



Center for Health Care Services

The Bexar County Jail Diversion Program: An Economic Evaluation

What is the Bexar County Jail Diversion Program?

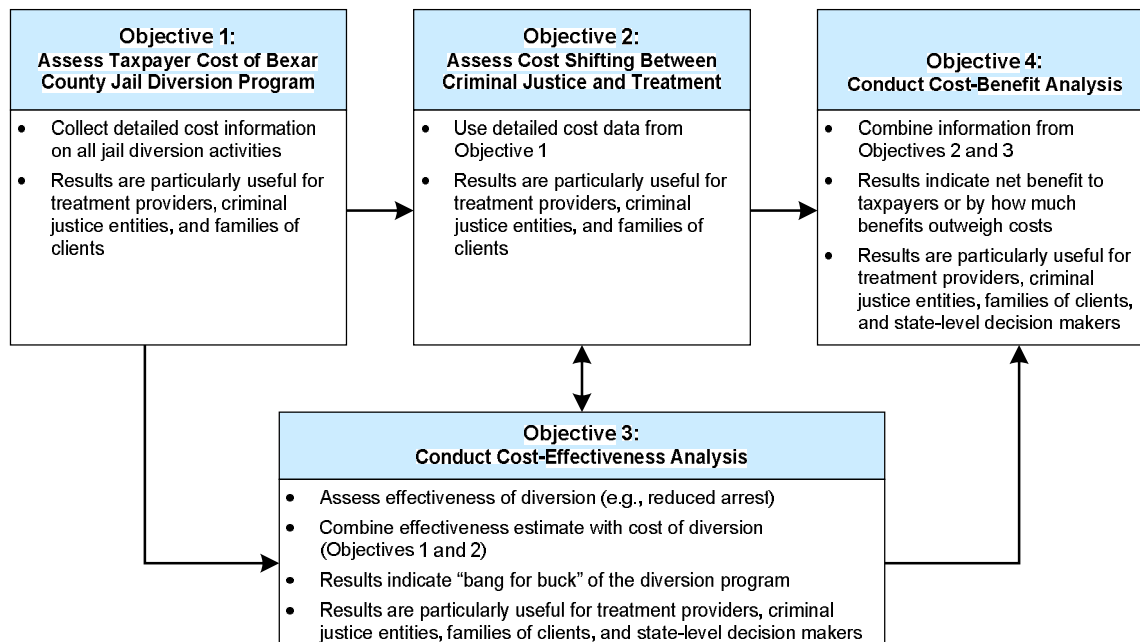
During the past 5 years, the Bexar County Center for Health Care Services (CHCS) has helped form a collaborative of agencies to address the unique needs of people with mental illness in the criminal justice system. The Bexar County jail diversion program moves people away from inappropriate incarceration and use of hospital emergency rooms toward the mental health treatment they need. The program holds the promise of more efficiently using taxpayers' dollars by reducing jail, court, and police costs and of helping people receive the treatment and community services they need to ultimately become contributing members of society.

RTI evaluators are working closely with CHCS and its community partners to assess the costs and benefits of the diversion program. The results will provide direct and practical guidance for treatment and service providers, families, and law makers.

What is the Economic Evaluation?

The National Center for Behavioral Health Solutions based in Texas, together with AstraZeneca, funded researchers from RTI to evaluate the diversion program. The economic evaluation will provide an accurate assessment of the Bexar County diversion program's costs and impact on the community, including organizations involved in law enforcement, adjudication, detention, supervision, and health services provision. Exhibit 1 shows how the four evaluation objectives build on one another.

Exhibit 1. Objectives of the Economic Evaluation



How Does a Successful Evaluation Help the Community?

RTI and CHCS designed the evaluation to address specific high-priority questions faced by the community, providing timely information to key stakeholders. Exhibit 2 matches selected features of the study with benefits to the community.

Exhibit 2. Features and Benefits of the Evaluation

Evaluation Feature		Benefit to the Community
Uses data on resources from a comprehensive list of stakeholders	à	Results will be directly relevant to each stakeholder involved with the diversion
Draws on a research design that is as sophisticated as necessary and practical to implement	à	Findings will be reliable and robust and thus can be confidently disseminated to other jurisdictions and used to help secure funding
Provides intermediate reports, written for a wide audience	à	Evidence on Bexar County’s diversion program will be timely and used throughout the community

Next Steps

The evaluation is well underway and is currently in the data collection phase. CHCS and RTI will provide intermediate reports throughout 2006 and will distribute a final report in mid-2007. For more information, please contact Mr. Gilbert Gonzales at CHCS at 210-358-9804 or via e-mail at ggonzales@chcs.hhscn.org, or contact Dr. Alexander Cowell at RTI at 919-541-8754 or via e-mail at cowell@rti.org.