

FACE FACE

Connecting Policymakers to People Involved with the Correctional System

Reducing the Prevalence of People with Mental Illnesses in Prisons and Jails

Millions of people with mental illnesses are incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails. In many counties across the country, jails provide more treatment for people with mental illnesses than community-based mental health providers do. Once incarcerated, people with mental illnesses tend to stay longer in jail and, upon release, have a higher likelihood of being reincarcerated than those without mental illnesses. Due to limited resources and a lack of coordination between corrections, mental health, and other agencies, a significant number of people with mental illnesses will continue to cycle through the criminal justice system, which may lead to negative outcomes for them and their families—as well as a failure to improve public safety.

Almost **2 million times** each year, people with serious mental illnesses are booked into county jails.¹



 Jails spend **2 to 3 times more** on adults with mental illnesses, compared to those without treatment needs.⁴

Addressing Common Misconceptions

The majority of people with mental illnesses are not violent and do not commit crimes. Further, the majority of violent crimes are not committed by people with mental illnesses. But misconceptions about the criminal activity of people with mental illnesses have led to stigmatization.⁵





1. Henry J. Steadman, Fred C. Osher, Pamela C. Robbins, Brian Case, and Steven Samuels, "Prevalence of Serious Mental Illness Among Jail Inmates," *Psychiatric Services* 60, no. 6 (2009): 763.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. See, e.g., Jeffery Swanson et al., *Costs of Criminal Justice Involvement in Connecticut: Final Report* (Durham, NC: Duke University School of Medicine, 2011).
5. NASMHPD/CSG Justice Center, *Responding to a High-Profile Tragic Incident Involving a Person with a Serious Mental Illness: A Toolkit for State Mental Health Commissioners* (Alexandria, VA: NASMHPD, 2010), https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Responding_to_a_High-Profile_Tragic_Incident_Involving_a_Person_with_a_Serious_Mental_Illness.pdf.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-MU-BX-K011 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.