



Public Health Meets Public Safety

Connecting data, policy, and people

THE PROBLEM

Youth and adults with behavioral health needs are overrepresented in all parts of California's justice system, despite significant, often groundbreaking policy innovations. For Californians with mental illnesses, addictions, or co-occurring behavioral health disorders, the unmet needs that can bring them into the juvenile or criminal justice system are frequently complex. In addition to behavioral health conditions, they might experience interconnected challenges such as housing insecurity, unemployment, strained family or community connections, and poor physical health.

Unfortunately, the infrastructure designed to provide care to this population while protecting public safety in California is also complex, spanning numerous sectors and agencies at the state and local levels. While information exists on behavioral health needs in the community, state and local correctional facilities, probation and parole, and state hospitals, these data are fragmented and often collected without an eye toward consistency or sharing across systems. Only concentrated research efforts have been able

to shed light on questions such as whether people returning from prison access housing or enroll in Medi-Cal and receive community-based care. At the local level, data capturing the behavioral health population within jail systems is limited and may be hard to compare from county to county due to differences in how populations and interventions are defined. Some counties are leading the way on developing data systems, but most are still developing the capacity to integrate data for this population.

Policymakers need this information to understand what's working and where changes are necessary. Knowing how to design policies and allocate resources effectively requires understanding the scale of different needs, what interventions can address those needs, and who can provide appropriate services and supports. This comes from improved data for policymaking that is contextualized by the perspectives of people on the receiving end of public health and public safety policies.

OUR APPROACH

Public Health Meets Public Safety aims to reduce the number of adults and young people with behavioral health needs in California's justice system by marshalling data to inform policy decisions. Building on existing state and local data integration efforts, the Public Health Meets Public Safety team will develop resources that support state, local, and community leaders in this shared goal. California's Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health (CCJBH) engaged The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center to develop this project, which began in June 2020 and will run through June 2022.

OUR TEAM

The project team is led by Hallie Fader-Towe, a program director at the CSG Justice Center based in San Diego. In addition to leveraging expertise from the CSG Justice Center's national policy and research team, the core project team includes Mia Bird, Kevin O'Connell, and Elizabeth Siggins, all of whom have decades of experience working with data to inform policy at the intersection of criminal justice and behavioral health in California.

For more information, contact Hallie Fader-Towe at hfader@csg.org or 646-383-5750.

WHAT WE'LL PROVIDE

Stakeholder engagement

The project team will meet with diverse justice, health, and housing stakeholders at the state and local levels, as well as people with personal experiences of these systems, to guide this effort.

Data inventory

The team will prepare an inventory of datasets that can be used to answer relevant policy and research questions. The inventory will specify what information the datasets capture and how data are currently collected and reported, and data quality. The team plans to look at state data, publicly available aggregated data, and, to the extent possible, locally owned and used data.

Policy analyses

The team will prepare several analyses that demonstrate how available data can be applied to select policy questions. The goal is to develop an accessible presentation of analyses to inform the work of CCJBH, as well as other state, local, and community stakeholders.

Implementation and sustainability plan

Throughout the project, the team will work with CCJBH and others to develop a long-term approach to regularly use data to inform state policy at the intersection of criminal justice and behavioral health.



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS