



Bridges of Colorado

Person-Centered. Solution Focused. Collaborative.

Behavioral Health & Justice Involvement

Individuals with mental health conditions are over-represented within the criminal justice system. Further and prolonged system involvement, such as incarceration, often worsens mental health symptoms.



44% people who are incarcerated have a history of mental health condition ¹



70% of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health condition ²

WHY THIS MATTERS TO ALL OF US

Complex Challenge

The trauma and stress associated with incarceration has a potential snowball effect, exacerbating existing conditions and potentially contributing to new diagnoses such as depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance use disorders¹

Treatment

Needs and Access

Less than half of people with a history of mental health condition receive mental health treatment while held in local jails¹

Improved Outcomes

Outcomes are significantly better when people with behavioral health needs are connected immediately to treatment and recovery support services ⁴

UNTREATED PSYCHOSIS³

Duration of untreated psychosis is the period that goes from the onset of psychosis to the start of adequate treatment. It's associated with poorer mental health outcomes, such as:

- More severe symptoms
- More frequent psychotic recurrences and hospitalizations
- Poorer response to medications
- Poorer quality of life and functional outcomes (e.g., employment, rehabilitation and social reintegration)
- Gray matter reductions in areas of the brain that control personality, behavior, and language



The Lived Experience Advisory Council consists of justice-involved people living with behavioral health needs and their family members. As cross-disciplinary collaborators, the council also delivers panel presentations bringing firsthand experience, guidance and advice to criminal justice and behavioral health professionals.

RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES

Collaborate with Justice System Professionals to support increased behavioral health understanding and service connection

- Engage directly with justice system partners in cross-system education
- Share existing resources with justice partners
 - Mental Health First Aid training provides skills for early intervention <https://mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>
 - Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) develops skills to respond to people with co-occurring needs <http://citinternational.org/What-is-CIT>
 - PulseLine training by current/former law enforcement on interacting with people with disabilities <https://pulseline.org/training/iwd/>
- Reach out to Bridges of Colorado to explore collaborative opportunities <https://bridges.colorado.gov/bridges-of-colorado-contacts>

Expand your knowledge

- Make a personal commitment to ongoing education and knowledge building
- Training resources:
 - NCSC Judicial Task Force Response to Mental Illness Recommendations <https://www.ncsc.org/sites/default/files/media/document/MHTF-State-Courts-Leading-Change.pdf>
 - NCSC Judges Guide to Mental Health Diversion, <https://ncsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/spcts/id/593/rec/1>
 - Anosognosia FACT SHEET - NAMI <https://www.nami.org/co-occurring-conditions/anosognosia/>
 - Competency & restoration reimagined from practice to possibility: Level setting- NCSC <https://www.ncsc.org/event/competency-restoration-reimagined-practice-possibility-level-setting>
 - Implementation in action: Advancing state court behavioral health strategies- NCSC, <https://www.ncsc.org/resources-courts/implementation-action-advancing-state-court-behavioral-health-strategies>

Check-in with yourself

- Burnout assessments can be useful tools: The Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT) is a validated questionnaire that aims to measure burnout or risk for burnout <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7766078/pdf/ijerph-17-09495.pdf>

This handout is provided as part of the Lived Experience Advisory Council Panel Presentation

To inquire about a panel presentation for your organization contact:
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Bridges' Lived Experience Advisory Council Members in the Media

- Inside Isolation: Mental illness and solitary confinement in the Boulder County Jail Archives - [The Boulder Reporting Lab](#)
- Illinois lawmakers look to Colorado program that, for \$6 a day, gets help for people who are mentally ill - [Chicago Sun-Times](#)
- When Mental Illness Becomes a Jail Sentence - [The Atlantic](#)
- The Peer Recovery Community Organization: How to Leverage Your Lived Experience and Create a New Legacy - [Gabe Cohen](#)

References

- ¹ NAMI. (2024). Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System.
- ² AIM Youth Mental Health. (2026). Mental Health in the Juvenile Justice System: A Comprehensive Review.
- ³ Zoghbi, A., et al. (2022). The Neurobiology of Duration of Untreated Psychosis: A Comprehensive Review.
- ⁴ All Rise. (2024). Adult Treatment Court Best Practice Standards, Vol 2.