

2020 CSAC Challenge Award

San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Sheriff's Department: Behavioral Health Incentive Program

Overview: San Luis Obispo County has committed to reduce the number of days individuals with severe mental illness (SMI) are in jail and provide them with tools to increase their positive social interactions and decrease their rates of recidivism.

Challenge: A significant number of the inmates on the incompetent to stand trial list had escalating behavioral problems that often resulted in isolation placement for safety and security. Individuals with SMI on average spend 40% longer than inmates that are non-SMI in jails. Research shows that placement in lock-down causes a rise in behavioral outbursts, mental decompensation, dirty cells, poor hygiene, and increased rates of assaults on staff. In response, SLO County Jail reorganized the housing placement of inmates, trained staff for specialized positions, developed a behavioral health incentive program, and contracted with the California Department of State Hospitals to implement a Jail Based Competency Treatment Program (JBCT).

Solution: SLO County Sheriff's Office created a housing unit, Kansas Jail Max (KJ Max), specifically for inmates with special needs, including SMI, and made significant modifications to the housing pod in KJ Max for the new JBCT program. In KJ Max, jail staff introduced a Behavioral Health Incentive Program to assist in transitioning these inmates out of lock down, into the JBCT program, and back into the community. The incentive program rewards inmates when they practice proper hygiene, clean their cells, assist in cleaning shared/common areas, engage in programs offered, exercise, comply with medication, attend mental/medical health appointments, and associate/interact with others. The incentive program promotes participation in these activities by "paying" in points for each task completed; then, each week, they redeem their points for incentive items. Each person who transfers into KJ Max, receives a point chart that outlines what activities earn points, how many points each task is worth, and how many points each incentive item costs. By enrolling JBCT-bound patients in the

incentive program prior to admission into JBCT, we find that patients are restored to competency quicker, previously isolated patients get out of lock-down and program together, there are less behavioral outbursts, and greater compliance with authority. Furthermore, medication compliance and participation in programming within KJ Max have all increased as a result of the incentive program. Programming includes yoga, exercise, journaling programs, ministry, AA, NA, Narcan training, and a canine program.

Innovation: The Behavioral Health Incentive Program leads to positive outcomes for each patient because it supports installation and maintenance of protective factors, while reducing the strength of risk factors. For example, it increases medication compliance and socializing while reducing mental health symptoms and feelings of loneliness. The incentive program has powerful, positive effects because it re-authors the narrative of the inmate-custody relationship and changes each inmate's experience of authority. Also, the program honors individuality and encourages personal responsibility. Furthermore, Custody staff learn new ways to manage, communicate with, and support individuals with mental health concerns. This direct positive contact with authority changes each patient's understanding of authority. By combining the incentive program with the JBCT program, we found it promotes positive social modeling through observing active participation in a milieu resulting in positive change. As the patients emulate one another through increased socialization and conversation, they learn empathy. The custody staff have changed their focus to counsel and coaching and away from writing up and reprimanding the inmates. Inmates are rewarded for good behavior and this assists toward rehabilitation of the inmate through reduction of risk factors and an increase in protective factors for violence and recidivism.

Results: San Luis Obispo County Jail has seen amazing results in just one year's time. Since the start of the Behavioral Health Incentive Program coupled with our Jail Based Competency Treatment Program, we have recorded a decrease of safety cell placement hours by 9.8% and seen an overall decrease in jail

assaults by 19.4%. The impacts of these programs have greatly reduced the number of days spent in jail for these patients as well. The average restoration time compared to the State average is 46% shorter and has reduced the wait time from commitment to admit by over 80% for the patients at the San Luis Obispo County Jail. This reduction of days in custody not only helps to reduce the length of stay in jail for the severely mentally ill, but also is a significant cost savings to the County Jail.

This has positively impacted jail staff by greatly reducing assaults both verbal and physical and has created an environment where both inmates and staff have an increase of positive interactions. The positive effects extend into the community, with the goal that when the patient re-enters the community, they have better self-esteem, act in more responsible ways, contribute to the community in a more productive way, and are more likely to trust authority and reduce resisting authority/executive officers reducing their rate of recidivism.

Replicability: The Behavioral Health Incentive Program, in conjunction with a JBCT program, can be replicated throughout jails in California through coordinated efforts of jail staff, administration, and the JBCT providers in the jail. Our program has proven that it can be promoted as best practices and can be utilized by others. Jails throughout California have reached out and have come to our facility to take tours and learn about our program. In August of 2020 we began sending representatives to other county jails to assist them in learning about and implementing this program.

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Optional Submission Link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16LBwzfQavuos-5upAUTIQ7xOpt7P2All/view?usp=sharing>