

# RACIAL DISPARITIES IN DRUG ABUSE TREATMENT



Black and white Americans use illegal drugs at similar rates, but Blacks are 10 times more likely to be incarcerated for drug crimes. <sup>1</sup>

## 2 MILLION



The War on Drugs was created by the Nixon Administration and created federal drug agencies, mandatory sentencing, and no-knock warrants.

Before mandatory sentencing for drug crimes 300,000 individuals were serving time in prison or jail. At the start of 2000, the number grew exponentially to over two million and the number of drug arrests more than tripled. <sup>2</sup>

## WHO GETS TREATMENT?

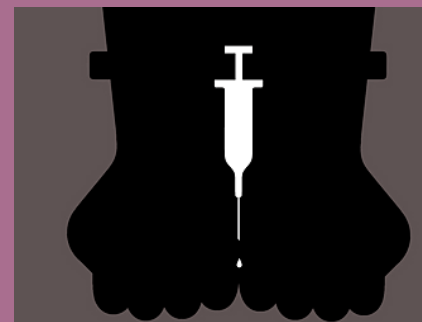
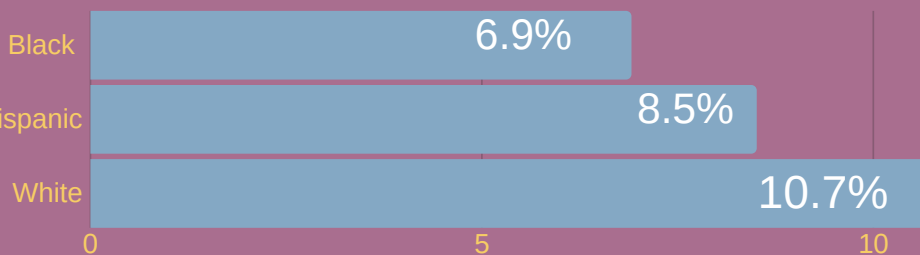
Blacks are less likely to be given an alternative to jail time than whites for drug offenses. With the rate of Black males receiving a drug treatment disposition being **.041** compared to **.071** for white males. <sup>3</sup>



## WHO IS IMPACTED?

Black adolescents receive substance use disorder (SUD) treatment is **6.9%**, **8.5%** for Hispanics, compared to **10.7%** for whites. These lower rates of SUD or substance abuse treatment for black and Hispanic adolescents were evident both in the medical sector and in self-help programs. <sup>4</sup>

## TREATMENT RATES FOR ADOLESCENTS



## UNDERLYING CAUSES- GETTING TO THE ROOT



The racial disparity in substance abuse treatment recommended over jail time is only the surface of a much larger problem. Minority offenders are prone to harsher treatment by law enforcement agents because (1) minorities lack resources to resist derogatory stereotypes and labels, (2) groups with more power view minority groups as a threat to the status quo, and (3) the depiction of criminals as racially or culturally abnormal and dangerous increases the fear within majority groups, resulting in harsher sanctions. <sup>5</sup>

# WHAT DOES HELP LOOK LIKE?

## SUD Treatment

Substance use disorder treatment can come in the form of medication, rehab, counseling, and outpatient care. <sup>6</sup>

## Drug Court

Drug Courts are court programs that specialize in defender, offenders and juvenile offenders who have alcohol and/or drug dependency problems. <sup>7</sup>



# MOVING FORWARD

**DECREASING THE GAP IN SUD TREATMENT GIVEN TO WHITE ARRESTEES VERSUS BLACK ARRESTEES MEANS MAKING DRUG ADDICTION A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE INSTEAD OF JUST A CRIMINAL JUSTICE ISSUE. THIS WILL ENCOURAGE EARLIER INTERVENTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS SUFFERING FROM ADDICTION AND DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO GET HELP.**

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides states with expansive new funding to enroll low income adults in Medicaid, although the Supreme Court recently ruled that states may decline to participate in the expansions without losing their existing Medicaid programs. Expanding medicare and healthcare to ensure better resources for individuals addicted to drugs means mandating coverage for rehabilitation programs federally.<sup>8</sup>

The only way to ensure those needing SUD treatment are getting it is to increase the number of drug courts. Drug court graduates recidivism rate is 17% compared to the 66% reoffend rate of drug offenders who complete prison sentences. The annual cost of a drug court participant is \$3,500 compared to annual prison fees that range from \$13,000 to \$44,000 per inmate. <sup>9</sup>

# References

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