ASSESS, PLAN, IDENTIFY, COORDINATE (APIC)

Policy makers in Maine and around the country face the serious challenge of addressing the needs of people with mental illness involved in the criminal justice system. There are a number of strategies that can be used to ensure a successful transition from jail. These reentry strategies gauge inmates’ needs and connect them to appropriate services. The following is a description of a type of reentry strategy which is considered a best practice approach by the GAINS Center, which works to help states develop collaboration among criminal justice, substance abuse and mental health systems.

Assess, Plan, Identify, Coordinate (APIC)

APIC is a transitional planning tool for inmates with co-occurring mental health and substance-abuse disorders which was developed using the results of multi-site studies of jail mental health programs as guidance. This four step tool integrates the mental health, criminal justice, and substance-abuse treatment systems. Even those inmates who are incarcerated for very short periods (72 hours or less) can benefit from the tool. Throughout the process, inmate feedback and involvement is necessary in order to create the most appropriate transition plan.

Assessing

The inmate’s psychosocial, behavioral, and medical needs and strengths, as well as public safety risk of the inmate includes gathering all useful information that is necessary to create a transition plan. The inmate’s ability and willingness to pay for mental health services also need to be considered, as well as any special needs such as cultural identity, primary language, gender and age.

Developing a treatment plan which addresses an inmate’s short and long term needs includes connecting the inmate with appropriate services, involving family members in planning process, and initiating benefit applications/reinstatements. It also includes ensuring the inmate is on proper medication, has proper clothing, food, housing and resources to obtain adequate nutrition, transportation to appointments, and has plans for child care if needed.

Identifying

Community and correctional programs for post-release services includes locating specific community resources and forwarding the discharge summary to the appropriate provider. This step includes ensuring that the inmate has treatment and support services that are appropriate for his/her level of disability, motivation for change, and availability of resources, and also that his/her belongings are returned upon release.

Coordinating

Includes supporting a case manager to act as a boundary spanner. The inmate, jail provider, and community agency cooperatively assign the case to community treatment agency, and that the contact information for the person responsible for care of the inmate between release and follow-up appointment is communicated. This step includes insuring that the inmate knows the details regarding his/her first follow-up appointment, and knows who to contact if there are problems or if an appointment needs to be changed.