

**Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Members: Tips for Supporting the Local Behavioral Health Service Continuum**

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**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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In many counties, elected commissioners oversee county budgets and programming, which often includes funding for jails, health departments, and other services impacting people with behavioral health disorders. At least one county commissioner should serve on the local CJCC to consider local services and programming needs for people with behavioral health disorders, help channel resources to areas of need, and champion meaningful, collaborative improvements to the local criminal justice and behavioral health systems.

**Steward County Resources to Support People with Mental and Substance Use Disorders**

- *Identify* where long-range goals of local behavioral health services align with county objectives and financial goals, in order to recommend sustainable program structures.
- *Recruit and hire* county management staff whose scope of work supports local jail and behavioral health department program goals.
- *Contribute to regional policymaking* on mental health services, housing, and transportation that supports people with mental and substance use disorders.
- *Require regular reports of data and information* around the involvement of people with mental and substance use disorders in the county jail, the utilization of county behavioral health resources, and efforts to address gaps in services identified in the community.
- *Support the allocation of funding* towards preventive and crisis care services for people with mental and substance use disorders.

**Partner with Stakeholders & Advocate for Systems Change**

- *Build relationships* with mental health and substance use treatment providers in the community.
- *Learn from partners and people with lived experience* within criminal justice systems about service gaps, structural limits to providing and receiving continuity of care, and types of supports that would be helpful.
- *Support data collection and system mappings* so stakeholders understand the current behavioral health and criminal justice systems, including potential service gaps and the related community impact.
- *Engage in peer learning* with leaders of other counties to exchange best practices and lessons learned around serving people with mental and substance use disorders.
- *Communicate support* for diversion initiatives and increased funding for services across the behavioral health continuum.
- *Participate* in the local Criminal Justice Coordinating Council or subcommittee focused on behavioral health issues to develop innovative solutions to community needs, including:
  - Improving collaboration between local stakeholders.
  - Identifying people with mental and substance use disorders in the criminal justice system.
  - Assessing opportunities for diversion from the criminal justice system to treatment where appropriate.
  - Identifying gaps and opportunities in the local behavioral health service continuum.
  - Advocating for funding for behavioral health services and diversion programs.
  - Fostering a culture change to increase reliance on behavioral health professionals rather than criminal justice professionals for people with mental and substance use disorders.