US jails confine large numbers of people each day and process nearly 12 million admissions each year (Minton & Zeng, 2015). This is approximately 20 times higher than the number of admissions to prisons (Vera Institute of Justice, 2015). The Prison Journal's special January, 2016, "Jails and Mental Health Issues" focuses attention on the increasing number of mentally ill in local jails, even as jails experience overcrowding, budgetary and resource shortages, recidivism, and "invisibility" in current national policy discussions about correctional and criminal justice reform.

Authors in the special January 2016 issue document a number of key jail mental health policy and research issues:

1) the proper role of the jail for the delivery of behavioral healthcare and other services;
2) the perceptions of jail staff, treatment providers, and detainees on re-entry impediments in rural jurisdictions, particularly with regard to continued mental health services;
3) an evaluation of a model reentry program for detainees with substance use disorders, linking the issue of co-occurring disorders and recidivism;
4) a focus on female jail detainees' needs for services and programming from the perspectives of jail staff;
5) the role of trauma as a common experience among female jail detainees in a large urban jail and their capacities to deal with reentry impediments;
6) the use and abuse of solitary confinement in jails, focusing on Riker's Island as a case study and
7) the emergence of crisis intervention teams as a valuable tool for diverting the mentally ill from correctional to mental health settings.
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