

Accountability Court Funding Program FY'24 Enhancement and Innovation Grant Proposal

Department: Treatment Services

Program to be served by grant: Hall County Drug Court, Hall County H.E.L.P. Program and Veterans Treatment Court, Hall County DUI Court, Hall County Family Treatment Court, and Hall County Parental Accountability Court

Grant Solicitation Release Date: September 6, 2023

Grant Application Deadline: September 29, 2023

Total Budget Request: \$114,455.22

Match Requirement: 12% cash match total (based on CJCC calculation) \$15,607.53

Project Description

In an effort to better utilize resources across all of our accountability court programs, our agency will restructure the Hall County Drug Court program and Hall County H.E.L.P. Program (Mental Health and Veterans Court) beginning in January 2024. The major component of this restructure will be to create a new "Co-occurring Track" to target individuals with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. Dual-diagnosis participants who are enrolled in any accountability court in Hall County shall be referred to this new Co-occurring Track. Currently, the Hall County H.E.L.P Program has a capacity of 90 participants and 72% of participants are considered dual-diagnosis. In the restructure, the H.E.L.P Program will retain its SPMI Track (Severe and Persistent Mental Illness) and Veterans Track and will add this new Co-Occurring Track. Currently, 11% of Hall County Drug Court participants qualify as co-occurring and will transfer out of the Drug Court and into the new H.E.L.P Program Co-occurring Track in January. By making these changes, we will be able to better share treatment resources across the agency and best address the treatment needs of our participants. Following the restructure, the Hall County H.E.L.P. Program would have three distinct tracks: SPMI, Veterans, and Co-occurring. The Hall County Drug Court program would have three distinct tracks: Alpha Track (high-risk/high-need), Bravo Track (moderate-risk/moderate need), and the REACT Track (high-risk prison re-entry). We anticipate the new Co-occurring Track to have an immediate census of over 70 participants who meet the clinical criteria for dual-diagnosis and the track will have a general capacity of 90 participants/

The REACT Track re-entry program was absorbed into the Hall County Drug Court program in February 2023. Potential participants are identified for the REACT Track while incarcerated in the Georgia Department of Corrections prison system. Individuals complete the RSAT program at our local Correctional Institute and when they are transferred to the Transitional Center, they officially enroll in the Drug Court - REACT Track. Since February, the REACT Track is averaging 4 new enrollments per month and currently has a census of 21 participants with a projected census cap at 40 participants.

As a result of this restructuring, we are seeking grant funding through the Enhancement and Innovation Grant to fund a full-time case manager for the new Co-occurring Track of the H.E.L.P. Program as the immediate census beginning in January will be 73 participants. Our existing H.E.L.P Program case manager would remain assigned to the SPMI and Veterans Tracks of the program. We are also seeking funding for a full-time counselor for the REACT Track of Drug Court. With the projected census numbers of 40 REACT participants, and the unique challenges of the re-entry population, we will require a

dedicated full-time counselor for providing appropriate treatment dosage and clinical case management services.

We are seeking funding to provide peer support to be shared among all of our accountability court participants. Our agency currently utilizes peer support individuals for our mental health court program and the results of this relationship have had a profound impact on rapport with clients and trust in the program. We are seeking to expand our MOU with our local RCO, J's Place Recovery to fund CARES peer support specialists to all programs to help promote long-term recovery from substance use. These peer support individuals will assist our courts with recovery coaching, aftercare planning, case management, and support services within our community.

We are requesting funding to partner with ProGeneX to provide pharmacogenetics testing for participants. Research indicates that many individuals go through lengthy trial-and-error processes in order to find medications that work best for their genetic makeup. Pharmacogenetics testing detects potential drug interactions and risks, individual estimated metabolism rate and direct relation to mental health and other prescribed medications. Nearly 42% of our participant population is diagnosed with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. Many of our participants spend months going back and forth with their doctors to find the proper medication dosage to best address their symptoms and oftentimes experience adverse side effects along the way. Grant funding will allow us to provide this specialty testing for approximately 30 participants to serve as a pilot project in our jurisdiction. It is our belief that this service will assist willing and qualified participants in eliminating unnecessary medication trials and stabilize their treatment at a much faster rate thus reducing relapse and recidivism rates at the front end of treatment enrollment.

We are requesting funding to train 12 counselors within our agency in the Habilitation Empowerment Accountability Training (HEAT) curriculum to better serve our African-American males and those participants who identify with black culture. Research has shown that the HEAT curriculum improves retention and those who complete the curriculum graduate at substantially higher rates than those who do not. Our census data indicates that 10% of the participants receiving services from our agency are African American males. After participation in the RED Assessment, the Hall County H.E.L.P. Program is currently receiving technical assistance through American University on ways to improve outcomes for minority populations in the program. Having counselors trained in an evidence-based treatment curriculum such as HEAT would allow our agency to reach our goals of providing culturally competent and responsive services for our participants, thus enhancing participant outcomes and improving recidivism. Our request includes travel costs for HEAT facilitators to come to our agency to train our staff, costs of workbooks, and certification costs for staff.

Rx Disposal: As we continue to see increased rates of prescription drug abuse in our programs, we are seeking funding to secure a permanent medication disposal box at our location so our staff can supervise the safe disposal of unwanted and/or expired medications. Our data indicates that 9% of our participants are primary opioid users and over 50% of participants are considered polysubstance users with regular opioid use.

Needs Statement

As the Hall County H.E.L.P. program has grown 30% and the Drug Court program has grown 8% since December 2022, the need has arisen to restructure the program and allocate resources according to the treatment needs of the participants.

Since the Hall County Drug Court and Hall County H.E.L.P. Program have coexisted since 2006, both programs have treated similar co-occurring populations in each program, often duplicating resources per program. The creation of the H.E.L.P. Program Co-occurring Track will eliminate the need for duplicating treatment resources as all participants who meet the criteria for a co-occurring disorder will fall under one track and we will be able to consolidate group counseling schedules and better utilize our treatment staff. The creation of the new Co-Occurring Track will increase the H.E.L.P. Program's capacity by 67%, and will require the addition of a full-time case manager to track participant progress. Funding through this grant would alleviate much pressure on our program by providing much needed personnel and would cover all salary and fringe costs for January-June 2024.

The REACT Track is an innovative partnership between the Hall County Drug Court program, the Department of Community Supervision and the Department of Corrections. The REACT Track targets high-risk offenders who are returning from the state prison system and is designed to assist participants with community and recovery resources, as well as enhanced structure and accountability as they reach probation/parole status through DCS. Funding for a full-time REACT counselor would provide participants with the specialized counseling services and re-entry planning needed for this population. Grant funding would cover all salary and fringe costs for January-June 2024.

All of our accountability court programs could greatly benefit from the services of certified peer recovery specialists to encourage long-term community recovery support services. By partnering with our local RCO, we will be able to provide enhanced services to our participants and help them build connections with individuals who have a shared lived-experience and who can help them navigate struggles in their recovery journey. For these services, we would request funding for 8 hours of peer recovery services per week, provided by the RCO. Our objective is to connect participants with a peer-led group upon enrollment and again prior to graduation for added support in their recovery.

We are seeking approved funding to begin specialty pharmacogenetic testing for those participants diagnosed with mental health disorders. Our programs indicate that 42% of enrolled participants are diagnosed with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. Oftentimes, we see an increase in relapse and program infractions at the onset of treatment enrollment most of which are directly tied to instability with mental health. By partnering with ProGene-X, we will provide pharmacogenetic testing to approximately 30 participants which will help identify genetic markers and generate individualized reports for metabolic rates, drug interaction indicators, and other factors to better identify appropriate mental health medication and dosing by their medical physician. We believe this unique service will assist participants in achieving medication stability at much faster rates thereby decreasing relapse and recidivism rates.

As the results of the Project Red Assessment indicate, our courts could greatly benefit from culturally responsive treatment options for our participants. In general, our accountability court programs, and programs across the nation, have historically less successful outcomes for young African American

males. We believe that access to this curriculum will improve treatment engagement and lead to positive program outcomes for this target demographic.

Grant funding for a permanent medication disposal box would allow our programs to better monitor access to unapproved or expired medications by participants. Our treatment staff currently meet with clients to conduct medication counts on all mood-altering prescribed medications and having a disposal box would allow staff to have a greater degree of certainty that medications are being disposed of properly. We anticipate that access to these medication disposal boxes will result in decreased relapse on old medications and a safer home environment for family members and children.

Project Goals

1. Accommodate case management needs of newly formed “Co-Occurring Track” with an anticipated census of 70-90 participants. By hiring another full-time case manager, we will be able to serve all participants effectively as the entire census among all three H.E.L.P. Program tracks is projected to expand to 150 participants.
2. Accommodate the unique counseling needs of the REACT Track of the Hall County Drug Court program. Individuals who are returning into the community following an extended incarceration require additional services. By hiring a full-time counselor, we will be able to facilitate REACT re-entry treatment groups and individual counseling sessions for these participants.
3. Successfully incorporate peer services into wider operation of all of our accountability court programs. Having the ability to connect our participants to peer services will increase the likelihood of long-term recovery support and reduce recidivism.
4. Decrease trial-and-error related to mental health medications and dosing by providing pharmacogenetics testing for eligible participants. By identifying appropriate medications based on genetic markers, participants will be able to establish effective treatment plans with their medical doctor and achieve mental health stability at a faster rate thus decreasing rates of recidivism and relapse at the onset of treatment enrollment.
5. Incorporate evidence-based, culturally responsive programming for young African American males in our accountability court programs. The HEAT curriculum has been shown to increase program retention for young African American men and is structured to promote positive community engagement from an Afrocentric perspective.
6. Increase access to safe medication disposal options for all accountability court participants, especially those who have been diagnosed with an Opioid Use Disorder and increase supervision and accountability for unused and expired medications.

Project Activities and Services

Funding will pay for a full-time case manager position with the Hall Co. HELP Program to address the restructuring of the program and the addition of the new Co-Occurring Track. Funding of this position will allow the program to immediately increase by 67%. Funding will pay for a full-time counselor position with the Hall County Drug Court devoted to the growing REACT Track, an innovative reentry track to target high-risk/high-need individuals returning from the state prison system. This position will have an immediate caseload of 21 participants, with the capacity to increase to 40 participants within the year. Funding will support access to peer recovery resources for our accountability participants for approximately 8 hours per week as agreed with our local RCO. Funding will pay for pharmacogenetic

testing for eligible participants to develop appropriate medication and treatment plans thus reducing relapse and recidivism rates at the onset of program enrollment. These projects provide a direct cost-savings to our county and allows for more immediate access to treatment to participants. Funding will pay for 12 counselors to be trained in the HEAT curriculum, thus addressing the need to provide more culturally responsive services in our programs per the RED Assessment Tool. Funding will purchase a medication disposal box for all participants to access in order to safely dispose of unused or expired medications, thus reducing the likelihood of relapse on those medications.

Resources Needed

This grant will allow us to establish an additional full-time case manager for the Hall County H.E.L.P. Program and help us provide immediate case management services to the newly formed Co-Occurring with an immediate projected census of 73 participants. This grant will allow us to establish a full-time counselor devoted to our growing REACT Track of the Hall County Drug Court program. The current REACT census is 21 participants and expected to double within the year based on enrollment numbers. Additionally, funding is needing to strategically incorporate and integrate peer services into the fabric of our accountability court programs, provide specialty testing for program participants to address mental health medication needs, incorporate an evidence-based culturally responsive curriculum for African American males, and provide a central location to safely dispose of unused or expired medications.

*We will use salary for a county funded position as match for this grant. Hailey Solomon, Drug Court Lead Counselor (Dept. 163).