



The Washington Report

The Newsletter of the National Association of Police Organizations
Representing America's Finest

June 17, 2013

NAPO WASHINGTON REPORT FLASH

Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act (JMHC A)

As has been noted in previous *Washington Reports*, NAPO has made reauthorization of the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act (JMHC A) a top legislative priority for the 113th Congress, as the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHC P) helps criminal justice and mental health agencies work collaboratively towards better outcomes. The JMHC P can help law enforcement agencies across the United States in their responsibilities in assisting those, and dealing with, citizens with mental health issues.

The JMHC A is scheduled for a mark-up on June 20, 2013. **As NAPO continues to work closely with its counterparts to advocate for this legislation, we would be most grateful if your organization considered signing on to the JMHC A National Reauthorization sign-on letter (PDF can be found under Washington Reports drop down window).**

If you would like to sign-on to the letter, please contact the Council of State Governments Justice Center's Manager of Government Affairs, Mr. Jay Nelson, at: (202) 624-7842 or jnelson@csg.org. **The deadline for signing on to the letter is close of business on June 18, 2013.**

If you have any questions about this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact Melissa Nee at: mnee@napo.org.

Please monitor NAPO's website www.napo.org, and Facebook- page: National Association of Police Organizations, and follow us on Twitter at NAPOpolice for breaking news and updates.

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Chair
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary
2318 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
B-351C Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Leahy and Goodlatte and Ranking Members Grassley and Conyers:

Our diverse organizations represent law enforcement officers, judges, court personnel, corrections officers, policymakers, faith-based leaders, and mental health professionals. We come together to ask you to support S.162/H.R. 401, the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act. This bipartisan bill, introduced by Senators Al Franken (D-MN) and Congressman Richard Nugent (R-FL), is vitally important to the criminal justice and mental health fields.

Individuals with mental health conditions are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. In a recent five-site study of people in U.S. jails, 14.5 percent of men and 31 percent of women had a serious mental illness—rates in excess of three to six times those found in the general population. Taken together, these numbers comprise 16.9 percent of the jail population.ⁱ About three-quarters of jail prisoners who were identified as having a mental illness also met the criteria for substance abuse or dependence.ⁱⁱ

In 2004, Congress passed the Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA), which supports collaborative programs that address the needs of justice-involved individuals with mental health conditions. MIOTCRA enhances public safety by funding training for law enforcement officers on how to identify and respond to incidents involving people with mental illnesses, increasing mental health courts nationwide, improving collaboration between criminal justice and mental health systems, and improving access to effective treatment. Across the nation, the initiative supports more than 300 jurisdictions, including four dozen mental health courts and more than two dozen police departments.

The Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act reauthorizes and improves this critically important program. In addition to extending the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration program for five years, the bill provides additional resources for veterans treatment courts, increases focus on resources and training for jails and prisons, and provides innovative training at police academies. This important legislation will ensure that state and local governments can continue to design and implement sound initiatives that improve the criminal justice system, increase public safety, reduce state and local spending, and help individuals with mental illnesses.

Please support S.162/H.R.401, the Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Act.

Sincerely,

ⁱ Steadman, H. J., Osher, F. C., Robbins, P. C., Case, B., and Samuels, S. (2009). Prevalence of serious mental illness among jail inmates. *Psychiatric Services*, 60 (6).

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics