

Southlake Center for Mental Health – Forensic Diversion Program

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Lake County Community Corrections

Lake County Indiana suffers significantly from high levels of criminal activity and violence linked to drug and alcohol use/abuse. Habitual drug offenders who are incarcerated in the Indiana Department of Corrections are predominately individuals who have been socially marginalized as a result of race, ethnicity, and financial status. According to the 2003 Northwest Indiana Quality of Life Council, 19.3% of Indiana prison inmates were convicted for controlled substance violations. Most of these individuals have not been provided drug treatment interventions that are of intensity, duration, and specificity to meet their needs to rehabilitate.

Through the combined efforts of Lake County Community Corrections and Southlake Center for Mental Health, and the combined funding of the Division of Mental Health & Addictions (DMHA) and the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Forensic Diversion Program was established to provide habitual drug offenders long term residential treatment services as an alternative to incarceration.

The Forensic Diversion Program continues to serve the most severely chemically dependent offenders within a residential setting, located at Lake County Community Corrections. The program structure provides intensive cognitive behavioral oriented therapy concurrent with a curriculum that targets residents' issues of criminal thinking

distortions, drug use, and when appropriate co-occurring disorders. Utilizing the combined resources and collaboration between the agencies' staff, Southlake Center for Mental Health and Lake County Community Corrections have demonstrated that relapse and recidivism can be reduced through cost-effective and proactive treatment. Offenders who successfully participate in this treatment are rehabilitated and reintegrated into society.

The Forensic Diversion Program began operations on October 29, 2004. The program provides convicted drug offenders with a 90-day intensive residential treatment program that addresses the offender's cognitive and behavioral processes as an alternative to continued drug use/trafficking and incarceration. Following completion of the residential component, the offender is under house arrest and the supervision of Lake County Community Corrections for a period of no less than nine months. During this period, the resident participates in aftercare services at one of the three mental health service providers in Lake County: Edgewater Systems for Balanced Living, Tri-City Mental health, or Southlake Center for Mental Health, based on the geographic location of their residence. The program supervisor, consulting psychiatrist and addictionologist, clinical therapists, and addiction technicians currently staff the Forensic Diversion Program.

Annually, the Forensic Diversion Program now screens and evaluates some 200 referrals and has the capacity to treat up 60 clients annually from fourteen counties in Northwest Indiana. The Indiana Division of Mental Health and the Indiana Department

of Corrections recognized this treatment model as the standard by which new programs will be measured. Remarkably, over sixty percent of the offenders who successfully complete the residential component of the Forensic Diversion Program, the home detention under the supervision of Lake County Community Corrections, and the aftercare services at a designated mental health treatment provider have remained drug free for their first year following acceptance into the program.

Since the programs' inception in 2004, the Courts, the Prosecutor's Office, the Public Defender's Office, private attorneys, and County Community Corrections facilities in seven counties have referred some 340 individuals for intakes and evaluations. To date, seventy-two individuals have been admitted to the Forensic Diversion Program. Of those who successfully completed the residential component, over sixty percent have remained abstinent from further drug use and are in compliance with Community Corrections supervision. This is compared with the national average of untreated habitual-drug-offenders who have recidivism and relapse rates in excess of eighty percent in their first year following release. The economic, societal, and human savings realized through this collaborative program cannot be understated.