



Queens Connect-O  
Technical Assistance Workshop  
May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022



Office of Alcoholism and  
Substance Abuse Services



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
IRVING MEDICAL CENTER



Center  
for  
Court  
Innovation



New York State  
Psychiatric Institute

# Welcome and Introductions

## Facilitators:

- **Alejandra Garcia**, Senior Program Manager, Center for Court Innovation
- **Kelly Van Develde**, Senior Program Manager, Center for Court Innovation
- **Katherine Elkington**, Associate Professor, Columbia University, New York Psychiatric Institute
- **Margaret Ryan**, Project Director, Columbia University, New York Psychiatric Institute
- **Susan Sturges**, Opioid Court Coordinator, Division of Policy and Planning

## Stakeholders:

- **Hon. Toko Serita**, Judge, Queens Misdemeanor Treatment Court
- **Eric Fieldman**, Judge's Court Attorney
- **Naima Aiken**, Project Director at Queens Criminal Court, Queens Connect
- **Shannon Castang-Feggins**, Resource Coordinator, Queens Connect
- **Angela Albertus**, Queens County District Attorney's Office
- **Aisha Greene**, Queens County District Attorney's Office
- **Floyd Herring**, Queens County District Attorney's Office
- **Donna Haase**, Legal Aid Society
- **Diana Salierno**, Legal Aid Society
- **Elder Alcime**, Cornerstone Treatment Facility
- **Dr. Carolann Slattery**, Samaritan Village
- **Theresa Tobin**, New York Police Department



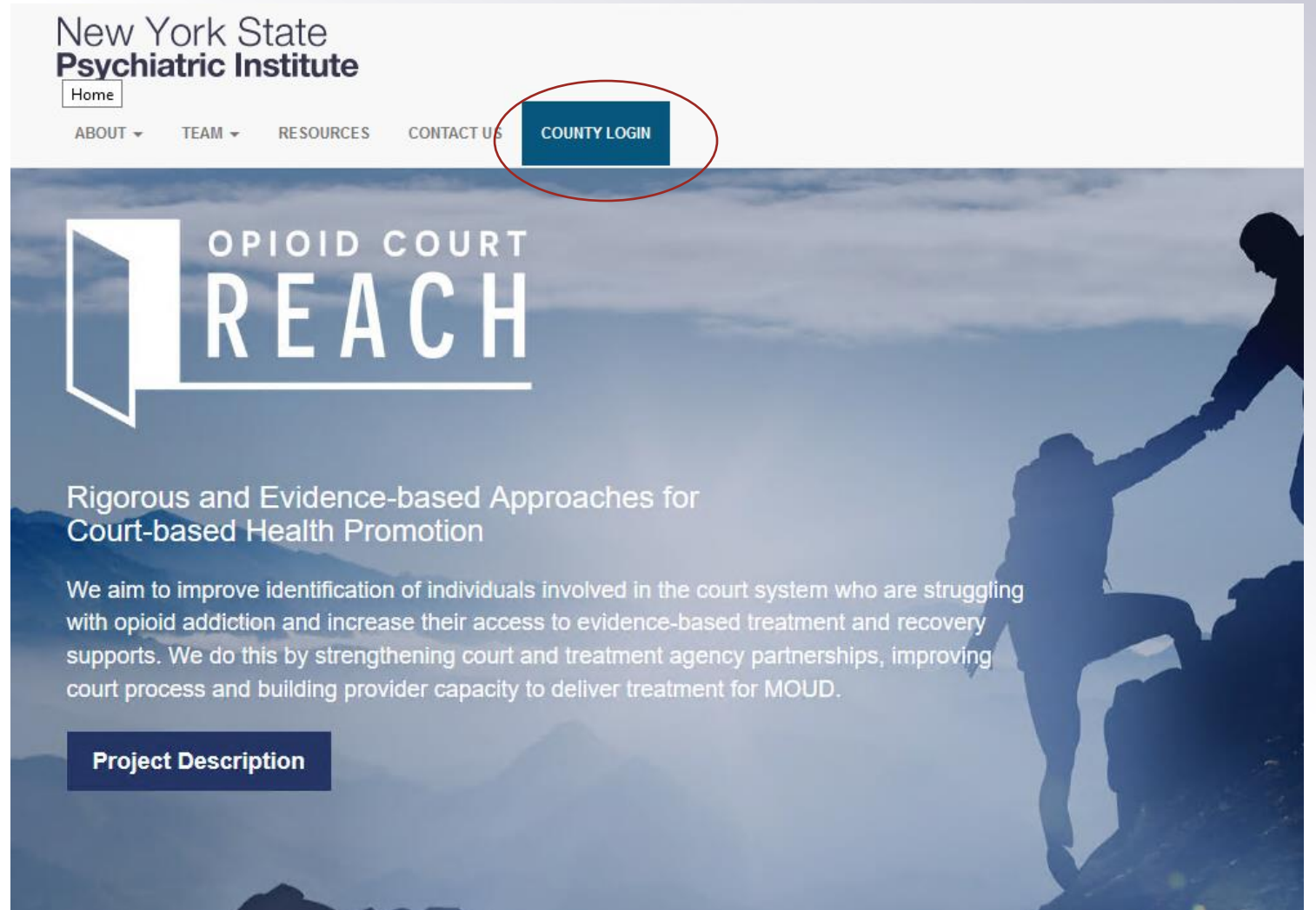
## Rigorous and Evidence-based Approaches for Court-based Health Promotion

- Implementation science research project: apply research and evidence based knowledge to make practice and policy change
- Funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- Collaboration between Columbia University/New York State Psychiatric Institute, the Center for Court Innovation, and the Office of Court Administration
- Research + training and technical assistance
- 10 opioid courts in New York
- Goal: Improve **access to treatment and recovery supports** for participants, and enhance **opioid court operations**

# Project Website

[projectreach.nyspi.org](http://projectreach.nyspi.org)

You will receive a personalized login for your county page and resources



# Training Modules

## My Courses



### JCOIN Module 1: The Opioid Crisis in Context

0% Complete  
0/1 Steps



### JCOIN Module 2: Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

0% Complete  
0/1 Steps



### JCOIN Module 3: 10 Essential Elements of Opioid Courts

0% Complete  
0/1 Steps

# Project Timeline

Phase 1: Needs Assessment



Phase 2: Targeted Enhancement Support

Phase 3: Roll-out

Phase 4: Monitoring

# What changes can we make that will result in improvement? Implementing the 10 Essential Elements of Opioid Courts

1. Broad legal eligibility

2. Immediate screen for overdose risk

3. Informed consent after consultation with defense counsel

4. Suspension of prosecution or expedited plea during treatment

5. Rapid clinical assessment and treatment engagement

## The 10 Essential Elements of Opioid Intervention Courts



6. Recovery support services

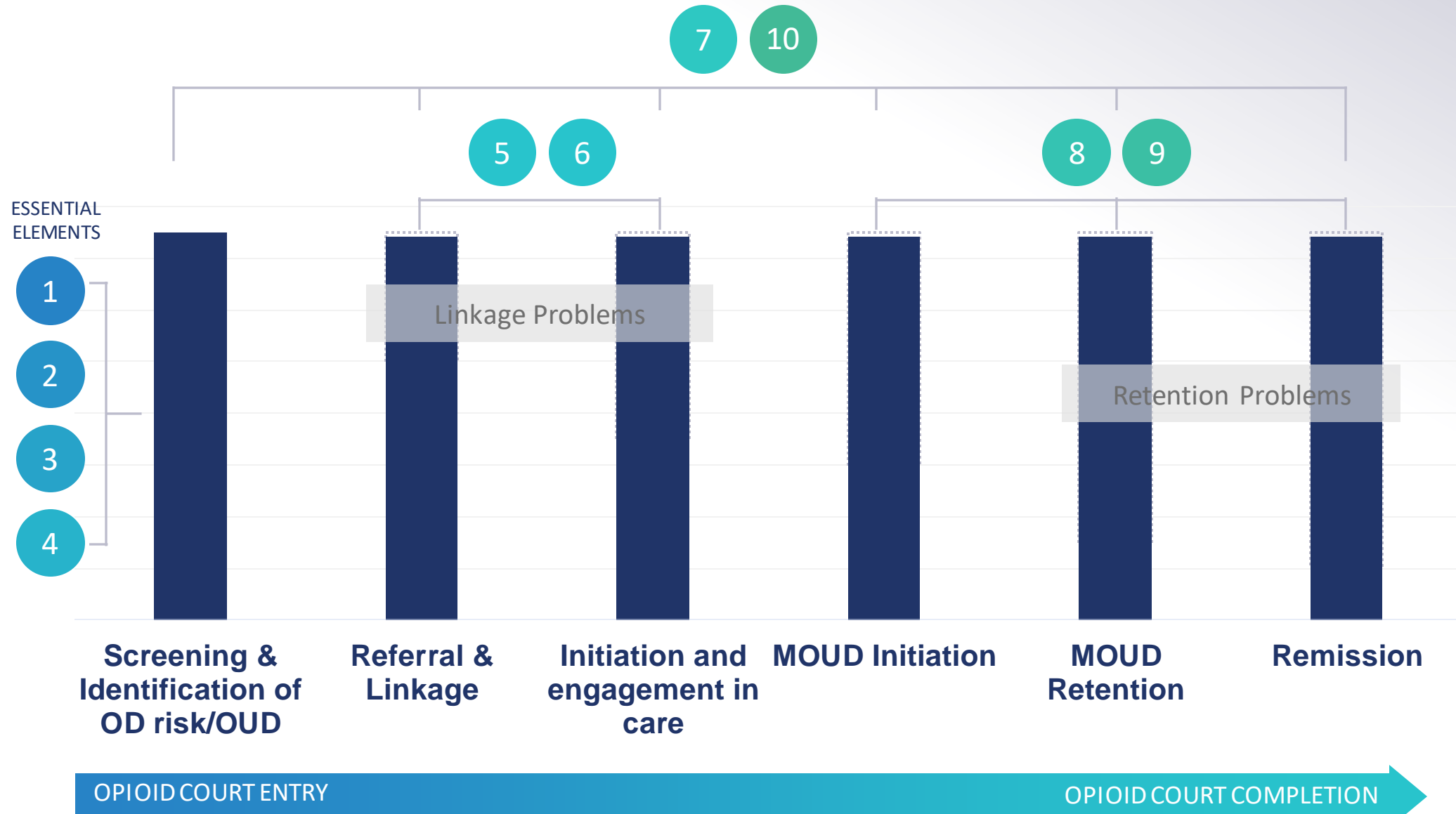
7. Frequent judicial supervision and compliance monitoring

8. Intensive case management

9. Program completion and continuing care

10. Performance evaluation and program improvement

# And how will we know that a change is an improvement?





# Snapshot of Queens Connect-O

Queens Connect-Opioid (O) is a program that provides participants at risk of opioid overdose with rapid overdose intervention, which may include medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). Queens Connect-O refers eligible participants for clinical assessment, and immediate referral and appointment(s) for opioid-based treatment.

Under this no-plea diversion program, a participant's completion of six sessions and reduced risk of overdose will result in a dismissal of their case. This program is also designed to address the participant's needs in a holistic and comprehensive manner, and includes educational, vocational, and home health services related to any mental health or psychiatric conditions.

Through a series of case management and clinical sessions, participants are exposed to resources available in their community to support and encourage the desire for treatment. Participation in any recommended treatment program, while encouraged, is not mandated.

# Needs Assessment Findings and Recommendations

# Essential Element #1: Broad Eligibility

## Findings:

- Accepted charges:
  - Penal Law 220.03 (Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the 7<sup>th</sup> Degree)
  - Penal Law 155.25 (Petit Larceny)
  - Penal Law 165.40 (Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the 5<sup>th</sup> Degree);
- District Attorney's Office has discretion to admit other misdemeanor charges or individuals with open cases, open parole, or probation; and
- All participants who successfully complete the program have their case end in dismissal.

# Essential Element #1: Broad Eligibility (cont'd)

## Recommendations:

- Consider automatic transfer for agreed eligible charges;
- Increase legal eligibility to additional misdemeanor charges and inclusion of individuals on parole and probation who are at risk of overdose;
- Discuss inclusion of cases with alternative dispositions for successful completion, as well as a no-disposition approach; and
- Increase clarity for stakeholders on legal eligibility and what requirements must be reached for the Queens District Attorney's Office to use discretion to admit.

# Essential Element #2: Immediate Screening for Risk of Overdose

## Findings:

- Receive referrals from the District Attorney's office, defense counsel, or other court staff;
- Case manager uses a screening for risk of overdose that was developed from the Bronx OAR tool (Overdose Avoidance Recover); and
- Case manager administers the UCMS screener, then a referral is made to treatment providers to complete a clinical assessment.

# Essential Element #2: Immediate Screening for Risk of Overdose (cont'd)

## Recommendations:

- Create a streamlined identification and referral pathway, that includes identification by peers and court staff at arraignment;
- Raise awareness about clinical eligibility to larger stakeholder group in the county;
- Educate stakeholders on variety of programs and options in the county; and
- Use risk of overdose screeener developed by Project Opioid Court REACH.

# Essential Element #3: Informed Consent after Consultation with Defense Counsel

## Findings:

- Potential participants have access to defense counsel to discuss their options fully before enrolling; and
- Due to the number of programs available, there can be confusion around which programs clients are eligible for and how to make referrals.

## Recommendations:

- Increase clarity of which programs are appropriate for which clients;
- Provide education about opioid use disorder and the Queens Connect-O program for attorneys; and
- Identify gaps in referral process and streamline the referral process for defense attorneys.

# Essential Element #4: Suspension of Prosecution or Expedited Plea

## Findings:

- Prosecution, discovery, and CPL 30.30 speedy trial time are suspended for the duration of program participation;
- Cases are dismissed upon successful completion; and
- The Queens District Attorney's Office is the primary decided on which cases are permitted to enter the program.



# Essential Element #4: Suspension of Prosecution or Expedited Plea (cont'd)

## Recommendations:

- Identify outcomes for unsuccessful completion;
- Ensure that participants who engage in Queens Connect-O, but who are ultimately unsuccessful, are not penalized for their participation, formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding;
- Create a plan to expedite referral of cases from District Attorney's Office and the forthcoming NYPD HOPE Program.

# Essential Element #5: Rapid Clinical Assessment and Treatment Engagement

## Findings:

- Utilize two treatment providers in the area;
- An array of treatment modalities are provided, including detox services, inpatient and outpatient treatment, and MOUD;
- Participants are not required to complete a treatment plan in order to complete the program;
- Providers have peers on staff and offer mental health services; and
- Providers need clarity on court involvement of clients.

# Essential Element #5: Rapid Clinical Assessment and Treatment Engagement (cont'd)

## Recommendations:

- Once screening and referral procedures are in place, inform treatment partners about policies and procedures of the court;
- Utilize mobile vans that are available by treatment providers for immediate transport to treatment; and
- Continue to include treatment partners in all stakeholder meetings.

# Essential Element #6: Recovery Support Services

## Findings:

- Participants are required to complete six sessions that includes recovery support services

## Recommendations:

- Implement six session design once participants are enrolled in the program;
- Involve both treatment provider-based peers and TASC peers to support participants' completion of the program; and
- Ensure services are coordinated among various providers through ongoing communication.

# Essential Element #7: Frequent Judicial Supervision and Compliance Monitoring

## Findings:

- Drug testing is not conducted by the court and is not determinate in successful completion of the program; and
- Other judges would benefit from understanding which cases are appropriate to refer to the program.

## Recommendations:

- Provide bench cards to arraignment court judges; and
- Schedule stakeholder meetings to occur throughout the year to review procedures and program operations.

# Essential Element #8: Intensive Case Management

## Findings:

- Has a court-based case manager with problem-solving treatment court experience; and
- Case manager conducts assessments and provides support in completing the six sessions of the program.

## Recommendations:

- Utilize case managers for identification and screening at arraignments;
- Utilize intensive case management once participants are enrolled in the program; and
- Coordinate services across providers and agencies to ensure continuity of care.

# Essential Element #9: Program Completion and Continuing Care

## Findings:

- Uses a unique six session model aimed at clinical stabilization; and
- Cases are dismissed and sealed by the DA's office after completion.

## Recommendations:

- Consider broadening options for program completion to include more serious cases that the DA's office would not agree to be dismissed and sealed; and
- Develop a more detailed guide for session completion.

# Essential Element #10: Performance Evaluation and Program Improvement

## Findings:

- To date, because the program has had no participants, there is limited data entered in the UCMS.

## Recommendations:

- Work with Project Opioid Court REACH staff to identify areas and strategies for data entry improvement, including the use of the Opioid Court dashboard; and
- Implement recommendations from this report with the help of technical assistance from Project Opioid Court REACH.



# Action Planning

Finding:				
Goal 1:				
Objective 1A:	Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
Objective 1B:	Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
Objective 1C:	Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures

# Wrap-up and Next Steps!



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# Thank you!



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