



The Mental Health and Safe Communities Act

Sponsored by Senator John Cornyn

Enhances Information Sharing to Strengthen Existing Background Check System without Expanding It

- Reauthorizes and strengthens the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) to clarify the scope of mental health records required to be uploaded and provides incentives to ensure states share these records.
- Directs existing federal funding to programs that improve collaboration between federal, state, and local justice systems to reduce the risk of mental health crises that involve violence.
- Protects Due Process by requiring notice, a judicial hearing, and a determination that a person is a danger to themselves or others before prohibiting them from purchasing or possessing firearms.

Increases the Use of Treatment-Based Responses for Mentally-Ill Offenders during Incarceration and Post-Release Custody

- Allows state and local government to use existing funding to create pre-trial screening and assessment programs to identify mentally ill offenders, provide need-based treatment, and develop post-release supervision plans.
- Requires the Attorney General to direct federal judges to operate mental health court pilot programs, allowing incarcerated mentally-ill offenders to be diverted from prison to residential treatment facilities or other forms of treatment-based supervised release.
- Requires state and local governments to use drug court and mental health court funding to develop specialized programs for offenders who have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders.
- Enables existing federal funding to be used to provide treatment, mentoring, and other transitional services to mentally-ill offenders leaving custody.

Facilitates Best Practices on Crisis Response and Prevention for Law Enforcement, Judicial Officials, and Communities

- Mandates specialized training and requires the use of new technology to ensure federal law enforcement, judicial officials, and uniformed services personnel are properly equipped to respond to individuals with mental illness and mental health crises.
- Allows state and local governments, including school officials, to use existing federal grant funding to expand the use of Crisis Intervention Teams, who are trained to respond to mental health crises and prevent acts of violence.
- Empowers families to intervene and help prevent mental health crises by providing additional resources for judicially-administered alternative treatment programs.

Endorsements

National Rifle Association
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Police Organizations
National Sheriffs' Association
American Correctional Association

American Jail Association
Council of State Governments
Treatment Advocacy Center
National Association of Social Workers