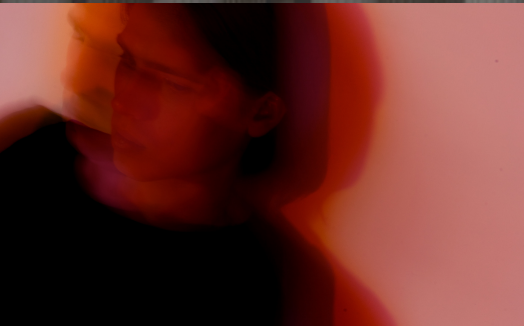


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MENTAL HEALTH & DRUG COURTS

Michigan Justice Advocacy



20% OF INMATES SUFFER FROM MENTAL ILLNESS

People who struggle with poor mental health and mental illness are particularly vulnerable to incarceration and have an increased likelihood of becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

188 PROBLEM-SOLVING COURTS

There are 188 mental health and drug courts within Michigan known collectively as treatment courts or problem-solving courts.

71% OF MALES & 74% OF FEMALES

IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM HAVE A SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEM

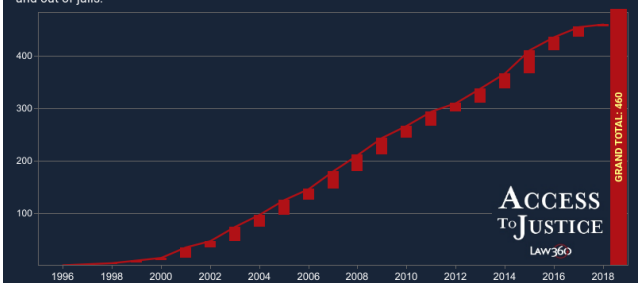
Drug and alcohol addiction are prevalent among incarcerated individuals and has been growing at an exponential rate since 1980.

WHAT ARE MENTAL HEALTH COURTS? WHAT ARE DRUG COURTS?

These are an alternative solution to incarceration for individuals with substance abuse problems or severe mental illness who commit crimes. They are part of a larger effort to divert persons with mental illnesses from the criminal justice system by improving mental health services and providing support at the earliest possible stage. This affords legal institutions the ability to add nuance to complex cases and to enact therapeutic jurisprudence.

The Rise of Adult Mental Health Courts in the U.S.

Over the last 20 years, state jurisdictions have been steadily establishing more adult mental courts to provide people with a mental illness access to treatment that society has not and stop them from cycling in and out of jails.



Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation

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Some people worry that these treatment courts will be used in place of services within the community thus bringing far more people with mental health concerns and drug addictions into contact with the criminal justice system than is necessary. However, many proponents advocate for use of the Sequential Intercept Model which bolsters the importance of preventing a person from becoming involved with the justice system at the earliest possible stage. Adopting this method would mean that treatment courts would be employed as a single step in a larger, more inclusive system of services devoted to mental health as opposed to the only means of assisting mentally ill individuals.

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“an accessible, comprehensive, effective mental health treatment system focused on the needs of individuals with serious and persistent mental disorders is undoubtedly the most effective means of preventing the criminalization of people with mental illness.”

The nation already spends well over \$150 billion to operate the prison industrial complex so there may be some hesitance to support a system with a hefty price tag attached to it.

The mental health court system is often regarded as a less costly alternative to incarceration but the research has not shown this notion to be definitive. Steadman et al (2014) concluded that MHC participants "averaged \$4,000 more for all three follow-up years" these treatment costs "were not offset by criminal justice cost savings." However, only a year later in a study conducted by Kubiak et al (2015) "the total combined cost savings for participants in the 12-month post-MHC period was \$1,411,020."

Treatment Courts may not be the final destination when it comes to mental health treatment but they could be a step in the right direction.

HOW DOES THE NATION ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY WHILE ADDRESSING PUBLIC HEALTH?

If the goal is to deter crime, rehabilitate offenders, and promote overall safety and well-being then the criminal justice system requires a wholistic approach to crime with recovery-oriented mental health services. Treatment courts are a fairly recent innovation designed to provide housing, rehabilitation and counseling to those experiencing mental illnesses and/or drug abuse who have committed crimes.

Currently, acceptance into these specialized dockets are contingent upon defendant willingness to undergo treatment, the centrality of a defendant’s mental health status to his or her criminal behavior, the classification of the offense, and whether or not the person is willing to plead guilty.

Although these courts are still somewhat in their infancy, they are still making a positive impact. One of the most troubling statistics surrounding incarceration is recidivism. According to the National Institute of Justice, almost 44% of criminals released return before the first year out of prison. However, 75% of drug court graduates remain arrest-free at least two years after completing the program. While, Mental health courts have been shown to reduce recidivism by 20%.

Completers (N = 265)		Noncompleters (N = 184)	
Surviving	Recidivism	Surviving	Recidivism
265	53 (20.0%)	184	97 (52.7%)
212	22 (10.4%)	87	27 (31.0%)
190	23 (12.1%)	60	4 (6.7%)
167	4 (2.4%)	56	5 (8.9%)
163	1 (0.6%)	51	2 (4.0%)
159	1 (0.6%)	46	0 (0.0%)
149	0 (0.0%)	43	2 (5.3%)
103	0 (0.0%)	31	0 (0.0%)
82	1 (1.4%)	23	0 (0.0%)

References |

For additional information please consult the resources below

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