

# Black Lives Matter

A Summary of Research on the OMPD and Denver Municipal Court

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*Prepared for the Office of the Municipal Public Defender of Denver*

A large, blue, low-poly bear sculpture is the central focus, appearing to climb the glass facade of a modern building. The bear is rendered in a faceted, geometric style. The background features a multi-story building with a sign for 'Hilton Garden Inn' and some trees with autumn-colored leaves. A semi-transparent dark blue banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white text.

In 2019 we conducted a study...

# The Court Statistics Study

How the study was conducted:

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- We pulled data for 10,000 cases from 2018.
- 6,473 were closed and could be analyzed.
- We supplemented our data with information regarding sealed cases.



# The Court Statistics Study

## Findings:

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### Homelessness is the primary case in front of the courts:

- 37.86% of the cases involve people experiencing homelessness: trespass, alcohol in public, and park violations.

### There is a disconnect between the court's procedural requirements and the ability to follow those requirements:

- 64.8% of cases had at least one failure to appear and 1,222 (12%) of the cases were still in warrant status a year later.
- only 51% of defendants were successful on probation, compared to 64.7% in general for the state.
- 57% will apply for Public Defender representation after 21 days. In municipal cases, a jury must be requested within 21 days or the defendant loses the right to have a jury trial.

### Cases do not go to trial:

- 2.29% of cases set for trial go to trial and 69.85% of cases set for trial are dismissed.



# The Court Statistics Study

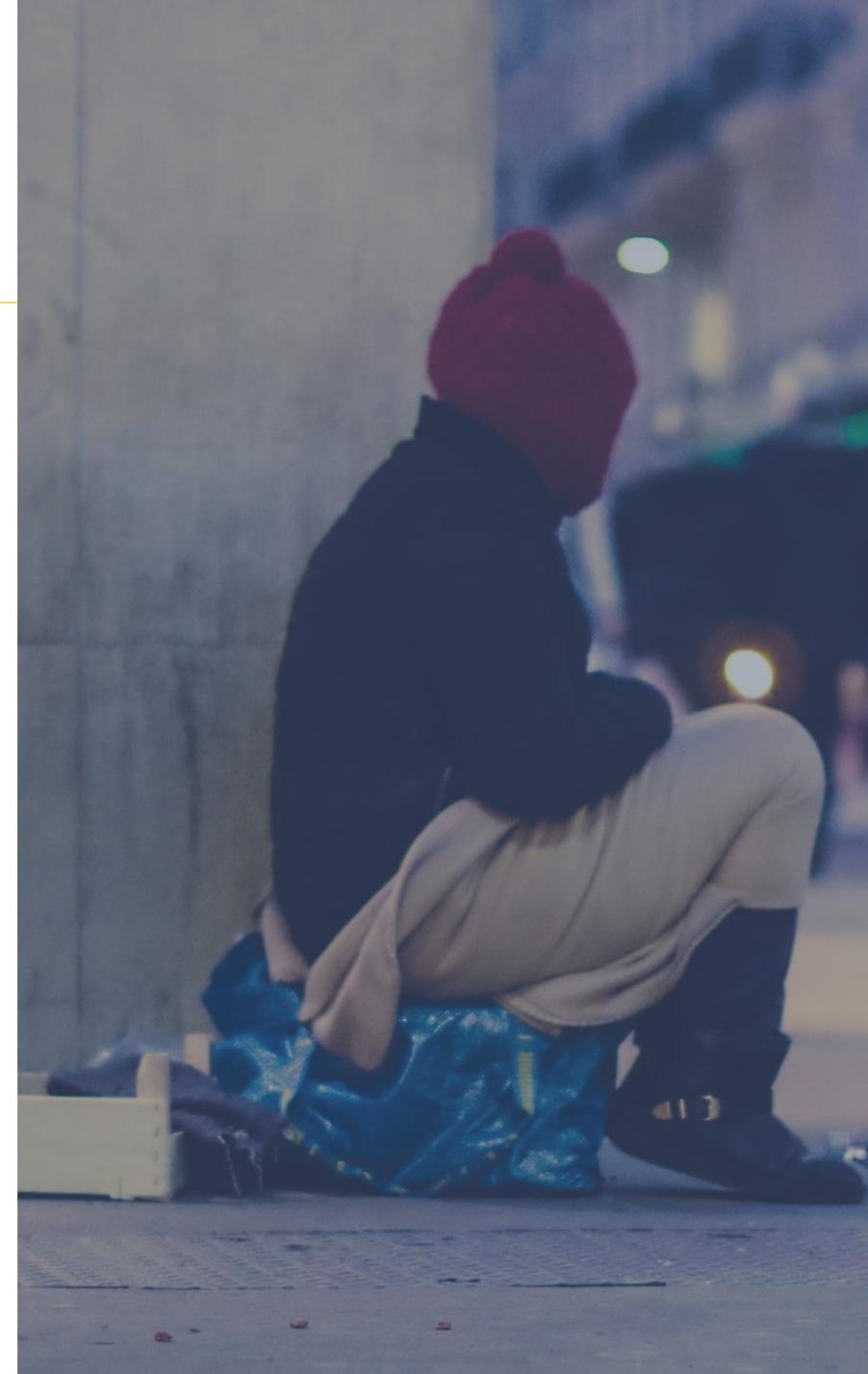
## Systemic Issues

According to prior research regarding individuals experiencing homelessness,

- Individuals experiencing homelessness are 11x more likely to face incarceration;
- Incarcerated individuals are 10x more likely to be homeless;
- 40% of the population report mental health needs (twice that of the general population);
- The majority of interactions for this population involve nonviolent offenses.

(- Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (2019) Return to Nowhere, The Revolving Door Between Incarceration and Homelessness

- Greenberg, Homelessness in the State and Federal Prison Population)



A person wearing a red beanie and a dark jacket is sitting on a black metal bench, looking out over a large body of water. In the water, a large group of ducks is gathered, with many flying and splashing. In the background, a tall, multi-story brick building is visible on the left, and a large, low-rise building with a red roof is on the right. The sky is blue with some light clouds. Bare tree branches are visible in the upper corners of the frame.

# The Impact of Race

# Black Lives Matter

## Systemic Issues in Denver

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- According to the last census, the Black population in Denver is... 9.8%
- The Black population in the Denver municipal court system is... 29.51%

# Black Lives Matter

## Systemic Issues in Denver

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- According to the last census, the Black population in Denver is... **9.8%**
- In cases where the charges were interference and resistance, the Black population in court is... **36.36%**

No cases involving other charges were included to solely analyze cases where the offense was interference followed by resistance

# Black Lives Matter

## Systemic Issues in Denver

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- In interference and resistance cases where guilt was found, non-Black individuals received jail... **43% of the time.**
- In interference and resistance cases where guilt was found, Black individuals received jail... **75% of the time.**

# Black Lives Matter

## Systemic Issues in Denver

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- Similarly, the Black population in trespass cases is... **28.7%**
- For Black defendants, where guilt was found, the sentence included jail... **47.6% of the time**
- For White and Hispanic defendants, where guilt was found, the sentence included jail... **41.8% of the time**



Systemic Racism

Mental Illness

Trauma

Discrimination

Poverty

Oppression

Homelessness



# Potential Solutions

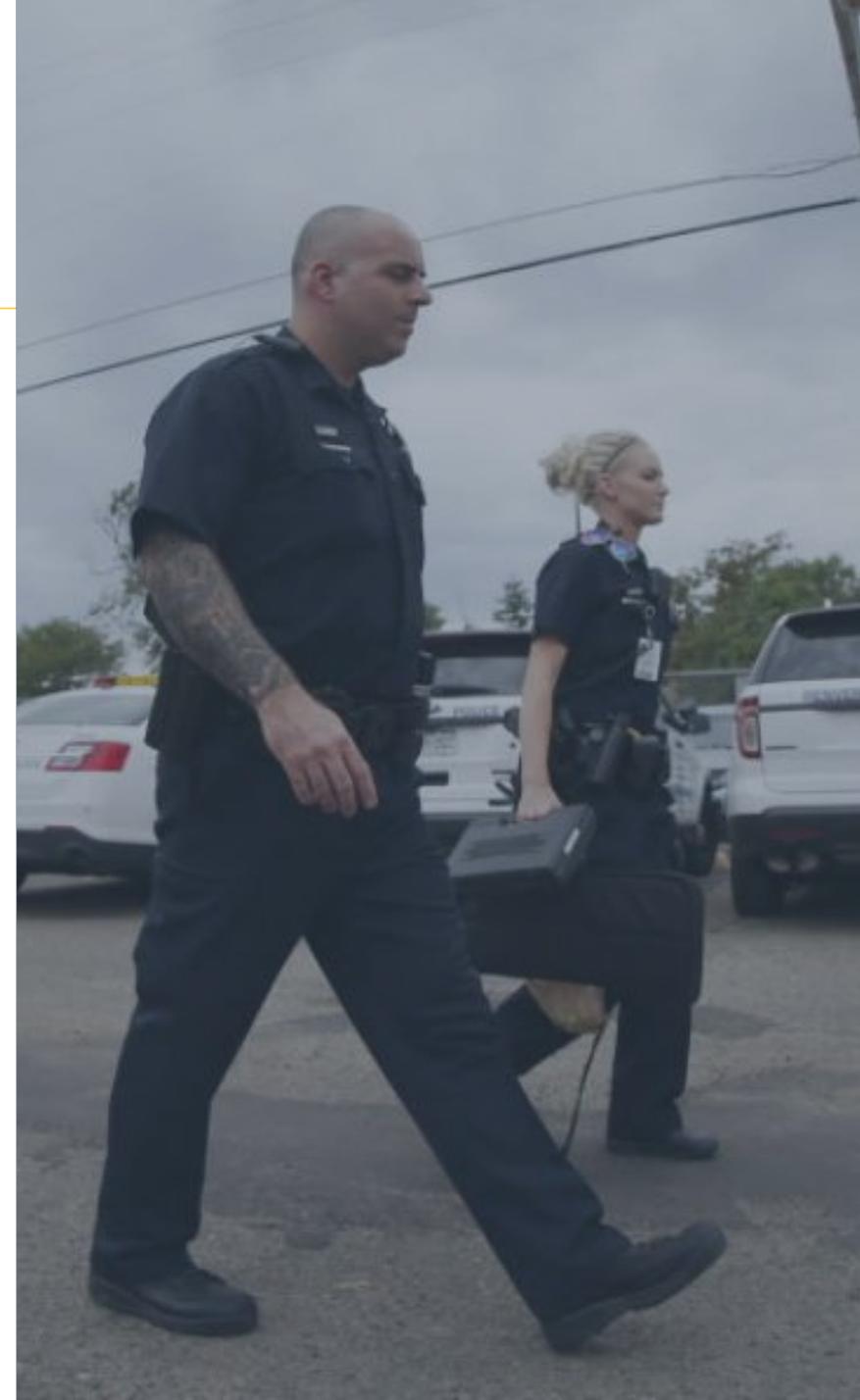
# Understanding Police Work

Letting police do police work

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## Are we asking too much?

- What role should police officers play in our society?
- How should police be funded?
- Are they expected to be enforcers, mediators, therapists, social workers, case managers and mental health experts – all in one?



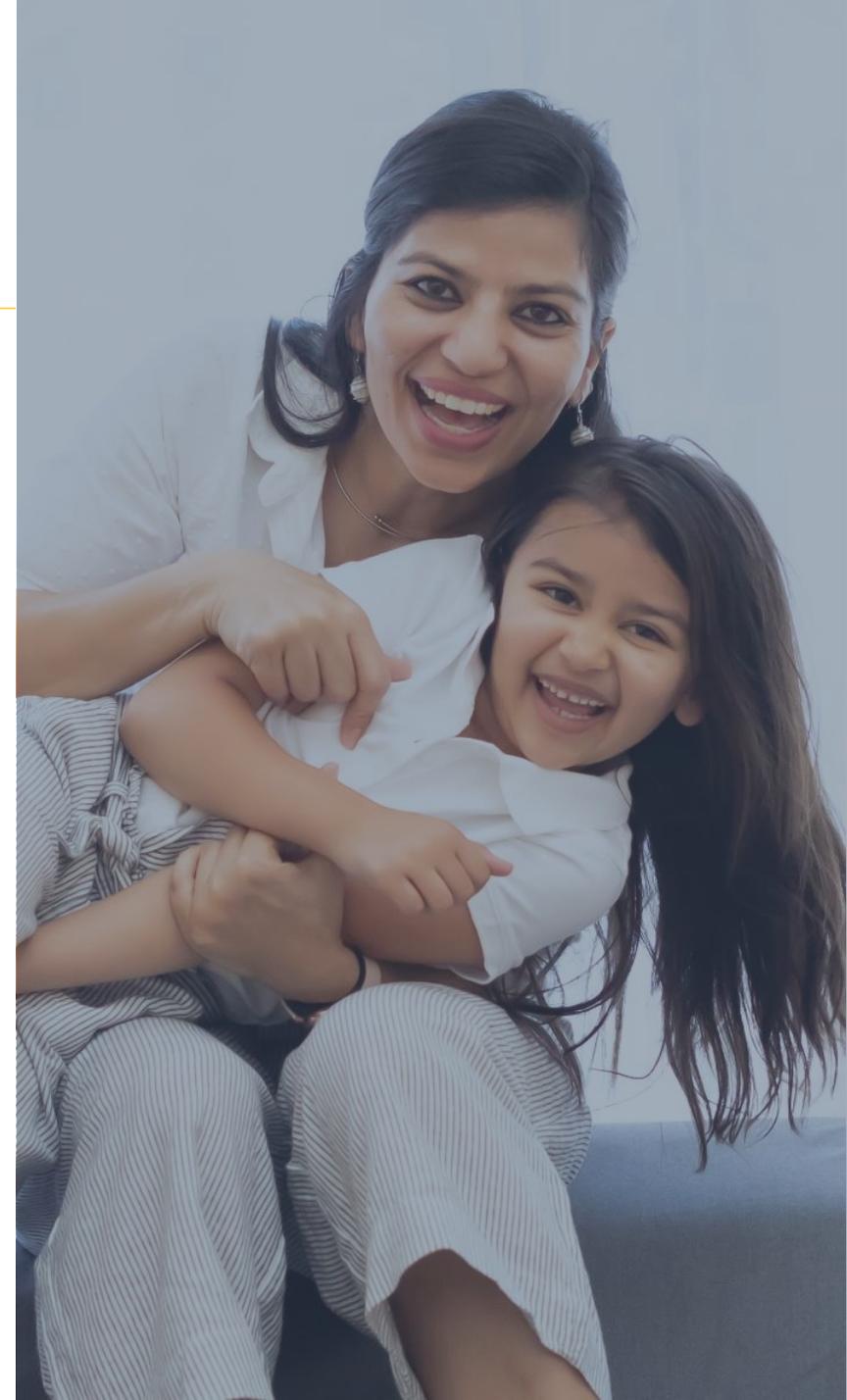
# Our Point of View

Ending the Jail Cycle

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## Helping people succeed

- Our goal is always to support and connect people prior to police involvement.
- We meet people when they become clients – after police involvement.
- Our goal is to reduce recidivism and connect clients to services to end subsequent police interaction.



# Understanding client needs

Creating a safe space

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## We can be a catalyst for change

- Our clients are the highest users of safety services (including jail bed days) in the City.
- Our attorneys learn what issues are causing police contact and court contact in the course of the representation.
- Our goal is immediate access to case management/social worker than can refer the client to benefits, and support services will be invaluable. Peer navigators will be the supportive person that can relate to their situation and assist in getting this done!



GOOD  
VIBES  
ONLY

# Connecting with Services

## New efforts

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- One solution is more support and connection to services from sources that are not police officers.
- Denver Human Services in conjunction with the Office of the Municipal Public Defender has been awarded a Byrne JAG Grant.
- Front Door To Procedural Justice -- \$121,000 to hire social worker/case manager and peer navigator.

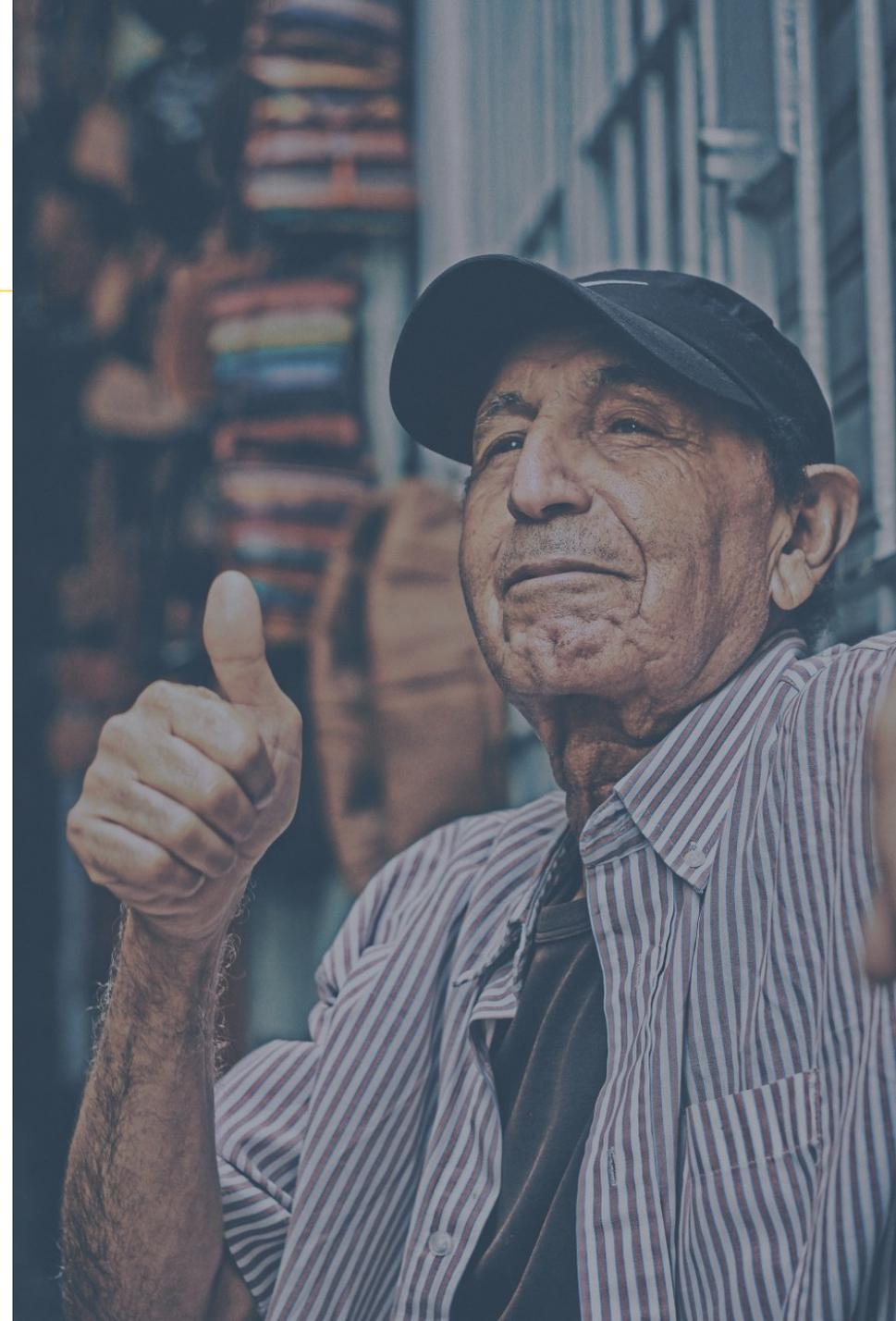


# Goals for the JAG Grant

Opening Doors and Making Connections

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- Increase connection to benefits and other services for OMPD clients and their families;
- Reduce recidivism and homelessness among OMPD clients;
- Improve case outcomes and improve the court system for the city of Denver.





# Future Goals

# Offering Services

## Wraparound Services

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- Wraparound services are a category of intensive supports for individuals and families with complex needs that affect multiple life domains and require supports from multiple providers or are involved in multiple systems, including the criminal justice system.
- Must address the individuals' prioritized needs across life domains, utilize evidence-based treatment, and build their self-efficacy to handle challenges
- Should be co-located in community settings where individuals already go and already feel safe (Cocozza, Steadman, & Dennis et al., 2000)



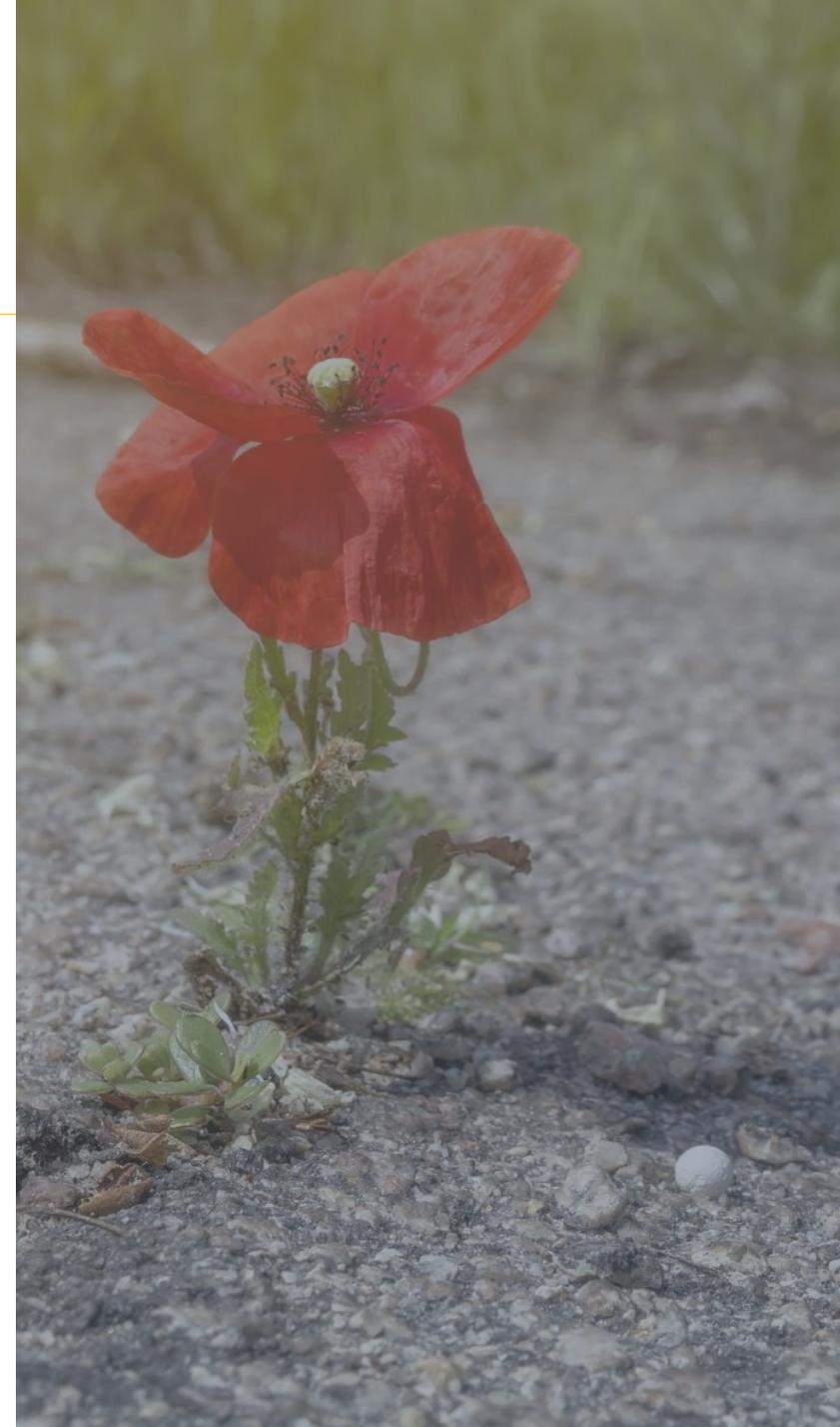
# Offering Services

## Wraparound Services

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- High-fidelity wraparound is a form of *high intensity behavioral health treatment*, a community-based, client- and family-centered approach that is specifically designed to engage individuals with severe mental health and/or substance use conditions who are at risk for or experiencing complicating problems such as physical health problems, developmental challenges, and/or involvement in criminal and juvenile justice systems.

(Governor's Behavioral Health Task Force Safety Net Subcommittee, 2020)



# Offering Services

## Wraparound Services

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- *High intensity behavioral health treatment* provides individualized support to **reduce risk for worsening problems**, ensure continuity of care across the service system, and prevent adverse outcomes such as homelessness, criminal justice involvement, and physical or behavioral health crisis.



# Offering Services

## Wraparound Services

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- Effective *high intensity behavioral health treatment* must have the following characteristics:
  - Assertive outreach and engagement
  - Community-based
  - Multi-disciplinary and team-based
  - Recovery-focused
  - Culturally and Linguistically Responsive
  - Client-driven
  - Flexible in duration and intensity
  - Coordinates care across settings
  - Expands and leverages natural supports
  - Includes advocacy and builds skills for self-advocacy

(Governor's Behavioral Health Task Force Safety Net Subcommittee, 2020)



A group of diverse hands stacked in a pyramid shape, symbolizing teamwork and gratitude. The hands are of various skin tones and are reaching up from the bottom of the frame. The background is a blurred office setting with a staircase railing. The text "Thank You" is centered over the hands in a white, sans-serif font.

Thank You