



# California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) Justice-Involved Initiative

## The Issue

Justice-Involved individuals -- people who are now, or have spent time, in jails, youth correctional facilities, or prisons -- are at higher risk for poor health outcomes, injury, and death than the general public. They face disproportionate risk of trauma, violence, overdose, and suicide.



Incarcerated individuals in California jails **with an active mental health case rose by 63 percent over the last decade.**



**Sixty-six percent of Californians in jails or prisons have moderate or high need for substance use disorder treatment.**



**Overdose is the leading cause of death** for people recently released from incarceration, and people in California jails or prisons have a drug overdose death rate more than three times that of incarcerated people nationwide.



In California, **nearly 29 percent of incarcerated men are Black, while Black men make up only 5.6 percent of the state's total population.**

Through its [Justice-Involved initiative](#), California is taking significant steps to improve poor health outcomes in this population as they prepare to re-enter their community. The initiative allows people to enroll in Medi-Cal and receive a targeted set of services in the 90 days before release. This will help to ensure continuity of health care coverage after incarceration, enabling access to programs and services like [Enhanced Care Management \(ECM\) and Community Supports](#), warm linkages to medical and behavioral health services, and prescription medications in hand upon release.

## Faces of CalAIM: Meet Cameron\*

Cameron is nearing the end of his time in prison. He was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and has been on medication while in prison to manage his condition. He will need to continue to see a psychiatrist and take his medications after he is released but does not know how he can get this care. Since Cameron has a diagnosed mental health condition, he qualifies for the Medi-Cal Justice-Involved initiative and begins receiving targeted Medi-Cal services 90 days before his release date. He is assigned a care manager who conducts a needs assessment and develops a transitional care plan for him. Cameron's transitional care plan includes a "warm handoff" to a psychiatrist who will continue his care in the community, and a supply of his bipolar medication in-hand. Cameron also qualifies for post-release enrollment in ECM and Community Supports, including housing and food supports, to help him build stability as he re-enters his community. His ECM care manager has been able to meet him via telehealth before his release in order to build a trusted relationship. *(\*A hypothetical individual based on a composite of cases.)*

## Key CalAIM Initiatives to Improve the Health of Justice-Involved Individuals

The California Justice-Involved initiative ensures continuity of coverage through Medi-Cal pre-release enrollment and provides key services to support a successful re-entry. Under the initiative, county jails, county youth correctional facilities, and state prisons:

- Ensure all eligible individuals are enrolled in Medi-Cal prior to release.
- Provide targeted Medi-Cal health care services to youth and eligible adults in the 90 days prior to release to prepare them to return to the community and reduce gaps in care. Eligible adults include those who have a mental health diagnosis or suspected diagnosis, a substance use disorder or suspected diagnosis, a chronic clinical condition, a traumatic brain injury, intellectual or development disability, or are pregnant or postpartum. All incarcerated youth in a youth correctional facility are eligible with no clinical criteria required.
- Provide “warm handoffs” to health care providers to ensure that individuals who require behavioral and other health care services, medications, and other medical supplies (e.g., a wheelchair) have what they need upon re-entry.
- Work with community-based care managers to offer intensive, community-based care coordination for individuals at re-entry, including through Enhanced Care Management.
- Work with community-based care managers to make Community Supports (e.g., housing supports or food supports) available upon re-entry if offered by their managed care plan.

To implement these aims, Medi-Cal [provides funding to build capacity for workforce, technology changes, and data sharing that support justice-involved initiatives.](#)

## CalAIM’s Positive Impact on Justice-Involved Individuals

The great majority of individuals leaving jail and prison are people of color, whose incarceration can often be traced back to inequitable treatment and stigmatization, and who have poorer health outcomes than other populations. The state’s Justice-Involved initiative addresses these disparities by reducing gaps in care, improving health outcomes, and preventing unnecessary admissions to inpatient hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, and emergency departments.

California is the first state to obtain federal authority (and federal matching funds) to provide Medi-Cal services to incarcerated individuals prior to their release. This initiative is part of California’s broader transformation of Medi-Cal and its commitment to a healthier, more equitable health system for all.

