

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Members: Tips for Supporting the Local Behavioral Health Service Continuum

JUDGES

Judges' high-profile positions can make them especially effective at building partnerships to advance the development of the local behavioral health service continuum. Judges have positional power they may leverage to advocate for improvements to support people involved in the criminal justice system who experience behavioral health challenges.

Improve Courtroom Interactions

- *Incorporate trauma-informed practices and processes* in the courtroom.
- *Train courtroom staff* in interacting effectively with individuals with behavioral health challenges.
- *Divert individuals* to mental health or substance use treatment where possible.

Partner with Stakeholders

- *Become familiar* with mental health and substance use treatment providers in the community.
- *Get to know local behavioral health leaders* (doctors and administrators) to learn more about their concerns and better understand how the behavioral health system impacts people appearing before the court.
- *Foster conversations* between behavioral health and criminal justice leaders.
- *Create and implement evidence-based diversion programs* in partnership with local law enforcement, community behavioral health providers and community leaders.
- *Participate* in the local Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and/or subcommittee focused on behavioral health issues to develop innovative solutions to community needs, including:
 - Improving collaboration between local stakeholders
 - Identifying people with mental health and substance use disorders in the justice system
 - Assessing opportunities for diversion from criminal justice to treatment where appropriate
 - Identifying gaps and opportunities in your local behavioral health service continuum
 - Advocating for funding for behavioral health services and diversion programs
 - Fostering a culture change to increase reliance on behavioral health professionals rather than criminal justice professionals for people with mental health or substance use disorders

Advocate for Systems Change

- *Promote or help organize cross-system training* among criminal justice and behavioral health professionals.
- *Support data collection and system mappings* so everyone understands the current behavioral health/criminal justice system and the number of people affected by it.
- *Advocate for funding* for community-based behavioral health services, including inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance use treatment, among peers and local leaders.
- *Communicate support* for diversion initiatives and increased funding for services across the behavioral health continuum.
 - Submit comments to local city councils or county commissions
 - Publish opinion editorials in the local newspapers