

MassHealth's Impact on Justice-Involved People



Improving health coverage for justice-involved people is especially important in light of Massachusetts' commitment to addressing systemic racism in both the criminal justice system and the health care system. MassHealth fills a critical gap in health care coverage for people who have been incarcerated.

PERVASIVE STRUCTURAL RACISM IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM COMPOUNDS HEALTH INEQUITIES

- Black residents account for only **7%** of Massachusetts' population but **26% of the prison and jail population**.
- People leaving incarceration are vulnerable to poor health outcomes—they typically have **high physical and behavioral health needs**.
- In Massachusetts, former adult inmates are **120 times more likely to die from an opioid overdose** than individuals with no incarceration history.



MASSHEALTH IMPROVES HEALTH COVERAGE, ACCESS TO NEEDED SERVICES, AND RECIDIVISM RATES FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED PEOPLE

- **85%** of the Department of Correction prison population is **enrolled in MassHealth** or have suspended coverage reactivated as part of their pre-release discharge planning.
- MassHealth covers a robust set of behavioral health services, many of which are typically not covered by commercial insurance.
- Nationally, Medicaid coverage has been linked to lower rates of recidivism.

MASSHEALTH IS A LEADER IN DESIGNING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO MEET THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF JUSTICE-INVOLVED PEOPLE

- MassHealth has made policy changes related to suspension of coverage to ensure justice-involved people are **enrolled in MassHealth immediately upon their release into the community** so they don't experience gaps in coverage.
- MassHealth's Behavioral Health Initiative offers intensive care management to meet the needs of justice-involved individuals as they re-enter the community. Supports include **appointments with physical and behavioral health providers, referrals to social services** such as food and employment support, and **help obtaining stable housing**.

For more information on MassHealth's Impact on Justice-Involved People, see the full issue brief at https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/sites/g/files/cspkws2101/files/2021-06/MH_Impact_JIP_brief_FINAL.pdf.