

# PROSECUTION Research Network



 **THE  
EQUITAS PROJECT**  
A NATIONAL INITIATIVE OF **MENTAL HEALTH COLORADO**

# PROSECUTION RESEARCH NETWORK

*Prosecutors Leading the Way to Health, Justice, and Safety*

The Institute for Justice Research and Development & The Equitas Project,  
a national initiative of Mental Health Colorado

## PURPOSE

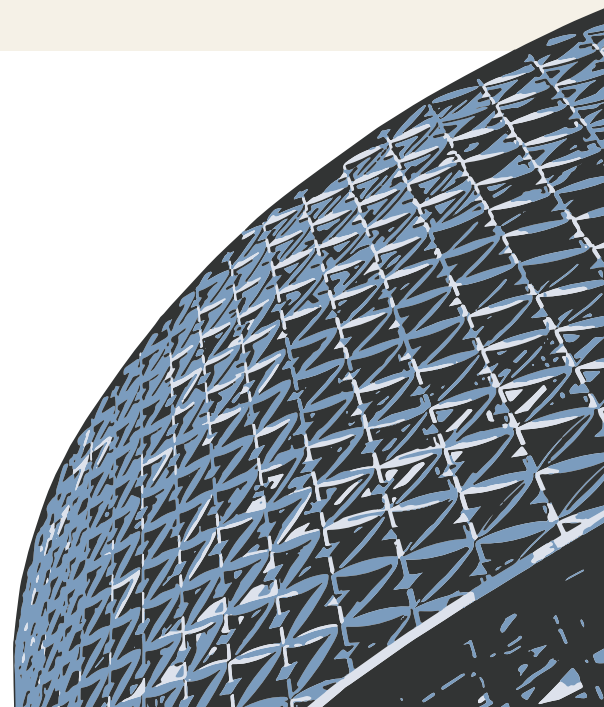
To form a national leadership network of prosecutors who are interested in advancing innovative practices and interventions at the intersection of mental health, substance use, and criminal justice. This network will lead the way toward an era of unprecedented health, justice, and safety in the United States.

Prosecutors all over the United States are acutely aware that the criminal justice system has become, by default, the nation's largest system for responding to the consequences of gaps in care, supports, and services for the population's mental health and substance use.

These prosecutors are implementing innovative practices and interventions to divert individuals with unmet health needs toward appropriate health care. They are creating alternatives to criminalization and incarceration, which improve health outcomes and reduce costs, while preserving safety.

## THE NETWORK WILL CONNECT AND SUPPORT THE WORK OF PROSECUTORIAL OFFICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY BY

- Identifying areas for growth or improvement of prosecutor-led diversion programs
- Facilitating the sharing and refinement of best practices
- Assisting these jurisdictions with strategies for securing funding and other support to start, continue, and expand diversion and redirection programming





## GOALS

*Prosecutorial offices will experience the following outcomes:*

- Reduced docket pressure
- Lower costs
- Prosecution resources focused on cases that demand more time and attention
- Improved public relations
- Enhanced coordination with other system, treatment, and community stakeholders

*Communities will experience the following outcomes:*

- Reduced disruption to communities when unnecessary incarceration is reduced and eliminated
- Improved safety of communities
- Increased success and well-being of individuals
- Reduced criminal justice involvement and poor health outcomes associated with poverty, health risks, lack of access to services, and other public health gaps



## STRATEGIES

- Identify opportunities for improvement
- Collect, evaluate, and standardize data; analyze outcomes, practices, and procedures according to stated goals
- Expand successful existing programming
- Select and implement new and evidence-based programming to maximize impact
- Structure the collaboration of engaged prosecutorial offices to improve information- and outcomes-sharing across jurisdictions, with jurisdictional variances accounted for through rigorous analysis and reporting
- Increase the efficiency of each dollar used within each diversion program by selecting for practices with demonstrated outcomes, and by honing the use of these programs to provide the greatest value to each office and client
- Increase available funding for such programming through cost avoidance and substantial increased support from governments, educational institutions, private entities, and other philanthropic investors



## OUR INITIATIVE BEGINS BY

- Establishing regular calls
- Gathering existing data from participating offices
- Interviewing at least one designated staff person regarding diversion program successes, barriers, community partners, and aspirational goals
- Compiling findings from initial conversations and identifying additional prosecutorial partners across the country to add to the network
- Engaging local prosecutor partners through strategic site visits
- Scheduling in-person network summit meeting for late 2020
- Opportunities for expansion and funding will be explored with network partners and spearheaded by the network facilitators.



## INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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Our mission at the **Institute for Justice Research and Development (IJRD)** is to advance science, policy, and practice to improve the well-being of individuals, families, and communities impacted by criminal justice system involvement. IJRD prioritizes the rapid dissemination of research findings to advocates, professionals, and policymakers who can adopt them.

Unlike traditional academic research centers, our approach is anchored in trans-sector innovation. We conduct rigorous research in real world settings in collaboration with government, business, academic, and nonprofit partners. Founded and led by Dr. Carrie Pettus-Davis at Florida State University, IJRD builds on a foundation of nearly two decades of faculty research to apply scientific discovery to technological advances that have yet to be fully pursued in criminal justice-related policy or practice.

We invite you join us and learn more at <https://ijrd.csw.fsu.edu>.



**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).

### PLEASE CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS

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