

Judicial & Law Enforcement Task Force Meeting Summary – July 8, 2015

Persons present: Judge Deborah Daniels, Judge Gary Oxenhandler, Kelly Wallis, David Thomas, Jennie Atwell, Nancy Chapman, Lucy Hess, Keith Hoskins, Mary Epping, Janet Thompson, Rusty Antel, Bob Aulgur

Nancy and Lucy, two of the four social workers at the Boone County Jail, (the four social workers are authorized/paid to work only 40 hours per week) presented the numbers about who is currently housed at the Jail. They noted that 34% of the current population has a mental illness diagnosis (or by history), and many of those with a mental illness have a co-occurring substance abuse disorder. Of the 62/63 on the list, 14 are in segregated housing, thus they are kept in their cells 22-23 hours per day and, when they are out in the common room, they are still segregated from the rest of the population. Of the 62, only 12 had no booking history at the Boone County Jail, and of the remainder, it ranged from this being their second time to a high of 31 and 33 since 1991. Most of those in the Boone County Jail are in on felonies, there is one in on a pre-trial commit order, and five are commit only.

Kelly Wallis provided the group with a current list of the Boone County Children's Services funding recipients from fall 2014. This list includes the names of the organizations providing the services, the type of services provided, the target population for the services, the term of the contract and the amount expended. The hope that the services will impact the makeup of our jail population in future years was expressed.

Rusty Antel then posed the questions to the group that the Stepping Up initiative has suggested are the first steps to creating a solution in each County participating in the initiative: What are the assets? What are the barriers to success? And, more cogently, how do we characterize or define success? What are we targeting? That we cannot solve the problems of the world was acknowledged, we must instead focus our attention on providing resources to the officers on the streets who deal with folks with mental illness and to the officers in the jail, who have become the warehouse for folks with mental illness.

With this in mind, Rusty noted that Kelly's list is a good start for our resource inventory. Much discussion was had about the availability of mental health in-patient facilities/beds in the community. Judge Oxenhandler asked if there is truly a dearth of such placement opportunities or if something else was creating a roadblock to assistance. Much discussion was had about how judges can be made aware of a person's mental situation once he or she is in the county jail. Judge Oxenhandler suggested that he was amenable to hearing from the folks at the jail as a heads-up for this situation.

In the asset inventory category, the list included:

The Public Defender

The Public Administrator and her attorney

Mental Health courts—as a coordination point for services

Drug court/veterans court—same thing, in terms of coordination but it is often stated that funds don't exist for screening, although that may be a big part of the answer.

Municipal court—can be an asset but they must have access to services and personnel.

Road blocks to success that were discussed included the lack of additional CIT training received by the Columbia Police Department and the institutional directive to not use the training because of the workload that this engenders. Fewer officers are receiving CIT training and those who have already been trained are retiring so, the availability of those skills on the force is diminishing.

A “co-occurring” issue that exacerbates the CIT problem is the mandate that, when officers bring folks to the University for MUPC, before they can get admitted to MUPC, the person must be seen in the ER, and must be seen in MU’s ER (having been seen at Boone is insufficient). Officers report that, whether brought from the streets or from the Jail, someone presenting with a mental health issue will often wait 4-5 hours before being seen. This obviously ties up the officer(s) for that amount of time, at a minimum. It was reported that this is a new policy since Mid-Mo was replaced by MUPC. One result reported is that, even if CIT training would suggest that the appropriate response would be to take the person to MUPC, officers will take the person directly to the Boone County Jail.

It was suggested that, to further develop community assets, Reality House get CIT training for its staff and officers, and that the staff and doctors at the ER and MUPC also be trained.

One of the directives for our group was to reach out to the University to see how we might be able to minimize the road block that has been erected to getting appropriate mental health care in the ER phase of the process.