

Incarceration Diversion and the Role of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Artwork by Matteo Bertelli description: White men in suits with elongated ties that appear like jail bars imprisoning people



What am I presenting?

- Marginalized Identities are Overrepresented in Incarceration Settings
- Employment = Economic Security
 - The Path from Arrest to Pretrial Detention
- Vocational Rehabilitation Example: Good Will Hunting
- Impact of College Education Example: Video
- How Exposure to Vocational Training During Incarceration Lowers Unemployment and Recidivism
- Wrap Up & Call to Action

Marginalized Identities are Overrepresented in Incarceration Settings

Study: The Links Between Disability, Incarceration, And Social Exclusion

- *“66% of incarcerated people self-reported a disability, with Black, Hispanic, and multiracial disabled men especially overrepresented in prisons.”*
- *“A higher estimated percentage of incarcerated women reported disability (79.5%) compared with incarcerated men (64.6%).”*

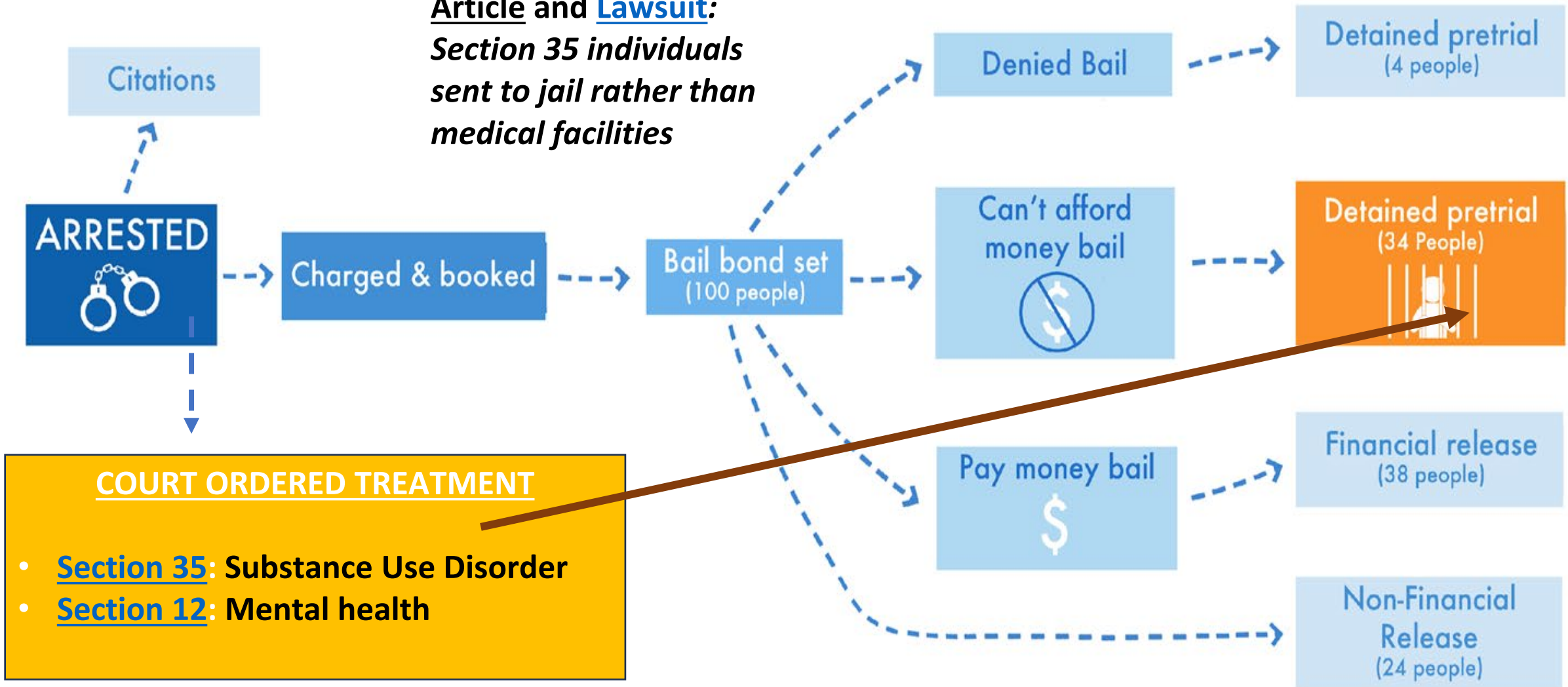
Employment = Economic Security

- A disproportionate amount of marginalized identities are economically insecure
- An article from the Prison Policy Initiative website, [“Detaining the Poor: How money bail perpetuates an endless cycle of poverty and jail time”](#) explains if individuals start life poor, they will have less access to economic or educational opportunities and healthcare
- Without support, individuals are more likely to experience unemployment, trauma, homelessness, etc.
- They may also encounter more negative experiences with law enforcement

The Path from Arrest to Pretrial Detention

Source

Article and Lawsuit:
*Section 35 individuals
sent to jail rather than
medical facilities*



Vocational Rehabilitation Example:

Good Will Hunting

- Connection to disability: Early exposure to violence and trauma in childhood
- Released with Conditions (did not have to serve lengthy sentence)
 - ✓ Math with Professor
 - ✓ Counseling with therapist
 - ✓ Find a Job
 - ✓ He stays out of jail



4. Release conditions



Impacts of Education While Incarcerated

Video: Melissa McKee Prison Pet Partnership

Video: College Behind Bars by Lynn Novick

Things to Think About:

How did college education contribute to the development of self esteem?

How did Melissa's experience with prison education lead to employment?



Christine's service dog in training, David Bowie

HOW EXPOSURE TO VOCATIONAL TRAINING DURING INCARCERATION LOWERS UNEMPLOYMENT & RECIDIVISM

Source

- ✓ Up to 89% of those who return to prison are unemployed (Kimmitt, 2011).
- ✓ In a [study](#) of 3,000 released Virginia offenders, re-incarceration was reduced by 24% for those who participated but did not complete vocational training and by 57% for those who completed their training (Hull, Forrester, Brown, Jobe, & McCullen, 2000).

Research Study:

Disabling Incarceration: Connecting Disability to Divergent Confinement in the USA

*“Class based analysis of disability urges us to shift our understanding of disability oppression from discussions of stigma and deviance to that of **systematic economic exclusion of people with disabilities**.”*

In other words, people with disabilities want to work, they just do not have opportunities and/or fear the loss of [social security](#) benefits.

Wrap Up

- Incarceration should be an entry point for individuals with disabilities to learn about vocational rehabilitation. Individuals without diagnosed disabilities could receive medical evaluations. Those evaluations could then be used to determine VR eligibility.
- Statistics show that vocational training has the potential to drastically improve individuals' lives.
- Employment = Economic Security

Call to Action

- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission could have a significant role in keeping individuals with disabilities out of jails and prisons.
- The SRC could recommend that the MRC hold virtual/in-person educational forums to explain VR services to individuals with disabilities who are incarcerated or on probation and parole. MRC consumers who have been incarcerated may help to lead the forums/discussions if staff capacity is low.
- The SRC could consider ways to engage individuals with disabilities who have experienced incarceration.
- The SRC could recruit voting members who have experienced incarceration.
- The SRC could consider creating a committee that would collaborate with the MRC to support

Questions and comments?

