

The PEOPLE Framework

Supporting International Alternatives to Incarceration for Individuals With Substance Use and/or Mental Health Disorders

OVERVIEW

Substance use and mental health disorders pose major challenges for legal and health systems around the world. The Center for Advancing Justice, a division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, helps countries and territories implement evidence-based legal and health system improvements that address these underlying causes of crime, reduce reoffending, and strengthen communities.

The Center for Advancing Justice uses the PEOPLE framework to guide our assessment, training, and technical assistance work with both adult and juvenile legal and health systems across the globe.

P - Partnerships

Obtain input and secure buy-in from key stakeholders—individuals, communities, and organizations—that stand to be impacted by or will help facilitate change.

E - Engagement

Engage stakeholders in productive dialogue and develop a thorough understanding of local history, demographics, culture, resources, strengths, and gaps.

O - Operations

Use in-person observation, interviews, system mapping, and data analysis to understand how the legal and health systems currently operate and identify opportunities to enhance practices.

P - Policy

Assess national and international legal frameworks to ensure that improvements can be developed in accordance with applicable legal constraints.

L - Learning

Use multiple training methods including virtual instruction, e-learning modules, individual coaching, and in-person training, to engage stakeholders and support effective implementation of improved policies and practices.

E - Evaluation

Support and train legal and health practitioners in robust data collection procedures and evaluate new practices and policy changes to measure the success of justice system improvements over time.

The Center for Advancing Justice may be able to help you build improved legal and health system responses to individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. For more information, please contact NADCP Chief Development Officer Aaron Arnold at aarnold@allrise.org.

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that substance use and mental health disorders pose major challenges for legal and health systems around the world, the Center for Advancing Justice, a division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, helps countries and territories implement evidence-based legal and health system improvements that address the underlying causes of crime, reduce reoffending, and strengthen communities.

Our process begins with a thorough legal and health systems assessment using proven tools and methods, and we establish partnerships with key stakeholders and local leadership to increase buy-in. We then leverage our unparalleled subject matter expertise to deliver customized technical assistance to support the planning and development of effective alternatives to incarceration and other interventions—particularly for individuals with substance use and mental health disorders—and we carefully evaluate and monitor results.

THE PEOPLE FRAMEWORK

The Center for Advancing Justice uses the PEOPLE framework to guide our assessment, training, and technical assistance work with both adult and juvenile legal and health systems across the globe. This framework relies heavily on data-driven decision making while recognizing that the needs of people—legal system-involved individuals, legal system practitioners, health system practitioners, and community members—must be at the center of effective legal and health policies.

Using the PEOPLE framework, the Center for Advancing Justice helps countries and territories implement improvements and reforms that make legal systems more restorative and health systems more effective. During all phases of the process, the Center for Advancing Justice employs a cross-sectional team of in-house experts and in-country specialists to assist in system assessment and implementation of improvements and reforms.

P - Partnerships

Sustainable legal and health systems improvement require input and buy-in from stakeholders—individuals, communities, and organizations—that stand to be impacted by or will help facilitate change. The Center for Advancing Justice helps build these necessary partnerships.

- » Secure the commitment of all key government agencies (prosecution, defense, corrections, public health, etc.) and non-government organizations (NGOs) (treatment providers, social services, advocates, etc.) to participate in the reform effort.
- » Identify and enlist local community leaders, those with lived experienced, and others directly impacted by legal and health policies and practices in the reform effort to ensure inclusivity and foster cultural responsiveness.
- » Formalize stakeholder commitment through a written memorandum of collaboration.
- » When appropriate, establish a core team of cross-disciplinary stakeholders to serve as the project’s steering committee.

E - Engagement

The Center for Advancing Justice engages stakeholders in productive dialogue and develops a thorough understanding of the local legal and health systems' history, demographics, culture, resources, strengths, and gaps. This information is essential to planning and implementing legal and health systems enhancements that meet local needs and improve outcomes.

- » Convene stakeholders for one or more kickoff meetings to introduce the project, set expectations, build a shared vision, and set the project timeline.
- » Conduct semi-structured interviews and meetings with stakeholders to assess priorities, concerns, communication channels, resources, and political support.
- » Facilitate focus groups and surveys as needed to supplement stakeholder interviews.
- » Host community input forums to ensure that impacted individuals have ample and accessible opportunities to express their views.

O - Operations

Before change can be implemented, it is essential to understand how the legal and health systems operate in practice. The Center for Advancing Justice's expert staff of experienced practitioners and researchers uses in-person observation, interviews, system mapping, and data analysis to gain real-world perspective on the local legal and health systems' current performance and identify opportunities to enhance practices.

- » Observe court, corrections, and other agency operations through desk reviews and in-person observations.
- » Visit local treatment centers and social services agencies to observe operations, review programming, and engage in discussions with practitioners.
- » Collect and analyze data from legal and health systems agencies and partner organizations.
- » Create a detailed system map illustrating decision points and processes.
- » Facilitate planning meetings with key stakeholders to identify priority areas for improvement.
- » Engage in strategic planning to develop concrete goals, objectives, and steps to implement selected system improvements.
- » Lead ongoing meetings with the project steering committee to gauge progress, ensure completion of deliverables, and overcome barriers.

P - Policy

Legal and health systems operations are guided in large part by the laws, regulations, agreements, and policies that govern those systems. The Center for Advancing Justice assesses both the national and international legal framework in which the systems operate so that improvements can be developed in accordance with applicable legal constraints.

- » Assess the rule of law and national/local policy landscape.
- » Identify applicable international agreements and guidance (e.g., “UNODC/WHO Treatment and Care for People with Drug Use Disorders in Contact with the Criminal Justice System: Alternatives to Incarceration or Punishment”) and assess their impact on legal and health systems policies and practices.
- » Review technical reports containing information about legal and health systems policies and management.
- » Overlay policy considerations onto legal and health systems maps.
- » Work with legal and health systems officials and partners to develop new and/or revised policies to support improved practices.

L - Learning

With a strategic plan for legal and health systems improvement in place, the Center for Advancing Justice provides intensive training and technical assistance to all key stakeholders to support effective implementation of new policies and practices. This assistance is rooted in our three decades of experience leading legal and health system innovation in the United States and internationally.

- » Deliver customized training and technical assistance, using adult learning principles, on evidence-based addiction treatment and promising alternative-to-incarceration models.
- » Leverage multiple training methods—including virtual instruction, e-learning modules, individual coaching, and in-person training—to engage stakeholders and support effective implementation of improved practices.
- » Provide custom worksheets, checklists, and how-to manuals to support learning and transfer to practice evidence-based models and methods, including drug courts and other treatment courts, diversion programs, prearrest deflection programs, postconviction reentry programs, and other proven models.
- » Prepare local experts to serve as trainers (“train the trainer”) to ensure in-country sustainability.
- » Work with in-country specialists to engage in training follow-up, ensure successful transfer to practice, and promote expanded access to substance use and mental health treatment throughout the legal and health systems.

E - Evaluation

The Center for Advancing Justice’s professional researchers work directly with local stakeholders to ensure that the legal and health systems have a robust data collection and evaluation plan in place to measure the success of all legal and health system improvements over time. In addition, the researchers assess the effectiveness of the Center for Advancing Justice’s training and technical assistance efforts.

- » Help jurisdictions develop a data collection protocol designed to support evaluation of system improvements.
- » Measure transfer to practice through indicators such as new policies and practices implemented, number of officials trained, number of individuals served, and changes in key measures such as case filings, incarceration rates, referrals to alternative-to-incarceration programs, case dispositions, treatment placements, etc.
- » Conduct process evaluations to ensure that new policies and procedures are being implemented as intended.
- » Use available data to measure the impacts of legal and health systems improvements and reforms on outcomes for those involved in the legal system, victims, and the community at large.
- » Assess training and technical assistance efforts using standardized measures.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ADVANCING JUSTICE

The Center for Advancing Justice was created by leaders of the treatment court movement at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Advancing Justice harnesses more than three decades of credibility, expertise, and leadership responsible for the creation of nearly 4,000 treatment courts (i.e., alternative-to-incarceration programs) throughout the world. With a constituency of thousands of legal and public health professionals spanning every intercept point in the justice system, from entry to reentry, Advancing Justice is positioned to lead a new era of global reform.

