

# Adult Holistic Defense Case Management Program

## Introduction

Adult Holistic Defense Case Management (AHDCM) is a partnership between Santa Barbara County Public Defender and Family Service Agency (FSA), made possible by a grant from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. The goal of the program is to stabilize lives, reduce recidivism, and create safer communities through innovative and individualized case management that addresses the dynamic risk factors for the criminal behavior of clients.

## Importance

- Holistic defense is a cultural shift from focusing on the criminal act and resulting punishment, to a client-centered model that reduces recidivism by stabilizing offenders' lives.
- Holistic defense focuses on the *entirety* of the client's life and provides a web of existing community-based support and interventions aimed at addressing the underlying *criminogenic needs* (changeable risk factors) that may have contributed to the individual's criminal activity.
  - For example, a man arrested for shoplifting may have substance abuse or mental health issues; he may be homeless; he may lack education. If those needs aren't successfully addressed, it is highly likely he will end up back in the system.
- AHDCM differs from existing holistic defense models in that it is (1) a partnership between a community service agency and the Public Defender's office that (2) focuses on addressing psychosocial and criminogenic needs as intermediate outcomes in the reduction of criminal behavior.
  - AHDCM might connect the man arrested for shoplifting with substance abuse treatment, bridge housing, educational programs, and/or employment assistance, depending on his specific criminogenic needs. As his life stabilizes—he finds affordable housing, reduces his substance intake, and finds steady employment—his propensity to reoffend is expected to decrease.
- This is one of only a few HD programs in the U.S. even though there is a growing consensus that more intensive, client-centered approaches are needed to address the risk factors that contribute to individuals' continued involvement in crime.
- Successful implementation of this model in Santa Barbara County could lead to replication and impact policy in the State of California and, potentially, nationwide.

## Research Study

- AHDCM is a two-year pilot program in the City of Santa Barbara that will lay the groundwork for an eventual randomized controlled trial (RCT). To meet ethical standards for research with human subjects, the project will be subject to institutional review at the UC Berkeley.
- The UC research team will measure (1) increased participant psychosocial and criminogenic needs stability, leading to (2) reduced recidivism.
- AHDCM aims to demonstrate that existing legal and social services can be better leveraged to create an innovative, affordable, and effective model for individual and broader criminal justice reform.

## How the Program will Work

- The AHDCM program is modeled on the Bronx Defenders' Holistic Defense program.
- The Client, Public Defender Attorney and FSA's Holistic Defense Advocate, make up the holistic defense team.
- The Holistic Defense Advocate will embed in the Public Defender's office giving indigent clients access to comprehensive case management and a public defender attorney all in one location
- The Holistic Defense Advocate is an integral part of the defense team, working with the public defender, conducting assessments, and making referrals to treatment programs and social service providers.

## Adult Holistic Defense Case Management Program

### Determining if the Program Worked

- The study will track and measure a group of primary recidivism outcomes and expected intermediate outcomes in each of the five life course domains. The results will show if recidivism is reduced and how much, as well as which of the five domains contributed to the reduced recidivism.

### Team

**Santa Barbara County Public Defender** – The office currently has 37 attorneys who handled 23,000 cases last fiscal year countywide, of which 10,602 were low level offenses.

**Family Service Agency (FSA)** – FSA is a nonprofit social service organization that has served Santa Barbara County since 1899, providing diverse prevention and intervention programs to decrease risk factors that can lead to family and community instability, and diminished quality of health and life circumstances. Two of FSA's core competencies are case management and mental health counseling. In providing a myriad of social services and interventions to low and very low income clients, FSA works in close collaboration with other community agencies

**Researchers** – FSA has partnered with the UC Berkeley to assist with the development, implementation, and evaluation of AHDCM. Professor David J. Harding will serve as the Principal Investigator. Dr. Harding is an expert on research methods for causal inference, and his past research includes projects on the criminal justice system. Heather M. Harris, a Postdoctoral Researcher under Dr. Harding, will serve as Co-Investigator is responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. Dr. Harris has experience integrating administrative data from multiple sources and developing it for research purposes; Dr. Harris managed data collection and conducted the analysis necessary for the longest-ever follow-up of a criminal justice experiment. Wolfson Professor Lawrence W. Sherman of the University of Cambridge will advise them during the AHDCM pilot. Dr. Sherman is a preeminent scholar in the field of experimental criminology. His experience executing numerous experiments includes evaluations of the effect of hot spots policing on crime rates and the effect of restorative justice conferences on recidivism and victim satisfaction with the justice process.