

## Behavioral Health Justice Intervention Services Grant

### El Dorado County Probation Department

#### Proposal Narrative

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#### Community Need (300 Words)

El Dorado County's Stepping Up Initiative was established in 2016 to reduce justice system involvement of the mentally ill in El Dorado County. In December 2020, the County finalized a strategic plan with four goals: *reduce* jail bookings, days in jail, and recidivism and *increase* connections to treatment. Existing assets included co-responder teams and the use of a mental health screen in jail. The planning process resulted in agreements to expand mobile crisis response teams and establish a pre-trial diversion program with enhanced treatment services. However, major challenges pertaining to cross-agency referrals and information sharing were unresolved. The proposed project creates information sharing procedures, technology plan, scope of work, and project budget for automatic referrals and information sharing for the purposes of:

- Notifying Behavioral Health of individuals with potential mental health concerns who have been booked into jail.
- Enabling the inclusion of a positive mental health screen finding on the pre-trial report sent to the Courts, District Attorney, and Public Defender's Office.

The project is expected to impact the 1,500 people with behavioral health concerns booked into jail annually and ensures that the 127 people booked into custody four or more times are identified at booking and referred into treatment services. It seeks to reduce the proportion of juvenile probationers who subsequently become adult probationers (50%) by providing earlier linkages to treatment services.

The project builds upon the existing Stepping Up partnership which includes all local law enforcement agencies and other criminal justice partners, as well as the Health and Human Services Agency, NAMI, and the Behavioral Health Commission. It leverages prior work to develop an annual data dashboard which defined pertinent data fields in multiple platforms and has been identified as a critical next step in a multi-phase project to develop a shared database under the vision of CalAIM.

#### Project Description (1000 Words)

The proposed capacity building project will develop data collection and sharing mechanisms across partner agencies that will better facilitate a warm hand-off to behavioral health services and help increase referrals into the pre-trial diversion program. The project will result in (1) a process and technology plan, that will ultimately enable the county to procure a software developer; and (2) align workflow processes and department practices for the data collection, sharing, and reporting.

Goal: Increase connections to treatment, thereby reducing justice system involvement for individuals with substance use disorders (SUD) / serious mental illness (SMI).

Objective 1: Staff within partner agencies routinely collect, input, and analyze required data elements as part of usual business operations.

- *Activity:* map workflow processes within partner agencies with regards to the collection, input, and analysis of behavioral health findings for those involved with the juvenile or criminal justice systems.
- *Activity:* Update and refine system practices to ensure the routine input of information by justice partners and the download and subsequent follow-up by behavioral health partners.

Objective 2: Develop a technology plan and scope of work that will enable system partners to receive real-time notifications of individuals with a positive mental health screen who are booked into custody.

- *Activity:* Develop data sharing agreements for real-time information sharing.
- *Activity:* Develop technology plan with desired reports and procedures (project specifications) for a vendor to build a shared data base that allows for limited information-sharing between law enforcement, behavioral health, and other service providers as allowable under HIPAA.

A core component of this work is the creation of the data sharing agreement between law enforcement and behavioral health which can meet project needs while simultaneously ensuring the protection and safety of confidential and private health and criminal justice case information. The project proposes to hire an outside facilitator, known and trusted by project partners, to first convene conversations with community members about the project purpose and second to use those conversations to guide the development of the agreement. These discussions will continue to help the partners grow in their understanding of each other's work, the mandates they operate under, and dispel myths and assumptions.

The project adheres to a capacity building mantra of "it must be done in one year, with one time funds." Once work is complete and the technology plan is developed the capacity building goals will have been achieved with no further need of state resources to sustain project activities as no direct services are proposed through this project. The County will have a written plan and data sharing agreements in place to start work creating a data platform for better referrals and coordination of services. From the technology plan (developed under this proposal) the final phase of the project is conceived as follows:

1. A shared data platform will be developed and managed by the County IT department.
2. Specified data from each partner's case management system will be "pushed" to the central shared database.
3. Using algorithms, a narrow and limited set of information will then be forwarded as need to respective agencies and placed into their case management systems for follow-up.

The process creates a safe mechanism for the one way flow of information without any direct connections between the different agencies' case management systems.

While seemingly simple in conception, upon consultation with information technology experts there are numerous challenges inherent in developing a real time flow of information between the systems. All experts agree that the work is feasible, just that it must proceed with due caution and with all elements, system abilities, and agency processes understood and mapped out prior to any programming work occurring. Project funds will allow El Dorado County to hire a data consultant to create the technology plan with desired project specifications, agency system capabilities, and budget. The project consultant,

after first facilitating discussions with stakeholder groups, will then work with the County IT department to create the technology plan.

The short term outcomes of the project are as follows:

- Consensus among law enforcement, criminal justice, and behavioral health partners on how to share information in a manner that will facilitate referrals to treatment services and enable more clients to be diverted away from traditional criminal justice proceedings.
- Enhanced ability for community members to request an appointment for behavioral health assessments or treatment services from different facilities along the intercept model – jail, courts, or probation.
- A technology plan, scope of work and budget for the programming work necessary to create the shared database will be developed with the intention of releasing the work for public bid.

Long term the project places El Dorado County further along the pathway started five years ago and articulated in its Stepping Up Initiative Strategic Plan. The core vision and purpose of this project is to avert a mental health crisis from escalating and potentially leading to a law enforcement response. Evidence suggests that over half of people with a mental illness are not receiving treatment as needed. Too often jails become a catchpoint in the safety-net system. Through the proposed project, jail stays in El Dorado County will be brief and infrequent for people with mental illnesses. By sharing the mental health screening information collected at booking all relevant partners will be informed of a person with a potential mental illness and will be tasked with proceeding according to their respective mandates.

To complete this project El Dorado County will use BHJIS capacity building funds to hire a project consultant who will document and map system processes and then work with County IT to create a Technology Plan with the specifications for the interface. Consultant and County deliverables to complete this project are outlined in the Deliverable-based budget form.

### **Applicant Qualifications (500 Words)**

El Dorado County Probation has served as lead agency for the Stepping Up Initiative since 2016. The Stepping Up Initiative's steering committee is comprised of various agencies, including representatives from NAMI and the Behavioral Health Board. The Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) provides executive leadership and oversight.

Justice system involvement is too often the unintended negative consequence of untreated behavioral health concerns. As a result, individuals are processed through a system that is neither designed for, nor conducive to recovery. In partnership with Behavioral Health and the Sheriff, Probation will build a two pronged alert system using the booking process. Currently, nearly all individuals booked into custody or detention are screened using the *Brief Jail Mental Health Screen* tool; among adults, 29% show an indication of a behavioral health concern. Ideally both Behavioral Health and Probation should receive real-time notification of that screen. The notification could provide behavioral health clinicians with sufficient information to determine if (a) this is an existing client that will need coordinated treatment services or (b) if it is someone that should be contacted for further follow-up. In either situation the clinical team will have sufficient information to follow-up with client in custody or detention or upon release. Additionally, Probation can include notification of a positive mental health screen on the pre-

trial report, flagging the client for potential assessment and consideration for various treatment and / or diversion programs.

El Dorado County understands that this is complex work and is requesting funds under the Behavioral Health Justice Intervention Services capacity building component to complete phase one of the project: creating a technology plan and piloting the flag system under a one year project grant. The project will be embedded within the framework of the larger Stepping Up Initiatives thereby ensuring public participation and accountability for the project.

The day-to-day project manager will be Julie Wyatt, the CCP Analyst, with assistance from Amanda Earnshaw (IT) in the development of the technical plan, and County Council for the development of the data sharing agreements, and Amy Haynes in development of the Behavioral Health Use Cases. The bulk of the work will be completed by Kevin O'Connell of OCR. Mr. O'Connell is a trusted partner in El Dorado County and served as a lead facilitator in the sequential intercept mapping and planning under a 2018 Bureau of Justice Assistance grant. Mr. O'Connell has extensive experience in data analysis and systems mapping, justice and behavioral health research, and is currently a lead partner in a MHSOAC Innovation Incubator project to develop data driven solutions and system change in 10 counties. El Dorado County is part of this effort and will use the data dashboard strategy plan as a starting point for proposed work on the Technology Plan.

Project oversight will be shared by Gary Romanko, Deputy Chief Probation; Amy Haynes, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health; and Amanda Earnshaw, Assistant Director, Information Technologies. Fiscal management and accounting will be directed by Nikki Moeszinger, Chief Fiscal Officer of El Dorado County Probation.