

# Justice-Involved Peer Support



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# Internal and External Stressors

- Children – Spouse – Family
- Fear of the Unknown
- Loss of freedom
- Basic privacy denied
- Safety: Personal space – safety for self
- Loss of personal possessions – car, home
- Financial
- Health/medication
- What else?

# Culture of Incarceration/ Learned Behaviors

- Segregation still exist?
- Hierarchy of power among inmates
  - Inmates with mental/physical disabilities are preyed upon.
  - Certain crimes are frowned upon & others are glorified
- Social values learned in prison, dislike & distrust of people & systems
- Prison language
- Comradery against a common enemy
- Survival strategies and coping behaviors
- Others?

# Psychological Consequences of Incarceration

- Diminished sense of self-worth
- Feelings of shame, guilt, and hopelessness
- Independence and self-initiative are muted
- Hyper vigilant on high alert due to threat or personal risk
- Mask of “tough guy” persona/vulnerability invites exploitation
- Social withdrawal and isolation/depression
- Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills hindered

Prevalence of trauma especially for individuals with mental health or substance use challenges

# Causes of Trauma

- Many inmates with mental health challenges are kept isolated from others
- Use of force/restraint/searches
- Denying privileges and requests
- Harassment and racist behavior
- Sexual harassment/abuse
- Withholding information/language barrier
- Overcrowding/living conditions
- Fights/proximity to violent encounters
- Exposure to harsh and unwavering discipline

# Trauma-Informed Approach and Why It's Important

## Six Key Concepts

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness & Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

# Strategies to Trauma Informed Approach

1. I will be diligent around keeping my word and mindful of not promising things that I am unsure of or that are outside of my scope of work.
2. I will continually empower the person by listening, validating, and honoring their choices.
3. I will celebrate diversity and remain open-minded to those I serve, using my natural curiosity as a bridge builder.



# System/Structure of Judicial Systems

- Mental Health Court – Include Sequential Intercept Model
- Substance Use/Drug Court – Include Diversion Programs
- Pre-release (6months) – who's involved, what's involved

# Integration, Reintegration, and Re-entry



# Legal Obligations

- Court fees
- Probation/parole
- Court order treatment
- Child support/spousal
- Prior to incarceration/loans/obligations
- Restoration of rights
- Others?

# Re-entry Barriers

- Housing
- Employment
- Transportation
- Technology
- Stimuli/distractions
- Structure vs freedom
- Relationships
- Stigma

# Re-entry Barriers, Cont.

- Institutionalized: may cause loss of knowing how to do things for self or how to reframe from doing those things that may be harmful. May miss important clues and cues
- Children/family back in life: may be unclear on how to “fit” back in to family unit (parent, sibling role)
- Lack of support: may be due to “bridges being burned,” family/friends deceased, loss of contact
- Time restraints/task saturation: difficulty in prioritizing needs and obligations. Urgency to get one’s life back in order may cause a sense of overwhelmingness
- Peer pressure: challenges saying “NO” to old friends and old habits. Non-recovery environments. Need to connect – social skills inhibited due to lack of emotional intelligence interactions

# Overcoming Barriers: How Peer Support Can Help

- Collaborate on identifying priorities (best if the person takes the lead)
- Identify and develop resource's needed; make a plan of action
- Support in identifying healthy supporters – Who are they? What's their role?
- Peer Support Specialist shares part of their story that supports healthy change
- Let the person take the lead
- Be fully present with the person in a way that validates and reinforces their abilities and strengths
- Point out their progress and ability to overcome challenges/barriers

# Things to Consider

- Be aware of our own potential for biases
- Expect urgency – making up time lost – rebuilding of life
- Expect loss, grief, lack of self-worth, lower self-esteem – or the exact opposite; important that we demonstrate patience and understanding
- Many individuals have experienced trauma, ridicule, lack of respect; important that we keep our word and be accountable in order to build that trusting relationship
- Meet the person right where they are at – how one experienced incarceration may be completely the opposite for another
- Others?

# Maintain Recovery & Connection

- Connecting with a recovery group such as 12-step, SMART, Celebrate Recovery, etc.
- Employment/training opportunities
- Identifying, locating, and obtaining a doctor and/or Mental Health Clinic
- Creating healthy relationships/friends
- Support with resume writing/submitting applications
- Approaching people/systems in a way that we get our needs meet
- Advocacy



# Restoration of Rights

- The right to vote
- The right to hold public office
- The right to bear arms
- The right to travel abroad
- Public social benefits
- Others?

# Q & A

