



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

**EFFECTIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR INCARCERATED PEOPLE WITH MENTAL
ILLNESS RE-ENTERING SOCIETY MAY PREVENT DISABILITY**

A forum was held by coalitions of advocates for mental health and correctional organizations on “Breaking the Cycle of Recidivism”. This briefing made a case for timely federal benefit assistance upon retry from prisons for people with mental health problems. Presenters at the forum were House Representative Members who are advocates for the mentally ill, a director of a state government justice center, a director of an advocacy and training center and a warden of a county correctional center.

Summary

There are more than 9 million prisoners in Federal or state correctional facilities, with 5 million on probation at the end of 2008, and more than 735,000 individuals were released. These data represent an increase of 20% of the prison population since 2000. At least 95% of states prisoners will be released back into their communities at some time. However, more than two thirds of state prisoners who were released in 1994 were rearrested and more than half returned to prison within three years.

The incidence of serious mental illness is two to four times higher among prisoners than the general population. Over 70% of prisoners with mental health disorders also have a substance abuse disorder and more than 10% of those entering prisons are homeless before their incarceration. In addition, approximately 2 million children have parents who are incarcerated. There is need for risk assessment of people with mental health reentering society from prisons to determine appropriate interventions that reduce recidivism. Thus, it is desirable to prepare for unforeseen barriers that need to be addressed in careful reentering into society of persons with mental health problems with back up systems

Disability Prevention Issues

Although the prevalence of mental illness is high in prisons, there are people with other physical and mental impairments. Prisoners released from jails account for one quarter of the people living with AIDs and one third are diagnosed with Hepatitis C. Prevalence of chronic illness and communicable diseases is far greater among people in jails and prisons. In addition, three quarters of people returning to society from prison have a history of substance abuse disorders. There are appropriate evidence based practices for people with disability and at risk of disability that may prevent recidivism of non violent people that address issues of diminished health and disability with appropriate community based services.

Activity

There is study of incarcerated people with disabilities and people at risk of disability with respect to programs that may result in prevention of diminished health that contribute to disability.

Principle

Appropriate evidence based practices should be applied to vulnerable incarcerated people at risk of disability to prevent recidivism.