

County of Marin: 2021 CSAC Challenge Awards Executive Summary

Enhanced Behavioral Health in the Justice System

Overview: Marin County's criminal justice behavioral health-related efforts have been effective, including the launch or expansion of multiple programs and recognition as a *Stepping Up Innovator County*.

Challenge: Marin County has a long history of providing behavioral health services to individuals in the criminal justice system. This includes in-custody mental health and substance use treatment, post-adjudication collaborative Courts (STAR Mental Health Court, Adult Drug Court), and community-based Recovery Coaches. However, racial inequities and gaps in services remained. With the passage of statewide criminal justice reform measures (e.g. Proposition 47 in 2014, AB1810 in 2018, and AB1950 in 2020), we recognized an opportunity to transform our behavioral health system to be more responsive to the needs of individuals in the criminal justice system, with a focus on equity. This included the need to provide services to an expanded pool of eligible clients, to be more proactive in offering behavioral health services in lieu of incarceration, and to partner closely with County criminal justice agencies.

Solution: Under the auspices of the County's Criminal Justice Behavioral Health (CJBH) committee, chaired by County supervisor Damon Connolly, Marin County signed onto the *Stepping Up Initiative* in 2017, a nationwide initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illness in jails. Subsequently, Marin County sought out and received numerous grants to develop a Proposition 47-funded care coordination program, to expand Adult Drug Court operations, and to launch a Behavioral Health Diversion Program. Additional sources of funding such as Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and Medi-Cal revenue were used to expand collaborative Courts, increase capacity in behavioral health programs to serve individuals in the criminal justice system, and bring in people with lived experience from diverse backgrounds to help shape the path forward and provide peer support. The result of this process has been the build out of a comprehensive system of behavioral health care for justice-involved individuals that promotes racial equity. This includes community-based preventive programs, a pre-trial Diversion program, expanded in-custody mental health and substance use treatment, enhanced re-entry supports, and increased capacity in post-trial collaborative mental health and substance use Courts. One the newest aspects of this comprehensive approach is an innovative healing-centered housing program that

address trauma—which has largely been the “elephant in the room”—for women who have been cycling through the criminal justice system. Marin County was recently recognized for these efforts as a *Stepping Up Initiative Innovator County*.

Innovation: The development of behavioral health programs for individuals in the criminal justice system is not new, and all Counties have been challenged to respond to recent policy changes at the state level. However, Marin County’s approach is innovative in its comprehensiveness and oversight by the CJBH committee, a collaborative meeting of multiple County departments, community-based organizations, and interested community members, as a collective impact model to address justice issues. Marin County has utilized braided funding streams to launch and expand numerous programs at every level of involvement in the criminal justice system. This has included partnerships among multiple County departments, local cities and towns, and community-based organizations. It is our shared goal to have a comprehensive continuum of care to help reduce incarceration and re-incarceration for individuals with behavioral health disorders.

Results: In three years of our Proposition 47 Care Coordination program we served over 180 individuals and observed a 20% decrease in jail bookings and over 50% decrease in total jail days for enrolled participants. Similarly, for clients released to Marin County under AB109 between 2013 and 2020, half (266 total individuals) received substance-use disorder services within two years of their release, with additional positive outcomes for employment and housing. During COVID, jail population numbers declined by over half, and our collaborative group is looking at strategies to maintain lower numbers going forward.

Replicability: Marin County’s coordinated and collaborative approach to behavioral health services could be replicated by other Counties. Success factors include a centralized oversight body (in Marin, this is the CJBH committee), dedicated staff, and a commitment to working together across departments to achieve success.

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