

Durham County Criminal Justice Resource Center Provides Compassionate and Innovative Care for Justice-involved Community Members

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The Durham County Criminal Justice Resource Center (CJRC) is a local government entity dedicated to providing support and treatment to justice-involved individuals both in the jail and in the community, while also promoting public safety through partnership with the local criminal justice system. CJRC's services include behavioral health treatment, cognitive behavior intervention, employment training and placement assistance, housing, wraparound services, and access to educational services. Currently the only resource center of this kind in North Carolina, the CJRC's vision is to support clients' successful reentry into the community, leading to decreased recidivism and fewer negative consequences that impact communities when individuals cycle in and out of jail.

Approximately 16% to 64% of the nearly 7 million adults in the nation's criminal justice system (ie, jails, prisons, probation, and parole) have a mental illness and the vast majority of these adults will need reentry supports [1-4]. As a result, Durham groups are prioritizing services and supports for this population. There are many other complex factors that lead to incarceration. Therefore, the CJRC's work is collaborative and calls for engagement with a variety of key local stakeholders, including the police department, the jail, government officials, and behavioral health providers. To appropriately and fully serve clients, the CJRC offers a broad range of resources that meet the needs of individuals. Several of the mental health-focused programs are described here.

Detention-based Services

The CJRC Jail Mental Health (JMH) team serves individuals in the county detention facility who have screened

positively at intake for mental health concerns. Although the annual number of jail admissions in Durham County reduced by almost 27% from FY16 to FY19, the number of detainees referred to JMH increased by over 11% in the same time period (Steenberg B, FY 2019 program statistics, unpublished data, 2019). The JMH team, along with a contract psychiatrist, provides medication, case management, and discharge planning services to approximately 160 eligible incarcerated people per month. The jail psychiatrist and clinicians determine the most appropriate placement for their clients in the facility, with the most vulnerable persons housed in a specialized mental health pod. Staff is also available to respond to sick calls from any justice-involved person in the jail who requests to be seen.

The Substance Abuse Treatment and Recidivism Reduction (STARR) program provides comprehensive substance use disorder treatment services to incarcerated men and women in the Durham County Detention Facility, including addiction education, group therapy, and community resources education [5]. STARR typically serves 40-45 individuals per month.

Both teams work to connect individuals with community resources after release. Clients can receive assistance with housing, clothing, connection to treatment providers, a 30-day supply of medication, naloxone kits, and more.

Community-based Services

The Mental Health Court Diversion program serves individuals with severe and persistent mental illness or severe mental illness on medication, such as schizophrenia or psychotic disorder, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder,

and/or obsessive compulsive disorder. The program is designed to reduce the recidivism of this group by offering treatment, assistance with basic needs, and the opportunity to have their charges dismissed upon completion. Clients receive intensive wraparound supports, including short-term housing, transportation, and most importantly connection to mental health services.

In outpatient substance use disorder treatment, individuals are assessed for their level of need and receive treatment that is responsive to that, including drug education, relapse prevention, and aftercare.

Individuals returning to Durham after incarceration can access reentry services that are tailored to their individual needs. Some require wraparound services such as housing, clothing, hygiene items, transportation assistance, and help accessing medical services, while others need only short-term assistance to get back on their feet.

In addition to behavioral health concerns, many CJRC clients suffer from chronic health issues. Our staff helps individuals navigate various systems to better access medical services, medication, and federal benefits, and has also assisted clients with obtaining eye glasses and dental care. We partner with Lincoln Community Health Center as well as Durham Public Health's FIT (Formerly Incarcerated Transition) Program for connection to services and providers, ensuring that individuals can receive care regardless of their insurance or financial status. CJRC will cover prescription copayments if needed and assist clients with enrolling for coverage through the Affordable Care Act.

If you are interested in learning more about the Criminal Justice Resource Center and our work, please visit our website: dconc.gov/government/departments-a-e/criminal-justice-resource-center. NCMJ

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