

Mental Illness

IN THE US LEGAL SYSTEM

40%

of US adults with severe mental illness will come into contact with the legal system at some point in their life

150,000

juveniles in the justice system each year meet criteria for one or more severe mental or emotional disorders

72%

of men and women in the US prison system with mental illness have cooccurring substance abuse disorders

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are an attorney looking into this issue and how you can help, look at this case study and research

To do this, simply scan the QR code or go to "Final Product" at www.sarahanderson032.wixsite.com/2018



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A BRIEF LOOK AT

Mental Illness in the Legal System

Case Study and Research

BY SARAH ANDERSON

Under the mentorship of Mrs. Claire Petty, 2018-2019



ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

Millions of Americans struggle with mental illness without the treatment they need to improve. According to the International Medical News Group, women with mental illness are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than the general population and men are four times more likely. In prisons, inmates with mental health issues make up 7% to 16% of the prison population, an unproportional number compared to that of the general population. This is a significant problem among youth with mental illness as well. An estimated 20% of juveniles have serious mental conditions and some of which have co-occurring substance abuse issues. Many adults turn to illegal substances to self medicate as well and have history of homelessness, foster care, or abuse (sexual or physical). According to the US Department of Justice, 72% of individuals with mental illness in the prison system also have co-occurring substance abuse disorders.

COMMON ISSUES

Problems that attorneys often face when working with clients who have mental illness

- lacking clear legislative solutions across the US
- substance abuse that is difficult for clients to manage
- inaccurate understandings of the extent of some serious mental illnesses
- lack of available treatment or medication
- little public awareness of the severity of mental illness in their community

SOLUTIONS IN PLACE

Because of the lack of clear legislation nation wide for cases involving mental illness, some countys and attonreys have found creative soltuions to these issues

- Indefinite Bond
- Pre-Trial Diversion Programs, especially for first time offenders and non-violent crimes
- Mental Health Diversion Court Programs, seen especially in Tarrant County

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

When defending clients with mental illness it is important that key steps are taken during the criminal process to ensure the severity of the mental illness

- competency evaluations as soon as the indictment is filled
- insanity evaluation following the results of the competency evaluation

These medical evaluations will help determine what type of defense to consider for your client

HOW TO HELP

For attorneys in Collin County:

- join the mental health wheel at the Collin County Courthouse for court appointed individuals
- undergo a brief training on how to properly work with these individuals and provide them with the best legal aid possible

For attorneys elsewhere:

- help raise awareness on the issues
- educate oneself on mental illness and its effects on clients

