

Mentally Ill Individuals and Jails

FACT SHEET

FLORIDA COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

November 2010



- Approximately 9 million people are booked into US jails over the course of the year. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009)
- At midyear 2005 more than half of all jail inmates had a mental health problem. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- The National GAINS Center estimates that more than 1.1 million people diagnosed with serious mental illnesses are arrested and booked into jails annually (Steadman, 2007).
- In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in the number of adults with serious mental illnesses and children with severe emotional disturbances involved in the criminal and juvenile justice systems because of behaviors related to untreated mental illnesses or, on occasion, because it is the only means of accessing mental health services or basic life needs. (Supreme Court of Florida, 2007)
- The justice system was never intended to serve as the safety net for the public mental health system and is ill-equipped to do so; however, this is exactly the role that Florida's jails, detention centers, and prisons have been forced to assume as increasing numbers of individuals are unable to access critically needed care in the community. (Supreme Court of Florida, 2007)
- According to a study by the Council of State Governments Justice Center, researchers documented serious mental illnesses in 14.5 percent of the men and 31 percent of the women in jails, which taken together, comprises 16.9 percent of those studied - rates in excess of three to six times those found in the general population. (Council of State Governments, 2009)
- Only 1 in 6 jail inmates who had a mental health problem had received treatment since admission. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- Of those jail inmates with a mental illness, 44% had a past violent offense, 26% had three or more prior incarcerations, 76% were dependent on substances or a substance abuser, 62% used drugs in the month prior to arrest, 17% were homeless in the year before arrest, 24% suffered past physical or sexual abuse, and 37% had parents who abused alcohol or drugs (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- In less than 200 years, we have taken mentally ill individuals who were in jails and prisons; transferred them to mental hospitals; then we closed down the mental hospitals, thereby forcing the mentally ill individuals back to jails and prisons. (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)
- Large numbers of people with serious mental illnesses are cycling through the criminal justice system, often resulting in tragic outcomes for these individuals, their families, and the communities in which they live; the ineffective use of law enforcement, court, and corrections dollars; missed opportunities to link people to effective treatment; and failure to improve public safety. (Council of State Governments, 2009)
- Too often there are people incarcerated who have serious mental illnesses, oftentimes for minor offenses, who would be better served in the community. Though jails have a constitutional mandate to treat the mental illnesses of individuals under their supervision, they are ill-equipped to meet the needs of those with serious mental illnesses. (Council of State Governments, 2009)



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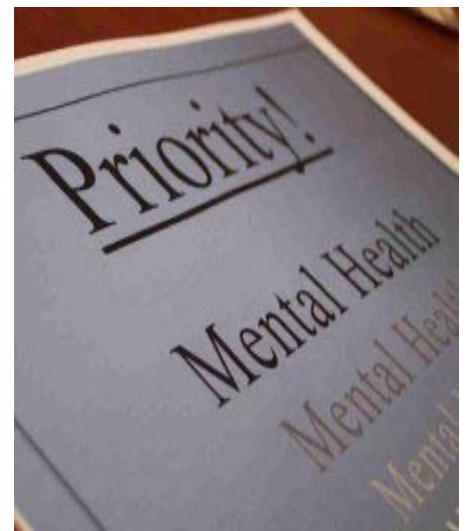
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- A Florida Mental Health Institute study found that being male, being homeless, not having outpatient mental health treatment, and having an involuntary psychiatric evaluation in the previous quarter were independently associated with significantly increased odds of misdemeanor arrests and additional days in jail. On the other hand, being black, being younger than 21 years, having a non-psychotic diagnosis, and a co-occurring substance use disorder diagnosis were all independently associated with significantly increased odds of felony arrests, and with the exception of having a non-psychotic diagnosis, they were also significantly associated with additional days in jail. (FMHI, 2010)
- On any given day, the Miami-Dade County jail houses between 800 and 1200 defendants with serious mental illness, making it the largest psychiatric facility in the State of Florida. (Supreme Court of Florida, 2007)
- The high rate of symptoms of mental health disorder among jail inmates may reflect the role of local jails in the criminal justice system. Jails are locally operated correctional facilities that receive offenders after an arrest and hold them for a short period of time, pending arraignment, trial, conviction, or sentencing. Among other functions, local jails hold mentally ill persons pending their movement to appropriate mental health facilities. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- People with mental illnesses are 64% more likely to be arrested than those without a mental illness – for committing the same crime. (Bazelon Center for Mental Health, 2001)
- Using 2004–2005 data not previously published, we found that in the United States there are now more than three times more seriously mentally ill persons in jails and prisons than in hospitals. (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)
- Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said: “Our jails and prisons collectively are the biggest mental-health facilities in the state....Jails have become asylums for thousands of inmates with mental illnesses whose problems and needs far exceed what jails can provide.” (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)
- Mentally ill inmates cost more than non-mentally ill inmates for a variety of reasons, including increased staffing needs. In Broward County, Florida, it costs \$80 a day to house a regular inmate but \$130 a day for an inmate with mental illness. (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)
- In the Broward County jail in 2007, 23 percent of the prisoners were taking psychotropic medication. (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)
- Since the county and state corrections systems are separate from, and usually not coordinated with, the mental health system, most mentally ill persons leaving jails and prisons receive little, if any, psychiatric aftercare. Consequently the recidivism rate is thought to be higher than it is for other released prisoners. (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)
- In Florida, Dade and Broward counties are designing “the first county jails ever to be built specifically for inmates with chronic and severe mental illness.” (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)
- National indicators show that persons of color are disproportionately represented in both adult and juvenile justice systems. Studies also show that while there are few, if any, differences in the nature and scope of crimes committed by persons of color in comparison to their white counterparts, their rates of arrest, prosecution, and incarceration, as well as the length of sentences, are substantially higher. (Mental Health America, accessed 2010)
- Allowing youth and adults with mental illness to enter the justice system contributes to large corrections costs. Many individuals with mental illness commit minor public disturbances that lead to arrests. Focusing on alternative justice strategies can help save counties money. For each non-violent offender in jail moved to probation or parole, local government corrections systems could save almost \$25,000. (National Association of Counties, 2010)
- Moving fifty percent of current non-violent inmates to probation or parole from jail could save local governments \$7.2 billion per year, even after factoring in additional probation and parole costs. (National Association of Counties, 2010)
- An estimated 7% of people with serious or persistent mental illnesses are put in jail or prison each year. (Council of State Governments, accessed 2010)
- The rate of mental health problems also varies by the age of inmates. Inmates age 24 or younger had the highest rate of mental health problems and those age 55 or older had the lowest rate. An estimated 70% of local jail inmates age 24 or younger had a mental health problem, compared to 52% of those ages 55 or older. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- Among jail inmates, about 14% of those who had a mental health problem had lived in a foster home, agency, or institution while growing up, compared to 6% of jail inmates who did not have a mental health problem. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)

- The majority of jail inmates who had a mental health problem (52%) reported that they had a family member who had been incarcerated in the past. Among those without a mental health problem, about 36% of jails inmates reported that a family member had served time. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- Over a third (34%) of local jail inmates who had a mental health problem said they had used drugs at the time of the offense leading to their incarceration, compared to a fifth (20%) of jail inmates who did not have a mental problem. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- A larger proportion of inmates who had a mental health problem had served more prior sentences than inmates without a mental health problem. Among jail inmates, 42% of those with a mental health problem had served 3 or more prior sentences to probation or incarceration, compared to 33% of jail inmates without a mental health problem. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- Only 17% of local jail inmates had received mental health treatment since admission. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- Among jail inmates, in 2002, around 30% said they had received treatment for a mental health problem in the past, up from 25% in 1996. The proportion who had received treatment since admission (11%) was unchanged. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006)
- There are now more than three times more seriously mentally ill persons in jails and prisons than in hospitals. (Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, 2010)



ABOUT FCCMH

The Florida Council for Community Mental Health (FCCMH) is a statewide association of 70 community-based mental health and substance abuse agencies. The members serve as the principal provider of care to Medicaid beneficiaries and uninsured individuals. They are the community's mental health and substance abuse safety net, providing a comprehensive set of services ranging from inpatient psychiatric care, crisis care, medications, residential treatment, outpatient care housing, and employment services. They are essential health care providers with strong community ties. Many have been business for more than 40 or 50 years. The association's membership includes a number of agencies that specialize in substance abuse services and children's services, as well as hospital-based programs.

Each member agency is a private corporation - most are nonprofit agencies generally with a volunteer, citizen board of directors who are representative of the local community.

For More Information:

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