

THE SOZOSEI FOUNDATION'S BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION ON THE CRIMINALIZATION OF MENTAL ILLNESS ELEVATES KEY PATHWAYS FOR CHANGE

At the Sozosei Foundation, we believe an opportunity exists to make measurable progress to decriminalize mental illness through creativity, experimentation, and collaboration. In the spirit of collaboration, we recently hosted a Virtual Book Club featuring authors and renowned psychiatrist Dr. James Knoll and renowned psychologist Dr. Joel Dvoskin. Led by Sozosei Board Member, Mary Chi Michael, Dr. Knoll and Dr. Dvoskin discussed their contribution to the recently released book, "Decriminalizing Mental Illness" with more than 100 attendees.

Prior to the event, the Sozosei Foundation sent Book Club registrants copies of "Decriminalizing Mental Illness." The outcome was a 90-minute discussion where over 100 organizations and individuals contributed comments, questions and thoughts to the lively discussion.

KEY STATISTICS:



FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS:

"Participating in the free events Sozosei Foundation is offering has really helped me as a Mental Health PO feel validated in my efforts and to not lose hope in trying to bring reform to my tiny locality."

"The discussions helped me to consolidate many of my random thoughts on the issues."

"The authors were very knowledgeable, and the book club format helped to bring this out."

"The discussion format raised and emphasized issues that might be missed in reading the weighty book."

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTIONS TO EXPAND THE TOPIC AND KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING:

"It would be great to incorporate national organizations such as National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association of Drug Court Professionals, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police to discuss systemic change to improve outcomes via criminal justice."

"It would be great to talk specifically about housing options and existing best-practice models."

"Please consider offering a "Best Practices" roundtable. This format would allow those who are having success with innovative approach to share with others who would like to adopt that for their home area."

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM DR. KNOLL AND DR. DVOSKIN:

"If the criminal justice were a boxing match, there would be an investigation because it looks like we're trying to lose." - Dr. Joel Dvoskin

"These institutions were never developed to treat people with mental illness." - Dr. James Knoll

"In the last few decades, the public mental health system has been choked to death." - Dr. Joel Dvoskin

"The mental health team needs to know where their limitations are, law enforcement needs to know where their limitations are, and collaborate effectively. We need to be mindful not to silo ourselves too much." - Dr. James Knoll

The authors closed the session with ideas on what can move us forward, including the need to build out our community mental-health system, reform the criminal legal system, and address social determinants of health. Dr. Dvoskin energized a call to action by challenging all of us not to be complacent with rules and systems that don't work with the reminder:

"we can change the rules."

To watch the full, recorded book club discussion, visit the [Sozosei Foundation's YouTube channel](#).

**MENTAL ILLNESS
IS NOT A CRIME™**