



The number of individuals with serious mental illnesses (SMI) in the criminal justice system is between three and six times the number of individuals with SMI in the general U.S. population. A recent CMHS National GAINS Center (GAINS) and Council of State Governments Justice Center (Justice Center) study of over 20,000 adults in five local jails found that 14.5 % of male inmates and 31% of female inmates met criteria for a serious mental illness.<sup>1</sup> The overrepresentation of persons with SMI in the criminal justice system has an impact on the recovery path of these individuals, creates stress for their families, and has a large effect on criminal justice systems, public safety, and government spending.

#### The Judges' Leadership Initiative & The Psychiatric Leadership Group

In 2004, the Judges' Criminal Justice/Mental Health Leadership Initiative (JLI) was initiated to bring judges from all levels of state judiciaries together to improve judicial understanding of, and responses to, individuals with mental illnesses in our nation's courts. The JLI is led by an advisory board comprising judges from around the country and includes representatives from the National Center for State Courts and the National Judicial College and staff support from the Justice Center and GAINS. Since its establishment, the JLI has promoted improved understanding of the effective responses to defendants with mental illnesses through a regular newsletter with distribution to over 350 judges, two "benchbooks"— *The Judges' Guide to Mental Health Jargon* and *The Judges' Guide to Mental Health Diversion Programs*, technical assistance to state supreme court chief justice-led planning efforts in 11 states, and a collaborative outreach effort with Veterans Affairs on addressing the needs of criminal-justice involved individuals who have served in the military.

The JLI and Justice Center have launched a new initiative with the American Psychiatric Foundation (APF) to convene a "Psychiatric Leadership Group" (PLG) to advise the JLI. As the JLI has created a forum for judges to convene, the PLG creates an opportunity for psychiatric leaders to convene and advise judicial leadership on mental health issues that judges may confront in the courtroom. The advisory group draws upon already existing psychiatric leadership from the APF, The American Psychiatric Association (APA) Committee on Public and Community Psychiatry, The American Association of Community Psychiatrists (AACP) Committee on Mentally Ill Behind Bars, and Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP) Subcommittee on Community Psychiatry. PLG advisors are knowledgeable about service and treatment interventions that have been associated with both reductions in impairments and contact with the criminal justice system.

#### Training for Judges on Mental Illnesses (2010-2011)

One of the first objectives of this new collaboration was the development of a training module for judges on individuals with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders in the criminal justice system. This training provides judges with knowledge on how these health issues are likely to impact an individual's interactions with the criminal justice system, relevant procedural options, ethical

considerations, and effective collaborative treatment and supervision strategies. It is designed to optimize its potential application and integration for existing and future judicial trainings at the local, state, and national level. The APF and the Justice Center are joined by the National Judicial College and the GAINS Center as partners on this project. At the invitation of Cynthia Y. Cobbs, Director of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, and through coordination by Justice Kathryn Zenoff, Chair of the Special Supreme Court Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning for the Supreme Court of Illinois, this training was piloted in Springfield, IL, in May 2011, to excellent reviews.

### Project Partners

*American Psychiatric Foundation:* The mission of the APF is to advance public understanding of mental illnesses. The APF promotes awareness of mental illnesses and the effectiveness of treatment, the importance of early intervention, access to care and the need for high quality services and treatment through a combination of grants, programs, research funding and awards. This work reaches businesses, schools and community organizations that are committed to educating the public about mental illnesses. As the philanthropic and educational arm of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the APF combines the knowledge and credibility of the world's largest psychiatric organization of 38,000 psychiatrists, with its patient and family-centered mission.

*Council of State Governments Justice Center:* The Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that serves policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels from all branches of government. The Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies, informed by available evidence, to increase public safety and strengthen communities. The Criminal Justice/Mental Health Consensus Project at the Justice Center seeks to help local, state, and federal policymakers improve the response to individuals with mental illnesses who come in contact with the criminal justice system. The Justice Center is also the national technical assistance provider for the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice.

*CMHS National GAINS Center:* The CMHS National GAINS Center has operated since 1995 as a national locus for the collection and dissemination of information about effective mental health and substance abuse services for people with co-occurring disorders in contact with the justice system. The GAINS Center provides technical assistance to state and local governments on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

*National Judicial College:* Since 1963, NJC has awarded more than 89,000 professional judicial education certificates. With courses held onsite, across the nation and around the world, NJC offers an average of 95 courses annually with more than 3,000 judges enrolling from all 50 states, U.S. territories and more than 150 countries.

**For more information, including to sign up for the JLI newsletter and activities, please visit**  
<http://www.consensusproject.org/judges-leadership-initiative>

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<sup>i</sup> Council of State Governments Justice Center. 2009. *Justice Center Study Brief: Prevalence of Serious Mental Illness among Jail Inmates*. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center