



Homelessness and Mental Illness: How Trump's New Executive Order Could Backfire

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In late July, President Trump signed an [executive order](#) urging local authorities to find ways to force homeless individuals with mental illness into hospitals. On its face, some observers might find this move appealing. [Homelessness has skyrocketed across American cities, generating headlines about homeless encampment waste and public substance use.](#) And mental health care, which many of these individuals need, is difficult to access—and arguably easier to obtain in a hospital. But Trump's order may in fact undermine its own aims.

Research shows that psychiatric hospitalization has little impact on “Crime and Disorder on America's Streets,” as the executive order puts it, and which it purports to address. Instead, while the order and other Trump Administration policies may remove homelessness from public view, they neither house nor heal those suffering from it.

In a cross-national [study](#), for example, one of us found that levels of institutionalization were unrelated to mass shooting events. In fact, people experiencing homelessness are more likely to be [victims of violent crimes than perpetrators](#), including assault and sexual violence. If Trump is concerned about violence caused by homeless individuals, it's unlikely that hospitalizing them will reduce it.