

**Report to the Honorable Senator Manning, Representative Janelle Bynum, and
The Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Reform
Yellow Line Project Report
John Gotchall, MD, The Arc of Benton County
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Thank you for your work as the Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Committee today. There were several conversations in the testimony (ongoing) that reminded me of Blue Earth County, Minnesota's Yellow Line Project. I first heard about this in Jan. 2019 and the Oregon Criminal Justice Summit. I wonder if this model would serve Benton County, Lane County or Oregon. Perhaps you have already considered this model of diversion.

One flaw in the model is that it does not disaggregate or screen for developmental or other neurocognitive disabilities. We must disentangle mental health issues, substance abuse and disabilities at the earliest opportunity, even when they co-exist, if we are to achieve desired outcomes.

[The Yellow Line Project's presentation is linked here.](#)

Recent events have raised the urgency for overdue justice reform. We have communicated with Blue Earth County Human Services Director Phil Claussen regarding the incorporation of DRT concerns into a Yellow Line Project (YLP). He said to do it!

In this time of constrained funding, it is important to note that the YLP has a good return on investment.

[The Yellow Line Project \(YLP\) appears to be successful](#) for mental health and substance abuse issues. In 18 months, 2,217 people were screened in Blue Earth County. 81% had mental health or chemical dependency issues. Of those, 12% were eligible for diversion services and 150 people started a services plan. Of those entering a project plan, 82% completed their plan and only 6% came in contact with law enforcement over the next year. Surely those statistics are associated with decreased use of force against vulnerable persons.

Blue Earth County is saving money through early awareness, access and services. Detox costs are down 23%, saving \$117,000 per year. The County's state hospital costs are down 80% in 5 years, saving about \$266,000/year. Perhaps Benton County, Lane County or Oregon can fund a good screening program and disability education for its justice system with some of that \$383,000/year savings.

Blue Earth County demographics are similar to Benton County, even its [ancient courthouse](#). Yellow Line Project and similar policing policies in Blue Earth County are being considered as the basis for [justice reform by the Minnesota](#) Legislature.

Best regards,

John Gotchall, MD
The Arc of Benton County