

# **FINDINGS SUMMARY: ISSUES FACING COUNTY JAILS**

## **COUNTY JAILS IN TEXAS**

- In 2011, Texas jails housed an average of almost 60,000 inmates per day.<sup>1</sup>
- Counties spend an average of \$62.79, or 12% of their annual budget, per detainee per day.<sup>2</sup>
- The cost of arresting and booking an individual in an urban county in Texas can reach upwards of \$120 per person per day;<sup>3</sup> shelter and case management is only \$25.<sup>4</sup>
- The large, urban Harris County Jail has a budget of over \$160 million and an average daily population of 8,842;<sup>5</sup> the smaller, rural Henderson County Jail has a \$4 million budget and an average daily population of 255 detainees.<sup>6</sup>

## **HOMELESSNESS AND JAILS**

- About 1% of Texas' population is homeless;<sup>7</sup> the rate of homeless persons in jail is 15.3 times that.<sup>8</sup>
- The large, urban Dallas County Jail incarcerates an estimated 987 homeless individuals daily and spends almost \$15 million annually;<sup>9</sup> the mid-sized Williamson County Jail incarcerates 596 homeless individuals daily and spends over \$3 million annually.<sup>10</sup>

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND JAILS**

- About 68% of jail detainees struggle with addiction,<sup>11</sup> compared to 18.4% of the general U.S. adult population.<sup>12</sup>
- 82% of inmates from rural areas suffer from alcohol dependence.<sup>13</sup>
- 88% of convicted jail inmates with substance abuse or dependence committed a non-violent crime.<sup>14</sup>
- The large, urban El Paso County Jail incarcerates an estimated 1,075 individuals with substance abuse issues daily and spends over \$36 million annually;<sup>15</sup> numbers for rural Orange County Jail are 127 and almost \$3 million respectively.<sup>16</sup>

## **MENTAL ILLNESS AND JAILS**

- 64% of jail inmates nationally suffer from a mental illness.<sup>17</sup>
- 25-40% of all Americans with mental illness will pass through the criminal justice system at some point.<sup>18</sup>
- Women have a much higher prevalence of depression and anxiety than their male counterparts.<sup>19</sup>
- Until very recently, the Harris County Jail was the largest mental health care provider in the state.<sup>20</sup>
- The average stay for a person with mental illness in the Travis County Jail is about 50-100 days.<sup>21</sup>
- The mid-sized Collin County Jail incarcerates an estimated 627 individuals with mental illness daily and spends over \$12 million annually;<sup>22</sup> the small, rural Angelina County Jail incarcerates 127 individuals with mental illness daily and spends almost \$2.5 million.<sup>23</sup>

## **THE BENEFITS OF TREATMENT**

- Substance abuse treatment is associated with a reduction in crime.<sup>24</sup> One study showed that individuals who participate in community-based drug treatment programming report a 78% reduction in drug selling, 82% decline in shoplifting, 64% reduction in arrests, and 48% reduction in engagement in illegal activities.<sup>25</sup>
- Court supervised treatment for individuals with co-occurring disorders saves the state \$1.73 for every \$1 spent.<sup>26</sup>
- Women who receive gender-specific, trauma-informed care while incarcerated are 360% more likely to complete voluntary community-based treatment upon release and 67% less likely to return to prison than women who receive gender neutral or male-based therapeutic care treatment.<sup>27</sup>
- Jail- or community-based treatment is more likely to reduce recidivism if interventions are consistent.<sup>28</sup>
- Case management leads to an increase in employment and a decrease in criminality.<sup>29</sup>

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Save valuable taxpayer dollars by promoting strategies that address the root causes of homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness for people accused or suspected of committing low-level crimes.
2. Increase public safety by implementing solutions to divert individuals dealing with substance abuse and homelessness.
3. Empower communities to solve local problems by implementing solutions to divert individuals dealing with mental illness and homelessness.
4. Increase efficiency by coordinating communication between county jail, community mental health, and judicial staff.
5. Create tools for personal responsibility by expanding in-jail treatment programming, coupled with an inside-out reentry component.
6. Stop the cycle of victimization by bolstering specialized programming for women, especially for women with mental illness.

<sup>1</sup> Texas Commission on Jail Standards (TCJS), “Jail Population Reports,” January 2011–December 2011, data available upon request.

<sup>2</sup> Brandon Wood, Assistant Director of TCJS and Diana Spiller, Research Specialist with TCJS, in email correspondence to Sarah V. Carswell, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC), 30 November, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Data calculated by average hourly police officer salary wage (Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Houston & San Antonio), multiplied by estimated time used for arrest (1-2 hours), and added to average cost of jail per person per day (\$62.79). Harris County Sheriff’s Department, in telephone conversation with Rebecca Bernhardt, TCJC, February 24, 2011; Dallas County Sheriff’s Department, in telephone conversation with Rebecca Bernhardt, TCJC, March 1, 2011. Data available upon request. Also see TCJS, *Jail Population Reports*.

<sup>4</sup> Arjun Sethi, “Homelessness Treated as Criminals in America,” *USA Today*, February 15, 2012. Also see TCJC, “Project Reconnect: A Model Reentry Program in Dallas,” April, 2012. Case management is “a service that links and coordinates assistance from institutions and agencies providing [social services] for individuals in need of such services.” Evelyn Roberts Levine, “Glossary” in *Social Worker’s Desk Reference*, ed. Albert R. Roberts and Gilbert J. Green, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 831.

<sup>5</sup> *Supra* note 2. The average daily population is based on FY 2011 daily population data for each month, minus contract detainees, since that cost is not a burden on the county. *Supra* note 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless, “Sunset Commission Decisions,” June 2000, <http://www.sunset.state.tx.us/77threports/homelessdecisions.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Greg A. Greenberg and Robert A. Rosenheck, “Jail Incarceration, Homelessness, and Mental Health: A National Study,” *Psychiatric Services*, 59, no. 2, February, 2008, p. 170, <http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/data/Journals/PSS/3837/08ps170.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> The annual homeless cost is based on a 15.3% homelessness rate in county jails, the average daily population for 2011 (minus contract detainees), and the cost of incarceration per person per year. Data available upon request. Also see *supra* note 1 and *supra* note 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Substance Dependence, Abuse, and Treatment of Jail Inmates, 2002,” U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, July 2005, p. 1, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/sdatij02.pdf>. Also see Matt DeLisi, “Who Is More Dangerous? Comparing the Criminality of Adult Homeless and Domiciled Jail Inmates: A Research Note,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 44, no. 1, 2000, p.61.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Alcohol Alert,” no. 76, July 2008, available at <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AA76/AA76.htm>. Alcohol abuse or dependency is its peak among adults age 18-24, at 18.4%, this rate is much higher than the rate of substance abuse or co-morbid disorders among individuals of any age.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas A. Powell, John C. Holt, and Karen M. Fondacaro, “The Prevalence of Mental Illness among Inmates in a Rural State,” *Law and Human Behavior*, 21, no. 4, 1997, p. 435.

<sup>14</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Substance Dependence, Abuse, and Treatment of Jail Inmates, 2002,” U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, July 2005, p. 7, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/sdatij02.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> The annual substance abuse cost is based on an 88% substance abuse/dependence rate in county jails, the 2011 average daily population (minus contract detainees), and the cost of incarceration per year. Data available upon request. Also see *supra* note 1 and *supra* note 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Doris J. James and Lauren E. Glaze, “Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates,” U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, September 2006, p. 1, [http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Press\\_September\\_2006&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=38175](http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Press_September_2006&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=38175).

<sup>18</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness, “Spending Money in All the Wrong Places: Jails & Prisons,” [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org), [http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Fact\\_Sheets&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14593](http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Fact_Sheets&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14593).

<sup>19</sup> 43.6% of jailed women have psychiatric disorders; 21.6% of jailed men. Ingrid A. Binswanger and others, “Gender Differences in Chronic Medical, Psychiatric, and Substance-Dependence Disorders among Jail Inmates,” *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 3, March 2010, p. 479. Also see Nena Messina, Christina E. Grella, Jerry Cartier, and Stephanie Torres, “A Randomized Experimental Study of Gender-Responsive Substance Abuse Treatment for Women in Prison,” *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 38, 2010, p. 97.

<sup>20</sup> As of FY 2011, the largest mental health provider in Texas is Harris County Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority (MHMRA), due to the implementation of recent jail diversion programs and increased funding for MHMRA. MHMRA of Harris County, “Healthy Community: Annual Report 2011,” <http://www.mhmraharris.org/documents/AnnualReports/2011AR/AR%20for%20Web.pdf>. Also see Healthcare for the Homeless Houston, “Jail Inreach Project,” <http://homeless-healthcare.org/program/jail-inreach-project/>.

<sup>21</sup> National Public Radio, “Nations Jails Struggle with Mentally Ill Prisoners,” npr.org, September 4, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/04/140167676/nations-jails-struggle-with-mentally-ill-prisoners>.

<sup>22</sup> The annual mental illness cost is based on a 64% mental illness rate in county jails, the average daily population for 2011 (minus contract detainees), and the cost of incarceration per year. Data available upon request. Also see *supra* note 1 and *supra* note 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Justice Policy Institute, “Substance Abuse Treatment and Public Safety,” January 2008, p. 4, [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/08\\_01\\_REP\\_DrugTx\\_AC-PS.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/08_01_REP_DrugTx_AC-PS.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* at 9.

<sup>26</sup> Avinash Singh Bhati, John K. Roman, and Aaron Chalfin, “To Treat or Not to Treat: Evidence on the Prospects of Expanding Treatment to Drug-Involved Offenders,” April 2008, p. xvi, [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411645\\_treatment\\_offenders.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411645_treatment_offenders.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> *Supra* note 20 at 103-104.

<sup>28</sup> *Supra* note 27 at xiii.

<sup>29</sup> W. Patrick Sullivan, “Case Management with Substance-Abusing Clients,” in *Social Worker’s Desk Reference*, ed. Albert R. Roberts and Gilbert J. Green, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 495.