

SUPPORT SB20-042: Extend Committee Treatment Persons in Juvenile & Criminal Justice Systems | Sen. Rodriguez and Fields & Reps. Singer and Benavidez

ABOUT MHDCJS:

The Committee & Taskforce Concerning The treatment of Persons with Mental Health Disorders who are involved in the Juvenile and Criminal Justice System (MHDCJS) structure was created to house Colorado's ongoing examination of the intersection of mental health and criminal justice with the goal of developing legislative strategies to address the over representation of individuals with mental health disorders in the juvenile and criminal justice system.

The structure includes a year-round legislative committee and an ongoing taskforce, which acts as a think tank of subject matter experts to advise and report to legislators directly, as opposed to other departments or entities.

THE WORK:

This structure gives the legislature an opportunity to collaboratively receive recommendations directly from an entity that is directly working for it and to introduce 5 bills each year based on this relevant research and work.

Since its inception, the MHDCJS structure has brought forward reforms and achievements including:

- ❖ Funding for intensive juvenile programs, and significant reforms regarding juvenile competency to proceed with trial.
- ❖ Developing standardized mental health screenings in the criminal and juvenile justice system.
- ❖ Initiation of CIT training programs in Colorado, and ongoing examination of sustainability.
- ❖ Initiation of jails releasing individuals with IDs.
- ❖ Development of a mechanism for medication consistency between jails and community providers.
- ❖ Reforms in housing policy such as zoning, funding, and rental applications to assist individuals post incarcerations.

This year, the MHDCJS structure worked on several evidence-based policy reforms which were introduced as bills:

- ❖ SB20-026: Workers' Compensation for Audible Psychological Trauma
- ❖ HB20-1035: Programs to Develop Housing Support Services
- ❖ SB20-037: Trusted Interoperability Platform Advisory Committee
- ❖ HB20-1079: Juveniles on Colorado Sex Offender Registry

OPPORTUNITY:

Since its inception the MHDCJS structure has been re-authorized 3 times to allow this independent, non-department driven, and bipartisan research and work to continue and to ensure that the legislature has a body that is working for it and making deliberate recommendations in this space.

This year, more than ever, the MHDCJS is excited for the opportunity to re-authorize and revitalize its work. This bill not only re-authorizes the structure for an additional 3 years, but also makes several updates to the language to ensure the work is focused around the legislature's current needs.

These updates include:

- Expressing a more deliberate requirement for the task force to collaborate with other entities that are researching related topics, such as current executive branch task forces.
- Honing the study focus on the task force and introducing language to promote more upstream study to help prevent initial criminalization of individuals at risk.
- Providing a structure for the LOC to request formal taskforce feedback on bills currently in the legislative process.
- Changing the name of the MHDCJS to capture behavioral health more broadly, and modern whole-person approaches.

Supporters of SB20-042 include: The Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council, Healthier Colorado, Office of the Child's Representative