National Leaders in Law Enforcement, in Partnership with The Equitas Project, Agree on Mental Health and Justice System Solutions

The nation's first response to mental health crises is often dangerous for all involved, say experts.

DENVER (PRWEB) April 10, 2019 -- The way we currently address mental health amounts to a public health crisis, say law enforcement department and policy leaders. The lack of access to mental health care for many communities places an overwhelming burden of mental health crisis management on public safety agencies. Law enforcement experts have just released a priority list for community-based reforms, produced in collaboration with The Equitas Project, a non-profit organization working nationally at the intersection of mental health and criminal justice.

“Chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors all over the country agree that there is more communities can do to produce better outcomes for more people. Arrest and incarceration should not be the nation’s primary tools for managing mental health. Health care, housing, and education all have bigger roles to play,” explained Vincent Atchity, The Equitas Project’s Executive Director.

The document, which lists over 50 areas for improvement, emphasizes the urgency of these issues and identifies ways of addressing them. Authors of the document include national experts and top-ranking officials representing agencies from major cities and counties in every region of the country. Urgent recommendations for smarter and more cost-effective approaches to supporting the health and wellbeing of the population include specific strategies for:

- Enhancing access to affordable, high quality mental and physical health services
- Reducing homelessness
- Mobilizing local leadership
- Adopting crisis response policies that emphasize de-escalation, violence prevention, and “co-response” models which deploy both law enforcement and clinician responders together
- Promoting wellness within each public safety agency
- Promoting health-based alternatives to arrest, incarceration, and criminal charges for individuals in need of mental health support and care.

Please visit The Equitas Project’s website for more information on the Course Corrections: National Law Enforcement Summit and document (including all signatories), plus tools for sharing this list with leaders and constituents in your community.

The Equitas Project is joined by the following groups in releasing this announcement:

American Conservative Union Foundation
Broomfield Police Department (CO)
Center for Court Innovation
CIT International
Cook County Sheriff’s Office
Denver District Attorney’s Office
Fair and Just Prosecution
Harris County Sheriff's Office (Houston, TX)
Houston Police Department
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
LEAD National Support Bureau
Lima Police Department (OH)
The Longmont Department of Public Safety, Colorado
Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office
Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office
Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department
National Association of Counties
New York City Police Department

For more information, or to arrange an interview with The Equitas Project or the above-named organizations regarding this update, please contact Gwendolyn West at either 303-789-2664 x210 or gwest@equitasproject.org.

About The Equitas Project

The Equitas Project, an initiative of the David and Laura Merage Foundation, envisions an America rededicated to liberty and justice for all, where there is a commonly held expectation that jails and prisons should not continue to serve as the nation’s warehouses for people with unmet mental health needs. Equitas is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization which promotes mental health awareness, and which champions laws, policies, and practices that prioritize improved population health outcomes, sensible use of resources, and the decriminalization of mental illness. We are committed to disentangling mental health and criminal justice.

To learn more about our work and mission, please visit www.equitasproject.org, and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @EquitasProject. Email us at info@equitasproject.org.
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