

## DANE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

POPULATION:  
**546,695<sup>1</sup>**



## BACKGROUND

In 2016, Dane County joined Data Driven Justice (DDJ), committing to data sharing and integration across justice, health, and community services systems in an effort to divert individuals with substance use disorders and mental illnesses away from the justice system and decrease or eliminate their need for emergency services. The county also resolved to better understand and address the racial disparities within these systems. Dane County has devoted significant time and resources to integrate and use that data to identify gaps in care and other problems within the crisis response system.

Long standing efforts on criminal justice reform in Dane County, in addition to growing community support, led the County Board to approve an expansive reform package in October of 2020.<sup>2</sup> This package included a triage and restoration center, a community justice center, and protocol changes for a crisis first responder pilot program.

This case study shares Dane County's recent successes providing crisis response services to residents in need and the steps that led to these successes.

## COLLABORATING TO IMPROVE CRISIS RESPONSE

The Dane County Criminal Justice Council is comprised of leaders and stakeholders from across the criminal justice system in Dane County and enables innovation and collaboration within the justice system to bolster justice, equity and public safety. Established in 2008, the CJC has three formal subcommittees that consider and address Racial Disparities, Behavioral Health and Pretrial services. Its mission was conceived out of a series of meetings with stakeholders including CJC staff, justice stakeholders, community advocates, subject matter experts, and those with lived experience of the Dane County Criminal Justice System.<sup>3</sup>

The continued collaboration within the CJC and its collaboration with external stakeholders – including groups overrepresented in the Dane County criminal justice system – have proved to be a driving factor leading to the county's decision to invest in innovative and effective forms of crisis intervention.

## SUCCESSES IN FUNDING CRISIS INTERVENTION

**40 percent of people in the Dane County Jail suffer from mental illnesses.<sup>7</sup>**

### Mental Health Triage and Restoration Center

One of Dane County's 2020 wins in the criminal justice space was funding a study to plan a triage and restoration center. The triage center will serve as a place to bring individuals who are experiencing mental or behavioral health crises in lieu of jail or an emergency room. This triage center is a response to years of community and police requests for an alternative to traditional emergency services and incarceration. The hope for the center is that it will operate under a "no wrong door" principle, whereby walk-ins are welcomed along with those brought by a community partner or law enforcement.<sup>4</sup>

## Community Justice Center

To reduce racial disparities in the justice, health, and social services systems in Dane County, the Dane County Board approved funding to plan a new Community Justice Center. Officials hope the Center will provide services such as peer mentoring, addiction treatment, housing services, and job training alongside a community court. Dane County's Community Restorative Court and Community Justice Center are inspired by the successes of the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, New York where the community court aims to pair people with services provided in the same building in lieu of traditional criminal justice sentences. At the Red Hook Community Justice Center, three out of four people receive social services instead of jail time and after a first appearance in court less than 1% of people go to jail.<sup>9</sup> The community court model aims to provide alternative ways to resolve court cases and improve community trust by attempting to address the issues that caused a person to commit a crime in the first place.

## Mental Health First Responder Pilot Program

The Dane County Board and the CJC agreed to partner with Dane County's largest city, Madison, Wisconsin on a mental health first responder pilot program. Dane County will establish new 911 protocols and will add support to Madison, Wisconsin's pilot efforts. The program will be loosely based on Eugene, Oregon's Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Street (CAHOOTS) program which uses social workers and medics to respond to 911 calls when an individual is having a mental health, behavioral health or drug crisis instead of police. While the specifics of the pilot are still in development, all are excited about the partnership.<sup>6</sup>

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**Dane County annual investment in mental illness and addiction services – almost \$65 million per year.<sup>8</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. "QuickFacts: Dane County, Wisconsin." [www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/danecountywisconsin/PST045219](http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/danecountywisconsin/PST045219). Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Hamer, Emily. "Dane County Board Passes Major Criminal Justice Reform Package." Wisconsin State Journal, 16 Oct. 2020, [madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-board-passes-major-criminal-justice-reform-package/article\\_ebba4959-3725-592b-b961-d2e09155906c.html](https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-board-passes-major-criminal-justice-reform-package/article_ebba4959-3725-592b-b961-d2e09155906c.html).

<sup>3</sup> Dane County Criminal Justice Council. "About Us." [cjc.countyofdane.com/About-Us](http://cjc.countyofdane.com/About-Us). Accessed 9 Dec. 2020.

<sup>4</sup> County of Dane. "County Executive, Board Chair Announce Plans to Pursue Development of Mental Health Triage and Restoration Center." 24 Sept. 2020, [www.countyofdane.com/PressDetail/10719](http://www.countyofdane.com/PressDetail/10719).

<sup>5</sup> Hamer, Emily. "Dane County Board Passes Major Criminal Justice Reform Package." Wisconsin State Journal, 16 Oct. 2020, [madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-board-passes-major-criminal-justice-reform-package/article\\_ebba4959-3725-592b-b961-d2e09155906c.html](https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-board-passes-major-criminal-justice-reform-package/article_ebba4959-3725-592b-b961-d2e09155906c.html).

<sup>6</sup> Hamer, Emily. "Dane County Board Passes Major Criminal Justice Reform Package." Wisconsin State Journal, 16 Oct. 2020, [madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-board-passes-major-criminal-justice-reform-package/article\\_ebba4959-3725-592b-b961-d2e09155906c.html](https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/dane-county-board-passes-major-criminal-justice-reform-package/article_ebba4959-3725-592b-b961-d2e09155906c.html).

<sup>7</sup> County of Dane. "County Executive, Board Chair Announce Plans to Pursue Development of Mental Health Triage and Restoration Center." 24 Sept. 2020, [www.countyofdane.com/PressDetail/10719](http://www.countyofdane.com/PressDetail/10719).

<sup>8</sup> County of Dane. "County Executive, Board Chair Announce Plans to Pursue Development of Mental Health Triage and Restoration Center." 24 Sept. 2020, [www.countyofdane.com/PressDetail/10719](http://www.countyofdane.com/PressDetail/10719).

<sup>9</sup> Hamer, Emily. "Creating 'a more fair and just system': Dane County explores Community Justice Center." Wisconsin State Journal, 30 Oct. 2020, [https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/creating-a-more-fair-and-just-system-dane-county-explores-community-justice-center/article\\_89d49d5f-94ac-5b1a-ba6d-a2fca6f62eae.html](https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/creating-a-more-fair-and-just-system-dane-county-explores-community-justice-center/article_89d49d5f-94ac-5b1a-ba6d-a2fca6f62eae.html).