



CORRECTIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATES, INC.

Fulton County Jail *Success Story*

For more than two decades, Correctional Medical Associates (CMA) has partnered with the Fulton County Jail to provide mental health, and more recently, comprehensive physical health services to its inmate population, today providing intake medical screening to approximately 34,000 people each year.

Milestones

- Secured NCCHC accreditation within one year of contract start
- Improvements in care resulted in release from federal consent decree initiated under previous vendor
- Reduced healthcare-related inmate grievances by 90 percent
- Continuous Quality Improvement Studies keep performance standards at their maximum

Beginning in 1986, CMA (at that time known as Correctional Mental Health Associates, Inc.), began providing mental health services for the Fulton County Jail. Today, CMA treats more than 13,000 inmates each year for mental health issues, with almost 800 of those receiving acute psychiatric treatment.

CMA works closely with the Fulton County Superior Drug and Mental Health Court's Alternative Sentencing/Treatment Diversion Program. This program is offered to those inmates who are charged with felony offence(s) and whom the court has determined that, because of their mental illness, would not benefit from prison or long-term jail sentence.

The court's treatment coordinators identify an appropriate community resource/program that would benefit the inmate. Because each community program has its own admission criteria, CMA is then charged with developing the individual-specific discharge plan that includes, but is not limited to, medical/mental health stabilization, appropriate supply of medications, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted disease treatment, and clearance.

These community programs have an admission criterion that is wholly dependent upon an appropriate and timely discharge plan; therefore, CMA's role in the court's Alternative Sentencing/Treatment Diversion Program is critical to the inmates' acceptance into these community programs.

In 2000, CMA successfully secured the medical health contract for Fulton County Jail. At that time, the jail was under a federal consent decree. Over the past eight years, working collaboratively with jail leadership, CMA raised the level of health care from “disgraceful and totally unacceptable” (as reported in a court order by Judge Shoob, the federal judge presiding in this matter, dated March 13, 2000) to “impressive” (as reported by Dr. Greifinger, the court appointed federal monitor, in his January 31, 2001 report).

“We have had a lot of positive outcomes in the health of these inmates and that translates into a positive impact on Fulton County as a whole.”

George Herron
Health Services Director
Fulton County Jail

Because of successful management, effective resource management and collaborative partnership with the jail and county, the jail was released from the Settlement Agreement in November 2002, less than two years after CMA assumed full responsibility. This was achieved by a conscientious and committed effort to develop systems and processes that complied with all aspects of the Settlement Agreement and the constitutional rights of all inmates.

CMA has not rested on its laurels. The company has been successful in securing renewal of its contract through three additional rigorous bids since 2000, and continues to provide services that enhance the overall operation of the jail, as recognized by Health Services Director George Herron:

There are three issues that are central to operating a safe and secure jail environment – medical care, food service and inmate grievances. CMA has had a positive impact in all three areas. In addition to providing excellent medical care, resulting in a dramatic reduction in inmate grievance, CMA was proactive in advising us on how to raise the dietary standard for all of our inmates in an effort to prevent and manage chronic care diseases (i.e., diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol). As a result of this advice, the food services staff is now providing heart-healthy diets (unless otherwise medically indicated) and this change has resulted in better control and possible prevention of these chronic diseases.