

Housing Choices

A Newsletter for Mental Health Professionals

October 2008

Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

A Hand Up Instead Of A Hand Out

By Peggy Robertson

It is a perfect Catch 22.

A young woman was released from jail and happy not to be behind bars anymore. However, that happiness quickly disappeared when she realized she did not have a home and would therefore be unable to get a job. Her chances of relapse were high.

A man who is ready to be released from jail on parole did not have an address to show, so he ended up having to stay in jail for two more months. The question is, is there a solution for housing ex-offenders? A significant number of individuals receiving treatment for substance abuse/co-occurring disorder while incarcerated have no place to live when they are released. As a result, they end up homeless or in a living situation that is not conducive to their ongoing recovery needs.

Beaver County has come up with an innovative way to provide housing for ex-offenders coming out of the county jail. Thanks to a very progressive collaboration between Gateway Rehab Corrections Division and the Beaver County Housing Authority, there are safe and affordable housing options for ex-offenders with disabilities.

In 2006, Karen Florence, director of Gateway Corrections' Transitional Living and Beaver County Jail program, learned about the Eleanor Roosevelt Apartments, a 72-unit apartment building in Aliquippa owned by the Housing Authority that had more than a 70% vacancy



Charon Chappell (left), Beaver County Housing Authority management aide; and Karen Florence (right), director of Gateway Corrections' transitional living and Beaver County Jail program.

rate. Ms. Florence knew that there were large numbers of previous offenders in need of housing and supports. She assessed the situation and saw a golden opportunity to help people from corrections get housing, get back to work, and contribute to the community.

Ms. Florence met with the Housing Authority and explained how Gateway Rehab could partner with them to revitalize the apartment building and make it a thriving part of the community. Carl DeChellis, deputy director of the Housing Authority of the County of Beaver, also saw the benefit of providing specialized services and housing to vulnerable people transitioning back into the community. An important part of the plan was having Gateway on site supporting the residents. This partnership between Gateway and the Housing Authority led to the development of the Eleanor Roosevelt Apartment Transitional Living Program, which assists individuals released from jails, prisons, or other programs who have no housing or safe place to live that would support their recovery needs. The services provided by Gateway are further enhanced by a

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Edition...

<i>Housing: A Key to Diversion and Re-entry.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>A System Aimed at Achieving, Not Avoiding.....</i>	<i>7</i>

(Gateway Rehab continued from page 1)

partnership with the Beaver County Behavioral Health (BCBH). Gerard Mike and Nancy Jaquette from BCBH assist by providing services to help individuals with behavioral health disorders lead safe and successful lives in the community while maintaining a long term commitment to recovery.

The staff at Gateway recognized the need for supportive housing for ex-offenders many years ago. In 1995, Gateway had its first contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and began providing services at its Aliquippa site. From 1997 through 2002, Gateway Corrections operated Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Programs and other drug and alcohol programs in State Correctional Institutions as well as outpatient locations throughout Pittsburgh. Gateway Corrections sites also opened in Braddock in 1998 and Erie in 1999. Gateway Corrections established programs in the Beaver County Jail and Erie County Jail in 2001 and 2004, respectively, for people identified with mental illness and substance abuse issues coming out of jail.

Gateway works diligently to assist individuals who have been incarcerated and are soon to be released. For example, they helped one person who had been kicked out of his or her last apartment



A resident's living room in one of the Eleanor Roosevelt Apartments

prior to incarceration, and who was in need of housing upon release. Gateway staff works with offenders while they are in prison, and together with the Gateway Beaver County Jail staff and Probation Department, develop an individualized treatment plan. They use the Client Information for Initial Placement as a tool to gather information. What is critical is that the staff works with offenders while they are still in jail and makes sure that they gather all of their important information needed for getting housing and employment prior to their release. This includes getting copies of a birth certificate, social security number, medical records, employment information, treatment history, legal history, education, etc.

Two critical things that Gateway will do for its clients is to help them get their M.A. benefits in place and give them a housing application to fill out while in jail.

Individuals with felonies and past housing violations must have a report/consent from the Gateway Beaver County Jail staff and Probation Department indicating their treatment status and progress along with ongoing plans to continue services. A team consisting of Gateway, Housing, Probation and other treatment providers provides input. Final approval or disapproval lies with the Beaver County Housing Authority.

Clients who apply for housing and are accepted in the Eleanor Roosevelt Apartments have access to many benefits. For example, staff from Gateway Rehab is on-site 24/7 and there is always a safe door to knock on for people who need support, who are in crisis, or who need a friend. Also offered are round-the-clock security and various services for all residents such as life skills training and relapse education, leisure planning, picnics, and even movie days.

(Continued on page 6)

Housing: A Key to Diversion and Re-entry

By Peggy Robertson

Many people with mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders who are arrested for criminal offenses get caught up in a vicious cycle. Release from prison can be a revolving door if housing and treatment are not available.

Unfortunately, in many counties in Pennsylvania, there is a lack of housing, treatment and support services for persons with mental illness released from prison, inadequate re-entry planning, a denial to housing and/or suspension and denial of public benefits. According to Diana Myers, President, Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc. (DMA), there needs to be coordination between the criminal justice system and housing providers. The York County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) recognized this need and engaged DMA to conduct a housing needs study targeting people with serious mental illness who are involved in the criminal justice system.

The goals of the study were to analyze data on the target population, assess the current housing and services available to this population, identify barriers, develop a plan to address barriers and offer recommendations to create a comprehensive continuum of housing and services. The following summarizes findings from data that was gathered:

- There are limited resources available for the target population including:
 - limited crisis/emergency housing and service options
 - a lack of supportive housing and specialized transitional and permanent housing
 - a lack of mental health services and treatment options for people with co-occurring disorders
 - insufficient re-entry planning
 - a lack of education among the players and a need for cross-training
- There needs to be:
 - more collaboration and coordination
 - additional data collection and analysis
 - a clear assignment of responsibility for planning and implementing housing and services.

Ms. Myers commented, "In the long run, if the issue of housing and services for people with serious mental illness is to be successfully addressed, it must become part of the larger discussion of affordable housing in the community."

As a result of the findings made by DMA, several recommendations were made.

Developing a range of housing options is critical to prevent people from becoming, or remaining homeless once they are released from prison. These options include provisions of:

- Crisis/Emergency Housing, which is specialized short-term/emergency beds. This can provide an alternative to arrest or incarceration, re-entry from jail or resolve a crisis while on parole/probations. any communities have these in the mental health system but most of the beds are occupied.
- Transitional/Bridge Housing, for individuals meeting the HUD definition of homeless, for individuals not meeting HUD's definition for homeless, and master leasing for individuals excluded from housing due to public and private policies.
- Permanent Housing for homeless with disabilities, including rental subsidies and shared housing such as the Fairweather Lodge model
- More permanent housing options for non-homeless, which can be achieved by expanding the Public Housing Authority preference, developing relationships with private landlords and creating more supportive housing.

For re-entry to be successful,

(Continued on page 4)

(Diversion and Re-entry continued from page 3)

people must have access to the supports and services they need. A comprehensive, effective mental health system can help prevent the criminalization of people with mental illness and ease the transition back into the community for those who have been incarcerated. The service recommendations made in the York County CJAB study are:

- Create a Joint Task Force to develop a process for the initial point of contact (such as a police officer) including a crisis response
- Create a Cross-training program
- Develop Re-entry transition planning
- Create Forensic Peer Support Services

After a very comprehensive cost analysis, it was found that permanent supportive housing saves money. Prison and jail are among the most expensive settings to serve people who are homeless or who have mental illness. In York County, the per day cost of someone in jail is \$58, whereas the per day cost for someone in permanent supportive housing is \$40. In order to provide more permanent supportive housing, major stakeholders must form partnerships and coordinate their efforts. These key players include the courts, probation and parole, mental health/behavioral health, housing and community development and law enforcement.

Many steps have been taken in response to the CJAB study since it was completed. York County has partnered with the Planning Commission to learn about criminal activity in the county, specifically who is doing it and in what geographic areas. This will allow the CJAB to wisely place money where it is needed. They have also partnered with the adult mental health court and the juvenile mental health court. They have received 15 vouchers for the mental health population and have hired a housing specialist. The Local Housing Options Team formed a subcommittee that will meet with landlords and they are considering ways to provide supports that will make housers more comfortable in taking the forensics population.

Bringing together housing and mental health partners to work with the criminal justice system is the only way to meet the housing needs of people with serious mental illness involved in the criminal justice system. York County has begun the process.

The Honorable Penny Blackwell, Judge, York County Court of Common Pleas, Chris Rafferty, Housing and Community Development Administrator, York County Planning Commission and April Billet-Barclay, Treatment Court Administrator, Adult Probation Supervisor, York County Adult Probation/Parole Services further explained the impact of the study and how it is being implemented.

Ms. Billet-Barclay noted, "The Housing Study evolved after the implementation of the Mental Health Court in York in 2005. It became evident that there weren't enough services for the people who were being referred for treatment. We knew we had to make a change and the Housing Study grew out of that realization. The impact of the study was huge because it laid out a 5-year plan that includes implementation and where to get funding."

Judge Blackwell stated, "The biggest impact of the study was when it was presented to the Board of Commissioners and the Criminal Justice Advisory Board by Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc. The Board approved the overall concept of the study and they support the plan. They are confident that the proposed services can be provided in an economical and effective manner through collaboration. Their approval indicates that they recognize that there are citizens in the community who need their assistance and through implementation of the plan, these citizens can be diverted appropriately. They realize that it is better for people to be in the community with treatment, as opposed to incarceration. The CJAB is very pleased that we have the Board of Commissioners behind the program, which has proven to be very valuable. In

(Continued on page 5)

(Diversion and Re-entry continued from page 4)

addition, the Warden of the Prison, Mary Sabol, has been very supportive of the program and has been identifying people who can be appropriately released into the community. And it is understood by all that safety must always be maintained in the community.”

Funding sources were identified to help carry out the program, and two major grant applications were submitted. One proposal was sent to SAMHSA to support a partnership between the Drug Court and Treatment Court to help mental health consumers coming out of prison with their re-entry plan. The other proposal was sent to the Bureau of Justice Assistance to ease the transition from jail back into the community. This grant proposal is modeled on the Memphis Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) which was established as a result of a collaborative effort among the Memphis Police Department and various leaders in the community, including members of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI). Training is an important component of the CIT initiative, and NAMI members play a key role in administering the training program for police officers.

In Memphis, the CIT officers’ goals are to de-escalate or to eliminate encounters that may be potentially injurious to consumers, police officers, or citizens. The CIT receives

extensive training in responding to people with mental illness. Training topics include recognizing mental illness and medications, crisis de-escalation techniques, defense weapons training, and role-playing sessions. The Memphis CIT has served as a model of an advanced, proactive response to mental illness in the community, and has been duplicated in numerous police departments nationwide.

York County is beginning to employ this model and police officers will be trained to divert mental health consumers on the street into a treatment facility rather than incarcerate them. The program trains officers on how to interact with people in order to make informed decisions on how to best meet their needs. York County is committed to the program even if they do not receive the grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. They will seek funding from other sources. This is a train the trainer program and already meetings have been held with emergency room personnel, NAMI representatives, legal representatives, police officers and individuals in treatment.

Ms. Billet-Barclay was able to organize these meetings by contacting all of the major players, who in turn have been reaching out to other people. She explained, “Although there is an initial investment of additional staff time and money,

the end result should not only maximize staff time, but make staff more effective. Everyone has been buying into this training program, and it may ultimately save tax payers money.”

Ms. Billet-Barclay continued, “We know that what we have been doing to divert mental health consumers and help them with re-entry has not been working. Currently we are identifying resources in the community. We are working on how to get a quicker process to make sure the paper work is done while the individuals are in jail, and then they can be reinstated without delay. We are also developing a survey for prison guards to find out what their experience has been with individuals with mental illness who are in crisis and to learn what their frustrations are. We will then apply these results to our current system and determine how we can change the system.”

Judge Blackwell commented, “We want to maximize our resources to help the system work more effectively and efficiently. In a way, because we are a medium-sized county it is more difficult to come up with programs quickly because there are limited resources. We have also been navigating the funding restrictions because once we get something in place we want to be able to maintain them well into the future.”

(Continued on page 6)

(Gateway Rehab continued from page 2)

One probation officer is assigned to the building. Gateway has also been able to provide individuals with furniture, food and toiletries upon release.

However, Gateway staff makes it clear that this is not a hand out program. Residents are strongly urged to get their hand in the mix, to make their own decisions, to participate in activities, to sign up for job training, GED training, 12-Step meetings, take advantage of the clinical staff, all of these programs and supports that help a person integrate into the community. The Transitional Housing Resident Handbook outlines all of the services available both on site and in the community.

Gateway staff is available to assist with individual and community needs, and individuals can remain in their apartment as long as they choose. If a person is ready to transition into another living arrangement where they require

less support, Gateway staff will assist with the transition and provide ongoing support groups. There is no discharge policy in the program. Evictions can only be put into effect by the Housing Authority.

Gateway recognizes that people do relapse. Therefore, it is also reassuring that if a resident should have a relapse in recovery and needs to be hospitalized, as long as the rent is paid for, the apartment will not be rented to anyone else. For people who are hospitalized, knowing they have a place to come home to upon release can help significantly in the recovery process. This gives people taking the journey of recovery a dignified place that they can call home.

Gateway staff commented, "We address the whole person and look at ways to provide options for our clients so that they don't revert back to bad habits. We want to provide hope and build self-esteem

and connect people to what they want. And whereas we know how important it is for people to get substance abuse and mental health treatment, we also understand the importance of having toilet paper and, of course, food."

Richard Foster, Director of Gateway Corrections, said, "Other people in the community have been knocking on our doors for the services we offer. There is a trend for community-based supportive services and Eleanor Roosevelt Apartment Transitional Living Program is an example of a successful model combining housing and supports for people with mental illness and substance abuse/co-occurring disorders."

For more information on Gateway's transitional living programs, call Richard Foster, M.A., Gateway Corrections Division director at 412-215-4589 or e-mail richard.foster@gatewayrehab.org.

(Diversion and Re-entry continued from page 5)

When asked what the biggest obstacles are to changing a system that has not been working for years, the answer was funding and affordable housing. Chris Rafferty mentioned, "The LHOT is working on developing a Fairweather Lodge and this takes a lot of coordination. But the process has started and we have for-profit and non-profit developers working with

MH/MR. We serve low to moderate income populations but we are also targeting sub-populations."

Judge Blackwell commented, "The Housing Study set forth twenty-six various tasks. This has resulted in a coordination of the entire system. I applaud the efforts of the Planning Commission; they have been crucial to this process and Chris really took the ball and

ran with it. April has been a key component and without her I'm not sure this could have come together. She has spent numerous hours above and beyond the call of duty! And I remain committed to this project because it is extremely beneficial."

Mr. Rafferty added, "It has been a long, fine effort to make this work."

A System Aimed at Achieving, Not Avoiding

By Peggy Robertson

Pretrial services programs, according to ***Pretrial Services Programs: Responsibilities and Potential***, can be valuable resources for making significant improvements in the criminal justice system because they are used in the early stages of the criminal case process. Unnecessary detention before trial not only results in unnecessary jail costs, it also deprives defendants of their liberty.

Pretrial release programs seek to address the underlying problem that brought the defendant into the system in the first place. Pretrial release can be a win-win situation. The program can save funds by releasing individuals who pose no harm to the community until their trial because when accused individuals are released, they're no longer an expense of the local community's prison system. In addition, pretrial release prevents potentially innocent people from losing their jobs, falling behind on bill payments, and suffering other difficulties as a result of imprisonment.

John Clark, Director, Technical Assistance, Pretrial Justice Institute (PJI) in Washington D.C. was keynote speaker for the Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) Conference held at the Penn Stater on June 26, 2008. He explained

that the first pretrial service was born in 1961 with the goals of providing due process to those accused of a crime, maintaining integrity of the judicial process by securing defendants for trial and protecting victims, witnesses and the community from threats or danger posed by the defendant.

Traditional Diversion and Specialty Treatment Courts

Pretrial release can occur in different ways according to what programs are offered by the local jurisdiction. Specialty Treatment Courts and Traditional Jail Diversion are two approaches that have met with success. They both potentially have the benefit of getting defendants assessed and placed into appropriate treatment very early after arrest instead of the defendant waiting many months until treatment is ordered as part of a sentence, if convicted. For both approaches, the treatment that is ordered as a requirement of participation in the program may be the first time the defendant has received treatment for a mental health or substance abuse problem.

Specialty courts are a nationwide initiative that involves collaboration between the courts and mental health services to develop strategies that achieve long-term

recovery in offenders with mental health and substance abuse issues. Specialty courts such as mental health and drug courts are based on the concept of "therapeutic jurisprudence, an interdisciplinary approach to law in which legal rules, processes and institutions result in positive therapeutic consequences for individuals involved in the legal process. To produce a beneficial outcome, many of the courts use dismissal of charges after successful completion of the program as an incentive to participate in community treatment. It also helps to avoid re-offenses.

The term "jail diversion" refers to programs that divert individuals with serious mental illness (and often co-occurring disorders) away from jail and provide linkages to community-based treatment and support services. The individual avoids arrest or spends a significantly reduced time period in jail and/or lockup on the current charge or on violations of probation resulting from previous charges.

According to ***Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components, National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 1997***, a major difference in the two approaches is that the

(Continued on page 8)

(Pretrial Services continued from page 7)

Specialty Court Model is a coordinated strategy among the judges, prosecution, defense, and treatment providers to govern offender compliance. Traditional diversion turns compliance over to the diversion program staff and treatment providers and there is little, if any, judicial interaction with the participant. However, both approaches use monitoring and evaluation to measure achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness. Participating in a specialty court program is voluntary for the defendant but it offers the strong incentive of the possibility of a dismissal of charges. If a defendant opts for specialty court or is referred to a diversion program, the following services occur in order for the process to go smoothly and to set up the most effective treatment plan:

Information Gathering

In order to create a complete history of the defendant before the initial court appearance:

- An interview is held to determine the defendant's residence, employment record, time in the area, mental health and/or substance abuse and drug and alcohol issues
- An investigation verifies the information with references and completes a criminal record check
- Compilation of a complete

court appearance history that includes compliance status of probation, parole and pretrial release

Risk Assessment

An explicit, objective and consistent evaluation determines whether or not the defendant might be dangerous or fail to appear in court by assessing:

- The nature of the offense and likelihood of conviction
- The defendant's employment status and family relationships
- Length and nature of residence
- Age, character, reputation, mental condition
- Prior history of FTA (failure to appear); criminal records; any use of false I.D. and any other relevant "catch all" factors

Supervision

If the defendant is placed into appropriate treatment, effective risk management can ensure success by monitoring the prescribed conditions which might include:

- Proof of residence
- Monitoring compliance which can include reporting in, complying to curfews, house arrest and/or restraining orders
- Drug testing, no drinking
- Assisting released Defendants in finding employment, medical care, or drug treatment

- Enrolling in treatment and/or obtaining support services
- Informing the court of violations of release conditions
- Reminding Defendants of court dates

Pretrial release, which allows a release from confinement prior to a trial, can take several forms. Sometimes the offender can be released at the moment of arrest.

Depending on the charge, release may be withheld. The right to bail or release is part of the due process legislation. Pretrial releases consist of bail bonds, citation releases, and release on one's own recognizance. The accused party is expected to appear in court as a condition of pretrial release.

If the person is incarcerated, from jail to bail could take a week or less or it could take longer if the court is waiting for an address, information from the offender's doctor, etc. The goal is to move offenders from prison to a more appropriate setting, hopefully a continuum of care. Housing is a huge issue and efforts are often made to try to find a family member to connect with, or alternative resources to facilitate a residence. Helping the defendant have resources in place to help cope after release from prison, and providing proper management after release, are key. If

(Continued on page 9)

(Pretrial Services continued from page 8)

offenders are identified early enough in the process, with supervised conditional release, they can be safely diverted from incarceration.

Three Counties provide excellent examples of how pretrial programs can benefit people with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders.

Dauphin County

One of the goals of the Pretrial Services in Dauphin County is to make it easy for individuals to be referred into the treatment system. Therefore, supervising individuals while out on bail is a critical component of pretrial services in Dauphin County. The individual on bail must be court-ordered by either the Magisterial District Judge or the Common Pleas Court to participate in the supervision program. Pretrial Services staff makes sure that the judge has comprehensive information about the defendant and then the Judge makes the decision about setting bail. Release is dependent upon mental health and drug and alcohol evaluation, attending classes, and working with the mental health department. If someone violates their condition of release, the supervisor gets in touch with the District Judge (DJ) or the Common Pleas Judge to have another hearing.

Allegheny County

Like Dauphin County, Allegheny County makes sure to provide the judge with as much information as possible. That is why they have bail agents available day and night. They were able to get the jail to give them a room where they could do the risk assessment for the DJ. The key benefit is that better, more comprehensive information is given to the DJ quickly.

Justice Related Diversion Services coordinates with Service Coordination Units and other agencies for individuals released from the Allegheny County Jail prior to, or at, the preliminary hearing. Individualized service plans include housing, treatment services and relations with community supports and case management. In addition, they provide referrals to Forensic Support Services or Mental Health Court for defendants whose charges are held for trial or waived to trial from their preliminary hearing.

Lehigh Valley

Early intervention for offenders with mental illness and co-occurring disorders has also met with success in Lehigh Valley. Steve Kuksa, First Assistant District Attorney for Lehigh County's DA Office explained that when multiple systems are involved in the evaluation of the defendant, pertinent information is shared and a good treatment program can be put in place. Team

MISA (Mental Illness and Substance Abuse) provides early identification of special needs defendants and together does an evaluation for treatment. The involvement of Team MISA is voluntary for the defendant. Team MISA will take referrals from anyone including the judge, defense attorney, and police, and they encourage supportive people such as family members to attend and serve as a resource. Many times people commit offenses because of a change in their meds, or they are off of their meds, and this information needs to be presented. With early intervention, everything is front loaded and often there is minimal judicial involvement. A cost benefit analysis shows that not only is early intervention sustainable, it saves the court and prison money and time.

Having communication in place among all of the stakeholders at every step of the pretrial process, and ensuring there is follow-through with the proper treatment and resources in place for the defendant, is an investment in a healthier society.

*Some information for this article is from **The Role of Traditional Pretrial Diversion in the Age of Specialty Treatment Courts: Expanding the Range of Problem-Solving Options at the Pretrial Stage**, by John Clark, Pretrial Justice Institute and CMHS National GAINS Center, (2007), **Practical advice on jail diversion: Ten years of learnings on jail diversion** from the CMHS National GAINS Center. Delmar, NY: Author and **Pretrial Services Programs: Responsibilities and Potential**, By Barry Mahoney, Bruce D. Beaudin, John A. Carver III, Daniel B. Ryan and Richard B. Hoffman; March 2001; NCJ 181939.*



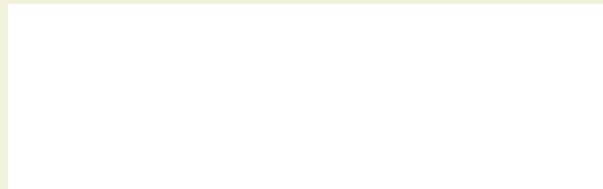
The Eleanor Roosevelt Apartments (pictured left) provide a Transitional Living Program, which assists individuals released from jails, prisons, or other programs who have no housing or safe place to live that would support their recovery needs. To learn about this program in Beaver County, see page 1 of this newsletter.

Housing Choices is published by: Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc. and sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS).

Project Director: Diana T. Myers Newsletter Editor: Peggy Robertson

We welcome your submissions and ideas for articles. If you have information about a related project or would like more information about a project described here, please contact us at the following address:

Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc., 6 South Easton Road, Glenside, PA 19038 215-576-1150, ext. 3., Fax: 215-576-8650



FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GLENSIDE, PA
PERMIT NO. 916

Housing Choices c/o
Diana T. Myers and Associates, Inc.
6 South Easton Road
Glenside, PA 19038