

## 2017 CSAC Challenge Awards – Riverside County Probation Department

### Intensive Re-Integration Services (IRIS) Unit

**Overview:** Riverside County Probation (RCP) and Riverside University Health System - Behavioral Health collaboratively developed a specialized in-custody treatment program for youthful offenders with mental health issues. (25 word summary)

**Challenge:** Mental health disorders are more complicated and difficult to treat in younger offenders, especially when they are committed to in-custody treatment programs with peers who do not face these challenges. Historically, in-custody programs have not been focused to address the needs of youth with mental health disorders, and there has been a gap in the development of appropriate mental health assessments and specialized treatment for this population. With nearly 80% of our juvenile detention population having some form of mental health issue, RCP and Behavioral Health recognized the need to bridge this gap and provide a solution.

**Innovative Solution:** In July 2015, a funding award from the Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction (MIOCR) Grant enabled RCP and Behavioral Health to create Intensive Re-Integration Services (IRIS), a program specifically designed to treat youth who are seriously emotionally disturbed. These youth would have otherwise been placed in private Rate Classification Level (RCL) 12/14 programs, or absorbed into in-custody programs with youth who may not suffer from mental health disorders. Each youth screened and accepted into the IRIS program receives an individual treatment plan focused on enhanced mental health services for their successful re-integration into the community. The IRIS program currently provides this service to male juvenile offenders.

**Originality:** IRIS is a comprehensive three phase treatment program. RCP and Behavioral Health staff work in tandem with the goal of reducing recidivism among mentally ill youthful offenders and assisting them with successful community re-entry. In January 2016, a 10-bed IRIS unit was established at Riverside Juvenile Hall. Youth who are committed to the Youth Treatment and Education Center program, a one-year commitment program administered by RCP, are screened for IRIS and accepted if they meet the program criteria. These youth must meet the qualifications for serious emotional disturbance. During IRIS's initial phase, youth receive intensive treatment through multi-model, evidence-based practices. Aggression Replacement Training, Moral Reconation Therapy, Trauma Focused - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Seeking Safety, were programs specifically chosen for the IRIS unit because they have been identified as therapy approaches with strong empirical research supporting their effectiveness with juvenile offenders. Family therapy is also provided to the youth and their families on a regular basis. The second phase focuses on planning for the youth's post-custody needs, such as appropriate housing, educational services, employment preparation, life skills development, and screening to determine appropriate Enhanced Aftercare services. In the final phase, the youth are supervised in the community by an Enhanced Aftercare probation officer who has been trained in Functional

Family Probation Supervision, an evidence-based case management approach that engages the entire family in the youth's rehabilitation. In addition to providing supervision, this probation officer may be part of a Wraparound team that works with the youth and family or may refer the youth and family to Functional Family Therapy, another evidence-based practice.

**Cost Effectiveness:** Riverside County was awarded \$948,510 through the MIOCR Grant to fund the implementation of IRIS. To ensure sustainability, the funding is provided over a three-year period to support training in evidence-based practices, improved staffing ratios, a new Wraparound Team, and research. The research component is critical in establishing that the evidence-based practices selected for the IRIS program, when provided with fidelity, significantly decrease recidivism rates, which ultimately lowers the overall costs for rehabilitating youthful offenders.

**Results:** Since the opening of the IRIS unit, 25 youth have been accepted into the in-custody treatment portion of the program. This portion of the program requires a minimum of 26 weeks to successfully complete all of the mandatory treatment programs. A total of twelve youth have successfully graduated the program, and there are currently ten youth in the IRIS unit. The youth are all progressing well and are on track to graduate from this phase of IRIS. Only five youth have been removed from the program, which is a small percentage compared to other treatment programs utilized by RCP. In fact, three of the five youth were allowed to return to the program. One of these youth has graduated, and the other two should soon follow. Since the IRIS unit's inception, six youth have graduated from high school, and three of these youth have enrolled in junior college off-site. Two of the high school graduates have gone on to obtain part-time employment. RCP and Behavioral Health staff assisted these youth with their college enrollment and job searches. Moreover, IRIS youth who demonstrate appropriate behavior are rewarded with outings to educational and recreational events, given opportunities to perform community service, and allowed to participate in special off-site activities. In March 2017, a team of IRIS youth received statewide recognition after entering the 2017 Directing Change Film Contest. Directing Change is part of California's Mental Health Movement, a statewide effort to prevent suicide and reduce the stigma related to mental illness. A short film entitled "Feeling Locked" submitted by the IRIS youth was selected as the first place winner in the Youth and Young Adult/Mental Health Matters category through the statewide selection. Over 450 films were submitted throughout the state, but the film submitted by the IRIS youth was the only one to come from an in-custody treatment facility. (Their film can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/l5EFy5gLcJE>.) Clearly, the IRIS program is having a positive impact on the lives of youth with mental health needs and will continue to expand its reach following its relocation to RCP's new, state-of-the-art Alan M. Crogan Youth Treatment and Education Center later this summer.

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