

Linking Mentally Disordered Individuals to Services They Need Keeping Them Out of Jail: Project Link

Case for Action:

- Jails and prisons have become the final destination for mentally disordered people in America
- People with schizophrenia and other severe mental disorders often are arrested and incarcerated due to lack of access to appropriate treatment

Description:

- Started in 1995, Project Link serves mentally ill adults in Monroe County, enrolling them in the program as they come out of jails or the hospitals.
- A multidisciplinary mobile treatment team serves enrolled patients, often with a dual diagnosis of mental illness and substance use disorders, and works closely with judges, probation and parole officers, and corrections staff to insure continuity of treatment.
- Aimed at people with severe and persistent mental illness and a history of risk of involvement with the criminal justice system
- A culturally competent staff of case advocates serves a population that is predominately African American and Latino
- Originally, managed by a diverse team of community leaders, efforts are placed on direct involvement of breaking the cycle of patients bouncing from jail to the hospital to the streets

Outcomes:

- Project Link demonstrates the value of community efforts working closely between the medical community and the criminal justice system
- A study tracked 44 individuals in their first year enrolled in Project Link:
 - The average number of days in jail was reduced from 104 to 45
 - The average number of days in the hospital was reduced from 114 to 8
 - The average cost of care per individual fell from \$74,500 to \$14,500 from one year prior to one year after enrollment into Project Link
 - There was a dramatic improvement in the patients' ability to care for themselves, program satisfaction and reduction in substance use disorders.

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