

Behavioral Health and the Courts



Pandemic-Related Resources

February 2021

In collaboration with the CCJ-COSCA Rapid Response Team, early Task Force work focused on court responses to the added difficulties presented by the pandemic when dealing with cases involving individuals with serious mental illness. The following pandemic-related resources were developed in 2020-2021 for the state courts with links provided for your convenience.

[Providing Court-Connected Behavioral Health Services During the Pandemic: Remote Technology Solutions](#)

This brief provides an overview of telehealth resources and options as they pertain to criminal justice related behavioral health interventions, including teleservices to provide behavioral health screening and assessment, behavioral health treatment, and competency evaluation and restoration.

[Supporting Vulnerable Populations: Civil Interventions and Diversion for Those with Mental Illness](#)

This brief describes non-criminal justice interventions that have been shown to be effective in increasing public safety while providing effective interventions for those in need. It discusses ways in which courts can play a role in diverting people in crisis from entering or penetrating the criminal justice system. While no community has all of these alternative strategies and resources in place, now is the time to explore which of these short-term improvements might be implemented now, and which longer-term strategies can be explored further.

[Addressing Court Workplace Mental Health and Well-being in Tense Times – Webinar](#)

In collaboration with the National Association of Presiding Judges and Court Executive Officers (NAPCO), Rhode Island Congressman (Ret.) Honorable Patrick Kennedy and Garen Staglin, President, ONE MIND AT WORK, highlighted that the mental health issues triggered by the pandemic will overwhelm the health care industry and that it is more important than ever to address the well-being of judges and court employees.

[The Crisis Care Continuum: Resources for Courts During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

This brief acquaints court leaders with the opportunities to influence change in the courts and communities during these difficult times and to implement practices that will result in better outcomes for those with serious mental illnesses. Links to research and resources are provided at each stage of the crisis care continuum. The system disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic provide an immediate and unique opportunity to engage in meaningful system change, at a time when that change is needed most. Courts can and should be part of leading that change.

[Addressing the Mental Health and Well-Being of Judges and Court Employees](#)

This resource acquaints court leaders with the importance of promoting the mental health and well-being of judges and court employees during and after the pandemic, offers some tips and best practices, and provides helpful resources and research.

[Improving Outcomes for People with Behavioral Health Needs: Diversion and Case Processing Considerations During a Pandemic](#)

The purpose of this brief is to acquaint court leaders with opportunities to influence change in their courts and communities during these difficult times and to implement practices that will result in better outcomes for those with behavioral health needs. The National Center for State Courts joined the Council of State Governments Justice Center in leading a virtual peer learning collaborative consisting of three sessions on how to improve criminal case processing for defendants with behavioral health needs. This brief reflects the recommended best practices and innovations developed through the peer learning collaborative.

[Listening to the Field: Observation and Recommendations to Reduce Jail Population During a Pandemic](#)

This brief describes lessons learned by four communities as they respond to the pandemic and its effects on individuals with significant behavioral health needs in the criminal justice system, particularly in jail. What emerges from listening sessions conducted with these sites are unanticipated problems, useful data and innovative practices that inform strategies that all criminal justice systems should embrace during and after the pandemic.