

Excerpts about California from
“MANAGEMENT OF THE SEVERELY MENTALLY ILL
AND ITS EFFECTS ON HOMELAND SECURITY”

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In 2011, the author conducted a national survey of 2,406 senior law enforcement officers (LEOs). Following is a sampling of the responses from the 106 California LEO respondents who participated in the survey. 90.6% of the California respondents (96) had more than 20 years experience. The study concludes that police and sheriffs are unnecessarily burdened *“dealing with the unintended consequences of a policy change that in effect removed the daily care of our nation’s severely mentally ill population from the medical community and placed it with the criminal justice system.”* The author concludes returning the care and treatment of people with mental illness to the mental health system would free up law-enforcement resources to protect the public from other threats.

Among Chief Biasotti’s recommendations:

- *States should enact new assisted outpatient treatment laws (Laura’s Law in CA –ed.) incorporating within those laws revised (civil commitment) standards. Federal funding should be tied to each state’s cooperation in effectively implementing and monitoring the AOT laws within their state. Currently few states actually use the AOT laws that are already in place.*
- *For the severely mentally ill population who have a past record of violence when not in treatment, regular supervision ensuring compliance with treatment needs to be conducted and overseen by each state’s department of mental health.*

California Sample

From your observations has there been an increase in the mentally ill population over the length of your career?
Yes: 74.5%.

From your observations, has there been an increase in the number of mentally ill detainees/prisoners requiring more direct supervision over the length of your career? Yes: 75.5%

How has the amount of time that your department spent on calls for service involving individuals with mental illness changed over the length of your career? Increased: 68%; Substantially increased: 11.4%

If there is an increase in your jurisdiction regarding calls for service involving individuals with mental illness what do you attribute the increase in calls to? (select all that apply)

- Public’s inability to effectively refer mentally ill persons into mental health treatment programs: 64.2%
- More persons released from inpatient mental health facilities into the community: 66.3%

What obstacles affect the ability of law enforcement to make referrals for persons with mental illness - check all that apply

“Unable to refer obviously psychotic persons unless they meet the ‘dangerous to self or others’ criteria”:
70.5%

What is the average amount of time your officers spend with a mentally ill person, from the onset of the call for service, inclusive of transportation and time in the hospital or mental health facility, waiting for a mental health patient to undergo the initial psychiatric evaluation? Under 1 hour: 16.2%; 1-2 hours: 43.8%; 2-3 hours: 23.8%; 3-4 hours: 10.5%; More than 4 hours: 5.7%

In your estimation, what percentage of your homeless population appears to be mentally ill?

41-60%: 27.4%;
61-80%: 30.2%