

Carroll County



Core Service Agency

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Carroll County Mental Health Diversion Efforts

Background

In FY08, the Carroll County Detention Center and the Carroll County Core Service Agency partnered together, with the support of the Behavioral Health and Addictions Advisory Council (BHAAC), to develop a grant application to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in hopes of obtaining funding for planning efforts to divert individuals with mental illness from entering or further penetrating the criminal justice system. Although the county was not selected as an award recipient, the need for developing a comprehensive criminal justice and mental health collaboration in the county remained a priority in both systems. As such, a goal to continue the partnership efforts with the Carroll County Detention Center in the development of a mental health diversion program was formally added to the FY11 CSA Annual Plan.

Through previous efforts in the county, Carroll County already has the benefit of grant funded reentry services under the Maryland Community Criminal Justice Treatment Program (MCCJTP) and a newly developing reentry program sponsored by the Carroll County Health Department Bureau of Addictions. However, there are still a number of individuals incarcerated at the local detention center, on a pretrial status, who could safely be released to the community if the necessary services and supports were coordinated and made available to the individual. It is the intent of the new diversion program to intercept those individuals who meet specific criteria, during the initial detention/initial court hearing phase and divert them to appropriate comprehensive community treatment as a condition of pretrial release.

Mental Health Diversion Program

The Mental Health Diversion Program will begin as a pilot program to provide diversion services (from the detention center) for individuals with mental health and co-occurring substance abuse needs. Individuals meeting specific program criteria (currently in development) will be identified by attorneys, MCCJTP staff or detention center staff and referred to the Office of the State's Attorney for consideration for the diversion program. The State's Attorney's office and the Office of the Public Defender will confer to determine if the defendant may be appropriate for diversion. If both the offices agree to diversion, the judge will sign an order for the Mental Health Diversion Program evaluation to take place. This evaluation is not an assessment of competency to stand trial or criminal responsibility. To proceed with the diversion evaluation, the individual must be considered to be competent and voluntarily engaged in the process. A clinical assessment of needs will be conducted by a licensed psychologist through the Mental Hygiene Administration's Community Forensic Evaluation Program, and recommendations for services will be forwarded to the MCCJTP staff for development of the diversion plan and linkage to community service providers. Once the plan is developed, it will be presented to the judge and parties. If the Court and parties accept the proposed plan, the plan may be incorporated in Conditions of Pretrial Release or Conditions of Probation. The MCCJTP staff, Pretrial Services and/or Probation will

collaborate to monitor the individual's compliance with the diversion plan while in the community. Successful participation in the diversion program may result in the individual not receiving any additional jail time, or the individual's criminal cases being "stetted" or "nolle prossed" (suspended or not prosecuted). It is estimated that the number of individuals to be served by the program on an annual basis will be approximately 20 persons.

The Role of the BHAAC and Community Providers

As the advisory council for Mental Health and Addictions services in the county, the participation of the BHAAC members in providing recommendations to the Core Service Agency regarding the effectiveness of the Mental Health Diversion Program will be vital to the success of the program. In addition, partnerships with community providers will also play a critical role in the outcomes achieved by the program. The Core Service Agency has proposed that the Mental Health Diversion efforts in the county, including the MHDP, have an established sub-committee of the BHAAC to be responsible for leading the continued efforts around justice-involved individuals with behavioral health needs.