**From BDAI President, Tom Bousamra:**

BDAI is busy **advocating for jail and criminal justice improvements** even if we are not able to get into jail to present our Life Skills classes, provide counseling or other services. Three of our efforts are as follows…in a nutshell:

**Community Partners** is a group that meets weekly with Captain Chris Barsheff. VP Toni Stanfield, Communications Coordinator Kathy Sanders and I, along with reps from other agencies, discuss ways to improve mental health services in the jail, better ways to divert people in substance abuse or mental health crisis away from jail and how to continue our supportive release programs during Covid-19, among a host of other issues.

**Community Crisis Assistance Team** is a coalition of a dozen agencies we have brought together that is planning a Crisis Stabilization Center, modeled in part on other communities, as an alternative solution to jail. Law enforcement officers, City police and Sheriff officers (two of our dozen partners) would someday soon (we hope) be able to bring someone (not a safety threat) to the center, someone who is experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis. Other agencies could refer as well. At the center, recovery coaches, counselors and/or medical or psychiatric personnel as needed would work to stabilize the individual and connect them to resources. They could also “sleep it off” under supervision if this was indicated. Now that we have mostly secured a venue, a fiduciary and an umbrella service provider, we are about ready to start writing the grant.

**Supportive release.** We have grant monies that are difficult to spend because of a lack of contact with the incarcerated. We have been helping those upon release struggling with poverty issues by providing BATA passes, food and clothing vouchers if needed. We have coordinated with court administrators and others to assist individuals with the costs of tethering, testing and/or T-housing for those who would not otherwise afford to participate in one of the court probation programs.

Just remember: We’re in this together. Be well.

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