

We Want to Address Mental Health...Now What?

If you're wondering how to better address mental health and substance abuse at the county level, please note that each county's approach will vary based on population characteristics and the specific needs of that county's justice-involved population. Below are some suggestions for how to get started and what information can help successfully address local needs.

Commitment from local stakeholders

- Have elected county officials issued a mandate or passed a resolution to support this issue?
- Has a planning team been formed and does it include mental health and alcohol/substance abuse treatment providers?
- Is there agreement regarding the vision, mission, and guiding principles?
- Is there a designated project coordinator and an organized planning process?

Timely screening and assessment

- Is there a system-wide definition of mental illness, substance use disorder, and recidivism?
- Are validated screening and assessment tools being utilized?
- Is the county utilizing an efficient screening and assessment process?
- Is every individual booked into the jail screened and assessed for mental illness, substance use disorders, and identifiable risk?
- Are information-sharing agreements in place to minimize communication barriers?

Collect baseline data

- What is the prevalence of mental illness in your jail population?
- What is the average jail stay for people with mental illness?
- How often are people in the jail with mental illness connected to community-based treatment, services, and supports?
- What is the recidivism rate of individuals with mental illness?
- Do you have a way to electronically collect data?

Engage in system mapping

- Have you identified available systems, resources, and needs through a system-wide process review (also known as system mapping)?
- Have you determined what services and programming are available, both in-person and virtually?
- Have you identified gaps and challenges such as process issues, capacity needs or population projections?
- Have you explored which evidence-based practices would be most effective at meeting the needs, as identified through the screening and assessment process?

Prioritize policy, practice, and funding

- Utilizing the SIM (Sequential Intercept Model), do you have a full spectrum of strategies to implement at each intercept?
- Have you identified a continuum of treatment, services and housing?
- Are your strategies focused on the four key measures: (1) reducing the number of people with mental illness booked into the jail; (2) shortening the length of stay for people with mental illness in the jail; (3) increasing the percentage of people with mental illness in the jail connected to the right services and supports; and (4) reducing recidivism?
- Have costs and funding sources been identified?
- Is the county invested?

Track progress

- What will be your reporting timeline on the four key measures?
- What will be your process for progress reporting?
- How will you evaluate your program implementation?
- How will you evaluate your program impact?

Additional Resources

Crisis Now Model (<https://crisisnow.com/>)

Sequential Intercept Model – SIM (<https://www.samhsa.gov/criminal-juvenile-justice/sim-overview>)

Improving Responses to People with Mental Illness: *The Essential Elements of a Mental Health Court* (https://bjaojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/MHC_Essential_Elements.pdf)

Developing a Mental Health Court (<https://csgjusticecenter.org/projects/mental-health-courts/learning/learning-modules/>)

Correctional Mental Health Screen for Men (<https://www.waspc.org/assets/docs/cmhs-m.pdf>)

Brief Jail Mental Health Screen (<https://www.prainc.com/product/brief-jail-mental-health-screen/>)

Texas Christian University Drug Screen V (<https://ibr.tcu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/TCU-Drug-Screen-5-v.Aug17.pdf>)

Evidence-Based Practices Resource Center (<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource-search/ebp>)