

Collaborative Justice Services (CJS)

Description

Collaborative Justice Services (CJS) offers a jail re-entry program for adults diagnosed with a mental illness released from Essex and Morris County Correctional Facilities. Upon referral from police, court, jail, and social agencies, CJS begins services immediately, starting intake and discharge planning on day one by using a consumer-centered, wellness-based approach. CJS assesses consumers' strengths and needs to develop personalized plans that aim to reduce or eliminate additional jail time by promoting therapeutic outcomes. The goals are to decrease arrests and incarceration, reduce repeated offenses, and improve access to mental health and social services post-release. CJS also provides mental health training for law enforcement officers to enhance awareness and best practices regionally.

Personnel

Collaborative Justice Services continues to benefit from high staff retention, fostering continuity and trust in operations. At the Essex campus, the team includes three Forensic Case Managers (FCMs) and a Program Director, all of whom operate both within the jail and in the broader community. At the Morris campus, the staff comprises one Program Director and one Forensic Case Manager, who similarly serve clients within the Morris County Correctional Facility and follow them in the community as needed.

Caseload

As of June 30, 2026, Collaborative Justice Services Essex is managing 43 active cases, illustrating engagement with the community and county systems. Referrals originate from a wide range of sources: the Mental Health and Medical Departments at Essex County Correctional Facility (ECCF), the Essex County Office of the Public Defender, Essex County Probation, and the Essex County Prosecutor's Office. Additional referrals come through the ECCF Social Services Department, Justice-Involved Services programs, state prisons, as well as self-referrals, family members, and internal CJS staff networks, reflecting a well-integrated consortium of justice, legal, and community stakeholders. At the same time, CJS Morris had 15 active cases on the same date. Referrals to this campus are made by the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, Morris County Correctional Facility, Morris County Public Defender's Office, Community Connections, community organizations, and Morris County Probation Services, underscoring similarly broad collaboration in that jurisdiction. This referral breadth across both campuses highlights CJS's strong interagency relationships and its capacity to engage individuals at multiple entry points within the justice system, whether entering through court systems, corrections, or community-based relationships. It also reflects CJS's active role in identifying and supporting individuals at risk of incarceration via direct, self, and family-initiated referrals. By mid-2026, both campuses were steadily serving clients across the entire referral spectrum, from legal entities to families, supporting reentry through tailored service planning, linkage, and discharge support.

Demographics

MHA's CJS program provides services to residents of Essex and Morris counties who are 18 years of age and older, are diagnosed with a mental illness and have a history with the justice involved system.

Gender: At the end of the fiscal year, self-reported gender for individuals served in CJS Morris was 80% male, 7% female, with the remaining 13% declining to specify. CJS Essex was 81% male and 19% female. **Ethnicity:** During FY 2026, CJS Morris provided services to individuals who self-reported the following races and ethnicities: 33% Caucasian, 40% African American, 7% American Indian/Alaska Native/Indigenous, 7% Asian, and 13% Unknown. CJS Essex provided services to individuals who self-reported the following races and ethnicities: 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0% Asian, 63% Black or African-American, 2% Multiracial, 2% Hispanic, 14% White, and 17% Not Reported. **Age:** CJS Morris provided services to 7% between the ages of 20-29, 33% between the ages of 30-39, 47% between the ages of 40-49, and 13% between the ages of 50-59. CJS Essex provided services to 20% of individuals were ages of 18 to 24, 37% are between 25 and 34 years old, and another 16% fall within the 35 to 44 age range. Those aged 45 to 54 make up 23%, while the 55 to 64 group represents 2%. Lastly, 2% of the population is between 65 years old or older.

Performance Outcomes

Performance outcomes for Collaborative Justice Services were systematically measured and monitored through the Mental Health Association (MHA), Quality Assurance (QA) Committee. During Fiscal Year 2026, Essex CJS tracked consumer recidivism to the Essex County Correctional Facility at key intervals, specifically within 30, 60, 90, and 120 days post-release. According to the QA threshold, fewer than 50 consumers were expected to return to jail within each of the 30/90-day and 60/120-day timeframes. Of the consumers monitored, 12 were re-incarcerated within either 30 or 90 days of their release, while only 5 were re-incarcerated within either 60 or 120 days, demonstrating relatively strong outcomes against the program's target benchmarks.

At the Morris campus, consumer recidivism was also monitored monthly for return to jail within 30, 60, 90, and 120 days following release. The QA threshold in Morris aimed to have fewer than five consumers re-incarcerated within 30 and 90 days, and fewer than ten within 60 and 120 days. During FY2026, no consumers returned to jail within any of the measured intervals at 30, 60, 90, and 120 days. These results underscore the effectiveness of discharge planning and community linkage strategies at the Morris location and reflect a highly successful year in terms of recidivism prevention.

During FY2026, CJS Essex successfully reduced consumers' county sentence by a total of 4,006 days. CJS continues to monitor the cost-effectiveness of its impact on county costs. In FY2026, the program saved approximately \$813,218.00 in county costs. (Please note the approximate cost to house a county inmate daily is \$203.00). Based on the data gathered, CJS will continue to monitor time saved for consumers both for county and state time.

During FY 2026, CJS Morris made significant strides in collaborative efforts with the Morris County Correctional Facility, the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, and the Morris County Public Defender's Office. Through these partnerships, staff successfully diverted individuals from potential incarceration, preventing approximately 364 county jail days. These efforts translated into substantial fiscal impact: the program delivered estimated savings of \$73,892.00 in county-level incarceration costs. This outcome reflects both the effectiveness of the diversion work and the value of close cross-agency coordination in achieving cost-avoidance and safer community outcomes.

Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

Essex

Collaborative Justice Services in Essex County distributed satisfaction surveys to consumers, hand-delivered, mailed, or left at their residences, with assurances that responses would remain confidential. Ultimately, 100% reported being overall satisfied with CJS services. These surveys align with best practice standards for preserving confidentiality and promoting high-quality, trustworthy data collection. Transparency about data use, secure collection methods, and assurance of anonymity all help build respondent trust and boost survey participation and honesty. In addition, best practices recommend monitoring and auditing survey processes to prevent data breaches and to maintain integrity—measures especially important when serving vulnerable populations. By assuring confidentiality and protecting identities, CJS not only met a notable satisfaction benchmark but also upheld ethical standards essential to serving justice-involved individuals with mental illness.

Gender

Of the consumers who responded to the survey, 50% were male and 50% were female.

Ethnicity

Of the consumers who responded to the survey, 50% identified as Hispanic and the other 50% identified as White.

Age

Of the consumers who responded to the survey, 50% were in the age range of 25-34 and the other 50% were in the range of 35-44.

Morris

In Morris County, surveys were distributed to consumers—either hand-delivered, mailed, or personally left at residences—all accompanied by sealed envelopes to reinforce anonymity. Recipients were informed that their responses would remain completely confidential, and they were offered multiple secure return options to ensure privacy. Recent survey results show a remarkable 100% satisfaction rate on key measures, including overall satisfaction, dignity and respect and staff availability. Furthermore, the program encourages self-direction and personal choice, with 100% of individuals reporting they are encouraged to make their own decisions and actively participate in their treatment goals.

Gender

Of the consumers who responded to the survey, 100% were male and 0% were female.

Ethnicity

Of the consumers who responded, 33.33% of the consumer identified as Caucasian, 33.33% identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 33.33% preferred not to answer.

Age

Of the consumers, 66.67% identified as being 25-34 years old, and 33.33% as 55-65 years old.

Program Highlights

- During Fiscal Year 2026, the CJS Essex program continued to strengthen its impact through comprehensive case management, strategic community partnerships, and collaborative advocacy efforts aimed at improving outcomes for justice-involved individuals living with behavioral health needs.
- During Fiscal Year 2026, CJS Essex staff successfully facilitated 217 community linkages, connecting participants to essential supports that addressed both immediate and long-

term needs. These referrals included access to mental health treatment, substance use services, stable housing, financial assistance, healthcare, transportation, and other community-based resources.

- During Fiscal Year 2026, to further strengthen cross-system collaboration, the CJS Essex Program Director conducted numerous in-service educational presentations throughout the fiscal year. These trainings increased awareness of behavioral health issues, highlighted the role of Collaborative Justice Services, and reinforced the value of treatment-focused interventions for justice-involved populations. Presentations were delivered to key criminal justice stakeholders, including the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, the Office of the Public Defender, Essex County Municipal Court, and the Essex County Correctional Facility. These outreach efforts enhanced interdisciplinary partnerships, expanded understanding of diversion opportunities, and reinforced a shared commitment to improving outcomes for individuals with behavioral health needs involved in the justice system.
- During Fiscal Year 2026, the CJS Essex Program Director, in partnership with the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, delivered 40 hours of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training to approximately 55 law enforcement officers.
- CJS Essex also remained actively engaged in agency-wide initiatives that promoted recovery, wellness, and community inclusion. Program representatives participated in the agency's Annual Consumer Achievement Awards, recognizing individuals for their treatment progress, recovery milestones, and personal accomplishments. Staff also supported the Annual Consumer Picnic, fostering social connectedness, health promotion, and meaningful engagement among consumers, families, and community partners.
- During Fiscal Year 2026, CJS Morris staff facilitated 83 community linkages, helping clients access a range of essential services, including behavioral health care, housing assistance, substance use treatment, employment resources, and other supports critical to successful community reintegration.
- In collaboration with the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, the Program Director led a total of 160 hours of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, reaching approximately 104 law enforcement officers and 36 mental health professionals throughout the year.
- In August 2025, Program Director attended the CIT International Conference held in Anaheim, California. The purpose of the conference is to bring together law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates and public safety leaders.
- Morris County CIT Program was awarded the 2026 Program of the Year at the 11th Annual CIT-NJ Conference and Awards.
- Throughout the year, CJS Morris consumers engaged in several community-building and social wellness events in partnership with other Mental Health Association of Essex and Morris (MHAEM) adult programs. These included a summer picnic at Hedden Park, a fall festival hosted at the Morris campus, and a holiday celebration organized by Holiday Express at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey. These gatherings play a meaningful role in promoting recovery, fostering social connection, and reducing isolation among participants.
- CJS also took part in the Annual Consumer Achievement Awards ceremony held at the Morris campus, recognizing the resilience, accomplishments, and personal progress of clients involved in the program. Celebrating these milestones helps to reinforce hope, highlight recovery journeys, and affirm the impact of supportive services.

Advocacy Activities

CJS actively participates in several key systems-level meetings across both counties, including the System Review Committee (SRC), Professional Advisory Committee (PACADA), the Mental Health Initiative, the Essex County Task Force, the Essex County Prosecutor's Mental Health Diversion Program, Review Team for the Morris County Prosecutor's Office Mental Health Diversion Program, the Morris County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Steering Committee, and the New Jersey State CIT Committee. These collaboratives provide an essential platform for interagency communication, service coordination, and strategic planning. In addition, CJS engages in regular case review meetings with the Essex County Correctional Facility, and partners closely with CFG (Correctional Focus Guidance) and the facility's Mental Health Team to support integrated care planning and transition support for incarcerated individuals.

Both Morris and Essex County CJS programs participate in the Statewide CJS Directors' Meetings convened by the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). These meetings serve as a critical venue for exchanging insights with peer programs from other counties, addressing challenges in service delivery, identifying best practices, and staying informed on policy changes, protocol updates, and new initiatives impacting CJS statewide.

CJS staff across both counties also work directly with consumers to build self-advocacy skills, promoting active participation in their recovery and encouraging involvement in peer-led organizations and advocacy groups such as self-help centers and NAMI-NJ. Through open dialogue and individualized support, clients are empowered to take a more active role in shaping their own treatment and in representing the needs of the justice-involved mental health community.

FY 2027 Goals

CJS staff will focus on increasing the total number of contacts with consumers, their families, and service providers. They will continue to work closely with the Public Defender's Office to enhance collaboration and support for consumer success. Additionally, CJS will persist in collecting data and closely monitoring all performance indicators to ensure ongoing improvement. The team will also continue to work with consumers to empower them to achieve their goals. To enhance their effectiveness, CJS staff will attend relevant trainings to expand their knowledge of best practice measures. They will also conduct trainings and presentations as needed to educate others about the role of CJS, including local law enforcement. Furthermore, CJS will maintain collaboration efforts with the Essex and Morris County Correctional Facilities to increase referrals and will continue working with the County Prosecutor's Office to provide CIT training to local law enforcement.

Morris Mental Health Diversion (MMHD) (Morris)

Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) (Essex)

Description

The Morris Mental Health Diversion (MMHD) Program, part of the CJS team, promotes recovery by engaging individuals, assessing their readiness for change, and connecting them to mental health, housing, and other supportive services. The program partners with local law enforcement and courts to divert eligible individuals from the criminal justice system at an early stage, with the goal of reducing recidivism and supporting long-term wellness and recovery.

The Essex Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) Program is a consumer-centered outpatient behavioral health initiative that diverts justice-involved individuals with mental health needs from deeper involvement in the criminal justice system by connecting them to treatment and community-based supports. Through strong partnerships with the Administrative Office of the Courts, Essex County Superior and Municipal Courts, Essex County Correctional Facility, Pre-Trial Services, Probation, Central Judicial Processing Court, and the Public Defender's Office, eligible individuals are identified early using a Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) screening tool and referred for a comprehensive clinical assessment while at Essex County Correctional Facility. The program provides a full continuum of care, including individual counseling, psychiatric services, peer support, and advocacy. By supporting diversion efforts in both Superior and Municipal Courts, CJR aims to reduce recidivism, promote recovery, facilitate charge downgrades or dismissals when appropriate, and improve long-term stability and successful community reintegration

Personnel

At MMHD, there is one Program Director, one Forensic Case Manager (FCM), and one Licensed Forensic Clinician. Staff work within the jail and in the community, completing intakes and developing treatment plans for consumers who are eligible for the Morris and Sussex County Prosecutors' Mental Health Diversion Program.

CJR is staffed by a multidisciplinary team consisting of one Program Director, one Peer Support Specialist, and two licensed clinicians (LCSW/LPC). Team members operate both within Essex County Correctional Facility and in the community, conducting screenings and intake assessments and providing treatment to eligible individuals approved for pre-trial release.

Caseload

As of June 30, 2026, MMHD had 28 active cases. During FY 2026, referrals for MMHD were made through the Morris County Prosecutor's Office, the Morris County Public Defender's Office, the Sussex County Prosecutor's Office, and the Morris County Sheriff's Department (Community Connections).

As of June 30, 2026, CJR had 32 active cases and served a total of 67 consumers during the year. During FY 2026, referrals for CJR were made through Essex County Correctional Facility, Essex Municipal Courts, and Probation.

Demographics

MMHD accepts individuals who are 18 years of age or older and are mental health consumers who are not yet incarcerated but are at risk for incarceration due to criminal involvement, as well as criminally charged adult residents of Morris County who have a mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorder and who are either: Pending discharge from or incarcerated in the Morris County Correctional Facility (MCCF); or Released, or charged on a summons, and facing indictable charges.

CJR accepts individuals who are 18 years of age or older, have a positive mental health screening, and are criminally charged adult residents of Essex County who are on pre-trial release and have third- or fourth-degree charges.

Performance Outcomes

Performance outcomes were measured and monitored through MHA's Quality Assurance (QA) Committee. MMHD consumer recidivism to jail within 30, 60, 90, and 120 days was monitored monthly. The threshold indicates that fewer than five consumers would return within 30 and 90 days, and fewer than ten consumers would return to jail within 60 and 120 days. During FY 2025, 0 consumers returned to jail within 30 days, 0 consumers returned within 60 days, 0 consumers returned within 90 days, and 0 consumers returned within 120 days.

During FY 2026, MMHD successfully collaborated with the Morris and Sussex County Prosecutors' Offices to admit 22 clients into the Prosecutors' Mental Health Diversion Program. As a result, staff successfully diverted consumers from a criminal sentence, avoiding approximately 45,615 prison days. For FY 2026, the program saved approximately \$9,259,845 in state costs as the approximate daily cost to house an inmate is \$203.

CJR's performance outcomes were measured and monitored through MHA's Quality Assurance (QA) Committee. One key metric tracked monthly was consumer recidivism to Essex County Correctional Facility within 30, 60, 90, and 120 days post-release. During FY 2026, 0 consumers returned to jail within 30 days, 2 returned within 60 days, and 2 returned within 90 and 120 days. Furthermore, beyond the initial 120-day follow-up period, four individuals were re-incarcerated, resulting in a 6% recidivism rate (4 of the 67 consumers served during the fiscal year). This reflects a 94% success rate in preventing re-incarceration among program participants.

CJR also collaborated effectively with Essex County Superior Court, Municipal Courts, and the Essex County Public Defender's Office to facilitate the dismissal of 15 cases. During FY 2026, Municipal Court Mental Health Diversion Programs were established in Newark, East Orange, and Irvington. By the end of the fiscal year, 15 consumers were actively participating in diversion, with 5 successfully graduating from the program.

Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

In Morris and Essex Counties, surveys were distributed and tallied to measure consumer satisfaction. All consumers were informed that their responses would remain confidential. They were provided with a sealed envelope to protect anonymity and informed of several methods for returning the surveys.

MMHD

Surveys were distributed to consumers resulting in a 63% response rate for the program. A core strength of the MMHD program is its exceptional client satisfaction and commitment to creating a respectful and empowering environment. Recent survey results show a remarkable 100% satisfaction rate on key measures, including overall satisfaction, dignity and respect, and staff availability. Furthermore, the program encourages self-direction and personal choice, with 100% of individuals reporting that they are encouraged to make their own decisions and actively participate in their treatment goals. The data also underscores the program's effectiveness in its primary mission, as 100% of clients reported receiving resources and support to avoid incarceration, demonstrating the program's real-world impact. **Gender:** Of the consumers who responded to the survey, 70% were female and 30% were male. **Ethnicity:** Of the consumers, 30% identified as Hispanic and 70% identified as Caucasian. **Age:** The exact ages of the consumers were collected. Of the consumers, 20% identified as being between 25–34 years old, 40% were between 35–44 years old, and 40% were between 45–54 years old.

Essex CJR

In Essex County, surveys were distributed and tallied to measure consumer satisfaction. All consumers were informed that their responses would remain confidential. Consumers were provided with a sealed envelope to protect their anonymity and informed of several methods for returning the surveys, resulting in a 33% response rate. 100% of respondents strongly agreed that they were satisfied overall with CJR services.

The 2026 Criminal Justice Reform (CJR) Satisfaction Survey shows overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, with 100% strongly agreeing that staff assisted them in achieving their goals. All respondents also reported active participation in treatment planning, feeling culturally understood, and being willing to recommend the program. Open-ended responses highlighted improvements in mental health, independence, access to employment and education, and overall life satisfaction. **Gender:** Of the consumers who responded to the survey, 100% were male. **Ethnicity:** Of the consumers, 40% identified as African American and 60% identified as Hispanic. **Age:** Of the consumers, 20% was between 18–24 years old, 20% were between 25–34 years old, one 20% was between 45–55 years old, and 20% was between 56–64 years old.

Program Highlights

- MMHD staff successfully connected clients to 174 community resources and linkages.
- The Morris Program Director and the Morris County Prosecutor's Office provided 160 hours of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training to approximately 104 law enforcement officers and 46 mental health professionals.
- A Morris County Mental Health Diversion graduate participated in four CIT trainings to educate law enforcement officers on effective communication strategies for interacting with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. By sharing their lived experience, the graduate helped enhance officers' understanding of de-escalation techniques and foster more compassionate and effective responses to individuals in crisis.
- The Morris County CIT Program was awarded the 2026 Program of the Year at the 11th Annual CIT-NJ Conference and Awards.
- 4 consumers successfully graduated from the Morris County Prosecutor's Mental Health Diversion Program, resulting in the full dismissal of their criminal charges.

- There were 12 new admissions into the Morris County Prosecutor's Mental Health Diversion Program and 10 new admissions into the Sussex County Prosecutor's Mental Health Diversion Program.
- In August 2025, the Program Director attended the CIT International Conference in Anaheim, California. The purpose of the conference was to bring together law enforcement, mental health professionals, advocates, and public safety leaders.
- MMHD consumers, in collaboration with other MHAEM adult programs, attended a picnic at Hedden Park, a fall festival at the Morris Campus, and a holiday party hosted by Holiday Express at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey.
- MMHD participated in the Annual Consumer Achievement Awards ceremony, held at the Morris Campus, recognizing the success and progress of program clients.
- CJR staff pre-screened 386 individuals using the Social Determinants of Health tool at Essex County Correctional Facility and completed 56 clinical assessments.
- CJR staff successfully connected consumers to 69 community resources and linkages.
- CJR, in partnership with Essex Municipal Courts, established Mental Health Diversion Courts in Newark, East Orange, and Irvington, meeting one Friday per month.
- CJR presented on Criminal Justice Reform at the American Counseling Association annual conference, and the program was highlighted in the association's monthly newsletter.
- CJR partnered with the Orange Police Department to conduct community engagement events in September 2025.
- CJR participated in a Mental Health Awareness event with CareWell Health.
- The CJR Program Director continues to offer Mental Health First Aid and Motivational Interviewing training to the community and within MHA.
- CJR participated in the Annual Achievement Awards, held at The Elks Lodge in West Orange, celebrating the mental health achievements of consumers.
- CJR participated in the annual boat trip, Halloween party, Thanksgiving party, holiday party, and annual picnic during the fiscal year. These events highlight MHA's commitment to fostering community.

Advocacy Activities

The MMHD Program Director participates as a member of the Review Team for the Morris County Prosecutor's Office Mental Health Diversion Program, the Morris CIT Steering Committee, and the NJ State CIT Committee.

The CJR Program Director and CJR clinicians actively participate in monthly review meetings for the Newark, Irvington, and East Orange Mental Health Diversion Courts. In addition, they continue to advocate for consumers involved in other municipal courts, Superior Courts, and civil cases by collaborating closely with community partners to ensure comprehensive support and representation.

Morris and Essex County staff work closely with consumers to assist them in developing self-advocacy skills by maintaining an open dialogue about various ways they can become involved in different levels of advocacy (i.e., self-help centers and NAMI-NJ).

FY 2027 Goals

MMHD staff will focus on increasing the total number of contacts with consumers, their families, and service providers. They will continue to work closely with the Public Defender's Office to

enhance collaboration and support consumer success. Additionally, MMHD will continue collecting data and closely monitoring all performance indicators to ensure ongoing improvement. The team will also continue working with consumers to empower them to achieve their goals. To enhance their effectiveness, MMHD staff will attend relevant trainings to expand their knowledge of best practices. They will also conduct trainings and presentations as needed to educate others about the role of MMHD, including local law enforcement. Furthermore, MMHD will maintain collaborative efforts with the Morris County Correctional Facility to increase referrals and will continue working with the Morris County Prosecutor's Office to provide CIT training to local law enforcement.

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JR staff will focus on increasing the total number of consumers served and expanding the number of contacts with consumers, their families, and service providers. They will continue to work closely with Essex County program partners, including the Administrative Office of the Courts, Superior Court, Municipal Courts, Central Judicial Processing Court, Pre-Trial Services, the Public Defender's Office, and Probation, to enhance collaboration and support consumer success. Additionally, CJR will continue collecting data and closely monitoring all performance indicators to ensure ongoing improvement. The team will continue working with consumers to empower them to reach their goals and will attend relevant trainings to enhance their knowledge of best practices. CJR will also conduct presentations as needed to educate others about the program and will maintain collaborative efforts with Essex County Correctional Facility to increase referrals.