



## **Snohomish County Coordinated Therapeutic Response Hub Referral Project**

Phase II Initial Report, February 2024

### Background

Throughout the summer and fall of 2022, the Center for Justice Innovation (the Center) completed a needs assessment of Snohomish County's Superior Court, District Court, and criminal legal system partners to identify opportunities for systematic collaboration to accelerate the assessment of behavioral health needs, referrals to programs, and entry into services.

Based on the needs assessment's findings, the Center began a two-year project with Snohomish County in July 2023 to enhance cross-system collaboration within the criminal legal system. The goals of the Snohomish County Coordinated Therapeutic Response Hub Referral Project include:

- Addressing overlapping target populations;
- Improving collaborative data sharing, communication, and case management;
- Reducing the time between arrest and filed charges;
- Identifying strategies to enhance mental health resources and supports;
- Establishing objective legal criteria and eligibility guidelines for therapeutic courts; and
- Developing a uniform referral process; and establish guidelines for processing cross-jurisdiction cases.

Key to this project is the development and implementation of recommendations that will establish or enhance early-intercept connections to services for people with criminal legal involvement. To achieve this goal, the project team will incorporate input from an advisory committee to develop recommendations and address the barriers and limitations to treatment access for individuals with criminal legal involvement.

The project award covers two years, July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025.

### Overview of Work to Date

Beginning in July 2023, Jamie Reed, Program Administrator for Snohomish County Superior Court, and Center staff invited participants for a multi-disciplinary advisory

committee, eventually identifying 26 individuals to join the committee across judicial, executive, behavioral health, and criminal legal system partners.

On September 11, 2023, project staff convened the initial advisory committee meeting virtually using Zoom. Project staff from Snohomish County and the Center were introduced, as well as each of the committee members. Project staff outlined the overarching goal (i.e., identify justice-involved people with substance use and/or mental health disorders and connect them to treatment via a hub model) of the project, walked the committee through the steps to achieve the goal (i.e., participate in system mapping; identify where connections to treatment can be established or enhanced; identify barriers to treatment; develop countywide recommendations for connecting justice-involved individuals to treatment), and explained the role and responsibilities of the advisory committee (i.e., inform development of the project; engage and connect with people familiar with processes; review and comment on recommendations).

From November 2023 through January 2024, project staff conducted 11 one-hour interviews with advisory committee members, most of whom had not participated in the earlier on-site needs assessment process. These interviews helped project staff better understand the current therapeutic court and criminal legal landscape in Snohomish County. Findings from the interviews also helped project staff better understand services and resources available across intercepts.

On Tuesday, January 16 and Wednesday, January 17, 2024, the project convened a day-and-a-half in-person Sequential Intercept Model<sup>1</sup> Mapping workshop at the Everett School District Community Resource Center. The workshop was attended by approximately 40 participants, including invited community members, advisory committee members, two Center project staff, and three SIM organizers and facilitators. Key takeaways and outcomes from the SIM workshop are discussed below, as well as the next steps for the overall project.

### Current Therapeutic Court Screening and Identification Landscape

The identification and treatment processes for individuals with criminal legal involvement, especially those with substance use and mental health disorders, is significantly varied across the county. The reasons for this variation, particularly in the context of early-intercept screening, are complex. The Washington State judicial system offers significant discretion, granting jurisdictions considerable flexibility to tailor strategies and processes according to their unique needs. With Snohomish County's large geographic size and multiple judicial jurisdictions, the processes and approaches each jurisdiction takes in responding to substance use and mental health

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<sup>1</sup> THE SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MODEL: <https://www.prainc.com/sim/>

disorders can vary significantly, leading to a plethora of individual and overlapping approaches to screening and identification. Consequently, there exists a patchwork of strategies across the county, with each jurisdiction adopting methods that best align with their specific landscape and available resources.

Identifying eligible participants for therapeutic courts can be a complex process, in part because not all individuals who may benefit from a therapeutic court are eligible, due to court structures or screening variations. In most parts of the county, court-involved individuals are identified as eligible for therapeutic courts based on type of charge, record review, and through the prosecutor's discretion. Once the individual is referred to therapeutic court, a screening and assessment are done to determine legal and clinical eligibility. Although this may be the first time these individuals are screened, the intent is solely to determine if they meet the criteria for acceptance into therapeutic court. If eligible, after being enrolled in the therapeutic court, the individual is referred (back) to treatment and community organizations to address the needs identified from the screening. Depending on charge and location of criminal activity, some participants may not be eligible for therapeutic court intervention, due to the current structures of Superior, District, and Municipal courts.

### SIM Mapping Group Recommendations

Over the course of the first day of the SIM Mapping workshop, participants identified gaps, silos, and needs along each intercept. As the first day concluded, participants identified action items and potential interventions based on the gaps and needs. Participants then voted on priority action items to focus on moving forward. The morning of the second day, the facilitators introduced the action items which had received the most votes and began to facilitate next steps for follow-up after the completion of the workshop, including identifying the individuals responsible for taking the lead for each task.

#### **1. Initiate a Snohomish County version of Crisis Connect with data sharing**

Starting at intercept zero, this would allow first responders to access and share information about individuals who need care on scene. Currently Department of Correction (DOC) has the ability to share information via a crisis alert, but EMS doesn't have similar access. Crisis Connect with data sharing is available in many other counties in Washington State and would provide access to an individual's medical history, including whether they have insurance coverage and whether they currently have a mental health or treatment provider.

#### **2. Identify and provide supportive transitional housing options**

Participants consistently cited housing as a critical need for individuals across all intercept points. Especially necessary is access to quality barrier-free housing for individuals entering the recovery process and/or experiencing mental health concerns. Multiple programs and organizations across the intercepts have the ability

to provide funding or vouchers for housing, but find themselves competing for the same beds, creating competition instead of access. DOC maintains a list of regional barrier-free housing options for individuals being released from incarceration, but participants highlighted that there are no current standards in place to identify quality placements, referencing Washington Quality Recovery Residences (WAQRR).

### **3. Engage in earlier identification and intervention for therapeutic courts**

Of particular interest for this project, SIM Mapping workshop participants recognized the barriers currently limiting or delaying the identification and intervention options for individuals who may be eligible for therapeutic courts. Workshop participants cited the need for screening early on, perhaps at the time of arraignment or in the jail. Many individuals who are eligible for therapeutic courts have participated in diversion programs or received services through county case worker outreach. Creating additional pathways for identification (by law enforcement, case workers, peers, etc.) could allow individuals to receive treatment and intervention in a timelier manner. Similarly, the need to reduce the time between arrest and filed charges can be addressed in this priority action item.

### **4. Expand LEAD county-wide**

The way that LEAD can liaise with multiple stakeholders across intercepts makes it a strong contender for broad expansion throughout Snohomish County. LEAD functions slightly differently in different jurisdictions, but expansion and uniformity can continue to break down silos and provide opportunity to engage in collaborative co-response models county-wide. The action step for this recommendation was simple: a consensus decision by workshop participants to push for expansion.

### **5. Facilitate a warm handoff on release / Connection text to providers on entry/exit**

Participants agreed that a warm handoff is especially critical upon release from jail or prison, but also needed at earlier intercepts, including if an individual visits a hospital or treatment facility. The use of peer navigators was floated at all intercepts, but particularly for this priority item, as individuals most in need can fall through the gaps without a system in place to allow them to succeed as they move between intercepts. One gap specifically discussed was the lack of a pharmacy at the jail, meaning that individuals may leave the jail without a supply of medicine for the interim time until their insurance coverage begins.

### **Additional priority: Establish a 24/7 Crisis Care Hub with embedded social workers and mental health care**

SIM Mapping participants engaged in ongoing discussions about the feasibility of making a 24/7 Crisis Care Hub a priority item to emerge from the workshop. Although most agreed this would be a goal, the challenge most frequently cited was staffing; there is a shortage of mental health professionals in general, especially providers willing to work overnight hours to maintain the required staffing presence.

## Next Steps

### *SIM follow-up*

- Expand the Advisory Committee to include identified individuals responsible for leading SIM mapping action steps
- Meet monthly to identify progress and roadblocks

### *Present to County Legislature*

- [Community Safety and Justice Committee](#)
- March 12 - with Judge Wilson

### *Continue Strategic Planning Process*

- Survey
- Data collection
- Focus groups for judges at Superior, District, and Municipal levels
- Focus group / interviews with prosecutors

Project staff will use the SIM Mapping group recommendations and the information gleaned from interviews and focus groups to draft recommendations for enhancing identification and screening processes to help identify and connect people with criminal legal involvement to the treatment and services that they need.

### *Expand Information Sharing across Intercepts - Design a Hub Model*

Efficient information sharing across intercepts—such as law enforcement and first responders, courts, and treatment providers—is a critical aspect of creating a cohesive and integrated system. Ideally, as individuals move through different stages of the criminal legal system, the collected information would follow them to ensure continuity and informed decision making. This will require intentional sharing of information that allows relevant stakeholders across intercepts to access and contribute information. This shared repository will need to adhere to stringent security and privacy protocols while facilitating real-time updates and communication. The insights gained at one intercept should inform and guide subsequent interventions, resulting in a more effective and coordinated approach. This approach will also effectively use limited resources and allow for courts to organize cross-jurisdiction cases.