



# INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY • COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK • [IJRD.CSW.FSU.EDU](http://IJRD.CSW.FSU.EDU)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Prosecutors, researchers, and advocates convene to advance equity in the criminal justice system**

*Defining and Refining the 2020 Framework for Prosecution and Public Health*

The Prosecution Research Network convened virtually on July 13 and 14, 2020 for the purpose of identifying research and policy strategies to improve health, reduce incarceration, and increase national safety, prosperity, and wellbeing.

The newly formed Prosecutors Research Network, comprised of offices from rural and urban jurisdictions around the country, held its first summit to discuss establishing an evidence base for prosecutorial-led alternatives to detention and incarceration. The Prosecutors Research Network is the creation of a partnership with the Institute for Justice Research and Development (IJRD) at Florida State University and Colorado Mental Health's Equitas Project.

"It is inspiring to see the members of this network act as change agents to better the lives of the people they serve. They are focused on creating more second-chance success stories in our communities across the nation while also making sure drivers of crime are appropriately addressed," said Carrie Pettus-Davis, executive director of IJRD.

During a poorly understood health crisis, Americans with mental health needs of all kinds are neglected, stigmatized or inadequately supported by health and safety systems. The nation's response to health needs such as mental health challenges and substance use are too often defaulted to the criminal justice system. Relying on the criminal justice system to respond to the chronic and acute health needs of the population negatively impacts public health, public safety and limits advances toward racial and economic equity.

At the summit, leaders presented solutions such as: creating alternatives to incarceration and detention, getting defendants the adequate healthcare needed instead of criminal justice interventions when possible, and identifying research opportunities for establishing an evidence base.

This network is the first of its kind to examine the power of prosecution to act as a partner in prevention of unnecessary detention, incarceration and unaddressed health needs.

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## **ABOUT Prosecution Research Network**

The Prosecution Research Network (PRN) is a national leadership network of prosecutors who are interested in advancing innovative practices and interventions at the intersection of mental health, substance use, and criminal justice. This network will lead the way toward an era of unprecedented health, justice, and safety in the United States. It was formed through a partnership between the Florida State University College of Social Work Institute for Justice Research and Development and The Equitas Project of Mental Health Colorado. The Prosecution Research Network is a prosecutor-led national network designed to identify, implement, and sustain innovations at the intersection of behavioral health and prosecution.

## **ABOUT the Institute for Justice Research and Development (IJRD),**

We prioritize rapid dissemination of research findings to the advocates, professionals, and policymakers who can adopt them rather than limiting the communication of our findings to academic audiences. Trailblazing scientific discovery to some of society's greatest challenges. The mission at IJRD is to advance science, policy, and practice to improve the well-being of individuals, families, and communities impacted by criminal justice system involvement, in a first of its kind research and development center. The movement from mass incarceration toward smart decarceration has the potential to produce effective, sustainable, and equitable criminal justice reforms. <https://ijrd.csw.fsu.edu/>

## **ABOUT the Equitas Project**

The Equitas Project, a national initiative of **Mental Health Colorado**, made possible thanks to the generous support of the David and Laura Merage Foundation, envisions an America rededicated to liberty and justice for all, where there is a commonly held expectation that jails and prisons should not continue to serve as the nation's warehouses for people with unmet mental health needs. Mental Health Colorado is the state's leading advocate in promoting mental wellness, ending shame and discrimination, and ensuring equitable access to mental health and substance use care. Mental Health Colorado is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization and an affiliate of Mental Health America. To learn more about Mental Health Colorado's work and mission, visit [www.mentalhealthcolorado.org](http://www.mentalhealthcolorado.org). For Equitas' work and mission, please visit [www.equitasproject.org](http://www.equitasproject.org)

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