

**COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND THE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE POPULATION IN
LUCAS COUNTY, OHIO***

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This is the sixth in a series of articles from the Supreme Court of Ohio Advisory Committee on Mentally Ill in the Courts, chaired by Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton. This article highlights Lucas County's successful collaboration in improving mental health services available to mentally ill offenders.

I. ADULT FORENSIC TASK FORCE

In 1999, the Lucas County Mental Health Board assembled the Adult Forensic Task Force to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas of potential improvement of mental health services available to mentally ill offenders. The task force has studied all points of entry into the system to assure that immediate assessment was in place for offenders who might have mental health challenges. The task force has actively monitored the following areas on an ongoing basis:

- Linkage with appropriate community services;
- Intervention;
- Uninterrupted treatment;
- Medication; and
- Hospitalization when necessary.

This collaboration has produced extensive benefits to the system in terms of better integration of services and shared expertise related to the local population and the specific challenges and barriers consumers may face. As a result of task force activities, an excellent system of communication has emerged among the following organizations:

- State hospital;
- Common Pleas Court & Municipal Court;
- Forensic monitor at Lucas County Adult Probation ;
- Mental health agencies treating the clients; and
- Crisis services.

This article will provide an overview of programs that work together to provide seamless, high caliber services to consumers involved with the criminal justice system in Lucas County.

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II. FORENSIC SERVICES

Forensic services are delivered to two categories of offenders among those with the most serious criminal involvement:

- those found Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI); and
- those found Incompetent to Stand Trial/Unrestorable—held under the criminal court’s jurisdiction for a first or second-degree felony.

Offenders with less severe circumstances include those who have some criminal justice experience coupled with mental health issues. These could be clients processed through municipal court or on probation to the court of common pleas. The system also serves those sent to probate court by municipal court or the court of common pleas.

III. MUNICIPAL COURT PROJECT

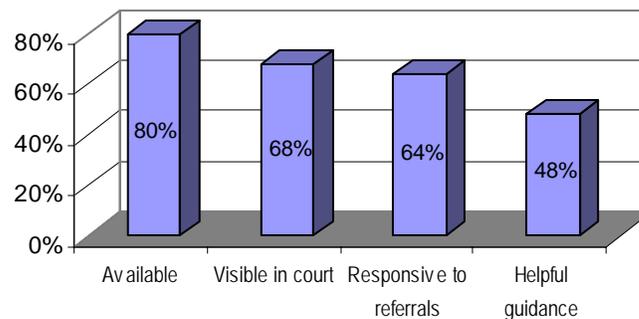
This project assesses mentally ill offenders and links them with appropriate mental health services. The goals are to reduce the number of jail bed days and recidivism, while increasing symptom stabilization for clients with mental illness who are involved in the criminal justice system. The project offered the following services to more than 200 persons during fiscal year 2002:

- Assessment;
- Linkage; and
- Consumer advocacy.

Among clients who linked successfully with community mental health centers, several common themes emerged. They tended to have more severe diagnoses and were likely to have had a history of more frequent arrests compared with those who did not follow through. Interestingly, linked clients’ service hours increased significantly from an average of 18 to 30 hours after their involvement with the diversion program. Also, their average time spent in jail dropped significantly from 3 to 2 arrests per year.

A local agency, Unison Behavioral Health Group, assumed the management role for this project in 2001 and has developed stability since that time. As a result, a recent satisfaction survey produced generally positive feedback. Respondents included Municipal Court staff using MHT services, such as judges, attorneys and probation officers. Eighty percent of respondents perceived the team as being available, and a majority said the team was visible and responsive:

Survey Results



IV. PROGRAM OF ASSERTIVE COMMUNITY TREATMENT (PACT)

Unison also manages the Best Practice PACT Program, a clinical team providing intensive treatment, rehabilitation and support services to consumers with a serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI). PACT serves two groups of SPMI clients: community clients, who are at high risk of violence or treatment noncompliance, and NGRI clients, those found Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity.

The PACT team monitors services provided to the NGRI population in Lucas County, including psychiatric, case management, and outreach nursing services. The team works closely with the Common Pleas Court, the Forensic Monitor and Northcoast Behavioral Healthcare’s Toledo campus to provide follow-up services while the consumer is on conditional release. Prior to release, some services focus on preparing for the adjustment and ensuring a smooth transition into the community.

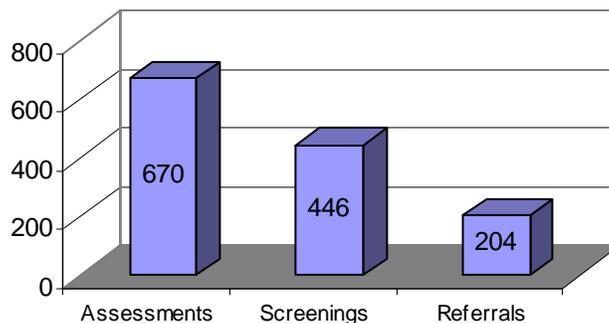
The second function of the PACT team is to serve 30 of Lucas County’s most needy consumers. These 30 individuals come from all corners of the system, with 10 of the 30 reserved for mentally ill offenders. Traditionally, consumers in the program are severely ill, prone to substance abuse, resistant to traditional treatment, entangled with the legal system and at risk for violence. The PACT team consists of six veteran case managers, two outreach nurses, and a psychiatrist. The team operates on a 24/7 model through an on-call service that includes weekend field monitoring.

PACT staff identified several areas of client success during FY2002. These included successful transitions from group homes to apartments and fewer hospitalizations.

V. MENTAL HEALTH AND THE JAIL PROJECT

Unison works in partnership with Lucas County Corrections Center to identify inmates with mental health needs and link them with appropriate services. This program ensures that clients’ needs are coordinated with service providers, and provides risk assessments to those who may be suicidal or in need of intensive services. Overall, the Jail Project provided the following during FY2002:

Jail Project Results



VI. CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM: A BEST PRACTICE IN THE MAKING

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) represents a partnership between MHB and the Toledo Police Department that benefits local consumers. The Board provides a 40-hour, five-day program to enhance officers' understanding of mental illness and provide a toolbox of skills for dealing with incidents in which mental illness is a factor.

In total, the Board has trained 59 law enforcement officers in northwest Ohio. Lucas County's second group of 28 officers graduated May 3, 2002. The success of the first CIT class emerged throughout FY2002 as graduates put their skills to use. Officers responded to 291 calls involving mental illness during the course of routine assignments. The results are shown below:

- 72 percent were transported to Rescue.
- Only 2 were arrested.
- The rest were transported to a hospital.
- 0 reports of injury to officer.
- 0 reports of injury to the consumers.

The program's contribution to the community has produced wonderful testimonies from participants. In one case, a CIT officer encountered an individual needing shelter. Through the course of the program, officers and local shelters had improved communications with one another. Officers were able to page the manager of St. Paul's Community Center at 2 a.m. and meet the person's needs. Ever since, the shelter has kept one or two beds available specifically for CIT requests.

For more information about adult services in Lucas County, please call Mental Health Board Adult Services Director Debra El-Amin, Psy.D., at 419-213-4600.