

Program Brief

Lorain County Adult Probation CIT Outreach Team - Lorain, Ohio

Problem Statement: “Two million people with mental illness are booked into jails each year. Nearly 15% of men and 30% of women booked into jails have a serious mental health condition” (NAMI). Traditionally, officers viewed mental illness as a problem better addressed by social workers and medical professionals. Most officers were unprepared for interactions with individuals with mental illness. Officers were ill equipped to manage a person during a mental health crisis. As such, interactions became difficult with both sides suffering from the fall-out of a negative interaction. As a result, individuals with mental illness end up un-medicated, incarcerated and unwell. Once released, if still un-medicated and not linked with mental health professionals, these individuals cycle in and out of local jails.

In November 2016, Lorain County Adult Probation (LCAPD) joined the *Stepping Up* Initiative, which supports local communities in developing effective systems of care that bridge the criminal justice and mental health systems. In 2017, LCAPD created a CIT Outreach Team to provide opportunities and resources to divert from traditional measures and link individuals to treatment rather than jail.

Program Overview: The LCAPD CIT Outreach Team facilitates wellness and builds rapport with defendants with serious mental illness. The LCAPD CIT Outreach Team takes a proactive approach and conducts visits to defendants in their surroundings, which offers support and encouragement. The team has developed working relationships with several local law enforcement agencies, and mental health providers and the team has become a multi-team, integrated approach. Defendants that successfully participate in mental health counseling programs and make positive strides toward completing probation are rewarded gas or food cards. Overall, the team aims to create trust, build rapport, engage in new positive encounters, and facilitate a supportive team for the defendants.

Outcomes: The Lorain County Adult Probation CIT Outreach Team is an innovative, community-based approach to improve the outcomes of encounters with individuals with mental illness. Through collaborative community partnerships and intensive training, CIT improves communication, identifies mental health resources for those in crisis and ensures officer and community safety. In addition, the program:

- Gives officers more tools to complete their job safely and effectively
- Keeps officers focused on crime
- Produces cost savings as mental health treatment is substantially less expensive than incarceration

To learn more about the Lorain County Adult Probation’s CIT Outreach Team, please contact:

Officer Bridget Byam-Novak

bnovak@loraincounty.us or 440-326-4715

Resources

1. <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Public-Policy/Jailing-People-with-Mental-Illness>