

Diversion Initiative Overview and Applicant Information

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC), with funding from the Sozosei Foundation, invites pilot courts to test the usefulness of the updated [Judges' Guide to Mental Health Diversion](#) (Guide) and to identify needed modifications. Selected courts will be provided on-site and virtual technical assistance by NCSC to test the Guide and plan and implement jail diversion systems for individuals with behavioral health needs.

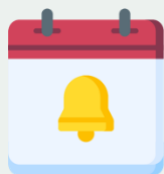
The National Judicial Task Force (Task Force) to Examine State Courts' Response to Mental Illness published its [Final Report and Recommendations](#) on October 25, 2022. One of the recommendations is to establish diversion to treatment systems.

The Task Force earlier approved a plan to update a 2010 guide working with the GAINS Center, the Judges and Psychiatrists Leadership Initiative (JPLI), Policy Research Associates, and the Council of State Governments Justice Center. This Guide will inform this project and the work of the pilots. While pre-arrest deflection and diversion are essential to a community's response to individuals with mental health needs, the updated guide is focused on post-arrest and pre-plea diversion to treatment systems, including civil alternatives.

The Sozosei grant will allow up to six rural or suburban jurisdictions to pilot the updated Guide with assistance from the NCSC. The pilot courts selected will use the draft guide to implement a continuum of post-arrest and pre-plea jail and court diversion systems, identify lessons learned to include in the Guide, and recommend changes to the guide before publication. The guide and assistance to the pilot courts will prioritize public safety, enable courts to better serve their community, reduce costs, promote a continuum of community-based treatment options, and improve the lives of those with mental health disorders. The technical assistance will be provided at no cost to participating courts.

Through this technical assistance, the pilot courts, with the assistance of NCSC, may also implement other elements of the Task Force recommendations. For this project, NCSC will give special consideration to courts that have established partnerships with jails and local behavioral health service providers to screen, assess, and identify individuals with behavioral health needs and deliver treatment.

Schedule of Events for the Diversion Initiative



- November 15, 2022**.....Applications open
- December 9, 2022**Applications close
- December 12-31, 2022**NCSC to review applications and select sites
- January 3, 2023**.....Sites notified of application decisions
- January - April 2023**.....Technical assistance to test usefulness of Guide and implement jail diversion system(s)
- May - June 2023**.....Sites to contribute to updating Guide based on their experience

What will courts get for participating in this project?

- Technical assistance to improve court responses to individuals with mental health and behavioral health needs, including on-site and virtual meetings with NCSC consultants and experts and customized process and implementation planning, at no cost to participating courts;
- Potential connections with Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), the cutting-edge model of community-based treatment for behavioral health disorders; and
- Access to national expertise and collaboration with a developing network of courts also working to implement a new continuum of diversion, consistent with the Task Force Recommendations.

What does NCSC need from courts to participate in this project?

Courts seeking to participate in this project must build a stakeholder team who have an interest in improving court responses to individuals with mental health and behavioral health needs by implementing a jail diversion system.

- This team must include:
 - a judge that regularly hears criminal cases or the chief judge (or both),
 - court administrator,
 - jail administrator,
 - behavioral health provider/center/clinic,
 - prosecuting attorney,
 - public defender or defense representative, and
 - pretrial services (if applicable).
- Additional team members could include anyone responsible for setting policy, who has expertise, or who is a stakeholder in the local justice system. Examples include but are not limited to a funding unit (municipal, county, or state) representative, peer support (or a person with lived experience); civil court judge; law enforcement; probation; or community leader.

As part of the project, participating courts must commit to:

1. Meet with NCSC for an initial on-site visit and potential virtual site visits over the course of the pilot lasting up to six months, participate in ongoing virtual technical assistance, and engage in ongoing conversations with NCSC regarding diversion implementation and the usefulness of the Guide;
2. Work with NCSC to collect and provide relevant data and costs;
3. Implement one or more diversion pathways outlined in the Guide; and
4. Publicly promote the diversion continuum and lessons learned from this collaboration in resources created by NCSC and/or your court.

Evaluation of Applications

NCSC will evaluate the applications based on criteria regarding the jurisdiction's needs and capacities relating to mental health treatment, including:

- Any innovations the court has already developed or is planning to develop;
- Availability of existing deflection and diversion systems;
- Availability of community-based treatment options;
- Availability of community-based supportive services;
- Working relationships between court and local service providers; and
- Jurisdiction demographics

NCSC will select up to six jurisdictions to participate in the technical assistance project. NCSC will notify all applicants of the status of their application by January 3, 2023.

Resources

[Collaborative Court and Community Caseflow Management](#)

[Leading Change / Sequential Intercept Model \(SIM\)](#)

[Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics \(CCBHCs\)](#)

[Behavioral Health Data Elements Guide for the State Courts](#)

[NCSC Behavioral Health website](#)



How to Apply

Submit your [application](#) by **Friday, December 9, 2022**. (To preview the application questions, [click here](#).) NCSC will review the applications and notify courts selected for the project by January 3, 2023.

For more information about the project or application, please contact Mike Tartaglia, NCSC Senior Court Management Consultant at mtartaglia@ncsc.org.

