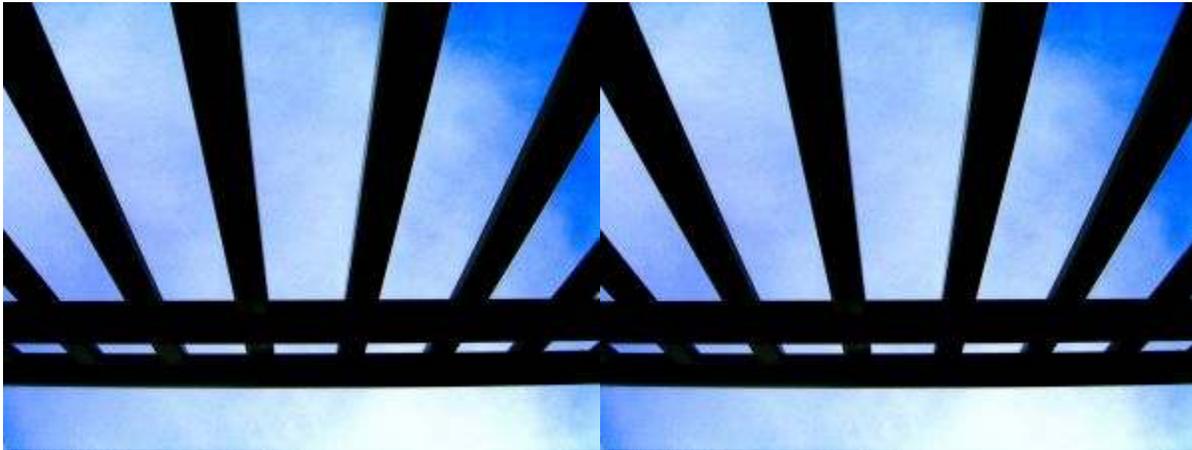


MENTAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERCEPT PROJECT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS IN JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS, TO IMPROVE THE
RESPONSE TO ADULTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Report prepared by
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MENTAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERCEPT PROJECT REPORT

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TO ADULTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

That people with mental illness land in the criminal justice system at an alarming rate has been recognized in recent years by leaders of Johnson County's mental health and criminal justice systems. During 2008 seventeen percent of the inmate population (17,637 men and women) in the Johnson County Adult Detention Center was on psychotropic medications during incarceration. One-third of residents in facilities operated by the County Department of Corrections received on-site psychiatric services. Courts and correctional agencies were the third most frequent source of referral to the Johnson County Mental Health Center.

Leaders of both systems -- mental health and criminal justice -- believed that by working collaboratively, strategies could be identified and applied that would reduce the number of persons with mental illness who are involved in the criminal justice system. In the spring of 2009 United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) was asked to facilitate a planning process with key organizations that would result in productive recommendations.

With a planning grant awarded to UCS from the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, UCS embarked on the project. Technical assistance was provided from the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center. The planning project used the "Sequential Intercept Model," a product of the National GAINS Center,* as a framework to develop targeted strategies that appropriately intercept adults with mental illness when they come in contact with the criminal justice system.

The project had eleven partner organizations: Johnson County Mental Health Center, Johnson County Manager's Office, Johnson County Office of the District Attorney, 10th Judicial District Court and Court Services, Johnson County Department of Corrections, Johnson County Sheriff's Office, 10th Judicial District Public Defender's Office, National Alliance on Mental Illness Johnson County (NAMI), and Overland Park and Lenexa Police Departments. In addition to those key partners, serving in an advisory capacity were Mental Health America of the Heartland, Kansas Department of Corrections/Re-Entry Policy Council, Mid-America Regional Council, State Representative Pat Colloton, and the Kansas Department of Corrections Parole Office.

*The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) National GAINS Center has operated since 1995 as a national locus for the collection and dissemination of information about effective mental health and substance abuse services for people with co-occurring disorders in contact with the justice system.

Partner organizations spent more than 500 hours in small work group meetings and regularly held work team and leadership team meetings. Through these facilitated meetings, and in consultation with the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the current systems were mapped. Barriers and issues were identified. Data were collected and analyzed. Evidence-based practices were considered. Principles and key elements were developed, and project recommendations were agreed to by all partners.

This report (with an appendix) is divided into six sections:

- 1) Introduction and background
- 2) Project description including participants, model used, planning process, mapping and identification of issues
- 3) Findings
- 4) Barriers, goals and recommendations
- 5) Guiding principles, key elements
- 6) The future

Recommendations

The project recommendations, arrived at by consensus, are intended as a guide for organizations, both individually and collectively. The goal is a system that intervenes at the earliest point possible and also helps incarcerated adults with mental illness prepare for safe and successful transition to the community. Essential to intervening at the earliest point is a mental health system with adequate capacity to serve those who need help.

Recommendations are presented for the six key intercept points that were investigated. (Intercept points, indicated in bold italics throughout the report, are when opportunities occur for preventative services to keep individuals from going deeper into the criminal justice system.) While every recommendation is important for overall systems improvement, a small number are identified as priorities. Common themes for every system include education about mental illness, cross-training of staff, and the involvement of family members and loved ones of persons with mental illness.

For ***Law Enforcement*** the recommendations focus on preventing unnecessary entry of persons with mental illness into the criminal justice system. Recommendations include enhanced training of dispatchers and officers, and developing alternatives to arrest.

District Court Pre-Trial and Adjudication improvements center around screening and evaluation, and alternative forms of prosecution. Key recommendations are:

- 1) Consistently screening individuals for mental illness.
- 2) Providing mental health information when appropriate in pretrial hearings and for use in dispositional alternatives (bond, diversion).
- 3) Expanding mental health diversion.
- 4) Assigning a specific attorney in the District Attorney's Office as a contact for offenders with mental illness.
- 5) Providing mentally ill defendants on diversion with information about how to comply with the rules of diversion and how to obtain community support.

For ***Sentencing and Supervised Release*** the recommended improvements focus on finding more sentencing options and connecting inmates with community-based resources and assistance at the time of release. Other recommendations have to do with ensuring that probation officers are working with offenders' natural community of support, collecting and analyzing data to help determine when a mental health court is warranted, implementing a review board, and strengthening Johnson County Mental Health Center's ties with Wyandot Center for Community Behavioral Healthcare, Inc.

Adult Detention Center recommendations call for using information about inmates' mental health condition to develop plans for treatment, housing and programming, as well as reducing the amount of time an inmate goes without access to medication, and offering evidence-based treatment programs within the Detention Center.

The recommendations for the ***Residential Center*** include implementation of a "Modified Therapeutic Community" to address co-occurrence of substance abuse and mental illness, and assigning released inmates who are under court supervision to probation officers with specialized training.

For ***Reentry*** the recommendations call for successful transitioning of individuals to the community, including mental health services and treatment, and a 30-day supply of medication upon release.

What happens now? From the project's start, system improvements began to take place. The simple act of meeting and opening channels of communication resulted in heightened awareness of the issue and changes in processes. Clear ideas began to take shape about program and process improvements. The eleven partner organizations committed to use the guiding principles, key elements, and recommendations as the framework for continuing to work together to improve system interaction for better outcomes for individuals with mental illness. Partners will meet on a periodic basis to assess progress. Partners recognize that cooperation, coordination, and collaboration alone are not enough to achieve long-lasting system improvements. In most cases implementation of new procedures and programs will require additional resources. Currently resources are not adequate to achieve the ideal system. Project partners committed themselves to identifying and securing dedicated funding that would bring success. The Johnson County Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC) assumes responsibility for moving the project forward. CJAC will collect and monitor data in order to measure the effectiveness of implemented changes and to assess progress.



Founded in 1967, UCS is a nonprofit planning organization that provides coordination and leadership for meeting the most critical human needs in Johnson County, Kansas and surrounding communities. UCS is United Way of Greater Kansas City's planning partner in Johnson County.

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