

“Looking for mercy”

CAB was a high-achieving soccer player at Austin College when he experienced his first psychotic episode. A promising son with a bright future ahead of him, he soon went from the soccer field to a 13-year cycle in and out of jail and hospitals due to co-occurring bipolar, schizoaffective disorder and anosognosia, making him resistant to treatment. During one mental health episode, he was arrested for trespassing at a Christian bookstore named ‘Divine Mercy’ where he told police he was “looking for mercy.”

Systemic Failures:

Arrested 15 times, each instance directly related to his poorly managed mental illness

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Each arrest was an opportunity to **recognize** his serious mental illness and instead route him into a **civil commitment**

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After 2.5 years in jail, CAB was released onto the street this month. There was **no deliberate, long-term care plan** to keep him safe or out of jail again

Proposed Interventions:

Crisis stabilization units that provide people with serious mental illness with **appropriate levels of care**

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Civil commitments for people with serious mental illness get them **appropriate care** and keep them **out of jails**

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Campus settings (including a secure option) where people with serious mental illness can receive longitudinal care and live with dignity

What We Need:

Community based **crisis respite and stabilization care** to reduce contact with the criminal justice system

From jail, people found incompetent can access **temporary** care through the forensic waitlist, but competency restoration is merely stabilization for the purposes of case disposition. Lack of continuity of care after release leads to **recidivism**



Calls to mental health crisis lines often lead to arrests and **jail** instead of immediate diversion to appropriate **care**



People return to jail from competency restoration and then get convicted, released without any follow up plan, or lose competency again if they sit for too long in jail

Incarceration leads to:

- Punishment for behaviors resulting from diagnosed & unmet mental health needs
- Homelessness & loss of benefits
- Escalation of crises with fewer options for care due to prior record
- Public safety issues
- Additional charges for behaviors in jail
- Re-arrest on higher charges
- Strain on Emergency Services and criminal justice system

Criminalizing Mental Illness is Bad For Public Safety

The cycle of arrest, temporary “care” and discharge is **cruel, wasteful**, and **leads to worse safety outcomes** for everyone.

Poor management of mental illness is a **public safety issue**. When people with serious mental illness do not get the appropriate care they need in a timely manner, it can often lead to a crime and possible **victimization of both the individual with mental illness and people in the community**.