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PROMISE PROGRAM

PROGRAM FOR RETURNING OFFENDERS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY

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, primarily due to technical violations of parole conditions or other criminal behavior resulting from mental illness. Homelessness is a key contributor to the high recidivism rate of mentally ill parolees. Parolees without homes are more likely to go without treatment and medication, exacerbating symptoms and increasing chances of parole violations.

California's high recidivism rate among mentally ill parolees 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 increasing state costs related to recidivism.

The Solution:

Housing California and the Corporation for Supportive Housing propose the PROMISE Program, which seeks to transition homeless offenders with mental illness exiting prison into permanent supportive housing and integrated services in order to reintegrate parolees successfully into the community, increase public safety, and reduce state costs. The program will provide enhanced case management and "in-reach" services to EOP and CCCMS inmates prior to release with the goals of ensuring services, housing, and access to income upon release.

Because Proposition 63 funds cannot serve parolees, the PROMISE program will provide supportive housing and necessary services to participants while they are on parole. PROMISE will provide for funding for integrated services, similar to the AB 2034 Program, which serves homeless mentally ill non-parolees. In order to facilitate the transition of participants to permanent supportive housing, priority will go to housing developments that receive other funding for housing and services for persons

with mental illness, such as the Mental Health Services Act funding (Proposition 63). Participants will pay 30% of their income in rent. Services will include mental health services, vocational rehabilitation and employment services, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, veterans' services, transportation assistance, and support in accessing other health care, federal income and housing supports.

Subject to available funding, CDCR will roll out the program in 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 measure outcomes, 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 avoid spending significant resources relative to re-housing these parolees in prison.