



Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee (MHJAC)

Mission

Our mission is to spearhead and support statewide and local strategies reducing the number of justice-involved individuals with behavioral health, co-occurring substance use disorders, and intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities from the justice system through comprehensive and appropriate diversion, treatment, and reentry services.

Vision

Our vision is to be recognized as a national leader in fostering system-wide, transformational models and standards across the Commonwealth that support the wide diversity of individuals with behavioral health concerns and/or disabilities when involved in the justice system.

Guiding Principles

In all our decisions, plans, and programs, we are guided by these principles:

- **Safety:** We strive to keep public safety and the well-being of Pennsylvania's communities as paramount.
- **Victims' Rights:** We are sensitive to the rights of victims of crime.
- **Social & Racial Equity:** We are committed to upholding the highest standards of social and racial equity.
- **Validity & Reliability:** We support and advance reliable research and the sharing of substantive, evidence-based practices.
- **Collaboration:** We exemplify, encourage, and sustain strong peer-to-peer relationships between and among members of the state, county, justice system, and behavioral health community.
- **Connection:** We strive to have open engagement with those we serve in our communities and the stakeholders committed to promoting the Mission and Vision.

Goals & Objectives

GOAL 1: To Assist Counties in Implementation of Diversion Programs

- 1.1. Assist counties in utilizing validated risk and needs assessment tool(s) in the implementation of diversion strategies, across the Sequential Intercept Model, linking non-violent individuals to community-based treatment as an alternative to incarceration.
- 1.2. Promote pretrial services which include forensic case managers and Certified Peer Support services.
- 1.3. Promote juvenile diversion practices that address the gap in services for transitional age youths.

GOAL 2: To Provide Training and Technical Assistance to Counties, Law Enforcement, Including Support for County Initiatives

- 2.1. In consultation with key partners (i.e., MPOETC, PA Chiefs of Police Association), expand behavioral health training that provides best practices for law enforcement officers when encountering individuals with behavioral health concerns and/or disabilities, including those within existing and emergent special populations.
- 2.2. Continue support for cross-systems trainings of criminal justice and behavioral health practitioners, working across the Sequential Intercept Model to promote communication, collaboration, and understanding of respective responsibilities.
- 2.3. Assist counties in measuring the effect of interventions for individuals with mental illnesses involved in the criminal justice system.

GOAL 3: To Support Uniform Data Collection and Sharing Within and Among Counties

- 3.1. Assist counties in developing uniform data collection elements; uniform definitions to track and evaluate the effectiveness of planned interventions; and implement uniform jail screening tool for mental illness.
- 3.2. Improve information sharing between criminal justice and behavioral health agencies.

GOAL 4: Promote the Utilization of Evidence-based Practices (EBPs) with Counties, Commonwealth Agencies, Law Enforcement and Behavioral Health Professionals

- 4.1. Improve access to evidence-based practices associated with public health outcomes (support access to psychopharmacologic medication; integrated dual disorder treatment; cognitive behavioral therapies addressing criminogenic features; assertive community treatment).
- 4.2. Continue to share best practices with counties while fostering county-to-county information sharing.

GOAL 5: To Strengthen Reentry through Planning and Treatment Plans and Community Supervision

- 5.1. Increase services, including in-reach, that prepare individuals with behavioral health needs for release from county jails.
- 5.2. Promote the development of appropriate community supervision and treatment plans when releasing individuals with behavioral health needs from state correctional facilities.
- 5.3. Encourage specific training for corrections staff on the behavioral health needs of special populations.

GOAL 6: Support Capacity Building to Effectively Serve Individuals with Behavioral Health Needs

- 6.1. Promote the strengthening of the criminal justice and public safety workforce segments which focus on supporting individuals with behavioral health needs.
- 6.2. Recommend and promote innovative justice system models that expand capacities across the integrated systems which serve individuals with behavioral health needs.