

## **Eleventh Judicial Circuit's Criminal Mental Health Project**

Miami-Dade County is home to the largest percentage of persons with serious mental illnesses of any urban area in the United States. Approximately 9.1% of the total population in this community (210,000 persons) suffers from a mental illness; yet less than 13% receive treatment. The problem is even more severe in our local jail. On any given day, the Miami-Dade County Jail houses between 800 and 1200 inmates with serious mental illnesses. It has become the largest psychiatric institution in Florida.

The Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida Criminal Mental Health Project (CMHP) serves individuals with serious mental illnesses, who become involved or are at risk of becoming involved with the criminal justice system. CMHP is a more effective and cost-efficient alternative than institutionalization for such individuals. The program has improved public safety, saved critical tax dollars, reduced police and civilian injuries, saved lives, reduced recidivism to jails, and improved access to mental health treatment for persons with mental illnesses. This is accomplished through cooperative linkages established among the judiciary, defense and prosecuting attorneys, local law enforcement agencies, community service providers, and other community representatives. CMHP offers the concept of hope and recovery for individuals with severe mental illnesses that have often been misunderstood and discriminated against. These individuals have the opportunity to achieve successful recovery, community integration, and reduce their recidivism to jail once engaged in treatment, services, and community support.

With assistance from the GAINS Center, through the GAINS Center Summit Conference 2000, the Eleventh Judicial Circuit in and for Miami-Dade County, Florida has begun the process to effectively integrate all of its services to provide "Diversion and Linkage to Comprehensive Care," thereby making jail "the last resort" for individuals suffering from mental illness.

The CMHP includes the following programs:

### **PRE-BOOKING DIVERSION:**

#### **Crisis Intervention Team Policing (CIT)**

CIT officers are uniformed patrol officers who have received special training to respond to crisis calls pertaining to mental illness. As appropriate, individuals are transported to mental health receiving facilities for evaluation, treatment, and referrals. The CMHP offers CIT training to police departments throughout Miami-Dade County.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CIT

- What does a CIT officer do?
- When do I call for a CIT officer?
- What do I do if I have a mental health emergency and need a CIT officer?
- What do I do if I do not have an emergency, but still need help?
- Do I have CIT in my area?
- How can I get more information about CIT?

### What does a CIT officer do?

CIT officers respond to crisis calls involving possible mental health issues. They evaluate and de-escalate potentially volatile situations and as necessary transport individuals suffering from a mental illness to community-based facilities for evaluation, treatment, and referrals, instead of subjecting them to immediate arrest when appropriate.

### When do I call for a CIT officer?

It is appropriate to call for a CIT officer when you suspect there is an immediate mental health situation.

### What do I do if I have a mental health emergency and need a CIT officer?

In the event of an emergency, please call 911, state the emergency involves a person with possible mental illness, and request a CIT officer respond to the scene. If your community does not currently have a CIT program implemented, call 911 and inform the dispatcher the emergency involves someone with possible mental illness.

### What do I do if I do not have an emergency, but still need help?

If this is not an emergency, you can call 211 for assistance with social services needs.

### Do I have CIT in my area?

To date, the following police departments have received CIT training: City of Miami, North Miami, Miami Beach, Aventura, Miami-Dade County, South Miami, Pinecrest, Key Biscayne, North Miami Beach, Surfside, Miami Shores, Florida International University Police, Hialeah, Sunny Isles, Coral Gables, Opalocka, Homestead, Sweetwater, Miami Shores, Miami-Dade School Police, Miami-Dade Corrections & Rehabilitation Department.

Other organizations and police-dispatch units have also received CIT training. Please contact CMHP for further information.

### How can I get more information about CIT?

If this is not an emergency and you would like more detailed information about CIT in your area please contact Cindy Schwartz (305) 548-5319 Monday-Friday 9AM to 5PM, or email [cischwartz@jud11.flcourts.org](mailto:cischwartz@jud11.flcourts.org).

**POST-BOOKING DIVERSION:  
County Court Jail Diversion Program**

Within 24-48 hours of arriving at the jail, eligible misdemeanor defendants with mental illness are diverted to mental health facilities for appropriate treatment.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JAIL DIVERSION  
PROGRAM**

*How does the Jail Diversion Program work?*

*Who is eligible for the Jail Diversion Program?*

*How are eligible individuals screened?*

*How can I get more information about the Jail Diversion Program?*

*How does the Jail Diversion Program work?*

A defendant meeting program criteria is transferred out of jail to a mental health facility within 24-48 hours of an arrest for necessary treatment. Within 24 hours of an arrest, the jail psychiatrist determines if a defendant meets criteria for an evaluation for involuntary hospitalization. If so, the case is expeditiously placed before one of the two Jail Division judges to determine if the defendant should be transported to a mental health crisis receiving facility. Individuals diverted for crisis stabilization are monitored by the Court Case Management Specialist who works with the CMHP to ensure that diverted individuals receive adequate services and aftercare planning. Diverted individuals are also monitored by staff from the Administrative Office of the Courts Mental Health Administrators Office, which is responsible for reporting to the Judiciary and arranging all mental health evaluation, treatment, and monitoring services.

Based on the severity of the charges and the defendant's criminal and mental health history, a determination is made in consultation with the State Attorney's Office and the defense counsel whether or not to dismiss charges upon the client's stabilization and completion of a discharge plan. If it is determined at discharge that the defendant requires greater supervision, the defendant is transported back to court by the Department of Corrections where the court decides the appropriate outcome and conditions for release. As part of the Project, probation officers are specially trained to handle defendants with mental illnesses. When appropriate, defendants are placed on probation with these particular probation officers who work to keep the defendant compliant with treatment. Monitoring a defendant on a misdemeanor charge ranges from six months to a year. Failure of a defendant to comply with treatment may result in the initiation of Baker Act proceedings or on rare occasions, incarceration. In cases where it has been determined that the defendant does not need to return to court, the charges are dismissed after the court receives a discharge summary from the receiving facility, and the defendant agrees to participate in the Jail Diversion Program. The defendant is then referred to a community-based treatment program for ongoing treatment.

Who is eligible for the Jail Diversion Program?

Eligible individuals must have pending misdemeanor charges, be booked into the jail, and meet criteria for involuntary psychiatric examination based on Florida Statutes. Individuals arrested on felony charges are not eligible at this time.

How are eligible individuals screened?

Eligible individuals are screened for the program at the jail by correctional health staff.

How can I get more information about the Jail Diversion Program?

Contact Cindy Schwartz (305) 548-5319 Monday-Friday 9AM to 5PM, or email [cischwartz@jud11.flcourts.org](mailto:cischwartz@jud11.flcourts.org) for more information on the Jail Diversion Program.

**COURT CASE MANAGEMENT:**

Case Managers assigned to the Post-Booking Jail Diversion Program by the Florida Department of Children and Families facilitate discharge and aftercare planning for program clients diverted to mental health facilities from jail. In addition, peer specialists employed by the CMHP and social work students completing university practicum placements are assigned to Post-Booking Jail Diversion clients after discharge from mental health facilities to improve engagement into the program and community mental health system.

**COMPREHENSIVE CARE PROGRAM:**

- ❖ **Transition Program:** The Court utilizes an assessment tool for clients in the Post-Booking Jail Diversion Program in an effort to meet individual needs when determining appropriate aftercare.
- ❖ **Housing Program:** The Court works closely with the Homeless Trust and other community housing organizations to ensure that adequate housing is available for program clients.
- ❖ **ID Program:** The Court collaborates with Camillus House to offer program clients identification cards.
- ❖ **Entitlements Program:** The Court collaborates with the local Social Security Administration Office to facilitate and expedite program clients' access to benefits.
- ❖ **Contingency Funds:** Funds are available for indigent program clients for housing and medication needs through the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Jail Diversion Expansion Program.

**ALF QUALITY OF CARE PROGRAM:**

CMHP established an Assisted Living Facility (ALF) referral program in order to improve the access to and the quality of care received at ALFs in Miami-Dade County. ALFs participating in this program have agreed to comport themselves to the Court's standards of care and to avail themselves to a monitoring system by a team of Court appointed professionals.

**RESEARCH PROGRAM:**

CMHP continuously leads evaluation efforts to determine recidivism, cost analysis, program effectiveness, and other areas of interest to the Project.

**CONTACTS:**

For additional information regarding the CMHP, contact the following individuals:

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