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FACT SHEET

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Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues

The Judicial Council's Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues was appointed to advise the council on ways to improve the response of the criminal justice system to offenders with mental illness by promoting interbranch collaboration at the state level and interagency collaboration at the local level. The task force focus has been on improving practices and procedures in criminal cases involving adult and juvenile offenders with mental illness, ensuring the fair and expeditious administration of justice, and promoting improved access to treatment for litigants in the criminal justice system.

Charge

The task force was charged with developing recommendations for policymakers, including the Judicial Council and its advisory committees, to improve systemwide responses to mentally ill offenders and to develop an action plan to implement the recommendations.

Specifically, the task force worked to:

- Identify needs for court-related programs and services that address mentally ill offenders in adult and juvenile courts;
- Promote interbranch and interagency collaboration at state and local levels to identify barriers and create opportunities to improve case processing and outcomes;
- Disseminate locally generated best practices to trial courts and partner agencies;
- Identify methods for evaluating the long-term effectiveness of mental health programs in the courts and identify the best or promising practices that improve case processing and outcomes;

- Provide policymakers with recommendations to improve services and case processing for cases involving mentally ill offenders;
- Advise the Judicial Council and its advisory committees of funding needs and potential resources;
- Provide access to education and outreach programs designed to enhance the effectiveness of case processing and outcomes for cases that involve mentally ill offenders in adult and juvenile courts; and
- Serve as a clearinghouse for ideas, questions, and comments generated in the course of preparing recommendations.

History

This task force is one of seven similar projects established by state supreme courts throughout the nation with support from the Council of State Governments (CSG) as part of its criminal justice and mental health initiative encouraging effective leadership from different facets of the criminal justice and mental health systems.

Presiding Justice Brad R. Hill, of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District, was appointed as chair and other task force members were appointed in spring 2008. Task force membership included representatives from all three branches of government, as well as criminal justice and mental health partners. Continued funding for this project has been supported by California's Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) fund.

The final report of the task force was submitted to the Judicial Council April 29, 2011 and included 137 recommendations addressing ways to improve outcomes and reduce recidivism rates for offenders with mental illness while being mindful of cost and public safety considerations. The final report submitted to the Judicial Council can be found at www.courts.ca.gov/xbcr/cc/20110429itemo.pdf.

Task force recommendations are designed to:

- Promote innovative and effective practices to foster the fair and efficient processing and resolution of cases involving mentally ill persons in the criminal justice system;
- Expand education programs for the judicial branch, State Bar of California, law enforcement, and mental health service providers to address the needs of offenders with mental illness;
- Foster excellence through implementation of evidence-based practices for serving persons with mental illness; and

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- Encourage collaboration among criminal justice partners and other stakeholders to facilitate interagency and interbranch efforts that reduce recidivism and promote improved access to treatment for persons with mental illness.

At the recommendation of the task force, Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye will appoint a committee to create an action plan for implementing task force recommendations.

The task force is set to sunset June 30, 2011 and the implementation working group will be appointed in late 2011.

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Additional resources:

General information on the Criminal Justice/Mental Health Consensus Project and Leadership Initiative: <http://consensusproject.org>; <http://consensusproject.org/JLI/>
California Department of Mental Health/Mental Health Services Act Information: http://www.dmh.ca.gov/Prop_63/MHSA/State_Interagency_Partners.asp