



NACOLE Candidate Election Questionnaire

Name: Ronald W. Pierce

Position Sought: Board of Directors – At-Large

Geographic Location: New Jersey

Current Employment: Deputy Ombudsperson – NJ Office of the Corrections
Ombudsperson

1. How long have you been involved with NACOLE, and how did you initially become involved?

I have been an institutional member of NACOLE for two years (since starting work for the NJOCO) and an individual member for more than a year. I initially became involved after a discussion by the NJ Ombudsperson, Terry Schuster concerning NACOLE.

2. Which NACOLE Committees have you served on? Have you had other involvement in NACOLE as a volunteer?

2024 – Current: Jail & Prison Oversight. I have not had the opportunity yet to be involved as a volunteer.

3. Please share highlights of your background/experience in law enforcement oversight.

I have the unique experience to have served a period of incarceration, getting first-hand lived experience of prison conditions. This lived experience is something I bring to the board that is unique and not currently on the board.

My first experience with oversight was as a Policy Analyst for the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, who were the Court Appointed Monitors for the Consent Decree over the Newark New Jersey Police Department. Our Lead, Brooke Lewis guided me in various techniques to insure oversight determinations are supported by the data. I worked to develop places where community members directly affected by

policing policies gathered to conduct surveys and gather needed research to understand the perception of those being policed on the changes the Police Department was undergoing as part of the Consent Decree.

4. Why do you want to serve on NACOLE's Board? What makes NACOLE's mission important to you?

NACOLE's Board is made up of experts in the field of oversight. Jail and Prison Oversight is related, but has issues unique to it. In this sub-field, I bring the unique perspective of my thirty years lived experience within the correctional settings as well as academic expertise, with a bachelors in Justice Studies and a master's degree in Criminal Justice. I was instrumental in the passage of the Dignity Act, which brought independent prison oversight to New Jersey. Further, my presence on the Board brings trust from those encapsulated in the system. I believe my perspective and insight will advance the Board's vision for the future of oversight.

As part of my incarceration, I worked as a Paralegal, a clerk for the furniture shop, the head Clerk of Social Services, and the head clerk for the Recreation Department. In each of these positions, I had to understand the inner workings of the Department of Corrections. Part of my duties as a para-legal was working at Courtline. I had to understand the structure of the discipline system, so I could defend those I was delegated to represent in a various set of proceedings. I had to read the Officers reports of the incident and understand what they were and were not saying as part of my duties to represent the people. As the Social Services Clerk, I worked with staff to maintain programing and to try to bring forward what the population needed from the perspective of the incarcerated population. Similarly, as Recreation Clerk, I had to make lists and provide training for referees, umpires and sit as arbiter in protests. Further I had to work with custody and other staff to create lists and passes for those involved in sports programs.

NACOLE's mission to me is a vital part of expanding the humane treatment in the field of Criminal Justice. I find the mission to be insightful and a guideline to create greater trust and accountability in the field of policing and corrections. This mission is important to me because I see how much damage comes with a deep mistrust for the system of policing and corrections and this aims at repairing this through a means to bring transparency to the criminal legal system.

5. What skills/qualities do you expect to contribute as a Board member?

I have a Masters in Criminal Justice. Having worked for The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, a legal advocacy think tank dealing with social justice issues, I have

academic, lived, practical, and managerial experience. My master's degree in Criminal Justice, with my bachelors in Justice Studies and minor in Sociology, I bring academic accolades, as a formally incarcerated person, I have lived experience, my experience working as a policy analyst at the Institute (NJISJ) I bring practical experience working in the advocate realm, and as a Deputy Ombudsperson, I have management experience. I bring all of my life experience and training with me, to provide the Board with qualities that are not always included in the conversations about the practices that will better support the profession of Civilian Oversight. I am very detailed oriented, with legal training as a Para-legal while incarcerated. Now as a Deputy Ombudsperson, I have a unique ability to see the issue from different perspectives that can contribute the Board's ability when zooming out to the big picture, to incorporate those not usually at the table to be considered.

6. What goals do you have for your service on the NACOLE Board, what would you most like to accomplish as a Board member?

My goals for my service on the Board is to bring the value of all stakeholders having a voice in the oversight of those entrusted with certain powers, that they act responsible, in accordance with their oath and duties, being accountable to the public they serve. As a Board member, I would love to promote the growth of the Prison and Jail oversight field, as the public's eyes are less able to see what is happening behind the prison gates. There are no people with cell phones videoing the conduct within these enclosures, so it is even more imperative to have oversight to ensure the humane treatment to our most vulnerable population. Working at Courtline,