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## I-Team

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## The Forgotten Floor, Part 2

A CBS4 I-team Investigation

**Shocking Conditions Revealed At Miami-Dade's Jail**

**Concerned About Mentally Ill Inmates? Click Here To Help**



Michele Gillen  
Reporting

(CBS4 News) MIAMI

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On the I-Team's visit to the facility, many inmates were concerned about open sores on their naked bodies. "There are so many infectious diseases in here you wouldn't believe it," one said.

Tom Mullen is an advocate for the mentally ill and director of a Miami crisis intervention Halfway house that is an alternative to Floor 9.

"They're human beings dammit, and they have a right to live with a certain amount of equality, of quality of care," he said.

And some experts believe it could be available. Despite the volatile overcrowding at the jail, rooms and beds go unused just minutes away at a secure treatment facility specializing in care for the mentally ill who have been arrested. Some advocates say it's an example of bureaucratic red tape holding help hostage.

"And here we have a facility right now, that has 38 beds and can only use 16, because of the rules and laws that they have put in," said Turolla.

Conditions on Floor 9 are expected to get worse. Recent changes in Medicaid are reducing benefits to the tune of tens of millions of dollars according to Leifman and backlogging help for the most in need. Inmates with mental illness now must navigate the HMO system in order to be treated.

Judge Leifman said, "As you can see they are just horribly, horribly overcrowded and they are just shuffling people around the best they can. And these changes in Medicaid and the backlog of the hospital are exacerbating an already crisis situation."

While local dollars are now earmarked for a psychiatric treatment facility for inmate, the doors are not slated to be open for another two years. The need is immediate, but advocates for the mentally ill are forced to wait.

"We are stuck for a while. I don't have an easy answer," Judge Leifman said. "We are going to need money for treatment. We can't do it overnight. And we can't just put these people back on the street. It's going to put them and the community at risk. And we are not going to put the community at risk."

Meanwhile, Earley, whose own son was diagnosed with mental illness in college and ended up in jail, wonders what it will take to end the nightmare at Floor 9.

"All those people on the 9th floor have parents. Maybe they gave up on them, maybe they got burnt out, but they are human beings, and they deserve our compassion and they deserve better than what they are getting and the people of Miami are better than what that jail shows.

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mate speaking about brutal conditions at Miami-Dade's cells for the mentally ill, talking through a grate in his door.

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The Miami-Dade Pre-Trial Detention Facility, where mentally ill inmates are held.

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