

Winnebago County Wellness Track

Honorable John T. Gibbons

Deputy Court Administrator Emily Behnke

Development of the Wellness Track

- Stakeholders in Misdemeanor Courtroom noted frequent recidivism among defendants
- Winnebago County Crisis Co-Responder Team (CCRT) often was attempting to assist these individuals
- CCRT collaborated with the Court Stakeholders
 - Sharing of available services

Target Population

- Misdemeanor cases, primarily Class B & C
- Generally non-violent offenses, exceptions upon agreement of the State's Attorney's Office
- Based on case information, a potential need for mental health services
 - Housing Insecurity and Substance Use Disorder indicators considered

First Steps

- Vetted available services and introduced community services to the Court parties
- Held Summits with Court parties
 - Presented issues that were occurring and collaborated on responses
- CCRT offered services to ensure a warm hand-off occurred
 - Focus was on those that were re-offending
- Set status dates to ensure linkages had occurred
- Designated time slot on status call
- Hurdles that remained:
 - CCRT was spending time in the courtroom instead of in the community
 - Identification of cases was isolated to Courtroom 315

AOIC Pilot Site Opportunity

- Application for funding from the AOIC Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program
- Funds full-time Court Liaison, position was filled in June 2023
 - Streamlined identification of cases
 - Separating into a docket for more meaningful follow-up
- Deputy Court Administrator began project and data collection
 - Case identification managed by stakeholders
 - Client contact and service recommendations
 - Establish services referrals and provide community and court outreach

Identification of Clients



- Court Liaison reviews the charges filed daily and Notice to Appear call
- Reviews court records for potential identification:
 - Statement of Facts
 - Past criminal history
 - Jail mental health assessment
- Referrals through CCRT, Jail medical/ mental health staff, Public Defender's Office, State's Attorney's Office, or Judges
- Court parties are notified of the potential fit for WT
 - Communications flow through Court Liaison to ensure no ex parte communications occur
- Judge and Court Parties place case on WT Docket if in agreement

Service Plan



Client Outreach

Court Liaison meets with Client and explains WT either prior to first court date or at first appearance.




Development Plan

Court Liaison works with Defense Counsel to sign releases, conducts brief MH Screen. Discusses needs with Clients. Refers to Service Providers



Status on Services

Services referrals adjusted as needed. Refer for Crisis, Mental Health, Substance Use Evaluations, Community housing and job support.



Service Connection

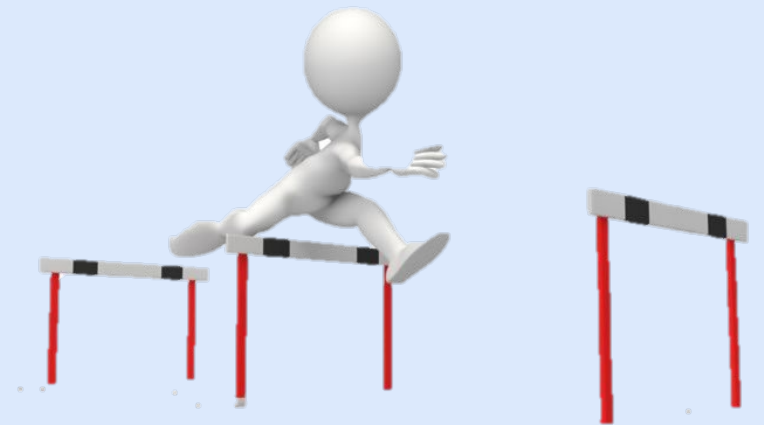
Verify connection to services or completion of evaluations.

Case Outcomes

- Court Liaison assists in outreach between court dates as needed and provides court reminders
 - This addition, in the past quarter, has resulted in fewer Failure to Appear
- More engaged family members
- Upon successful connection to services or follow through with directives, State's Attorney's Office moves to dismiss the case
 - Dismissals are important for access to housing
- After multiple attempts if there is a lack of engagement, the case is returned to the misdemeanor courtroom to proceed

Project Obstacles

- Onboarding of Court Liaison, shortage of qualified candidates
- Limited court time
- Failure to Appear at Notice to Appear Court



Project Successes

- Collaboration with Stakeholders and CCRT
- Positive reception from Community Providers
- Data Collection and preliminary recidivism results
- Integration of the Court Liaison into Court Administration and Collaboration with the Problem-Solving Courts
- 24 Successful completions with cases dismissed since start of Pilot Project



Questions?

Contact Information

Judge Gibbons jgibbons@17thcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov

Emily Behnke ebehnke@17thcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov