

Accountability Court Funding Program FY'23 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, Hall County Parental Accountability Court, Dawson County Treatment Court, and the Hall County Sheriff's Department – Jail Division

Grant Solicitation Release Date: September 6, 2022

Grant Application Deadline: September 30, 2022

Total Budget Request: \$51,502

Match Requirement: 12% cash match total (based on CJCC calculation) \$7,023

Project Description

The Hall County H.E.L.P. Program (Mental Health and Veterans Court) has experienced an increase in program census of 78% since January 2022. In addition to the significant census growth, referrals to the program have grown. From January 2022 to August 2022, our program has experienced an increase in program referrals of 271%. Due to current staffing capabilities, we are only able to take in a fraction of those participants deemed eligible for program participation which leaves a length waiting list of approximately 30 participants each week. We are seeking grant funding through the Enhancement and Innovation Grant to fund a full-time counselor position in order to expand our services and enroll eligible participants at a faster rate. Hall Co. HELP Program is currently averaging 70 active participants each month with only 2 counselors and 1 full-time case manager position. By adding an additional counselor, we could expand our services to a capacity of appx. 90 participants which would eliminate our waiting list and allow immediate access to treatment for those deemed eligible. In addition to the regular mental health court case load, this additional clinical would take on participants enrolled in our Veterans Treatment Court track of the program which has also experienced an increase in growth within the past few months. A full-time clinician is vital to the continuation and growth of our program as our local community service board has significantly cut back on services available in our area leaving many individuals without any available mental health treatment. We hope to provide much-needed treatment to this vulnerable population through funding provided in this opportunity.

The accountability courts of the Northeastern Judicial Circuit (Hall County specific) will collaborate with the Hall County Sheriff's Department and Hall County Jail to provide additional substance use/mental health and ancillary services to incarcerated participants. This grant award will help us expand weekly psychiatric services and pay for administrative and supervision fees for the work release program. By paying for the weekly administrative and supervision fees associated with Work Release, we will relieve a substantial financial burden to eligible participants who would face longer retention stays at the local jail. We will be able to enroll eligible participants into our programs at an expedited speed and move those in need of housing to work release to begin securing employment and saving funds for residential placement. Historically, individuals who were eligible for work release would stay longer due to the length of time to save needed funds for release while also paying the weekly supervision fees. This grant and partnership with our local jail will alleviate that burden to participants allowing them to be released

from custody sooner, which ultimately provides a cost-savings to our county and provides more immediate access to treatment. Additionally, grant funding will pay for an additional 4 hours of psychiatric services provided at the jail by contracted staff (Avita). A psychiatric nurse practitioner has agreed to provide psychiatric assessment and medication management services for incarcerated individuals associated with the accountability courts at a contracted rate. This will provide much-needed services in the jail and allow individuals to become stabilized on medications at a faster rate and provide continuity of care after release from custody.

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 54% 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 medications and dosing to best address their symptoms oftentimes experienced adverse side effects along the way. Grant funding will allow us to provide this specialty testing for approximately 15 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.

Needs Statement

Since the beginning of the year, our programs have experienced continued growth in referrals and program enrollments. The most notable program growth is seen in Hall Co. H.E.L.P. Program (mental health/veterans treatment court) with an increase of 78% census and 278% referrals from January to August 2022. The need for another full-time counselor is paramount in order to properly absorb this growth and provide vital services to this vulnerable population. We have never experienced such significant census growth at such a rapid pace and we cannot keep up with demand with current staffing size. By adding an additional counselor, we will be able to expand our program census to keep up with referrals and provide faster access to treatment for those individuals deemed appropriate. Currently, we are one of the few options for mental health treatment in our area as our local CSB has cut back on available services. Funding through this grant would alleviate much pressure on our program by provided much needed personnel and would cover all salary and fringe costs for January-June 2023.

Currently, our jail collaborates with Avita Community Partners to provide telehealth psychiatric services for a total of four hours one day per week. All inmates requesting/requiring mental health assessments for diagnostic and medication purposes are seen by this contracted psychiatric nurse practitioner. Due to the limited time, it can be several weeks before a participant can be seen which delays much needed medication services and possible enrollment in to one of our programs. Funding through this grant would expand the available hours and add an additional day of services, which would greatly benefit all participants in need and alleviate some resources at the jail.

An additional need we have identified and are addressing through this grant application is financial assistance to pay for required weekly supervision/administrative costs for Work Release. We frequently identify eligible participants for program enrollment but are unable to immediately release them or enroll in services due to lack of housing. Participants will request a move to Work Release as a condition

of their bond in order to secure employment and save needed funding for residential placement. By collaborating with our local jail, we will alleviate this financial burden allowing participants to save funds faster and be released from custody at an expedited rate.

A final project we are seeking approved funding to begin is specialty pharmacogenetic testing for those participants diagnosed with mental health disorders. Our programs indicate that 54% 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 appx. 15 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.

Project Goals

1. Decrease wait time to program enrollment to the Hall Co. HELP Program for eligible participants by funding a full-time counselor position to alleviate workloads strained by recent program growth. By hiring another full-time counselor, we will be able to immediately increase program census by appx. 20-25 participants who would otherwise have to wait several weeks to months for program enrollment and treatment related services.
2. Increase psychiatric services at the jail. We will add four hours per week for direct telehealth services with a psychiatric nurse practitioner for diagnostic mental health services. This will directly benefit incarcerated individuals by decreasing the wait time for services and reducing barriers to program enrollment.
3. Decrease time spent in local jail and expedite enrollment into programs. By paying the weekly supervision and administrative costs associated with our local Work Release program, we will be able to enroll eligible participants into our programs faster and allow them to move from general population to Work Release granting them the opportunity to secure employment and save needed funds for residential placement. By relieving the financial burden of weekly Work Release fees, we will allow participants to save funds faster and be released from custody at an earlier rate, which ultimately provides a cost-savings to our county and more immediate access to treatment for eligible participants.
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.

Project Activities and Services

Funding will pay for a full-time counselor position with the Hall Co. HELP Program to alleviate the significant program growth experienced over the past several months. Funding of this position will allow the program to immediately increase census by appx. 20-25 participants and eliminate a waiting list consisting of several weeks to months for program enrollment. Funding will pay for the expansion of direct psychiatric services by adding four additional hours per week with our contracted psychiatric

nurse practitioner. All services will be delivered directly at the Hall County jail and will prove effective by decreasing enrollment time to accountability courts and residential treatment programs, decreasing incidents of relapse and AWOL status at onset of programs, and increasing participant engagement in treatment by providing direct services while incarcerated. Additionally, funds will be utilized to pay for weekly supervision fees associated with our Work Release program which will allow participants to secure employment while incarcerated and save funds for residential placement at faster rates leading to earlier release dates. Finally, funding will pay for pharmacogenetics 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.

Resources Needed

This grant will allow us to establish an additional full-time counselor position for the Hall Co. H.E.L.P. Program and immediately increase program census which has experienced a growth of 78% since the start of the calendar year. Additionally, funding is needed to increase psychiatric services, as the jail's current budget does not allow for increased hours at the contracted rate, work release administration and monitoring fees so participants can be released from custody faster and decrease cost to the community, and provide specialty testing for program participants to address mental health medication needs.

*We will use salary for a county funded position as match for this grant. Jeanette Gurr, HELP Program Coordinator (Dept. 163).