

# 50-STATE REPORT

(<https://50statespublicsafety.us/>)

## PART 1, STRATEGY 2

### **Action Item 1: Improve the identification of people who have behavioral health needs in the criminal justice system.**

#### **WHY IT MATTERS**

Currently, many state and county criminal justice agencies cannot accurately identify how many people in their custody have behavioral health needs because they don't routinely use validated universal behavioral health and criminogenic screening and assessment tools. Without this information, criminal justice agencies cannot develop effective case plans for people who have behavioral health needs. Further, criminal justice agencies can't successfully implement agency-wide—or even criminal justice system-wide—strategies to improve recovery and reduce recidivism.

Criminal justice agencies' practices vary greatly across the country; some agencies do not screen anyone for behavioral health needs, while others may screen only some people. Other agencies may conduct clinical assessments for everyone instead of targeting the use of specialized assessments through universally conducted initial screenings. Criminal justice agencies may not use shared definitions across agencies for serious mental illnesses and substance addictions, which increases the difficulty of identifying people who need treatment, and makes data sharing between agencies more challenging. In turn, this limits collaboration, continuity of care, and the potential for improved outcomes.

#### **WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE**

- Establish standardized definitions of serious mental illnesses and substance addictions for people in the criminal justice system to improve consistency and collaboration between criminal justice and behavioral health agencies.

See Case Study: Ohio establishes a standard definition of serious mental illness for criminal justice systems

- Provide funding and establish standards for training for law enforcement officers to identify people who may have behavioral health needs and respond appropriately.

See Case Study: Implementing Crisis Intervention Team Training in Ohio

- Require universal screening using a validated tool when people are booked into jail or prison or placed on supervision, and follow up with a comprehensive clinical assessment for those who screen

positive for a behavioral health need.

- Provide guidance and statutory clarification to encourage and facilitate information sharing within and across criminal justice and behavioral health agencies.

See Case Study: California develops guidelines for counties on sharing behavioral health information

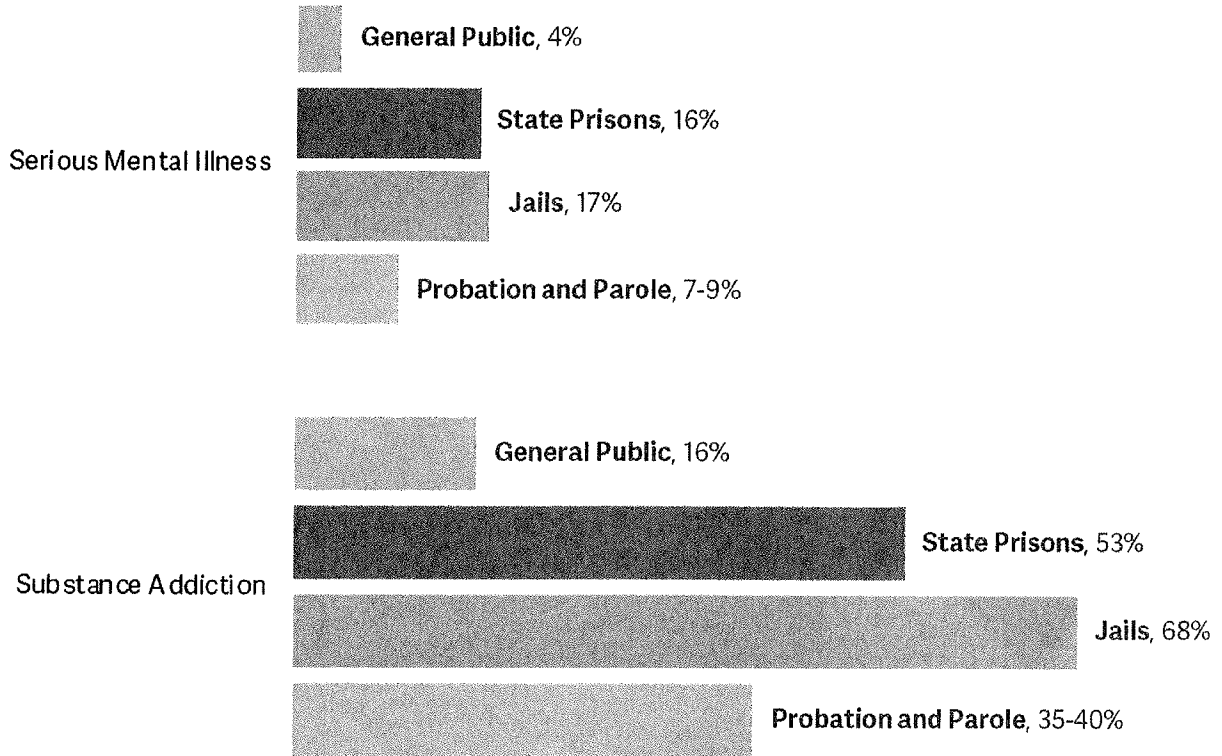
## **KEY QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ACTION**

- What can your state do to promote universal screening and assessment processes using validated tools to identify people who have mental illnesses and substance addictions across the criminal justice system?
- Do criminal justice agencies in your state use shared definitions for serious mental illnesses and substance addictions across the state? If not, can the state support local jurisdictions in identifying shared definitions?
- How can your state improve behavioral health data collection, analysis, and information sharing between state and local criminal justice and behavioral health agencies to strengthen strategic planning, increase access to treatment and supports, and improve outcomes?

Use the information that follows to inform your answers to these questions.

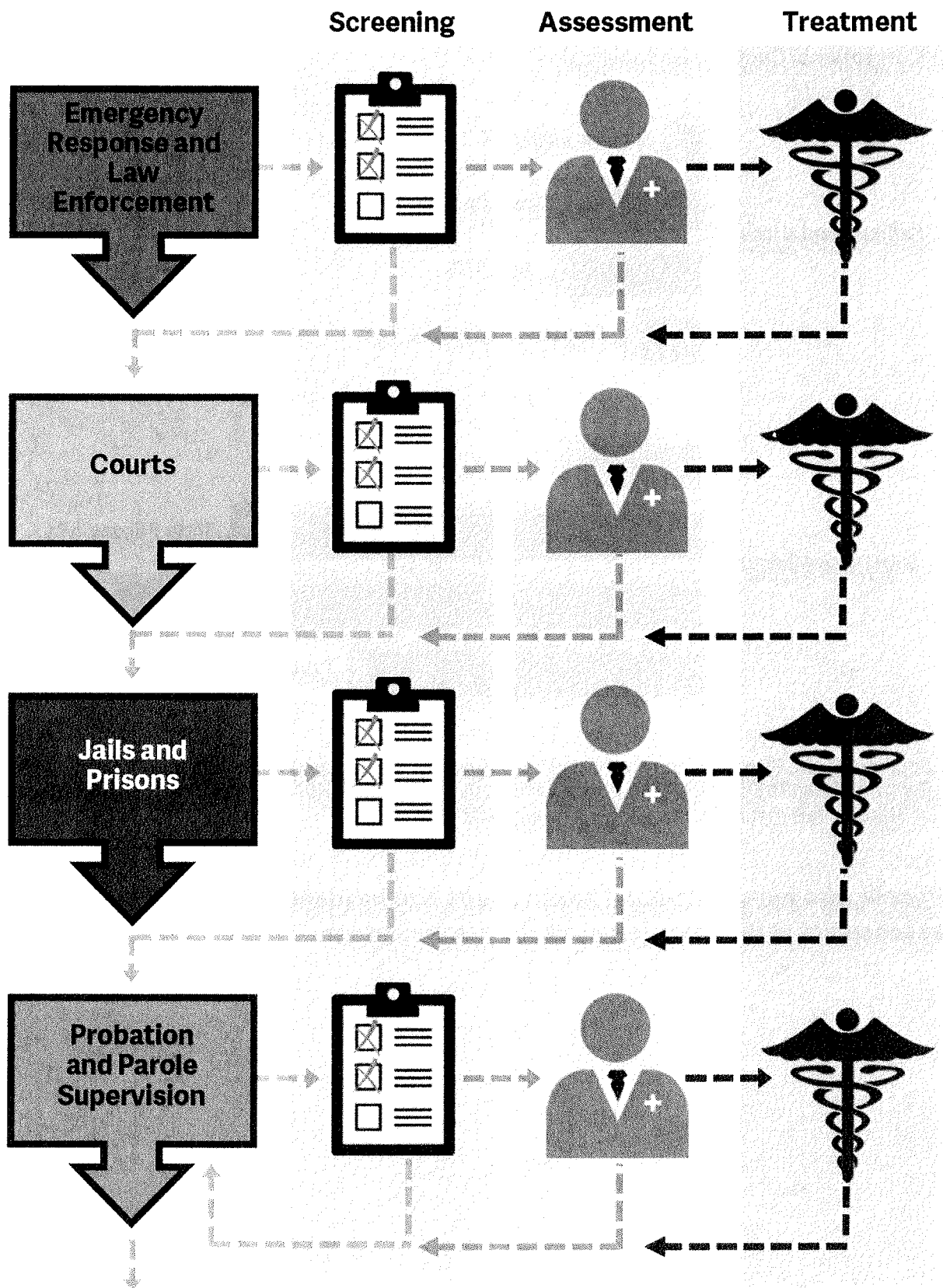
**The proportion of people in the criminal justice system who have a serious mental illness or substance addiction is greater than for the general public.**

# Estimated Proportion of Adults with Mental Illness and Substance Addiction in U.S. Population and under Correctional Control and Supervision



Source: Alex M. Blandford and Fred Osher, *Guidelines for the Successful Transition of People with Behavioral Health Disorders from Jail and Prison* (New York: SAMHSA's GAINS Center and The Council of State Governments Justice Center, November 2013).

**People who have behavioral health needs can be identified with screening and assessment at different stages of the justice system.**



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Screening and Assessment

Shortly after a person enters the criminal justice system, and as needed thereafter, he or she should be screened by trained staff for addictive disorders, mental illnesses, and the potential presence of both. Screening tools for substance use and mental illnesses are designed to quickly

identify people who may have behavioral health needs. People who screen positive should receive a clinical assessment to confirm the presence of disorders and a recommendation for the appropriate type and level of services.

Criminogenic risk and needs should also be identified at the earliest stage of criminal justice involvement, and people should be reassessed over time using **CRIMINOGENIC RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS** to monitor changes in risk level and needs. (For additional information on criminogenic risk and needs assessments, see also [Part 2, Strategy 2 \(/part-2/strategy-2/\)](#).) The results of assessments of both behavioral health conditions and criminogenic risk and needs should be considered in developing comprehensive case plans to address a person's behavioral health and criminogenic needs.

To learn more, see [Adults with Behavioral Health Needs Under Correctional Supervision: A Framework for Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Recovery \(https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/9-24-12\\_Behavioral-Health-Framework-final.pdf\)](#).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Stepping Up

Since May 2015, 400 counties have passed resolutions to join [Stepping Up \(https://stepuptogether.org/\)](#), a national initiative to reduce the number of people who have mental illnesses in jails. Recognizing the critical role local and state officials play in supporting change, the National Association of Counties (NACo), The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation (APAF) are leading this unprecedented national initiative.

NACo, the CSG Justice Center, and APAF are working with partner organizations to build on the foundation of innovative and evidence-based practices already being implemented across the country, and bring these efforts to scale. These partners have expertise in the complex issues addressed by Stepping Up and include sheriffs, jail administrators, judges, community corrections professionals and treatment providers, consumers, advocates, behavioral health directors, and other stakeholders.

[Reducing the Number of People with Mental Illnesses in Jail: Six Questions County Leaders Need to Ask \(https://stepuptogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Reducing-the-Number-of-People-with-Mental-Illnesses-in-Jail\\_Six-Questions.pdf\)](#) serves as a blueprint for counties to assess their existing efforts to reduce the number of people who have mental illnesses and co-occurring substance addictions in jail by considering specific questions and progress-tracking measures.

The six questions county leaders need to ask are:

- Is your leadership committed?
- Do you have timely screening and assessment?
- Do you have baseline data?
- Have you conducted a comprehensive process analysis and service inventory?
- Have you prioritized policy, practice, and funding?

- Do you track progress?

The [Stepping Up County Self-Assessment \(https://tool.stepuptogether.org\)](https://tool.stepuptogether.org) is an online tool designed to help counties evaluate the status of their current efforts to reduce the prevalence of people who have mental illnesses in jails. The tool helps counties identify progress they have made in implementing system-level changes and provides resources on how to implement changes that they may find challenging.

Additional information about Stepping Up can be found [here \(https://csgjusticecenter.org/mental-health/county-improvement-project/stepping-up/\)](https://csgjusticecenter.org/mental-health/county-improvement-project/stepping-up/).

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##### **STRATEGY 2**

**Improve responses to people who have behavioral health needs in local criminal justice systems.**

(<https://50statespublicsafety.us/part-1/strategy-2/>)

#### NEXT PAGE

##### **ACTION ITEM 2**

**Ensure that a range of behavioral health treatment and service options are available within jails and prisons and in the community for people in the criminal justice system.**

(<https://50statespublicsafety.us/part-1/strategy-2/action-item-2/>)

(<https://csgjusticecenter.org/>)

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