

MEMORANDUM

October 7, 2016

TO: Public Safety Committee
Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst 

SUBJECT: Update – STEER (Stop, Triage, Engage, Educate, and Rehabilitate)

Expected for this session:

Lt. Mark Sheelor, Montgomery County Police Department
Jac Charlier, Director, Center for Health and Justice at TASC, Inc.
Meghan Westwood, Director, Avery Road Treatment Center/Maryland Treatment Centers

Background

Previously, the joint Committee has been briefed by members of the Criminal Justice Behavioral Health Initiative on efforts to examine the different places where people engage with the criminal justice system and provide appropriate diversion and alternatives to a path of arrest, court, and possibly a jail sentence. At this session, the joint Committee will be provided with updates on three of these efforts: STEER (Stop, Triage, Engage, Educate, and Rehabilitate), which works to connect people to substance abuse treatment rather than arrest and pre-trial programming, CORP (Comprehensive Reentry Project), which is working to find stable housing and services for people with substance abuse or co-occurring disorders as an alternative to jail, and the Mental Health Court, which expects to help offenders engage in appropriate treatment to stop recurrent criminal behavior due to mental health challenges. In addition, the joint Committee will hear from Department of Correction and Rehabilitation Director Green on efforts to move inmates with serious mental illness and/or competency issues out of the local jail and into a State psychiatric hospital.

STEER UPDATE

STEER is a joint initiative of the Montgomery County Police Department, the Police Executive Research Forum, Maryland Treatment Centers, and the Center for Health and Justice at TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities), Inc. Its goal is to direct people in need of substance abuse treatment away from jail to an intervention program. Police Officers

use a screening tool to decide whether a person is a candidate for this deflection. The risk assessment may be used by a Police Officer who is responding to a call for service or in an on-view situation. Charges can be held in abeyance while the person is seeking services.

A brief summary is attached at ©1-2. The joint Committee will note that the handout says that STEER creates a “warm hand-off.” The process for a “warm hand-off” is one that has also been discussed by the Healthy Montgomery Behavioral Health Task Force as a way to have greater success not just by offering information but by making a connection with the service. In the case of STEER, there is a community-based case manager.

The summary notes that for the first six-months, 86 individuals were referred to the STEER case manager and 32 have been successfully engaged in treatment.



STEER Police Deflection

Stop, Triage, Engage, Educate and Rehabilitate

STEER Overview: Stop, Triage, Engage, Educate and Rehabilitate (STEER) launched in March 2016 as a joint venture of the Montgomery County (MD) Police Department, Maryland Treatment Centers, Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and The Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. Evaluation is being done by George Mason University. STEER is a police deflection (i.e. pre-arrest/booking police diversion) initiative that incorporates *prevention* deflection and *intervention* deflection.

STEER Priority: Improved public safety – it's what citizens expect from the police but how that is done is the power of deflection: police and human services working together. STEER operates around the core value proposition of deflection, namely ensuring the "correct" movement of citizens either into the criminal justice system or away from it and towards the human services system, and as a result: 1) reducing crime, 2) (re)building community relations, 3) reducing drug use and 4) restoring the lives of citizens.

Evidence-Based Officer Decision Making. STEER begins during calls for service or on view situations during which police officers conduct a field risk-need screen (without the need to go to a district or lock-up) to determine if an individual fits a low-moderate criminogenic risk profile (using the Proxy Risk Tool) and high treatment need profile (using the CAGE substance use screen).

If eligible criminal charges are present, the charges can be held in abeyance if the individual voluntarily accepts a STEER *intervention* referral. If no criminal charges are present, the individual can still be referred to STEER in a *prevention* contact. Both elements of STEER reduce drug use thereby reducing crime. The citizen is offered a chance for treatment and help, without entering into the criminal justice system.

STEER creates a "warm handoff" from the officer to a 24/7 community-based case manager for full clinical assessment and referral to treatment resources to address their underlying substance use disorder and mental health challenges. The case manager focuses on rapid treatment access, retention, motivation, engagement and completion, and works with officers on the street to identify and engage prospective participants.



Opportunities & Lessons Learned

- 86 individuals have been referred to the STEER case manager since March 2016
- 32 have been successfully engaged in treatment
- Preliminary indicators show that engagement levels for this police deflected population (37.2%) are comparable to other brief intervention and referral compliance rates.
- Officers evidence-based risk-need tools to enhance and guide their decision-making in the field, reducing error and increasing effectiveness
- Deflection opportunities happen at all times of the day, and the system must be equipped to respond
- STEER is demonstrating significant levels of officer buy-in thanks in large part to the relationship with Maryland Treatment Centers
- The STEER case manager has a mobile office -- they can be in the vehicle, at the district, and on the streets following up with STEER participants.
- STEER offers an opportunity for police to receive formal training in the science of addiction and behavioral health
- STEER is proving to be an effective model for engaging people post-opiate overdose for both hospitals and law enforcement, suggesting that a STEER-like model could be a useful tool fighting the opioid overdose epidemic.
- STEER deflection provides a natural strategy to improve community relations by showing citizens the police know when a citizen needs help instead of needing to be arrested. STEER makes clear "the police are indeed here to help" and not "just to arrest".