

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/our-current-justice-system-isnt-doctor-recommended>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

I am asked daily why The California Endowment a health foundation where I serve as a program director is interested in criminal justice reform. I now have an answer that doesn't require me to say one word.

The Endowment and the American Public Health Association (APHA) created [the video](#) you see below to show the painful impact mass incarceration has on the health of our communities and communities of color in particular.

Since the 1980s, justice policy at the state and federal levels adhered to the notion that severe punishments in our schools and communities would keep us safer. Schools began suspending students, especially students of color, for minor misbehavior but ignored the fact that these same students were also the ones most likely to suffer from childhood trauma. Instead of treatment, they received a punishment that [increased their likelihood](#) of getting in trouble with the law. At the same time, [more and more adults](#) were incarcerated for nonviolent crimes. While our prison population soared, we learned incarcerated meant [a shorter life expectancy](#).

The intersection of public health and the justice system which readers can learn more about through Vera's [Justice Reform for Healthy Communities](#) initiative led The Endowment, APHA, and others in the public health community to take up the mantle of criminal justice reform. The Endowment, along with many other California partners, has enthusiastically spread the word about the passage of Proposition 47 not just because it gives as many as [a million people](#) the chance to have old, nonviolent felony convictions removed from their records, but because of how a clean slate can translate into new opportunities for jobs, housing, and better health. And with the money saved from not incarcerating people for minor offenses, California will have more money to spend on youth programs, substance abuse treatment, support services for people leaving prison, and other programs that are more likely to keep communities safe and healthy.

I hope you'll take a few minutes today to watch the video and learn how being part of the movement for criminal justice reform and being part of the movement to create a culture of health are one and the same.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

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