



Mental Health Services in all Family Justice Centers Initiative

The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) is partnering with NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H), under the ThriveNYC initiative, to station mental health teams, consisting of a full-time therapist, part-time psychiatrist and full-time administrative staff support member at the City's five Family Justice Centers (FJC). The goal of the initiative is to ensure that the Family Justice Center's holistic services approach includes long-term, trauma-informed counseling services in order to ensure that all of a victim's needs, physical and emotional, are being addressed. This initiative builds upon the successful mental health counseling program launched at the Bronx Family Justice Center with the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry. This program has been operational since 2014 and has been very successful in assisting victims of domestic violence at the Bronx FJC with their long-term emotional needs. The Columbia University Department of Psychiatry has agreed to provide training, technical assistance and support to the H+H teams hired to staff the Family Justice Centers.

According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene report released in 2008 on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Against Women in New York City, approximately 30% of adult women who experience IPV reported "serious psychological distress," as opposed to 7% of women who reported no experience of IPV. In addition, victims of intimate partner violence have significantly higher rates of adverse mental health outcomes. According to the 2010 Centers for Disease and Control National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey, the prevalence of adverse mental health outcomes was significantly higher among women with a history of physical violence by an intimate partner; specifically, they experience higher rates of poor mental health (3.4 for victims vs. 1.1 for non-victims) and difficulty sleeping (37.7 for victims vs. 21 for non-victims). Despite the impact IPV has on an individual's mental health, a 2014 survey conducted by OCDV and Columbia Presbyterian of NYC Family Justice Center (FJC) staff revealed that 40% of counselors and case managers at the FJCs responded that they did not know where to refer their clients for mental health services, and many identified that if they did make a referral, waiting lists were long or it was not possible for their clients to get treatment.

Program Overview

OCDV operates the New York City Family Justice Centers (FJCs), which provide comprehensive social service, civil legal and criminal justice assistance for survivors of intimate partner violence, elder abuse and sex trafficking in all five boroughs. The FJCs are safe, caring environments that provide one-stop services and support. Key City agencies, community, social and civil legal services providers, and District Attorney's Offices are located on-site at the FJCs to make it easier for survivors to get help. Services are free and confidential. City-contracted agencies and/or community-based organizations located at the FJC provide services to the clients. Clients participate in an intake screening to determine their service needs and appropriate referrals are made to case managers who provide assistance to the client.

Depending on specific needs, the client may be referred to additional services providers at the FJCs or within the community. Clients can obtain a wide-range of services at the FJCs, including: safety planning, risk assessment, counseling, civil legal assistance (including family, immigration and matrimonial), public benefits, and housing and shelter. Clients can also meet with a district attorney or a police officer on site. In 2016, the FJCs assisted almost 25,000 clients through more than 62,000 visits.

The New York City Family Justice Center's H+H psychiatric team at the Family Justice Centers (FJC) consists of a psychiatrist and psychotherapist (psychologist or clinical social worker), to provide psychiatric assessment, stabilization, and brief psychotherapy. If longer term or more complicated treatment is required, a referral would be made to the affiliated HHC hospital or other community based service. Each program at a Family Justice Center is affiliated and supervised by a Department of Psychiatry at an HHC facility of that borough. That Department is responsible for the oversight and supervision of treatment services and staffing. It is recommended that psychiatric staff at the Family Justice Center have routine contact and involvement with other Department staff and activities.

The program will also be supported by assistant program managers assigned to each FJC program. The assistant program managers will assist in client screening, scheduling appointments, data collection, client follow up, coordination with the affiliated HHC hospital and other program activities.

Each client seen by the mental health team at the Family Justice Center would be registered as a patient of the affiliated HHC facility and a medical record would be opened for each client. The physician and clinician would document each contact in the medical record as per ambulatory care documentation standards. Services provided include: psychiatric assessment, medication stabilization, short-term psychotherapy (trauma informed, cognitive oriented), and referral for longer term or more intensive treatment if indicated.

The program is currently operating at the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn FJCs. The program should be operational at the Staten Island FJC by the end of October 2017.

Program Output and Outcome Measures

The FJC mental health program collects the following data on program outputs:

1. Number of Clients Assisted by Mental Health Professionals at NYC Family Justice Centers: The program will provide services to 1,000 FJC clients annually.

Outcome Measures

OCDV, H+H and Columbia University have been focused on launching the program across all five Family Justice Centers and have not yet discussed appropriate outcome measures. Upon the launch of the project at the Staten Island FJC, we will discuss the development of appropriate outcome measures.

If you have any research or evaluation questions that you would like to propose for this initiative, please submit a proposal following the instructions below and also on the ThriveNYC Investigator's Hub website.

Proposals of no more than 5 pages, single spaced, should include:

- Proposed specific aims and hypotheses
- Approach and methodology
- Investigative team
- Resources available to conduct study and resources requested
- Requests/Assumptions about collaboration with DOHMH
- Human Subjects Protection
- Proposed Budget

Researchers will be required to obtain their own funding and will be provided with consultation support and facilitation from the Center for Innovation in Mental Health at the City University of New York School of Public Health. Data transfer and data use agreements will be established prior to any data transfer. Proposals and questions should be submitted to: cimh@sph.cuny.edu. Proposals are reviewed on a rolling basis.