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Data Download



County-Funded Treatment Services for Mentally Ill Offenders Under Community-Based Corrections Supervision

In a previous *Data Download*, we reported that about 27% of offenders under CBC field supervision and 42.6% of offenders in residential facilities are in need of mental health treatment services. In addition, more than 35% of offenders needing mental health treatment are not receiving services.

Public funding for mental health treatment services in Iowa is administered by each of the state's 99 counties. Earlier this year, the Durrant/PBA consulting group conducted a statewide survey of each district department of correctional services, regarding the availability of county-funded mental health services for offenders. The survey was conducted between December 26, 2007 and January 25, 2008. The results indicate that while 97% of the counties will pay for probationer treatment and 88% will pay for parolee treatment, only 33% will pay for work release offender treatment and only 55% will pay for treatment for offenders in residential facilities. This disparity is due to the fact that some counties contend that offenders who are in residential facilities are under the control of the Department of Corrections and therefore DOC should pay for their treatment services.

The survey found that ten counties do not have a mental health office. In addition, 25 counties do not have a mental health professional who can prescribe medications. So, offenders must then travel to a neighboring county to receive services, and the lack of transportation may prohibit access to treatment for some. When the counties do pay for treatment services, the offender must qualify as a county resident in order to access that assistance.

Depending on the county, the range of time on a waiting list for a medication appointment is 4-10 weeks, with an average waiting period of six weeks. For an unstable offender needing services, that delay could prove to be too long.

The availability of co-occurring disorders treatment for offenders who have a mental illness and chemical dependency (8.6% of probationers and parolees and 14.3% of offenders in residential facilities) is even more limited. Just over half - 53 - of Iowa's counties provide co-occurring disorder treatment.

As you can see, there are significant gaps in county-funded mental health services for CBC supervised offenders. But before these gaps can be addressed, it was necessary that they first be clearly identified. This survey is a good start.

The mission of the Iowa Department of Corrections is to:
Protect the Public, the Employees, and the Offenders from Victimization.