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March 22, 2018

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## **Prosecutors Gather for Symposium on Confronting Mental Health Issues Within the Criminal Justice System**

*Elected Prosecutors from Around the Nation Visit Miami-Dade to Discuss Best Practices for Responding to, and Avoiding Criminalizing, Individuals Struggling with Mental Health Issues*

**MIAMI, FLORIDA** – Some of the country’s foremost criminal justice experts and elected prosecutors are gathering in Miami this week to discuss ideas, obstacles, and reforms concerning mental health issues and the criminal justice system.

Over the two-day convening, elected district and state attorneys and criminal justice experts will be touring treatment facilities to learn about Miami’s innovative Criminal Mental Health Project (CMHP) and also discuss innovative programs nation-wide.

“The public health crisis of mental illness has become a criminal justice crisis,” said **Miriam Krinsky**, Executive Director of [Fair and Just Prosecution](#) (FJP), a national network of elected prosecutors working to promote a smarter, more compassionate justice system and the organizers of the gathering. “Over half the adults in this country with a mental illness - and over 90 percent of adults with a substance use disorder - did not receive treatment in the last year, and too many end up in the criminal justice system by default. It is heartening to see elected prosecutors, law enforcement, and justice system leaders coming to terms with this problem and working collaboratively to promote smarter solutions that do right by the individual, while also promoting public health and safety.”

The event is the result of a partnership between FJP and **NYU Law’s Center on the Administration of Criminal Law** – these two groups will be cohosting a national convening of academics, policy makers and criminal justice practitioners in New York in mid-April where elected prosecutors will join mental health and law enforcement leaders to craft concrete recommendations for needed system change.

Attendees are in Florida to learn more about innovations in Miami that have been led by Miami-Dade County Eleventh Circuit Judge Steven Leifman, a long-time champion of creating more effective responses to mental illness within the criminal justice system.

“In Miami-Dade we have created a national model that seeks to divert individuals with serious mental health issues from the criminal justice system to community-based treatment and support services. These programs have proven to work in treating some of the root causes of crime and in decreasing incarceration,” said **Judge Steven Leifman**. “Our work has resulted in substantial decreases in incarceration in the county – including the closure of an entire jail at a cost-savings to taxpayers of \$12 million per year.”

The national gathering will include site visits to Miami’s Mental Health Courts as well as its new Forensic Diversion Facility. Criminal justice experts – including prosecutors, researchers, and local officials, among others – will also discuss national approaches to crisis stabilization, mental health screening and assessment, rehabilitation programs, and other strategies aimed at addressing mental health issues. The convening will offer prosecutors concrete, locally applicable reforms they can adopt to improve mental health treatment in their home districts.

[Fair and Just Prosecution](#) has taken a leadership role in the movement to end overincarceration by helping newly elected District and State Attorneys committed to new thinking and innovation translate their goals into concrete policies and reforms. This gathering will assist those prosecutors in taking critical steps to decriminalize mental illness.

*Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms.*

*For additional questions about the Miami conference, please contact Miriam Krinsky at [krinskym@krinsky.la](mailto:krinskym@krinsky.la) or 818-416-5218. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit [www.fairandjustprosecution.org](http://www.fairandjustprosecution.org) or follow us on Facebook [@FairAndJustProsecution](https://www.facebook.com/FairAndJustProsecution).*