



## Promote Smart Decarceration

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### The Issue

The United States is the world leader in incarceration, which has led to staggering economic, social, and human costs for our society. This social justice crisis substantially over-incarcerates the most vulnerable groups; people of color, people living in poverty, and people with behavioral health disorders.

### Societal Goal

With smart decarceration, we can reduce the prison and jail population by 1 million people in the next decade. This would entail a proactive, cross-sector, and evidence-driven approach that addresses existing racial and economic disparities and promotes a philosophical shift in how we think about incarceration and public safety.

### A Decade of Work

The Promote Smart Decarceration Grand Challenge addresses those factors that have direct and immediate impact on adult criminal justice system processes and an individual's experience in the adult criminal justice system, with specific emphasis on the experience of incarceration. It is organized around, and uniformly focused on, three key outcomes of the adult criminal justice system: 1) Substantially reduce the incarcerated population in jails and prison; 2) Redress racial, economic, behavioral health disparities among the incarcerated; 3) Maximize public safety and community well-being.

Over the next ten years, researchers, practitioners and policymakers can engage in a variety of activities that will advance this Grand Challenge and ignite social work achievements, including work to:

- Reverse civic and legal exclusions for persons with criminal charges and convictions.
- Make reduction of racial and economic disparities a key outcome in decarceration efforts.
- Use incarceration primarily for the incapacitation of the most dangerous.
- Reallocate resources to community based supports.

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## Resources

- Epperson, M.W., Pettus-Davis, C. (Eds.). (2017). *Smart Decarceration: Achieving Criminal Justice Transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Oxford University Press.
- Pettus-Davis, C., Epperson, M., & Grier, A. (2017). [Guideposts for the Era of Smart Decarceration](#).
- Pettus-Davis, C. & Epperson, M. (2016, September). *Policy recommendations for meeting the Grand Challenge to Promote Smart Decarceration* (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Policy Brief No. 9). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare.
- Pettus-Davis, C., & Epperson, M. W. (2015). *From mass incarceration to smart decarceration* (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Working Paper No. 4). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.
- Policy action statement. *Promote smart decarceration*. Actions to reverse civic and legal exclusions for people with criminal charges and convictions.
- Websites:
  - <https://csd.wustl.edu/OurWork/SocialJustice/Decarceration/Pages/default.aspx>
  - <http://www.GrandChallengesforSocialWork/12-challenges/promote-smart-decarceration/>
  - [www.sw-cj.org](http://www.sw-cj.org)

## Network Leadership

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## Get involved!

Sign up for the Grand Challenges newsletter & updates: [www.GrandChallengesforSocialWork.org](http://www.GrandChallengesforSocialWork.org)

Participate in this grand challenge network:

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#Smartdecarceration