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Whatcom County Criminal Justice Treatment Account 2023-2025 Plan



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WHATCOM COUNTY

Planned Amendment for Whatcom County 2023 – 2025 CJTA funding

Whatcom County developed this initial 2023 – 2025 CJTA plan in early February, 2023 using the historic biannual amount allocated by CJTA, a total of \$644,836. As per statute, we convened the CJTA panel for consensus of the plan on February 14, 2023 and submitted the plan to Whatcom County Council for approval, on March 15, 2023. We submitted the Panel and County Council approved plan to HCA on April 14, 2023.

After plan submission, Whatcom County received the 2023 – 2025 CJTA State contract noting the biannual amount allocated to Whatcom County had increased by \$6272 from historic totals. Given the necessary steps needed to update the CJTA plan; (reconvening CJTA Panel for consensus, and re-submitting the plan to Whatcom County Council for approval) prior to the 10/1/2023 submission deadline, Whatcom County requested allowance to re-submit the original 2023 – 2025 CJTA plan using the historic biannual amount of \$644,836 with the commitment of submitting an updated plan reflecting the increased 2023 – 2025 allocation on or before January 31, 2024. Whatcom county submitted the original plan to State CJTA reflecting the historic biannual amount and added this “Planned Amendment” component to the original plan.

Overview

Whatcom County received \$651,108 in Criminal Justice Treatment Account Funds (CJTA) from the Washington State Healthcare Authority (HCA) for the 2023 – 2025 biennium. CJTA funding is subject to a planning process which includes assessing local needs, developing a plan, and making recommendations to a local Panel as indicated in statutory authority (RCW 71.24.580). The planning process concludes with the Panel’s recommendations for awards, oriented toward filling gaps left by evolving changes which impact the substance use disorder service system. Changes such as those caused by the pandemic, diversion of people from the criminal/legal system into treatment, a growing need for substance use disorder assessments, and existing grant funding for MOUD services in the jail were considered by the Panel when developing the CJTA plan and recommendations for the 2023-2025 biennium.

Background and History of the law for CJTA

In 2002, the Washington State Legislature passed laws to reduce prison sentencing for non-violent drug offenses. The Legislature determined that there would be savings from those prison reduction acts which they formalized into law (RCW 71.24.580). The Legislature further theorized that funding from the Criminal Justice Treatment Account (CJTA) could be placed into substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and support services to prevent recidivism in the criminal/legal system. In subsequent updates of the law, the legislature opened funding restrictions to allow recovery support services, and later added specialized funding for Drug Court (recently renamed “Recovery Court”) related services. In addition, there is a requirement that 30% of CJTA funding be used for best or innovative practices.

Summary of Expenditures & Panel Recommendations

The Whatcom County CJTA Panel has met several times since 2018, and made recommendations for the following services; substance use disorder assessments for people in the jail, residential treatment service availability, rental assistance for Recovery Court participants, Recovery Court case management, and a Medication for Opioid Use Disorders (MOUD) program in the jail. The proposed services were seen as gaps in the substance use disorder continuum of care for people with non-violent drug offenses. Due to limited funding, the Panel prioritized service needs for Recovery Court participants as a primary concern.

Whatcom County received a total of \$322,418 in State CJTA funds in the last year which was allocated to the gaps described above. Of that amount, \$146,737 was intended for Recovery Court related services from a specialized CJTA fund. After the onset of COVID-19, most CJTA funding continued to be utilized however due to the low vacancy rate in Whatcom County few places were open to house people participating in the Recovery Court Program (RCP), thus the rental assistance funding was not well utilized. In addition, the SUD assessor was on leave for an extended time with no staff replacement. Funding in the amount of nearly \$25,000 was reduced from rental assistance and SUD assessments, and added temporarily to the Whatcom County Jail’s MOUD program. The remainder of CJTA funding was fully expended for the State biennium 2021-2023.

2023 – 2025 Proposal and Rationale:

The local CJTA Panel is linked to the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (IPRTF) which has labored since 2015 to divert or prevent incarceration when and where possible. If incarceration is necessary, the IPRTF has supported fully functioning behavioral health services to ensure appropriate access during transition from the jail and to ensure ongoing stabilization and recovery in the community. A description and detail of the Task Force’s work can be found at this link:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/2052/Incarceration-Prevention-and-Reduction-T>

The IPRTF continues to prioritize additional behavioral health services at every point in the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM). The SIM is a National consensus-based theoretical model developed to show various phases of the criminal/legal system where people with behavioral health issues can be intercepted or diverted so that their needs for treatment and care are appropriately addressed. In 2022, a team of subject matter experts, the Behavioral Health Gap Analysis Team (BHGAT) was appointed to update the Whatcom County SIM reflecting current gaps and needs for the behavioral health and criminal legal interface. See the link for the Whatcom County model at this link:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/67214/6122-BHGAT-SIM-UPDATE>

With this background knowledge, the local CJTA Panel reconvened on December 6th, 2023, to discuss and update the recommendations made by Whatcom County Health and Community Services Department for the 2023-2025 biennium. The Panel elected to continue with the same basic plan as identified in April of 2023, with a few exceptions. The Panel increased the Admin to reflect the additional funding total. They decreased the treatment contract, as other funding was identified to support this program, increased the rental assistance and prioritized SUD assessments at the jail and in the community, which was rated as a high priority by the BHGAT team on the updated SIM. These services are a necessary component of diversion and re-entry for people who may/have entered the criminal/legal system.

2023-2025 CJTA Biennial Allocations

Service Categories	CJTA	CJTA Supplemental	Percent Biennial Total
Admin 10%	\$65,110.80		10%
SUD Jail Assessments	\$160,163.00		25%
Treatment	\$82,522.00		13%
Rental Assistance*	\$22,563.00	\$86,352.20	17%
Jail MAT	\$20,000		3%
RCP Case Management*		\$214,367.00	32%
TOTAL	\$350,388.80	\$300,719.20	100%

*Best Practice & Innovative

Finally, the State requires a mention in the County plan update of the local match for CJTA funding. Since the Whatcom County Recovery Court will receive a direct benefit of funding in the amount of \$214,367, the County will demonstrate a match of at least that amount (dollar for dollar) for each quarter in the Revenue and Expenditure Report through the local Behavioral Health Sales Tax Funds.

Conclusion:

A total of \$651,108 of CJTA funding was approved by the panel and will be administered by the County for the 2023 – 2025 biennium.

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