



FSSA News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 6, 2020

FSSA announces pilot programs designed to treat Hoosiers involved in the justice system

Programs designed to help alleviate pressures on county jails; Pilots to launch in Marion and Vanderburgh counties

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration’s Division of Mental Health and Addiction today announced a series of pilot programs designed to increase access to mental health care for inmates in Indiana county jails.

The pilot programs will focus on individuals found incompetent to stand trial who are awaiting placement in the state psychiatric hospital network. Currently and historically in Indiana, these individuals are forced to await the availability of a bed in a state psychiatric hospital before they can receive the competency restoration services required by law. DMHA’s pilot programs will work with a variety of partners to provide these services in three new, and different settings: jails, the community, and private inpatient psychiatric settings.

“We know that there are too many people suffering from serious mental illness that end up in the justice system, and many county jails are not equipped to provide them the treatment that they need,” said Jay Chaudhary, DMHA director. “These pilot programs represent important first steps being taken by the state in collaboration with our county jails to improve the treatment of justice-involved individuals with mental illnesses in Indiana.”

The jail-based restoration pilot programs are being launched in Marion and Vanderburgh counties in partnership with community mental health centers Adult and Child Health and Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare Inc. respectively. These organizations will provide services directly to jail inmates, with a goal of restoring competency and resolving the criminal case much more quickly, rather than awaiting the availability of a state hospital bed.

A separate community-based restoration program will also pilot in Marion County, also in partnership with Adult and Child. It is geared toward providing competency restoration to individuals whom a court decides are safe to return to the community while awaiting competency restoration and will include therapy, skills training and legal education. Finally, an inpatient pilot program, called Project CREATE (COVID-Related Emergency Access to Therapeutic Environments), will transition appropriate county jail inmates throughout Indiana to partnering inpatient psychiatric providers.

“By treating individuals more quickly and in more appropriate settings, we hope to reduce the amount of time they spend in legal limbo, with charges suspended and indefinitely tying up public resources,” said Chaudhary. “In addition, we hope to reduce the waitlist and wait times for our state hospitals through early identification and treatment of individuals who may never actually need the highly intensive, expensive services provided in the state psychiatric hospital network.”

The jail- and community-based pilot programs are already in early operation. Project CREATE should begin serving inmates by the end of this year.

“As president of the Indiana Sheriff’s Association, I thank the governor, FSSA and DMHA for working with ISA to help us deal with the number one problem in Indiana jails: providing help for inmates with serious mental health issues,” said Porter County Sheriff David Reynolds.

###

News Media Contact:

Marni Lemons
317-234-5287

Marni.Lemons@fssa.IN.gov