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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Michigan Community Mental Health (CMH) and the Pentwater Police Department have been awarded a federal grant to improve collaboration between the criminal justice system and mental health services in Lake, Mason, and Oceana Counties.

In Lake, Mason, and Oceana counties individuals with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders are frequently lodged in the local jails. While in jail, individuals may not have access to adequate services for their mental health and substance use disorder needs. Currently, local law enforcement and West Michigan CMH lack an effective system to divert these individuals out of jail and into treatment.

The grant is part of the US Department of Justice's Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program, which supports initiatives that aim to increase public safety and increase access to mental health and substance abuse services. The strategic plan developed under this grant will set up a system for local law enforcement and West Michigan CMH to quickly identify individuals who bump into the criminal justice system and require mental health and/or co-occurring substance abuse services, and then connect those individuals to treatment. Many of these individuals can be safely served in treatment rather than remaining in jail.

Over the next year the \$75,000 award will mainly be used to fund expert consultation and training for the project team, local law enforcement, and mental health workers. Besides West Michigan CMH and law enforcement, other key partners will include local court systems and hospitals.

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