

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH THE PROGRAM
FOR RETURNING OFFENDERS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS SAFELY
AND EFFECTIVELY (PROMISE) PROGRAM**

The Problem: The mentally ill parolee population served by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) currently consists of 3,540 Enhanced Outpatient Program (EOP) and 15,991 Correctional Clinical Case Management System (CCCMS) for a total of 19,531 parolees, of which an average of 3,500 are homeless.

Each year over 6,000 parolees suffering from serious mental illness are returned to prison for periods ranging from a few months up to one full year or longer if they receive a new term. This is primarily due to technical violations of parole conditions or other criminal behavior that can result from mental illness. Homelessness is a key contributor to the high recidivism rate of mentally ill parolees. Parolees without homes are much less likely attend medical or counseling sessions and stay on medications, thereby exacerbating symptoms and increasing parole violations.

Returning mentally ill parolees to state prisons is a very expensive proposition. The annual average cost of housing a general inmate in state prison is \$43,287. The cost of housing an EOP participant in prison is roughly \$110,000 per year.

As a result, the lack of transitional and permanent supportive housing for mentally ill prisoners reentering the community worsens outcomes for the parolees themselves, decreases public safety, and significantly increases state costs related to recidivism.

The Solution: The PROMISE Program seeks to transition homeless offenders with mental illness who are exiting prison into permanent supportive housing and integrated services in order to successfully reintegrate them into the community, increase public safety, and reduce state costs from recidivism. The program will provide enhanced case management and “in-reach” services to EOP and CCCMS inmates prior to release with the goals of ensuring identification, services, and income upon release and placing parolees in permanent supportive housing.

Because parolees cannot be served by Proposition 63 funds (and the housing they support), the PROMISE pilot program will provide transitional supportive housing and necessary services to participants while they are on parole. The department will contract with integrated service providers, similar those who serve homeless mentally ill non-parolees under the AB 2034 program. These providers will in turn subcontract for the housing needs of program participants. In order to facilitate the transition of participants to permanent supportive housing, priority will go for extra units in housing developments that also include permanent supportive housing for persons with mental illness. Participants will pay 30% of their income in rent. Services will include conflict resolution and life skills, mental health services, medically necessary medications to treat severe mental illnesses, alcohol and drug services, transportation, supportive housing, vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services, and money management

assistance for accessing other health care, federal income and housing support, and veterans' services.

Subject to available funding, CDCR will roll out the program in select locations within three counties, serving up to 100 participants in each county. After three years, the department will conduct an evaluation of the initial roll-out sites to ascertain the outcomes of the program, describe the lessons learned, and determine the cost savings to the state. The proposal envisions ramping up the program statewide within five years.

By providing supportive housing to mentally ill parolees, the state is likely to save significant resources relative to re-housing these parolees in prison.