



# ***Together We Can***

## **Reducing Criminal Justice Involvement for People with Mental Illness**



**Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors**  
**Presentation to the Board on May 1, 2018**  
**Santa Barbara, CA**

**WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE**

# Presenters

- MHSOAC Commissioner and Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown
- MHSOAC Executive Director Toby Ewing
- MHSOAC Senior Researcher and Criminal Justice and Mental Health Project Staff Lead Ashley Mills



# About the Commission

- Created to provide oversight, accountability, and leadership to guide transformational change of the community-based mental health system
- Commission “Tools”
  - Innovation
  - Prevention and Early Intervention
  - Plan Review
  - Incentivizing Grants
  - Data and Analytics
  - Advocacy
  - Policy Research Projects



# About the Project

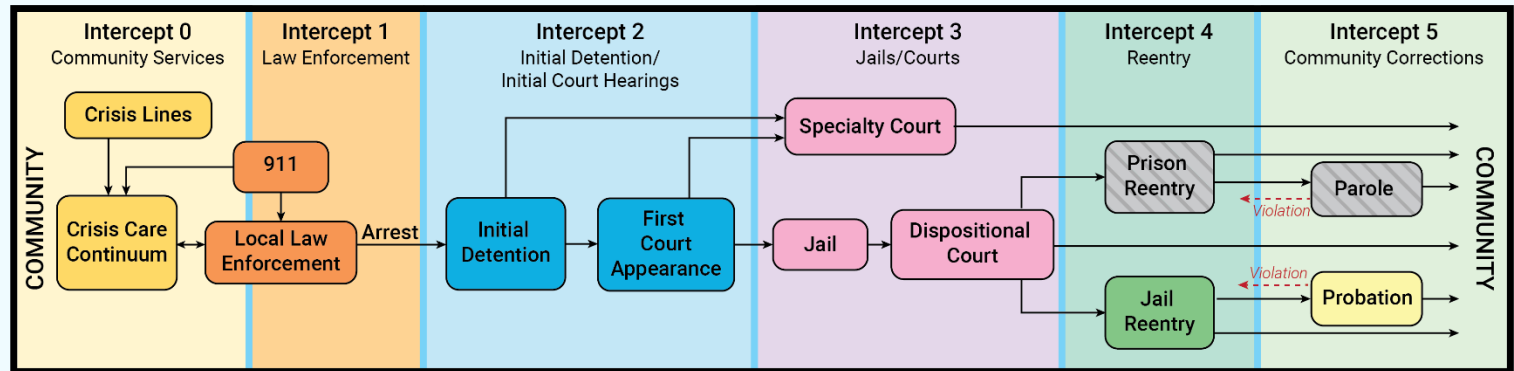
- Criminal Justice and Mental Health Project Subcommittee
- Project activities:
  - Subcommittee Meetings
  - Public Hearings
  - Community Forums
  - Site Visits
  - Local and National Initiatives
  - Small Group Discussions
  - And more



# Findings in Support of Diversion

## ■ Opportunities for Diversion

- Organizing a system that diverts people with mental health needs at various criminal justice “touch points”



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# Findings in Support of Prevention

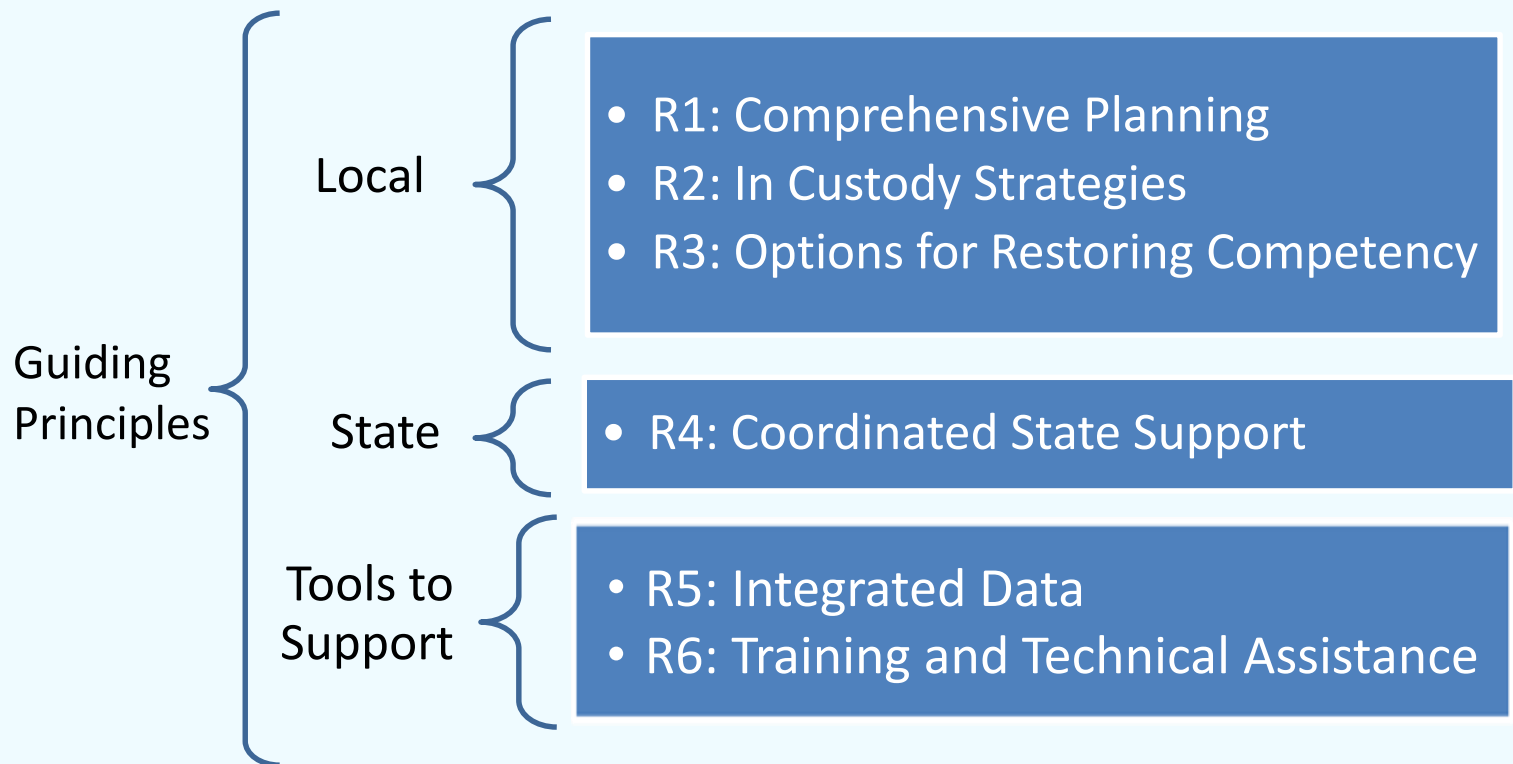
## ■ Opportunities for Prevention

- Preventing criminal justice contact from happening in the first place
  - ◆ Leadership
  - ◆ Capacity
  - ◆ Collaboration
  - ◆ Equity
  - ◆ Integration



# Report Overview:

## Findings and Recommendations



## ■ FINDING ONE

- Too many mental health consumers, particularly those from African American, Latino, Native American, and LGBTQ communities, end up in jail because of unmet needs and system inequities.
- A robust, prevention-oriented system can reduce this unnecessary harm.

## ■ RECOMMENDATION ONE

- California's mental health agencies, in partnership with law enforcement and others, should have a comprehensive prevention-focused plan that reduces the incarceration of mental health consumers in their communities.





## ■ FINDING TWO

- California's jails are not equipped to serve mental health consumers.
- Diversion should be prioritized but counties need more effective in-custody options to ensure they can provide appropriate and necessary services for those who cannot be diverted.

## ■ RECOMMENDATION TWO

- The Board of State and Community Corrections should facilitate a collaborative effort with counties to identify, develop, and deploy services and strategies that improve outcomes for mental health consumers in jail, including universal screening for mental health needs at booking and enhanced training for custody staff.



## ■ FINDING THREE

- A large and growing number of people found incompetent to stand trial because of unmet mental health needs are forced to spend months in jail awaiting services necessary for their cases to proceed.

## ■ RECOMMENDATION THREE

- To reduce the backlog of people found incompetent to stand trial, California must maximize diversion from the criminal justice system.
- For people who cannot be diverted and are found incompetent to stand trial, the state and counties should expand options for restoring competency.



## ■ FINDING FOUR

- California has not put in place a statewide, systemic approach for prevention and diversion to reduce criminal justice involvement for mental health consumers and improve outcomes.

## ■ RECOMMENDATION FOUR

- The Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health should fortify its efforts to champion collaboration among state agencies to support local prevention and diversion of mental health consumers from the criminal justice system.



## ■ FINDING FIVE

- Data is a critical tool in decision-making and service delivery, but state and local agencies are not effectively harnessing its power to improve outcomes for those in need.

## ■ RECOMMENDATION FIVE

- The California Health and Human Services Agency should reduce or eliminate barriers so that data and information technology are used to drive decision-making, identify service gaps, and guide investments in programs to reduce the number of people with mental health needs in the criminal justice system.



## ■ FINDING SIX

- To build effective prevention and diversion systems, criminal justice and mental health professionals will need new knowledge, skills, and abilities to better serve mental health consumers and their communities.

## ■ RECOMMENDATION SIX

- The State, in partnership with the counties, should expand technical assistance resources to improve cross-professional training, increase the use of data and evaluation, and the dissemination of best practices, including community-driven and evidence-based practices.



# Thank you!

Additional questions?

Please contact Ashley Mills at [ashley.mills@mhsoac.ca.gov](mailto:ashley.mills@mhsoac.ca.gov)

Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability  
Commission | [www.mhsoac.ca.gov](http://www.mhsoac.ca.gov)

