

Racial Equity Pocket Questions

What are the racial impacts?

The social worker position funded in this grant is primarily tasked with diverting individuals from the criminal justice system to more appropriate mental health service options. People experiencing mental health and substance use concerns tend to be the most vulnerable in our community and racial and income data of this population is consistently disparate from the overall community demographics. Mental health care data suggests that there are differences among racial, ethnic, and income groups' ability to access and continue mental health care. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown that negative impacts are disparate for certain sub-groups in the greater population. This grant focuses on reaching the most vulnerable in our population and connecting them to resources to improve wellbeing.

Links:

[Black Indigenous and People of Color \(BIPOC\) Mental Health Fact Sheet | Resources to Recover \(rtor.org\)](#)

[Mental Health Disparities - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

Who is or will experience burden?

Mental health and social service providers will have additional clients in need of services and support. This grant provides for additional mental health positions to support an anticipated increase in client numbers and need for sustained care over time to meet an existing community need. Metrics collected will guide future resource needs and program changes.

Who is or will experience benefit?

Members of the community with mental health or substance use disorders will be better connected to appropriate services and supported in their efforts. This benefit extends to family and community members who may be less affected by individuals experiencing these difficulties when behavior manifests in disruptive ways. The police department will be enabled to co-respond with an officer and a social worker in order to more fully determine best options in situations involving mental health and substance use issues. This ability to provide more appropriate services has been shown to reduce criminal actions in the future by the affected people.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Mental health services are under resourced and not robust enough to provide consistent and supportive care to individuals with mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders. This lack of system capacity has resulted in inappropriate criminal justice system involvement for people suffering from these issues.

Some people fear the stigma of seeking help for mental health or substance use concerns due to community beliefs. People can also have concerns due to mistrust of the mental health or medical field because of historical disparities in treatment and outcomes.

In addition, many people lack the financial resources necessary to afford mental health and substance use treatment and care. Coupled with limited options for health insurance and limited coverage of treatment options for some people with health insurance, accessing and continuing care for these issues can be extremely difficult.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

While this model of diversion and service provision is being used nationally and shows success in reducing criminal justice involvement and reducing crime related to these issues, this model is mostly new to this area outside of Chapel Hill Police Department's Crisis Unit work. We anticipate that success will be mirrored here, but the data gathered will tell the story of program impacts. For this reason, multiple metrics will be tracked to determine if this effort is effective in reducing criminal justice involvement and overall negative effects from a personal and community perspective.

There is a possibility that certain people will not take advantage of the mental health and substance abuse resources in this program due to concerns about potential stigma related to seeking assistance and appearing weak to others. These concerns are not limited to this model program and reflect a larger issue with stigma and mental health/substance abuse treatment. Efforts continue to combat this concern and the social worker in the police department could make strides through training and education of community members to reduce this concern.