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## Improving outcomes for criminal offenders with serious mental illness

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Recidivism among repeat criminal offenders with serious mental illness is higher than recidivism among non-impaired offenders. Offenders with mental illness, who are released from jail are homeless and utilize publically funded human services, cost communities in terms of crime victimization, or become a burden to taxpayers as indigent patients in medical or psychiatric hospitals. These ongoing problems may be mitigated with effective program and treatment coordination during the incarceration and after release, because it will increase emotional stability and decrease psychiatric symptoms during the admission and upon release. Outpatient service adherence and formal community supervision are positive factors in reducing re-incarceration for inmates with serious mental illness. The lack of coordination between mental health services and the judicial system and inadequate continued care between incarceration and community settings places communities at risk of crime and offenders at risk of continuing to cycle through the system. Procedure for improving outcomes in the community for offenders with serious mental illness must involve both interagency collaboration and advocacy. Ideally, a small group of stakeholders can come together to create a plan that addresses barriers at different system levels. Sometimes advocacy associated with reducing stigma and educating stakeholders is the first step. For other communities, the first step is to determine the conduits for collaboration between agencies. This process requires both a micro and a macro intervention; our efforts to improve collaboration and advocacy must address the system of care simultaneous to addressing the needs of individual persons.

### Biography

Lorena Fulton has been advocating for improved access to care and quality care for offenders with serious mental illness since 2007. She has served as a Member of the Prisoner Review Team and collaborated with professionals within the justice and mental health service systems and eventually worked as part of a team that formed the County's Mental Health Court.

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