

# Reaching Victims Who Have an Incarceration History

A Webinar for Service Providers

September 12, 2019

---

This webinar was produced by the Vera Institute of Justice **Center on Victimization and Safety** 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 webinar are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

# Welcome



**Allison Hastings**

Project Director

Vera Institute of Justice

# Agenda

- **Overview of the problem and barriers to services:** Allison Hastings, Vera Institute of Justice
- **Reaching Formerly Incarcerated Survivors: Lessons from a Mainstream Victim Service Program in Iowa:** Mary Ingham and Nicole Hamilton-Brahm, Crisis Intervention Service
- **Reaching Formerly Incarcerated Survivors: Lessons from a Victim Service Initiative in Newark, New Jersey:** Colleen Smith and Lorenzo Nash, Newark Community Solutions
- **Questions & Answers**

# 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.



# Victimization experiences before, during, and after incarceration

Facts and figures

Barriers to services

Opportunities for healing

# Did you know?

People who have an incarceration history 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

- The language victim service providers use is not always the language formerly incarcerated survivors use
- False dichotomy of “victim” and “perpetrator”
- Stigma
- Reentry services and victim services are siloed
- Few trauma-informed service programs for victims/survivors who have an incarceration history

# Overcoming these barriers and reaching more survivors

- Victims of Crime Act rule change
- Growing awareness among victim advocates and criminal justice reformers that people do not fit neatly into a singular category of “victim” or “offender”
- Efforts to cultivate work at the intersection of reentry and healing (Boston and Washington, DC)
- Intentional work by victim service providers to reach more victims in their communities, including those who have experienced incarceration

# Reaching Formerly Incarcerated Survivors: Lessons from a Victim Service Program in Iowa

A Conversation with Mary Ingham & Nicole Hamilton-Brahm

Crisis Intervention Service

# Welcome Mary Ingham



**Mary Ingham**

Executive Director

Crisis Intervention

Service

# Welcome Nicole Hamilton-Brahm



**Nicole Hamilton-Brahm**

Homicide and Other  
Violent Crimes Program  
Supervisor

Crisis Intervention  
Service

# About Crisis Intervention Service



## Rural Victim Services

- Demographics
- Services
- Dilemmas among rural survivors

# How we serve victims

- Screening – screening “in” vs. screening “out”
- The “we serve everyone” paradox
- Getting started in rural communities
- Dichotomy in victim Services and why it exists

# Preparing staff to serve formerly incarcerated survivors

## Resistance

- Fear
- Safety
- Bias

## Honest Evaluation

- Of Self
- Of the Situation
- Of the Work We  
Do

# Reaching and engaging formerly incarcerated survivors

- Who do we Need?
- Where do goals align?
- What does the system gain?

**End Result = Access**

## Strategic Priority 1: Focus resources toward individuals most likely to reoffend

- Incarcerate only those that need it.
- Staff in correlation with a person's risk.
- Expand community supervision.

## Strategic Priority 2: Focus on evidence-based and research-informed practices for improved client reentry

- Invest in program models that reduce recidivism.
- Expand continuous quality improvement processes.
- Seek housing options for geriatric and seriously mentally ill individuals.
- Expand and collaboration with other agencies and organizations.

# Providing services



# Making it work



The National  
**RESOURCE CENTER**  
 for **REACHING VICTIMS**

Helping those who help others

[Move to End Violence: Building Movement for Social Change](#)

# Reaching Formerly Incarcerated Survivors: Lessons from a Victim Service Initiative in Newark, New Jersey

A Conversation with Colleen Smith & Lorenzo Nash

Newark Community Solutions

# Welcome Colleen Smith



**Colleen Smith**

Clinical Director

Newark Community  
Solutions

# Welcome Lorenzo Nash



**Lorenzo Nash**

Victim Services Peer  
Mentor

Newark Community  
Solutions

# Newark Community Solutions

Community justice initiative designed to improve public perceptions of justice through restorative court-based and community-based programming



**Community Court**



**Youth Court**



**Victim Services**

# Our services

## What we do

- Individual and Group Counseling
- Case Management
- Mentoring
- Advocacy

## Who We Serve

- Flexible Eligibility
- Urban Community
- 18 to 30 year-old “non-traditional” victims of crime
- Poly-victimization: Victims of assault, survivors of homicide, and repeated exposure to violence

# How We Arrived Here

Work in the Courts



Work in the Community

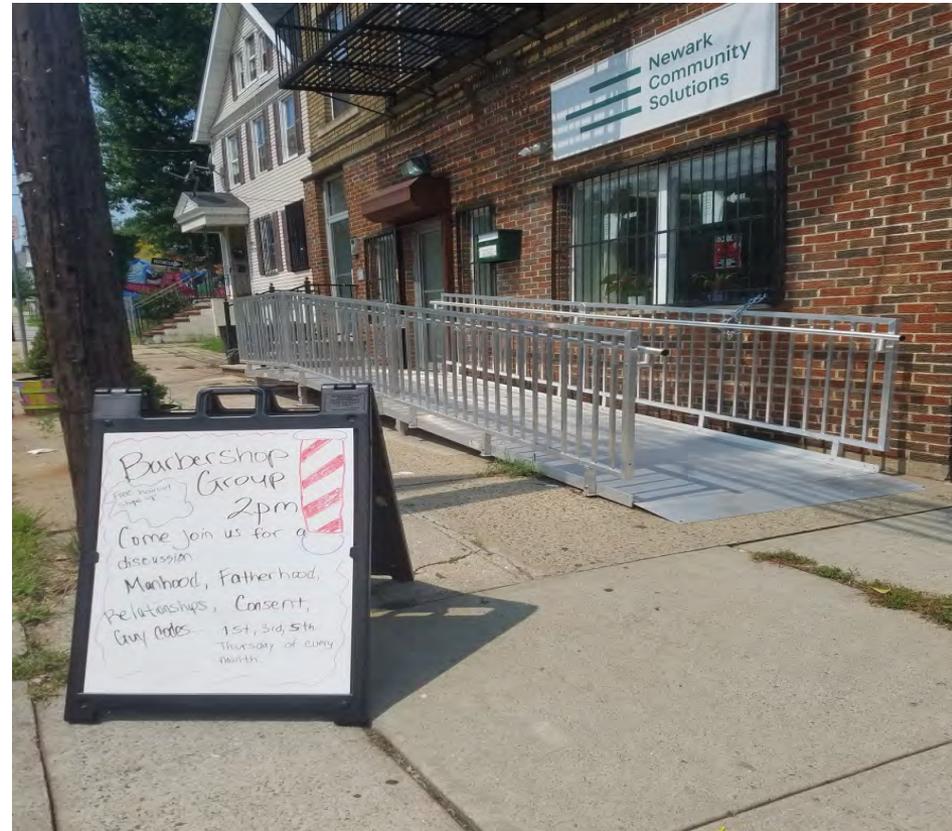


## Recurring Theme: *Worthiness*

- There are a number of dualities that present when working with people who are justice-involved or at risk of justice-involvement
  - -Offender vs. Victim
  - -Violent vs. Non Violent Crimes

# Shifting to Community-Based Programming in Newark

- For our clients, mental health and support services were too often connected to the justice system
- Identified a need to reach “non-traditional” victims on their own terms
- Realized we must bring services to people, meeting them “where they are”



# Preparing staff to provide victim services



- Intentional onboarding and training
- Ongoing supervision and support
- Acknowledgement of challenges and difficulties
- Celebration of successes, big and small



# Engaging Formerly Incarcerated Survivors

*“No one is leaving their comfort zone to come here unless there’s a reason. No one is taking that journey unless they feel like they’ll get something.”*



# Working with male survivors

Create Choice

Patience &  
Humility

Create Safe Space

Individual  
Defines  
"Problem"

Individual  
Defines  
"Success"

# Doing this work: Challenges and Opportunities

Thoughtful Outreach



Understand who you're working with



Involve the wider community



Get out of the office

# Doing this work: Challenges and Opportunities (2)

Language Matters

```
graph TD; A[Language Matters] --> B[Stay current]; B --> C[Be inclusive]; C --> D[Ask questions];
```

Stay current

Be inclusive

Ask questions

# Doing this work: Challenges and Opportunities (3)

Clinical Flexibility



If it doesn't work, do something else



There is diversity in healing



People know what they need, start there

# Doing this work: Challenges and Opportunities (4)

Be Consistent



You have to show up



Avoid promises



Follow up

# Key points and common themes

- Work with staff to help them feel comfortable; provide and offer support
- If you want to reach formerly incarcerated survivors, go to the spaces where they are
- Focus on what victims tell you they need and “small wins”
- Work to create trust and opportunities to seek help
- Be creative with resources and partnerships

# Questions?

# Contact information

Allison Hastings  
Vera Institute of Justice  
[ahastings@vera.org](mailto:ahastings@vera.org)