

Mental Illness & Criminal Justice in Florida: The Case for Medicaid Expansion

- Nearly one-fifth of Floridians (17.5%) aged 18 and older have a mental illness, and over 7% of Florida's adults have a substance use disorder.¹
- Almost 60% of adults with mental illness in Florida do not receive treatment.²
- In a national measure of access to mental health care, Florida ranked 40th.³
- Nearly one-fifth of the inmates in Miami-Dade County Jail (MDCJ) are people with mental illness and in need of psychiatric medication⁴, making MDCJ the largest psychiatric facility in Florida.⁵
- People with mental illness remain incarcerated in MDCJ for eight times as long as people without mental illness for the same charge, and at seven times the cost.⁶ One-third of male prisoners who require mental health treatment at the time of release return to prison within three years.⁷
- Uninsurance rates declined among justice involved individuals of all ages by nearly 10 percentage points following expansion in states that have expanded Medicaid.⁸
- Medicaid coverage significantly improved treatment rates for substance use and depression among justice-involved individuals.⁹ A study from Pinellas County, FL found that among people with severe mental illness who were released from jail, those who were enrolled in Medicaid at the time were more likely to access community mental health and substance abuse services.¹⁰
- Connection to healthcare has also been shown to reduce rates of recidivism. A Michigan intervention found that rates of recidivism fell by more than half when newly released prisoners were connected to a medical home and helped to access needed medications and care.¹¹
- Medicaid expansion could save the state up to \$57.5 million in inpatient hospital care of incarcerated individuals.¹²
- Medicaid expansion could save Florida up to \$200 million dollars currently used for mental health and substance use services for uninsured Floridians with low income, including formerly incarcerated individuals, who would now be eligible for Medicaid.¹³
- Expansion would improve public safety and reduce unnecessary, expensive incarceration.¹⁴

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- ¹ Mental Health in America, Prevalence Data, 2020, available at <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/mental-health-america-prevalence-data>
- ² Mental Health in America, Access to Care Data, 2020, available at <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/mental-health-america-access-care-data>
- ³ Mental Health in America, Access to Care Data, 2020, available at <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/mental-health-america-access-care-data>
- ⁴ Miami-Dade County Memorandum, Subject: Mental Health Statistics, To: Hon. Chairman Bruno A. Barreiro and Board of County Commissioners, From: George M. Burgess, County Manager, September 11, 2008.
- ⁵ Statement of Judge Steve Leifman, Chair, Supreme Court of Florida Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Courts before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Energy and Commerce Committee of the United States House of Representatives concerning People with Mental Illnesses Involved in the Criminal Justice System, available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF02/20140326/101980/HHRG-113-IF02-Wstate-LeifmanS-20140326.pdf>
- ⁶ Miami Dade County Office of the Mayor, Mental Health Task Force, “Care Comes First” 2007, available at <http://www.pacenterofexcellence.pitt.edu/documents/Miami-Dade-County-Final-Report.pdf>
- ⁷ Florida Department of Corrections, “Florida Prison Recidivism Report: Releases from 2010 to 2017”, June 2019, available at <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/recidivism/RecidivismReport2019.pdf>
- ⁸ Winkelman, Kieffer, Goold, et. al., Health Insurance Trends and Access to Behavioral Healthcare Among Justice-Involved Individuals—United States, 2008–2014, *J Gen Intern Med.* 2016 Dec; 31(12): 1523–1529.
- ⁹ Winkelman, Kieffer, Goold, et. al., “Health Insurance Trends and Access to Behavioral Healthcare Among Justice-Involved Individuals—United States, 2008–2014”, *J Gen Intern Med.* 2016 Dec; 31(12): 1523–1529.
- ¹⁰ Joseph Morrissey et al, “Medicaid Enrollment and Mental Health Service Use Following Release of Jail Detainees with Severe Mental Illness,” *Psychiatric Services* 57:6 (2006): 809-815 and “Joseph Morrissey et al, “The Role of Medicaid Enrollment and Outpatient Service Use in Jail Recidivism Among Persons with Severe Mental Illness,” *Psychiatric Services* 58:6 (2007): 794–801.
- ¹¹ Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, “Health Coverage and Care for the Adult Criminal Justice-Involved Population”, September 5, 2014, available at: <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/issue-brief/health-coverage-and-care-for-the-adult-criminal-justice-involved-population/> and see Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, “Michigan Pathways Project Links Ex-Prisoners to Medical Services, Contributing to a Decline in Recidivism”, <https://innovations.ahrq.gov/profiles/michigan-pathways-project-links-ex-prisoners-medical-services-contributing-decline>
- ¹² Anne Swerlick, Florida Policy Institute, “Expanding Medicaid Would Reduce Disparities in Access to Life-Saving Substance Use Disorder Treatment in Communities of Color”, April 6, 2020, available at <https://www.floridapolicy.org/posts/expanding-medicaid-would-reduce-disparities-in-access-to-life-saving-substance-use-disorder-treatment-in-communities-of-color>
- ¹³ Anne Swerlick, Florida Policy Institute, “Expanding Medicaid Would Reduce Disparities in Access to Life-Saving Substance Use Disorder Treatment in Communities of Color”, April 6, 2020, available at <https://www.floridapolicy.org/posts/expanding-medicaid-would-reduce-disparities-in-access-to-life-saving-substance-use-disorder-treatment-in-communities-of-color>
- ¹⁴ Statement of Judge Steve Leifman before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations