



The Insanity Offense: How America's Failure to Treat the Seriously Mentally Ill Endangers Its Citizens

E. Fuller Torrey

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A leading expert on mental illness outlines the tragic consequences of deinstitutionalization and sounds the call for reform.

Beginning in the 1960s in the United States, scores of patients with severe psychiatric disorders were discharged from public mental hospitals. At the same time, activists forced changes in commitment laws that made it impossible to treat half of the patients that left the hospital. The combined effect was profoundly destructive. Today, among homeless persons, at least one-third are severely mentally ill; among the incarcerated, at least one-tenth. Of those individuals living in our communities, many are the victims of violent crime. Other untreated individuals commit crimes, including murder and assault. In *The Insanity Offense*, E. Fuller Torrey takes full stock of this phenomenon, exploring the causes and consequences as he weaves together narratives of individual tragedies in three states with sobering national data on our failure to treat the mentally ill. In the book's final chapters, Torrey outlines what needs to be done to reverse this ongoing—and accelerating—disaster.

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