

# Understanding and Reaching Crime Victims with Incarceration Histories

A Webinar for VOCA Administrators, Part 2

**Allison Hastings, Michelle Garcia, and Ashley McSwain**  
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# Welcome



**Allison Hastings**

Project Director

Vera Institute of Justice

# Training Goals for Part 2

- Gain tools to promote welcoming and inclusive services for survivors with incarceration histories,
- Identify strategies to better support existing grantees who serve survivors or victims of crime with incarceration histories, and
- Advance healing by seeking to fund new programs that work at the intersection of prisoner reentry and justice.

# About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims

The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims is a one-stop shop for victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, criminal justice professionals, and policymakers to get information and expert guidance to enhance their capacity to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially those from communities that are underrepresented in healing services and avenues to justice.

**We are supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime.**



# About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (2)

## **Our communities of focus are victims who are:**

- Immigrants or Limited English Proficient,
- Men of color,
- Women of color or other historically marginalized populations,
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning,
- Children,
- Older adults,
- People with disabilities or people who are Deaf, and
- Formerly incarcerated.

# About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (3)

**We are a collaboration among:**

- Caminar Latino
- Casa de Esperanza
- Common Justice
- FORGE
- The National Children's Advocacy Center
- The National Center for Victims of Crime
- The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
- Vera Institute of Justice
- Women of Color Network, Inc

# About Us: The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (4)

## **We are working to:**

- increase the number of victims who receive healing supports by understanding who is underrepresented and why some people access services while others don't;
- design and implement best practices for connecting people to the services they need; and
- empower and equip organizations to provide the most useful and effective services to crime victims.

# Vera Institute of Justice Center on Victimization and Safety

- Works to improve access to healing services for all victims of crime.
- Focuses on groups of people who are at elevated risk of harm, but have less access to healing and avenues to justice, including:
  - People with disabilities,
  - People who are Deaf,
  - Incarcerated people, and
  - Formerly incarcerated people.



# What we learned in the first webinar

Victimization experiences of formerly incarcerated people

Barriers to services

Opportunities to support crime victims with incarceration histories

# High levels of victimization

People with incarceration histories have higher rates of victimization and abuse than people who have never experienced incarceration.



# Victimization experiences before incarceration

In his study of 122 (107 men and 15 women) people who returned to the Boston area post-incarceration, Bruce Western found that **prior to incarceration:**

- 40% had witnessed someone being killed
- Nearly half were beaten by their parents
- 1/3 grew up with family violence
- 16% reported being sexually abused
- Half were seriously injured while growing up

(Bruce Western, *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2018).)

# Victimization during & after incarceration

## During incarceration

Approximately 1 in 10 former state prisoners reported experiencing sexual abuse while in detention. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012)

## After incarceration

Of the 122 participants Bruce Western's Boston Reentry Study, 1/4 had been threatened or attacked since returning home. (Western, 2018)



Many victims do not get help while they are incarcerated or during reentry.

# Barriers to accessing victim services during reentry

- Terminology and false dichotomy of “victim” and “perpetrator”
- Stigma
- Reentry services and victim services are siloed
- Few trauma-informed service programs for victims/survivors with incarceration histories
- Professionals responsible for post-release supervision may not be trauma-informed

# Opportunities to support crime victims with incarceration histories

## **Cultivating projects at the intersection of reentry and healing:**

- Encourage existing grantees to address the needs of formerly incarcerated victims.
- Promote partnerships between existing grantees and reentry programs.
- Fund new programs that feature partnerships between reentry organizations and victim service programs.
- Fund hybrid programs that are already working at the intersection of reentry and healing.

# Cultivating projects at the intersection of healing and reentry

Lessons Learned from VOCA Administrator Michelle Garcia

# Welcome: Michelle M. Garcia



**Michelle M. Garcia**

Director

District of Columbia

Office of Victim Services  
and Justice Grants

# Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG)

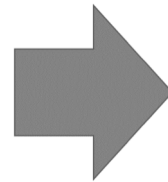
The mission of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) is to develop, fund, and coordinate programs that improve public safety; enhance the administration of justice; and create systems of care for crime victims, youth, and their families in the District.



# State Administering Agency

## Awards

- VOCA
- VAWA
- Byrne JAG
- Title II
- RSAT
- Coverdell
- PSN
- Other discretionary rewards



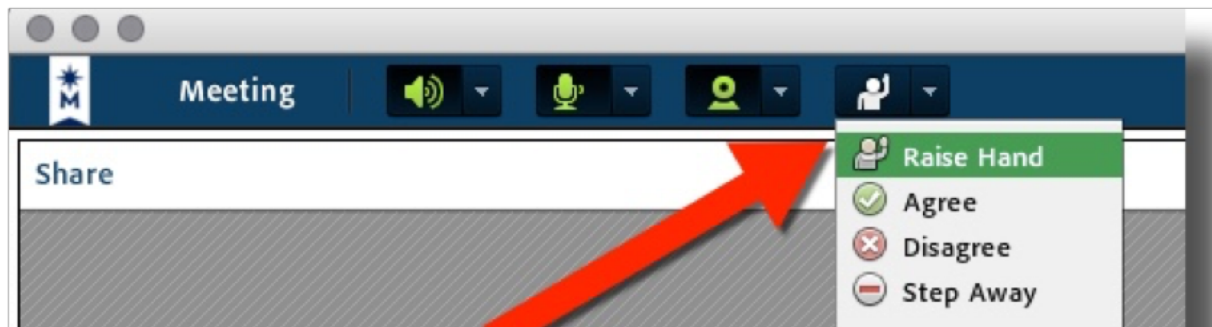
Victims of crime

Justice-involved  
individuals  
(adults and youth)

Youth who are  
truant or at risk for  
truancy or juvenile  
delinquency

# Raise Your Hand

- If you are the SAA for victim services and criminal justice formula funds.
- If you coordinate/collaborate with your SAA for criminal justice funds.





# What we know about justice involvement on any given day in DC

- 130 – Average daily adult arrests from all agencies
  - 4,779 – Pretrial Services Agency average daily population
  - 10,110 – Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency 1-day count on 9/30/2017
  - 2,099 – Department of Correction 1-day count on 9/30/2017
  - 5,258 Bureau of Prisons 1-day count on 12/30/2017
- 
- **22,376** – Total number of justice system-involved individuals on a given day in 2017

# What we know about women in our prisons and jails on any given day

At least half of incarcerated women have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime.

(Browne, Miller, & Maguin, 1999; Sacks, 2004)

**Histories of victimization are nearly universal for women in U.S. jails:**

- 86% have experienced sexual violence
- 77% have survived intimate partner violence
- 60% have experienced caregiver violence

(Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012)

# What are our resources to address these realities?



OVSJG FY2019 Budget: ~\$48 million

# Victim or Perpetrator



**False Dichotomy**

# Some promising efforts

- Domestic violence victims/survivors
  - Battered women's clemency projects
- Human trafficking victims/survivors
  - Vacatur and expungement efforts
- Vision 21: Supporting Male Survivors of Violence
- PREA

Despite these efforts, we have more work to do to make sure crime victims with incarceration histories get the help they need. . .

# Service providers often work in silos

## Victim Service Providers

- Not trained to address incarceration
- Not wanting to work with “offenders”
- Already struggling to meet demand for services

## Re-entry Service Providers

- Not asking about or able to identify victimization histories
- Not trained to address victimization
- Not sure where to refer clients



# Benefits of Addressing the Intersection

- Successful reentry requires addressing trauma
- Cycle of victimization and incarceration
- Reducing recidivism reduces victimization



# Benefits of Addressing the Intersection (2)



**Source:** United States Sentencing Commission  
[Research Report on Recidivism among federal violent offenders, 2019](#)

## Benefits of Addressing the Intersection (3)

- Moving beyond surviving to thriving



# How VOCA Administrators can begin addressing the intersection

## 1. Immerse yourself in reentry

The [National Reentry Resource Center](#) is a great resource

## 2. Facilitate connections between reentry and victim services providers

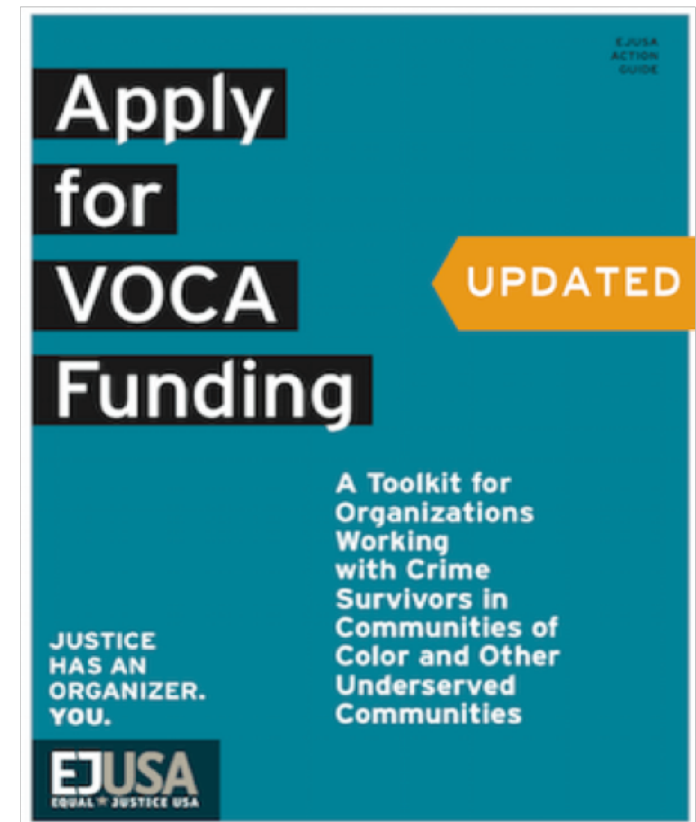
Check out the [Lionheart Foundation State Listing of Reentry Programs](#)

# How VOCA Administrators can begin addressing the intersection (2)

## 3. Provide potential grantees with resources

### [“Apply for VOCA Funding Toolkit”](#)

for organizations working with crime survivors in communities of color and other underserved communities, by Equal Justice USA



# Getting Dollars Out the Door

- Include incarcerated and returning citizens in needs assessments
- Craft RFPs that encourage/ prioritize services for justice-involved individuals – be explicit!
- Promote/require partnerships between reentry and victim service providers
- Get the RFA in front of reentry providers

**FY18**

**1 application**

**1 award**

**FY 19**

**8 applications**

**4 awards**

# Working at the intersection of reentry and healing

Lessons learned from Ashley McSwain

# Welcome: Ashley McSwain



**Ashley McSwain**

Executive Director

Community Family Life  
Services



# About Community Family Life Services

## **Community Family Life Services, Inc. (CFLS)**

supports women who are returning home following a period of incarceration by assisting them as they move into permanent self-sufficiency.





# About Community Family Life Services (2)

## Our primary goals:

- to provide short-term crisis and emergency assistance; and
- to empower individuals and families to successfully change their lives.



# About Community Family Life Services (3)

## **Our programs and services:**

- Transitional housing,
- Medical case management for individuals living with HIV or AIDS,
- Women's reentry housing initiative,
- Case management for incarcerated women,
- Employability development and job placement,
- Mentoring, and
- Group and individual parenting sessions.

# Why these programs and services?

**Because women returning home after a period of incarceration have many needs, including:**

- Childcare,
- Housing,
- Parenting support,
- Employment assistance,
- Health care, and
- Unmet needs stemming from unaddressed trauma and victimization.

# Our clients



When you work with a woman returning home from prison or jail, you are usually working with a crime victim too.

# Working at the intersection of reentry and healing requires resources

**VOCA funding** is a great source of support for programs serving crime victims, but it can be challenging for programs like Community Family Life Services:

- Language of “victims” and “victimization”
- Eligibility requirements
- Complicated nature of the applications
- Performance measures

# Securing VOCA funding in 2017

## What worked this time?

- Application language was more inclusive and seemed to say “we want to cast a wider net”
- Housing for justice-involved women was included in the mix of funding priorities
- We worked to secure partnerships with victim service providers

# How VOCA dollars support our work

## **Women's Reentry Transitional Housing and Victim Services Initiative**

This program provides transitional housing and support services for formerly incarcerated women who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence.





# Women's Reentry Transitional Housing and Victim Services Initiative

## Key details:

- Women can stay for up to 3 years.
- 16 housing units.
- Partnerships with victim service providers to identify potential clients.
- VOCA dollars support trauma-specific therapy, housing, case management, and transportation costs.



# Success stories: The Case of “TB”

**“TB” was a victim of domestic violence, who had been incarcerated for over 18 months for charges related to prostitution.** She came to our transitional housing program in 2017.

While in the program she worked with a case manager, attended therapy and support groups, and enrolled in the parenting program. **She has now regained custody of her children and secured full-time employment.**

# Opportunities for VOCA Administrators

- Be **explicit** that funding is available for serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated victims/survivors.
- **Reduce barriers to applying:** Ask yourself honestly, “How onerous is the application process? Is this keeping people from applying?”
- **Assess if metrics for measuring success are the correct ones** for this population.

# Questions?

# Contact information

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