



# Illinois Psychiatric Society

## NEWS RELEASE

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## **Second Chance Act Improves Mental Health Services for Prisoners**

**Chicago, Illinois** - The Illinois Psychiatric Society (IPS), a state association of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), applauds recent Congressional efforts led by Rep. Danny K. Davis, D-Ill., to improve treatment for the large number of people with mental illnesses and substance use disorders who are currently incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons.

The U.S. Senate passed the Second Chance Act (H.R. 1593) this week by unanimous consent. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the legislation last fall. The legislation would provide transitional assistance to ex-offenders in an effort to reduce a return to alcohol abuse. Additionally, the legislation would extend and provide a full continuum of care for treatment of substance use disorders and improve mental health screening and treatment.

“It is a national tragedy that jails and prisons have become the primary mental health care facilities in the United States today,” said APA President Carolyn Robinowitz, M.D. “We have been working with Congressman Davis’ Mental Health Advisory Committee to support this very important initiative. IPS is also working on other initiatives to help ex-offenders retain their progress with regard to mental health care as they transition from prison or jail to the community,” said Kenneth Busch, MD, Chair of the IPS Governmental Affairs Committee.

Approximately 1% of adults in the US, or 2.2 million people, are incarcerated. According to a 2006 report by the U.S. Department of Justice, entitled "Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates," more than half of the population incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails – including 56 percent of state prisoners, 45 percent of federal prisoners and 64 percent of local jail inmates – were found to have a mental illness. Many of these inmates suffer from treatable disorders such as major depression, bipolar disorder and substance use disorder.

“People with mental illness, left untreated, can develop symptoms and behaviors that lead to their arrest and incarceration,” Robinowitz said. “Treatment can help prevent incarceration. Improving funding and cooperative programs between mental health care professionals and correctional agencies is a step in the right direction.” “In addition, mental health treatment, in prison as well as upon reentry into the community, can help reduce recidivism among patients with mental illness, and this will be the focus of future initiatives by IPS and Congressman Davis’ Mental Health Advisory Committee,” said Kenneth Busch, MD.

### **About the Illinois Psychiatric Association:**

The Illinois Psychiatric Association is a district branch of a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org) and [www.HealthyMinds.org](http://www.HealthyMinds.org).