

L.A. County Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) Work Group

Community Workshop in Antelope Valley

Meeting Notes

— Saturday, September 28th, 2019 —

Partner Organization: **Paving the Way Foundation** (44818 Fern Ave Ste. 105, Lancaster, CA 93534)
[Meeting held at Antelope Valley Partners for Health, located at 44226 10th St W, Lancaster, CA]

Purpose of Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) Community Workshops

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the ATI Work Group in February 2019 and is partnering with stakeholders to develop a roadmap to expand diversion options so care is provided first and incarceration is a last resort. To elevate the voices of formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones, the ATI Work Group's Community Engagement Ad Hoc Committee partnered with community-based organizations to hold a series of community workshops in selected communities. At these workshops, formerly incarcerated people and family members with loved ones in custody, shared their experiences and advice on which services, supports and policies are most needed to prevent incarceration.

2. Activity #1: Building the System Together — Input on Three Key Recommendations of the Draft ATI Roadmap

Recommendation #1: Train 9-1-1 operators to screen for mental health and substance use disorder crises and to direct calls involving behavioral health crises that do not require law enforcement to mental health and substance use disorder professionals who can help the person in crisis.

- Sample of participants' suggestions for making Recommendation #1 work:
 - ◇ There needs to be continuing education/training for 9-1-1 operators.
 - ◇ Police officers should be trained to identify mental or behavioral health crises.
 - ◇ Train operators to be compassionate, objective, and bias-free.
 - ◇ Public support and awareness are needed for this initiative to succeed.
 - ◇ Resources and treatment facilities should be local and easily accessible.
 - ◇ It would be helpful to have a separate mental health hotline.
- Sample of participants' concerns regarding Recommendation #1:
 - ◇ Funding for training programs and treatment services.
 - ◇ Consistency and standardization of training for 9-1-1 operators.
 - ◇ Lack of coordination between different services and parties involved.

Recommendation #2: Put in place a practice where law enforcement, whenever possible, addresses and releases people with clinical behavioral health disorders at the time of contact and helps connect the person to the appropriate service provider.

- Sample of participants' suggestions for making Recommendation #2 work:
 - ◇ Treatment centers should provide transportation for individuals.
 - ◇ Maintain communication with family members regarding the individual's status and whereabouts.
 - ◇ Conduct mental health evaluations to determine what specific services an individual needs.
 - ◇ Create designated agencies within local communities to respond to these situations.
- Sample of participants' concerns regarding Recommendation #2:
 - ◇ Could create trauma for family members of affected individuals.
 - ◇ Should have a safe space with centralized resources and services.
 - ◇ Feedback from family members should be taken into account.



Recommendation #3: *Develop a strengths and needs-based system of pretrial release by establishing an entity outside of law enforcement that conducts voluntary needs and strengths assessment quickly upon law enforcement contact and/or initial detention, whenever possible. The entity would prioritize pre-booking with a presumption of release and link people with clinical behavioral health disorders to community-based care.*

- Sample of participants' suggestions for making Recommendation #3 work:
 - ◇ Have trained specialists to assess individuals and direct them to the right services — this could also create future jobs for formerly incarcerated individuals.
 - ◇ Build more local community resources; the Antelope Valley area does not have as many as Los Angeles does.
 - ◇ Increase the availability of mental health services.
- Sample of participants' concerns regarding Recommendation #3:
 - ◇ Some individuals do not want help; people need internal motivation to take advantage of these resources and programs.
 - ◇ Cost of [treatment] programs.
 - ◇ Lack of resources in the Antelope Valley area to support diversion programs.



3. Activity #2: Small Group Discussion on Services Needed for Successful Prevention, Support During Custody, and Re-entry

a. What supports and resources would have helped prevent you and/or your loved one from entering the criminal justice system?

- ◇ Improved after-school youth programs.
- ◇ Access to rehabilitation services.
- ◇ Assistance with job placement and vocational training.
- ◇ Accessible and affordable mental health treatment services.
- ◇ Stronger family support.

b. What were the services you and/or your loved one needed the most in the PRE-RELEASE phase of incarceration?

- ◇ Job skills and technology training.
- ◇ Support groups and counseling.
- ◇ Medications that were prescribed before incarceration need to be given while in custody.
- ◇ Assistance in obtaining documentation (birth certificate, driver's license, social security).

c. What were the services you and/or your loved one needed most in the POST-RELEASE phase of incarceration?

- ◇ Resources to help with homelessness and drug use issues.
- ◇ Skills training to integrate back into the community.
- ◇ Local community center for families to obtain resources and receive counseling.

d. What have been the most significant barriers to you and/or your loved one in accessing the resources you need during the pre-release and post-release phases of incarceration?

- ◇ Lack of information on legal rights and how to navigate the legal system.
- ◇ Stigma in the community [as a formerly incarcerated person].
- ◇ Lack of interpretation services for limited English/non-English speaking individuals.
- ◇ Lack of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and humility among service providers.

