

# FRESNO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH - OUTCOMES

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**PROGRAM TITLE:** Behavioral Health Court (BHC)    **PROVIDER:** Department of Behavioral Health

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:** Mental health clinicians, a dedicated probation officer, and case manager serve on a multi-agency treatment team to serve eligible and suitable adults in the justice system. The BHC team consists of the judge, defense and prosecuting attorneys, probation officer, FSP Personal Service Coordinators and other FSP representatives, a jail liaison through Corizon Health, the BHC Coordinator, and occasionally clinicians/interns conducting psychiatric assessments. The goals are to improve public safety, reduce recidivism, and improve mental health access and treatment for those in the justice system.

This adult problem-solving collaborative court first began in the fall 2008 and slowly added participants the first two years. Its first graduate was in 2011 from the original 2008 group of three participants. As of June 30, 2015 a total of 104 individuals were referred, 80 accepted, and **cumulatively 56 have exited of which 16 graduated**. A person with an SMI who has pled guilty or nolo contendere to an eligible felony who wishes to voluntarily participate is eligible (no sexual violence assault, serious personal injury to others, sales of drugs, or gang involvement conviction is eligible). Designed to be an 18 month program with four stages, the average time for completion by graduates in this report time period is about 2 years, 2 months. Two people graduated in about 18 months and two people took as long as a little over 3 years.

**From January 2014 through June 30, 2015 a total of 53 clients were served**, with 92.5% having co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders. A total of 38 new defendants were referred to BHC in 2014 through June 30, 2015, 23 were accepted, and **25 exited of which 8 graduated (7 graduated in FY 14-15)**. The passage of Proposition 47 resulted in 6 terminations as a result of their reduction of charges giving them the option to opt-out of BHC, one person eligible for opting out graduated at the same time, and one person chose to stay in BHC even with reduced charges. Probation was willing to continue supervision and the client chose to continue for greater personal accountability.

There were 20-29 active cases on any given day throughout the year, with BHC staffing discussions and hearings one afternoon every other week. As of June 30, 2015 there are a total of 28 active clients, with two on extended bench warrants in fugitive status and not really active. The most common diagnoses are (not in order of frequency) Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, Bi-polar disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, PTSD, and Polysubstance Abuse or dependence.

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## AGES SERVED:

☐ Children  
☒ Adult

☒ TAY  
☐ Older Adult

**DATES OF OPERATION:** September 2008 - present

**DATES OF DATA REPORTING PERIOD:** Jan 2014-Jun 2015

OUTCOME GOAL	OUTCOME DATA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40% of participants exiting each year will successfully graduate.<sup>1</sup></li> </ul> <p>Participants complete four phases that include: 1) Orientation and Beginning of Treatment (approximately 60 days but often longer to allow for substance abuse treatment); 2) Life Skills Building (minimum 90 days); 3) Maintain Wellness and Recovery (minimum 180 days); and 4) After-care and Independence (minimum 180 days). There are numerous activities within each area that are included in order to move to the next phase, such as drug abstinence, progress in medication compliance, progress in wellness and recovery action plan development and implementation, housing stability, and stabilization of the psychiatric condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce recidivism of program graduates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 of 25 clients (32%) who exited in the past 18 months successfully graduated. These graduates spent a range of 17 months to 38 months in the program. Of the remaining 17 exits, 6 opted out of participation when Prop 47 went into effect and their charges were reduced from felonies to misdemeanors. One transferred to another county, 1 timed out of the probation supervision period after 3 years in the program, 3 absconded, and the remaining 6 were due to non-compliance.</li> </ul> <p>As a new fiscal year baseline, 7 graduated in FY 14-15 out of 19 exits (36.8%)</p> <p><b>The cumulative graduation rate from inception through June 30, 2015 is 16 of 56 exits from BHC or 28.6%<sup>2</sup>.</b></p> <p>Two graduating individuals received their high school/GED diplomas while in BHC and two more became gainfully employed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The three 2014 graduates have had almost a full 12 months</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> This is an arbitrary goal developed with information gathered from a very small number of responding California mental health courts to our survey. National research indicates measuring a graduation rate can be misleading and not the best measurement of success. Research shows recidivism is positively impacted by involvement in a mental health court. Such courts are becoming an evidence-based practice.

<sup>2</sup> Not statistically valid due to such a small sample size.

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	<p>since their graduation and none have reoffended. The five 2015 graduates have not yet had a full 12 months out of court to determine recidivism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The 2013 graduate has not reoffended. Of the six 2012 graduates, one re-offended in 2013 and was successfully participating again in BHC, but opted out when becoming eligible under Prop 47 and reoffended the following month. This graduate had spent only 13 months in the program at her first graduation and then another 14 months when she opted out. The 2011 graduate has had no recidivism.</li></ul> <p><b>The cumulative graduate recidivism rate of 1 person of 11 individuals through 2014 is 9%, although that one person has had two incidents, bringing the rate to 18%.<sup>3</sup></b></p> <p>The three 2014 graduates had served a total of 105 days in jail the year prior to beginning BHC for four convicted charges. Post-graduation, 0 jail days or convicted arrests.</p> <p>The 2013 graduate had 2 convicted charges and served a total of 0 actual days in jail prior to BHC. Post-graduation, the graduate has had 0 jail days or convicted arrests.</p> <p>The six 2012 graduates had 16 convicted arrests among them for the year prior their entry, pled to 12, and served a total of 840 actual days in jail or an average of 120 actual days each. Post-graduation, the number is 1 convicted arrest with 19 jail days and a second incident with no jail time. The second incident of convicted arrest resulted in a failure to appear in court and the person is on bench warrant for arrest status.</p>
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<sup>3</sup> Not statistically valid due to such a small sample size.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improvement in coping skills, behavior, and productive use of time</li></ul>	<p>Prior to BHC entry, the one 2011 graduate had 3 convicted arrests and served 86 actual days in jail. Post-graduation, he has had no convicted arrests and no jail time.</p> <p><b>Cumulative jail days through 2014 of the graduates in the year prior to participating in BHC totaled 1,031 actual days. Post-graduation, 1 graduate reoffended and spent 19 days in jail, with the second incident an outstanding bench warrant and no jail time yet recorded.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In order to graduate, participants must regularly attend therapy, learn new coping tools, show consistent improvement in behavior skills and increase their productive use of time. 100% of the graduates showed such improvement.</li></ul>
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### DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION(S):