

Health and Criminal Justice Program

Overview

For over twenty years, the University of Massachusetts Medical School has built a portfolio of innovative works to improve the outcomes of populations under criminal justice supervision. The Health and Criminal Justice Program, a part of UMass Medical School's Commonwealth Medicine division, focuses on research and scholarship; education; and service and consulting. As a leader in the field, UMass Medical School has forged partnerships across several medical schools to create the [Academic Consortium on Criminal Justice Health](#), which hosts an international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed [conference](#) now in its eighth year.

Why we do the work

The United States incarcerates more individuals than any other country in the world; and on any given day, 1 of 100 adults in the country is put behind bars. This population is substantially over-represented by men, minority and poor persons, and those experiencing serious mental illness. One in three black men has a lifetime risk of incarceration. Post-release, former prisoners face barriers to housing, jobs and health care, placing these individuals and their families at risk for poor health. Rates of recidivism average 75% over five years, thus demonstrating the limits of prison-based rehabilitation.

[The National Research Council](#) has called for a comprehensive overhaul of our criminal justice system to reduce mass incarceration. Research is clearly needed to develop alternatives to incarceration, engage detainees in care during incarceration, and identify and adopt evidence-based strategies to improve care transitions at the time of release. While few grant-making institutions are supporting such research, UMass Medical School and several other institutions are generating new knowledge to address this crisis.

Research and Scholarship

Led by the Department of Psychiatry and Commonwealth Medicine, UMass Medical School conducts research and scholarship on adult criminal justice and diversion; juvenile justice and assessment; the intersections of mental illness and substance abuse with criminal justice; and health policy on complex issues facing the criminal justice health field. [The Systems and Psychosocial Advances Research Center](#) (SPARC) within the Department of Psychiatry devotes several researchers to this field of study.

Commonwealth Medicine includes faculty concerned with vexing problems facing society and criminal justice institutions such as substance abuse treatment, management of ADHD, mental health programming, treatment of Hepatitis C infection and community reentry strategies.

Education

UMass Medical School educational researchers, recognizing that care of inmate populations includes facets often unfamiliar to clinicians, have led the development of [core competencies](#) in clinical criminal justice health care. They have developed multiple opportunities for learners to be introduced to correctional health care, including an interdisciplinary population health clerkship in correctional health, [clinical electives](#) in both outpatient and inpatient settings as well as a fellowship program.

Service and Consulting

UMass Medical School has provided comprehensive health services for the past 15 years at the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (FBOP) medical facility in Devens, Massachusetts. In May 2014, the medical school was awarded a contract to manage comprehensive medical services to nearly 1,000 inmates at the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) located in Ray Brook, New York. UMass Medical School also provides comprehensive medical services at the Federal Medical Center in Butner, N.C. and was awarded a contract for FCI Berlin, N.H. in 2013.

The costs of correctional health care have skyrocketed, with spending in 41 states rising from fiscal 2007 to 2011 at a median growth of 13 percent, according to a [new report](#) by the Pew Charitable Trust and the MacArthur Foundation. UMass Medical School understands the needs to control costs, and works with agencies to develop flexible programs and services that increase the value of their health care spending.

UMass Medical School's [Commonwealth Medicine](#) has expertise in bridging both clinical and operational management, promotes best practices in third party management, and has a strong track record of compliance with FBOP core safety and security requirements in conjunction with hospital protocols.

Academic health science centers seeking to expand their service delivery to include criminal justice health can consult with UMass Medical School. Services include contracting, program development and start up, managed correctional health care consulting, pharmacy management services and decision support for evidence based clinical guideline and care pathway development.