

Discussion Guide

Reaching Victims Who Have an Incarceration History: A Webinar for Service Providers

By Kaitlin Kall

September 2019

These discussion questions can be used to help facilitate a dialogue with your colleagues and about how the content of this webinar applies to your work.

Webinar description:

Crime victims who have a history of incarceration carry both the trauma of suffering violence and the burden of stigma that comes from having spent time behind bars. This stigma can create real barriers to healing. [This webinar features the perspectives of victim service providers from two organizations](#) - Crisis Intervention Service in rural Iowa and Newark Community Solutions in Newark, NJ - working with this community of survivors. Presenters discuss how they have worked intentionally to open their doors to formerly incarcerated survivors, to support their staff to work with this population, and to create trauma-informed programs that reach overlooked survivors in their communities.

Presenters:

- *Allison Hastings, Project Director, Vera Institute of Justice*
- *Mary Ingham, Executive Director, Crisis Intervention Service (Iowa)*
- *Nicole Hamilton-Brahm, Violent Crime Program Supervisor, Crisis Intervention Service*
- *Colleen Smith, Clinical Director, Newark Community Solutions (Newark, NJ)*
- *Lorenzo Nash, Victim Services Peer Mentor, Newark Community Solutions*

Discussion Questions

1. In her presentation, Mary of Crisis Intervention Service (CIS) discusses her organization's shift towards using person-first language to avoid labeling. She says, "When we talk today, we try to avoid terms such as victim, survivor, batterer, rapist, and really focus on who we are serving. We are serving moms and dads, brothers and sisters, families, and community members. It's not our job to put labels on the people we are serving. The best way to form relationships is removing labels." Does your agency use person-first language? How can you promote using language that avoids stigmatizing labels?
2. During the webinar, Nicole explains that despite the assumption that CIS "served everyone", they realized they were not reaching people with incarceration histories. When they worked to reach those survivors, some staff were resistant and wondered, "If we are picking and choosing who we provide services to, and we pick someone who has done harm and has been incarcerated, who will we pick next?" How has your staff reacted in the past when you've expanded services to a new community of survivors? How did you or how would you anticipate overcoming any staff resistance or concerns?
3. Lorenzo shares some of his methods for conducting outreach to potential clients, particularly men of color who often have high levels of trauma and distrust of service providers, on behalf of Newark Community Solutions. Activities include community canvassing, outreach to reentry programs and local colleges, and hosting events such as barbeques. What are some "nontraditional" ways that you could conduct outreach to under-served

survivors, including men of color and those with incarceration histories?

4. Colleen explains that for Newark Community Solutions, developing a trauma-informed culture includes “creating choices for clients and allowing individuals to define their problems and their successes instead of having us lead with what we think people need.” What is your agency’s approach to developing and supporting a trauma-informed culture? How does supporting clients’ autonomy play into this approach?

This document was produced by the Vera Institute of Justice under award #2016-XV-GX-K015, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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