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.

PERVERSIVE 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/csphws2101/files/2021-06/MIH_Impact_JIP_brief_FINAL.pdf.

Kinda Serafi
Mandy Ferguson
Manatt Health