

## OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

Entrants must complete all sections for the entry to be considered by the Committee. A copy of this official entry is available at [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org)

County Snyder County  
County Class 7th  
Address P.O. Box 217, 9 West Market Street  
City, State, Zip Code Middleburg, PA 17842  
Primary Contact, Title Adam J. Wagner, Deputy Warden  
Contact Phone (570) 374-7912

### PROJECT INFORMATION

Title Snyder County Prison: Facility Dog Program

Project Start Date June 22, 2015

### PROGRAM NARRATIVE

**Enter program narrative that addresses each of the following subject areas, and does so in the order presented below. Entries must be submitting using this form. All sections must be complete. Entries submitted without the required information may be disqualified.**

**Problem Discussion** - Enter comments on the identified need and the background including what programs were in place before the current project, if any, and how it led to this effort. This section is worth 10 points.

At the Snyder County Prison, it is the responsibility of the mental health clinician (MHC) to complete mental health assessments and provide treatment to individuals who are at an increased risk of hurting themselves or others. Providing groups, monitoring patients, and helping them achieve mental stability is part of the daily routine of the MHC. To accomplish this, the MHC has to have a wide variety of therapeutic techniques, tools, knowledge, and skills that can be transferred from the clinician to the patient. These skills are transferred on a daily basis. During the month of September 2014, the MHC completed 172 sick calls, more than any other provider. The psychiatrist completed the second highest amount of sick call by completing 35. This showed a prevalence of mental health within the facility and the need for the MHC to have a variety of tools to use when working with these patients. The majority of the individuals seeking mental health treat at the Snyder County Prison reported: struggling with anxiety and/or depression or both. While psychiatric medications can be used to treat depression and anxiety, it is not the first resource that is used. Patients are encouraged to try a variety of coping skills and activities to help reduce these symptoms on their own. Despite educating patients on coping skills, psychiatric medications were still prevalent, with Seroquel,

being the second most prescribed medication in the month of September 2014 (second only to Ibuprofen). Vistaril, Neurotin, and Effexor were also on the top ten list of medications that were prescribed at the facility. These medications are paid for by PrimeCare Medical inc. as per the contract they hold with the County of Snyder. Tiffany Gum, MSW, LCSW, CCHP, CCTP, who is employed by PrimeCare Medical Inc. and who is the current MHC at the Snyder County Prison, realized that based on the statistics compiled during the month of September 2014, that there was a clear and present need for alternative treat options at the Snyder County Prison, specifically in regards to the treatment of mentally ill inmates. Prior to the development and implementation of the Facility Dog Program at the Snyder County Prison, the primary treatment method for those inmates struggling with mental health issues was the prescription of psychotropic medication. This is not only a costly way to treat mental health but also a dangerous one, as many of the psychotropic medication prescribed can be easily abused.

**Background** – Enter history of the project, including any evidenced-based approaches to divert individuals from further penetration into the juvenile or adult justice system, community involvement strategies, formation of stakeholder groups, county- wide planning strategies, etc. This section is worth 20 points.

The Facility Dog Program at the Snyder County Prison was implemented on June 22, 2015 by Tiffany Gum, MSW, LCSW, CCHP, CCTP. The primary goal of the program was to help reduce anxiety and depression among inmate population being treated for mental health at the Snyder County Prison. Research on animals and their therapeutic effect on humans have been done on a variety of populations including helping professionals, individuals working in high stress jobs, and individuals with mental/emotional diagnosis (Stallones, 1994). These studies have provided empirical evidence that animals are natural stress reducers. In fact, it has been proven that the mere presence of a dog in a room, even with no human interaction, reduces the reactions to stress more than the presence of a close friend (Allen et al). With the large percentage of the inmate population at the Snyder County Prison requesting assistance in managing their mental health symptoms, it could clearly be seen how a facility dog would be beneficial. The majority of these individuals were receiving medications for relief of these symptoms prior to the implementation of the facility dog program. With the use of a facility dog, the MHC would be able to offer another tool to the inmate population before seeking relief through the use of medications that are often expensive, have undesired side effects, and are commonly abused. It was determined that if mental health symptoms could be decreased through the program, than it could be inferred that there would be a decrease in the amount of psychotropic medications being prescribed. The decrease in the use of psychotropic medications would also be a direct correlation to the reduction in the amount of money spent on purchasing psychotropic medication, the amount of contraband (ie cheeking medication) found in the facility, and the amount of abuse/misuse of the medication by the inmate population. SSD Brickle, the facility dog, accompanies the MHC in her daily work routine. SSD Brickle uses specific techniques to help the MHC provide clinical interventions to patients who are in need. These techniques include applying deep pressure on the chest, moderate pressure on the thighs/abdomen, and extended stays.

**Soundness of approach** – Enter a description of the ways the project conforms to either program themes or goals as established in the criteria. This section is worth 20 points

The adoption and implementation of the Facility Dog Program at the Snyder County Prison

specifically relates to and addresses two (2) of the Award Program Goals: Adoption of assessment methodologies which identify areas for effective change and the Employment of innovations in housing and treatment of mentally ill inmates. It also meets the criteria for one (1) of the 2018 Themes: Targeted interventions. The two (2) main goals of the Facility Dog Program at the Snyder County Prison at the time of implementation were to reduce anxiety and depression among the inmate population and reduce the number of psychotropic medications being prescribed at the Snyder County Prison.

**Program Elements** – Enter a description of the elements of the project, utility, adaptability, strategies used, community and stakeholder involvement, evidence-based approach. This section is worth 20 points.

Prior to the implementation of the facility dog program at the Snyder County Prison, Ms. Gum provided the inmate population and the staff at the Snyder County Prison the opportunity to fill out confidential evaluations while in the mental health office. The evaluations and data collected were from the willing participants using Beck's Anxiety Inventory and Beck's Depression Inventory and gauged to measure anxiety and depression at the time of the visit. The participants were given each inventory prior to their initial contact with SSD Brickle. The same inventories were given to each participant at the two (2) week mark and again at the three (3) month mark. The evaluations were monitored and reviewed on a quarterly basis for both the inmate population as well as the staff by Ms. Gum. Ms. Gum also reviewed the monthly management report per the CorEMR for the inmate population and recorded the available data pertaining to mental health visits and psychotropic medication usage.

**Expectations and Measurable Goals** – Enter a description of the costs of the project, how it was funded, projected impact, number of inmates diverted or assisted, utilization of risk assessment, impact on recidivism. This section is worth 20 points.

The facility dog program at the Snyder County Prison resulted in neither PrimeCare Medical Inc. nor the County of Snyder being responsible for any monetary obligations or contributions to the program. The full cost of the facility dog program, including any costs that resulted from the adoption of the dog were absorbed by Tiffany Gum, MSW, LCSW, CCHP, CCTP. As a result, the facility dog is solely owned by Ms. Gum and is not owned by either PrimeCare Medical Inc. or the County of Snyder. At her own expense, Ms. Gum provides Liability insurance for the facility dog and purchases and maintains the Liability insurance annually. The data shows that the Facility Dog Program has been successful in reaching the goal of reducing anxiety and depression among both the inmate population as well as the staff at the Snyder County Prison. However, due to the increased usage in psychotropic medication as part of detox protocol and the increased number of female inmates at the Snyder County Prison, the program has not seen the decrease hoped for in the amount of psychotropic medication being prescribed. However, without these two (2) unforeseen elements, the Facility Dog Program at the Snyder County Prison would have clearly achieved its goals. The Facility Dog Program will remain in place at the Snyder County Prison and will continue to strive to reach and exceed its intended goals while helping to provide a better therapeutic environment for the inmate population.

**Evaluation/Sustainability** – Enter details describing the process for evaluating success

including assessment methodologies, data reports, continuation, and determination of success. This section is worth 10 points.

The data collected showed that anxiety decreased 42% among participants from their initial inventory score to their two (2) week score, 43% from their initial inventory score to their three (3) month score, and by 44% from their initial inventory score to their scores recorded at the one (1) year mark. When the data was compared as staff vs. inmate population, the staff at the Snyder County Prison appeared to be impacted at a higher rate than the inmates. Despite this finding, both groups shared a significant decrease in reported anxiety. It should be noted that no inmate involved in the study remained incarcerated in the Snyder County Prison for their one (1) year evaluation. The data collected related to depression showed that depression decreased 41% among participants from their initial inventory score to their two (2) week score, 25% from their initial inventory score to their three (3) month score, and by 40% from their initial inventory score to their one (1) year score. When the data was compared as staff vs. inmate population, the staff at the Snyder County Prison appeared to be impacted at a higher rate than the inmates. Despite this finding, both groups shared a significant decrease in reported depression. Again, it should be noted that no inmate involved in the study remained incarcerated in the Snyder County Prison for their one (1) year evaluation. The data collected regarding the amount of psychiatric medication prescribed at the Snyder County Prison is varied. Anxiety medications given short term, for detox protocols, have increased; however, the overall use of psychiatric medication has decreased. It should also be noted that since the study began, the Snyder County Prison increased their holding capacity for female inmates by approx. 26 beds and the female inmate population at the Snyder County Prison are prescribed psychiatric medications at a higher rate than the male inmate population. Although, the decreases in anxiety among the inmate population as well as the staff at the Snyder County Prison cannot be contributed entirely to SSD Brickle, it appears that her presence and the implementation of the Facility Dog Program have had a positive impact at the facility. This is indicated by quantitative data collected during the inventories and the qualitative data collected in the daily communication between the inmate population, staff, and Ms. Gum. The qualitative data collected has been through daily conversations, letters, and request slips filled out by the inmate population to the MHC since SSD Brickle joined the staff at the Snyder County Prison.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Please include any supporting documentation to demonstrate the impact of the project in cost or population outcomes, or other data to demonstrate the considerations utilized in determining the scope or design of the project. Scoring will be based on factors including the entrant’s description of the problem, the soundness of the approach, and success in meeting goals and objectives. Award submissions will receive consideration for outcomes or best practices supported by data. **SUPPORTING INFORMATION SHOULD BE COPIED AND PASTED DIRECTLY INTO THE FORM USING THE BOX BELOW.**

Click here to enter text.

**All forms must contain at least one signature.** Signatures can be entered electronically, or submitted via fax using a separate form. To sign, right-click on the signature line, select “Signature Setup” from the drop down, and follow the prompts. If submitting signatures on a separate form, enter “FAXING” on the signature line.

X  
\_\_\_\_\_  
County Chief Executive Officer

X   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Board of Commissioners

**SUBMITTING YOUR ENTRY – To submit the entry, save a copy of this completed form after all information, including signatures and supporting materials have been added. When saving the form, please assure that the document name includes the county name, the type of project and the year – (i.e. FranklinJailAward2018). Address an email to [bpenyak@pacounties.org](mailto:bpenyak@pacounties.org) and attach the award submission.**