

Court-Led Collaborations to Address Substance Use and Mental Health Needs in Adams County, Ohio

May 5–6, 2026, Adams County, Ohio

Peer Site Visit Opportunity

Introduction

The Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR), on behalf of the State Justice Institute (SJI), is pleased to announce a peer exchange opportunity May 5–6, 2026 (with additional travel days required depending on your home location). Up to five communities will be selected to receive travel scholarships to participate. These travel scholarships will allow each community to send a team of three to four practitioners to participate in the structured, 2-day peer exchange at no cost.

The peer exchange will be based in Adams County, Ohio, a community in the southern part of the state approximately 1 hour from Cincinnati. Throughout the 2-day site visit, the visiting teams will have the opportunity to learn about and observe the many successful aspects of Adams County's comprehensive, collaborative response to behavioral health and substance use, including:

◀ **Operation Better Together (OBT).** OBT is a collaborative initiative addressing substance use disorders, mental health, and child welfare through a comprehensive, cross-agency approach. OBT was born out of the community's desire to improve the lives of its

residents. Through partnerships between the court, probation, the local health department, behavioral health agencies, workforce development, child protective services, schools, law enforcement, and others, the group works together to identify gaps and implement solutions. OBT was recognized by the Rural Justice Collaborative Advisory Committee as one of the best rural justice projects in the nation.

◀ **Courthouse-Initiated Programming.** Through the leadership of the Commons Pleas Court Judge, the Adams County Courthouse has become a safety net for the community. The courthouse is home to numerous services, including telehealth visits for justice-involved individuals, juveniles, and the community; the courthouse classroom for students in need of specialized services; in-person counseling; the Justice Bus; recovery specialists; and more.

◀ **Justice Bus.** Through OBT, Adams County deploys the Justice Bus the first Tuesday of every month to provide free legal aid and services to the community. There are no legal aid services in the county, so OBT addressed this need through the Justice Bus initiative.



State Justice Institute

◀ The **REACH for Tomorrow program**. Found in all schools in Adams County, the REACH (Restoring, Educating, Advocating, Collaborating, and Hope) program seeks to help individuals, families, churches, coalitions, and communities realize their goals for health, healing, and wholeness. Specifically, REACH for Tomorrow serves as the school-based mental health service in the Adams County Ohio Valley School District (ACOVSD) supporting the family unit as a whole. The REACH for Tomorrow team also works with the sheriff's office on the development of a crisis response team and a Handle With Care Program.

◀ **The Adams County Training and Business Center**, an innovative hub that offers comprehensive workforce development programs. Through the leadership of the Adams County Commissioners and in partnership with Ohio Means Jobs, residents can receive job support, GED education, certification programs, driving instruction, help in obtaining a driver's license, training in various trades, various technology trainings, and much more.

Through this peer exchange, visiting teams can discuss and share best practices, exchange ideas and knowledge, and engage in peer networking events. Visiting teams also will be provided opportunities to meet together and process the information as a team.

Eligibility

To be eligible for this technical assistance opportunity, your community must meet the following criteria:

◀ Represent a rural community as defined by the Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer (<https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/rural-health/rural-health-eligibility>), a tool maintained by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). If you believe your community is rural but not identified as such by the HRSA tool, please provide a description of why you believe your jurisdiction represents a rural community.

◀ Assemble a cross-sector team that includes a judge and two to three additional team members who represent the following sectors: juvenile probation, local school system, treatment provider, workforce development, and/or law enforcement.

Benefits If Selected

Sites that are selected for the initiative will:

◀ Receive travel scholarships for up to four team members to participate in a 2-day site visit to Adams County May 5–6, 2026 (as well as additional travel days required based on your home location). Travel scholarships will cover airfare, lodging, ground transportation, and daily meal per diem. Participants will be reimbursed for their actual allowable expenses.

◀ Have a meaningful opportunity to learn from local practitioners and one another.

Peer Site Visit Request Requirements

Sites interested in this opportunity should review the requirements carefully. Sites must commit to the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders to be considered for this opportunity. Sites must also commit to a team consisting of three to four sectors (identified below).

Mandatory Team Members

1. A judge who has jurisdiction over dockets connected to substance use, mental health, juveniles, and/or family court matters.
2. Two or three additional team members, each representing one of the following sectors:
 - Juvenile probation
 - School system
 - Treatment provider
 - Workforce development
 - Law enforcement
3. Please note that each team member must represent a different sector.
4. These three to four individuals will receive a travel scholarship to cover airfare, lodging, ground transportation, and daily meal per diem. Participants will be reimbursed for their actual expenses.

-
-
5. A team may request to bring one to two additional team members at their own expense. Teams will only be reimbursed for travel expenses of up to four of the mandatory team members. There are space limitations, but every effort will be made to accommodate these requests.

Peer Site Visit Request Submission

Please submit your request by completing this [form](#). A PDF version of the questions is available [here](#). Once you have completed the form and saved your responses, you will receive a confirmation of receipt. If you have any questions at all, please email contact@reachingruralresources.org.

Peer Site Visit Request Timeline

Request forms will be reviewed and approved on a rolling basis, with submissions received by March 16, 2026, receiving priority consideration. Submissions will not be accepted after March 31, 2026.

This project is also supported under Cooperative Agreement Number SJI-25P016 from the State Justice Institute. The points of view expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.