

The Criminal Justice Reform Program (CJR)

At The Mental Health Association

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The Beginning of The Pilots

Morris Pilot

Morris Diversion Pilot was awarded through the Budget Act for Fiscal Year 2022. These funds were also used to expand into Sussex County in October 2023.

Essex Pilot

Essex was awarded a contract by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) via Request for Proposal (RFP) in July 2022, and program was implemented September 2022.



Photo of Essex County Correctional Facility

The Essex Pilot- Prescreening Process

From the beginning, MHA had a working relationship with Essex County Correctional Facility and Pre-Trial Services. CJR partners with those entities to pre-screen potential consumers utilizing the social determinants of health tool before they appear in Central Judicial Processing Court (CJP) each day.

- From the start of the pilot CJR has screen 1277 individuals

The Morris Mental Health Diversion Program

- In Morris we work closely with the Prosecutor's Office
- Sherriff's Office
- Other law enforcement for the success of the Morris Program.



The Overview of CJR



Goals of CJR

The goal of CJR is to promote recovery through engagement, assessment of readiness for change, and linkage of individuals who have a mental health diagnosis who are approved for pre-trial release and jail diversion to mental health treatment, financial, housing, and other needed services. CJR is a client-centered outpatient mental health program. However, we offer so much more than outpatient counseling services



CJR Services

CJR offers therapy, psychiatric evaluation, medication management, group therapy, peer support, and case management services. CJR also works closely with clients to assist them with legal matters on the superior and municipal court level.

The Eligibility Criteria

- On Pre-Trial Release
- 18 years or older
- Essex County Resident
- Jailed at Essex County Correctional Facility
- Flag for Mental Health
- 3rd and 4th Degree Charges





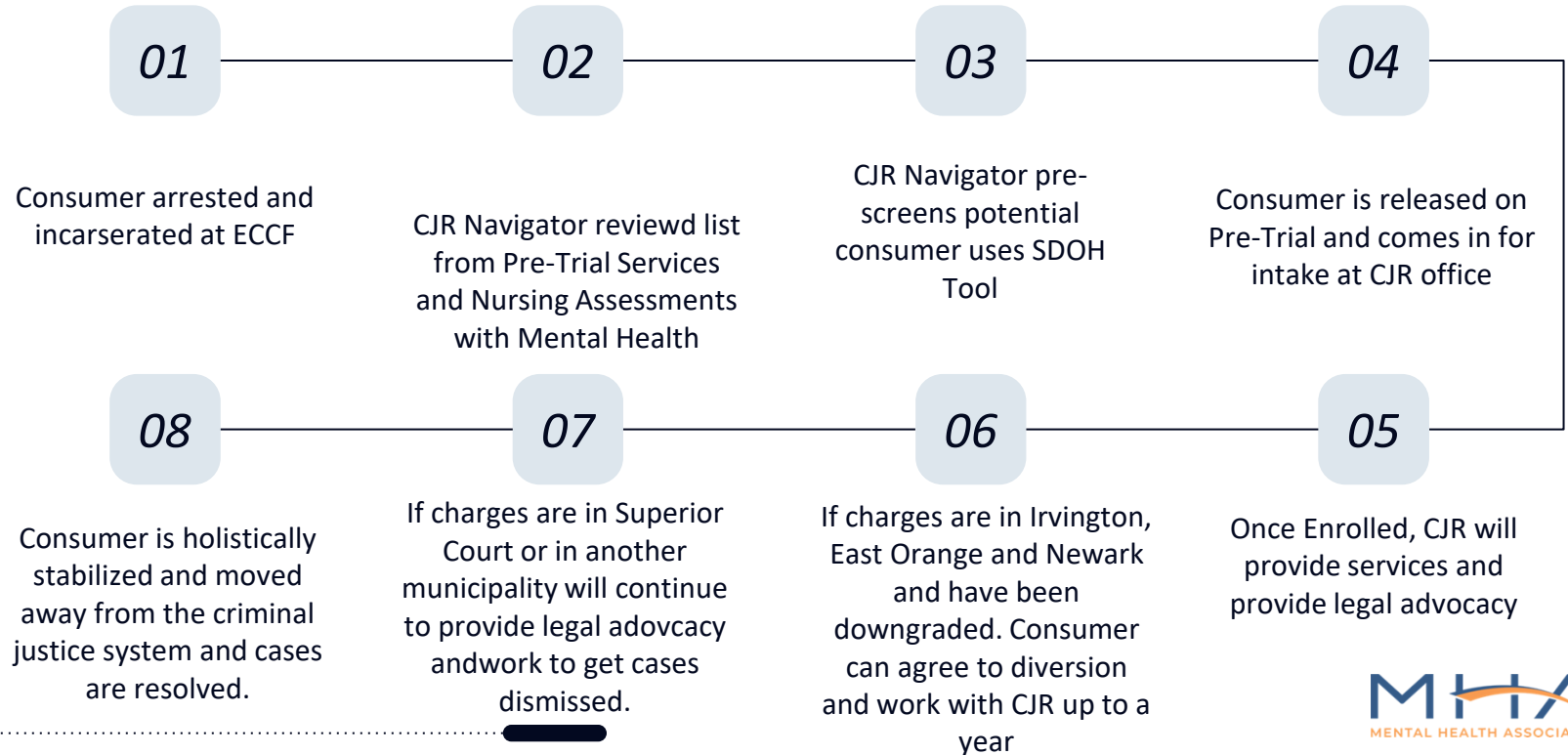
The Courts

CJR started out in partnership with the Essex Superior Court and transitioned to include Municipal Court officially this November 2024.

The majority of cases were individuals who were released on pre-trial cases and were downgraded to Municipal Court and ineligible for diversion on the Superior Court Level. As we worked with consumers to get their cases dismissed, we also built a partnership with Municipal Court offering diversion for Newark, Irvington, and East Orange.

- FY24, CJR was able to assist 16 individuals with dismissals without the resource of diversion.

The Process



The Challenges

Enrollment

CJR pre-screens a large amount of people and about 10% come in for a intake appointment. Many potential consumers are very difficult to find once released.

Relationship with ECCF

Maintaining a working relationship with ECCF during administration changes and changes to our access in the jail.

Stabilization

Most of our enrolled consumers have significant trauma and substance abuse history. Stabilization takes time and recovery is sometimes a slow process.

Diversion

The pilot until most recently did not have an avenue for jail diversion which effected enrollment and commitment to the program.

The Successes

A client began with the CJR Program citing difficulties regulating his anger and other negative emotions. Since his admission to the program, he has shown immense improvements in emotional identification, processing, and regulation. His communication skills within his interpersonal relationships has positively changed to the point that his loved ones and peers are commenting, “therapy is really working for you!” He has been able to enhance other areas of his life as he establishes realistic educational, occupational, and financial goals for himself. Most recently, he was accepted into an EMT-training program, on a scholarship, his training began in the summer of 2024.


**INSPIRING
STORIES.**

This story highlights another woman who came into our program during her pregnancy. Client had a charge related to a domestic violence incident a few months before she came into our program. Client violated a restraining order before coming for her intake appointment and had an open warrant out for her arrest. The CJR program coordinated with the Public Defender’s Office, medical professionals, the court, and the Prosecutor’s Office to keep client’s incarceration short. When the client was released from ECCF, we assisted her with anger management, therapy, medical linkages, financial entitlement, and provided her with baby items and continued legal assistance. She has engaged in peer group and weekly therapy and has made a complete turnaround in her life. This client and her baby are thriving. She is now actively working on employment and has stabilized her mood. The client continues to maintain stability in the community. CJR was able to link her and her baby to the resources they need. CJR also assisted with getting one of her cases dismissed and is working currently with the Public Defender to get her last case dismissed. She has also not been arrested again in the 11 months she has been in our program.



7%

Recitivism Rate for CJR- YTD



Thank You!

Do you have any questions?

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