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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan  
Social Justice Committee  
Monday, June 23, 2025 – 6:30 PM  
*This meeting was conducted via Zoom***

**MINUTES**

*CB8 Members Present:* Sarah Chu, Saundrea I. Coleman, Wendy Machaver (public member)

*Absent:* Jennifer Michaels

*Approximate Number of Public Attendees:* 11

**Item 1 – Discussion of Manhattan District Attorney Bragg's Pathways to Public Safety Program**

Speaker: Toni Mardirossian, Chief of Pathways to Public Safety, New York County District Attorney's Office

Ms. Mardirossian described the Pathways to Public Safety program at the New York County District Attorney's Office (DANY) which incorporates three programs: (1) prevention/intervention; (2) court-based diversion; and (3) re-entry. It is important to DANY that the public knows that the office has these programs, understands what they are doing, and why they are doing it. These programs are not soft on crime – they are evidence-based strategies to improve public safety.

**1. Prevention/Intervention**

- These programs include neighborhood and court-based navigators through external partners who work in the community and within the court system.
- Navigators are people with lived experience who work with community members struggling with similar issues. They build relationships with their communities – it often takes many months/years to gain people's trust. They can help people from arraignments to supportive housing referrals.
- They can take people from arraignments immediately to housing.

**2. Court-based Diversion**

- These programs provide pathways for people charged with crimes to be diverted from convictions through participation in programs or avoid incarceration. These programs include the following:
  - Judicial Diversion/Drug Courts
    - For people charged with a non-violent felony (commercial burglaries, stealing purse, drug dealing) who have both substance abuse disorders and mental health diagnoses. Eligibility is based on charge and clinical need.
      - The court has clinicians who can provide diagnoses.
      - DANY funds mental health experts to provide diagnoses.
      - This program was developed based on a concerning trend in drug courts that people were presenting with both substance abuse and mental health needs.
  - Mental Health Court
    - For people charged with violent and nonviolent felonies with serious mental health illnesses.
      - Requires consent from the District Attorney.

- Only funded to serve about 50 participants.
    - Drug courts and FATI serve more people living with serious mental health illnesses.
- Veterans Court
  - For veterans with mental health or substance use disorders. DD214 military discharge papers are required.
- Felony ATI Part (FATI)
  - No statutory exclusions for this program. People can be charged with violent felonies. Often these are individuals whose crimes were related to external pressures, such as negative social peers or who may have possessed a firearm out of community safety fears.
    - There is a very robust screening process to identify participants who can manage rigorous treatment programs.
    - Each participant receives individual treatment plans.
    - Exclusively funded by DANY through forfeiture dollars.
- Problem-Solving Courts
  - Manhattan Justice Opportunities (MJO), Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES), New Support Through Advocacy, Rehabilitation, and Treatment (NewSTART), and Midtown Community Court.
    - For people arrested in Manhattan on low-level offenses, they have the opportunity to engage in programs designed to address specific underlying needs (substance use, housing, mental health) **in lieu of prosecution or incarceration.**
    - 5 days a week/4 courts per week.
  - One of the goals of Problem-Solving Courts is to break the generational cycles and help participants change the trajectory of their lives.
  - Monitoring Engagement & Compliance
    - Programs respond to specific problems that a participant has; they will flood them with prosocial activities (such as employment) and services.
    - Most programs require participants to have a job or disability benefits to graduate.
    - Participants take a plea, and if they graduate from the program, their felony plea can be withdrawn and reduced to a misdemeanor, or an indictment can be dismissed.
    - If a participant does not successfully complete the program, they would receive the sentence they would have gotten if they didn't go through the program.
- Supporting Data and Outcomes
  - As of May 1st, 29% of felonies indicted in 2024 referred to the Pathways Program.
  - In 2022, DANY hired 7 deputy bureau chiefs to report to Pathways. They proactively reviewed every Manhattan case and assessed them for problem-solving courts or ATI.
  - Today, almost a third of felonies in Manhattan are being diverted. However, the courts need a lot more clinicians to manage this volume. A lot of case managers have high caseloads.
  - Four courts manage 1000+ indicted cases involving nonviolent and violent felonies.
  - When appropriate, restorative justice can be pursued.
  - These programs demonstrated reductions in recidivism and improvements in recovery, psychiatric stability, and community restitution

### **3. Questions & Answers with Toni Mardirossian (summarized for brevity)**

**Q: Can you speak to how the program incorporates community input or responds to neighborhood concerns?**

**A:** Community input is helpful and helps and provides pieces of the puzzle we do not have. Community members will reach out and let us know if the individual is exhibiting mental health issues. If they are young and don't have a lot of contacts or are away from family, it can be difficult to get information on needs driving the behavior.

**Q: How does the ATI program address racial and economic disparities in the criminal legal system?**

**A:** Since 2019, the criminal legal system has been under a microscope for well-earned criticism. It is a system that is holding a lot of failures of other systems. Studies tell us what can lead to criminal justice involvement - literacy, untreated trauma, etc. It is the worst system to deal with people because it is full of lawyers and lacks the social services needed. You see so many racial and economic disparities and those populations are underserved in other systems. It is better to invest in those systems and shrink the footprint of the criminal legal systems. Bail reform changed who is on Rikers, but we still see people who can't pay on Rikers. Almost all participants take Medicaid. A pervasive problem across the board is access to mental health services.

**Q: How are survivors of violence or harm consulted or considered in diversion decisions?**

**A:** Every prosecutor will ask a complainant, victim, or survivor what they think is a fair outcome. Sometimes people have unrealistic expectations. For extraordinarily serious behaviors, the risk to public safety is such that this person is not going to be eligible for the program even if the victim wants them to get help. Or it could be a low-level crime - like stealing a credit card, and the victim may want them to go away for five years. There's a need to manage expectations around programming. There is no guarantee that a person who needs treatment will follow through. A victim's perspective is important and is a factor, but not determinative of the approach that will be taken.

Restorative Justice brings the harmed parties together with the responsible party. Each party has a prep session before coming together. The person responsible can hear about the harm and what it did to the victim. If they can acknowledge that harm, they can make a plan moving forward, and the victim has a say in how to repair the harm. The single biggest problem is to get victims and witnesses to cooperate. We have a survivor's bureau, and time is something folks cannot give freely. Disparities for victims are the same disparities for the person responsible. A lot of victims are worried about getting hurt, and restorative justice requires the harmed party to participate. It needs to be the right case and the right person.

**Q: How do you address undiagnosed dyslexia among the justice-involved population?**

**A:** The clinical teams will find out if the person had an IEP. The Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) can sometimes access special services and benefits for people with cognitive, developmental, and literacy issues. One of our biggest struggles is getting people access and services. Medicaid pays for many of these programs - cuts to Medicaid would devastate us.

**Q: There are only 50 spots in Mental Health Court, but what is the demand?**

**A:** Medicaid pays for the actual services in the community, but clinicians paid through the Office of Court Administration (OCA) are the conduit between the court and community provider. This contract is through the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH). We can fill hundreds of spots. Instead, people are being served through FATI and Problem-Solving courts. We don't want to turn people away, but we divert them to the next best option.

**Q: How do you educate judges on problem-solving courts, and what is their participation level?**

**A:** Most problem-solving court judges get training, and there is an application to be part of these courts. They are especially interested in judges with an understanding of mental health issues and familiarity with treatment dispositions. We need more judges to serve in these courts.

**Q: How can you implement these programs in the hospital system?**

**A:** The hospital system works in a civil setting. You have to be a harm to yourself or others. In the civil process, the expectation is that you're going to be discharged. The criminal system is different. This is coercive care. We have leverage for people to get care. While it starts out coercive, hopefully, once someone sees the benefit to their life and finally engage with family or have a job, these sorts of things move from external to internal motivation. The hospital doesn't have that leverage. DA Bragg supported the Supportive Care Act to help people get access to the services they need after being discharged from the hospital. This would include intervention teams to follow the person after discharge, but we couldn't get that as part of the legislation because of the funding requirements.

**Item 3 – Old Business**

**No items of Old Business were discussed.**

**Item 4 – New Business**

**No items of New Business were discussed.**

**This meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm.**

***Saundrea I. Coleman and Sarah Chu, Co-Chairs***

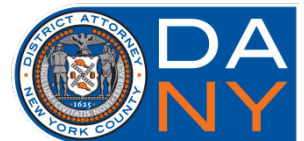
# PATHWAYS TO PUBLIC SAFETY



COMMUNITY BOARD 8  
2025

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Pathways Division – Gain an understanding of the principles, structure, and operations of the Division
- Learn the basics of problem-solving courts' history and purpose
- Understand the four felony problem-solving courts and the population each serves
- Restorative Justice – Learn what it is and opportunities for it within the criminal legal system



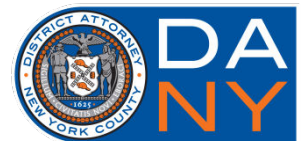
# PATHWAYS TO PUBLIC SAFETY

- Prevention / Intervention
- Court-based Diversion
  - **Judicial Diversion/Drug Court (Article 216)**
    - Targeted Needs: Substance use disorder (including alcohol)
    - Mental health track (DANY-funded)
    - Eligibility: Charge and need
  - **Mental Health Court**
    - Targeted Needs: Serious Mental Health Diagnosis
    - Eligibility: Charge and need
  - **Veterans' Court**
    - Targeted Needs: Mental Health / SUD
    - Eligibility: Charge & DD214
  - **Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Part (FATI)**
    - Targeted Needs: Individualized treatment plans
    - Eligibility: no statutory exclusions (catchall)
  - **Criminal Court – MJO, CASES NewSTART, Midtown Community Court**
- Reentry



# PROBLEM SOLVING-COURTS

- Problem-solving courts have evolved over the last 30 years
  - Now more than 3,000 drug courts and other PSCs nationwide
- Proven to reduce recidivism
- Cost efficient (compared to traditional criminal court process and incarceration)



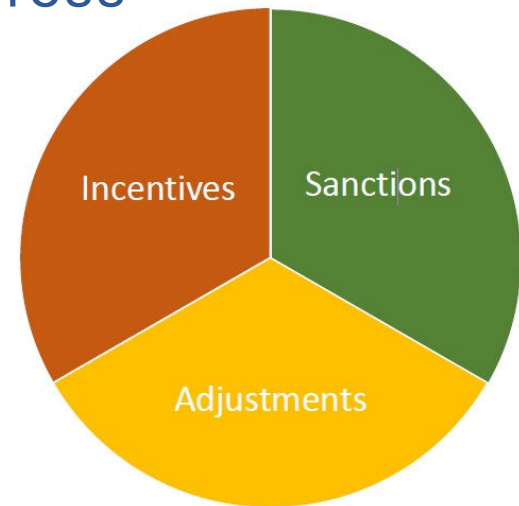


# GOALS OF PROBLEM-SOLVING COURT

- Reduce Recidivism
- Provide Tools for Recovery
- Psychiatric Stability
- Family Reunification
- Avoid Consequences of Criminal Record
- Victim Safety
- Standardization of Cases
- Provide Services for Children/Victims
- Prevent Injuries/Deaths
- Community Restitution
- Offer Personal Choice
- Provide Supportive Services
- Linkages with Resources
- Reduce/Prevent Opioid Deaths
- Improve Decision Making

# MONITORING ENGAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE

- Monitoring adherence to plans and compliance with court conditions
  - Responding to problems & progress
  - Incentives
  - Therapeutic adjustments



## CASE STUDY

JG  
Judicial  
Diversion

- **Instant Case Facts**
  - Nighttime break-ins of commercial establishments
- **Indictment Charges**
  - Burglary in the Third Degree, 140.20, 6 counts (JD eligible)
- **Criminal History**
  - 6 prior felony convictions, 21 misdemeanor convictions
  - Several pending Burg 3s in Queens and approx. 17 open Burg 3s in Manhattan
- **Additional Considerations**
  - Clinical need driving criminal behavior was obvious
- **Mandate**
  - Clinical recommendation: residential treatment
  - No rearrests throughout his mandate (20 months)
  - Not a “perfect” road
  - Graduated 2 years ago-NNA



## Referred to Felony Problem-Solving Courts

As of May 1 , 2025, **29% of felonies indicted in 2024** had been referred to Pathways for in-depth assessment.

## Pre/Post-Plea by Pathways Track

for People Referred into a Felony Problem-Solving Courts

As of May 1, 2025, there were 1,010 people with a case pre- or post-plea in a Pathways Track.

PS Court	Pre-Plea	Post-Plea	Total <i>People</i> with Cases Pending in Track (Pre/Post-Plea)
FATI	170	305	475
JD	136	342	478
MHC	12	38	50
VTC	2	5	7
Total	330	686	1,010