



McLean County selected to participate in White House's Data Drive Justice Initiative

In early 2016 the McLean County Administrator's Office was contacted by a representative of the White House, who inquired as to McLean County's willingness to participate along with approximately 20 other jurisdictions from across the country who had been identified as possible contributors to a collaborative process now known as the White House's Data Driven Initiative to identify opportunities to utilize data exchange and strategies to increase diversion of those with mental illness from emergency rooms and incarceration. As identified during the recent McLean County Mental Health Action Plan development and by the County's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, a significant number of incarcerated persons are afflicted with mental health and substance abuse disorders. A small portion of the population many times utilizes a large majority of available resources, tending to cycle between local resources (jails, emergency rooms, crisis calls, etc.). Data-driven decision making and evidence-based practices are key to achieving optimal diversion of individuals to the most effective assistance/treatment program available and thereby optimizing the utilization of scarce resources.

County Board Chairman John McIntyre, County Board Health Committee Chair Susan Schafer, 11th Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Kevin Fitzgerald, 11th Judicial Circuit Administrator Will Scanlon, County Administrator Bill Wasson, Assistant County Administrator Hannah Eisner, Court Services Director Lori McCormick, Deputy Director Dennis McGuire and Drug/Mental Health Courts Program Director Cassy Taylor, along with State's Attorney's Office Chief Civil Assistant State's Attorney Don Knapp have participated in multiple teleconference calls weekly, since the origination of the initiative. In mid-May, the White House asked jurisdictions to provide a specific team; including elected representatives leading mental health associated activities in their communities, a jurisdictional executive administrator and a criminal justice representative, to participate in a workshop to work with other jurisdictions, academic institutions such as the University of Chicago and private sector data technology experts partners such as Esri, Amazon and MasterCard. On June 13, 2016, County Board Chair John McIntyre, County Board Health Committee Chair Susan Schafer, County Administrator Bill Wasson and Drug/Mental Health Courts Program Director Cassy Taylor attended meetings at the White House to share McLean County's experiences and learn from others. The meetings included White House staff, agency representatives, technology experts and local jurisdiction representatives from what has grown to be more than 60 jurisdictions, brought together to share knowledge, practices, and to work collaboratively on solutions to increase diversion of individuals with behavioral health needs from emergency rooms and incarceration. The focus of the meetings were as follows:

Diversion Strategies-McLean County

Some of the necessary resources for implementing diversion strategies currently exist in McLean County. For example, we have recently opened a crisis/substance abuse stabilization unit (CSU) and we have a well-established crisis mobile team (CMT). The initiation of Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) for law enforcement officers allows for utilization of techniques to recognize and diffuse situations involving persons suffering from behavioral health problems. The County has been a leader in post arrest pre-trial screening and drug/mental health court provisions and has also been a leader in the integration of criminal justice related data. Expanding CIT or similar training to dispatchers, additional law enforcement officers, EMT's, crisis mobile team members and others related to the system can improve the utilization of all elements of service and pre-arrest diversion. Improved communication is needed to assist dispatch systems/first responders and providers with information so that individuals can be identified and guided into the most appropriate and effective services.

Diversion Options-McLean County

As previously mentioned, best utilization and expansion of current resources such as the CSU, CMT, CIT and hospital resources are critical to diverting persons requiring behavioral health support. Other needed resources include 1) establishment of “wrap around” case management systems to help “super-utilizers” get connected and maintain the right resources and 2) expansion of overall opportunities for behavioral health treatment/counseling for the community.

Data Exchange

Data exchange has been one of the most difficult obstacles to surmount for a number of reasons. The most common challenges have been lack of integrated data for either criminal justice, health services or both. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) shared during meetings that it will be issuing guidance specifically addressing the issue of HIPAA rules protecting patient privacy relative to these data sharing initiatives. Some entities have been successful using limited data sets, focusing on the super-utilizers only and asking health care providers to notify them if the persons on the list appear at their facilities. One such linkage is between the McLean County Center for Human Services and McLean County Jail Health Services through the Illinois Department of Human Services datalink system, which allows exchange of information regarding mental health commitments and related data. Data sharing agreements were provided that may serve as templates that could be used by McLean County to address this issue. Justice data capabilities and analysis already in place utilizing the County’s Integrated Electronic Justice System (EJS) provides significant opportunities to advance this cause. Data sharing is also being utilized in linking with homeless information databases.

Funding Opportunities

A number of significant federal funding opportunities for service delivery were reviewed. These included SAMHSA block grants; Medicaid funding; HRSA funds to expand behavioral health services and VA /HUD veterans programs. The White House will be providing a “playbook” incorporating all of the best practices gathered from participants in the workshop to aid jurisdictions throughout the country. This is expected to be available in July. The White House is also going to be promoting this initiative in late June (release date had been planned for the workshop week).

County staff will continue to be the point of contact with the White House during upcoming multi-weekly teleconferences through the end of calendar year 2016, along with the National Association of Counties (NACo) who recently agreed to co-sponsor the initiative and extend it beyond 2016. With the public announcement of the initiative, the County will be expanding participation of departments and staff when appropriate. The County’s Behavioral Health Coordinating Council will act as a mechanism to work with associated community agencies, behavioral health providers and interested parties.

[Additional Info...](#)