

## Tri-Branch Task Force on Justice and Co-Occurring Disorders

### History

The Chief Justice Task Force on Criminal Justice and Mental Health Collaboration (now called the Tri-Branch Task Force) was convened in August 2007 with assistance from the Council of State Governments. The original charge included assembling decision-makers from all three branches of government, establishing a cohesive structure to support statewide initiatives and the development of a strategic plan to divert individuals with mental illness and co-occurring disorders at the front end of the criminal justice system into treatment and other community supports.

### Statement of Purpose

The Tri-Branch Task Force is a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort that will design and begin to implement a statewide strategy (unified system) to improve the response to individuals with mental illness and co-occurring disorders who are involved with, or at risk of becoming involved with, the criminal justice system.

Strategies will be designed to respect individuals and their rights and to engage the most appropriate, least restrictive community services on their behalf. Strategies will enhance public safety, address the cycle of re-offense, improve the health and quality of life of the individual and community, and make good use of taxpayer dollars.

### Goals of the Task Force

1. To utilize and develop “criminal justice-capable” models, collaborative teams, and programs that understand and take into account the interconnections between law enforcement, hospital emergency departments, crisis workers, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, human services, and treatment.
2. To develop an integrated approach to information sharing, assessment, case management and service incorporating existing systems and resources as much as possible. This integrated approach will be responsive to individual needs and assist in the diversion of appropriate individuals from the criminal justice system.
3. To increase the awareness about and use of available and appropriate strategies at the local level as alternatives to the criminal justice system.
4. To develop, adopt, and fund models that increase services and fill gaps in services.
5. To enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to provide an effective, integrated response to individuals whose conditions result in impaired decision-making or functioning who are involved with or at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

The Task Force will:

- Support the development of **coordinated services and unified service plans** using a common case management or “teaming” approach that ensures a continuum of community-based treatment and service supports ranging from traditional and intensive treatment options to recovery options.

- Make available **implementation support tools and training** that will teach individuals about impairments due to mental health and substance use conditions in order to facilitate the use of alternatives to the criminal justice system.
- Increase the use of **evidence-based screening**, and when needed, **assessment tools** for individuals with impaired decision-making or functioning from the criminal justice system to the appropriate level of care.
- **Integrate this model with other initiatives:** Co-occurring, Trauma, Domestic Violence, Housing, and Treatment Court programs.
- **Support grant proposals** that further the work of the Criminal Justice Task Force and, if requested, provide oversight and guidance for the implementation of the grant funded projects that directly impact this work.