

# MENTAL HEALTH

A Georgia Jail's Perspective

# THE PROBLEM

- There is a perception that more people are mentally ill today than in the past.
- The representation of mentally ill in local jail populations is significantly higher than in the community.
- Due to this, jail resources are strained.
- Because of the nature of the jail environment and the lack of expertise of jail staff in dealing with the mentally ill, treatment outcomes are often poor.
- This is not just a Georgia problem.

# INCARCERATION OF THE MENTALLY ILL

- The U.S. incarcerates more people per capita than any other country on earth.
- CIT only works in communities that have adequate resources and only if backed by policy.
- No consensus on how to handle illness-related behavior with no criminal intent although behavior violates statute law.
- Jails become the facility of last resort.

# SNAPSHOT OF A GEORGIA JAIL

- Dougherty County Jail, Albany, Georgia. January 2020 population – 597
- Inmates undergoing mental health treatment – 209 (35%)
- Inmates on Mental Health Segregation – 25 (4%)
- Inmates in State Hospitals – 7 (<1%)

## CASES WITH MENTALLY ILL DEFENDANTS TAKE LONGER

- If competency is in question, evaluations can add months to an inmate's period of incarceration.

## THE ROAD TO A SOLUTION

- Determine if there are cultural causes of mental illness in the U.S. and address those causes.
- Explore alternatives to incarceration for pretrial inmates.
- Develop treatment resources, perhaps on a regional level, for local jails to divert inmates who require treatment.

**THANK YOU**

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