

# County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

## COMPREHENSIVE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

Counties are leading the call for comprehensive recommendations that will address behavioral health issues in county prisons.

Building on several years' priority work, CCAP's Comprehensive Behavioral Health Task Force released its findings and recommendations in August 2016.

- Encourage counties to employ successful strategies to control the need for incarceration
- Expand training, education and awareness efforts to improve public perception and understanding
- Provide effective supports and services to reduce entry into the criminal justice system and to improve outcomes for re-entry
- Understand special populations and unique circumstances
- Address the needs of returning veterans
- Research larger policy issues and develop longer range policy strategies to assist county efforts

All of these goals will require the engagement of various communities, including lawmakers, local staff, citizens, judges, local partners and others to assure local buy-in and collaboration.

Prisons are not the place for many of these individuals. Society must provide care and treatment as well as every possible tool to safely transition those with mental illness and substance abuse issues back into society, in an effort to improve lives, use resources more appropriately and build safer communities.

Read the Executive Summary and full Report of Findings and Recommendations at

[www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org)



## Did You Know...

As many as 65 percent of all county jail inmates in Pennsylvania have a substance abuse disorder, 10 to 30 percent have a mental illness, and as many as 14 percent have a serious mental illness.

Across the country, county jails house more individuals with mental illness than psychiatric hospitals.

Untreated and unaddressed substance abuse and mental health needs are often the catalyst to entry into the criminal justice system - and the reason individuals continue to cycle back through the system.

By treating the reasons behind criminal behavior, we can break the cycle of admissions and readmissions to county jails.



According to a survey by the National Association of Counties, reducing the number of people with mental illness in jails is of the highest priority for county jails.

## Fast Facts

Counties nationwide spend nearly \$100 billion annually on health care for inmates.

Average annual cost of incarceration in a county jail for one inmate - \$40,000

Inmates experience behavioral health disorders about three times more frequently than the general population.

Studies have shown that jails spend two to three times more money on inmates with mental illnesses that require intervention than on other people in custody.

More than a decade of declining state and federal financial support has severely strained the ability to maintain behavioral health services and treatment within the community.

Other unique circumstances can compound the problem - such as juvenile offenders, homelessness, the needs of returning veterans, or other traumatic experiences.