



Mental Health Services in County Jails

Update to 2016 Evaluation Report

February 2018

Problems Identified

- **Insufficient Placement Options.** The Department of Human Services' (DHS) hospitals lacked sufficient capacity for persons with serious mental health needs. Many beds at the Anoka-Metro Regional Treatment Center were used for patients who did not need inpatient care, and DHS's community behavioral health hospitals were not fully staffed. This hindered the ability of law enforcement to get persons with mental illness assessed and treated—for example, instead of making an arrest, or following a jail stay.
- **Limited Jail-Based Services.** Jails offered limited psychiatric services, counseling, or case management. State rules for jails did not require mental health assessment within a prescribed period following admission, contrary to professional standards.
- **Limited Training.** Training can help law enforcement officers handle situations involving persons with mental illness, but many officers did not have this training.
- **Defendants Were Jailed While Awaiting Competency Treatment.** Among individuals that a court had deemed incompetent to stand trial, most remained in jail while they waited for the court to commit them to treatment. Such jail stays violated state law.

Changes Implemented

- **Legislature Increased DHS Funding.** The 2016 Legislature appropriated funds to create a facility in St. Peter for persons whose competence must be restored before they can stand trial for criminal charges. This was intended to free up a total of 32 beds at DHS's secure treatment facilities in Anoka and St. Peter. The Legislature also appropriated funding to enable each community behavioral health hospital to operate at full capacity (16 beds).
- **Crisis Response Training Mandated.** The 2017 Legislature required state and local law enforcement agencies to provide all officers with training for intervening in mental health crises (starting July 1, 2018) and appropriated funding for this purpose.

Action Needed

- **Staff DHS Facilities Fully.** Although the Legislature appropriated additional funding to DHS, the agency's mental health hospitals have still operated below capacity. As of late 2017, DHS had filled less than three-fourths of the funded clinical staff positions at these facilities, and about 15 percent of the facilities' beds were unused.
- **Amend Law Regarding Competency Treatment.** We recommend statutory changes so that persons that a court has deemed incompetent to stand trial would not need to go through a separate court commitment process to get into competency treatment.
- **Require Timely Mental Health Assessments.** The Legislature should amend state law so that all inmates jailed for at least 14 days would be required to receive an assessment.
- **Update State Jail Rules.** The Department of Corrections initiated a process to amend these rules to better reflect correctional best practices for persons with mental illness. That process is still underway.