

RCW 71.24.450 Offenders with mental illnesses—Findings and intent. (1) Many offenders with acute and chronic mental illness are delayed in their release from Washington correctional facilities due to their inability to access reasonable treatment and living accommodations prior to the maximum expiration of their sentences. Often the offender reaches the end of his or her sentence and is released without any follow-up care, funds, or housing. These delays are costly to the state, often lead to psychiatric relapse, and result in unnecessary risk to the public.

Many of these offenders lack the skills or emotional stability to maintain employment or even complete applications to receive entitlement funding. Housing and appropriate treatment are difficult to obtain.

This lack of resources, funding, treatment, and housing creates additional stress for the offender with mental illness, impairing self-control and judgment. When the mental illness is instrumental in the offender's patterns of crime, such stresses may lead to a worsening of his or her illness, reoffending, and a threat to public safety.

(2) It is the intent of the legislature to create a program to provide for postrelease mental health care and housing for a select group of offenders with mental illness entering community living, in order to reduce incarceration costs, increase public safety, and enhance the offender's quality of life. [2019 c 325 § 1027; 1997 c 342 § 1.]

Effective date—2019 c 325: See note following RCW 71.24.011.

Severability—1997 c 342: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1997 c 342 § 6.]