



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."

NEWS RELEASE

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New S.M.A.R.T. Inmate Program Implemented

FCSO Awarded 530K for Mental Health, Substance Use Disorder Treatment



Flagler County Sheriff Rick Staly often speaks of getting "dirt bags" off the streets and into the one-star accommodations of the Green Roof Inn, the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility in Flagler County. But for Sheriff Staly, it has always been about more than just arresting the criminal. It's also about treating the person and helping strengthen the community.

Thanks to a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance Criminal Justice Mental Health Collaboration Program, the Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) received a \$530,000 grant to fund an in-custody treatment program for inmates in its detention facility in Bunnell. The FCSO is one of only three Sheriff's Offices across the country to receive this funding.

As a result, Sheriff Staly launched a new evidence based in-custody treatment program February 28 to help local inmates succeed once they are released back into Flagler County. Sheriff Staly dubbed his jail program, "S.M.A.R.T.," for **S**uccessful **M**ental **H**ealth and **A**ddiction **R**ecovery **T**reatment.

Being a facility in the heart of the county, the Green Roof Inn is a local jail that houses many Flagler County residents. And, with an average inmate population of about 225 men and women, approximately 80-percent of them suffer from both mental health and substance use disorders. This new initiative will help treat these disorders and the underlying factors which have caused them.



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“Positive outcomes inside the jail translate to positive outcomes in our county,” Sheriff Staly said. “The vast majority of our local jail inmates will be released back into our community by the courts. They live and work among us. And so often, the disorders which helped land them in jail are still with them when they are released. S.M.A.R.T. can help give them the tools to turn their lives around and become productive members of our community.”

The first step to treating the person in S.M.A.R.T. is having medical and mental health professionals screen each inmate as they are booked into the jail. After inmates are screened for mental health and substance use disorders, they may be selected for individualized and group counseling now available for inmates as a result of the grant.

Selection also depends on the level of crime the individual may be incarcerated for. Only low to medium-risk inmates are considered for the program with a maximum class size of 18 inmates per 12-week session. If selected, they are placed into the new “Peer Support Treatment Pods” where they will be housed together and participate in group and individual therapy sessions. The daily sessions are led by licensed behavioral health clinicians and certified peer support specialists to keep their focus on improving themselves and helping each other during their incarceration.



S.M.A.R.T. uses evidence-based therapy curriculums like “Breaking the Cycle,” which is one of a series of treatment journaling tracts developed by The Change Companies. Additionally, W.R.A.P., or Wellness Recovery Action Plan, involves group therapy, interviewing, behavioral therapy and expressive writing to help each person in the program see measurable results during their time in the program. Inmates also use workbooks incorporating what is known as “Interactive Journaling.”

Modeled after an inpatient treatment facility, S.M.A.R.T. will help participating inmates uncover the root causes of their disorders. It will also help them identify the triggers which often lead to them hurting themselves, their families or their neighborhoods after they are released. The goal is to treat and prevent repeat actions which could once again cost them their freedom or even their life.

“Ineffective coping with major life issues like depression or anxiety are among some of the factors that can lead to a mental health or substance use disorder diagnosis,” Chief of Court & Detention Services Division Dan Engert said. “Significant negative factors such as sexual abuse, dysfunctional family units, abusive or absent parents and many other negative life events occurring when an inmate was a child can manifest themselves into becoming significant negative indicators when they become adults.”

Being able to recognize those factors requires people trained in the recovery process. Embedding licensed on-site clinicians with inmates helps inmates identify their problems and provides tools to help them get started in the recovery process is a very important step in building the program.

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However, in Engert’s opinion, it’s the two Certified Peer Support Specialists that make the real impact as they hold sessions five days a week, Monday through Friday, working with the inmates for several hours a day.

“The Peer Support Specialist is who the inmate sees as recovery in action,” Engert added. “That peer has lived with a disorder. They have walked in their shoes and lived their lives, including being incarcerated or even homeless. So inmates see the peers who are now employed, clean, sober and excited about helping them and that becomes who they focus on. They visualize themselves as being successful in recovery. They become the most important piece and can make or break the program.”

Rosemarie McNamara-Robert, an employee of Epic Behavioral Health Inc. in St. Augustine, Florida, is the on-site clinician. However, when you spend anytime within the treatment pods you quickly learn that Emil Caron, also from Epic Behavioral Health Inc., and Danielle Moye-Auriemma, a volunteer from O.A.R.S. (Open Arms Recovery Service of Flagler County), truly make the difference as the “peers” within the program.

“I was incarcerated in Volusia County three years ago,” said Caron. “When I went in, I knew I was done using. I wanted to change my life. A peer support specialist worked with me and I knew that I would love to be able to do that for someone else one day, too. I’ve now been in that role for a year. And, at the end of this month, I’ll be three years in recovery.”



Caron started working on his Peer Certification while he was still incarcerated. His relationship with his own peer support specialist while behind bars inspired him to start working on his training to serve in the same role one day. This week, the Spruce Creek High School alum and U.S. Navy veteran is now leading week two of the new program at the Green Roof Inn.

“These men are working on targeting goals in their own lives this week,” Caron said. “We help them create realistic, measurable, attainable, specific and time-based goals. We ask each S.M.A.R.T inmate to share a goal and make sure the goal is one that will help them focus on the future.”

“Sheriff Staly told me from day one about the challenges of mental health and addiction treatment services in Flagler County,” Engert said. “He said if treatment has to start with the jail, then that’s where we start. He wanted solutions to deal with the mental health and addiction aspects of our inmates. That’s where S.M.A.R.T comes in.”

According to the National Council for Behavioral Health (NCBH), which nationally represents 3,000 mental health and substance use disorder providers, more than half of them were forced to shut down some of their programs due to issues stemming from the pandemic. “There aren’t as many options for someone to get treatment these days,” Engert said. “We’re seeing less and less in-patient treatment beds available. And often, inmates wait months for openings. We had to figure out alternatives and in

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some instances, county jails have become the de facto treatment facilities. We were fortunate to be able to receive federal funds for our program.”

The Flagler County Drug Court and the State Attorney’s Office have both discussed the possibility of having the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility serve as an alternative for new inmates who need treatment they won’t be able to get somewhere else or in state prison.



“If they fit the criteria, they are considering sentencing some to serve time in the county jail rather than to a prison. Or even in some circumstances, until a long term treatment bed becomes available.” Engert said. “Being able to provide in-custody treatment while they are in jail is a huge advantage to those inmates who truly want to start a path to recovery.”

If untreated, inmates with a substance use disorder are 40 times more likely to die from an overdose. While in custody, inmates have no access to substances, thus reducing their tolerance. If they use narcotics again after their release, the results can be fatal.

The last critical aspect of S.M.A.R.T. involves the transition from jail back to the community. A clinician from Epic Behavioral Health, Inc. works with the inmates to develop re-entry plans and follows them in the community to make sure they remain a participant in treatment services locally. The peers are also involved with providing continued support to the former inmates who participated in the S.M.A.R.T. program after returning as members of the Flagler County community.

“For the ones who are reachable, we want to help them get their lives together. We want to be able to provide a foundation for success for them during the program and after they are released,” Staly said. “This is about strengthening our communities. We can provide help they need right in the Green Roof Inn. Through screening, those who really want and need help can begin treatment inside the jail walls. Then, after they are released, we can put a plan in place to help them continue their treatment on the outside. At the end of the day, we don’t want the Green Roof Inn to be a revolving destination place. We want them to be successful members of the Flagler County community.”

The ultimate goal of S.M.A.R.T. is to provide treatment services so they will improve their lives, their family’s lives, reduce recidivism, reduce overdoses and overdose deaths.

Since Sheriff Staly was elected he has implemented numerous programs in the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility to help inmates become productive citizens. They include Homeward Bound, Inside-Out Dad, S.T.R.I.D.E., GED, AA, NA, faith-based programs and technical programs in partnership with Flagler Technical College and many more.

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