

CCJBH Diversion Reentry Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 19, 2024

3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

In- Person and MS Teams Webinar

Workgroup Purpose:

The workgroup showcased programs that train peers to provide case management and behavioral health services to the justice-involved populations.

Councilmember Advisors:

Judge Stephen Manley, *Santa Clara County Superior Court*

CCJBH Staff:

Staff Members Present: Brenda Grealish, *Executive Officer, Council on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health (CCJBH)*, Elizabeth Vice, Jessica Camacho Duran, Emily Mantsch, Cameron Byrd, Belicia Smith, Gabriella Wyatt, and Cathy Hickinbotham.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Ms. Grealish welcomed participants, gave an overview of the agenda and shared the purpose of the workgroup. Councilmember Judge Manley introduced himself to the participants.

II. Camden County, New Jersey - Embedding Peers with Lived Experience in Reentry and Reform Efforts

Sharon Bean, *Camden County Jail Populations Manager, Justice Systems Reform & Innovations Unit Supervisor*

This presentation provided an overview of the community engagement strategy employed through the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge Innovation funding, as well as highlighted the services provided by the NuEntry Opportunity Specialists, who are peers that serve at every step in helping people return home to the community and prevent recidivism.

Ms. Bean began her presentation by providing context and background on their facility in Camden County, New Jersey. She stated that the facility has a capacity to house 1,267 individuals. In 2023, the daily average population was approximately 836, with 7,300 intakes, an average length of stay of 38 days and 75 percent of individuals returning directly to the community. In 2016, the Camden County Department of Corrections (DOC) embraced a philosophical shift, believing they were uniquely positioned to positively impact and alter the trajectory of a person's life following incarceration. Ms. Bean explained that the philosophy behind the DOC's reentry work, which also underpins the peer work, is to provide individuals with the necessary tools and resources to succeed after release.

In 2018, after recognizing the value of peer involvement for two years, Camden County applied for and received a small grant through the MacArthur Foundation's Safety and Justice Challenge Innovations Site. This funding enabled the development of a community engagement strategy to strengthen and expand existing reentry efforts. The strategy included the establishment of a Reentry Committee, a Reentry Community Engagement Coordinator, NuEntry Opportunity Specialists (NOS), and enhanced community involvement. Ms. Bean explained that the multipronged approach utilized the Reentry Committee, staffed with NOS as an advisory board. This board serves as a foundation for convening all stakeholders and directing all community-based work moving forward. Central to this strategy, the NOS individuals who were previously incarcerated serve as credible messengers to others released from incarceration, helping to reduce the stigma of incarceration through community education and outreach activities. The NOS network initiated community engagement efforts, connecting with over 100 individuals returning home from incarceration in both the Camden County Correctional Facility and New Jersey State Prison. The NOS enlisted new community-based partners and now lead forums across the county and state to educate and engage residents about the criminal justice system. Ms. Bean highlighted that the NOS network has been instrumental in bridging gaps and closing divides through genuine, transparent conversations about service delivery systems, embodying their mantra of "speak WITH not FOR." The NOS are now embedded in every aspect of reentry work throughout the county. Ms. Bean stated that because of the NOS network's efforts, the county has integrated requirements into all funding opportunities, mandating that the Youth Service Commission include a component of peer inclusion in their organizational structure and staffing model.

From the initial activities in 2018, NOS members expressed a desire to enter the jail to assist with transition planning, as engaging with individuals either immediately upon discharge or once they are already released presents unique challenges. From a safety and security perspective, specific vetting and clearances were necessary. Now, NOS peers enter the jail like any other civilian to meet with individuals, develop reentry transition plans, connect them to services, and support family reunification. Moreover, the NOS peers have developed relationships with the correctional officers and have helped change the officers' perceptions of individuals who have been previously incarcerated. Ms. Bean detailed the evolution of the Peer Reentry Support Team Program (PRSTP), which began two years ago and includes 14 NOS peers. These peers, who have personal experiences with substance use disorders (SUDs) or criminal justice, work in teams to engage individuals transitioning home. The program, peer-driven and peer-led, supports clients with SUDs regardless of their criminal history. It features bi-weekly case conferences with a multidisciplinary team to enhance collective learning and improve services, which typically last between 3-6 months.

A typical day for a NOS peer involves meeting with soon-to-be-discharged individuals, documenting health records, and coordinating with external providers. The peers successfully connect individuals to sober living environments and maintain contact post-discharge, often facilitating transportation and family communication, thanks to the comprehensive support from case managers.

Ms. Bean highlighted the extensive training for NOS peers aimed at maximizing their effectiveness and ensuring their well-being. She noted that since its inception in October 2023, PRSTP has had about 400 intakes, 232 participants, and a significant impact despite challenges in maintaining engagement post-release.

III. Tarzana Treatment Centers College – In Prison Peer Education and Re-entry Services

Ashley McGowan, *Chair of Peer Support Training Support Program*

This presentation provided an overview of TTCC services pertaining to peer education in prisons and the Medi-Cal Peer Support Certification training program, particularly as it relates to the justice-involved specialty.

Ms. McGowan began her presentation by discussing Senate Bill (SB) 803 (2020), which authorized a new Medi-Cal provider type known as a Peer Support Specialist (PSS). This designation allows services provided by certified PSSs to be billed to Medi-Cal. Since the inception of SB 803, Tarzana Treatment Centers College (TTCC) has served as a training provider. TTCC also offers a General Education Degree (GED) program, addressing the needs of prospective students who lack the required GED or high school diploma. This enables TTCC to bridge programs and offer comprehensive training opportunities for its students. Ms. McGowan explained that TTCC has collaborated with Continuity Consulting, Legacy Outreach, and Prison Way to launch an in-prison based PSS training program at Valley State Prison (VSP) in Spring 2023. This training is the culmination of the Youth Mentor Offender Program, which aims to prepare individuals under the age of 25 to mentor youth in the future. While the community-based PSS program typically lasts three weeks, TTCC has developed an extended schedule specifically for the in-prison training. To date, TTCC has completed two cohorts and graduated 68 individuals at VSP. Ms. McGowan noted that these graduates are considered credible messengers, capable of providing support based on their own lived experiences, not only within the justice system, but also in behavioral health care, particularly in dealing with substance use and other mental health challenges. The in-prison instructor has the necessary clearance to enter the prison, while other support staff operate from Los Angeles.

Ms. McGowan expressed that TTCC is planning to expand this type of programming to additional prisons and jails. They are building on their partnership with Prison Way, which operates a step-down program at two Los Angeles County jails. This program engages individuals in custody who are interested in becoming mental

health assistants, providing support to those with more intense mental health needs. The peer component complements other mental health training provided by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. The first cohort at the Twin Towers and Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF) consisted of nine students who graduated in January 2024. Recruitment is ongoing, with plans to expand as the use of mental health assistants has successfully reduced aggression rates. TTCC hopes to enroll larger cohorts in future sessions. Ms. McGowan highlighted a key challenge related to exam logistics at VSP, where trainees do not have access to the necessary technology to take the PSS exam online. To address this, TTCC is collaborating with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) to arrange for a proctor to administer the exam in person at the prison. Another issue is maintaining engagement, as support staff working remotely often struggle to regularly connect with the students to sustain their interest in obtaining certification. To overcome this, TTCC has hired an instructor with lived experience.

Additionally, Ms. McGowan noted that TTCC serves as a vendor through CalMHSA to provide a Justice Involved (JI) specialization for the PSS certification, which complements the existing in-prison programs. This only requires a modification in the curriculum's delivery method. However, she pointed out that the JI specialty faces accessibility issues not encountered with the standard PSS certification, such as the absence of previously available scholarships, lack of specific billing modifiers, and the reluctance of agencies to absorb the additional training costs for their clients, patients, or employees. TTCC is actively seeking alternative funding sources to address these challenges.

Ms. McGowan described the TTCC Reentry program, known as the Ubuntu Rising Scholars Academy, funded by a grant from the California Community Reinvestment Grants (CalCRG). This program serves as a support hub, offering a comprehensive network of care focused on empowerment and inclusivity for individuals navigating reentry after incarceration. It includes career development, assessments, resume assistance, development plans, and job placement services. Participants work with a job placement specialist who complements their academic pursuits (PSS, GED, or SUD counseling) to help them secure employment as a PSS or SUD counselor. Additionally, the program offers monthly workshops on topics such as self-care, financial literacy, and digital literacy. Academic counselors provide treatment referrals and warm handoffs, connecting participants to essential community resources. Ms. McGowan concluded her presentation by providing contact information for those seeking further details.

IV. Self-Help and Recovery Exchange (SHARE!)

Libby Hartigan, *Co-Founder and Director of Training*

Pedro Gomez, *Peer Advocate*

This presentation provided an overview of SHARE!'s programs, as well as highlights their Medi-Cal PSS training, SHARE! housing, peer respite and self- help programming, and included a peer worker who shared his lived experience with the justice system and how he became employed as a peer with SHARE!.

Ms. Hartigan provided an overview of the history of the SHARE! Program, which began in 1993 by a small group of volunteers committed to recovery through self-help support groups. The mission of SHARE! is to assist individuals in pursuing personal growth and change by providing a loving, safe, non-judgmental environment where people can find community, information, and support, thereby empowering them to make changes in their lives. Since its inception, SHARE! has grown significantly and now employs over 60 people. It offers services through two self-help centers, a peer respite Recovery Retreat, and collaborative scattered site housing that accommodates over 400 individuals annually. Additionally, SHARE! is qualified to certify Medi-Cal Peer Support Specialists. The program serves a diverse group of people facing various challenges, including those reentering society from incarceration, dealing with addiction or mental health issues, undocumented immigrants, and individuals struggling with domestic violence, sex addiction, and sex trafficking. SHARE!'s approach consistently focuses on recognizing the strengths and contributions of its participants to the SHARE! community. Ms. Harrigan explained that the self-help centers operate under a few basic principles: no one is turned away and there are no barriers in assessments or intakes. SHARE! provides over 150 self-help support groups a week, offers a volunteer-to-jobs program that imparts tangible skills to help individuals gain employment, operates a computer resource lab, and provides a cost-effective anger management program that is accepted by the courts, except for batterers. This cost-effective approach is uncommon in the community and helps alleviate the financial hardships many participants face. The self-help support group model has proven effective by fostering a sense of autonomy in participants, helping them see themselves as part of the solution rather than the problem, especially in managing anger.

SHARE! also oversees a peer Collaborative Housing program that accommodates over 400 people a year in scattered sites throughout Los Angeles. This program is not a Section 8 initiative, but rather a shared housing model akin to sober living environments. While some houses focus on sober living, others emphasize mental health support. SHARE! refers individuals to privately owned homes where residents manage the house like a family, typically comprising 6-8 people. Rents range from \$600 to \$950 for a shared bedroom. Peer Bridgers, many of whom have histories of incarceration, provide support services to these houses, helping residents resolve conflicts and coexist harmoniously. Notably, the program eliminates barriers such as

background checks, security deposits, and application fees, which often hinder those returning from institutional settings. Impressively, 41 percent of those seeking housing move into a home within two days of contacting the Housing Placement team.

SHARE! operates a peer respite program, or Recovery Retreat, which offers a two-week residential stay in the least restrictive environment. This prevents individuals from needing services at a higher level of care. California has several peer respites across the state, including two in Los Angeles, one in San Jose, one in Alameda County, and one in Nevada County. Each year, the Recovery Retreat hosts about 200 people, connecting them to recovery resources. During their stay, individuals receive housing, access to self-help support groups, work on personal goals, and learn budgeting and conflict resolution skills.

Since becoming a certified CalMHSa training provider in July 2022, when the PSS certification was introduced, SHARE! has prepared individuals with lived experiences, family members, parents, and caregivers through an 80-hour job training program for careers in the public health system. This program not only involves comprehensive training, but also culminates in a state certification exam, ensuring participants are fully qualified to serve in their roles. SHARE! trains more than 200 people annually and provides scholarships for this training. This transformative experience allows participants to learn about resources for themselves and become more skilled at offering those resources to others. They discover that their lived experience, which they once thought might hold them back, can be a positive attribute and a pathway to employment.

However, SHARE! faces challenges in funding training for the justice-involved specialization, as community members also struggle to find employment as PSS. Despite these challenges, there is strong interest in the PSS justice-involved specialization training, particularly among instructors with personal experiences of incarceration who have witnessed the benefits of drug court diversion programs. Once certified, individuals have job opportunities in various settings, including substance use treatment, mental health clinics and facilities, drug courts, homeless outreach for housing placement, drop-in centers, peer respite positions, emergency rooms, warm lines and hotlines, and street outreach teams.

One challenge for individuals reentering society from the justice system is that some employers, due to their contracts, cannot hire people with criminal backgrounds to work with protected classes such as the elderly, minors, or developmentally disabled populations. SHARE! frequently hires individuals with felony records. The organization once wrote a letter of recommendation for a person whose background posed a barrier to employment. Through SHARE!'s advocacy, the individual successfully secured the job. Having lived experience of incarceration greatly enhances a peer's ability to connect and empathize with the people they serve.

Mr. Gomez shared that he is an employee at SHARE!'s downtown location. He recounted his 15-year incarceration and credited SHARE! with helping him turn his life around, allowing him now to support others by sharing his spirit, strength, and hope. Mr. Gomez admitted that upon his release, he struggled with self-medication and run-ins with the police until he encountered the SHARE! program. His life began to change after attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Mr. Gomez expressed a desire to practice public speaking; however, he currently excels at communicating hope to people on the streets. Those who once knew him now see him as a role model. He invites them to SHARE!, and they are joining him. Mr. Gomez expressed his gratitude to God for the positive changes in his life.

V. CDCR: Division of Rehabilitative Programs, Occupational Mentor Certifications Program (OMCP)

Freddie Roberson, *Substance Use Disorder Certified Counselor II Journey Counselor*

Paul Galloway, *Substance Use Disorder Certified Counselor II Journey Counselor*

Thomas Deschaine, *Certified Alcohol Drug Counselor I Journey Counselor*

This presentation provided an overview of DRP's OMCP that is facilitated at Valley State Prison and the personal experience and impact of the program on each presenter.

Mr. Deschaine began by stating that the OMCP equips incarcerated individuals with the training and education necessary to become Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Counselors. The program also allows participants to engage in paid mentorship roles within prisons through the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP). OMCP mentors provide guidance and peer-to-peer support to those assigned to Cognitive Behavioral Interventions (CBI), a facet of the program jointly operated by the CDCR and California Correctional Health Care Services' Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) program. Currently, 14 OMCP graduates who have been released from prison are now working as contracted staff providing AOD services both inside correctional institutions and in community-based programs.

In 2009, CDCR's DRP collaborated with the Orange County Department of Education, Options Recovery Systems, and others to recruit and train 50 incarcerated individuals at California State Prison, Solano, to obtain certification as Substance Abuse Counselors recognized by the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). This initiative was highly successful, prompting CDCR to expand and continue the program in 2011. OMCP is now operational in seven facilities across the state. The OMCP program at California State Prison, Los Angeles County, began on July 12, 2021. The typical duration of the training program for an OMCP cohort is one year. Upon completing their internship hours,

participants receive AOD counselor certification from the California Association for Alcohol/Drug Educators, recognized by the DHCS.

Mr. Roberson presented that, to be eligible for the OMCP, individuals must have more than five years remaining on their sentence and must not have incurred any serious rules violations in the past three years or been assigned to a secure housing unit in the last 3 to 5 years. These criteria are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Applicants must have a reading level of 9.0 or above, complete an application packet to their institution's Correctional Counselor (CC) II or I, or DRP CC III, and participate in an interview process. The application process includes submitting a resume, at least two character references from staff members, any certificates earned, and a

500-word essay answering the question: "How do I maintain my recovery AND what can I offer others to sustain their recovery?"

The AOD education component of the program covers a minimum of 50 hours of training in each of the following subjects: Overview of Addiction, Neurobiology & Pharmacology, Individual, Group, & Family Counseling, Personal & Professional Development, Case Management, Law and Ethics, and Practicum & Orientation.

Mr. Galloway described that participants are recruited from institutions statewide and receive training at one of the seven designated training sites across California. Upon successfully completing the OMCP and passing an AOD exam proctored by an accredited AOD certifying agency, participants assist CBI contract staff in co-facilitating ISUDT groups. OMCP graduates play a crucial role in the CBI component of the ISUDT program by assisting in class operations, providing guidance to participants, and supporting the understanding and utilization of course curriculums. They are compensated for their work while incarcerated. OMCP graduates also facilitate other programs within prisons, such as youth diversion programs at Central California Women's Facility CCWF and VSP. Once released, many OMCP graduates are hired by nonprofit and community-based programs and often return to the prisons to facilitate additional programs.

Mr. Deschaine began his personal story by sharing that he spent over 20 years in prison, serving a life sentence, and was found suitable for parole in 2018, crediting the OMCP as a significant factor in establishing his suitability for release. In 2014, while working in ISUDT at VSP, he was selected for the first OMCP cohort and graduated in 2016. He emphasized the tremendous impact of the program, noting that its value extends beyond certification as it addresses the underlying issues that led to incarceration, enabling successful community reintegration. The culture of accountability and professionalism cultivated among peers at VSP was transformative. Within three weeks of his release, Mr. Deschaine was hired as a counselor and has since secured increasingly better positions. He highlighted the high level of education provided by the OMCP curriculum, surpassing what is

typically available in the community. Eventually, he was invited to return to VSP as a counselor.

Mr. Roberson shared that he was asked to become a mentor in 2014, but initially knew little about what that entailed or the program itself. He switched jobs within the prison and became a mentor as VSP was launching their program. Mr. Roberson, who served a life sentence and was released in 2022 after 28 years, explained that his participation in OMCP taught him he had much to contribute to the field of recovery, based on his own experiences with drugs and alcohol. Upon release, he continued to support men and women struggling with addiction while still on parole. He was given the opportunity to return to VSP, the same prison from which he was paroled, to teach the next cohort. Mr. Roberson now uses the foundation laid by the first cohort to teach the seventh, instilling the integrity that is central to the program.

Mr. Galloway shared that he was incarcerated for 24 years, serving a life sentence when he arrived at VSP. He was inspired by the opportunity to make a difference and gain skills, which motivated him to set a goal to join the OMCP. He entered the program in 2016, became certified, passed the exam, and was paroled in 2021. He explained that his primary motivation for participating in the program was to help people before they return home, guiding them to address the issues that led to their incarceration to prevent future offenses and ensure no one gets hurt upon their release. Participating in the ISUDT program alongside other OMCP participants allowed him to confront and challenge himself in ways he believes could not have been achieved through other self-help groups, despite his extensive involvement in such groups. He gained five years of work experience as a mentor in prison. Mr. Galloway emphasized that OMCP graduates are dedicated to giving back and improving VSP by contributing to other programs within the institution.

Councilmember Discussion

Q: Judge Manley asked how the Camden Program engages individuals with short jail stays, averaging 38 days, from booking to follow up.

A: Ms. Bean explained that 50 percent of the population cycles out within 24-48 hours. Program staff are integrated into the booking classification process, and the reentry team follows up with specific referrals and ensures a team responds within 24 hours.

Q: Councilmember Manley asked if the requirement to include peer support positions in Camden County funding opportunities was established through legislation or county policy.

A: Ms. Bean confirmed that it is a Camden County policy.

Q: Councilmember Manley inquired if Tarzana's peer program, which reduced violence, was being expanded.

- A:** Ms. McGowan noted the expansion of the step-down program with mental health assistants in Los Angeles County jails, highlighting a reported 300 percent decrease in aggressive behaviors.
- Q:** Councilmember Manley questioned how individuals involved in SHARE! supported themselves to afford housing and move in quickly, asking about government assistance.
- A:** Ms. Harrigan stated that typically SHARE! serves individuals with mental health and SUD who qualify for Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). Some may also receive military assistance or have other sources of income. SHARE! strives to connect people with housing programs that can cover their rent while they seek employment. One council of cities in Southern California offers a special arrangement providing reduced rent for three to six months. Additionally, there are no requirements for first or last month's rent, making housing more accessible. Many individuals with a history of incarceration face difficulties passing background checks and are often excluded from the housing market; however, this is not an issue with the SHARE! housing program. SHARE! can house people quickly using this model because it does not rely on the Section 8 voucher or other government programs that involve extensive documentation and requirements. After securing immediate housing, SHARE! then focuses on longer-term solutions such as Section 8. Ms. Harrigan emphasized that SHARE! is an effective complement and supplement to existing housing programs.
- Q:** Councilmember Manley asked if the respite program was only two weeks long and inquired if it is an alternative to more restrictive care.
- A:** Ms. Harrigan affirmed the program's length and its role as an alternative to more restrictive care settings, offering a supportive community and recovery resources in a voluntary, non-overwhelming environment with eight beds. She noted that currently this program is funded by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and SHARE! is hoping it will still be funded after Proposition 1 is implemented.
- Q:** Councilmember Manley inquired about Mr. Gomez's daily role at SHARE!.
- A:** Mr. Gomez described his role at SHARE! Downtown, helping community service participants and connecting homeless individuals from Skid Row to community resources, housing, or treatment, and providing personal support. If they need a hug or someone to listen to their problems, Mr. Gomez obliges.
- Q:** Ms. Grealish requested more detail on how Camden County has integrated peers into jail settings, particularly with regard to the cultural shifts and specific policies developed to accommodate this practice. She voiced interest in learning about the methods used to overcome security concerns and law enforcement hesitations, and how data has been utilized to dictate security levels and access

for peers in these roles. She asked for insights into these experiences and the adjustments made to successfully implement peer involvement in the incarceration environment.

A: Ms. Bean stated that Camden County has been actively engaging in continuous discussions with correctional staff and wardens since 2018 to integrate peer roles into jail settings. She emphasized the importance of embedding reentry work into every level of conversation and training for new corrections officers, incorporating trauma-informed care and the science of addiction medicine. This approach aims to shift perspectives from purely punitive to more rehabilitative and supportive interactions with incarcerated individuals. Ms. Bean also mentioned that they challenge existing policies by having open dialogues about the reasons behind them, which has led to more flexible, case-by-case evaluations rather than strict rules based on the type of offense or years served. They encourage honest applications and consider individuals for peer roles based on their ability to contribute to the community positively, regardless of their past offenses. Additionally, she referenced a policy where peers are given a chance to prove themselves in the community for a year to demonstrate reduced recidivism before being granted broader access to jail settings.

Q: Ms. Grealish asked about the accountability and structure of OMCP and its potential as a model for other locations.

A: Mr. Galloway emphasized the critical role of accountability in OMCP, describing a "parallel process" where participants work on personal development alongside vocational training. Mr. Deschaine highlighted the cooperative culture among DRP staff and mentors, fostering professionalism and accountability.

Public Comment

Q: A member of the public stated that recently "The 50" movie launched and included a panel discussion with several of the people who helped launch the program years ago. They stated that the transformative stories were expected but the dramatic reductions in infractions and violence were a surprise to him. He stated that it is easy for CDCR to track violent episodes and infractions, and he would encourage CDCR to continue tracking and try and explore what elements make that ripple effect happen. He said it goes beyond the actual participants to spread throughout the prison system noting that some statements during the presentation hinted at it in terms of a culture change, and the public commentor thought that was very promising.

VI. Announcements

The next [Diversion/Reentry Workgroup](#) will be on June 7, 2024, from 3:00-5:00 PM, and will highlight presentations on services and programs that utilize peers to provide substance use disorder treatment at the state and local levels. The next

[Juvenile Justice Workgroup](#) will be on June 7, 2024, from 12:45-2:45 PM, and will continue the conversation on restorative justice from the February Juvenile Justice Workgroup and feature presentations on residential treatment for justice-involved youth with serious mental illness and substance use disorder. The next [Full Council Meeting](#) will be on June 28, 2024, from 2:00- 4:30 PM, and it will focus on the latest innovations in SUD treatment.

VII. Adjourn