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:
  - Train police officers to handle mental health-related situations.
  - Ensure that 9-1-1 operators are willing to listen to the caller’s concerns without making any assumptions.
  - Educate families of mentally ill individuals to let first responders know that this is a mental health situation.
  - Have the police officers and mental health workers arrive at the scene in an unmarked car rather than a police car.
  - Give families the option to call for mental health assistance rather than 9-1-1.

- Sample of participants’ concerns regarding Recommendation #1:
  - Need for adequate staffing and funding to maintain this program in the future.
  - An individual who requires mental health services may not follow through on seeking help.
  - Safety and liability concerns for mental health professionals who are sent to respond to 9-1-1 calls.
**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:
  - Monitor the individual for at least 90 days, providing enough time for them to experience a period of withdrawal under supervision.
  - Provide transportation to mental health service provider locations.
  - Involve the individual’s family and encourage family support.
  - Address any emotional issues or family/relationship issues the individual may be dealing with.

- Sample of participants’ concerns regarding Recommendation #2:
  - Staff should communicate with the individual to see if they truly want to seek mental health services.
  - Program will require longevity; will need more time than 1-3 months.
  - Hire staff members who have been through similar situations and successfully overcome them.
  - Individual may need counseling with family members.
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:
  - Increase the number of people who qualify for pre-trial release, and make the approval process quicker.
  - Make sure that law enforcement is reporting [information] accurately and honestly.
  - Provide training in motivational interviewing for staff running the programs and conducting pre-trial assessments.
  - Provide childcare services for individuals with children.
  - Conduct evaluations within the 24-48 hour window before transfer from the police station to the County jail.

- Sample of participants’ concerns regarding Recommendation #3:
  - Concerns about cost/finances.
  - Police officers need better training to recognize signs of alcohol use, drug use, and/or mental health illnesses.
  - 72-hour holds should be used; people should be aware of other options instead of incarceration.
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?
   - Drug and alcohol addiction support groups/therapy services.
   - Youth mentorship programs and after-school programs.
   - Family support and counseling.
   - Homeless services.
   - Provide support for children who have been exposed to substance use within their family.

b. What were the services you and/or your loved one needed the most in the PRE-RELEASE phase of incarceration?
   - “What-to-expect” classes to provide an overview of services and opportunities.
   - Working closely with a social worker or counselor.
   - Assistance with job-searching and submitting job applications.
   - Financial assistance for family.

c. What were the services you and/or your loved one needed most in the POST-RELEASE phase of incarceration?
   - Housing assistance, educational attainment, transportation services.
   - Mental health treatment services.
   - Family counseling/therapy.
   - Health insurance and dental 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?
   - Difficulty of obtaining housing with a criminal record.
   - Insufficient funding allocated to people’s Section 8 housing vouchers.
   - Shortage of affordable housing.
   - Stigma in the community and lack of trust from family.
   - Relapse into substance use.