

PROMISING PRACTICES IN CORRECTIONS AND RE-ENTRY

MODULE NINETEEN



Peer support for incarcerated persons with mental disorders

Forensic peer specialists serve as a positive role model while providing support to help individuals change negative attitudes and behaviors and engage in mental health and substance abuse treatment services. They also may provide resources on housing, employment, and educational opportunities in the community (PRA, 2012). In Massachusetts, the Framingham facility implemented a peer support program in which specially selected incarcerated persons attend a 2-day peer support training, then provide services to their peers via office hours, on-call, or request processes. Peer supporters receive monthly supervision and individual support, as well as incentives and appreciation for their work.

Wellness self-management (WSM)

WSM is an education and skills training program for justice-involved persons that helps develop coping skills and social skills, as well as skills for managing their mental disorders. The goals of these programs include reducing disciplinary actions, decreased use of crisis services, and improved transitions back into communities by persons with mental illness. In New York State, several prisons have implemented WSM for incarcerated persons diagnosed with severe mental illness. WSM is delivered in 40 sessions on topics including stress, substance use, recovery, building social supports, using medication effectively, reducing relapse, and self-advocacy.

Trauma, Addiction, Mental Health, and Recovery (TAMAR)

TAMAR is a program for incarcerated adults with histories of physical or sexual abuse, mental disorders, and substance abuse. The 20-session program provides trauma education to incarcerated persons and introduces correctional staff and community providers to principles of trauma-informed approaches.

Reentry checklists

The GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation published a Re-Entry Checklist to provide a centralized record of an incarcerated person's potential needs in areas such as mental health services, medications, and health care. The form includes

a column to note what actions correctional staff have taken regarding each need, as well as contact information for key professionals or resources. Four copies are made to be distributed to the correctional facility, the mental health unit, the medical unit, and the incarcerated person.

Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams

FACT programs combine treatment, rehabilitation, and support services through the use of teams in the community. The goal of these programs is to help offenders with mental disorders engage in community-based treatment in order to reduce repeated incarcerations or hospitalizations. The programs include case management, medication management and monitoring, housing assistance, individual therapy, chemical dependency and socialization groups, and vocational assistance.

Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT)

AOT is court-supervised treatment in the community. It has been authorized for use in most states and endorsed by key justice, mental health, and health professional organizations. AOT has demonstrated effects in reducing hospitalizations, arrests, incarceration, homelessness, victimization, suicide, and violence against others.

Pre-arrest Diversion Programs

Police are trained to recognize mental health issues and take those identified to mental health centers for evaluation instead of straight to jail.

Post-arrest Diversion Programs

Systematic and mandatory mental health screening after arrest to identify any mental health-related issues. Those identified would be diverted to treatment. Treatment may be a condition of deferred prosecution, sentencing, or probation.

Planned Reentry Programs

Pre-release programming prepares the person emotionally and practically to establish stable conditions once they arrive back in the community. This includes making a plan for mental health treatment and medication. This may mean coordinating with community counselors, pharmacies, housing, and employment.

Parole Officer Training

Parole officers are trained to respond to mental health concerns and to refer people on probation to support before they reoffend.