

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

Community Workshop in East Los Angeles

Meeting Notes

— Friday, September 27th, 2019 —

Partner Organization: **Homeboy Industries** (130 W. Bruno St., Los Angeles, CA 90012)

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:
 - ◇ Up-to-date, repeated training for 9-1-1 operators.
 - ◇ No use of guns or sirens at the scene.
 - ◇ Train police officers to know when to call a mental health professional.
 - ◇ Emphasize patience, compassion, and empathy when training responders.
- Sample of participants' concerns regarding Recommendation #1:
 - ◇ Need to provide evaluations and resources for individuals to prevent similar situations from happening in the future.
 - ◇ Follow-ups should be handled by healthcare professionals instead of police officers.
 - ◇ Mental health issues cannot be treated immediately; they require long-term support.

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:
 - ◊ Re-evaluate the Psychiatric Emergency Team (PET).
 - ◊ Designate someone to triage each crisis.
 - ◊ Communicate with family members who know the mental health history of the individual.
 - ◊ Focus on solutions: prevention, intervention, and after-care.
 - ◊ Create a coordinated system where all parties, including law enforcement, can look up an individual's mental health history/background.
- Sample of participants' concerns regarding Recommendation #2:
 - ◊ Not enough resources and funding.
 - ◊ Lack of coordination and communication between different systems.
 - ◊ Concern about who determines whether an individual has a mental illness.
 - ◊ Need to empower the individual in addition to changing the system.



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:
 - ◊ Assessments should be done by community.
 - ◊ Need to consider age of individual.
 - ◊ Collect data and research from other communities to know what is working.
 - ◊ Have to take into account cultural competency, gender identities, beliefs, and upbringing.
- Sample of participants' concerns regarding Recommendation #3:
 - ◊ Lack of trust between individuals and staff members.
 - ◊ Individuals might need a place to stay while they are assessed and treated.
 - ◊ Police need to be required to participate and cooperate.



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?

- ◇ More nurturing home environment.
- ◇ Youth mentorship programs, extracurricular programs, recreation centers.
- ◇ More affordable technical schools.
- ◇ Support groups and mental health care.

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

- ◇ Health screening/medical evaluation before release.
- ◇ Access to government documents, i.e. driver's license, birth certificate, etc.
- ◇ Medical, dental, and mental health services.
- ◇ Counseling for stress and trauma.
- ◇ Longer family visit times.
- ◇ Classes to prepare individuals for integration into the community.

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

- ◇ Assistance with housing, job searching, and transportation.
- ◇ Help with applying for Medi-Cal and Food Stamps.
- ◇ A consolidated "one-stop shop" where all services are accessible.
- ◇ An information hotline for formerly incarcerated individuals.

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 vocational training.
- ◇ Unsure of where to go for resources and services.
- ◇ List of resources provided was largely outdated and unhelpful.
- ◇ Lack of access to transportation.

