

# Position Statement on Psychiatric Services in Adult Correctional Facilities

Approved by the Board of Trustees, December 2021

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2018

Approved by the Assembly, November 2021

Approved by the Assembly, May 2018

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

### Issue:

The United States continues to see a growing percentage of individuals with mental illness in the criminal justice system. Thus, the provision of adequate mental health services to the millions of people incarcerated in U.S. adult correctional facilities – here defined as lockups, jails, prisons, Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers, Bureau of Indian Affairs detention centers, and military jails, prisons, and detention centers – remains a critical public health concern.

### APA Position:

**Mental health services, including care for individuals with substance use disorders and/or intellectual or developmental disabilities, in adult correctional facilities should minimally include:**

1. **Timely and effective access to mental health services screening, evaluation, and treatment, including an appropriate range of therapeutic interventions.**
2. **Necessary staffing levels to ensure access to care and to provide appropriate services.**
3. **Quality assurance and improvement reviews to identify and resolve inadequacies of care.**
4. **As therapeutic an environment as possible, optimized by support, guidance, and advocacy from mental health leadership and collaboration with correctional leadership. Mental health administration should be incorporated into the overall management of the facility.**
5. **Proper procedures, based on appropriate legal guidance, and staffing to safely administer involuntary medications when clinically indicated and when reasonable attempts at voluntary engagement in medication adherence have not been successful. This should not preclude psychiatric hospitalization if available and clinically indicated.**
6. **A balance and an effective partnership between security and treatment needs to ensure the effective delivery of mental health services.**

**Author:** Council on Psychiatry and Law