

What is the Mental Health Project?

The Mental Health Project provides legal and advocacy services to ensure that incarcerated youth and veterans obtain the mental health care they need and are not subjected to conditions that exacerbate their mental illness.

Youth or Veterans can be designated any service level by the Office of Mental Health (OMH). There is no minimum OMH service level to request services from the Mental Health Project.



Who does the Mental Health Project assist?

We provide services to incarcerated Youth and Veterans with mental health issues.

Youth: *Anyone 21 years old or younger who identifies as having a mental health issue.*

Veterans: *Anyone who served in the military, regardless of discharge or combat status, who identifies as having a mental health issue.*

For more information, please contact:

**Alissa R. Hull
Managing Attorney
Mental Health Project**

**Prisoners' Legal Services
of New York
114 Prospect Street
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 273-2283
ahull@plsny.org**

**PRISONERS'
LEGAL SERVICES
OF NEW YORK**

Mental Health Project:

Youth & Veterans



**The Mental Health Project for
Youth and Veterans was created
by a grant from the
van Ameringen Foundation**

Services for Youth

The Mental Health Project (MHP) provides the following types of legal services to qualifying young people in prison:

MHP attorneys advocate for mental health assessments for youth with under - and undiagnosed mental health issues;

MHP attorneys challenge disciplinary hearings to eliminate or reduce the amount of time a young person spends in solitary confinement; and

MHP attorneys advocate for the provision of special education services for youth who qualify for such services under federal law.

The MHP also provides accessible and detailed information to youth regarding their Rights at Tier III Hearings, the Inmate Grievance Program, and Filing a Claim for Lost or Damaged Property.

Services for Veterans

The Mental Health Project provides the following types of legal services to qualifying veterans in prison:

MHP attorneys advocate for mental health and/or medical assessments for veterans with undiagnosed PTSD or TBI injuries resulting from military service; and

MHP attorneys challenge disciplinary hearings to eliminate or reduce the amount of time that a veteran spends in solitary confinement.

The opioid crisis and substance dependence also significantly impact incarcerated veterans. For those veterans who continue to struggle with addiction in prison, the Mental Health Project advocates for appropriate drug treatment and programming while in prison.

The Mental Health Project also provides information to incarcerated veterans on the following: DOCCS Incarcerated Veterans' Programs, Re-Entry resources from the U.S. Veterans' Administration, and Benefits information from the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs.

Why Youth and Veterans?

Youth are overrepresented in solitary confinement in New York. Nearly 15% of youth between the ages of 18 – 21 are housed in disciplinary special housing units (SHU) and near another 5% are serving keeplock sanctions. Only 5.5% of the total DOCCS population is housed in SHU.

- Obtained through a Freedom of Information Act Request in 2017 by the Mental Health Project

Military service members are often overlooked in prison. The United States Government Accountability Office reported in 2017 that 62% of military service members separated from the military for misconduct between 2011 – 2015 had been diagnosed with either post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a traumatic brain injury (TBI), or another condition that could be associated with misconduct.

-“DOD Health: Actions Needed to Ensure Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury are Considered in Misconduct Separations.”