

Justice Through Compassion

MF is a 53-year-old woman currently sitting in a solitary confinement cell in Smith County Jail. She has a long history of serious mental illness. Without adequate treatment, she has cycled in and out of county jails dozens of times on a variety of non-violent charges. Most recently, she has been found incompetent to stand trial as a result of her serious mental illness. However, it is unlikely she'll ever receive a bed off the forensic waitlist before her sentence is complete, starting the cycle over once again.

Current Failures:

Arrested many times, each instance directly related to her poorly managed mental illness

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MF has been found **incompetent** to stand trial and likely will **never restore** competency as a result of her mental illness

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Jail does **not prevent** her recidivism because her mental illness keeps her from understanding what is happening

Proposed Interventions:

Appropriate levels of care in the community helps keep people with mental illness **out of jail**

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A **civil commitment** is a more appropriate way to help her get the support she needs while also keeping the **community safe**

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Outside of jail, the **best option** to get MF mandatory support is through a civil commitment

What We Need:

Civil commitments that can provide appropriate care and keep people out of jails

Even if they get a bed off the forensic waitlist, this does not provide appropriate treatment. Furthermore, it's in inappropriate setting for someone whose competency cannot be restored

People like MF are arrested for non-violent charges, like trespassing



In jail, they are found incompetent to stand trial due to serious mental illness. There, they wait for a forensic waitlist bed that may never appear

Incarceration leads to:

- Punishment for behaviors resulting from diagnosed & unmet mental health needs
- Additional charges for behaviors in jail
- Re-arrest on higher charges
- Strain on Emergency Services and criminal justice system
- Escalation of mental health symptoms due to an inappropriate environment
- Loss of housing or employment

Justice is best served with compassion

Justice is not served by detaining people with mental illness over and over for offenses that they do not understand. This is cruel, a waste of money, and is not accomplishing anything meaningful.

A better system focuses on compassion and rehabilitation for people whose criminal history is a result of their serious mental illness. Civil commitments for people like MF are a better fit for their needs and achieve the same goals of keeping the community safe by keeping her off the streets.

