

# Criminal Justice System



*Working together to develop and deliver  
mental health resources  
for Colorado communities.*

## Overview

- The Department of Corrections estimates that over 41% of the current inmate population has some level of mental health need, and that nearly 20% of those individuals have a serious mental illness.
- Without proper treatment, these individuals have a greater likelihood to recidivate and return to prison.
- Treatment for mental illness and substance abuse can be effectively treated in the community for much less than the cost of keeping the individual in jail or prison.
  - It costs between \$25,000-60,000 per year to keep an individual in a Colorado prison
  - It costs between \$6,000-8,000 per year to treat a seriously mentally ill offender in the community
- CBHC members are working on innovative jail diversion programs and prison transition options for individuals with serious mental illness.

## SB07-097— Offender Mental Health Services Fund

- SB07-097 directs 12% of the unused tobacco settlement money to the Offender Mental Health Services Fund to allow for a funding stream for Colorado's Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) to create treatment programs for adults and juveniles involved in the criminal justice system.
- Last year, six CMHCs created offender treatment programs through this fund, with five more adding programs this year.

## Denver Metro Area County Commissioners (MACC) Study

- The MACC commissioned the study, Transforming Services for Persons with Mental Illness in Contact With the Criminal Justice System, in 2008.
- Initial findings show that mentally ill inmates in the seven-county, Denver-metro area have an average jail stay of **121 days vs. 25 days** for non-mentally ill inmates. They also have much higher rates of recidivism.
- The MACC also found that these severely mentally ill inmates cost the seven counties an **average quarterly cost of nearly \$8.5 million**.