

Increase Criminal Justice and Recovery Services

By sustaining and elevating our criminal justice partnerships, we can alleviate the strain on the system and prevent traumatic cycling through the system for Ohioans experiencing behavioral health challenges. These budget priorities are informed by Gov. Mike DeWine's Work Group on Competency Restoration and Diversion.

2026 – 2027 Budget Priorities

1. **Pretrial Diversion:** Pilot the Pretrial Behavioral Health Intervention Program to divert individuals with lower-level felonies from state hospitals to inpatient facilities that provide competency restoration, crisis stabilization and reentry support.
2. **Judicial System:** Continue to support the Specialized Docket Subsidy Project, providing Ohioans participating in drug courts with local treatment and recovery opportunities, and expand the number of counties with assisted outpatient treatment programs.
3. **Access to Behavioral Health Medications:** Provide additional funding to the Behavioral Health Drug Reimbursement Program to support the increase in behavioral health medications dispensed to inmates within jails and community-based correctional facilities and reimburse these facilities for a portion of the medication costs.
4. **Systems Navigation:** Establish forensic navigators within the state's six regional psychiatric hospitals to support streamlined communication and collaboration among systems.
5. **Prescribing Consultation for Jails:** Increase timely access to behavioral health medications by establishing a telehealth psychiatric consultation program for jail health care providers.

Why It Matters

Investing in criminal justice and recovery services:

- **Reduces the strain** on Ohio's six regional psychiatric hospitals.
- **Alleviates pressure** on local jails and provides appropriate support for those in the criminal justice system.
- **Strengthens community-based treatment** options and competency restoration programs.

By the Numbers

- **37 states** of 41 surveyed cited a shortage of state psychiatric hospital beds, and **31** cited a shortage of beds for forensic patients; **29 states** experienced increased waiting times for state hospital psychiatric beds, and **28 states** experienced increased waiting times for non-state beds.¹
- About **2 in 5 incarcerated people** have a history of mental illness. Only **45%** receive treatment while in jail.²
- **31 states** have made significant amendments to, or created new, pretrial and diversion programs since 2017; **38 states** have diversion alternatives for individuals with substance-related needs, and **27 states** have pretrial diversion alternatives for those with mental health needs.³

¹ NRI, "[SMHA Use of State Psychiatric Hospitals – May 2024](#)." (May 2024)

² National Alliance on Mental Illness, "[Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System](#)." (July 2023)

³ National Conference of State Legislatures, "[The Legislative Primer Series on Front-End Justice: Deflection and Diversion](#)." (August 2023)