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Justice & Legal
Systems Comm.
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MENTAL HEALTH COURT

What is it?

- A rehabilitative court
- Designed to reduce incarceration for the mentally ill
- Treats the mentally ill for their illness, not *perceived criminology**
- Connects members with services
 - Transportation!
 - Housing!
 - Treatment providers!
 - Medication services!
 - Psychiatric services!

**Perceived criminology*: the notion that criminal behavior is a product of being a bad person, not other social and individualized factors. Reality – the vast majority of mentally ill individuals in the criminal justice system would not be in the system but for the lack of appropriate, coordinated services in the community.

What is needed?

10,000ft view – the ultimate problem fix

- Long-term community services that connect the mentally ill with services that treat their disability along with co-occurring disorders (COD =alc/drug addictions) - Outside of the criminal justice system; not inside. Services are needed that the Courts can tap in to, not have to create to solve problems for individual members of the community ALREADY charged with a crime

On the ground and in the courtroom

- Stable transportation. Allows members to attend court, attend appointments, and pick up medication. Critical to success in the program. Without it, history has proven success is impossible.
- Stable housing. Once a member is admitted into MHC, and if they are receiving services from the right agency, they can be eligible for housing in a therapeutic (non-hospital/ward) environment. Critical to success in the program.
- Treatment providers committed to serving the population in the program (prioritized funding and access)
- COD services that the Court can access immediately to increase bed date availability
- Prioritized psychiatric services that get members into Rx specialists within days, not weeks or months

Important to understand: MHC is currently trying to do what society and government officials have refused to do: fix a public health problem - within a system not originally designed to do so. Under current conditions and without large-scale, long-term community services, MHC is a stop-gap measure (stop the bleeding, fill the gap). Until public health system deficiencies are fixed, the criminal justice system will remain limited in what it can and cannot do to assist individuals arrested and charged for criminal offenses when their *offense* is really being afflicted with a mental illness the public health systems refuse to acknowledge and treat.