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Too many Ohioans with mental health, substance use disorders behind bars

CLEVELAND, OH – Ohio's prison population has more than tripled in less than 40 years. And, due to gaps in care, and the criminalization of mental illness and substance use disorders, Ohioans living with these illnesses make up a large proportion of that population.

This is one of the many findings The Center for Community Solutions and the Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition discovered in the first installment of *By the Numbers 4*, released May 24.

"Community Solutions and the MHAC partnered to examine this topic because we see an impact in sectors all across the state. Developing strategies and targeting investments to keep people who are dealing with behavioral health issues out of the criminal justice system will be beneficial to society as a whole," said Tara Britton, the Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for Community Solutions.

"This first installment of *By the Numbers* takes a look at the history of the behavioral health and criminal justice systems," said Joan Englund, Executive Director of the MHAC. "In order to understand how to best modify each system so those with behavioral health issues get the care they need, it's important to understand how each system evolved into what we see today."

The steady increase in prison and jail populations can be traced back to psychiatric hospitals closing and to many states, including Ohio, not investing adequate resources in community-based treatment for mental illness. As a result, many people with mental illness go without treatment or intervention, and can end up in jails or prisons. Incarceration is not only expensive, it's also ill-equipped to treat and rehabilitate people with illness and substance use.

Through a series of five installments of *By the Numbers*, released over the next several weeks, Community Solutions and the MHAC will examine the current state of behavioral health services for adults involved with the criminal justice system.

To read the full report please go to <http://www.communitysolutions.com/resources/by-the-numbers> or <http://www.mhaadvocacy.org>.

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