

Title: Healthcare in the Court!: A Novel Transitions of Care Clinic Within a Community Court

Format: Poster

Abstract:

Background

We identified a need to provide access to low-barrier healthcare to connect recently incarcerated patients with primary, mental health, and substance use care and to provide medical care for patients who have court cases and/or are receiving services through the Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC) in Austin, TX. The intervention was designed in collaboration with DACC, the medical team at the Travis County Jail and transitions of care experts working in the local safety net health system.

Methods

This project involved the development and implementation of a mobile clinic within DACC which provides many services, including case management. The care team is composed of a primary care and addiction medicine provider, a nurse, medical assistants, a medical administrative clerk, and a care coordinator. Patients are seen the same day and linked to health care within a local federally qualified health center (FQHC). The clinic currently sees patients bimonthly.

Results

The clinic served 43 patients in the first 4 months of implementation. Of these patients, 56% had experienced previous incarceration. Of those, 66% had been released in the preceding 6 months or less. The patients were predominantly male, with a large proportion of patients self-identifying as Hispanic. 74% of the patients were uninsured, and more than 50% were experiencing housing instability or homelessness. These patients were found to have high rates of mental illness, including depression, anxiety, PTSD, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. They were also found to have high rates of substance use disorders, particularly stimulant use and tobacco use. Hypertension was the most common medical condition noted. 37% were linked to further healthcare within the local FQHC. Limitations to data collection include that information was based on chart review prior to standardization of information gathered during history-taking.

The creation of a low-barrier primary care clinic within a community court is a novel approach to support diversion efforts and to provide transitions of care for recently incarcerated individuals. One of the key barriers to linking patients to care is lack of access to both a reliable phone and transportation. By integrating our healthcare services within the case management services already being provided at DACC, we have been able to help address these barriers.

Future directions include creating a transitions of care clinic system in consultation with Transitions Clinic Network, incorporating more mental health services within the clinic and increasing the frequency of the clinic operations to reach more patients.