

**Addressing Equity, Public Health & Justice Through an Innovative Pretrial Support
Project**

Tiffanie Leon-Synnott, JD
Honorable Lawrence Brown, JD
Ryan Quist, PhD

Level

Introductory

Track

Clinical/Legal

CE

CPA/BBS/BRN/CJER/MCLE

Bio

Tiffanie Leon-Synnott, JD, is a Supervising Attorney with the Office of the Sacramento County Public Defender. Tiffanie has been a Public Defender for over 20 years and specializes in the adults and youth facing the intersection of criminal justice, mental health and homelessness. She has helped to implement a range of innovations and programs to reduce the jail population, specifically focus on pretrial services and assist those with behavioral health needs. Her programs have been nationally recognized and award winning.

Judge Lawrence Brown was appointed to the Sacramento Superior Court by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2010. He currently serves as Supervising Judge, Collaborative Courts, presiding over three Mental Health Treatment Courts, Drug Court, Veterans Treatment Court, Reentry Court and the DUI Treatment Court.

Judge Brown has been recognized statewide for his efforts in behavioral health, including as “Behavioral Health Champion” by the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California in 2017 and Judicial Officer of the Year by the Chief Probation Officer of California in 2019. He also serves by appointment of the Chief Justice as vice-chair of the Judicial Council of California’s Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee.

Judge Brown is also a long-time adjunct professor at U.C. Davis School of Law, teaching courses on Judicial Process and Legislative Process. He also serves as President of the Anthony M. Kennedy American Inn of Court.

Ryan Quist, PhD, is the Behavioral Health Director in Sacramento County. His work in Behavioral Health started in Riverside County Behavioral Health where he worked in various roles for 18 years. Ryan remains very active in Statewide advocacy on Behavioral Health topics and was elected by other Behavioral Health Directors as Vice President for the County

Behavioral Health Directors Association (CBHDA). He co-chairs the CBHDA Medi-Cal Policy Committee. In Sacramento County, Ryan's focus is on mental health and substance abuse services for the homeless population, criminal justice population and bolstering the crisis continuum of care to prevent psychiatric hospitalizations. For children's services, he is dedicated to promoting field-based and school-based services and collaborating to support the foster youth and probation populations.

Narrative

Equity, public health and justice demands a new approach to pretrial services. Sacramento County recognized this demand and together in partnership with all justice partners, Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), and community, implemented an innovative approach that has shown positive outcomes that saves the county money, reduces recidivism and repairs lives. Recognized in 2020 by the California State Association of Counties with a challenge Merit Award, the Sacramento County Pretrial Support Project (PTSP) takes a holistic approach to pretrial services that is client centered with an emphasizes on mental health, housing, substance use and equity.

The PTSP designed an innovative interview-based need assessment tool that encompasses four evidenced-based tools: ACES (trauma), CAGE-AID (Substance screener), HSCR (homeless screener) and Brief Jail Mental Health Screen. Through holistic defense, law students use this tool to interview individuals and assess their needs in custody prior to arraignment. Once identified, individuals are linked to social workers in the Public Defender's office and safety discharge plans are coordinated with the Courts, Correctional Health, DBH, community and agencies to ensure that linkage, housing, transportation and supportive services are in place upon discharge. Individuals are also identified for diversion and collaborative court programs to secure early engagement. Recognizing the need for continued support and case management upon discharge, individuals are provided Community Intervention Workers and a Public Defender Social Worker while on pretrial.

Over the past 18 months, PTSP has assessed 2,808 individuals in custody and show that 81% of those assessed need social worker support, 57% mental health, 44% SUPT and 54% housing. Through this program, PTSP has linked/referred 786 individuals to mental health, 501 SUPT, and 474 to housing. With PTSP justice partners/community can feel confident that safety discharge plans are in place and individuals will be supported, linked to services and housed.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the intersection of public health, equity and criminal justice
2. Explain solutions to the decrease jail population, address racial disparity and address public safety through a public health approach
3. Explain how to navigate funding to support a public health approach to the criminal justice system and building bridges among silo departments