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# Capitol Monitor

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## OhioMHAS Awards Funds to Projects Serving Non-Violent Offenders

Using administrative savings achieved from the consolidation of state-funded agencies for mental health and addiction services under a single umbrella, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) Thursday announced the first round of funding for its new Community Innovations initiative. The department said it will invest \$1.5 million in SFY14 in 12 projects, serving 24 counties, which help link non-violent offenders with community-based behavioral health care services. The announcement was made at a kickoff event at the University of Findlay.

"An overwhelming percentage of offenders involved with the criminal justice system have a mental health and/or addiction disorder and are in need of treatment," said **OhioMHAS Director Tracy Plouck**. "Providing linkages upon release from jail to intensive community-based treatment and support offers hope toward improving the lives of individual offenders and the welfare and safety of the larger community."

The Community Innovations initiative encourages communities in Ohio to forge relationships between the behavioral health and criminal justice systems so individuals with mental illness and/or alcohol and other drug addiction receive the care they need. This, in turn, according to the department, "helps to reduce recidivism, increase public safety and minimize harm to those who come in contact with law enforcement."

"County jails are not the proper treatment facilities for individuals who have behavioral health issues," said **Bob Cornwell**, executive director of the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, which has partnered with OhioMHAS on the initiative. "With this funding, we will be able to expand connections to community based services for adults diagnosed with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders at all points of contact with the justice system."

By diverting appropriate individuals from county jails and prisons to treatment and preventing recidivism, communities could see a significant reduction in spending, Plouck explained. In Ohio, the average cost of addiction treatment in the community

is \$1,600 (without medication-assisted treatment), and the average cost of mental health treatment including two medications is \$7,500 per year; whereas it costs \$25,269 a year to incarcerate an adult in prison. On a daily basis, the cost of incarcerating an offender in prison is \$69.23; a day in jail is about \$75, while the cost of parole for one day is \$11.54.

According to the National Institute of Corrections, 17 percent of the jail population in the United States has a serious mental illness and 68 percent has a substance use disorder. An estimated 72 percent of the jail population has a co-occurring substance use disorder when serious mental illness is diagnosed.

“We celebrate the receipt of funds received through a competitive grant process in this region of the state as a result of the new Community Innovations initiative of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Hancock County’s goal is to improve the outcomes of individuals who are involved with the criminal justice system and in need of mental health and/or substance abuse services,” said **Precia Shenk-Stuby**, executive director of the Hancock County Board of Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services. “In the absence of addressing these needs, the likelihood for successful reentry in the community is greatly compromised.”

Hancock County is among the projects awarded first-round funding. Other counties receiving funding included the following, grouped by funded project:

- Butler, Clinton, Highland, Pike, Preble and Warren counties.
- Crawford and Marion counties.
- Hamilton County.
- Lucas County.
- Mahoning County.
- Montgomery County.
- Preble County.
- Seneca, Sandusky, Wyandot, Erie, Ottawa and Huron counties.
- Summit County.