



Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Jerry L. Clayton

Media Release

Washtenaw County Sheriff, Jerry Clayton Selected as Part of National Association of Counties and National Sheriffs' Association Joint Task Force to Study Inmate Health Care and Recidivism

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) today announced the formation of a joint task force to reduce jail inmate recidivism through continuity of health care services.

The task force, made up of NACo and NSA members representing county leaders, law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, behavioral health and veterans' services, will explore the impacts of the national mental and behavioral health crisis and the Medicaid Inmate Exclusion Policy (MIEP), which strips federal health and veterans' benefits from individuals upon admission to jail – not upon conviction – leading to increased recidivism.

“We are excited about our membership on this task force,” said Sheriff Jerry Clayton. “We believe that this national initiative, led by two of the most impactful associations in the country aligns with our local efforts to support Washtenaw County residents suffering from behavioral health challenges (mental health, substance use disorders). Our goal is to help ensure that individuals receive the services and treatment they need to live productive lives. This focus includes all persons that enter our criminal justice system and especially our veterans. Many of whom suffer as a result of their sacrifice to help keep all of us safe and secure. We are hopeful that our national involvement helps us as we attempt to design local solutions.”

“Stripping federal health benefits from those jailed but not convicted, and are presumed innocent, is a violation of their constitutional rights,” said NACo Executive Director Matthew Chase. “By providing continuity of health care to those most in need, counties can help break the cycle of recidivism exacerbated by untreated physical and mental illnesses and substance use disorders.”

“This task force will work tirelessly to remove the roadblocks people face in getting the care they need,” said NSA Executive Director and CEO Jonathan Thompson. “These experienced people will fix this problem and help the thousands of mentally ill citizens trapped in Americas' jail without the proper care.”

Members of the new task force will explore the impacts of existing federal policies on recidivism and health outcomes of local jail inmates. A focus will be placed on those individuals suffering from mental health, substance use disorders and/or other chronic health illnesses.

An issue plaguing sheriffs and jails throughout the United States is that of the increasing number of inmates with substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. Due to the lack of community resources, jails have become the de-facto mental health hospitals and treatment facilities and have assumed the liability as well. Across the nation, there is growing reliance on local jails to serve as “one-stop” treatment centers for these afflictions. Under current law, those who can afford bail keep their health care while those unable to pay – who are most susceptible to illness – face a gap in coverage. Research shows gaps in coverage lead to higher rates of recidivism resulting in over-incarceration.



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The double standard created by MEIP is putting undue strain on local judicial, law enforcement, public safety and human services systems leading to increased health care costs and poorer health outcomes. Having access to federal health benefits for non-convicted individuals would allow for improved coordination of care, while decreasing short-term costs to local taxpayers and long-term costs to the federal government.

The suspension of federal benefits for pre-trial detainees not only presents constitutional challenges but also unjustly increases the fiscal impact on sheriffs and counties to pay for needed medical and mental health care, that but for their incarceration, the federal government would cover. These monies, if reinstated, would increase sheriffs' ability to provide additional programming and resources to inmates and allow for a smoother transition into communities for the inmate without a lapse in benefits and medical care.

Read more about the need to reinstate federal health care benefits for non-convicted justice-involved individuals [here](#).

Members of the Task Force:

Co-Chair: Hon. Nancy Sharpe Commissioner, Arapahoe County, Colo.	Co-Chair: Hon. Greg Champagne Sheriff, St. Charles Parish, La.
Delrice Adams Executive Director, Cook County, Ill. Justice Advisory Council	Hon. Michael Adkinson Sheriff, Walton County, Fla.
Hon. Kathryn Barger Supervisor, Los Angeles County, Calif.	Hon. Roy Charles Brooks Commissioner, Tarrant County, Texas
Hon. Brett Clark Sheriff, Hendricks County, Ind.	Hon. Jerry Clayton Sheriff, Washtenaw County, Mich.
Hon. Thomas Dart Sheriff, Cook County, Ill.	Hon. Jerry Demings Mayor, Orange County, Fla.
Hon. John Flynn District Attorney, Erie County, N.Y., Member of the Board of Directors, National District Attorneys Association	Hon. Daron Hall Sheriff, Davidson County, Tenn.
Hon. Michael Heldman Sheriff, Hancock County, Ohio	Hon. David Hudson Judge, Sebastian County, Ark.
Hon. Clay Jenkins Judge, Dallas County, Texas	Hon. Peter J. Koutoujian Sheriff, Middlesex County, Mass.
Hon. Steven Leifman Associate Administrative Judge, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, Miami-Dade County, Fla.	Nick Macchione Director, Health and Human Services Agency, San Diego County, Calif.
Hon. John McMahon Sheriff, San Bernardino County, Calif.	Hon. Gabriel Morgan Sr. Sheriff, Newport News, Va.



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Hon. Christopher Moss County Executive, Chemung County, N.Y.	Hon. Eric Severson Sheriff, Waukesha County, Wisc.
Hon. Helen Stone Commissioner, Chatham County, Ga.	Hon. Tim Svenson Sheriff, Yamhill County, Ore.
Hon. Janet Thompson Commissioner, Boone County, Mo.	Hon. Errol Toulon, Jr. Sheriff, Suffolk County, N.Y.
Hon. Jenny Wilson Mayor, Salt Lake County, Utah	Edward Zachary Director, Veterans Service Office, Medina County, Ohio

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