

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

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**MAGISTRATES**

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Magistrates have a unique role in the criminal justice system as a gatekeeper, often determining if and how an individual enters the court system. Developing effective strategies to recognize and address the needs of people with behavioral health disorders may provide critical diversion opportunities at an intercept point that is often underutilized for routing people into treatment or services.

**Improve Interactions with Defendants**

- *Develop* an understanding of the unique challenges and needs of people with behavioral health disorders, particularly as those challenges or symptoms may relate to alleged charges.
- *Incorporate* trauma-informed practices and processes into the hearings.
- *Evaluate* the comprehension level of individuals being served who may have a behavioral health disorder or an intellectual or developmental disability.
- *Clarify* terminology and language to ensure defendants understand the court proceeding.

**Partner with Stakeholders**

- *Coordinate* with mental health providers, community support services, and the jail to ensure that when defendants are immediately released on their own recognizance or bail, they are linked with adequate services and resources.
- *Create* strategies for diverting people with behavioral health disorders at the magistrate hearing.
- *Establish* agreements with law enforcement to increase support for people with behavioral health disorders at the initial hearing and ensure buy-in around diversion strategies.
- *Develop* a tracking or flagging system in conjunction with a behavioral health partner or the public defender's office to ensure appropriate follow-up of people with behavioral health disorders facing charges in the criminal justice system.

**Support Systems Change**

- *Promote* or help organize cross-system training among magistrates and behavioral health professionals.
- *Ensure* that policies around bond determinations allow for appropriate diversion of people with mental illness, substance use disorders, and/or co-occurring disorders into treatment or services.
- *Participate* in the local Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and/or subcommittee focused on behavioral health issues to develop innovative solutions to community needs, including:
  - Improving collaboration between local stakeholders.
  - Identifying people with mental health and substance use disorders in the justice system.
  - Assessing opportunities for diversion from criminal justice to treatment where appropriate.
  - Identifying gaps and opportunities in your 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 health or substance use disorders.
- *Communicate* support for diversion initiatives and increased funding for services across the behavioral health continuum.