



DANE COUNTY



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Dane County Launches New Effort to Address Mental Health; County, School Collaborative Reaches 500 Kid Milestone

County Creates New Subcommittee to Focus on Mental Health in Criminal Justice System

Recognizing that May is Mental Health Awareness Month, today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and Dane County Board Chair Sharon Corrigan joined members of Dane County's Criminal Justice Council to announce consideration of a new subcommittee to focus on the intersection of behavioral health and the criminal justice system. This subcommittee would report to the full Criminal Justice Council, which is comprised of the County Executive, County Board Chair, Sheriff, District Attorney, presiding Judge, Clerk of Courts, as well as other key members of Dane County's criminal justice system. The announcement comes as Dane County shares new data highlighting program successes aimed at addressing mental health challenges in the community.

"Improving mental health services is a community challenge in need of a community response," County Executive Joe Parisi said. "Health care providers, health insurance companies, hospitals, community-based services, the county, schools, and others need to continuously innovate to meet the growing and evolving needs at making sure people receive the mental health care they need. From the innovative 'Building Bridges' effort we launched a few years ago in our schools to expanding crisis response services and now this latest effort, county government is stepping forward to improve mental health outcomes for those of all ages – now we need our health care partners to do the same."

NEW SUBCOMMITTEE TO ADDRESS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

"We are committed to deflecting and diverting people with behavioral health issues out of the criminal justice system," said County Board Chair Sharon Corrigan. "Behavioral health and criminal justice systems often collide and create barriers to successful treatment, this new cross agency subcommittee will provide an ongoing and intentional effort to keep people out of jail and into services that work for them."

In 2018, over 45 criminal justice, public safety, and behavioral health local experts partnered with national experts to develop strategies to reduce the number of people with behavioral health issues in the criminal justice system. This process, the Sequential Intercept Model training, is a way to identify points of contact at which to intervene, provide resources and prevent individuals from entering or heading deeper into the justice system. To view the overview video, [click here](#).

The Criminal Justice Council (CJC)—Behavioral Health subcommittee would focus on the critical intersection of criminal justice and behavioral health issues creating data driven and collaborative recommendations for policy change.

COUNTY COMMITMENT TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IS STRONG

As of this year, Dane County is spending nearly \$53 million of its budget on mental health services. From school based mental health teams and the Comprehensive Community Services program to crisis workers imbedded in law enforcement, Dane County has taken a multi-faceted approach to addressing mental health in the community.

- Building Bridges is a school based mental health program that is a collaboration between Dane County and several school districts in Dane County, including Madison Metropolitan, Sun Prairie, Verona, DeForest, Oregon, Mount Horeb, Stoughton, Waunakee, Middleton-Cross Plains, and Wisconsin Heights. This successful partnership has produced positive student and family outcomes by providing and linking students up to the eighth grade to needed behavioral health supports.

During the current school year, 524 students and their family members have worked with Building Bridges in 88 different school buildings throughout Dane County. Three out of four school staff report improved student behavior since Building Bridges involvement. When it comes to parents involved with Building Bridges, 98% report overall satisfaction with the program.

- Dane County's Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) program is a Medicaid benefit for people of all ages who have a mental health and/or substance use diagnosis. CCS provides psychosocial rehabilitation services that help participants learn skills to live a more satisfying, independent life. The CCS program has continued to grow, currently serving nearly 1,100 Dane County residents across their lifespan.

Several CCS participants have used substance abuse treatment to reduce substance use and/or attain sobriety resulting in employment stability, housing stability, and increased family connections. Of recent discharges from CCS, 20% took place because they lost Medicaid eligibility as a result of gaining and retaining full-time employment. One CCS participant was even able to fulfill a lifelong dream of purchasing a home with the support of their CCS team and other community resources.

- Dane County also contracts with Journey Mental Health Center to provide crisis workers imbedded with law enforcement. The goal of this collaboration is to reduce police contact for those with a mental illness and divert them from the criminal justice system while increasing their connection to needed services. These crisis workers have the ability to invest more time in these types of contacts than do patrol officers or other clinic-based crisis workers who are under pressure to move on to the next call for service.

Crisis workers have been imbedded with the Madison Police Department's Mental Health Unit for several years. Dane County's 2019 budget includes \$320,000 to expand emergency mobile mental health crisis services, the single largest increase in front line mental health resources in the county's history. This investment creates four new positions, one of which teams with the Dane County Sheriff's Office to improve the response to mental health crises countywide.

- Dane County has also invested in training 911 dispatchers in crisis intervention. Partnering with the National Alliance on Mental Illness – Dane County, those answering the phones for people in emergency situations have had Crisis Intervention Training.

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