

Overview

Newark Community Solutions seeks to re-engineer how justice is achieved in Newark, New Jersey, and the surrounding Essex County area. Headquartered in the Newark Municipal Courthouse, Newark Community Solutions is a team of social workers and criminal justice professionals who work to improve the quality of life in the communities they serve in partnership with the Newark Municipal Court, the Essex Vicinage, University Hospital, and numerous community-based service organizations. The diverse range of services offered through Newark Community Solutions all share the core goal of treating people with dignity and respect and improving relationships across systems and communities.

Our Approach

- **Providing Alternatives to Traditional Court-Processing**

Newark Community Solutions provides justice practitioners in both criminal and civil courts a broad range of diversion and sentencing options, including community service, drug treatment, counseling, and housing referrals. Every year, Newark Community Solutions diverts hundreds of low-level criminal cases from traditional court, impacting over 8,000 cases since the program's launch in 2011. The program recently started providing similar diversion options to Landlord Tenant courts in Essex and Bergen counties by connecting tenants in eviction proceedings with rent relief and other critical social services.

- **Supporting People with Mental Health Conditions**

In 2017, with funding from the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, Newark Community Solutions launched a mental health initiative in its municipal alternative-to-incarceration program. The program provides a tailored response with onsite care and direct referrals



to treatment providers for participants with mental health needs. Building on lessons learned through this initiative, Newark Community Solutions partnered with the New Jersey Judiciary to launch a pilot for mental health consumers released pretrial. As the “system navigator,” Newark Community Solutions provided assessment and clinical case management services to people with significant mental health needs who were being released pre-trial from the Essex County Correctional Facility under New Jersey’s bail reforms. The program aimed to swiftly identify people with mental health needs while they are in custody and link them to



community-based treatment and support services immediately upon their release.

■ **Helping Crime Victims**

In 2017, Newark Community Solutions launched an initiative dedicated to serving young men and women who have been exposed to violence and trauma. Since then, the program has evolved to provide specialized clinical case management and counseling services to community members and individuals connected to Newark Community Solutions' various justice-involved programming. In 2021, Newark Community Solutions expanded its victim service portfolio to provide hospital-based violence intervention services as one of University Hospital's community partners.

■ **Engaging the Community**

Maintaining a presence in the community is a central component to programming at Newark Community Solutions. Whether it is delivering meals to non-ambulatory Newarkers during the pandemic or creating virtual court "pop-up" centers across the city, Newark Community Solutions seeks to respond to the immediate needs of the people it serves. Newark Community Solutions participates in a number of local stakeholder groups designed to improve public safety and deliver mental health, substance use, and housing services throughout Essex County. Newark Community



Solutions has built strong relationships across diverse sectors, both convening and supporting interdisciplinary community outreach efforts to ensure equitable access to services across the legal, healthcare, and social service systems.

■ **Involving Youth in Community Justice**

Youth Impact Newark (formerly the Newark Youth Court) is a citywide afterschool program that trains its youth members to handle real-life cases involving youth who have been cited for low-level offenses such as vandalism, fare evasion, assault, and truancy. Since 2008, the program has offered meaningful, restorative alternatives to school- and court-based punishments, including community service and educational workshops. Beyond resolving cases, Youth Impact Newark functions as a robust youth development program for its members, who are Newark high school students from across the city who often have been impacted by the criminal justice system themselves. Members participate in enrichment activities like college visits and information sessions as well as professional development workshops.

For More Information

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