

Reducing Incarceration



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Mental Health Services Act
CHANGING LIVES. INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES.

What is the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)?

In 2004, California voters resoundingly passed the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) to address the dire need to expand mental health services. Using MHSA funds, counties and community providers deliver mental health services in community settings and save taxpayer dollars by keeping people out of costly hospitals, jails, and institutions.

Reducing Incarceration Rates is an Important Priority

Untreated mental illness puts individuals at risk of homelessness and involvement in the criminal justice system. Approximately one-third of California's state prisoners have open mental health case files, and more than 50% report recent mental health problems and drug abuse or dependence. Prison overcrowding is placing pressure on the state to release significant numbers of inmates, including those with health and mental health concerns, which shifts supervision and support responsibilities to counties. MHSA programs and services target people with serious mental illness who may have cycled in and out of the criminal justice system.

MHSA Full Service Partnerships are Decreasing Incarceration

A majority of MHSA funding is spent on a wrap-around service model called "Full Service Partnerships (FSPs)." FSPs target people of all ages with serious mental health needs and are intended to reduce participants' rates of incarceration. Services not only include mental health counseling and medication, but also assistance with housing, employment, education.

FSPs are proving to decrease the number of arrests and days spent incarcerated for participants of all ages throughout the state. Counties report that incarceration and arrest rates among transition age youth and adult participants have decreased by between **87% and 99%**, depending on the county. Kern County's FSP Program has achieved a **34% lower recidivism rate** than the offender population as a whole. In two years, Kern County's program has produced a **\$1.1 million cost savings** to the local sheriff's department.

Keeping Youth Out of the Criminal Justice System

Counties use MHSA funds to target youth with mental health problems to reduce their involvement in the criminal justice system. One example is Stanislaus County's *Juvenile Justice Teaching Prosocial Skills Program*, which assists youth ages 13-18 in their transition from the criminal justice system or probation into adulthood and the community. This evidence-based program provides an aggression reduction training curriculum.

Supporting Mental Health and Behavioral Health Courts

Mental health and behavioral health courts address the underlying mental health and behavioral health challenges that contribute to criminal behavior. Courts link offenders who would typically be prison-bound to long-term community-based treatment. Contra Costa's *MHSA Behavioral Health Court* has reduced local incarceration rates by **90%** and arrests by **95%**.

Increasing Knowledge and Skills of First Responders

Counties are using MHSA funds to establish or expand **Psychiatric Emergency Response Team Services (PERT)**, in which law enforcement officers receive mental health training and mental health specialists join law enforcement during responses. This ensures responses to people in mental health crises can be handled safely. San Diego County has 21 *PERT Teams*, which continually host trainings for officers in the San Diego Police Department. Riverside County has a clinical therapist available to ride along with officers.

Similarly, counties use MHSA funds for **Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)**, designed to improve police interactions with people with serious mental illness. Marin County is providing mental health training to 30 officers per year, Sonoma County has trained 184 officers, and Riverside County has trained over 400 officers. Santa Clara County conducts 16 trainings per year, and the local sheriff's department has added 16 hours of mental health training to its academy.

To learn more, visit
www.cmhda.org.