

Harris County Mental Health Jail Diversion Program (SB 1185)

The Results

The Mental Health Jail Diversion Program (MHJDP) is a collaborative, health and human services and criminal justice model that was established by Senate Bill 1185 to help reduce recidivism for individuals with a serious mental illness. It incorporates integrated health and behavioral health, housing, and treatment of co-occurring disorders, and criminogenic risk. It also applies the principles of Critical Time Intervention (CTI), an evidence-based practice of intensive case management, during the first weeks following release from jail or program enrollment.

Program Participants

Eligible participants had 3 or more bookings in two years and had not been convicted of exclusionary offenses such as homicide, arson, DWI, and sex offense.

Between August 2014 and August 2016, 4,155 individuals were screened.

- A total of 554 individuals were enrolled
- A cumulative total of 215 (5.1%) individuals declined services

The majority of enrolled participants (99.3%) were found to have incomes under the 2015 federal poverty level (FPL) guidelines; 45.8% of participants were classified as medically indigent (uninsured) and 23.8% received Medicaid benefits. An estimated 72.7% (403) were identified as homeless or in need of housing. Approximately 84% (468) of participants reported substance or alcohol use in addition to their primary mental disorders such as Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Program Evaluation

Statistical analyses were performed on a sample of 203 enrolled that had been followed for one year or more. Analysis of this sample showed the following:

- Male (72%)
- Never married (71%),
- English speaking (98%)
- African American (66%)
- Suffered from bipolar disorder (36%) with a secondary substance use diagnosis (43%)

Further analyses indicated that the jail-recruited sample improved more than those referred from the community. Individuals with severe "criminogenic" behaviors and attitudes improved at the same rate as those with less serious symptoms. Additionally, intervention was equally effective for major diagnostic groups.



Program Outcomes

Sample size 203 participants enrolled in the program for at least one year.

Recidivism

- 36.9% of participants had no further encounters with the criminal justice system in the year following enrollment.
- There was a 38.2% reduction in the average number of bookings per person.
- Participants served 3,836 fewer jail days.

Cost Effectiveness

- Average treatment cost per person per year was estimated to be \$4,482.93.
- Average criminal justice cost was determined to be \$11,435.75 per booking.
- Estimated cost avoidance for bookings totaled \$1,857,166.
- When program costs were entered into the cost-benefit equation there was a potential savings to the taxpayer of \$947,131.