

Expand Trauma Screenings in the Criminal Justice System

The Problem: According to a 2014 survey by TCJC of women incarcerated in Texas prisons, more than half of respondents were physically or sexually abused prior to their incarceration (with 58% having been sexually abused as a child), and 82% were survivors of domestic violence.

Along with, and perhaps as a result of, these significant trauma histories, these women also reported high rates of mental health problems and attempts to self-medicate. **55% of women reported that they had been diagnosed with a mental illness.** The most common diagnoses for these women were **depression (69%), bipolar disorder (48%), anxiety disorder (37%), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (32%).** And while mental health problems are common among all incarcerated populations, women are disproportionately affected.

Bell County's probation department utilizes trauma screenings, deploying trauma-informed social workers to support only those probationers that indicate a trauma score of 8 or higher. During FY 2018, 3.5% of male probationers scored an 8 or higher on the trauma screening. Comparatively, 16% of female probationers scored an 8 or higher, meaning female probationers were 4.5 times more likely to report having significant trauma histories.

Solution: Support HB 2168 by Allen: This bill requires the Texas Department of Criminal Justice – or its probation division – to conduct a one-time screening of individuals upon intake to prison or probation to identify those who have experienced significant trauma, and then refer them to the proper healthcare professional for treatment.

This is an important step towards a more trauma-informed corrections system.

And it is especially critical for women. Research shows that women who receive gender-specific, trauma-informed care while incarcerated are 360% more likely to complete voluntary community-based treatment upon release, and are 67% less likely to return to prison.

SUPPORTERS:

Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC)

Texas Public Policy Foundation

Texas Association of Business

Texas Appleseed

Texans Care for Children

Christian Life Commission

Goodwill Central Texas

Prison Fellowship

ACLU of Texas

R Street Institute