

How does time in jail and prison
impact the people we serve

“Listen baby”

- Mr. M. a man in his 50s with bipolar disorder receiving services from the University of Maryland’s Assertive Community Treatment team in 1993

Some information The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences | The National Academies Press National Academies research Council 2014

- Two conditions associated with degeneration of mental health:
 - overcrowding
 - confinement in isolation units.
- Prisoners with untreated mental illness are more likely to incur disciplinary infractions and suffer punishment as a result
- Those with untreated mental illness are more likely to be victimized, including sexual victimization
- Some prisoners with psychiatric diagnoses react to stresses of imprisonment with suicide
- Long term impacts including PTSD, anxiety disorders, depression
- Adverse effects of untreated symptoms, particularly psychosis

Some people I have met and learned about

Some people have given me full permission to share their stories, particularly Mr. H. With others I have made every effort to protect their identities

Mr. H

Mr. B

Ms. C

Mr. W

Mr. G

Ms. A

Mr. H

- A Black man with childhood onset schizophrenia with command hallucinations
- Symptoms refractory to treatment
- Substance use
- Correctional justice involvement from age 13
- Repeated arrests
- Eventual placement at Patuxent which he describes as “so terrible you don’t want to know”
- Referral to Assertive Community Treatment and clozapine initiation
- Mr. H today

Mr. B

- A Black man with first episode psychosis at age 19
- Arrested for a disturbance at a convenience store when it is clear from the police report that he was extremely symptomatic
- Excessive time at central booking
- Isolation
- Eventually sent to a state hospital for competency and then criminal responsibility evaluation
- Lengthy stay
- Problematic conditional release

Ms. C.

- A Black woman with a history of trauma and diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder
- Arrested on charges related to sex work
- Trauma (physical and sexual) while incarcerated
- Mother of a young child with whom she lost contact
- Impact of parental incarceration on children
- Long term impact on parents, particularly mothers
- Challenges for Ms. C. today

Mr. W

- A white man with a history of substance use and homelessness and a diagnosis of schizophrenia
- Arrested repeatedly for nuisance crimes
- Exhibited problematic behaviors at the detention center (intrusive, singing loudly, asking for cigarettes)
- Badly assaulted on multiple occasions while in custody

Mr. G.

- Black man with a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder depressed type.
- Arrested on arson charges
- Mental health court probation with residential rehabilitation as a conditions
- Ejected from one housing placement
- Able to complete probation in a second placement
- Residing successfully in a single room occupancy building in the community, utilizing case management and engaged in treatment

Ms. A

- A Black woman with a diagnosis of Bipolar disorder diagnosis and a long history of substance use disorder
- Arrested on possessions charges
- Mental health court probation including psychiatric residential rehabilitation
- Did very well during probation including rebuilding relationships with estranged family
- Relapsed with substances and dropped out of mental health treatment shortly after completing probation

“Locking People Up Is No Way to Treat Mental Illness”

The Atlantic May 30, 2022 [Norm Ornstein](#) and [Steve Leifman](#)

“The failures in services for people with mental illness and behavioral disorders associated with substance use have resulted in mass incarceration becoming the country’s de facto mental-health-care system. People with mental illnesses in the United States are 10 times more likely to be incarcerated than they are to be hospitalized. Those who don’t end up in prison are likely to cycle repeatedly through patchy psychiatric care, spells of homelessness, and emergency rooms. And every year, about 2 million arrests are made of people with serious mental illnesses.”

Some partial conclusions

- We can do better than what we are doing now
- The sequential intercept model, appropriate treatment for people in correctional justice and forensic psychiatric facilities, and criminal justice diversion at the court level are crucial
- Good aftercare is essential for people who are living with mental illness and who are engaged in and exiting the criminal justice system