

Improving Reentry for Homeless Veterans with Peer Support: The Post-Incarceration Engagement Model

A Workshop Presentation by:
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2023 National Health Care for the Homeless Conference & Policy Symposium
May 17, 2023



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VETERANS JUSTICE PROGRAMS: SERVICES FOR VETERANS INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Wednesday May 17, 2023

2023 National Health Care for the Homeless Conference & Policy Symposium

Session: Improving Reentry for Homeless Veterans with Peer Support:

The Post-Incarceration Engagement Model

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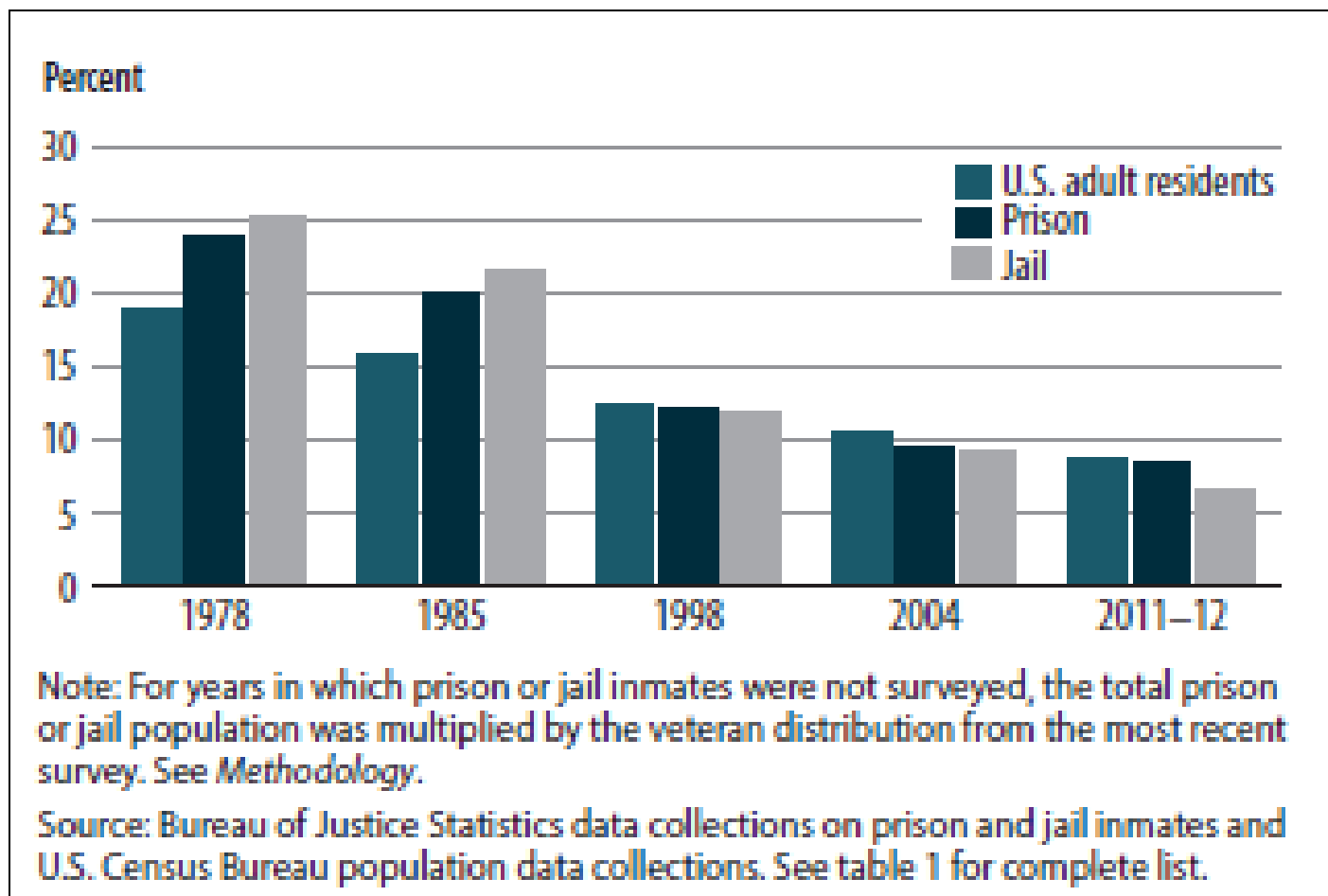
Objectives

- What do we know about Veterans involved in the criminal justice system?
- What are VHA's programs for justice-involved Veterans?
- PIE overview
- HCRV Specialist perspective
- PIE Peer Specialist perspective



Veterans in Prison and Jail

Estimated percent of veterans in the U.S. resident population in prison and jail, 1978, 1985, 1998, 2004, and 2011-12



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Veterans in Prison 2016

- Approximately 98% were males
- 96,300 males in state prison
- 9,100 males in federal prison
- Average age: 51 in federal and 52 in state
- In both state and federal prison:
 - Half of male veterans were white
 - About a quarter were black
 - About a tenth were Hispanic

Maruschak and Bronson, Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016, Veterans in Prison (NCJ 252646, March 2021)
<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/vpspi16st.pdf>

Veterans in State Prison, 2016, BJS

- Veterans in state prison are demographically different than non-Veterans
 - More likely to be male (98.2% vs. 92.4%)
 - More likely to be White (50.1% vs 28.9%)
 - Older (mean age 52.3 years vs. 37.9 years)
 - Male veterans more likely to be incarcerated for violent sexual offenses (26% vs 12%)
 - Male veterans less likely incarcerated for Property or Drug offenses (9% vs 15%)

Maruschak and Bronson, Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016, Veterans in Prison (NCJ 252646, March 2021)
<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/vpspi16st.pdf>

What is US Department of Veterans Affairs

- **Veterans Health Administration**
 - 171 medical centers, 1,112 outpatient clinics, 370 Vet Centers
 - Medical: inpatient, outpatient, emergency, surgical, pharmacy, rehabilitation, skilled nursing, hospice
 - Mental Health: assessment, diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues, including substance use; inpatient, outpatient, residential, pharmacy
 - Homeless: outreach, emergency/transitional/permanent housing, employment, prevention
 - Vet Centers: readjustment counseling, individual and group
- **Veterans Benefits Administration**
 - 57 Regional Offices
 - Life Insurance, Home Loan, Disability Compensation, Pension, Education, Vocational Rehabilitation
- **National Cemetery Administration**
 - 131 National Cemeteries
 - Burial, Military Funeral Honors, Burial flags, Headstones/Markers/Medallions, Presidential Memorial Certificates

Veterans Justice Programs (VJP): Mission & Vision

Mission

To identify justice-involved Veterans and contact them through outreach, in order to facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point. Veterans Justice Programs accomplish this by building and maintaining partnerships between VA and key elements of the criminal justice system.

Vision

Every justice-involved Veteran will have access to the care, services and other benefits to help him or her maximize their potential for success and stability in the community, including by avoiding homelessness and ending their involvement in the justice system.



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VJP Outreach Services

Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO)

- Gain access to the jail
 - Identify veterans and determine eligibility
 - Conduct outreach, assessment, and case management for Veterans in local courts and jails
 - Provide/coordinate training for law enforcement personnel
 - Linkage to VA and community services/resources
- Number of Specialists funded: 428
 - Note: Peer Support Specialists are 15 of these positions
 - Number of Veterans receiving VJO services, FY22: 39,591

Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV)

- Gain access to the prison
 - Educate Veterans' groups about VA and VA services
 - Identify Veterans and Determine Eligibility
 - Reentry Planning
 - Linkage to VA and Community Services
- Number of incarcerated Veterans receiving reentry services, FY22: 6,574



Limits on VA Services for Incarcerated Veterans

- Can provide:
 - Outreach, assessment, referral and linkage to services
 - Treatment for justice-involved Veterans who are not incarcerated
- Title 38 CFR 17.38 (c)(5) does not allow VHA to provide:
 - Hospital and outpatient care for a Veteran who is
 - Either a patient or inmate in an institution of another government agency
 - If that agency has a duty to give that care or services



What can VJP do?

- Facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point in the Veteran's criminal justice involvement.
 - Assist local partners in identifying veterans and determining eligibility for VHA services.
 - Conduct outreach, assessment, and case management for Veterans engaged with criminal justice systems.
 - Provide/coordinate training for criminal justice personnel regarding Veteran specific needs and VA services.
 - Link to VA and community services/resources



Clinical Characteristics of Justice-Involved Veterans Served by VJP

- Most Veterans seen in VJP have a mental health (67%) or substance use disorder (52%) diagnosis, or both (44%).*
- In Fiscal Year 2019:
 - 11% of Veterans seen in VJO had an OUD diagnosis*
 - Much more prevalent than Veterans who are not justice involved (1%)
- Veterans seen in VJO face a higher suicide risk compared to other VA Veteran patients.**

*Finlay, A. K., Blue-Howells, J., Stimmel, M., Yu, M., Stewart, K. & Clark, S. (2020). Veterans Justice Program: Connecting Veterans with Veterans Health Administration Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment [Fact Sheet 2020]. Menlo Park, CA: Center for Innovation to Implementation. (Updated 07/09/2020)

**Palframan KM, Blue-Howells J, Clark SC, McCarthy JF. Veterans Justice Programs: Assessing Population Risks for Suicide Deaths and Attempts. Suicide Life Threat Behav. 2020 Aug;50(4):792-804. doi: 10.1111/sltb.12631. Epub 2020 Mar 9. PMID: 32147866.

Clinical Characteristics of Justice-Involved Veterans

- Justice involved Veterans are 3x more likely to have attempted suicide in their lifetimes as compared to non-justice involved Veterans.*
- Older Veterans re-entering after incarceration are at particular risk for death by drug overdose and other accidental injury as compared to non-justice involved Veterans.**

*Holliday, R., Hoffmire, C. A., Martin, W. B., Hoff, R. A., & Monteith, L. L. (2021). Associations between justice involvement and PTSD and depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempt among post-9/11 veterans. *Psychological Trauma*.

**Barry, L. C., Steffens, D. C., Covinsky, K. E., Conwell, Y., Li, Y., & Byers, A. L. (2018). Increased risk of suicide attempts and unintended death among those transitioning from prison to community in later life. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 26(11), 1165–1174.



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Outcomes: What Do We Know So Far?

Recent research by a VA investigator demonstrated that:

- Within one year of their HCRV outreach visit, 88% of Veterans with mental health diagnoses had at least one VHA mental health visit.
- Within the same timeframe, 58% of HCRV Veterans with substance use disorder diagnoses had at least one VHA substance use disorder visit.

*Finlay, A. K., Blue-Howells, J., Stimmel, M., Yu, M., Stewart, K. & Clark, S. (2020). Veterans Justice Program: Connecting Veterans with Veterans Health Administration Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment [Fact Sheet 2020]. Menlo Park, CA: Center for Innovation to Implementation. (Updated 07/09/2020)



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VA Partnership with U.S. Jails and Prisons

- Outreach
 - In person outreach in 1,111 jails and 929 state and federal prisons
 - Negotiating access to an additional 890 jails and 132 prisons
 - Video outreach in 183 jails and 136 prisons
- Identification using Veteran Reentry Search Service (VRSS)
 - VRSS is a web-based tool intended to help criminal justice agencies (prisons, jails, and courts) identify Veterans within their populations
 - 350 jails in 26 states
 - 31 state departments of corrections
 - Federal Bureau of Prisons



For more information

- Health Care for Reentry Veterans:
<http://www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp>
- Veterans Justice Outreach:
<http://www.va.gov/homeless/VJO.asp>
- Jessica Blue-Howells, LCSW
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POST-INCARCERATION ENGAGEMENT PROVIDING PEER SUPPORT TO REENTRY VETERANS

ADDING PIE PEERS TO VJP REENTRY SERVICES

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Session: Improving Reentry for Homeless Veterans with Peer Support:

The Post-Incarceration Engagement Model

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VA Disclaimer

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs or the U.S. government. The authors have no conflicts of interest.

This project was funded by a grant from VA HSR&D QUERI (QUE 20-017).



Objectives

- Post-Incarceration Engagement (PIE)
 - An integrated peer support intervention for Veterans to support community reintegration
- Overview of the PIE model
- Work of VJP PIE peers
- Current implementation
- Pilot results



Goals and Key Objectives

- The Post-Incarceration Engagement (PIE) model is an intensive peer support intervention for reentry Veterans.
- PIE aims to improve linkage with and engagement in VA services, including mental health, substance use, and assistance with housing and employment with a goal of ultimately reducing homelessness and recidivism for Veterans being released from jails and prisons.
- The PIE intervention adds a peer specialist to enhance existing VA Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV) services and works closely with programs such as HUD-VASH.
- OPERATIONAL PARTNERS
VA Homeless Programs Office (Veterans Justice Programs and HUD-VASH)



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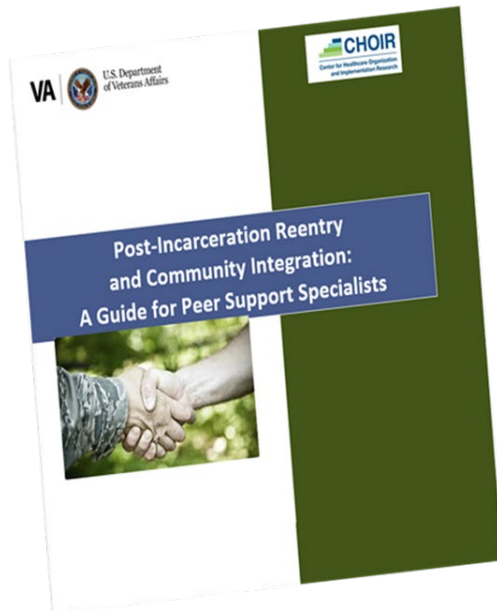
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Overview of PIE Intervention

PIE increases the reach and impact of VA's services for reentry Veterans



- Intervention begins pre-release and intensive services begin after release.
- PIE peer teams with Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) reentry specialist or VJO specialist
- Encompasses elements of the VA's patient-centered *Whole Health* approach
 - PIE peers are trained to help Veterans think about *What Matters Most* and to assist with goal setting
- Strong connections and partnerships with state and local correctional institutions, and community agencies



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Implementation at six new sites

Following the original pilot site in Bedford, MA, the following sites hired PIE peers in 2022 and 2023:

- Houston, TX
- Las Vegas, NV
- Little Rock, AR
- Manchester, NH
- Reno, NV (to begin May 2023)
- Togus, ME (no longer implementing)



Implementation strategies include:



- Implementation manual
- Training
- Facilitation
- Ongoing monitoring of program
- Updates & feedback (fidelity reports)
- Problem solving
- Providing support
- Monthly community of practice



New sites with > 8 months implementation



Manchester, NH
James Davis, CPS
Michele A. Dussault, LCSW



Little Rock, AR
Kristian N. Smith, CPS
Markisha Cole, LCSW



Houston, TX
Jermaine Britt, CPS
Thomas Mattison, LCSW



Las Vegas, NV
Corey Mortensen, CPS
Jennifer Yanez, LCSW

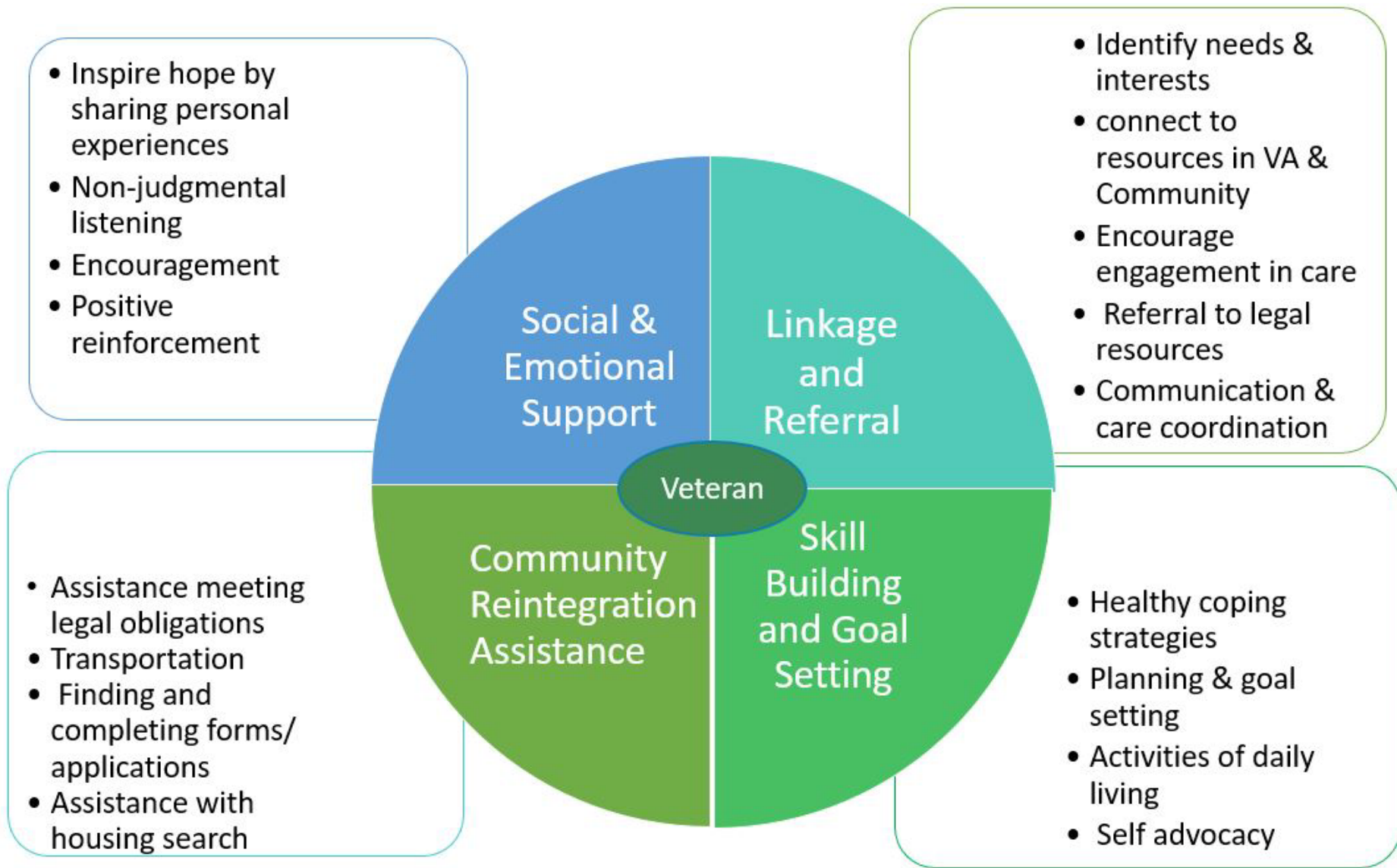


What is a VJP PIE Peer?

- A peer is not a clinician; peers are trained to draw on their lived experience to provide guidance and support
- VJP PIE Peers draw upon their lived experience with homelessness and/or recovery experiences as well as their knowledge of the VA healthcare system, benefits and community resources to assist Veterans leaving incarceration
- PIE peers team with VA's Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) case managers to facilitate access and encourage continued engagement in services.
 - When clinical expertise is needed peers contact the HCRV specialist or another clinician.
- Ideally, services begin pre-release



VJP PIE Peer Roles and Activities



Vital connections

- Justice-involved Veterans are frequently homeless upon release
- VJP PIE peers work intensively with newly released Veterans
- Working with the HCRV specialist, they connect justice-involved Veterans with VA and community resources to foster community reintegration:
 - Housing
 - Healthcare
 - Mental health and recovery services
 - Employment
 - Career Development including education and training
 - Benefits (VA and non-VA)
- Some peers are part of VA homeless centers that provide one-stop services, such as Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRC)



New sites: Accomplishments

- Trained peers, HCRV specialists, and clinical supervisors at 5 sites
- Over 100 Veterans received intensive post-release VJP PIE peer services with 574 documented encounters (6/1/2022 – 5/5/2023)
- Nearly 370 incarcerated Veterans learned about VA, benefits, and PIE services during pre-release informational sessions
- Establishing connections with parole/probation, corrections, and the community



Sex offenders – additional barriers

- Must register with local police department
- May need to wear monitor
- Housing barriers
- Employment barriers
- Stigma
- Internet restrictions



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“Being a sex offender, it's harder because it's such a more impactful crime. I know he [peer] doesn't have an issue. ... Somebody who is dealing with finding a job. Finding housing as a sex offender, which is near impossible.”

- Veteran in PIE Pilot



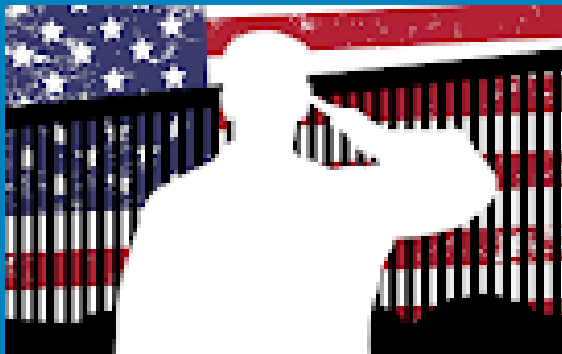
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Findings and Lessons Learned from Post- Incarceration Engagement (PIE) Pilot Study in MA



Healthcare Outcomes from PIE pilot

- 43 veterans in PIE intervention group; 36 in historical comparison group
- Intervention participants were significantly more likely to receive substance use treatment than the comparison group (86% versus 19%, $p < .0001$) and the mean monthly substance use visits was greater in the intervention group (0.96 versus 0.34, $p < .007$)
- Engagement in mental health services greater for intervention group than comparison group (93% versus 64%, $p < .003$)
- No significant differences between groups for linkage to primary care, emergency department use and hospitalization.

Hyde et al. Enhancing Community Integration After Incarceration: Findings from a Prospective Study of an Intensive Peer Support Intervention for Veterans with Historical Comparison Group. *Health & Justice*, vol. 10, December 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40352-022-00195-5>

Housing and Recidivism

Housing Situation	Released < 1 year at end of analysis period (n=24)	Released > 1 year at end of analysis period (n=19)
Permanent housing	6 (25%)	16 (84%)
Transitional housing	6 (25%)	1 (5%)
Short-term emergency housing	5 (21%)	0 (0%)
Residential treatment program	6 (25%)	0 (0%)
Street homeless/unsheltered	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Hospitalized		1 (5%)
Incarcerated	1 (4%)	

- Most people achieved permanent housing around 1-year post-release
- Recidivism rate at one year was 7%



Value of VJP Peer Support

- *“But when you get out, you’ve got the weight of the world on your shoulders. You're dealing with your own shame and guilt and a plethora of feelings. And to have somebody to help direct you and guide you and get you where, and the places you need to be, it's just amazing.”*
- *“It gives me hope for the future. It lets me know that [peer] will always be there. Somebody is always going to be there that I can go, and if nothing else, I can ask questions. I can get information I need.”*



Peer-reviewed publications

A few of the peer-reviewed publications based on the PIE Pilot:

Hyde, J; Byrne, T; Petrakis, BA; Yakovchenko, V; Kim, B; Fincke, BG; Bolton, R; Visher, C; Blue-Howells, J; Drainoni, ML; McInnes, DK. Enhancing Community Integration After Incarceration: Findings from a Prospective Study of an Intensive Peer Support Intervention for Veterans with Historical Comparison Group. Health & Justice, vol. 10, December 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40352-022-00195-5>

Hyde JK, Bolton R. Kim,B, Yakovchenko V, Petrakis BA, Visher C, McInnes, DK. I've just never done that: The influence of transitional anxiety on post-incarceration reentry and reintegration experiences among veterans. Health & Social Care in the Community, July 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13481>.

Kalver EH, McInnes DK, Yakovchenko V, Hyde J, Petrakis BA, Kim B. The CORE (Consensus on Relevant Elements) Approach to Determining Initial Core Components of an Innovation. Frontiers in Health Services. November 2021.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/frhs.2021.752177> (awarded 2022 outstanding article)



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PIE Leadership Team

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POST-INCARCERATION ENGAGEMENT PROVIDING PEER SUPPORT TO REENTRY VETERANS

HCRV SPECIALIST PERSPECTIVE

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Jennifer Yanez, LCSW

Healthcare for Reentry Veterans Program

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System

Las Vegas, Nevada



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Objectives

- Working with a PIE peer
 - Division of labor while maintaining close communication
 - Supervision
- Addition of a peer to HCRV team
 - Improves quality of care
 - Provides services that weren't possible prior
- Example of team-based approach



PIE team in Las Vegas



Corey Mortensen, VJP PIE peer and Liz Jarman, CRRC Program Coordinator and clinical supervisor
Not pictured: Jennifer Yanez, HCRV specialist

Community Resource and Referral Center



Northeast Primary Care Clinic
Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC) is co-located within our
Northeast Primary Care Clinic in Las Vegas, NV



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Nevada Snapshot

- Approximately 700 incarcerated Veterans in Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC)
- 18 facilities including Prisons (7), Conservation Camps/Fire Camps (9), Work Release Programs (2)
 - Southern Nevada VA HCS (HCRV/PIE team) mainly work with 12 of these facilities



Pre-Release in Nevada

- HCRV specialist is notified of a Veteran through various methods (in-person outreach to NDOC, emails from Reentry staff, emails from Pre-Release Parole and Probation (P&P) staff, direct letters or phone calls from incarcerated Veterans, VRSS)
- HCRV specialist meets with Veteran to complete HOMES assessment, get Release of Information signed, gather more information and ease anxiety
- HCRV specialist sends letter of eligibility to Veteran
- Veteran completes parole board hearing and notifies HCRV specialist of outcome
- HCRV specialist stays in contact with Veteran via phone, letters, or visits until release day



Day of release in Nevada

- NDOC transports Veteran to Parole & Probation (P&P)
- Meet Veteran at P&P
- Transport to CRRC to complete screenings and get housing program assignment
- Issue Homeless Programs phone, set up initial medical appointment
- Transport to housing and provide warm hand-off



Day after Release

- VJP PIE Peer meets Veteran to do time-sensitive tasks such as felony registration at police department, walk-in Mental Health appointment for medication refills
- The day after release also involves rapport building, lunch/meal with Peer, discussion about goals and plans
- Peer spends 5-6 hours with the Veteran



Case Study

- Incarcerated for 7 years
- Released April 2023
- 56 years old
- Caucasian female

- Needs upon release
 - HCRV assistance
 - Peer assistance



Case study – HCRV assistance

- 10 pre-release contacts to assist with benefits and release plan, including changes in parole plan
- Transportation from P&P to CRRC
- Completed assessments
- GPD Social Worker placed in housing
- Introduced option to have male Peer
- Warm hand-off to VJP PIE Peer



Case study – Peer assistance

- 9 contacts since release
 - 5 in-person contacts for at least 4 hours
- Day of release transportation to housing
- Felony registration
- Clothing and necessities
- Bank
- Acclimate to VA healthcare
- VA benefits
- Ordered documents
- Family reintegration



What VJP PIE Peer adds to Reentry

- Veteran facing assistance
 - Continues support beyond HCRV
 - Employment (felony friendly)
 - Helps with long-term housing
- Non-clinical trust and rapport
 - Shares lived experience
 - Role model
 - Goal planning and skill building
 - Linkage and continued engagement



Las Vegas PIE Team

For more information:

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POST-INCARCERATION ENGAGEMENT PROVIDING PEER SUPPORT TO REENTRY VETERANS

VJP PIE PEER PERSPECTIVE

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Kristian N. Smith, BA CPS

Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans Program

Central Arkansas VA Healthcare System

Little Rock, Arkansas



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Learning Objectives

Participants in this session will learn:

- How my background prepared me for this role
- The role PIE Peers can play in assisting Veterans with re-entry following incarceration
 - Pre-release
 - Day of release
 - Post-Release
- Impact of PIE Peer interventions: case study 1
- Impact of PIE Peer Interventions: case study 2
- Impact of PIE Peer interventions: case study 3



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Kris' Background

- Army Veteran 14 years; served in Iraq & Afghanistan
- Education:
 - BA in Criminal Justice
 - Certified peer specialist (CPS)
 - Trained in principles of Whole Health and Motivational Interviewing
- Position: VA Peer specialist since 2018
- Location: Community-based HCHV Program at the Veterans Day Treatment Center in Little Rock, Arkansas
- Relevant experience coming into VJP PIE Peer role:
 - Whole Health trainer
 - Former HUD-VASH peer
 - Conduct group sessions for veterans experiencing homelessness



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Kris' Immediate Support Team



Lynn Hemphill, LCSW, HCHV Program Manager – Supervisor; Estella Morris, PhD, LCSW, CHC Program Manager; Kristian Smith, BA, PIE Peer; Markisha Cole, LCSW, HCRV Coordinator



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Services include

Laundry



Meals

VA Housing programs:

Grant per Diem (GPD)

**Supportive Services
for Veteran Families
(SSVF)**



Showers



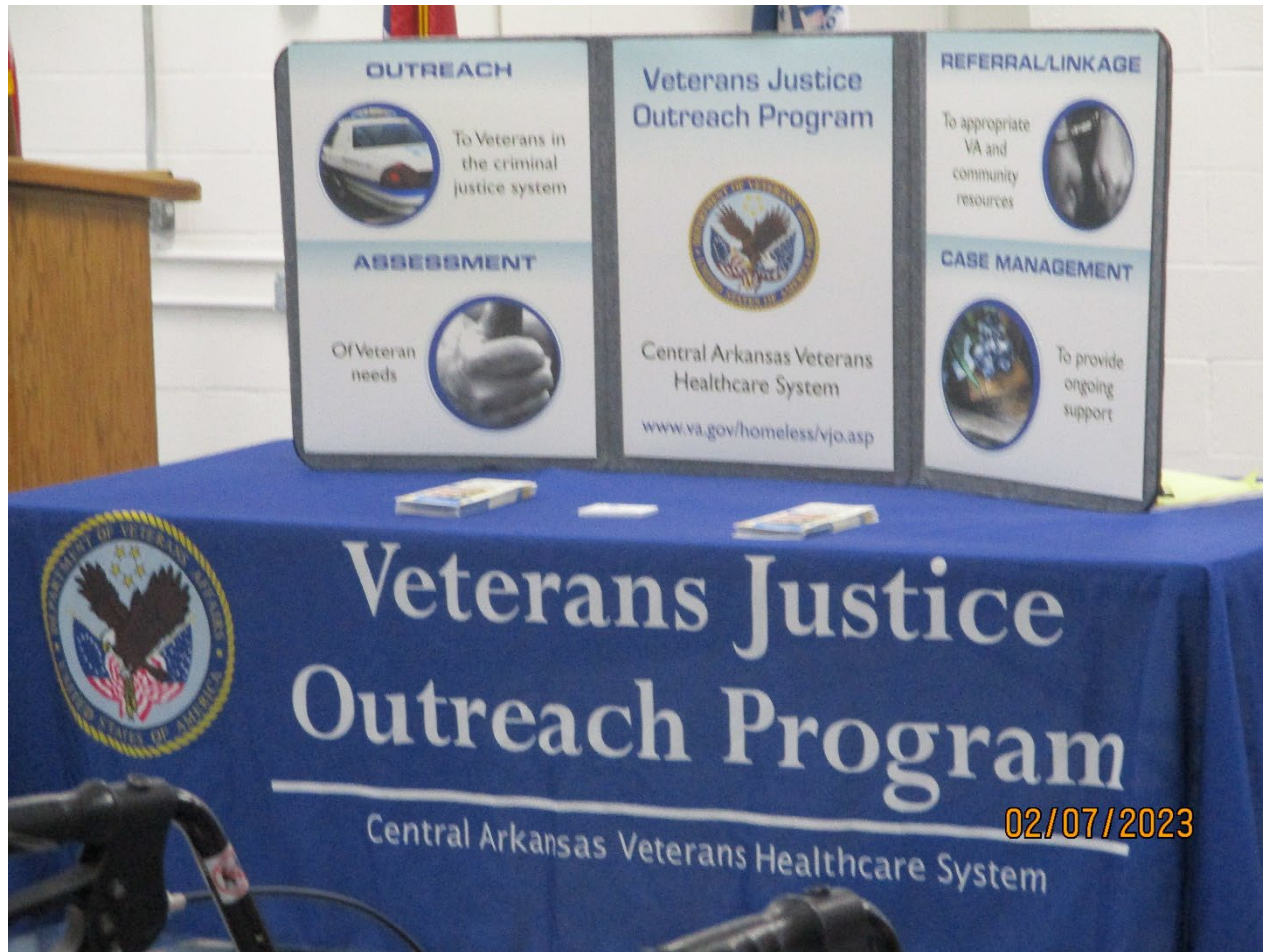
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Pre-release presentations



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Pre-release Peer services

- Not possible at all PIE sites
- Informational sessions for inmates:
 - Services and benefits
 - Assistance registering for VA services



Day of release peer services

- Provide transportation from prison
- Talking in vehicle about goals, concerns, and what happens next may relieve transitional anxiety
- May need to meet with parole or probation on day of release or soon thereafter
- Meet with HCRV specialist (a case manager) for placement in housing
- Transport to housing and introduce to staff
- Set appointment to meet the next day



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Post-release Tailored peer services

- Transportation
- Basic Necessities
- Stable Housing – moving to permanent housing
- Documentation
- Applying for benefits
- Legal stipulations
- Goal setting and skill building
- Finding employment
- Educational opportunities
- Connection and engagement with healthcare
- Reentry group

and much more!



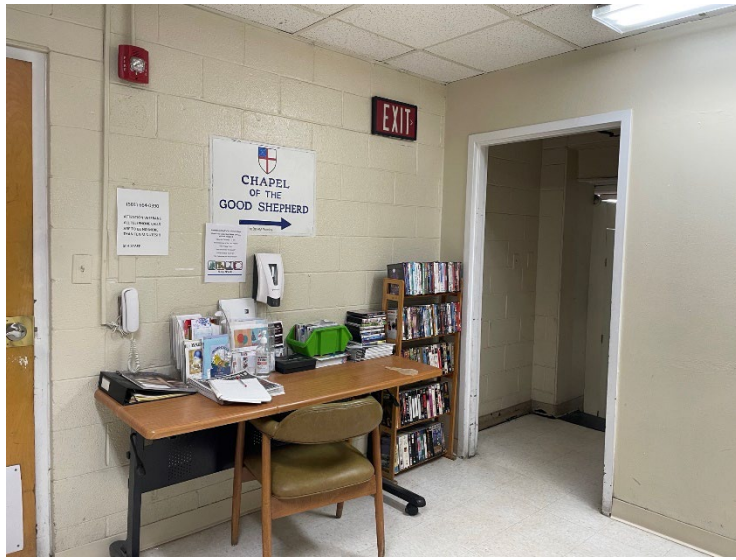
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Housing – St. Francis House



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Upon release

- Upon release Veterans are excited
- Some have fears of being free
- Unrealistic goals (want things done fast!)
- Need housing
- Need to start/re-establish benefits
- Obtain required documentation



Case Study 1

- Incarcerated for 2 years
 - Released December 2022
 - 67 years old
 - Caucasian male
-
- Pre-release, day of release, post release
 - Needs upon release
 - Peer assistance provided



Case Study 2

- Incarcerated for 14 years
 - Released February 2023
 - 57 years old
 - Caucasian male
-
- Day of release and post release services
 - Needs upon release
 - Peer assistance provided



Sexual offenders

- Sex offenders have special requirements
 - Housing restrictions
 - May be unable to use internet
 - Need to register with local police
 - May have monitoring requirement



Case Study 3 – sexual offender

- Incarcerated for 6 years
 - Released December 2022
 - 35 years old
 - Caucasian male
-
- Day of release and post release
 - Needs upon release
 - Peer assistance provided



Little Rock PIE Team

For more information:

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Questions and Discussion

Questions and Comments for the Panel?



Thank you for your time.
We appreciate your feedback.



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