
Task Force on Community Justice and Mental Illness Early Intervention July 11, 2016 Meeting Summary

On July 11, 2016, the Task Force on Community Justice and Mental Illness Early Intervention met in Rapid City for its fifth meeting. The group reviewed its goals for policy development, learned about promising practices from other jurisdictions, broke into policy development subgroups, and heard input from the public.

Goals for Policy Development

First, the task force reviewed its goals for policy development. They are based on the task force goals and what was learned during the system assessment and data review. The goals are to:

- *Identify Mental Health Issues Early:* Train first responders to recognize mental illness, and screen and/or assess people for mental illness who come into contact with the criminal justice system.
- *Expand Diversion Options:* Ensure options are available at different points in the criminal justice process to better serve people with mental illness while holding them accountable.
- *Shift Investments to Community-based Alternatives:* Better allocate limited local resources to effective alternatives and preserve limited jail resources for violent, chronic, and career criminals.
- *Increase Timeliness of Court Processing:* Reduce barriers to timely court processing for people with mental illness.
- *Ensure Access to Services:* Reduce barriers to accessing comprehensive,

effective mental health treatment for those involved in and exiting the criminal justice system.

- *Hold Government More Accountable:* Improve oversight and measure performance.

Promising Practices

The task force reviewed relevant practices from other jurisdictions, including:

- Mental health and crisis intervention training for law enforcement, including a Technical Assistance Center in Indiana established for this purpose and the incorporation of training into Rhode Island's Police Academy;
- Early mental health screenings in jails;
- Specialized pre-trial release programs, where defendants are connected with services and monitored in the community rather than being held in jail;
- A court monitoring program in Alaska that includes a multidisciplinary team and individualized case plans for defendants with mental illness as a condition of bail or probation;
- Time limits for forensic evaluations in two states;
- Coordinating care such that a defendant works with the same case worker before and after release; and
- Different ways states hold agencies accountable for implementing mental health and criminal justice reforms.

Policy Development Subgroups

The task force split into three policy development subgroups, with a charge for each to propose a set of recommendations to help reach the task force and policy development goals. The subgroups are:

1. *Early Identification and Diversion*, covering law enforcement contact, initial detention, and first court appearance;
2. *Court Processing and Detention*, including court processing, forensic evaluations, jail staffing and training, jail reentry and coordination with service providers, and probation supervision; and,
3. *Continuum of Treatment Services*, including mental health services for people in the criminal justice system, addressing gaps in services, and funding mechanisms.

The policy development subgroups met to set dates and agendas for their subgroup calls and to brainstorm policy proposals.

Public Input

The task force heard from members of the public who expressed support for the task force's approach and asked the group to consider increasing access to crisis beds, using of telepsychiatry, implementation of mental health courts, and increasing the use of psychologists for competency evaluations.

Next Steps

The next task force meeting is scheduled for August 18th in Ft. Pierre. The members will review and discuss policy recommendations from each of the subgroups.