

June 2014

Longitudinal Evaluation of Crisis Mental Health Services and Involuntary Commitments in Washington State

BACKGROUND

In 2014, the Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to conduct a comprehensive study of crisis mental health and involuntary treatment services in the state (see page 2). State expenditures on crisis mental health and inpatient psychiatric care exceed \$100 million per year—about one quarter of the total mental health budget.¹ Little is known, however, about the outcomes for the approximately 35,000 adults receiving these services every year.

This study aims to track longitudinal outcomes for adults receiving crisis mental health services, including individuals with involuntary psychiatric inpatient commitments. Outcomes to be analyzed include subsequent jail bookings, emergency department utilization, outpatient care, medication adherence, subsequent hospitalizations, and mortality. This project will also examine factors associated with these outcomes for both inpatient psychiatric treatment and crisis diversion alternatives. Finally, a review of state practices and research literature will be conducted to assess the evidence on the effectiveness of various practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ◆ What are the latest utilization rates for inpatient psychiatric beds in community hospitals throughout the state? Where are capacity needs greatest and how can these needs be addressed most effectively?
- ◆ What are the characteristics and treatment histories of adults who use crisis mental health or psychiatric emergency services? Are there evidence-based alternatives that can reduce inpatient admissions (or re-admissions)?
- ◆ What factors are associated with successful treatment outcomes for crisis and inpatient psychiatric care? Can these services be targeted or enhanced to improve effectiveness of interventions?

STUDY METHODS

- ◆ A longitudinal repeated measures analysis will be conducted to assess changes in utilization (i.e. jail, emergency department) in the periods before and after mental health treatment.
- ◆ Propensity score matching methods will be utilized to identify appropriate comparison groups from the study population.

¹ <http://clientdata.rda.dshs.wa.gov/ReportServer/>

Legislative Direction

[The] Washington state institute for public policy [will] complete a comprehensive assessment of the utilization and capacity needs of crisis mental health services provided by the Department of Social and Health Services. The study shall include, but not be limited to an update to statewide utilization and capacity figures for evaluation and treatment facilities, inpatient psychiatric beds, and regional support network-funded crisis facilities, including an estimate of the effect of the implementation of chapter 280, Laws of 2010 and chapter 335, Laws of 2013 on the capacity of the involuntary commitment system. The department shall work with the institute as needed on data collection procedures necessary to identify commitments associated with newly implemented standards;

- a) A longitudinal study of outcomes and public costs for adults receiving regional support network-funded crisis response services compared to adults evaluated for involuntary commitment who are not subsequently committed, and adults who receive a seventy-two hour involuntary commitment. Outcomes may include subsequent jail bookings or convictions, use of publicly funded medical care, and deaths; and
- b) A review of practices in other states regarding third-party initiation of a civil commitment petition, and an assessment of the comparative effectiveness of this change compared to other alternative practices for which comprehensive studies are available.

–2014 Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6002

Related research:

[Inpatient Psychiatric Capacity in Washington State: Assessing Future Needs and Impacts \(Part One\)](#)
[Inpatient Psychiatric Capacity in Washington State: Assessing Future Needs and Impacts \(Part Two\)](#)
[ITA Investigations: Can Standardized Assessment Instruments Assist in Decision Making?](#)