

Chief Justice-Led Task Forces to Promote Criminal Justice / Mental Health Collaboration

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND APPLICATION



1. Introduction

State Supreme Court Chief Justices are invited to apply for technical assistance and a small amount of funding to support a task force they establish in their state to improve the response to people with mental illnesses involved in the criminal justice system. The initiative will be coordinated by the Council of State Governments (CSG) with help from the National GAINS/TAPA Center, as part of the Judges' Leadership Initiative (JLI).

2. Background

a. What is the scope of the problem?

- There is a growing number of people with mental illnesses coming into contact with the criminal justice system.
 - In 2003, 11 percent of the New York state prison population was receiving some form of mental health treatment. The figure represents a 71 percent increase in this population since 1991 and is three times the rate of increase of the general prison population during the same period.¹
 - The Los Angeles County Jail and Riker's Island (New York City) each hold more people with mental illnesses than the largest psychiatric inpatient facilities in the United States.²
- The increasing number of people with mental illnesses in contact with the criminal justice system has significant implications for the administration of the judicial system, as well as public safety and government spending generally.
 - A Los Angeles County task force reported that 90 percent of Los Angeles County jail inmates with mental illnesses were repeat offenders; an estimated 31 percent had been incarcerated 10 or more times.³
 - According to a 2004 report, Miami-Dade County taxpayers spent \$18 per day to house inmates from the general population in jail; taxpayers spent \$125 per day to house inmates with mental illnesses in jail.⁴

1. The Correctional Association of New York. (2004). *Mental Health in the House of Corrections: A Study of Mental Health Care in New York State Prisons*. New York, New York: Wynn, J. R. & Warner, G.

2. Torrey, E. F. (1999). Reinventing Mental Health Care. *City Journal* 9(4).

3. Unpublished statistic courtesy of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' Task Force on Incarcerated Mentally Ill, 1991.

4. Circuit Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida. (2004). *Final Report of the Miami-Dade County Grand Jury*. Available at http://www.miamisao.com/publications/grand_jury/2000s/gj2004s.pdf.

b. What are judges doing to address this problem?

- Given their interest, commitment, credibility, and independence, some judges across the country have been convening committees and task forces of criminal justice and mental health leaders to improve the response to people with mental illnesses in contact with the criminal justice system.
- Many judges have also played key roles in establishing mental health courts, improving pre-trial service programs for people with mental illnesses, and promoting specialized police-based response programs for law enforcement officers.

c. Why should state Supreme Court Chief Justices become involved?

- Chief Justices are uniquely positioned to stimulate collaboration among state government officials and community leaders and to encourage them to develop joint initiatives within the criminal justice/mental health systems.
- Chief Justices can support and sustain the efforts of judges who have already begun to address these issues locally and encourage other judges to begin problem-solving initiatives in their own communities.
- The Conference of Chief Justices encouraged Chief Justices to take a leadership role in addressing criminal justice/mental health issues in a resolution passed by its members in January 2006. (<http://ccj.ncsc.dni.us/MentalHealthResols.html>)

3. Chief Justice-Led Task Forces

a. What is expected of the selected task forces?

- The state Supreme Court's Chief Justice or the justice appointed to lead the task force will take an active role in this initiative, including attendance at and participation in a forum in April/May (date and location TBD).
- The Chief Justice will designate one person to coordinate the task force's day-to-day activities and to serve as a lead contact for project staff.
- At the forum, each task force will develop a preliminary draft plan that includes (1) the issues on which the task force will initially focus, (2) the projected deliverables for the year, and (3) the governance structure for the task force, including how it will be staffed and supported throughout the duration of the initiative.
- By the end of 2007, each task force will establish a cohesive structure that will support statewide initiatives to improve outcomes for people with mental illnesses involved in the criminal justice system.
- The plan the task force designs and advances will build on any successes already achieved in the state (e.g., one county's mental health court or an ongoing partnership between a police department and its local court), leverage other relevant efforts already underway, and improve policy-makers' understanding of criminal justice/mental health issues.

b. Who will serve on the task force and what are its objectives?

- The Chief Justice, or the state Supreme Court Justice whom the Chief Justice designates, will chair a task force of high-ranking state officials and representatives from all three branches of government. Task force members should collectively reflect the leadership of the state's criminal justice

and mental health systems, as well as representatives of other relevant systems (e.g., housing) and interest groups (e.g., mental health advocates).

- Each task force will design and begin to implement a statewide strategy to improve the response to people with mental illnesses in contact with the criminal justice system. The strategy will focus on the operation of the state's criminal court system and its interface with the mental health system but should also recognize that for any strategy to be comprehensive, it must consider the role of state and local law enforcement and corrections.

c. What are selected task forces eligible to receive?

- Access to the nation's top experts in this issue area, administrators of successful policies and programs in other jurisdictions, and summaries of research and program models tailored to meet each state's specific requests for information.
- Participation in an invitation-only two-day forum (hotel, airfare, and meal expenses included) of all state task forces in the initiative.
- \$10,000 – \$30,000 in funding to cover some of the costs associated with staffing and convening the task force from January – December 2007 (in addition to forum expenses).
- Assistance with the development of a strategy to sustain the work of the task force (e.g., securing funding from foundations and other sources within the state).
- At least one on-site technical assistance event conducted by CSG and GAINS/TAPA per state to support task force activities in 2007.

d. What are the key dates?

- The task forces will receive support and technical assistance from CSG and GAINS/TAPA over a one-year period, starting in January 2007.
- In April/May 2007, CSG and GAINS/TAPA will host a forum of key leadership from each state selected.

Please see reverse side for application.

About the JLI, CSG, and GAINS/TAPA

The Council of State Governments Criminal Justice / Mental Health Consensus Project and the GAINS/TAPA Center for Jail Diversion provide technical assistance to state and local governments on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. CSG and GAINS/TAPA convened judges from across the country who were leaders in this issue area and with their help launched the Judges' Leadership Initiative. Co-chaired by Evelyn Stratton, a state Supreme Court justice in Ohio and Steve Leifman, a criminal court judge in Miami Dade County, the JLI seeks to: 1) support and enhance the efforts of judges who have already taken leadership roles on criminal justice / mental health issues in their community; and 2) promote leadership among more judges to address the overrepresentation of people with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system.

During the first year of activities CSG and GAINS/TAPA covered all expenses associated with the JLI through existing grants they received from federal agencies and private foundations. The task forces described here will be supported by grants from the JEHT Foundation and the Conrad J. Hilton Foundation. Additional support for the task forces and for other related JLI activities will come from the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Application for the Chief Justice-Led Task Force Initiative

NAME OF COURT

NAME OF CHIEF JUSTICE

NAME OF CONTACT PERSON FOR THE INITIATIVE

TELEPHONE NUMBER OF CONTACT

TITLE OF CONTACT

MAILING ADDRESS OF CONTACT

EMAIL ADDRESS OF CONTACT

Please provide answers to each of the questions below, if applicable to your state, on a separate sheet of paper. Responses should be numbered, and the application in its entirety should not exceed five pages (excluding any attached materials).

- 1 | Provide a short problem statement that includes an explanation of why a task force needs to be established in your state to improve the response to people with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system. When possible, support the problem statement with data, news articles, or government reports that reflect the current status of this issue in your state or in a particular county/municipality in your state.
- 2 | Describe any existing commissions, task forces, or committees created to improve the response to people with mental illnesses involved with the criminal justice system.
- 3 | Describe any additional commissions or task forces whose mission is related to, but not exclusively focused on, criminal justice/mental health issues.
- 4 | Describe any current state or local programs that are the result of criminal justice/mental health collaboration. Explain how your task force will build upon these current programs and the initiatives listed in questions 2 and 3.
- 5 | Discuss current sources of funding, if any, for planning or implementing collaborative criminal justice/mental health initiatives in your jurisdiction.
- 6 | Provide a statement of the Chief Justice's commitment to engage a wide range of task force members, including leaders of the state's criminal justice, mental health, and substance abuse treatment systems, and consumers and advocates. Preference will be shown for proposals that include task force membership from all three branches of government and reflect bipartisan support for the initiative.
- 7 | Indicate whether the Chief Justice will lead the task force and participate in key meetings, or if this role will be delegated to another state Supreme Court Justice. If the function will be delegated to another justice, please provide his/her name. (As specified in the overview, the Chief Justice may designate another justice to lead the initiative if the latter has more experience with criminal justice/mental health issues.)

Please return this cover sheet and your responses by January 11, 2007 to Lauren Almquist by email or fax (lalmquist@csg.org, fax: 212-482-2344)