

Jurisdictions Served: Black Hawk County

Black Hawk County has a population of approximately 130,000 people living predominately in the Waterloo/Cedar Falls region. The jail averages 250 inmates. The Black Hawk County Jail was experiencing constant overcrowding, and in 2004 the county's Department of Correctional Services received funding from the Central Point of Coordination (CPC) office, which oversees local mental health spending in the county, to address this population. The Department of Correctional Services, with input from various community organizations including the county attorney's office, put together the Mental Health Assessment and Jail Diversion Program. The goal was to establish a structured means of screening and early intervention for individuals with mental health issues and to pursue the best possible supervision/ treatment options for mentally ill offenders coming back into the community.

The Mental Health Assessment and Jail Diversion Program is based on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) "APIC Model" which includes the following components:

- **Assess:** Assess the inmate's clinical and social needs, and public safety risks
- **Plan:** Plan for the treatment and services required to address the inmate's needs
- **Identify:** Identify required community and correctional programs responsible for post-release services
- **Coordinate:** Coordinate the transition plan to ensure implementation and avoid gaps in care with community-based services

Access to Benefits

The Mental Health Assessment and Jail Diversion Program provides the opportunity for identified mentally ill inmates in the Black Hawk County Jail to be screened and provided assistance in establishing a transition plan. Referrals for inmates to enter this program come from a variety of sources, including jail staff, probation/parole officers, the Mental Health Center, the offender and their family, public defender/county attorney, case managers, and other involved community agencies. In addition, through grant funding, in 2009, Black Hawk County launched "Project Equinox," a mental health court program in Black Hawk County which is now in its fourth year of operation. The program, with a capacity of 30 individuals, is a collaborative effort between the Black Hawk District Court, the 1st Judicial Department of Adult Probation, the Black Hawk Grundy Mental Health Center, NAMI, local attorneys, and other county agencies. The County has also launched a Transitional Mental Health Reentry Program, added a mental health component to the Black Hawk County Drug Court in order to best address those with mental health issues and addiction, and is beginning a Co-occurring Adult Recovery Solutions (CARS) Program. Through a collaboration with the Iowa Department of Corrections, the CARS program provides participants with the first six months of treatment while in prison. It then oversees aftercare services and supervision for individuals upon release in Black Hawk County.

Sustainability

The Mental Health Assessment and Jail Diversion Program began with a grant from Black Hawk County's CPC, an office that assists with referrals and placement to appropriate service providers in the community. Currently, programs including mental health jail assessment programs, mental health re-entry services, and a mental health court in Black Hawk County receive partial funding provided by grants and the Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office.

Community Linkages

The Community Treatment Coordinator works with Probation/ Parole Officers in coordinating the transition of the offender back into the community. They focus on connecting the individuals with access to medications, housing options, finances, and employment. A unique feature of Black Hawk County's program is the Community Accountability Board, a group composed of various agencies and individuals from the community who have a vested interest in persons with mental illness. The board assists the Department of Correctional Services and the correctional consumers in reviewing potential program participants, developing comprehensive treatment plans, and identifying what needs to be done to have the greatest chance for a successful community transition.

Results

The Community Treatment Coordinator position has also enabled the Mental Health Assessment and Jail Diversion Program to track data and show the community results in improving public safety, improving people's lives, and saving money. A neighboring county, Dubuque, is using Black Hawk County's program as a model in developing its own jail diversion and transition planning efforts. As Sara Carter, the Community Treatment Coordinator, commented, "We have gotten to the point we are not just reacting to the problem, but we have put some planning into how to ease overcrowding in the jails, treat mentally ill individuals appropriately, and increase awareness of the issue throughout the community."