



Bridges Program

Connecting Colorado's Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems



BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

A Panel Discussion



Heather
Nakamura



Sara
Roe



Jennifer
Turner



Joe
Unnerstall



Deborah
Wilson-Porras

Connecting Colorado's Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems

Vision

All individuals within the criminal justice system are treated fairly and humanely, regardless of their mental health and co-occurring challenges.



Connecting Colorado's Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems


Mission

To promote positive outcomes for individuals living with mental health conditions who encounter criminal justice involvement by fostering collaboration between both systems.



Senate Bill 18-251

The purpose of the program is to identify and dedicate local behavioral health professionals as court liaisons (court liaisons) in each state judicial district to facilitate communication and collaboration among judicial, health care, and behavioral health systems.



Senate Bill 18-251

To address an increasing need for possible out-of-custody competency evaluations and restoration services due to an overwhelmingly large number of in-custody individuals sitting for months or longer awaiting services from CMHIP.



Senate Bill 18-251

To promote positive outcomes for Coloradans living with mental health conditions who encounter criminal justice involvement by fostering collaboration between both systems.



Custody to Community

Support individuals who are determined not to be a risk to community safety toward successful engagement in community-based services.



Stop the “Revolving Door”

Address deeper mental health needs and related social considerations of health toward long-term stability, reducing repeated involvement in the criminal justice system.



Timely & Appropriate

Identify meaningful responses to a participant’s mental health, competency, and other service needs and provide advocacy to ensure services are timely, appropriate, and accessible.

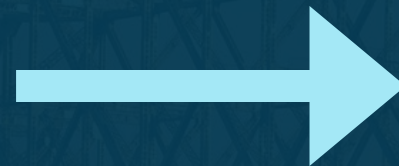


THE NEED

The majority of Coloradans with mental illness do not receive mental health services, with many receiving services only through entering the justice system.



Incarceration vs. Medical Care



Likelihood of incarceration vs. hospitalization:
4 to 1

People with serious mental illness are twice as likely to be arrested again within a year of leaving prison.



Connecting Services



As liaisons, we speak directly with participants to determine needs and continue assessing those needs for the duration of the case.



We send in court reports as necessary to update the court in relation to competency matters/services.



We help locate requested or required services and connect the participant with those services.



We support our participants to the degree they want, their contact with Bridges is voluntary.



What we don't do:

1

Supervise as if we were Probation or Pre-Trial services. We are a support to the participants, not another compliance monitor.

2

Force services into place. We allow the participant to be their own expert when it comes to what would benefit them.

3

Track participants 24/7. If they stop contacting and are not reachable at their provided phone numbers or contact info, we update the court and remain open just in case they need help later.



BRIDGES FAST FACTS

85%

In Fiscal Year 2021, 85% of judicial officers with criminal dockets made referrals to the program.

82%

Approximately 82% of Bridges Program cases are competency related and the remaining 18% are serving individuals with general mental health challenges but for whom competency has not been raised.

1,100

With the support of their liaison, participants on bond are connected to approximately 1,100 community-based services. 47% of the services are related to behavioral health and the remaining 53% are other support services (housing, social support programs and healthcare).



Bridging the Gaps

“There is something intensely dramatic and fanciful in the appeal of the bridge to all classes of people, under all conditions of nature. All traffic converges and concentrates on the bridges. They become a daily necessity and a familiar benefactor, giving convenient passage over some natural obstruction.”

- Walter Kidney, 1999





Bridges Program

Connecting Colorado's Criminal Justice and Mental Health Systems



Thank You!

Heather Nakamura Heather.Nakamura@Judicial.State.CO.us

Sara Roe Sara.Roe@NorthRange.org

Jennifer Turner Jennifer.Turner@Judicial.State.CO.us

Joe Unnerstall Joe.Unnerstall@NorthRange.org

Deborah Wilson-Porras Deborah.Wilson@NorthRange.org

