



# Maine Sheriffs' Association

*"One Team, One Mission"*

**Sheriff Kevin Joyce, President**

Sheriff Troy Morton, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President, Sheriff William King, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President – Sheriff Barry Curtis, Secretary –  
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October 4, 2019

To my esteemed colleagues of the Mental Health Working Group,

The Maine Sheriffs share this group's vision to reverse the trend of re-institutionalizing those in crisis pertaining to mental illness. The data presented today is a snapshot of our collective efforts across all sixteen counties and in many cases, working collaboratively with others in this room toward that end. We believe we are setting the standard for identifying and utilizing existing resources and while this report reflects work unfolding in all counties, it is but an illustration of the tireless efforts to provide and improve these services.

A small sample of services and initiatives provided by Maine's county sheriffs are listed below. These are listed randomly, and not in order of priority or importance.

**Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT)** – The sheriffs recognize the impact of successful MAT programs and have led the state in establishing protocols that are consistent between facilities. When the DOC put out a call to action, fourteen counties came to the table to offer their expertise in developing protocol language that would address concerns pertaining to efficacy during transitions. With a significant percentage of our inmates suffering from dual diagnoses of mental health issues coupled with substance abuse issues, successful MAT programs can and must be a priority for the state.

**Collaborations:** When asked about collaborative efforts to provide mental health services to inmates, we detected a common theme among all counties. Sheriffs are seeking professionals to come into the jails to provide the services needed by those inmates suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues. NAMI, AA, Aroostook Mental Health, Catholic Charities, Mercy, Crisis & Counseling, MEDPro, and even on-staff social workers. This list is a but a fraction of the resources identified by sheriffs across the state. We recognize the intense need for these services and we could not provide the critical services needed without the collaborations we nurture in all sixteen counties. In many cases, sheriffs spoke of the ongoing work with these professionals to prevent recidivism and ensure success for those inmates who are released back into their communities. This focus can and must be the future of county corrections.

Additionally, the Maine Sheriffs spearheaded a compelling meeting with the judicial branch of Maine's government in 2018, leading a round table discussion that included the Chief Justice and several judges, prosecutors, DOC, NAMI, municipal law enforcement, sheriffs, and other invested parties. The message was clear: we are all striving to reduce our jail population, address time waiting for trial, and develop communication tools to improve our systems. Our work together is ongoing and as recently as last month, we met to discuss proposed legislation that examines alternatives to incarceration in our female populations.

**Programming:** There may be some overlap in programming and collaborations, but for the purpose of this report, I wish to offer a glimpse into the jail programs being offered across the state that may impact incarcerated individuals with mental health illness. Jails reported offering programs such as gardening, education, religious services, detox programs, individual and group counseling, and re-entry programs that follow the inmate after their release, are all commonplace across the state.

**Legislative investment:** When asked what the sheriffs are doing to address mental health issues in our jails, it's incumbent upon us to discuss our legislative investment. In addition to the obvious work on this task force, sheriffs have made it a priority to share the work of committees and task forces with the belief that our expertise can help guide decision-makers as they work to resolve the mental health and substance abuse issues in Maine. With only sixteen sheriffs in the state, it's often challenging to ensure that the voice of county corrections is available to lawmakers. We've built this objective into our strategic vision as we believe county corrections offers a unique opportunity to affect positive outcomes for those citizens who find themselves in our care. All sixteen counties are participating in this ongoing work.

This report offers a sample of the tireless work that the Maine Sheriffs undertake every day to serve our most vulnerable citizens; those that find themselves in our jails. We do have a sixteen-page report that more closely identifies what is happening in each, individual county. I can provide this report upon request.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the robust success stories of the Maine Sheriffs. If you have any questions, I will be please to answer them.

Best regards,

Sheriff Kevin Joyce  
President, Maine Sheriffs' Association