

Behavioral Health Sub-Committee

Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission
Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division
Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

September 14, 2023

9:30 – 11:00 am

(Russell Hall, CVH, Room 217-A; and TEAMS)

Minutes

In attendance: Michael Aiello, Christopher Burke, Thomas Burr, Gail Hardy, Reena Kapoor, Michael Norko, William O’Connor, David Rentler

Guests: Patricia O’Rourke (Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, UConn)

- 1. Dr. Reena Kapoor was introduced as the new Director of Forensic Services for DMHAS, effective August 1, 2023.
- 2. Minutes of the May 11, 2023 meeting were approved.
- 3. We reviewed and discussed the newly created Sequential Intercept Map (SIM) of the various diversion programs across our multiple agencies. This was created by Chris Burke, Michael Aiello, and Dana Begin (DMHAS). David Rentler noted that some additional programs need to be added for Parole and he will work with Chris Burke on this. A question was raised about local police department diversion, given the increase in social workers imbedded in police departments. Chris Burke will inquire with the Evidence-Based Practice division of DMHAS about this since they meet with the towns/police departments on a regular basis. Gail Hardy noted that ESI occurs both before and after arraignment. Bill O’Connor noted that it would be useful to re-establish the court-based lunch and learn programs to help new court officials know about the array of diversion programs available. Michael Aiello added that Judicial is about to resume these meetings for this purpose.

Michael Norko noted that the data in the narrative descriptions of that we compiled of all the diversion programs should now be updated to include FY23 data. He asked members who submitted the FY 22 data for the previous list to update this with FY23 data. He also suggested that we start a spreadsheet for the yearly data so that trends can be visualized. The data could then be removed from the narrative descriptions, which should be updated as needed related to program development.

- 4. Discussion of criminal justice operations and inter-agency communications

DMHAS report from Michael Norko, Reena Kapoor, and Chris Burke:

Michael Norko provided an updated on the surge of admissions to Whiting. The monthly admissions for competency restoration remained above 20/month from February through June, dropped to 17 in July, and were back up to 23 in August. There has never before been a five-month stretch of more than 20 admissions of this type per month. Each of the two times there were four such months in a row resulted in over-census conditions at Whiting (2006 and 2013). It is not clear whether this is a new upward trend (consistent with national trends) or if we will return to more usual numbers of admissions. The work to enhance diversion, especially of misdemeanor-only defendants, is very important, especially as future needs assessments will be part of the architectural study beginning next week for a potential new Whiting building.

Reena Kapoor reported on efforts to appraise how many of the competency evaluation and restoration orders are for misdemeanor-only defendants. The Division of Forensic Services is working with the data folks at Judicial to ascertain these figures. The Judicial data system works from docket numbers, rather than from individual defendants. Data that Judicial can provide to DMHAS will have to be matched with DMHAS records of competency evaluations to get at the number of defendants ordered for competency evaluation who have only misdemeanor charges.

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Michael Norko noted that the current Byrne grant process has a category for interagency data sharing. It may be worth investigating a way to request a grant to create a new data system that would automate this matching and reporting process.

Chris Burke noted that the current 3-bed Enhanced Forensic Respite Bed program in Bridgeport continues to function well. A new contract with The Connection, Inc. has just been signed for four new beds in New Haven and a meeting to initiate that program is planned for next week. The new contract to expand to 11 beds in Bridgeport (with Recovery Network of Programs) is expected very soon and those beds are expected to open in January after new construction is completed. Those beds will be available to courts statewide.

CSSD report from Michael Aiello:

CSSD is now closer to establishing two new scattered site apartments (through RE-Entry Assisted Community Housing; REACH) for pre-trial mental health clients. The first program utilizes ARPA funds and is for pre-trial defendants with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. This will likely include 12 apartments and serve approximately 24 clients per year, for two years. The second program utilizes state funds (savings from the 1115 SUD Waiver Demonstration) to fund 5 REACH apartments that would be used for probation clients with mental health/substance use disorders.

CSSD continues to investigate how funds from the new 1115 Waiver Demonstration Project for sentenced inmates in the last 90 days of incarceration might help expand Rapid Re-housing as another stepdown option. They are also investigating ways to use the 1115 to help fund discharge planning work that occurs during the 90-day pre-release period.

Parole report from David Rentler:

Parole is generating an RFP for two halfway house sites of 8 beds each for females in Norwich and Waterbury.

Public Defender's office report from Bill O'Connor:

The office of the Chief Public Defender encouraged jail diversion services rather than competency evaluation/restoration for misdemeanor defendants. The office has been successful in helping 8 (possibly 9) PSRB patients achieve full release from the jurisdiction of the PSRB this year.

State's Attorneys' Office report from Gail Hardy:

The office is investigating the expansion of ESI to another court; New Britain, Windham, and Tolland JDs are being considered. The legislature did not fund expansion this past session. Justin Mell (from DMHAS) has been touring the existing ESI sites to offer recommendations/suggestions. These will be incorporated into a future proposal for expansion of the program.

NAMI-CT report from Thomas Burr:

The list of diversion programs is very encouraging, and the new SIM is helpful in visualizing all that is available. NAMI-CT is interested in expanding peer-run respite beds in the community as further alternatives to criminal justice involvement. The Coalition to End Homelessness requested \$50m in funding last legislative sessions but only received \$5m. Michael Aiello noted how they are using the results of their 2020 housing survey to demonstrate the significantly higher percentages of homelessness among clients with mental health and substance use concerns, as well as those who are pre-trial (versus probation/parole). This data clearly supports the need for attention to

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homelessness and resources for house people. CSSD is working the Department of Housing on rapid rehousing resources in 11 new locations.

- 5. CJPAC: Next meeting September 28, 2023
- 6. Scheduled meetings of the Behavioral Health Subcommittee (9:30 – 11:00 am):
 - November 9, 2023
 - January 18, 2024
 - March 14, 2024
 - May 9, 2024