

# Trauma and Justice: Why Clinical Pathways to Behavioral and Medical Healing Matter

JERSEY CITY, NJ, UNITED STATES, January 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- New Jersey is experiencing a significant increase in the number of individuals involved in the criminal justice system who have mental health challenges, reflecting broader national trends and long-term changes in mental health service delivery. As courts and correctional systems encounter higher levels of untreated trauma, serious mental illness, addiction, and neurological injury, the need for coordinated medical-legal responses has become increasingly urgent.



Jim McGreevey engaging directly with community members and veterans, advancing trauma informed clinical pathways that bridge justice, healthcare, and recovery.

National data illustrate this shift.

Around the year 2000, approximately 16 percent of individuals in state prisons were identified as having a mental illness. By the mid-2020s, more than one-third of individuals in state and federal prisons, and nearly half of those cycling through county jails, have a documented history of mental health conditions. These trends place growing pressure on courts, jails, and correctional facilities to manage complex clinical needs within systems primarily designed for custody and adjudication.

As a result, jails and prisons have increasingly become default holding environments for individuals experiencing psychiatric distress. Judges routinely encounter defendants whose conduct is shaped by untreated trauma, psychosis, traumatic brain injury, or substance use disorders. While courts may order evaluations or treatment, limited access to coordinated clinical pathways often results in extended periods of incarceration while individuals await assessment or placement.

Mental health and neuroscience research consistently demonstrates that trauma and serious

mental illness are medical conditions affecting brain function, perception, and impulse control.

Evidence-based interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy combined with accurate psychiatric diagnosis and medication management, can reduce symptoms, improve functioning, and interrupt trauma-driven behavior when appropriately implemented and accessible.

In response to these challenges, the [New Jersey Reentry Corporation](#) (NJRC) will convene its [2026 Annual Reentry Conference: Trauma on Thursday, April 2, 2026](#), at Saint Peter's University. The conference is designed to bring together physicians, psychiatrists, neuroscientists, judges, policymakers, and criminal justice leaders to examine the intersection of trauma, mental health, and justice-involved populations.

Confirmed speakers include Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, a Harvard-trained neuroanatomist recognized for her work on brain injury and recovery, and Dr. Petros Levounis, former President of the American Psychiatric Association, who will address trauma, addiction, and psychiatric treatment within justice-involved settings. The conference will focus on translating clinical research into practical, policy-relevant frameworks for courts and reentry systems.

The goal of the conference is to support informed decision-making across systems by highlighting evidence-based treatment approaches, identifying gaps in clinical access, and strengthening coordination between the medical and justice sectors. Topics will include trauma-informed care, diversion and reentry strategies, and the role of structured clinical pathways in promoting public safety and reducing recidivism.

As the number of court-involved individuals with mental health needs continues to rise, NJRC emphasizes the importance of responses that are medically grounded, data-driven, and operationally viable for the justice system. Expanding access to trusted clinical alternatives, integrating trauma-informed interventions into court processes, and strengthening coordination between healthcare and justice institutions remain central to these efforts.

#### About the New Jersey Reentry Corporation

The New Jersey Reentry Corporation is a statewide nonprofit organization charged with providing services to justice-involved individuals, including linkage to healthcare, behavioral health treatment, housing, employment, education, and legal support. NJRC works in coordination with state and local partners to promote public safety, reduce recidivism, and support successful community reintegration.

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