The Criminalization of Mental Illness
THE CRIMINALIZATION OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Crisis and Opportunity for the Justice System

SECOND EDITION

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DEDICATION

To Claudia and Virginia Slate for your love and support, to Dean Shoe for helping me find my voice, and to Ron Vogel for assisting me in finding the confidence to use it. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963) said in his book Strength to Love: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige and even his life for the welfare of others. In dangerous valleys and hazardous pathways, he will lift some bruised and beaten brother to a higher and more noble life” (p. 35). I, Risdon Slate, am that brother, and Ron Hudson is that neighbor. Without Ron’s courageous, selfless, and innovative actions this book would likely never have been written. – RNS

To my mother, Sheryll Gray, who taught me the power of empathy and compassion and that all persons are worthy of respect and consideration. To Scott and Kai Vollum, who inspire me every day to make this world a better, more peaceful place. Thank you for your tireless patience, love, and support. To the men and women with mental illness in the state hospital and the criminal justice system, who allowed me into their lives, enabled me to see the problems with the systems, and motivated me to change it. – JKBV

To my family and friends who have ridden with me on the roller coaster of life; To the many caring professionals in the mental health and criminal justice systems that are dedicated to people that are troubled by their own thoughts, and to members of the National Alliance of Mental Illness for decades of hard work and advocacy. – WWJ
CONTENTS

Foreword xv
Preface xvii
Acknowledgments xix

Chapter 1 • Introduction 3
  Defining Serious Mental Illness 3
    Schizophrenia 4
    Bipolar Disorder 5
    Major Depressive Disorder 6
  Prevalence of Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System 6
  Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System: Defining the Issues 7
  Addressing Persons with Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System: Successes and Goals for the Future 10
  References 15

Chapter 2 • The History of Criminalization of Persons with Mental Illnesses 19
  Early World History of Mental Illness 20
    Pre-Civilization 20
    The Ancient Civilizations 20
    The Middle Ages 21
    The Renaissance 22
    The Age of Enlightenment 22
  American History of Mental Illness Prior to Deinstitutionalization 24
    Pre-Civil War 24
    Biological Determinism 25
    Advances in Understanding the Brain 26
    The World Wars 27
    State Hospital Censuses Increased, Support Decreased 28
    Negative Publicity 29
    Discovery of Thorazine 31
    Anti-Psychiatry Movement 32
    The Civil Rights Movement and Right to Treatment Litigation 34
    A Federal Call for Community Mental Health Care 37
    The Beginning of Deinstitutionalization 38
    Restricting Civil Commitment 39
CONTENTS

Chapter 4 • Civil Commitment

What Is Civil Commitment? 111
Similarities and Differences between Civil and Criminal Commitment 113
Inpatient Civil Commitment: History and Reform 115
  History of Inpatient Civil Commitment 115
  Civil Commitment Reform 116
    Post-Reform Involuntary Commitment Criteria 116
    Post-Reform Civil Commitment Procedures 118
    Post-Reform Due Process 119
  Effects of the Civil Commitment Reform 120
The Controversy Surrounding Inpatient Civil Commitment 121
  Inpatient Civil Commitment Is Coercive 121
  Inpatient Civil Commitment Is Anti-Therapeutic 122
  Inpatient Civil Commitment Is Stigmatizing 123
  Inpatient Civil Commitment Is Discriminatory 123
  Inpatient Civil Commitment Is Driven by Money 124
The Current Status of Inpatient Civil Commitment 124
  Dwindling Hospital Beds 125
  Statutory Changes to Civil Commitment Laws 126
    Civil Commitment Has Become Too Permissive 126
    Civil Commitment Has Become Too Restrictive 127
Civil Commitment in Virginia: A State in Crisis 128
  Behind the Times: Virginia's Civil Commitment System 128
    Prior to Virginia Tech 128
  Examination of the Mental Health System Was Scheduled, but It Came Too Late 129
  Springing Into Action: Virginia in the Year Following Virginia Tech 129
    Improve Access to Voluntary Services and Use a Recovery Paradigm of Treatment 130
    Reduce Criminalization 131
    Redesign the Civil Commitment Process 131
  The State of Mental Health in Virginia: Post-Virginia Tech 134
Conclusion 136
References 137

Chapter 5 • Outpatient Commitment

Types of Outpatient Commitment 143
The Current Status of Outpatient Commitment 146
The Controversy Surrounding Outpatient Commitment 147
  The “Facts” about Outpatient Commitment: Critique of the Research 148
Opponents’ Opinions about Outpatient Commitment 150
  Tragedy Drives Policy 151
  Outpatient Commitment Statutes Are Unconstitutional 152
  Outpatient Commitment is Coercive 153
  Outpatient Commitment Is Stigmatizing 163
  Outpatient Commitment Is Discriminatory 163
  Outpatient Commitment Depends on the Availability of Services 164
Conclusion 169
References 171
Chapter 6 • The Law Enforcement Response to Persons with Mental Illnesses in Crises

Police Encounters with and Perceptions of Persons with Mental Illnesses

Police Training and Preparedness for Dealing with Persons with Mental Illnesses in Crises

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department CIT Policy

CIT General Procedures

Communication

Police Options

Conflicting Police Roles

Specialized Police/Mental Health Responses to Persons with Mental Illnesses in Crises

Mobile Crisis Team — Mental Health-Based Specialized Mental Health Response

Police-Based Specialized Mental Health Responses:

- PERT, MET, SMART, CIRT, HOT, & CSOs
- CIT — A Police-Based Specialized Police Response

Comparisons of the Law Enforcement Response Models

Understanding CIT

CIT Training

Types of CIT Encounters

The Procedural Fairness of CIT

Confidentiality

Liability

Agency Costs and Community Benefits

Need for Outcome Data

The Number and Types of CIT Programs

Results of CIT

Conclusion

References

Chapter 7 • Jail Processing of Persons with Mental Illnesses

Overrepresentation of People with Mental Illness in Jails

Estimating the Prevalence of Serious Mental Illness in Jails

Structured Diagnostic Interviews of Jail Inmates

Self-Reports of Jail Inmates

Indirect Measures of Mental Illness in Jails

Characteristics of a Jail Inmate with Mental Illness

Reasons for the Overrepresentation of the Mentally Ill in Jails

More People with Mental Illness Are Arrested and Jailed

People with Mental Illness Stay in Jail Longer

People with Mental Illness Have Higher Rates of Recidivism

Jail Inmates’ Right to Treatment

U.S. Supreme Court Cases

Estelle v. Gamble (1976)


The Right to Refuse Treatment

Discharge Planning

Professional Associations’ Guidelines
Chapter 8 • Traditional Court Processing of Defendants with Mental Illness, Part I: Competency to Stand Trial

Legal Competence in Criminal Cases

Competency to Stand Trial (CST)

The Standard for CST

Efforts to Refine the CST Construct

Raising the Issue of CST

Who Performs the CST Evaluation and Where Does It Take Place?

The CST Evaluation

Defendant Interview(s)

Collection of Collateral Information

Reliability of CST Evaluations

Research on CST

Base Rates of CST

Correlates/Predictors of CST

Ultimate Issue Decisions about CST

Competency Restoration
Chapter 9 • Traditional Court Processing of Defendants with Mental Illness, Part II: The Insanity Defense

Controversies Surrounding the Insanity Defense

The Standards of Insanity
- The M’Naghten Rule
- The Product Test
- The Irresistible Impulse Test
- The American Law Institute (ALI) Model Penal Code Test
- The Hinckley Case and Insanity Reform

Planning an Insanity Defense
- The MSO Evaluation
  - Establishing Mental Illness, Its Effects, and the Events of the Crime
  - Establishing Evidence Relevant to the Specific Crime and NGRI Standard
  - Reliability of MSO Evaluations

Procedural Aspects of the Insanity Defense Trial
- Jury Instructions
- Burden of Proof
- Ultimate Issue Decisions

Research on the Insanity Defense
- Base Rates of NGRI
- Correlates/Predictors of NGRI
  - Clinical Variables
  - Criminological Variables
  - Demographic Variables

What Happens to Defendants Who Are Found Criminally Non-Responsible?
- Research on Post-NGRI Acquittal
- Hospitalization Following NGRI Acquittal
- Research on Hospitalization following NGRI Acquittal

Graduated Release Programs
- Conditional Release
- Research on Conditional Release

“Guilty but Mentally Ill” Verdict
- Conclusion
- References
Chapter 10 • Mental Health Courts

Why Mental Health Courts? 377
The Emergence of the Nation’s First Mental Health Court 379
What Are Mental Health Courts? 384
Mental Health Court Dynamics: A Different Approach with Altered Roles 386
Case Examples in Mental Health Courts 391
Mental Health Court Models 395
Results from Mental Health Court Programs 398
Areas of Concern
Need for Adequate Services in the Community 402
Inadequate Funding and Sparse Data 404
Patients’ Rights and Competency 405
Stigmatization and Criminalization 407
Conclusion 408
References 409

Chapter 11 • Mental Illness in the Prison Population: Secure and Treat?

Prisoners with Serious Mental Illness 420
Challenges Posed by Prisoners with Serious Mental Illness 421
Disciplinary Infractions 422
Victimization 423
Suicide 424
Self-Injurious Behavior 425
Management of Prisoners with Serious Mental Illness 426
Prison Design and Operational Procedures 426
Segregation/Supermax Confinement 427
Current State of Supermax Confinement 428
Correctional Officers
Training 431
Treating Prisoners with Mental Illness 434
Prisoners’ Right to Mental Health Treatment 434
Current Status of Mental Health Services in Prisons 435
Challenges of Treating Prisoners with Mental Illness 437
Costs of Incarcerating Prisoners with Mental Illness 438
Conclusion 440
References 441

Chapter 12 • Diversion and Reentry: Strategies for Discharging Offenders Living with Mental Illness 447

Discharge Planning, Diversion and Reentry 451
Discharge Planning 453
Diversion 459
Examples of Diversion Programs 460
Reentry 464
Dangerous Mentally Ill Offender Program (DMIO) 466
Assertive Community Treatment (ACT): An Approach to Diversion, Discharge, and Reentry 467
Probation and Parole
Probation
Parole
Reintegration: Reentry Courts and Programs
Conclusion
References

Chapter 13 • Conclusion: Striving for Informed Policies

Crisis Drives Policy
Virginia Tech University
Sandy Hook Elementary School
Who Wants to Take Responsibility for Ending the Needless Recycling of Persons with Mental Illnesses In and Out of the Criminal Justice System? Multi-System Collaboration is the Answer
Influencing Policy
Influencing Policy through Testimony and Legislation
Influencing Policy through Accountability
Influencing Policy through Knowledge
Conclusion
References

Case Index
Name Index
Subject Index
The enormously increased presence of persons with serious mental illness in the criminal justice system is one of the great problems of our time. Estimates place the number at 360,000 or more incarcerated in the U.S. at any given time. As a result, mental health professionals and society generally have become much more concerned about the number of persons with serious mental illness in jails and prisons, as well as the treatment provided to these persons, both while incarcerated and after release. These issues are relatively recent. Reports of large numbers of persons with mental illness in U.S. jails and prisons began appearing in the 1970s, a phenomenon that had not been reported since the nineteenth century.

Criminalization of persons with serious mental illness is a subject of enormous complexity in terms of understanding how it came about, the problems that these mentally ill persons face in our jails and prisons and how to confront these problems, how to reverse criminalization and how to treat these persons in the community, either after release or, if possible, before they have been criminalized. Drs. Slate, Buffington-Vollum, and Johnson have chosen to present a comprehensive summary of these issues so that our understanding is deepened and our knowledge of what needs to be done is clarified.

One of the major concerns in present-day psychiatry is that placement in the criminal justice system poses a number of important problems and obstacles for the treatment and rehabilitation of persons with serious mental illness. Even when quality psychiatric care is provided in jails and prisons, the inmate/patient still has been doubly stigmatized as both a mentally ill person and a criminal. Furthermore, jails and prisons have been established to mete out punishment and to protect society; their primary mission and goals are not to provide treatment. The correctional facility’s overriding need to maintain order and security, as well as its mandate to implement society’s priorities of punishment and social control, greatly restrict the facility’s ability to establish a therapeutic milieu and provide all the necessary interventions to treat mental illness successfully.

After giving an exceptionally clear picture of how we have reached the sorry state of the present day criminalization of persons with serious mental illness, the authors of this book present a detailed description of what needs to be done by law enforcement, by custody staff in jails and prisons, by the courts, by probation and parole, by mental health professionals, by families, and by society generally. Important subjects in the efforts to decrease criminalization, such as the police as first responders and police Crisis Intervention Teams, Mental Health Courts, Assertive Community Treatment, Assisted Outpatient...
Treatment, the role of substance abuse and how to deal with it, and reentry strategies for persons with serious mental illness are described with clarity and in detail.

This book is a very important contribution to the literature and to the understanding of a problem which should never have been allowed to happen in a Country like ours. The authors are to be highly commended for the immense amount of work that went into writing it.
Various circumstances brought the authors of this book together. Wesley Johnson and Risdon Slate met in a South Carolina prison in 1985. Wes was a professor bringing students for a tour, and Ris was the prison administrator who served as tour guide. It would be some nine years later in a strip cell in the Richland County South Carolina Jail that the seeds for this book would be planted. Scott Vollum would hear the details of this story in a presentation made by Ris in San Antonio, Texas, and he would tell his wife, Jacqueline Buffington-Vollum, a forensic clinical psychologist with an interest in the criminal justice system's response to offenders with mental illness. Jacki knew Wes from Sam Houston State University and would years later ask Ris to come speak to students at James Madison University. Perhaps there is something to be said for serendipity, but here we are engaged together in this project.

For a myriad of reasons the criminal justice system has become the de facto mental health system. This book explores how and why this is the case. Persons with mental illnesses are disproportionately coming into contact with the criminal justice system, a system that has been largely ill-equipped to respond to such individuals. Many in both the mental health and criminal justice systems do not see it as their job or responsibility to intervene. Increasingly, criminal justice practitioners, faced with inadequate resources to respond on their own, are taking the lead in seeking innovative, collaborative alternatives for linking justice-involved persons with mental illnesses to treatment. These initiatives may engage law enforcement, the courts, corrections, and/or probation/parole authorities in collaborative partnerships with persons with mental illnesses, their family members, and mental health treatment providers. Various examples are presented in this book.

Topics covered in the book run the gamut from specialized law enforcement responses, to mental health courts, to jails and prisons, to discharge planning, diversion, reentry, and outpatient commitment. This book contrasts innovative strategies with more traditional approaches, such as civil commitment and recognizing competency to stand trial and insanity at the time of the offense, which are fraught with issues and tend to be shortsighted. The precarious balance between preserving civil liberties and maintaining public safety are discussed, and the concept of therapeutic jurisprudence is promoted. Another focus of the book is the need for adequate mental health treatment services and the compilation of outcome data to establish evidence-based practices. Real-life illustrative vignettes from professionals engaged in dispensing justice to persons with mental illnesses are included throughout the book.

With the addition of Jacki Buffington-Vollum to the 2nd edition of the book, there is increased coverage of issues from the standpoint of a critical forensic mental health professional. Based on her work in state hospitals, in jails and training of jail officers, and in private forensic evaluation practice, she was able to provide more detailed information on civil commitment, mental health professionals' forensic evaluations for the courts, and mental health services in jails than was provided in the 1st edition. This includes tra-
ditional approaches, the issues inherent to tradition, and innovative strategies. Moreover, she contributes insights from a mental health perspective throughout the book.

Too often crises have impacted the interface between the mental health and criminal justice systems, as evidenced at Virginia Tech and more recently with the tragedy that transpired at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. However, waiting for sensationalized cases to influence policy can lead to impulsively enacted and misguided interventions.

We believe that this book can serve a multitude of purposes. First, it can be used by training academies, criminal justice practitioners, and mental health providers in identifying and assessing what feasible alternatives are in existence and how to develop comprehensive services. This book also provides guidance for advocates, persons with mental illnesses, and their family members to use in their advocacy. In particular, we would like to believe that this book will be used by policymakers to make wiser, more proactive policy that will benefit not only the community but individuals struggling with mental illness. Finally, we hope it informs and inspires college students to one day act as positive change agents in this critical interface between the mental health and criminal justice systems.

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We offer a special thank you to Dick Lamb for writing the foreword to this edition of the book. Hank Steadman wrote the foreword to the first edition. Between these two gentlemen, we cannot think of any more admirable contributors to the study of the criminalization of mental illness. These men have devoted their professional lives to researching and seeking reasoned solutions to the intractable problems surrounding the interface of the mental health and criminal justice systems. We applaud them.

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