

Mentally Ill Inmates: Financial Impacts and Opportunities for the Future

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For the last 30 years jails have become depositories for the nations mentally ill. This is no different in the State of Florida. Florida's counties (mostly the jails) have learned that dealing with this growing population through incarceration is not only expensive but does nothing to keep the offender from re-entering an already overburdened system. Through this research, we ascertained that some counties are instituting alternatives to incarceration to provide appropriate care to this segment of the population. The larger the counties jail population, the more the county was involved in using alternatives. We determined jails are struggling with the increased costs of jail construction and population management due to lodging mentally ill inmates. We established it is difficult to determine if this population contributes to overcrowding among jails of all sizes. We were able to establish that not all of the aforementioned issues affect large and small jails to the same extent.