



Vermont Judiciary Commission on Mental Health and the Courts
First Annual Report
Executive Summary

The Commission was established as a Tri-Branch effort to examine the interaction between the judicial and mental health systems and to propose measures to better respond to the needs of court-involved individuals with mental health issues. Its four committees focused on pre-charge interventions, post-charge pre-trial services, competency and sanity evaluations and trainings geared to identifying and responding to signs of mental illness and intellectual disability.

A First Annual Summit on Mental Health and the Courts at the Vermont Statehouse provided an opportunity for persons from the three branches to consider and make recommendations to advance ways to shift the focus of response away from judicial process and towards intervention and treatment. The following components of an Action Plan emerged from the Commission's work to date:

1. Identify and retain a Behavioral Health Consultant to assist with improving judicial response to mental and behavioral health issues, to assist with the development and implementation of training curriculum and materials and to support on-going work of the Commission.

2. Plan for and implement Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Exercises across five regions in Vermont to further communication and collaborative working relationships among all interested agencies and parties working with court-involved individuals with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.
3. Monitor the effects of changes brought about through S.91, examine whether further amendments are necessary and consider whether new issues have arisen that require legislative attention.
4. Form a new committee focused on peer support services to explore how to include or support such services at all intercepts of the criminal and civil court processes for persons who have mental health and/or substance abuse issues.
5. Continue to develop and offer state-wide trainings associated with mental illness and intellectual disabilities to persons across all spectrums who interact with persons suffering from mental illness.

The Commission's First Annual Report includes a request that the Vermont Supreme Court consider extending the Commission's Charge and Designation to permit the Commission to continue its work beyond the currently authorized timeline.