

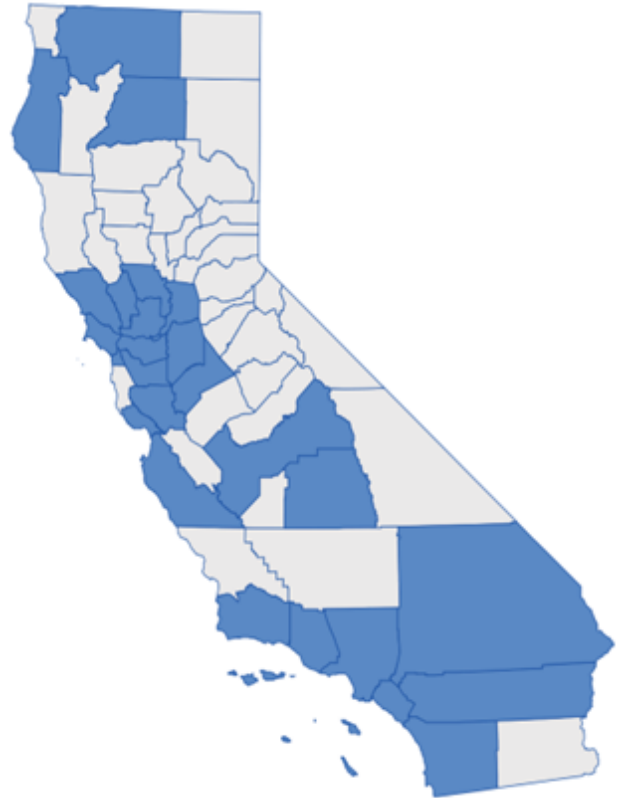
Utilizing Social Workers in Public Defense in California

The Advantage of an Interdisciplinary Approach

Integrating Social Workers and Case Management Specialists Can Increase Desired Outcomes:

- Reduce incarceration without harming public safety¹
- Reduce recidivism²
- Reduce in racial disparities in pretrial detention³
- Cost savings⁴
- Improvement in case outcomes⁵
- Free up attorney time to work on legal issues⁶

California Counties with Social Workers in Public Defense System



Percent of California Counties with Social Workers in Indigent Defense Systems



Why Use Social Workers and Case Management Specialists in Public Defense?



61%

of individuals jailed with mental health conditions could be safely diverted outside of jail.⁷



\$165 million

dollars in estimated cost savings over ten years in the Bronx from incorporating social workers into a holistic defense model by saving 1.1 million jail days through increasing non-jail alternatives.⁸

Social Workers Reduce Incarceration Without Harming Public Safety

- Create mitigation packets for sentencing
- Diagnose mental health conditions
- Review mental health and education records
- Provide support for clients in custody and placements
- Testify as experts regarding clients' needs
- Collect community and job information for judges to assess the safety of pretrial release



Substance Abuse

The intersection of substance abuse, mental health and the criminal legal system is widely known. Individuals who have contact with the criminal legal system experience high rates of trauma both before and because of their involvement in the system.⁹ Many individuals in the criminal legal system suffer from mental health problems and substance dependence or abuse.¹⁰

Bail Advocates

2017 study of 100,000 cases in Philadelphia showed that using social workers/bail advocates results in:



- ✓ **64%** reduction in the likelihood of bail violations
- ✓ **41%** reduction in the likelihood of future pretrial arrest
- ✓ **21%** reduction in the likelihood of future crime¹¹

Social workers and case management specialists are critical in connecting individuals to mental health treatment and resources to *decrease future system involvement*.



An estimated **42%** of inmates in state prisons and **49%** in jails exhibit both mental health concerns and substance dependence or abuse.¹²



1 in 5 deaths among young adults in California is tied to Fentanyl use.¹³ Alternative resources to police and jail are needed to prevent fatal and non-fatal overdoses.¹⁴



Incarcerated people are **10 times** more likely to experience homelessness.¹⁵ People experiencing unsheltered homelessness in California reported more than **10 times** the number of police contacts than people living in shelters.¹⁶

Social workers, as part of the attorney-client team, are in a unique position to have confidential conversations with clients. Public defense social workers are appropriate partners to assess and treat the root causes of criminal activity to stop the revolving door.

Endnotes

- ^{1,3,9} Paul Heaton, *Enhanced public defense improves pretrial outcomes and reduces racial disparities*, Indiana Law J. 96, 701 (2021) [found here](#).
- ^{2,4,8} James M. Anderson et. al., *The Effects of Holistic Defense on Criminal Justice Outcomes*, 132 Harv. L. Rev. 819 (2019) [found here](#).
- ^{5,6} Andreea Matei et al., *Assessing a Social Worker Model of Public Defense*, Urban Institute (2021) [found here](#).
- ⁷ Stephanie Holliday et. al. *Estimating the Size of the LA County Jail Mental Health Population Appropriate for Release into Community Services*, RAND, (2021) [found here](#).
- ¹⁰ Rachel Lee and Dr. Lisa Callahan, *Trauma-Informed Approaches Across the Sequential Intercept Model*, New York: The Council of State Governments Justice Center, (2022) [found here](#).
- ^{11, 12} Doris J. James and Lauren E. Glaze, *Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates*, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2006) [found here](#).
- ¹³ Dani Anguiano, *One in five deaths among young Californians tied to fentanyl*, The Guardian (May 24, 2023) [found here](#).
- ¹⁴ Bradley, Ray et. al., *Spatiotemporal Analysis Exploring the Effect of Law Enforcement Drug Market Disruptions on Overdose, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2020-2021*, (June 7, 2023), American Journal of Public Health, [found here](#).
- ¹⁵ Catherine Ho, *S.F. drug overdose deaths could set a record this year. What's causing the spike?* (June 16, 2023) [found here](#).
- ¹⁶ Janey Rountree, Nathan Hess, and Austin Lyke, *Health Conditions among Unsheltered Adults in the US*, California Policy Lab, (October 6, 2019) [found here](#).