



Milwaukee Community Justice Council

Working collaboratively to ensure a fair, efficient, and effective justice system that enhances public safety and quality of life in our community.

Committee Justice Council Mental Health Committee Overview

The Milwaukee Community Justice Council was created by county ordinance in 2007 to act as a vehicle for collaboration among Milwaukee criminal justice system entities. The Justice Council strives to ensure a fair, efficient, and effective justice system that enhances public safety and quality of life in our community. To further this mission, the Justice Council identified the improvement of the system's treatment of those with behavioral health issues as a strategic priority. In September 2013, the Justice Council created the Mental Health Committee (MHC) and tasked it with addressing this important initiative.

A significant percentage of individuals entering the criminal justice system have a mental health disability. Often, these are low-income individuals committing low-level offenses that arise out of symptomatic behavior. Criminal justice system involvement can cause significant disruption to the individual's life, resulting in a destructive and expensive cycle of migration between mental health facilities, the criminal justice system, and various programs designed to assist individuals in need.

The MHC utilizes a multi-agency collaborative approach to prevent unnecessary criminal justice involvement of those with mental health disabilities and to improve the treatment of those who do go through the system. Made up of criminal justice agency representatives, behavioral health professionals, mental health advocates, and academic partners, the MHC meets monthly to share information and perspectives with the goal of providing ethical, meaningful, and efficient system responses to individuals with mental health disabilities while protecting public safety.

The committee uses data-driven strategies to identify individuals who would potentially benefit the most from the committee's collaborative approach. Committee participants focus on these individuals and seek out early opportunities for community mental health interventions that can be used in lieu of incarceration or other destabilizing outcomes. This case-level focus improves outcomes for individuals and informs strategies for larger system improvement.

Additionally, the Committee created a Care Coordination Initiative that gives individuals the choice of opting in to an information sharing agreement that allows for additional services from committee agencies. Enhanced staff support for this initiative will be provided by the Behavioral Health Division's Community Access to Recovery Services Division (CARSD) starting in 2015.

For more information on the Mental Health Committee, contact Justice Council Director Nathan Holton at 414-276-8240 or nholton@publicpolicyforum.org. Visit the Justice Council's website at milwaukee.gov/CJC.