

PRA ENEWS

MAY



What Does a Decade-Long Focus on Behavioral Health Reform Look Like? Milwaukee County Has Answers

County leaders working to reduce the number of people with behavioral health conditions in jail often face the same challenge: knowing where to start. Cross-system change is complex, collaboration can be hard to sustain over time, and it can be difficult to know where to direct efforts to make the greatest impact.

Milwaukee County has been working through those challenges with Policy Research since 2015. Through their involvement in the Safety and Justice Challenge and technical assistance provided by Policy Research, Milwaukee has built a comprehensive diversion system that identifies and transitions people with behavioral health conditions in contact with the criminal legal system to community-based services. They have implemented strategies such as non-police crisis response, countywide co-responder coverage, booking-level assessments, and robust reentry services—all of which began with a shared understanding of their system.

That foundation came from the [Sequential Intercept Model \(SIM\)](#). PRA has facilitated three [SIM Mapping Workshops](#) for Milwaukee, bringing together cross-system representatives to identify gaps, align resources, and build consensus on next steps. In



MAY 2026

SPOTLIGHT ON THE LEGACY OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH REFORM IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY, WI

Author: Ashley Krider, M.S.

Since 2015, the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC) has grown to an over \$400 million national initiative funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The initiative, which has expanded to over 100 cities and counties, supports collaboration among local leaders and communities to reduce over-incarceration in local criminal legal systems by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. Policy Research, Inc. (PRI) partners with the MacArthur Foundation to help SJC communities reduce the number of individuals with mental illness, substance use, and other complex needs who are involved, or at risk of involvement with, their local criminal legal systems. The following is a spotlight on the behavioral health-focused work of one SJC site: Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Since they engaged with the SJC in 2015, Milwaukee County has advanced and developed multiple strategies specifically for individuals with behavioral health needs. Led by their [Community Justice Council](#), Milwaukee recognized the importance of diversion and intervention points within the community and across the criminal legal system. They took a comprehensive approach to redesign and better serve people with behavioral health and related complex needs.

Policy Research has provided technical assistance to Milwaukee through the SJC, including facilitating three [Sequential Intercept Model Mapping Workshops](#) (2015, 2018, and 2025) that brought together local cross-system representatives to identify gaps and resources and build consensus over time. As in most jurisdictions, there were many changes to personnel, programs, and specific priorities over the 10 years of the

Milwaukee and communities across the country, this local map of the system guides efforts and sustains momentum through leadership and funding changes.

Our new brief, “Spotlight on the Legacy of Behavioral Health Reform in Milwaukee County, WI,” shares what’s possible when a county commits to a coordinated approach. Schedule a [consultation with our team](#) to learn how a SIM Mapping Workshop could help your county do the same.

Download the Brief

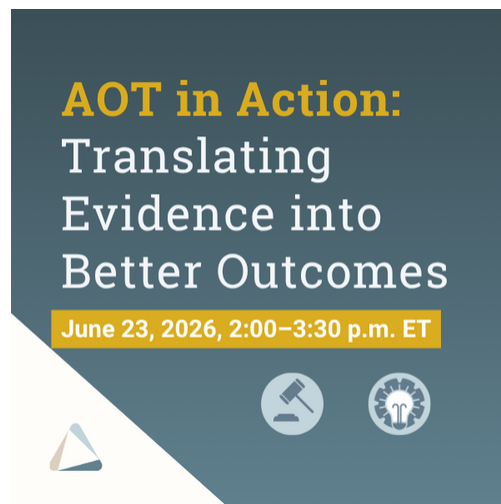
Register Now for AOT in Action: Translating Evidence into Better Outcomes

June 23, 2026, 2:00–3:30 p.m. ET

PRA is pleased to announce the next session in its Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) webinar series. In this session, leading researchers will discuss how to move from evidence to action when establishing, refining, or expanding an AOT program.

Presenters

- **Dr. Merrill Rotter**, Co-director and Medical Director, Office of Prevention and Health Initiatives, New York Office of Mental Health (*Moderator*)
- **Dr. Cindy Gipson**, Director, Crisis and Justice-Involved Services, AltaPointe Health
- **Dr. Marvin Swartz**, Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Duke University School of Medicine
- **Dr. Richard Van Dorn**, Senior Research Associate, PRA



Register for the Webinar

Real Communities, Real Change:

Polk County Uses SIM Mapping Workshop to Prioritize Recovery Needs, Funding Disbursement



In Polk County, Iowa, a PRA-facilitated SIM Mapping Workshop in May 2023 became the foundation for the county's FY2024–2026 Opioid Settlement Funds Strategic Plan. Cross-system partners used the workshop to identify top priorities: pre-arrest diversion, recovery housing, and jail reentry supports. These priorities were formally adopted as the framework to allocate settlement dollars.

The impact: The results are already visible. A newly hired case manager and peer recovery support specialist allowed a reentry program to serve 800 people returning from incarceration with everything from workforce preparation, education, referrals to treatment, and more. A mobile health unit established services inside Fort Des Moines Correctional Facility, providing substance use assessments, medication-assisted treatment, and transportation support for treatment continuation post-release. When communities have a plan, they can execute with confidence. That is what SIM Mapping Workshops provide—an aligned plan with a whole-system perspective.

Our expertise: PRA has provided technical assistance to hundreds of communities nationwide. Knowing what works where and under what conditions allows us to drive systems change locally. Our expertise can shift how your community responds to people with behavioral health conditions in contact with the criminal legal system.

The workshop process: In a SIM Mapping Workshop, cross-system representatives map their local system together, identifying gaps, duplications, and overlooked opportunities. The map is a shared framework, based on a common language, that gives everyone equal visibility of the system and their role in it. Using this map, participants develop a prioritized strategic plan grounded in their community's capacity and our expertise in what has worked nationally.

[Learn More About SIM Mapping Workshops](#)

[Bring a Workshop to Your Community](#)

PRA at an Event Near You

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST 
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CoRCon2026 Dallas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NACO Annual Conference and Exposition New Orleans• RISE26 Nashville	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CIT International Conference Orlando• NIGP Forum Columbus

This summer, PRA experts will share practical solutions to strengthen behavioral health systems by presenting and exhibiting at conferences. See which events we'll be attending, and be sure to connect with us in person.

At [CoRCon 2026](#) (June 7–10, Dallas, TX), Vice President **Chanson Noether, MA**, and Senior Project Associate **Kristin Sauerbier, LCSW**, will present the following sessions:

- *Sustaining Success: How Crisis Teams Can Thrive Beyond Initial Funding*
- *CRISIS: Crisis Responder Intervention Skills and Instructional Standards*

At the [NACO Annual Conference and Exposition](#) (July 17-20, New Orleans, LA), Senior Project Associate **Lisa Maye, MSW**, will highlight our [Systems Mapping and Training Center](#) offerings, and **Marc Stern, MD**, will highlight PRA's [Correctional Healthcare Toolkit RFP](#), designed to help correctional facilities improve their sourcing and evaluation of healthcare services.

At [RISE26](#) (July 20–23, Nashville, TN), **Travis Parker, MS, LIMHP, CPC**, will highlight our SMTC offerings. Senior Project Associate **Violette Cloud, JD, PhD**, Senior Project Associate **Melissa Neal Stein, DrPH**, and **Chanson Noether, MA**, will present the following sessions with support from SAMHSA's GAINS Center:

- *Managing Agitation and Symptoms of Mental Illness from the Bench*
- *Treatment Courts and Competence to Stand Trial: Opportunities for Integration*
- *From Surviving to Thriving: Solving the Challenge of Low Graduation Rates*
- *Supporting the Uptake of Medication for Opioid Use Disorders in Treatment Court Settings*
- *Roles, Boundaries, and Ethical Responsibilities of Treatment Court Team Members*
- *Guiding Principles and Recommendations for Trauma-Responsive Treatment Courts*

At the [CIT International Conference](#) (August 10–12, Orlando, FL), **Travis Parker, MS, LIMHP, CPC**, and Funding Resources Advisor **Sara Partyka** will highlight our SMTC offerings. **Chanson Noether, MA, Travis Parker, MS, LIMHP, CPC**, and **Kristin Sauerbier, LCSW**, will present the following sessions:

- *Wanna be a Millionaire? Tools and Tips for Developing Sustainable Funding Streams*
- *From Policy to Police to Prison to Practicality*
- *CRISIS: Crisis Responder Intervention Skills and Instructional Standards*

At the [NIGP Forum](#) (August 23–26, Columbus, OH), **Marc Stern, MD**, will highlight PRA's *Correctional Healthcare Toolkit RFP*.

PRA leads the nation in driving sustainable, impactful change for people with behavioral health conditions. Ready to transform your community? [Contact us!](#)

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove™

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

433 River St Suite 1005

Troy, NY | 12180 US

This email was sent to .

To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.