

**Criminal Justice Mental Health and Substance
Abuse Reinvestment Grant**

DCF RFA 2021 001

Hanley Center Foundation

Dixie County Addendum



Statement of the Problem

Using previous (non-COVID) year data for juvenile arrests, the committee has determined that after 6 months or less of preparation there would be over two years in which the specialty courts and programs would be addressing the needs of Dixie County youth. Of the 11 juvenile misdemeanor arrests, 9 were eligible for civil citations. Shifting the focus of law enforcement to civil citations should affect at least 2 youth per year, giving a total of at least 4 juveniles impacted by the civil citation efforts. Of the remaining 9 youth arrests, an estimated 6 per year would be served by teen court for a total of 15 youth served by the pre-trial diversion. Other youth would benefit in a non-judicial manner by participating in the program as the peer juries. Law enforcement gave an estimate of 20 calls in a year where juveniles were present. Over two years that would be 40 youth impacted by the Handle With Care protocol. Mental health court would also be available to serve qualifying youth with 3rd degree felonies or lower, potentially serving 10 youth over the two-year period.

Adult arrests for potential 3rd degree felonies or less numbered 240 in 2020. If 10% of those arrested qualify and participate in mental health court, 48 people would be impacted over the two-year period. The addition of youth and adults for mental health court would be approximately 58 people participating in the program over the two-year period.

Activity	Number Impacted
Mental Health Court	50
Teen Court	15
Handle With Care Training	40
Civil Citation Training	4

Based on this information, it is possible that Civil Citations may improve at a greater rate, causing a reduction in teen court participation due to civil citation being the less intensive diversion of the two.

Project Design and Implementation

Additional screenings: Participants in mental health court will be screened for acceptance into the program based on a tool that has yet to be designed but will be based strongly on the Alachua County mental health court screening tool. Participants will also receive a needs assessment screening to determine their needs and ability to meet the program criteria. The exact screening tool has not been determined, but it will target transportation, finances, and family and community supports.

The mental health court and teen court programs both support the position of local law enforcement who would like to see fewer teens being incarcerated and an alternative to incarceration for adults with mental health concerns that are not sufficiently managed by the jail system.

Performance Measures

Performance measures regarding the teen court and mental health court will be collected and reported by the specialty court coordinator on a monthly basis. The reports will be shared with the planning committee and the evaluation team every quarter and the committee will assess progress towards goals

for each program implemented. The program will be assessed on process outcomes (screening results, needs assessment results, program participation) as well as program deliverables. The planning committee, in conjunction with the program leads, will work to overcome any obstacles that reduce the opportunity for program success among participants.

Capability and Experience

Many members of the planning committee will be participating in the program implementation activities, bringing their experience to bear. The school district and county court system have experience working with a teen court program, as the county has participated in such a program in the recent past. The mental health court will be following the model utilized by neighboring Alachua County. Alachua County and Dixie County both use Meridian Behavioral Healthcare as the primary mental health provider. Meridian is an active participant in the Alachua County mental health court, the manager supervising the program for Meridian attends the Dixie County Planning Committee meetings. For the trauma-informed care trainings, the SEDNET Project will be providing that program to the Dixie County School District. This is part of the SEDNET priorities, they have provided the program across Florida for the past ten years. The evaluation of the program will be managed by WellFlorida, who have extensive experience in program evaluation.

The mental health court and teen court will require a specialty court coordinator who will be responsible for overseeing the operation of both diversion programs. They will meet with the participants and stakeholders, monitor client progress, and report back to the committee on the progress of the project.

Evaluation and Sustainability

According to a 2003 study of the Clark County (Wash.) mental health court, participants had significantly more case management, outpatient service days, and medication monitoring after enrollment than before enrollment. Additionally, participants had 68% fewer crisis intervention and 75% inpatient treatment days post-enrollment. This leads us to believe that mental health court participants in Dixie County will also benefit from fewer crisis intervention and inpatient treatment days, thereby reducing the number of individuals committed to a state mental health treatment facility. Based upon Table 14, we will strive to have less than 50% of participants be committed during and for six months after the program.