

# Developing a Mental Health Court: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum

## Coordinating the Delivery of the Curriculum

### Selecting a Facilitator

#### Understanding the role of a facilitator

The facilitator leads the group through the curriculum. S/he “encourages full participation, promotes mutual understanding and cultivates shared responsibility” to “support everyone to do their best thinking.” In this way, the facilitator “enables group members to search for inclusive solutions and build sustainable agreements.”\* As the group members apply the knowledge gained from the curriculum to their own work and collaborative process, the facilitator works side-by-side with the team to make decisions about their mental health court program. The facilitator also follows the lead of the group at times, supporting its efforts by providing useful information and resources.

During the training, the facilitator serves as both an instructor and a mediator of group discussion. It’s his/her job to ensure that critical points get discussed and that team members learn what they need to learn. The facilitator also strives to ensure that the members of the group trust one another and form a solid foundation for working together on the mental health court program.

On a more practical level, the facilitator:

- Identifies the group’s specific content and training needs
- Coordinates the group’s logistical efforts, including scheduling meeting times and locations
- Gathers the necessary resources and materials
- Prepares materials before the training and/or between training sessions
- Ensures that the group has access to data and research to inform its decisions

#### Choosing a facilitator

Knowledge of the subject matter and experience with delivering trainings are likely the first qualities that come to mind for an ideal facilitator. Other important considerations include:

- Knowledge of and experience group process and goal-oriented learning
- The ability and willingness to dedicate significant time to preparing for training, including reviewing the curriculum in advance, gathering materials, and engaging participants
- Enthusiasm and the ability to motivate widespread participation within a group

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\*Kaner, S. & Berger, D., “The Role of Facilitator.” Available at <http://enrapkscurriculum.pbworks.com/f/Role+of+Facilitator+-+Sam+Kaner.pdf>.

- Flexibility and willingness to modify his/her prepared plans to adapt to the team's changing needs
- Good listening skills

There may be someone in your community who is already well prepared to facilitate this curriculum. If your community has an existing criminal justice/mental health task force, the leader of that entity may be a good candidate to facilitate this training. If your community has a general criminal justice task force, the leader of that group likely already has experience in facilitating a multidisciplinary group, and perhaps even in administering training to groups. Some states—and even some counties—have criminal justice training agencies that administer training. If you know of a state or county training agency that works in your jurisdiction, consider engaging its services.

If none of these bodies exists in your jurisdiction, then you and the other potential participants in this training—who are the same individuals who will serve on the mental health court team once you have completed the training—should meet to identify potential facilitators.

Finally, the judge plays an important leadership role on every mental health court team. Consider asking him or her to help facilitate group discussion.

## Selecting a Delivery Strategy

In planning your training schedule, consider:

- **Your training needs:** *Developing a Mental Health Court* was developed primarily to train those interested in starting a new mental health court, but can also be used by existing mental health courts who wish to refresh or expand their knowledge of particular areas. If your jurisdiction is starting a new mental health court and is also new to collaboration between the criminal justice and behavioral health systems, you should complete the entire curriculum. If you are starting a new mental health court but already have another successful problem-solving court and are familiar with cross-system collaboration, or have an existing mental health court, you may want to skip certain parts where the subject matter is already familiar to you. **Tip:** *Review the overviews of all the modules and determine which ones—or parts thereof—you will complete. Note where you anticipate your group will wish to spend more or less time. As you go through the curriculum as a group, you may wish to reassess the team's priorities.*
- **Total training period:** The curriculum is designed to accompany the sort of planning process for starting a new mental health court that can take place over six to nine months of regular meetings and discussions. However, you can use the curriculum in any way you choose depending on the time you have available. You'll find sample delivery schedules below. **Tip:** *For sites beginning a collaborative planning process, using the curriculum over months rather than days will allow more exploration of the different considerations in starting a mental health court.*
- **Total training time:** The entire curriculum contains about 32 hours of group training time, which includes time to view all the Presentations and complete the accompanying Activities\*. If participants view the Presentations

**Note:** If your group has a facilitator, that individual is the best person to devise a delivery strategy tailored to the conditions specific to your jurisdiction and mental health court team. However, if your group is coordinating the curriculum without a facilitator, you'll want to read this section to help you determine a schedule for using the curriculum.

\*The times given to complete each module's Activities are conservative estimates and apply only to groups completing the Activities as instructed. Groups are encouraged to customize the Activities for their own needs and interests; however, the more you alter the Activities, the less accurate the time estimates will be.

independently, and group time is used only for Activities, the curriculum takes about 24 group hours. Each Presentation is self-paced; however, the Presentations are estimated to take approximately one hour to view. If two or more team members view the self-paced presentations together, encourage them to spend 10-20 minutes immediately following the session discussing what they have learned. The Activities Guides are estimated to take about three hours for each module. With unlimited time for the training, a team could view all Presentations and complete all Activities together. However, as most participants will have limited time, facilitators or other planners may need to require participants to view Presentations on their own prior to meeting to complete Activities. *Tip: Having participants view the Presentations independently can significantly reduce training time.*

- **Number of training sessions:** In many professions, training occurs through a single professional conference that occurs once a year. While this approach effectively limits travel costs to a single trip, it requires participants to focus on the task of learning for hours at a time and to absorb large amounts of information at once. Facilitators or other planners can arrange the ten modules in different ways to create from one to ten (or more) training sessions. *Tip: Particularly for groups unfamiliar with criminal justice-mental health collaboration, these materials will benefit from “down time” between modules for further reading and reflecting on how the approaches in the curriculum would be applied locally. Covering the materials over numerous, widely-spaced sessions will likely make the training more effective for such groups.*

## Sample Delivery Schedules for Full Curriculum

### Sample Delivery Schedule I: Group time used only for Activities

(Individuals complete Prep Work and view Presentations independently)

Total group time: 24 hours

Note that because there are no Activities in the two introductory lessons, *Introduction to Behavioral Health* and *Introduction to Criminal Justice*, the schedule below does not contain any group time for these lessons. As a result, the group will need to watch the Presentations for these introductory lessons, as well as *Module 1: Understanding Mental Health Courts* independently before your first session. If you’d like your group to spend some time together discussing one or both of the introductory lessons, then you may want to schedule an additional preliminary session to do so.

Description	Number of sessions	Hours per session	Frequency of sessions
Activities for one module during each session	8	3	<b>Recommended:</b> Once or twice a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; twice a week; once a week
Activities for one-to-two modules during each session	6	4	<b>Recommended:</b> Every other month; once or twice a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; twice a week; once a week
Activities for one-to-two modules during each session	5	4-5	<b>Recommended:</b> Every other month; once or twice a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; over one week
Activities for two modules during each session	4	6	<b>Recommended:</b> Every other month; once a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; over one week
Activities for two-to-three modules during each session	3	8	<b>Recommended:</b> Every other month; once a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; over one week; over three days

## Sample Delivery Schedule II: Group time used to view Presentations and complete Activities

(Individuals complete Prep Work independently)

Total group time: 32 hours

Description	Number of sessions	Hours per session	Frequency of sessions
Each of the first three modules once a week, then the session for the Module 1 Activities on the day following the Module 1 Presentation. Module 2 Presentation during the following month, with the Activities session soon thereafter. Repeat each month for subsequent modules	18	1 hour each for first three sessions; then alternate between 3 hours (to complete Activities) and 1 hour (to view presentation) for remaining sessions	<b>Recommended:</b> Generally twice a month (but see Description in the left-hand column) <b>Other options:</b> Over one month; over two months; over four month
Presentations for the two introductory lessons and Module 1 during first session, then Module 1 Activities the following day. Presentation and Activities for one module during each subsequent session	8	4	<b>Recommended:</b> Generally once a month (but see Description in the left-hand column) <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; twice a week; once a week
Presentations for the two introductory lessons and Module 1 presentation and Activities during first session. Presentations and Activities for one-to-two modules during each subsequent session	6	4-6	<b>Recommended:</b> Every other month; once or twice a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; twice a week; once a week
Presentations for the two introductory lessons and Module 1 presentation and Activities during first session. Presentations and Activities for one-to-two modules during each subsequent session	5	6-8	<b>Recommended:</b> Every other month; once or twice a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; over one week
Presentations for the two introductory lessons, Module 1 presentation and Activities, and Module 2 presentation and Activities during first session. Presentations and Activities for two modules during each subsequent session	4	8	<b>Recommended:</b> Every other month; once a month <b>Other options:</b> Over two weeks; over one week

## Convening the Group

See Resource 1 on page 6 for a Checklist for Convening the Group

For groups interested in creating a new mental health court program, it's important to make sure everyone who will be involved in developing, implementing, and running your community's mental health court participates in the curriculum. For groups involved with an existing mental health court, include a representative of every group that has a stake in the topic or topics you will be covering. That may be the full group described below.

An ideal group participating in *Developing a Mental Health Court* that is creating a new mental health court program will vary from community to community. However, the group will benefit from including at least one of each of the following individuals:

- Judge who would be presiding over the court
- Corrections official
- Prosecutor
- Defense attorney
- Court coordinator
- Case manager
- Behavioral health clinician
- Probation official
- Consumer
- Family member of a consumer

Enlist the judge in your efforts to convene the group. S/he will likely be helpful in inducing the other individuals to participate.

## Collecting Basic Data

*See Resource 2 on page 7 for a Checklist for Collecting Data*

The following information will be useful for jurisdictions considering starting a mental health court. Teams on existing courts may want to collect some of the same data, depending on the particular issues they are addressing. It's best to gather this data before your group's first meeting. It is important to know whether or not your jurisdiction collects data that would enable you to answer these questions. You may also wish to use this list as a basis from which to expand your jurisdiction's current data collection efforts.

- Percentage of law enforcement calls for service that involve an individual with a mental illness
- Dispositions of law enforcement calls for service involving people with mental illnesses (e.g., how many are arrested, taken to the emergency room, diverted to other community resources?)
- Percentage of current jail inmates with mental illnesses
- Percentage of jail inmates with mental illnesses in past years receiving mental health treatment or psychotropic medications in jail
- Percentage of jail inmates with mental illnesses who have been involved in treatment in the community
- Specific diagnoses of jail inmates receiving mental health treatment or psychotropic medications in jail
- Average length of stay for inmates with mental illnesses compared to that of the general population
- Types of charges of jail inmates with mental illnesses compared to those of the general population (e.g., what percentage are felony or misdemeanor, violent or non-violent)
- Percentage of all current jail inmates who have five or more prior bookings
- Percentage of jail inmates with mental illnesses who have five or more prior bookings
- Costs resulting from the 25-50 heaviest users of jail, detoxification, psychiatric hospital, emergency room, and community-based mental health services
- Average length of time required for competency evaluations

Note that *Developing a Mental Health Court* was designed with small groups of stakeholders from individual jurisdictions in mind, and the curriculum has been piloted in such settings (with the largest group composed of 20 or so individuals from two separate jurisdictions). However, larger groups may also make use of the curriculum or parts of the curriculum. For example, a statewide training might use *Module 1: Understanding Mental Health Courts* to introduce various jurisdictions to mental health courts, and might have attendees complete one or more Module 1 Activities in small groups. A statewide training might also use *Module 4: Target Population* with an audience from various jurisdictions with existing mental health courts. Attendees could be encouraged to share experiences, thoughts, and knowledge of new research on target populations with individuals from various other jurisdictions.

## Resource 1: Checklist for Convening the Group

Title	Name	Telephone	Email	Attending (Y/N)	Notes
Judge					
Corrections official					
Defense attorney					
Prosecutor					
Court coordinator					
Case manager					
Behavioral health clinician					
Probation official					
Consumer					
Family member of consumer					
Other: _____					

## Resource 2: Checklist for Collecting Data

Data	Who can provide	Obtained (Y/N)
Percentage of law enforcement service calls involving an individual with a mental illness		
Dispositions of law enforcement service calls involving people with mental illnesses		
Percentage of current jail inmates with mental illnesses		
Percentage of jail inmates receiving mental health treatment or psychotropic medications in jail		
Percentage of jail inmates with mental illnesses who have received treatment		
Specific diagnoses of jail inmates receiving mental health treatment or psychotropic medications in jail		
Average length of stay for inmates with mental illnesses compared to that of the general population		
Types of charges of jail inmates with mental illnesses compared to those of the general population		
Percentage of current jail inmates with 5 or more prior bookings		
Percentage of jail inmates with mental illnesses with 5 or more prior bookings		
Costs resulting from the 25-50 heaviest users of jail, detoxification, psychiatric hospital, emergency room, and community-based mental health services		
Average length of time required for competency evaluations		