

My name is MarCee Neary and I am the Program Director of the Community Crisis Center in Billings Montana and I am here today to talk about Project CALM, a jail diversion project between the Community Crisis Center and the Yellowstone County Detention Center. But before I talk about Project CALM, it is essential that I give you some history on the Community Crisis Center.

About 25 years ago, the two hospitals in Billings realized that there were a lot of persons presenting at the local emergency rooms for mental health, substance abuse and for social service needs. These persons did not need hospitalization, but needed a system of care solely for mental health and substance abuse. Thus the Community CC opened its doors in June 2006 to provide a system of care for persons who struggle with mental illness and substance abuse. About the same time the Crisis Center opened its doors, our local Detention Facility also immediately noticed a decline in the number of incarcerations, as the Crisis Center was also providing law enforcement with an alternative system of care to divert persons with mental illness to the Crisis Center for help instead of incarceration.

When the Crisis Center opened its doors, we made a commitment to working in collaboration with law enforcement. Therefore in October 2006, we sent a team consisting of law enforcement and mental health providers to Memphis Tennessee to be trained in CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) Training. CIT is a nationally recognized model that was started by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) in Memphis Tennessee. This model teaches law enforcement and first responders to work more efficiently and effectively with persons with mental illness and substance abuse struggles. To date, we have trained 274 first responders throughout Montana. It is exciting to see the change in the first responders who have taken CIT and who have changed their outlook and approaches in dealing with persons with mental illness.

Within the first year of the Community Crisis Center opening its doors, Terry Jessee (who is located at the Yellowstone County Detention Facility) and I realized that we shared many of the same persons at the Crisis Center and at the Yellowstone County Detention Facility, so we informally started working together on behalf of the persons that we realized did not need to be incarcerated, but instead needed a little extra care. So as persons were being discharged from the YELLOWSTONE COUNTY DETENTION FACILITY, Terry arranged for them to be discharged and transported to the Community Crisis Center where we could plug them in to case management and counseling services. However we were still missing one very crucial piece. The missing piece was having paid persons dedicated to helping the identified persons from re-entering the revolving door of incarceration. Then one day the Board of Crime Control contacted Captain Mc Cave at the Yellowstone County Detention Facility and asked him if Yellowstone County is engaged in jail diversion activities. Captain McCave was aware of our informal efforts and thus through the assistance of the Board of Crime Control, we were able to secure a Bureau of Justice grant and Project CALM formally began in January of 2010. CALM stands for Collaborate-Align-Link and Manage and those four words became the foundation of our project.

Through this grant, we were provided the funding to hire 1 ½ case managers. The full time case manager shared her time equally between the Yellowstone County Detention Facility and the Community Crisis Center. At the Yellowstone County Detention Facility, she identified persons with mental illness who needed case management while still incarcerated. She assisted with paperwork, applications, housing, and social service needs and any other assistance needed for persons to survive once released from detention and to break the cycle of incarceration. When not working at the Yellowstone County Detention Facility, this Case Manager worked at the Community Crisis Center and in the community assisting the same folks navigate the system. The second half time case manager worked solely at the Community Crisis Center and also helped persons navigate once released into the community. The case managers were instrumental in teaching clients to thrive, working on self advocacy skills, how to keep appointments and other life skills essential to help them breaking the cycle of incarceration. This grant also provided funding to assist with medication co-payments, group treatment, bus passes and minimal transportation so that clients could get to and from appointments.

In September 2013, the grant funding for Project CALM ran out. Although the Community Crisis Center and Yellowstone County Detention Facility still work cooperatively with clients, our formal funding to pay case managers to assist with jail diversion is no longer in place. However we have not given up and are still searching out alternative funding sources.

Stepping backwards briefly, after the Billings hospitals provided the first two years of funding, it was time that our community helped with a solution to keeping the doors of the Community Crisis Center open. Immediately upon opening the Community Crisis Center, the number of incarcerations of persons with mental illness declined and in response to this, the Billings community passed a public safety mill levy in support of the work of the Community Crisis Center. We were able to show the community that the Crisis Center provided a quick alternative to incarceration for persons with mental illness. The solution being a place for law enforcement to bring persons with mental illness for help. Law enforcement spends 5 minutes filling out paperwork at the Crisis Center and returns to the streets so that they can protect our community from persons that are truly dangerous. The mill levy that was passed by Yellowstone County on behalf of the Crisis Center provides about 50 percent of the annual funding.

It is important to note that the Crisis Center is not just for Yellowstone County residents and has served persons from 44 Montana counties. Yellowstone County residents and constituents have assisted us in funding about 70% of our annual budget so that we can responsibly take care of persons with mental illness and substance abuse. Yellowstone County has stepped up to support mental health services and the entire state benefits from our efforts. But what we really need is a stable commitment from the state of Montana. We have secured crisis services funding from HB 130 that was passed in 2009, but every year the Crisis Center competes for this funding source as other new programs open. The Community Crisis Center has demonstrated that our Evidence Based Model works and we deserve stable funding from the state to compliment the crisis services funding. Through our daily operations, we continue to divert persons with mental illness from the jails and the hospitals. As the demands to the

Community Crisis Center continue to increase, we have now outgrown our facility, but continue to strive to make an impact on the lives of those in the most need. We really need your support in keeping mental health programs alive in Montana.