

*The Prevalence and Treatment of Eating Disorders in Prison*

Overall health is influenced by many interconnecting forces including one's psychological, emotional, and physical health. Mental health, however, allows all the other pieces of one's health to function properly. Good mental health promotes a healthy lifestyle, a fortunate life, and allows one to make meaningful contributions to the community. On the other hand, poor mental health contributes to the inability to deal with stress, inability to maintain meaningful social connections, and leads to poor physical health. Within the criminal justice system, mental health is a prevailing issue. In a prison setting, people become deprived of their freedom, their movement becomes restricted, and they are confined to small places with constant supervision. A healthy mind cannot prevail in these circumstances. The deprivation these inmates feel can cause feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, and fear. This deprivation can also cause psychiatric disorders to develop or reemerge. Among the many diagnosable mental health impairments, eating disorders are a poorly explored topic. Many eating disorders co-occur with other psychiatric disorders including depression, anxiety, substance abuse disorders, and impairments in social functioning. The prevalence of eating disorders and other psychiatric disorders in prisons is a topic of great importance. This research will explore the prevalence and treatment of eating disorders in U.S. prisons, both state and federal. The prevalence and treatment options will be explored by interviewing mental health practitioners and service providers of the mental health treatment specific to eating disorders in Georgia. More specific attention will be given to the female inmate only prisons as the prevalence of eating disorders is much higher in the female population.