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:
  - Grant more power to the mental health workers than police officers in these situations.
  - Should have a team of on-call health professionals available to help.
  - Mental health professionals need to be aware of the resources available.
  - It would be helpful to have a prevention help hotline to call instead of 9-1-1.

- Sample of participants’ concerns regarding Recommendation #1:
  - Uniforms can be intimidating; workers who are sent to the scene should dress intentionally to help diffuse the situation — i.e. avoid using sirens, badges, and lights, which could intensify the state of the individual.
  - 9-1-1 operators and mental health workers should be trained to connect with the local community.
**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:
  - There should be a neutral third party on site who is respected and known by members of the community.
  - There needs to be a list of consequences if law enforcement does not comply with the recommendations.
  - Training needed for responders regarding behavioral health.

- Sample of participants’ concerns regarding Recommendation #2:
  - Police officers might not be familiar with possible sources of trauma.
  - What are the parameters that determine if an individual needs this service?
  - Lack of truth/context/background to the situation.
**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:
  - Community-based organizations should [be the entity to] make an appropriate, detailed written assessment and meet with family members regarding the client.
  - Establish a database of available resources.
  - [County-] contracted services should employ people who have been previously impacted by incarceration.
  - Designate navigators to help impacted individuals navigate the resources and systems available.

- Sample of participants’ concerns regarding Recommendation #3:
  - How will families and individuals receive the information needed to obtain the care and services needed upon release?
  - What about people who are not eligible for services and programs, i.e. violent offenders?
  - Need to ensure that police officers will work with community-based organizations.
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?**
   - Trauma intervention.
   - Family support/moral support.
   - Access to quality jobs.
   - Medical care and mental health care.
   - Parenting classes and support groups.
   - Youth diversion programs.
   - Stable housing environment — should screen foster care providers and homes to check for signs of abuse.

b. **What were the services you and/or your loved one needed the most in the PRE-RELEASE phase of incarceration?**
   - Assistance with setting up financial aid for reentry.
   - Jobs people are assigned in jail should be equally compensated and have a savings account.
   - Therapy and counseling services with individuals who have gone through the same process.
   - Job skills training.
   - Family counseling and mediation.
   - Financial literacy and digital literacy classes.

c. **What were the services you and/or your loved one needed most in the POST-RELEASE phase of incarceration?**
   - Community-based assistance; we want someone from inside the community.
   - Trade school was very helpful.
   - If we are sent to rehabilitation, we should be connected to services like jobs and schooling.
   - Holistic approach to reentry and support throughout the process.
   - Medical evaluation and primary care.

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 awareness of available resources/services.
   - Not enough mental health services.
   - Difficulty obtaining reunification with children — children cannot advocate for themselves and parents are usually not informed of court proceedings surrounding their child’s custody.
   - Lack of transportation.