



Public Policy Reform: Leveraging Policy to Decriminalize and Prevent Harm

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Panelists:

- ▶ Robert Riley II, Co-Founder of Missouri Network for Opiate Reform and Recovery
- ▶ Honorable Michael D. Burton, St. Louis County Circuit Judge
- ▶ Nancy McCarthy, Eastern Region Administrator MDOC Division of Probation and Parole
- ▶ Steven Lynch, Missouri State Representative for the 122nd District

Recidivism Rates:

- ▶ The Missouri Department of Corrections estimates that 97% of men and women committed to prison will someday return to our communities. In addition, the recidivism rate has been estimated to be approximately 46% for all releases and 37% for first-time releases in the state.

Factors for Recidivism

Factors for Recidivism or Criminal Behavior

Mental Health Issues

57%



of offenders with serious mental health problems return to prison within 5 years of release

Substance Abuse

53% of all prison admissions have convictions for drug & alcohol offenses

59% of those returning to prisons are for drug offenses

92% of those returning to prison required substance abuse treatment



Employment

72% of offenders who've never had full-time employment return to prison within 2 years



Only 27% of offenders who've had full-time employment return to prison within 2 years

Education

48% of offenders who leave prison WITHOUT a GED or high school diploma return within 2 years

Only 37% of offenders who obtain a GED in prison return to prison within 2 years



Note. Figure adapted from Missouri Reentry Process Brochure ⁵

2017 Legislative Advocacy Agenda

- ▶ State legislation for 911 Good Samaritan
- ▶ State legislation for Prescription Drug Monitoring Program
- ▶ State legislation for clean needle exchange

Legislation for Decriminalization

- ▶ State legislation for the enforcement of parity laws requiring insurance companies to provide mental health treatment/substance use disorder.
- ▶ State legislation that prevents judges from barring drug court from using medications such as buprenorphine and methadone prescribed by a doctor to treat opioid addiction.
- ▶ State legislation requiring substance abuse programs licensed by the Missouri Department of Mental Health to provide educational information on medication-based treatments and the use of anti-overdose drugs.

Redefining Decriminalization

Taking an evidence-based treatment approach in contrast to the current approach of reactively punishing the symptoms of substance use disorders