

Jennifer VanOrt holds a dual major Bachelors Degree in Social Work and Criminal Justice, and has spent the majority of her professional career actively engaged in supporting programs aimed specifically at addressing homelessness, most notably within the population affected by mental illness.

As a case manager, Jennifer offered support, resource connection, transportation, and a focal point of supervision to assist these individuals transition to stable community living, and to realize the goal of community participation. As an extension of her role in the decriminalization committee, established to address unmet community needs in direct respect to her population of interest, Jennifer now oversees the operation of Fayette County Mental Health Court, allowing her to continue a hands-on, face-to-face case management approach for the mental health court participants, as well as developing key community integration with law enforcement, jail systems, the local State mental health hospital, and community mental health providers.

As Fayette County Mental Health Court expands, Jennifer hopes to expand the level of early integration into the criminal justice system, leading to a reduction in time between initial contact and diversion to the program, coupled with improved community services and collaboration beyond the current service level.

Jennifer recognizes the endemic nature of the dually diagnosed in mental health service delivery within the context of the judicial system, and notes that the most effective way to engage this population in prudent, effective treatment, is to meet people “exactly where they are” on their personal journey, assess their individual wants, needs and aspirations, and subsequently make appropriate service and community connections.