



OHIO

**“We aren’t just connecting people to treatment; people are staying in treatment.”**

## EXPANDING AND ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT & REENTRY HOUSING COORDINATION FOR PEOPLE IN JAIL

### Project Background, Vision, and Outcomes

Ohio was concerned about the overrepresentation of persons with mental illness in jails, many of whom do not receive the necessary mental health services during incarceration and at time of reentry to the community. Additionally, this population experiences high levels of homelessness which complicates treatment and can further criminal-legal involvement. To address this problem, two counties in Ohio (Hancock County and Clermont County) sought to expand and improve their current mental health treatment and supportive services for individuals in local jails or who were reentering community settings.

The vision was to expand and enhance treatment and housing services to adults with mental illness and/or substance use disorders (SUDs) in and recently released from jails to mitigate the “revolving door” of people who return to jail, experience repeat homelessness, and/or become disconnected from treatment or services. Hancock County used

Transformation Transfer Initiative (TTI) funding to hire a full-time clinician to provide trauma-informed de-escalation training to correctional staff and provide psychiatric services to individuals in jail with a serious mental illness. Clermont County focused on obtaining supportive and permanent housing for individuals returning to community from jail. Additionally, several core services including initial screening, treatment services, and linkage to community health and supportive services were expanded during the TTI award period.

Data was collected on a variety of indicators, including information on the number of people in jail who received services, needed crisis services, or were admitted to inpatient care. Data from Hancock County showed that the program served 719 individuals in jail, 168 of whom needed crisis services, and 11 who were admitted to inpatient care. There were also 269 completions of the GAINS discharge form during the

(continued) ►

time period. Other outcomes were a reduction in jail recidivism among persons with a serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder(s) and that they “found housing for everyone that needed it”. Additionally, the awardees reported that many people who connected with treatment through the program were able to stay in treatment.

## Project Implementation: Challenges and Lessons Learned

Project challenges included a limited availability of housing for forensic clients causing them to “lose people” upon discharge to the community, and significant workforce shortages that impacted both mental health and criminal justice partner agencies.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic impacted the state behavioral health and correctional programming and operations systems. Specific to this TTI award, jail closures limited and even prevented behavioral health staff from physically accessing people in jail for a lengthy period of time. This was a significant challenge that impacted some partnerships between correctional facilities and agencies.

During the award period, Clermont County hired a designated staff member to solely work on housing and they noted that this dedicated focus increased their success with placing people in housing.

## Sustainability and Project Legacy

This project was used to expand existing reentry efforts that were already in place. When funding ends, they plan on advocating for additional funds from the local county boards and other sources to sustain current and future staffing and programming needs within their health and housing initiatives. A representative from Hancock County stated that they plan to continue engaging with providers that are

familiar with legal-involved patient populations and the unique health and supportive services needs for this special health population.

## Health Equity

This project was designed to address the needs of people with mental illness and/or a SUD who were currently in jail or preparing to return to the community from jail, and these populations represent marginalized groups due to their justice involvement.

## Peer Services Utilization

Ohio has a clear stance about the importance of peer support services, and more specifically forensic peer support services in the development of treatment plans and overall programming. Ohio does not contract with external service providers that do not hire peers within their own organizations. This shows a dedication to the peer support model of care and conscious collaboration with community providers with a shared vision on the utilization of peers within health treatment.

## Trauma Informed Care

Prior to receiving TTI award funding, leadership was already creating a trauma informed agency. All of the agency staff have been training in trauma informed care, and this continued during the expansion and enhancement of forensic health treatment and reentry housing coordination.

**For further information about this project contact Jennifer Roach at [jennifer.roach@mha.ohio.gov](mailto:jennifer.roach@mha.ohio.gov) or Christopher Nicastro at [christopher.nicastro@mha.ohio.gov](mailto:christopher.nicastro@mha.ohio.gov).**