

California State Senate

SENATOR
DARRELL STEINBERG
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE



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Steinberg Announces Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant Program

Law Enforcement, County and Mental Health Officials Show Support for Proposal to Reduce Crime, Curb Reoffending through Mental Health Programs

(Sacramento) – With the goal of reducing crime in our communities and breaking the pattern of our jails and prisons being de facto mental health facilities, Senate President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg is announcing proposed legislation for a recidivism reduction program to focus on juvenile and adult offenders with mental illness.

Representatives from law enforcement, California counties and mental health agencies are standing with the Senate leader as he proposes to bring back the successful community-based treatment and services of the state's Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant (MIOCRG) program. The re-established program will give counties the resources they need to divert mentally ill low-level offenders to treatment rather than jail, with follow-up services for those released from jail to keep them from reoffending.

“Local law enforcement tells me one of their biggest concerns is the growing number of people with mental illness in our jails. The L.A. County Sheriff says flatly that he runs the state’s largest county mental health facility. Senate Democrats have planted the flag for criminal justice reforms and reducing recidivism as a priority. This builds on that vision,” said Senator Steinberg. “This program can help slow the revolving door of incarceration, lower crime and costs, create better alternatives for counties under realignment, and bring desperately needed treatment for those struggling with mental illness.”

“We appreciate the efforts of Senator Steinberg recognizing the tremendous need for adequate mental health care in our communities,” said Stanislaus County Sheriff-Coroner Adam Christianson. “Our valuable partnership with the State Legislature and the Senator gives us the resources we need to promote a healthy, safe community.”

Steinberg’s proposal would partially restore the Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant program with \$50 million dollars allocated to counties from SB 105’s Recidivism Reduction Fund. Half the grant funding would be dedicated to adults with the other half focused on

juveniles. [A study](#) this year by the Board of State and Community Corrections shows 45 percent of youth in the California juvenile justice system have open mental health cases.

"Chief Probation Officers of California appreciate Senator Steinberg's leadership on mental health issues. CPOC understands that the expansion of effective mental health treatment programs for offenders in the adult and juvenile systems is key to reducing repeat offenses in our communities," said Sacramento Chief Probation Officer Lee Seale. "MIOCR grants would provide the opportunity for probation departments to implement evidence based programs that lead to cost effective solutions within the criminal justice system."

"There is no question that we can and must do better for those suffering mental illness in our communities," said Sacramento County Supervisor Phil Serna, representing the California State Association of Counties. "This legislation will help counties build and expand programs that offer the treatment and support this population needs to lead productive lives, and to avoid criminal activity and repeated incarceration."

Under the prior Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grant program established in 1998, counties developed local projects including mental health courts, enhanced community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment, and vocational and employment training. During the global recession when the state faced a \$42 billion deficit in fiscal year 2008-09, the MIOCRG fell victim to budget cuts and funding was eliminated.

[A 2005 evaluation](#) showed that offenders in these programs served less jail time, were arrested and convicted less often, and had significant improvement in functioning productively when compared to those treated as usual. The '05 evaluation was prior to AB 109 realignment. Counties today are managing a different offender population serving longer sentences. It's expected that MIOCRG programs now will be even more effective.

"Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Grants incentivize partnerships between law enforcement and treatment that make recovery more likely and possible," said L.A. County Mental Health Director Marv Southard. "Under Senator Steinberg's leadership, safer communities and appropriate, cost effective solutions will happen."

The enhancement of crisis mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment and recidivism reduction has been a priority for Senate Democrats this year. It includes: the addition of 2000 crisis mental health residential beds, 600 mental health triage workers and 25 mobile crisis teams ([SB 82](#)); establishing a Recidivism Reduction Fund as an alternative to expanding prison beds to resolve prison overcrowding ([SB 105](#)); and inclusion of mental healthcare and substance abuse treatment under Medi-Cal expansion ([SBx1 1](#) and [ABx1 1](#)).

You can view video of this morning's press conference and find background material on Senator Steinberg's web site - <http://sd06.senate.ca.gov/>

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