MENTAL HEALTH IS PUBLIC SAFETY

Decades of criminalizing Oklahomans with mental illness and substance use disorder have put an incredible strain on the public safety system — and it hasn’t made us safer. There is a better way.

WHAT WE’RE DOING ISN’T WORKING.

82%

Of Oklahomans who enter prison with non-violent offenses have mental health or substance abuse needs.

76

Since 2014, 76 people have died in county or city jails in Oklahoma by suicide or drug use.

10X

In 2012, there were 10 times as many Oklahomans with serious mental illness behind bars as there were in hospitals.

Currently, fewer than 1 in 3 Oklahomans leaving prison have received the mental health treatment they need.

INVESTING IN TREATMENT WILL MAKE ALL US SAFER.

5.8% VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION

Expanding health care to more people has reduced violent crime by 5.8% and property crime by 3% in recent expansion states -- largely due to better mental health care.

- Easy to access and comprehensive inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance use treatment reduces negative consequences that often lead to engagement with law enforcement.
- Access to health services following jail or prison release lowers recidivism by as much as two-thirds, according to some studies.
- In one example, Washington state reduced arrests by as much as 33% in a pilot group by investing in substance use treatment. It saved as much as $18,000 per person.

REMINDER: A person experiencing mental illness is more likely to be the victim of a violent crime than the perpetrator.
TREATMENT IS SAFETER, CHEAPER AND MORE EFFECTIVE THAN INCARCERATION.

Not only are diversion and intervention good for individuals experiencing mental health and substance issues, but the entire community benefits.

$4.2 MILLION SAVED PER COUNTY

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT ARE COST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO REDUCE CRIME.
Each additional treatment facility reduces the social cost of crime in a county by $4.2 million.

REVENUE VS. EXPENSE

4,076 Oklahoma drug court graduates earned $204 million dollars in wages and were expected to contribute $6.1 million in tax revenue. Had these graduates been incarcerated, it would have cost the state an additional $191.6 million! (FY10-FY12)

These graduates are now employed and less likely to recidivate than someone who was released at the same time.

WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

OPTION A
$23,000
The annual cost to incarcerate an individual with mental health needs.

OPTION B
$5,400
The average cost for someone to access mental health court as an alternative to prison.

OPTION B SAVES TAXPAYERS
$17,600 PER YEAR PER PARTICIPANT.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?
Check out these treatment and diversion programs:

Crisis Intervention Teams
Offender Screening
Family Treatment Courts

Day Reporting
Crisis Care Centers
Veteran’s Court

Juvenile Diversion
Anna McBride Courts
Drug Courts

Crisis Line
Reentry Services
Juvenile Drug Court

Data from NAMI, Urban Institute, Oklahoma Department of Corrections, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and, news reports.

Find citations for this document at healthymindspolicy.org/resources

HEALTHY MINDS POLICY INITIATIVE
Building community capacity in Tulsa to address treatable mental illness through local systems change and statewide policy work. LEARN MORE: HEALTHYMINDSPOLICY.ORG.