

MENTAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

CASE STUDY: Henrico County, Va.



METROPOLITAN RICHMOND
POPULATION:
321,924¹

JAIL BED CAPACITY:
1,047²

AVERAGE DAILY JAIL POPULATION:
1,100

BACKGROUND

Recognizing a high number of people with mental illnesses entering the Henrico County jails, in 2010, the Henrico County Sheriff's Office, in partnership with Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services (HAMHDS), initiated a Sequential Intercept Model process to identify places in the system where they could reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in the jails. Currently, about 18 percent of people who are booked into the county's two regional jails have a mental illness. As a result, Crisis Intervention Training for law enforcement officers and mental health and substance use treatment programming inside the jails were developed and implemented to address the needs of their population.

They also recognized that reentry was a significant challenge for people with mental illnesses. In September 2013, the Sheriff's Office and HAMHDS initiated The Jail Diversion Program to "divert re-incarceration" of this population. The program is designed to support individuals with mental illnesses and individuals dually diagnosed with mental illnesses and substance use disorders who are incarcerated in Henrico County jails. The overall goal of the program is to reduce re-incarceration rates by serving these individuals once incarcerated and then providing support services to them as they re-enter the community.

THE JAIL DIVERSION PROGRAM

While the program originally only had one part-time case manager dedicated to working with this population in the jails, in 2013, HAMHDS reallocated existing staff resources to dedicate one full-time mental health case manager and an existing jail-based mental health supervisor to create the Jail Diversion Program. The case manager and supervisor work closely with jail staff, other mental health staff who work within the jails, and with community partners to create bridges of support for people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The Jail Diversion Program begins serving people while they are still incarcerated and follows them as they re-enter the community.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE JAIL DIVERSION PROGRAM

- To link individuals with appropriate behavioral health services upon release from jail
- To link individuals with appropriate housing upon release from jail, and
- To assist individuals in developing skills to find employment following their release.

Jail mental health staff identifies individuals with serious mental illnesses and who have exhibited functional impairment in maintaining housing or employment and refers them to the Jail Diversion Program. Once a person is referred to the Jail Diversion Program, the case manager and supervisor meet with him or her while they are incarcerated to complete an assessment of immediate needs he or she will face once released. Needs may include housing, access to entitlements such as Medicaid, access to appropriate health services and employment. Once this assessment is complete, the staff works in conjunction with the individual to develop a service plan to meet these needs. Through a contractual agreement, the sheriff's office purchases staffing for mental

health and substance abuse services from HAMHDS, including mental health and substance abuse assessments, individualized and group treatment and psychiatric evaluation and medication management.

Jail diversion services continue once the person is released from jail. The case manager meets regularly with program participants in the community, assists them in getting to appointments and job interviews, monitors their mental health status and links them with appropriate community resources such as mental health treatment, health clinics and food banks. Additionally, the Program actively assists individuals through linking them to job training programs and to the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services as appropriate. The ongoing monitoring and support of individuals once they are back in the community provides Jail Diversion staff with the opportunity to identify problems early and develop action plans to address these issues and reduce the risk of re-incarceration.

OUTCOMES

During the first 18 months of the program, 22 individuals received intensive jail diversion services. On average, individuals in the program received 12 hours of direct service from the Jail Diversion staff. HAMHDS tracked several indicators to measure the success of their program and have demonstrated significant successes in each.

- **Re-incarceration:** Of the clients served, one was transferred to the Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC) and one was rearrested and incarcerated.

Twenty of the program participants (91 percent) have not been arrested or re-incarcerated, resulting in a **9 percent re-incarceration rate** compared to recent research showing **re-incarceration rates for this population as high as 68 percent.**

- **Housing Status:** The Jail Diversion Program has been successful in linking all participants with stable housing following their release from jail. Only 3 of the individuals served had stable housing prior to incarceration.
- **Linkages with Community Resources:** Nineteen individuals (86 percent) were linked to community services upon discharge from jail. Six of the individuals applied for SSI/SSDI while receiving jail diversion services. In addition, 10 of the individuals applied to have benefits reinstated.
- **Employment Status Post Incarceration:** Six individuals (27 percent) had some type of employment after their release from jail and one individual was involved in a volunteer program.

RESOURCE

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END NOTES

¹ Henrico County, Virginia. U.S. Census Bureau. Available at: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/51/51087.html>. Accessed July 17, 2015.

² Sheriff. Available at: <http://henrico.us/pdfs/finance/ApprovedAFPFY13/03.pdf>. Accessed October 26, 2015. The average daily population exceeds the capacity of the jail because of the large number of state prisoners who are held within the jail.

³ Amy Blank Wilson, Jeffrey Draine, Trevor Hadley, Steve Metraux, Arthur Evans (2011). Examining the impact of mental illness and substance use on recidivism in a county jail. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, v34, n4, July-August, p264-268

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