

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

SHERIFFS

Sheriffs' public platforms make them uniquely positioned to influence behavioral health service continuums through leadership within their own jails and local law enforcement agencies. Where sheriffs are elected officials, their positional power is especially influential with constituents and other elected leaders. As many sheriffs oversee local jails, they greatly influence the data and services available for people with behavioral health disorders and entering the justice system.

Improve Pre-Arrest, Post-Arrest, and Jail Responses

- *Train officers and staff* to use trauma-informed responses for people experiencing crises or symptoms of a mental illness.
- *Measure the number of people with mental illness* staying in the jail through screenings at booking and at later intervals throughout a jail stay.
- *Gather data* on the delivery of treatment and use of psychotropic medications inside the jail.
- *Improve treatment inside the jail* through evidence-based mental health and substance use screenings, assessment, and programming.
- *Ensure* that contracted or in-house mental health staff are able to meet the level of need for behavioral health services inside the jail.
- *Hire clinicians or social workers* to provide case management services and transitional support to people with serious and persistent mental illness.
- *Develop agreements* with community-based agencies to ensure warm hand-offs to available beds or services.
- *Provide cross-training opportunities* for staff to learn about community-based mental health and substance use treatment programs.

Partner with Stakeholders

- *Collaborate* with behavioral health providers to ensure effective diversion prior to booking and to integrate appropriate treatment within the jail.
- *Work* with community corrections and/or re-entry programs to reduce the recidivism of people with mental illness back into the local jail.
- *Participate* in the local Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and/or subcommittee focused on behavioral health issues to develop innovative solutions to community needs, including:
 - Identifying opportunities for diversion from the criminal justice system to treatment where appropriate
 - Identifying gaps and opportunities in the local behavioral health service continuum

Advocate for Systems Change

- *Engage* with local and state government for policy reform and funding for services.
- *Support partner agencies and community organizations* in their efforts to secure funding for behavioral health services through letters of support, collaborative grant applications, and more.
- *Explore creative funding approaches* to support programming that will enable people with mental illness or co-occurring disorders to enter treatment rather than the jail, when appropriate.