

**The Gulf Coast Center**  
***Texas Partners in Crisis Jail Diversion Task Force***  
**DIVERSION ACTION PLAN**

Original Submission: February, 2005

Status Update: January, 2006

The Gulf Coast Center (“Center”) and the “Texas Partners in Crisis” Jail Diversion Task Force submitted their Diversion Action Plan in February, 2005 in response to the community needs of Galveston and Brazoria Counties. The first “Texas Partners in Crisis” Jail Diversion Task Force meeting was held in September 2002. Community leaders from Galveston and Brazoria Counties; along with representatives from the Center, judiciary, law enforcement, probation, advocacy groups, psychiatry, hospital administration and family members were included in the membership. The task force has continued to meet on a regular, on-going basis since that time; working towards the successful implementation of the goals and action steps outlined in the plan; addressing and adapting changes as necessary. The Center submits this status update of the plan.

**Diversion Action Plan Goals, and Action Steps and Status**

- Development of a common shared database

Develop a database that shares information on individuals with mental illness who are impacted by the University of Texas Medical Branch of Galveston (“UTMB”), law enforcement, jails, juvenile justice centers, and Center. Through an automated information system, jails and juvenile detention centers can electronically transfer their census and pertinent data, on a daily/weekly basis to mental health (“MH”) providers in the area. This data will be very important in assisting with continuity of care, and in the electronic matching of jail and detention records with the Department of State Health Services (“DSHS”) CARE data system. One of the focuses of this database will be to provide early and on-going identification of consumers in the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Action Steps:

- Step 1: Develop a multi-agency “Release of Information” form that will be used to share data between systems.
- Step 2: Review and approval of release form by all legal departments involved prior to implementation.
- Step 3: Develop a standardized data collection form that will be used in both counties.
- Step 4: Coordinate the information systems of all the involved entities for common data collection capabilities.

Action Status:

- Step 1: Completed May 2005
- Step 2: Completed May 2005
- Step 3: Completed August 2005
- Step 4: A HRSA Community Access Grant was awarded to the Center in November 2005; and implementation of the grant’s planned program initiated December, 2005. The acquisition of planned computer software and equipment to facilitate Action Step #4 will be acquired upon receipt of HRSA approval of MIS plan. The grant and proposed program includes outreach teams and regional case managers. Additionally, in support of this grant and

proposed program, Jail Liaison staff will be assigned to both County Jails. Unfortunately, Federal legislation passed in December 2005 eliminated the second year funding for the HRSA Community Access Grant. Despite this set back, the Center and others are committed to continue support of the goals and activities of the project; and will seek replacement funding.

Scheduled date of completion: February, 2006

Primary Responsible(s): Center, HRSA Implementation Team

- Mobile Crisis Unit

Provide mobile crisis units (one in Galveston County and one in Brazoria County) of psychiatric nurses/medical personnel/social workers who will address the psychiatric/medication needs of individuals who miss medication appointments or are in crisis. A major focus of this unit is a pre-booking strategy to divert consumers prior to a disturbance/incident, resulting in an arrest or detention.

Action Steps:

- Step 1: Increase the use of the news media to inform the public of the mental health crisis in our counties.
- Step 2: Explore any and all funding sources including, private foundations, County Commissioner's Court, individual city funds, and UTMB.
- Step 3: Submit a formal proposal for the initial start-up and annual maintenance of the units.

Action Status:

- Step 1: On-going effort by all systems and individuals affected by the crisis continues. Total community news stories published to date total six (6) – May, 2005 (1); October, 2005 (1); November, 2005 (2); December, 2005 (1); January, 2006 (1).  
Scheduled date of completion: on-going  
Primary Responsible(s): *Texas Partners in Crisis Jail Diversion Task Force*
- Step 2: On-going search for funding sources is continuing.  
Scheduled date of completion: on-going  
Primary Responsible(s): *Texas Partners in Crisis Jail Diversion Task Force*
- Step 3: Once identified, completion and submission of proposal(s) to identified funding source(s) will be finalized. As of this date, available funding opportunities have been limited. Efforts are on-going to locate a potential funding source.  
Scheduled date of completion: August, 2006  
Primary Responsible(s): Galveston County Sheriff's Department, UTMB

- Develop and expand coordination between Juvenile Justice and Mental Health service providers

Develop Mental Health teams at the Juvenile Justice detention/boot camp sites to provide crisis screening and assessment for inpatient hospitalization for juveniles in their care. Inpatient hospitalization admission is determined by the assessment of the attending psychiatrist and the criteria addressed in the Texas Mental Health Code. An after hours response team will also be available by telephone to conduct crisis screenings in the evenings and on weekends. Transportation of juveniles to a hospital (who are in the care of Juvenile Justice), will be done by Juvenile Justice Officers. Texas Youth Commission ("TYC") /Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments ("TCOOMMI") will make referrals to the Center to arrange continuity of care for juveniles being discharged from TYC. Local Juvenile Justice Departments (MH teams) will provide

on-site mental health screening and mental health services or refer families (with children on probation) to the Center or an appropriate mental health provider. Wraparound services provided to children/adolescents at the Center, will involve extensive collateral involvement from all juvenile serving agencies.

Action Steps:

- Step 1: Develop mental health teams comprised of licensed mental health professionals to be located at the Galveston County Juvenile Justice and Brazoria County Juvenile Justice sites.
- Step 2: Wraparound services for eligible children/adolescents served by the Center will be provided.

Action Status:

- Step 1: Galveston County Juvenile Justice has an on-site MH Team (Ph.D. and master level therapists), that is funded through Juvenile Justice, and provide on-going screening, assessment, and treatment for the juveniles that are detained in their facility. They determine the need for inpatient hospitalization for the juveniles there and make the appropriate recommendations. Mental Health Deputies or Juvenile Justice personnel provide the transportation to the hospital for the juvenile. If further mental health treatment is needed, following the hospitalization, treatment is provided by the MH Team at the Juvenile Justice facility or parents/ legally authorized representatives (“LAR”) are referred to the Center’s MH Children’s Services or to a mental health provider of their choice. At this time, the Brazoria County Juvenile Justice does not have an on-site MH team and relies upon Center staff to provide the screening and assessment of juveniles in detention there. The develop of an on-site MH Team at the Brazoria County Juvenile Justice sites remains a priority; and plans for implementation continue.

Scheduled date of completion: May, 2006 (Brazoria County)

Primary Responsible(s): Galveston and Brazoria County Juvenile Justice

- Step 2: The Center’s MH Children’s Services is continuing its reorganization so as to assure the implementation of this planned action step; and is on schedule for completion by planned date of completion

Scheduled date of completion: February, 2006

Primary Responsible(s): Center

• Safe Haven/Assisted Living Housing

Obtain safe, decent and supervised housing for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. These individuals would also have a history of homelessness with possible co-occurring issues of substance abuse and incarceration. This low demand emergency shelter, located in Galveston County, would be staffed, on a 24 hour basis, by caseworkers and a nurse. A physician would be available several hours a week for in-person and “on call” psychiatric services. Capacity of the Safe Haven would be limited to 25 residents at any one time. The housing is directly linked to the mental health/substance abuse services of the individual. Housing is crucial for helping individuals with mental illness maintain stability and avoid involvement with the criminal justice system.

Action Steps:

- Step 1: Locate a suitable building (needed prior to submitting proposal)
- Step 2: Submit proposal to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (“TDHCA”) Emergency Shelter Grant

Step 3: Obtain funding and begin the start-up of the Safe Haven.

Action Status:

- Step 1: The Center identified a preliminary site to be used for initial funding proposals – 5825 Emmett F. Lowry, Texas City, Galveston County. Though the facility is limited in the available space for beds (eight maximum); the facility is readily available, accessible, and known to the community. The Center will continue to search for other possible locations.  
Scheduled date of completion: on-going  
Primary Responsible(s): Center
- Step 2: In lieu of a TDHCA Emergency Shelter Grant, the Center – as a part of the Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition’s 2005 Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) Continuum of Care submission – included a project request for HUD Supportive Housing funds for a Safe Haven. The Continuum of Care request was submitted June 2005. The project was ranked #1 priority; but unfortunately we were notified in December 2005 that the project was not funded. The Center will review the original request; and as possible resubmit the request in the 2006 HUD Continuum of Care request. Additionally, the Center is continuing to review and evaluate other funding opportunities; including a possible TDHCA Emergency Shelter Grant.  
Scheduled date of completion: on-going  
Primary Responsible(s): Center
- Step 3: Start up delayed pending funding.  
Scheduled date of completion: Upon funding  
Primary Responsible(s): Center

• Expansion of UTMB Psychiatric Bed Capacity

University of Texas Medical Branch will increase the psychiatric bed capacity, including the development of a psychiatric ICU. UTMB currently has a 42 psychiatric bed capacity. The Center’s Community Regional Hospital (contracted through UTMB) currently has a 20 psychiatric bed capacity. Community mental health inpatient treatment is woefully inadequate and is another critical need in diverting individuals from involvement with law enforcement.

Action Steps:

- Step 1: Exploration of all options for increase of local psychiatric bed capacity, including the possible use of contracted State Mental Health Hospital Funds (“SMHF”) and the issues related to Austin State Hospital as a safety net.

Action Status:

- Step 1: During State Fiscal Year 2006, the Center’s annual allocation of SMHF funds was decreased over 25%; though utilization and need have shown no decrease over the past four years. Per State Contract; should the Center exceed the SMHF allocation by its utilization, the Center could face significant fines and penalties. The Center is continuing to review options to expand psychiatric bed capacity; and still be in compliance with State contract requirements and allocations. The Center is continuing to review options as planned; and the completion date for the action step is on schedule for the planned completion date.  
Scheduled date of completion: February, 2006  
Primary Responsible(s): Center, UTMB

- Access to Psychiatric Medication

Develop a viable program that will allow consumers greater access to psychiatrists and psychiatric medications. The use of telemedicine in jails/detention centers can assist in allowing psychiatric sessions to take place in rural or hard to reach areas of the counties. Funds for the purchase and distribution of psychiatric medication will be a key piece in the stabilization of symptoms and reduction in relapse.

Action Steps:

Step 1: Obtain a state waiver to allow the Center to purchase prescribed consumer psychiatric medications under the Federal 340B purchasing program (Public Health Services Act).

Action Status:

Step 1: Upon review, the Center determined that the original planned action of the purchase of prescribed consumer psychiatric medications under the Federal 340B purchasing program was not the best option at this time. As access to psychiatric medications is a critical treatment element; over the past twelve months, the Center has taken the following action to expand and improve greater access to psychiatrist and prescribed psychiatric medications:

- Implemented telemedicine in the Brazoria County Jail
- Submitted and was awarded requests for additional funding for medications; including requests to the HOGG Foundation, Kempner Funds, and Texas Council on Offenders with Medical and Mental Impairments (“TCOOMMI”) Jail Diversion Funds
- Improved direct assistance to consumers in applying for available benefits; including SSI, SSDI, Medicare, Patient Assistance Programs, Medication Samples – to assist in obtaining medications and/or covering costs
- Restructured and reorganized adult and child Mental Health Outpatient Clinics, to improve and expand services, hours of operation, and accessibility
- Revised psychiatric medication procedures and guidelines
- Participate in the East Texas Behavioral Healthcare Network (“ETBHN”) pharmacy program; which provided effective and efficient pharmacy services, and assured best cost value of medications – maximizing limited resources
- Submitted a GAINS Jail Diversion Grant in May 2005; but the request was not awarded. The request included medication and psychiatric physician coverage; including telemedicine services.
- HRSA Community Access Grant awarded to the Center in November 2005; and implementation of the grant’s planned program initiated December, 2005. The planned program includes funds for psychiatric medications and psychiatric physician services; including the expansion of telemedicine service opportunities in the local jails and other key community resources. Program and staffing services implementation began in January 2006. Unfortunately, Federal legislation passed in December 2005 eliminated the second year funding for the HRSA Community Access Grant. Despite this set back, the Center and others are committed to continue support of the goals and activities of the project; and will seek replacement funding.

The Center and Task Force members will continue looking for opportunities to enhance and expand consumer access to psychiatric medications and physicians.

Scheduled date of completion: on-going

Primary Responsible(s): Center, UTMB

- Peace Officer Training

Provide increased mental health training to newly commissioned police officers as well as continued mental health in-service to officers already on the force. Specialized training to dispatchers will enable call takers to determine if the call involves a person with mental illness. This training combined with officer training can significantly reduce the time between the call for service and the officer arrival at the scene and to decrease the average time that people with mental illness spend in police custody.

Action Steps:

- Step 1: Galveston County Sheriff's Department will provide on-going mental health training for officers. Training requires attending a 2 day class and will be offered 2 to 3 times a year. All police chiefs in the counties will be notified of the class and encouraged to send officers from their department.
- Step 2: Request Texas lawmaker's to require all Texas police officers to participate in on-going mental health training on a biennium basis.

Action Status:

- Step 1: Training opportunities continued to be offered as planned; with notices and information regularly distributed on scheduled trainings. In further support of the planned action step, as necessary stipends are made available to local police departments to encourage and facilitate attendance.  
Scheduled date of completion: on-going  
Primary Responsible(s): Galveston County Sheriff's Department, Gulf Coast NAMI, Center
- Step 2: Recommended requirement continues to be presented to Texas lawmakers and officials; and encouraged for approval.  
Scheduled date of completion: on-going  
Primary Responsible(s): Galveston County Sheriff's Department, Gulf Coast NAMI, Center

- Development of a Mental Health Court System

Provide Mental Health court liaisons/caseworkers to assist with courts, jails, detention centers, and mental health providers in assessing needs, advocating, and determining resources available to individuals who have been incarcerated for non-violent misdemeanors and transitioning them to the appropriate services in their community. TCOOMMI staff will ensure continued mental health and support services for referred parolees. Adult mental health probation officers would also provide follow-up and report to the court on their probationers. Civil outpatient commitments will also be strengthened and utilized to enforce compliance with mental health treatment.

Action Steps:

- Step 1: Research information on mental health courts and how they are structured and organized.
- Step 2: Establish mental health courts in Galveston and Brazoria Counties.
- Step 3: Recruit and train mental health court liaisons/caseworkers for both counties. These individuals would coordinate efforts and gather information between the courts, DA's office, adult probation, TCOOMMI and Gulf Coast Center.

Action Status:

- Step 1: The planned action continues to be a priority and actively pursued; and continues to be researched for implementation in both counties.  
Scheduled date of completion: on-going  
Primary Responsible(s): Galveston and Brazoria County DA, Galveston County Probate Judge
- Step 2: Brazoria County has created a mental health court as planned. This court provides an alternative for individuals who are being released from jail and who will remain on probation. Mental health treatment and compliance with medications are stipulations of the probation. The planned action continues to be a priority and actively pursued in Galveston County; but implementation has been delayed due to limited funding, community changes, and other limited resources  
Scheduled date of completion: May 2006 (Galveston County)  
Primary Responsible(s): Galveston and Brazoria County DA, Galveston County Probate Judge
- Step 3: Brazoria County has created a mental health court as planned; and continues to implement the planned action. The planned action continues to be a priority and actively pursued in Galveston County; but implementation has been delayed due to limited funding, community changes, and other limited resources. Recruit and training will be implemented and completed within 90 days of establishment  
Scheduled date of completion: August 2006 (Galveston County)  
Primary Responsible(s): Galveston and Brazoria County DA, Galveston County Probate Judge

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G. Michael Winburn, Executive Director  
The Gulf Coast Center

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Date

*Distribution:*

Texas Partners in Crisis Jail Diversion Task Force  
Gulf Coast Center's Board of Trustees January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006