



Washtenaw County Mental Health and Public Safety Preservation Millage

Youth Diversion Activities Report: April 2019

For several years now, Washtenaw County Community Mental Health (WCCMH) and the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) have worked together to improve services for incarcerated adults with mental health and substance use disorders and to prevent more of these individuals from entering the criminal justice system in the first place. These diversion and support activities will be expanded with Mental Health and Public Safety Preservation Millage funding, including by the development of new activities and systems change efforts for justice-involved youth with behavioral health conditions.

Toward this end, WCCMH and the WCSO recently sponsored a 1.5-day workshop in Ann Arbor, during which more than five-dozen individuals from two-dozen Washtenaw County organizations worked to develop integrated strategies to better respond to the needs of justice-involved youth experiencing mental health and substance use conditions.

Research from the National Center for Youth Opportunity and Justice (NCYOJ) shows that behavioral health and trauma conditions are consistently higher among youth in the juvenile justice system when compared with the general adolescent population.

- Approximately 70 percent of justice-involved youth have a diagnosable mental health condition, compared with 20 percent in the general adolescent population.
- More than 75 percent of justice-involved youth have experienced traumatic victimization, compared with 34 percent in the general adolescent population.

The recent Washtenaw County workshop, facilitated by the National Center for Youth Opportunity and Justice, worked with participants to develop a detailed map showing the flow of juvenile justice contact for youth with mental health and substance use disorders, as well as the county's existing referral systems, services, and service barriers. The group then identified opportunities to increase cross-systems collaboration, improve early-identification practices, create diversion opportunities, and leverage or develop effective, community-based treatment services.



Workshop recommendations

Washtenaw County workshop participants agreed that youth with behavioral health conditions should be diverted from the justice system whenever possible; that no one agency or system could accomplish this work in isolation; and that evidence-based tools and procedures should be used across the juvenile justice continuum--from prevention and diversion activities to treatment programs and post-treatment support systems. Participants also outlined key values that should guide the work including respect for youth, parents, and families; open, honest, and non-judgmental communications; cultural humility and sensitivity; and youth-centered approaches.

After mapping available community resources, participants outlined a number of unmet needs and opportunities, such as:

- Youth-supportive housing;
- After-hours youth and family support services;
- Peer-to-peer networks;
- First-contact youth assistance practices; and
- Meaningful opportunities to include youth, families, and community members in the planning and implementation work.

Future investments

In the coming month, the National Center for Youth Opportunity and Justice will summarize the workshop findings into a full report that will map out the current system in Washtenaw County and highlight gaps and opportunities. This summary will be shared with workshop participants and other key stakeholders first so they have an opportunity to review the contents, correct errors, and provide feedback on the report.

More than five-dozen individuals participated in the workshop, including representatives from these public sector entities:

- Ann Arbor Public Schools
- Avalon Housing
- Judson Center
- Lincoln Consolidated Schools
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- Ozone House
- Student Advocacy Center of Michigan
- Washtenaw County 14th District Judicial Court
- Washtenaw County Children's Services
- Washtenaw County Community Mental Health
- Washtenaw County Health Department
- Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development
- Washtenaw County Office of Prosecuting Attorney
- Washtenaw County Office of Public Defender
- Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office
- Washtenaw County Trial Court
- Washtenaw Intermediate School District
- Youth Arts Alliance
- Ypsilanti Community Schools
- Ypsilanti Police Department



A new youth subcommittee of Washtenaw County's existing Mental Health Criminal Justice Diversion Advisory Council will explore ways that millage dollars can be invested to respond to the needs outlined in the report, to catalyze systems change efforts, and to improve services and programs for youth and families.

Stay informed

To be notified of millage investment priorities, millage job postings, new prevention programs, requests for proposals, and outreach activities, sign up for periodic updates from Washtenaw County Community Mental Health.

Remember

If you or someone you know needs support, please call 734-544-3050.

With special thanks to the workshop planning committee:

- Derrick Jackson, Director of Community Engagement, Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office
- Linda Edwards-Brown, Juvenile Court Administrator, Washtenaw County Trial Court
- Liz Spring, Program Administrator, Youth and Family Services, Washtenaw County Community Mental Health
- Holly Heaviland, Executive Director, Community and School Partnerships, Washtenaw Intermediate School District
- Lisa Greco, Youth Center Director, Washtenaw County Children's Services
- Lisa Gentz, Program Administrator for Millage Initiatives, Mental Health Court, and Jail Services, Washtenaw County Community Mental Health
- Trish Cortes, Director, Washtenaw County Community Mental Health