

Substance Misuse Intervention Proposal for Harrison County

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Background: A report produced in 2021 analyzing substance misuse in Panola, Harrison, and Gregg counties emphasized the need for intervention on substance misuse in the area. We decided to create a therapeutic community program to be implemented in the Harrison County Jail to target the specific need of the inmates with substance charges and Harrison County as a whole. Our approach was guided by the Community Partnership Model.

Agenda Building: The Department of Justice and the Correctional system in Texas will have ultimate power over building the agenda to address the decision-making and priorities of the program. The decision-making body of the TC program will be comprised of parole officers, social workers, and court officers. Representation of group members will be headed by people in the community with political and financial power as well as an advocate for the wants and needs of the inmates.

Structure: The structure of the TC program will consist of a board in which members will be comprised of the program director, clinical supervisor, senior level counselors and a program counselor with experience in the TC program. The board members will decide on funding and staffing and will be guided by the bylaws of the program. These bylaws will also cover program objectives and membership requirements. The primary objective of this program is to reduce substance misuse in Harrison County and lower recidivism for offenders with drug charges.

Analysis: The poverty rate in Harrison county in 2021 was 17.4% while the national poverty rate was only 11.6%. We decided a free program implemented in the jail would provide affordable access to help for a struggling community.

The community identified concerns about their own faith-based stigma around substance misuse and its comorbidity to mental illness. While the community has access to addiction counseling and medication assisted treatment, there is currently no resource available to target recidivism for inmates in Harrison County with drug charges. Alternative solutions to address the presented issues include diversion programs, community-based corrections, and drug courts. However, these methods are not supported by evidence that suggests they would be effective in this community.

Ownership: Solution-focused problem solvers take action in the community. In our TC program, members of the community will be called upon to display ownership by producing an environment which models prosocial behaviors for the inmates to mimic upon release. Businesses will receive incentive for hiring members of the program. Long-term goal achievement will be prioritized over short-term results of success. The responsibility of the presenting problem will be shared amongst the community.

Technology: Nationally, 41% of individuals with drug charges are reincarcerated compared to only 30% of those who completed a TC program. Rehabilitation is more cost-effective than incarceration.

Program details-

- Court/jail mandated
- Mandatory weekly TC meetings post-release
- Access to therapy, group therapy, parenting classes, relapse prevention efforts, self-help groups (AA, NA, etc.)
- Provides opportunities for field placements for BSW and MSW students at East Texas Baptist Univ. in Harrison County
- The TC members will have jobs in the jail (scribe, unit clerk, logician, laundry, etc) to promote accountability
- Funding will come from Therapeutic Communities of America, TDCJ, local establishments, etc.
- There will be a zero-tolerance policy for breaking rules, fighting, etc.
- The TC program will expand its influence beyond the walls of the jail.

Stewardship: This program will produce meaningful relationships throughout the community ensuring sustainability. The TC program leadership will be unbiased, diverse, well-trained, and experienced in skill-development. Termination of start-up help by the social worker will be conducted when the program and members are self-sustaining and there is a stable environment being maintained for the TC members, staff, and the community.