

Gray Matter Behavioral Health Caucus Civil & Criminal Justice Perspective

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Gray Matters Behavioral Health Caucus

We've come full circle

- 150 years ago, Dorothea Dix began her campaign to free people with mental illness from unnecessary confinement or incarceration with hardened criminals
- In the 1960's, deinstitutionalization moved most people out of the hospitals
- Today, people are still being warehoused, but now they are once again in our jails and prisons

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Studies have found....

- ... that community treatment for people who are frequently institutionalized would save \$25,000 per year per person in jail and court costs
- ...failures to adequately fund community based treatment and supportive services result in...
 - a significant waste of our financial resources
 - more importantly, the waste of human life and productive potential of people who could be tax-paying citizens

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Mental Health Courts

- In Georgia, needed treatment options, beneficial programs and common sense services have been severely curtailed or entirely eliminated
- Yet, money is available on a spotty basis for innovative programs called Mental Health Courts

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Mental Health Courts

These programs are popular because they work...

- ...when community treatment is available
- ... because a wide range of treatment options and supported housing, employment and transportation are made available to each participant
- ... because Case Management is provided

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Barriers

- Judges and Law Enforcement feel a frustration over a lack of Community Resources to refer people to
- The maze of Medicaid, SSI & SSDI funding and reimbursement rules determine what treatment a person gets.
- Sheriff's deputies around the state are stretched thin from long hours transporting people to evaluations in distant towns, often having to remain until a doctor becomes available

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Bridges

- Remove the barriers which prevent doctor and patient from making treatment choices based on what the person needs
- Set up an inexpensive system of local evaluations
- Increase funding to community-based treatment programs and supportive services
- Bring Georgia's per capita spending up to the national average

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Treatment Works, if you can get it.

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