

Melissa's Project

Melissa is seriously impaired by prolonged mental illness. She requires extensive treatment and recovery support services in order to live in the community. Melissa has a court-appointed conservator to act on her behalf in making important decisions that she is unable to make for herself. Melissa was plagued by repeated hospital admissions, homelessness and arrests for nuisance behavior stemming from her illness. Other individuals in the community have similar profiles—seriously impaired, conservator, repeated hospitalizations, arrests, and homeless. Melissa and some persons with similar conditions are doing better now, thanks to a new service that is named for her.

The Melissa's Project was created to break this unfortunate cycle. Funded by the Probate Court Administration and DMHAS, its mission is to monitor and coordinate services for people with complex mental-health needs to help ensure access to quality healthcare and services by facilitating linkages among community service providers.

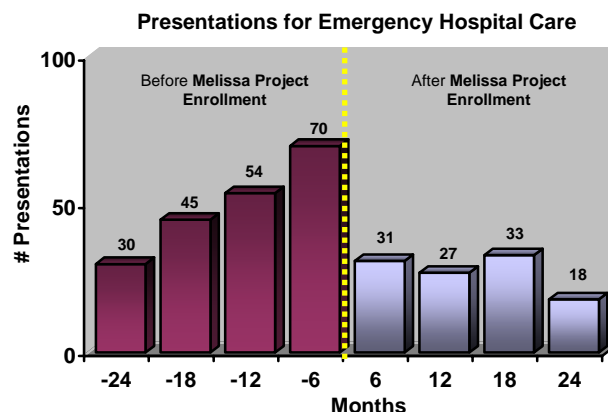
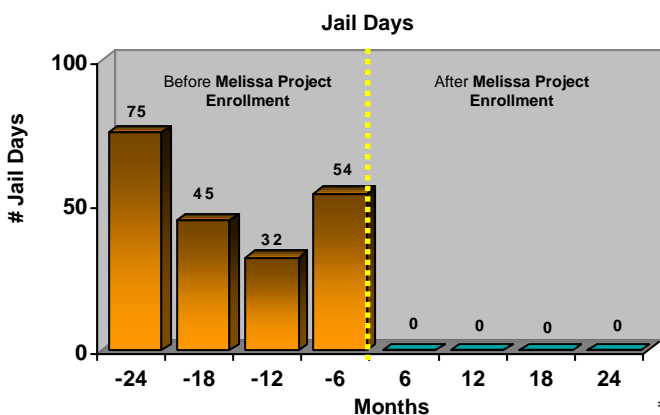
Administered by Guardian Ad Litem Services, Inc., a private, non-profit agency in northwestern CT, Melissa's Project:

- ▶ Serves people with serious, prolonged mental illness who have court-appointed conservators.
- ▶ Provides better-informed treatment options and outcomes for individuals and their conservators.
- ▶ Cuts through red tape to access services.
- ▶ Identifies community resources and specialty services, and solves problems around accessing these.
- ▶ Diminishes hospitalization, homelessness, and criminal recidivism.
- ▶ Provides practical approaches to safe-and-affordable housing and other basic human needs.

Judge James J. Lawlor, Probate Court Administrator



“Melissa’s Project has been a wonderful resource for our Probate Courts. The Project started as a small pilot aimed to assist persons with mental illness who were repeatedly coming before the court. Our own internal review indicates what we all believe to be true, that the Melissa’s Project is successful. . . . Melissa’s Project is also an example of interagency collaboration at its best.”



*N = 44 for study graphs

The Melissa's Project, while still quite young, is demonstrating significant reductions in recidivism rates, homelessness and behavioral symptoms that can result in actual or perceived criminal behavior. This proactive response to needs has translated into demonstrable gains for our people, as evidenced by a dramatic reduction in both emergency room visits, days spent in jail and a 65% reduction in days of inpatient hospitalization comparing patients two years before and two years after Melissa's Project.