of The City of Burlington. Our mission is to **address the roots and impacts of crime and conflict so that everyone experiences dignity, safety and justice**. We serve over 2000 people per year, are a staff team of 16 with about 50 volunteers, and are located in the heart of Burlington easily accessed by foot, bike or bus.

As part of our City’s structure, we report to the Director of CEDO, who reports to the Mayor. We have a seven member Community Advisory Board, which meets six times/year and is comprised of interested community members. We are also accountable to our seven funders, and the community at large.

We hold **contracts with DCF, AGO and DOC** to provide restorative justice services for both youth and adults.

The revenue chart below details our sources and percentages of funding this fiscal year:



We are one of four agencies in Chittenden County which offer state-funded restorative responses to crime and harm; all of us receive funding from the VT Dept. of Corrections. The Directors of our Centers meet monthly to talk about areas of collaboration and partnership.

Heather shared a story about a 60-year old woman who was charged with retail theft for walking out of Hannafords with items in her cart that she failed to scan through the self-checkout. The items totaled \$65.49. She has no prior charges

-If this happened in downtown Burlington she would be directly referred to the CJC by the police department. We have an agreement with Burlington Police Department that a specific list of misdemeanor charges are directly referred regardless of a person's criminal history.

-If this happened outside of Burlington, in Chittenden County, the case might be sent to another CJC (directly from the local police dept.) or to the State's Attorney.

-If it went to the State's Attorney, it then could be referred to the Court Diversion program. In Chittenden County, there are 13 deputy State's Attorneys and one elected State's Attorney. Multiple attorneys charge cases, and each have some amount of discretion. All Diversion cases in Chittenden County come to the BCJC.

It may be helpful to add that our team's response is the same be no matter how she is referred. She meets with a staff member for an intake appointment. They would spend some time getting to know each other. The staff member would ask basic intake questions in terms of demographics and support systems and ask health and mental health related questions. Persons in need of services related to their health are quickly connected to community-based supports. Our team would talk through what makes sense in terms of a restorative justice process while at the same time connecting with anyone impacted by the crime. Even this process looks different geographically.

Though I was not part of the working group my colleagues were in preparation for these meetings, I share common agreements with them:

- 1) Law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, DOC probation officers, DCF social workers, and community providers use their authorized discretion to refer to services as they determine appropriate.
- 2) We would encourage keeping a diverse array of funding sources, possibly to add, the Agency of Education and the VT Office of Racial Equity. These multiple State funding sources help to ensure stronger organizations that are able to be flexible and responsive to community needs and withstand changes in legislative and administrative priorities.
- 3) We would encourage a review of pre-charge and Court Diversion policies/practices and statutory frameworks. An exploration and analysis of funding and codification of pre-charge referrals which includes law enforcement's and prosecutor's policies should be undertaken, as well as an updating of statutory language and frameworks.

My personal recommendations:

- 1) Common contract/budget templates, common reporting forms, and a core set of common outcome metrics

- 2) Include those with lived experience in the criminal justice system, including our programs, in future analyses and discussions of how 'the system' is working.