

Project Narrative

1. Organization Description

Las Vegas Justice Court Community Court has been in operation since 2017 and works with each participant with the mindset of meeting them where they are at currently and helping them overcome one obstacle at a time. When they need substance use disorder treatment, the Misdemeanor Treatment Court program (MTC) provides substance abuse treatment, reclamation of government identification documents (ID), sober housing, and wrap-around services. We understand it takes a community to fix a community, which is why we have close relationships with our community partners, allowing better guidance of individuals through the completion of the program with the goal of getting them sober, healthy, out of the legal system, and hopefully off the streets.

The goal of MTC is to promote public safety and health by providing aggressive treatment and supervision to citizens with legal and substance abuse problems through partnerships between local government, law enforcement, the legal community and community agencies in a non-adversarial process. Community Court provides the voluntary Misdemeanor Treatment Court program under the supervision of a judge, in hopes that the participant will be able to overcome their substance abuse problems and become a productive member of society again without going through lengthy and costly incarceration. MTC's target population falls under service area Target A1: Criminal Justice Diversion, consisting of adults who are involved in the criminal justice system with a substance abuse problem, presenting with low to medium prognostic risks and low to medium criminogenic needs. This target populace encompasses those with co-occurring disorders, intravenous drug users, women with dependent children and pregnant women. MTC works to provide participants with resources for all four dimensions of recovery, while adhering to the 10 Key Components and Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards from the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. It does so by providing a progressing continuum of

recovery services focusing on achieving and maintaining sobriety through treatment and corresponding wrap-around services.

MTC is made up of a multidisciplinary team consisting of a judge, district attorney, defense attorney, coordinators and representatives from treatment providers who all work together to help participants stop being involved in the criminal justice system. When necessary, this collaboration provides greater resources to assist participants achieve recovery by capitalizing on participant progress and set-backs, and allows for quick response to emerging problems. All substance abuse treatment providers for MTC utilize a variety of approved treatment modalities to assist the participant, including cognitive-behavioral counseling, process group, and/or moral recognition therapy.

MTC takes a minimum of 9 months to complete, and is focused on having participants achieve milestone goals towards recovery and stabilization, instead of just doing a minimum time stint in the program. While in the program, participants must progress through four court phases in conjunction with treatment for substance abuse. Court phases are different from treatment phases to assure each participant receives an individual treatment plan based upon their needs. The court phases are from 30-90 days minimum in length and each have a different focus for the participant. Each court phase requires a minimum length of consecutive clean time to transition to the next court phase. The court phases are as follows: Phase One (30 days) focuses on acute stabilization and requires 10 days consecutive clean time for transition; Phase Two (60 days) focuses on clinical stabilization and requires 21 days consecutive clean time for transition; Phase Three (90 days) focuses on pro- social habilitation and requires 45 days consecutive clean time for transition; Phase Four (90 days) focuses on adaptive habilitation and requires 60 days consecutive clean time for transition to graduation. In order to graduate, participants must have completed all four of the court phases, their substance abuse treatment program, have not been charged with any new criminal offenses and submitted to random drug testing throughout the program.

MTC understands that its participants frequently need additional treatment beyond substance abuse treatment and wrap-around services geared towards habilitation. Towards that end, participants who have co-occurring disorders undergo additional evaluations by the treatment providers. Should the treatment provider inform MTC that the participant needs additional medical assistance with their mental health issues, MTC assists with providing referrals to licensed psychiatrists in the community who work with substance dependent clientele for additional evaluation and medication as deemed appropriate. Habilitation services are provided to all participants, and include cognitive behavioral services, model effective interpersonal problem solving skills, vocational training, employment connections, education, housing, and improving daily living skills. In providing habilitation services along with substance abuse treatment, participants gain skills to reduce criminal recidivism, and thus reduce costs on society. Participants are offered aftercare services at the conclusion of their substance abuse treatment, and MTC places significant focus on the creation of a stable, support structure to assist them with their continued sobriety. Providers work towards assisting participants in getting connected with social services and other community resources, along with obtaining government identification. If awarded SAPTA grant funding, MTC would work to provide participants treatment, supervision, reclamation of government issued identification, and connections to sober housing for up to three months. Participants would connect with the community rent voucher system as well as job development to assist them in taking over their housing costs.

Misdemeanor Treatment Court faces challenges in achieving its goal due to its overwhelming indigent population. On average, 2 Community Court participants per quarter enter MTC, totaling approximately 8 annually. Participants must meet with a court coordinator for evaluation to determine whether they qualify. There is no discrimination because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, physical or mental disability, religion or socioeconomic status in the selection of eligible participants. Referrals with a violent criminal history/underlying offense, or presenting with significant mental health pathology are not accepted into MTC.

Defendants with a history of arson, predatory behavior, trafficking, manufacturing, or selling a controlled substance, listed on the Sexual Offenders Registry, or have a documented history of multiple violent offences are not accepted into the program. Of those accepted into the program, the majority lack sober and safe housing. At least two participants agreeing to substance abuse treatment each quarter is homeless and admits to an opioid dependency.

At least 80% of indigent participants require detoxification and inpatient treatment, and all need outpatient treatment with sober living. Due to a lack of funding, participants do not receive the necessary level of care. MTC is a substance use disorder treatment program for low level, quality of life misdemeanor crimes committed within the Las Vegas Justice Court jurisdiction. The majority that identify as “experiencing chronic homelessness typically have complex and long-term health conditions, such as mental illness, physical disabilities, and/or substance abuse disorders. Regardless of what immediately caused them to lose their housing, once they become homeless, these conditions can make it difficult for them to get into housing, and they can face lengthy or repeated episodes of homelessness” (Southern Nevada Homeless Census & Survey 2019, p. 19). Participants will be evaluated and assigned to State Certified Substance Abuse and Prevention Treatment Agency (SAPTA) providers, referred to community partners for co-occurring mental health disorders, subjected to mandatory random drug testing, electronic monitoring, medical treatment, and reconnected to local community resources for wrap around services to assist in improving their individual situation(s) and offering an opportunity to break the cycle of re-offending. Reconnection of services is a goal of this program. Community service is mandatory for participation in the program as it is important to give back to the community which is why jail time is only utilized as a last resort. Successful completion of MTC can lead to case dismissal or closure.

Homeless participants without stable, safe and sober housing is a challenge faced by MTC. The majority of admissions are without housing, or lack safe, sober housing to go to and are unemployed. Many lack government identification and/or insurance. This populous has a high-

risk of reoffending and a critical need for treatment. They require enhanced wrap-around services including, but not limited to, sober living, counseling, work force assistance and additional social services. They also frequently require assistance with replacing lost identification such as driver's licenses, identity cards or other official documents. The lack of identification creates a significant barrier for participants seeking employment, housing, or social services, causing them to remain homeless, unemployed and without critical social services required to be successful in MTC. Participants lacking proper identification face additional challenges as they are prohibited from seeking any social services or enrolling in Medicaid.

While MTC is using as many outside resources as possible to defray costs, there still is a substantial unmet need in covering costs associated with substance abuse treatment care including medically-assisted treatment (MAT) and sober, safe housing for participants. With the rising number of participants needing and agreeing to treatment services and housing solutions to gain recovery, funding assistance is desperately needed to meet these needs. Funding under this grant is sought to help cover these fiscal gaps, to provide participants with the needed treatment and supervision to assist with their recovery as well as safe and sober housing and government identification for those participants without such.

2. Project Design and Implementation

MTC seeks to enhance its current program via this project to assist participants struggling with cessation by providing detoxification services, treatment (inpatient, partial hospitalization, or outpatient), reclamation of government issued identification and safe and sober housing to those participants lacking such. MTC will be maintained, but the enhancement will allow for services for those participants in need and allow avenues of treatment before a participant risks termination and/or incarceration. Currently MTC has approximately 10 participants, with a capacity of 40 participants. Funding under this grant will allow for greater services, greater participation and connecting more with those participants who need services. The goals for this enhancement

funding per project period are to provide where necessary (1) at least 8 participants with

detoxification services for an average of seven days at a rate of \$1,000 per day; (2) treatment options such as inpatient or partial hospitalization, for an average of thirty days for at least 8 participants requiring higher levels of care beyond outpatient treatment; (3) outpatient treatment, stable, drug-free housing environment for at least 8 participants for an average of three months to gain stability, and reclamation of ID; and (4) treatment supervision with electronic monitoring and drug testing for a minimum of 9 months. This funding would provide a key treatment option for detoxification to participants who are struggling with cessation and/or relapse instead of incarceration to detoxify them followed by higher levels of treatment care to help them with attaining recovery. This funding would also provide housing services for the many participants who enter the program without any form of housing, as well as providing safe, sober housing for those participants who enter the program with housing, but it is not a safe or sober environment for them to work on achieving sobriety or recovery.

Identification of participants needing detoxification, enhanced treatment services and/or housing, and reclamation of ID will happen primarily during the initial assessment for entering MTC, which is done by the court coordinators. MTC's target population falls under service area Target A1: Criminal Justice Diversion, consisting of adults who are involved in the criminal justice system who battled with substance abuse presenting with low to medium prognostic risks and low to medium criminogenic needs. This target populace includes those with co-occurring disorders, intravenous drug users, women with dependent children and pregnant women. All individuals referred are assessed by a Community Court Coordinator utilizing standardized screening tools¹ for admission as well as potential treatment needs. The assessment process identifies what substances the referral uses and their current housing situation. Frequency of use as well as last use of substances is also identified along with the ability to cease usage on their own. With available funding, MTC is committed to focusing greater effort on reaching out to indigent,² incarcerated offenders to provide stable, drug-free housing while undergoing substance abuse treatment to facilitate their habilitation, rehabilitation, and self-sufficiency and reduce the likelihood

of them re-offending. The enhancement of public safety is also achieved by reducing the number of misdemeanor offenders with serious substance abuse disorders who are engaged in criminal activities. Once accepted into the program, participants are referred to an approved treatment provider to begin their substance abuse treatment.³ Each participant will then undergo another evaluation by the treatment provider to determine their individualized needs for treatment, as well as their level of care. Those who are identified as having an opioid addiction are offered MAT services to assist them in achieving recovery. All participants entering MTC will begin phase one of the program and begin working through the four court phases over 9 months at minimum. Each phase will transition the participant through the four dimensions of recovery by helping them achieve sobriety; maintain sobriety; have a stable and sober place to live; obtain a purpose for their life; reclaim a role in the community; and learn to enjoy life again through pro-social, sober activities.

Implementation of Goal 1 would be on a rolling basis to meet the changing needs of participants as they enter the program. Goal 1's needs would be based upon identifying those program participants who are entering, or are currently in, the program, report opioid use within the last 24 hours along with reporting difficulty in stopping use without an outside influence. Once these participants are identified, they would be referred to a detoxification treatment facility for further assessment. After completion of detoxification, they would continue with MTC's established program protocols.

Goal 2's implementation would be based upon the recommended treatment needs of particular participants completing detoxification or being diagnosed by treatment professionals as needing a higher level of treatment care. These participants would be referred to treatment providers offering inpatient treatment or partial hospitalization services for a period of time to achieve further stabilization in recovery. These participants would still be part of MTC, and have to work on achieving particular phase goals while in this enhanced treatment so that they can keep working through the program, and not feel that they are going backwards or losing time in

the program. Once these participants complete their higher level of care, they would still continue on with Goal 3 of outpatient treatment services. Goal 4 of electronic monitoring and random drug testing would happen during the program entirety. The team meets prior to court to review drug testing results, rule adherence, treatment attendance and compliance, as well as participant progress with meeting their particular goals. This collaboration provides greater resources to recognize and capitalize on participant progress and set-backs, and allows for quick response to emerging problems.

Implementation of Goal 3 would also be on a rolling basis to meet the changing needs of participants as they enter the program or are current program participants. Once identified as needing housing, court coordinators will work on contacting housing providers to find placement for the participant. Those participants who are in custody would be picked up from the jail by an agent from the housing facility and transported to that sober facility. Those who are not incarcerated will be provided directions to the facility along with bus passes for them to get there, or if needed, an agent from the sober facility can arrange to pick them up. Participants who are in sober housing will work on reclaiming identification, connect with community resources for housing vouchers and are referred to job development so that they can work towards obtaining the ability to taking over their housing costs within a 90 day period.

With this grant funding, MTC can provide needed detoxification treatment services in response to the participant's needs, inpatient or partial hospitalization treatment for those who need it, outpatient treatment, safe and sober housing and reclamation of ID. This is a key to stabilizing the participant and then providing them access to a continuum of outpatient alcohol, drug and other related treatment and rehabilitation services.

3. Capabilities and Competencies

Justice of the Peace Rebecca Kern is the presiding Las Vegas Justice Court Misdemeanor Court judge. In November 2016, Judge Rebecca Kern was elected to serve a six year term as a Justice of the Peace for Las Vegas Justice Court Department 6. Judge Kern has presided over

the Las Vegas Justice Court Community Court program since January 2020. Judge Kern is responsible for adhering to any applicable provisions of the Local Rules of Practice for the Justice Court of Las Vegas Township, as approved by the Supreme Court of Nevada.

There are two full time Specialty Courts Coordinators working with the MTC Program, Melissa Bowman and Scott Carlson. Ms. Bowman has been the court coordinator since Community Court's inception in January 2017. Mr. Carlson was previously the Court Coordinator with Las Vegas Justice Court Drug Court and began with Community Court in February 2020. They both hold a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology, are Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselors, and have knowledge of court procedures and practices, community resources, counseling and therapeutic principles, program development and management. They set up individual files on program participants, systems to compile statistical data, preparation and management of the Community Court program docket, assist with coordinating appropriate treatment and community service referrals for program participants, and help with the solicitation of community support through education and linkages in an effort to enhance services available to program participants.

Clark County provides defense counsel to provide legal advice regarding program participants' due process rights and other related matters. The attorney meets with the team for staffing, attends court appearances, handles termination hearings and is also available to review program participants' progress, as needed.

The Office of the District Attorney (DA) reviews and recommends some, but not all, potential program participants for eligibility, participates in team staffing, reviews participant's progress, addresses community safety concerns, and handles termination hearings. The DA continues to work with the other criminal justice partners in developing a system to better identify potential participants.

MTC works with multiple agencies currently to provide substance abuse services to participants. Seven Hills, Las Vegas Recovery Center, Sierra Sage Recovery Services, Choices Group, Pathways and Freedom House all conduct ongoing screenings and assessments of program participants, make treatment recommendations, and provide

all levels of treatment care to program participants as well as Aftercare program services. These providers have provided treatment services for Las Vegas Justice Court Specialty Courts for over two years. Sierra Sage Recovery Services and Freedom House provide sober housing solutions to participants in need.

4. Plan for Collecting Data

DCCM is the online drug treatment court management system used to document program participant-specific information including but not limited to drug and alcohol testing results, counseling, compliance, demographics, criminal recidivism and employment status. Court coordinators do regular case planning with participants at least every 30-60 days, exit data gathering, and help work towards forging stronger agency and community partnerships. Regular case planning helps the program transition to meet the needs of participants, and identify areas needing improvement or adjustment. Exit interviews provide data as to recidivism rates, program services that are lacking, graduate status at the time of completion, or program features that work and should be maintained. Exit interviews with graduating participants also provide an opportunity for the coordinators to assure participant knowledge of aftercare programs and sober support networks they can access at no cost to them to help with diminished recidivism and increased public safety. This data will aid with forging partnerships between agencies and the community to show how MTC can help improve public safety, and gain future potential funding resources for sustainability. Court coordinators will be responsible for the data collection on participants served by the grant funds and providing data on a monthly and quarterly basis.

¹ Assessment tests include, but are not limited to, RANT (Risk and Needs Triage) screening instrument; SASSI-3 or similar test; AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test); MAST (Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test); ASAM Criteria; and DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)

² Indigent participants are those who have no source of income or earn below national poverty guidelines.

³ MTC currently has a pool of treatment providers who are able to provide the required services and who meet all required licensure and certifications to assist participants with their treatment plans.