



CSSD Chronicle



A regular publication of information and news about Court Support
Services Division

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CSSD Reaches Out To Clients With Mental Health Needs

An increasing number of inmates incarcerated in Connecticut's correctional facilities and individuals who become involved in the criminal justice system are being identified as having mental health disorders, including co occurring mental health and substance abuse issues. Of those who are sentenced to probation or pre trial supervision, these disorders present significant challenges to CSSD's efforts to provide effective services. In order to address this issue, the Division has embarked on a collaborative effort with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and the Department of Correction (DOC) to integrate community based treatment and supervision for these individuals. The new program will provide for enhanced supervision for sentenced clients with mental health issues, improved identification of pre trial clients with such issues, and access to additional mental health treatment services.

BACKGROUND: Research suggests that there is a positive correlation between reduced violations and recidivism rates and manageable caseload size when coupled with quality client engagement and evidence based treatment services. In CT, over a 12 month period, approximately 1,124 clients placed on probation were experiencing high levels of psychological and emotional disruption. We also know from a recent CSSD sponsored study that probationers assessed as high risk and classified at the surveillance level are violating probation at substantially higher rates than low risk levels (71% compared to 23%). A review of the data on the assessed needs of these high risk probationers reveals that mental health issues are one of the top two recidivism risk factors. It is anticipated that the expansion of specialized supervision and enhanced services for probationers with significant mental health problems could reduce the number of violations for this population.

NEW PROBATION MENTAL HEALTH UNIT TO BE DEVELOPED: This fiscal year CSSD received funding to hire ten additional Adult Probation Officers which has allowed the creation of a Probation Mental Health Unit. The officers assigned to this unit will have capped caseloads of 35 clients.

They will provide intensive supervision for clients with identified mental health disorders and work collaboratively with DMHAS staff to ensure access to an expanded service continuum for psychiatric and co-occurring disorders. The new Probation Mental Health Unit will begin accepting clients later this year. The officers will receive specialized training in mental health issues provided by DMHAS, who is also training mental health clinicians who will be working with probation clients referred through the unit. The mental health officers will be sited in eight towns: Bridgeport, Hartford, Meriden/Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich and Waterbury and they will work collaboratively on treatment teams with DMHAS providers and clinicians. There will be regional meetings held with local providers and MH probation officers to enhance linkages and awareness of community based psychiatric services, especially in locations outside of Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport.

ACCESS TO ENHANCED AIC & COMMUNITY SERVICES: As part of our effort to address mental health issues, CSSD and DOC have entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with DMHAS to provide case management, clinical treatment and targeted interventions for our clients. The services will be provided by the DMHAS community provider network statewide that is administered by their Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHA). The agreement also calls for DMHAS to provide three mental health clinicians who will service pretrial and probation clients, two of which will be located at least half time at the New Haven and Hartford AICs and one clinician to be located full time at the Bridgeport LMHA, Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center. These DMHAS mental health clinicians will also be available to work with the MH probation officers to provide or coordinate treatment for CSSD clients. The mental health clinicians will have caseloads capped at 25 to ensure the most effective delivery of services. Through the establishment of specialized lower caseloads, supplemented with appropriate additional services, we anticipate a reduction in probation violations and subsequent incarceration rates.

NEW JAIL RE INTERVIEW SERVICES: An additional service expansion has been provided for pre trial clients with mental health disorders who often are kept incarcerated due to a lack of adequate community based supervision services and treatment availability. Some of the new CSSD staff authorized in this legislative session were hired as Mental Health Jail Re Interview Program (JRIP) officers and also received specialized training in assessment and referral techniques.

In addition, three Intake/Assessment/Referral (IAR) specialists were hired to work on the JRIP. They were assigned to Garner, Osborn and York Correctional Institutions to provide initial screening and assessment of the mental health populations at these three locations and identify appropriate clients who can be released and receive specialized services that will be provided at the AICs and through the LMHAs. The three new JRIP staff began work in December to specifically address the increased numbers of clients with psychiatric disorders who have been unable to gain access to many community based services and remain incarcerated as a result. With their special training, they will enhance the coordination with local DMHAS mental health services in developing a comprehensive community supervision and treatment plan for pre trial clients. These JRIP staff will also serve as a liaison with local programs and courts.

CLIENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA & REFERRAL PROTOCOLS: The expanded service program is targeted to sentenced clients who suffer from anxiety, depression and could benefit from intensive mental health services but who do not require hospitalization. Potential probation clients can come from existing caseloads as well as new split sentence discharges and incoming clients. Referrals to the LMHA or DMHAS contracted provider will come from the designated DMHAS AIC mental health clinician following consultation with the MH probation officer. JRIP staff will target clients who are incarcerated pre trial and held on bond with psychiatric problems who have been screened by DMHAS. JRIP staff will also continue to work with DMHAS Jail Diversion staff.

ENHANCED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: The mental health treatment services that will be provided through the DMHAS network of LMHAs and contracted community providers will include but not be limited to:

- services for co occurring disorders
- partial hospitalization (3-5 hours a day in intensive outpatient setting)
- individual and group counseling
- linkage/referral to self help groups and community supports
- monitoring of self administered medications, provision of assessments/evaluations, treatment plans, progress reports and other information as necessary to DMHAS AIC clinicians
- development and implementation of aftercare treatment plans to the DMHAS AIC clinicians 72 hours prior to program completion

If stipulated by court, clients may remain under the supervision of the AIC even after treatment is completed to address public safety issues. In addition, the LMHA or contracted provider will be responsible for designating a Liaison who will handle the processing of CSSD referrals and communications including screenings and coordination of treatment admissions. The DMHAS AIC mental health clinicians will provide initial assessment/intake for appropriate clients, LSI/ASUS assessments, collaboration with treatment providers to develop treatment program plans.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on the Probation Mental Health Unit please contact Brian Coco, Chief Probation Officer I at 860-721-2176 or Brian.Coco@jud.ct.gov; for information on the Jail Re Interview mental health programming, contact Sara Barron, Program Manager I at 860-721-2164 or Sara.Barron@jud.ct.gov.

Suggestions? Questions? Comments? Concerns? Contact us! Rena.Goldwasser@jud.ct.gov