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

POLICE CHIEFS

Law enforcement agencies serve as the face of the justice system and are often called to respond to the needs of people with behavioral health disorders in the community. Police chiefs may be extremely instrumental in shaping the local behavioral health services continuum to be both responsive to the community and provide opportunities for diversion into treatment or services for patrol staff in the field.

Enhance the Force's Responses

- *Implement CIT training and approaches*; it is recommended that 25 to 30 percent of an agency's officers should be CIT trained (or at least have one CIT-trained officer on every shift). Where possible, hire clinicians to serve alongside CIT-trained officers in the field.
- *Provide* patrol officers with additional life-saving trainings such as Mental Health First Aid and CPR, along with race equity and cultural competency training.
- *Develop policies and training* that enable trauma-informed environment, practices, and processes.
- *Enable* patrol officers to divert individuals to mental health or substance use treatment, where possible, by having policies in place to enable discretionary diversion.

Partner with Stakeholders

- *Create alternatives* to transportation for people in crisis or showing symptoms of mental illness or enable clinicians to ride along when transporting a person with a behavioral health disorder.
- *Establish paths* for diverting people to mental health and substance use treatment providers, crisis response teams, and multi-disciplinary response teams in the community.
- *Gather data* on calls for service and other incidents involving people with behavioral health disorders; explore this data with partners to create solutions that improve responses and reduce calls for service.
- *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.

Support Systems Change

- *Engage* with local and state government and behavioral health leaders to explore policy reform and funding for services for people with behavioral health disorders.
- *Participate* in town/city board meetings to educate the public and leaders on current law enforcement and behavioral health issues and support effective policies and ordinances.