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At least 15,500 people with severe mental illness in Ohio jails cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars

This is one of the findings in a new report, By the Numbers 4

CLEVELAND, OH – While jails are not treatment facilities for people with mental health or substance use disorders, increasingly more people with these conditions are in understaffed county jails. This costs taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars each year according to a new report by The Center for Community Solutions and the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition.

"Not only are county jails not the best environment to treat those dealing with mental illness or substance use disorders," said Joan Englund the Executive Director of the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition. "Treating folks behind bars is expensive, costing taxpayers on average \$30,000 a year per jail, stressing already cash-strapped county budgets."

In 2015 more than 15,500 people with mental illness and/or substance use disorders were in county jails. In that same year, average spending for psychotropic medications for individuals with mental illness and/or substance use disorders was more than \$75,000 per jail.

When asked which type of incarcerated individual is more expensive to care for, 85 percent of jail administrators said it was a person with severe mental illness. Compared to those withdrawing from opioids or alcohol, individuals with severe mental illness are also more likely to cause disruptions in jails for jail staff. Ninety-five percent of jail administrators said they'd prefer to transfer incarcerated individuals with severe mental illness to a more appropriate setting.

Similarly, we also surveyed Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Boards across the state on their roles in serving those with mental illness and/or substance use disorders who are connected to the criminal justice system. We found most boards spend less than 5 percent of their budgets on people who are, or were recently in jail.

"Boards need better data to identify people who have mental illness or substance use disorders who have recently been behind bars to better serve that part of our community," said Tara Britton, the Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for The Center for Community Solutions. "Access to behavioral health services outside jail is also critical for those with mental illness to not go back to jail, or not go to jail in the first place."



Through a series of five installments of By the Numbers 4, released over the next several weeks, Community Solutions and the MHAC will examine the current state of behavioral health services for adults involved with the criminal justice system.

To read the full report please click [here](#).

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