

# Pertinent Issues

Research indicates prolonged incarceration and increased mental health symptoms are directly correlated; and in-patient care (in jails, hospitals, etc...) is more costly than community-based treatment.

Moreover, an increasing number of individuals with mental health treatment needs are identified during interactions with the criminal justice system. This growing problem is a national trend. One key in addressing this crisis is to identify people with a mental illness as early as possible in the criminal justice system. Once identified, the Diversion Program offers the Court viable alternatives to institutionalization and/or criminalization with careful consideration of mental health laws.

## Our Mission

*Lee Mental Health provides mental health advocacy and quality services for our community.*

Lee Mental Health Center, Inc. has been your community behavioral health care provider since 1969. The Center is a private, non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. We are also a United Way Partner Agency funded, in part, through contracts with the State of Florida's Department of Children and Families, the Lee County Board of Commissioners, private donations and grants received from the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, Cape Coral Community Foundation, The Able Trust, the Gannett Foundation, the City of Fort Myers and Ronald McDonald House Charities of Southwest Florida.

[www.leementalhealth.org](http://www.leementalhealth.org)

**Lee Mental Health**

2789 Ortiz Ave., Ft. Myers, FL 33905



# Program

# Diversion

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# Program Goals

# Program Description

# Services

## Lee Mental Health's Diversion Program strives to:

- Divert individuals with serious mental illnesses (including those with co-occurring substance abuse disorders) from unnecessary institutionalization and/or criminalization.
- Offer the Court viable alternatives to institutionalization and/or criminalization.
- Expedite resolution of legal matters complicated by issues related to mental illnesses.
- Reduce the risk of recidivism among individuals with a history of mental illness and related involvement in the criminal justice system.

This program is intended to help people transition from a secured setting, such as a crisis stabilization unit, jail, a civil state hospital, or a forensic facility, back into the community with the assistance of well-trained staff who are knowledgeable of the resources in the community.

Specifically, this program is for individuals with criminal charges in which a severe and persistent mental illness may complicate the legal proceedings. In essence, the Diversion Program serves as a bridge between the legal and mental health systems.

Further, the Diversion Program can often assist the Criminal Justice System in understanding, identifying and managing cases where a mental health disorder may be present.

- Advocacy and support related to Florida Statute Chapter 916
- State-approved competency restoration training
- Specialized resource coordination which includes linking individuals who have severe mental illnesses and a history of criminal involvement with resources in the community
- Community competency: individualized training of basic living skills
- Collaboration with Mental Health Court, Traditional Court and Probation

## Primary Activities

- Interpret Florida Statute 916
- Jail and community-based competency restoration training
- Expedite competency/sanity evaluations
- Provide screening and triage to offer options for Diversion
- Monitor legal proceedings
- Monitor conditional release
- Link to necessary resources
- Wrap-around community-based services
- Educate stakeholders and the community

## Contact

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