

MENTAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

CASE STUDY: Johnson County, Kan.

POPULATION:
APPROXIMATELY
560,000*

JAIL BED CAPACITY:
1,100

AVERAGE DAILY JAIL POPULATION:
650

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2008, as a result of an increasing jail population, the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners passed a [resolution](#) forming the Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC). The CJAC is tasked with studying and evaluating the county's criminal justice system, overseeing criminal justice data collection, analyzing trends in jail populations, identifying gaps in policy and practice, making recommendations and increasing community support for the criminal justice system.

In the spring of 2009, the CJAC asked United Community Services (UCS) of Johnson County, a non-profit organization that assists with community-wide planning and decision-making, to facilitate a [planning process](#) with key organizations that would result in productive recommendations to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses involved in the criminal justice system. At the time of this request, about 17 percent of the jail population screened for mental health service needs. UCS was awarded a \$50,000 planning grant from the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and received technical assistance from the Council of State Governments Justice Center to do this project.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Johnson County Mental Health Center
Johnson County Manager's Office
Johnson County Office of the District Attorney
10th Judicial District Court and Court Services
Johnson County Department of Corrections
Johnson County Sheriff's Office
10th Judicial District Public Defender's Office
National Alliance on Mental Illness Johnson County
Overland Park Police Department
Lenexa Police Department

Through this process, partner organizations spent more than 500 hours in small work group meetings where they used the [Sequential Intercept Model](#) developed by the GAINS Center to map their system, then identified barriers and other issues, collected and analyzed data, researched and considered evidence-based practices and developed key principles and recommendations. The project was named a national learning site through the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance. Below are a few examples of the programs developed through this process.

MENTAL HEALTH CO-RESPONDER PROGRAM

In 2010, Johnson County received a Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to implement a mental health co-responder program with the Olathe Police Department (OPD). The City of Olathe is the one of the largest cities in Johnson County and in the state of Kansas. The co-responder program involved the recruiting, hiring and training of a dedicated master's level social worker (the "co-responder") who would work with OPD and have a designated office within the Department.

The co-responder specializes in dealing with people who are exhibiting behaviors indicative of a mental illness. This person is equipped to conduct a detailed assessment of any given situation involving a person who may be acting out and make a recommendation as to the best course of action (e.g., a referral, hospitalization, continuing service). When OPD receives calls for service where mental illness is suspected (as determined by the OPD dispatch service), the co-responder dispatches with the officer to offer her expertise regarding the behavior and make a referral for the best course of action.

The co-responder also conducts training activities for officers that are designed to increase their awareness of and knowledge about mental illness, the role mental illness plays in criminality and the best ways to respond to people who may have a mental illness.

An evaluation of the co-responder initiative showed favorable results: The program increased the likelihood that action would be taken in a way that kept the individual with mental illness from penetrating the justice system, while providing the needed services and/or referrals.

CO-RESPONDER PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- The percentage of police calls that ended up in jail was already low, but fell slightly (2.4 percent to 1.5 percent pre- and post-initiative, respectively).
- The rate of hospitalization fell dramatically (53.7 percent before the co-responder program to 16.8 percent after), while referrals to services increased greatly (1.2 percent to 38.9 percent).
- The amount of ongoing treatment and supports to individuals with mental illnesses increased greatly (3.7 percent to 32.8 percent).
- Repeated law enforcement calls for service to the same individuals decreased dramatically following initial contact with the co-responder (average of 1.5 contacts per person to .616 contacts per person).

Because of these results and the support from law enforcement officers who were surveyed as part of the evaluation, the Olathe Police Department is continuing to support the co-responder program after the grant expired through a contract with the Johnson County Mental Health Center. In addition, another municipality in Johnson County, the Overland Park Police Department, received its own federal grant in 2013 to implement this program and plans to continue funding its co-responder with the Johnson County Mental Health Center. Overland Park is the second largest city in the state of Kansas and this program has been able to serve hundreds of people in its first year of implementation alone.

To watch a video on the co-responder program, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9daw_OKR-U.

RSI CRISIS STABILIZATION CENTER

Faced with a reduction in state mental health beds, leadership from Johnson and Wyandotte Counties, the Kansas legislature and the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) created a crisis services center near the University of Kansas Medical Center to serve people with emergency mental health needs from Wyandotte and Johnson Counties. The Rainbow Services, Inc. (RSI) Crisis Stabilization Center opened in April of 2014 and is funded through a three-year grant from the KDADS. It is operated by Wyandot Inc., a non-profit community service organization, in partnership with the Johnson County Mental Health Center and Heartland Regional Alcohol and Drug Assessment Center.

The RSI Crisis Stabilization Center provides 24/7 services for Wyandotte and Johnson County adult residents facing mental health and substance abuse crises. RSI is staffed by registered nurses, mental health technicians, licensed addiction counselors, case managers, recovery coaches, peer support specialists, activity specialists and triage specialists.

It provides three main services:

- a sobering unit for people with substance abuse issues that offers recovery support and assists people with accessing additional treatment services
- a crisis observation unit where people can stay for up to 23 hours and be connected to community mental health centers for follow-up services, and
- a crisis stabilization unit for short-term stays of up to 10 days for people requiring services over a longer period of time before transitioning to community-based care.

The RSI Stabilization Center served more than 1,000 individuals in its first year and has reduced the use of Osawatomie State Hospital beds, which are inpatient beds used for adults with severe and persistent mental illnesses, by 12 percent.

To watch a video on the RSI Crisis Stabilization Center, visit <https://vimeo.com/114316821>.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE INITIATIVES: JUSTICE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (JIMS)

In the early 1990s, Johnson County developed the Justice Information Management System (JIMS) with the support of the County Manager's Office and the Board of County Commissioners to connect courts, law enforcement and corrections agencies to access records. JIMS also provides limited access to city police departments, attorneys and the public. This system was funded by the county and was developed specifically for its needs. It is staffed by a director and as many as 20 people with a current budget of around \$2.3 million. It has proven to be an invaluable tool for planning and assessing policies and practices in Johnson County.

In January 1, 2010, a mental health referral flag (meaning that the individual is in need of on-going mental health services upon discharge from jail) was added in the Johnson County JIMS. The flag is used to determine the number of people entering the jail who are referred to the mental health team at the jail and also serves as an indicator for probation officers and others to connect individuals to treatment.

For more information on JIMS, visit *The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Network Mini-Guide Series: Three Approaches to Integrated Data Systems*. Visit: <http://69.195.124.207/~jmijust1/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/CJCCMini-Guide-Integrated-Data.pdf>

RESOURCES

Robert Sullivan
Criminal Justice Coordinator
Robert.Sullivan@JoCoGov.org
(913) 715-0745

* "Overview." JoCoGov.org. Available at <http://www.jocogov.org/government/about-johnson-county/overview>. Accessed June 17, 2014.

For more information about this publication or NACo's mental illness and jails project, please contact Nastassia Walsh, NACo Program Manager, at nwalsh@naco.org or 202.942.4289



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of COUNTIES

25 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NW
SUITE 500, WASHINGTON, DC 20001

202.393.6226 FAX 202.393.2630
www.naco.org

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