Supporting Survivor Reentrants: Learning to Serve Those Returning Home

2022 National Sexual Assault Conference

Co-Presenters
Courtney Dunkerton
Anna Wallin
Presenters

- Courtney Dunkerton (she/her)
  - Human Trafficking Program Coordinator
  - SSRP Project Coordinator
- Anna Wallin (she/her)
  - Program Evaluator
  - SSRP team member
The North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault is an inclusive statewide alliance working to end sexual violence through education, advocacy, and legislation.

www.nccasa.org
Our Framework

NCCASA as a statewide coalition uses a social justice framework. Therefore, our work is done from a strong intersectional, social justice perspective. By centering our work around marginalized communities, everyone is served.
Our Work
Organize and sponsor statewide trainings related to sexual violence
Support rape crisis programs
Resource sharing and technical assistance
Legislative agendas and policy change (local and national level)
Anti-human trafficking outreach and awareness
Prevention education
Colleges and universities
Acknowledgements

Not all women are victims
Not all men are perpetrators
Any gender can be a victim
Any gender can be a perpetrator
Workshop Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain the barriers unique to re-entrants who have experienced sexual violence
2. Describe the language use related to incarceration and reentry that promotes safety and equity
3. Identify strategies to equip community partners to address sexual violence in their own service area
Workshop Overview

- Introduction to the Project
- Who Are Survivor-Reentrants?
- The Value of Collaborative Partnerships
- Process
- The Importance of Shared Language
- Key Findings
- Resources that Connect Survivors to Services
- Q/A
POLL
Introduction to the Project
The initial goal was to create a resource for formerly incarcerated individuals that would direct them to services for any sexual abuse experienced prior to, during, or post-release.

Information from those with lived experience would inform the development and content of the resource.
Who are Survivor Reentrants?

► Community members returning home

► Language Matters

► Impact of Early Release

► Survivors of Sexual violence
Opportunity for those without lived experience of incarceration to understand the multiple barriers to daily needs and how all paths seemed to lead back to incarceration.

How would those who were also sexual assault survivors experience reentry?
The Value of Collaborative Partnerships
Our Team
“Because these relationships were built on trust and respect, we were better equipped to tackle difficult topics together.”
Process: How We Met our Goals
How to Safely Disseminate Information to Invite Key Informant Participants?

Have you recently been released from prison or jail?
Have you experienced sexual violence or human trafficking at any time in your life?

We are seeking participants to interview to find the best ways to connect citizens with community resources and information.

If you would like to participate in the Supporting Survivor Re-entrants Project, email SSRP@nccasa.org or text or call (919)899-5521.

At the time of the interview, you will receive a $20 giftcard for your participation.

Your participation is completely confidential, and your name will not be attached to the project.

Your voice matters! Your voice is powerful!

THE NC COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT, ORANGE COUNTY LOCAL RE-ENTRY COUNCIL, AND THE ORANGE COUNTY RACE CRISIS CENTER
The Importance of Shared Language
“There’s some language that just doesn’t resonate outside of the rape crisis center world.”

--SSRP Resource Manual
Disclosures “go against the grain of prison culture. Prisons are very hierarchical and coercive. That control, hierarchy, and coercion is...a type of currency, so it’s a fear of losing that currency in an institution where currency is already scarce…”

--SSRP Resource Manual
Resources: Connecting Survivors to Services
Supporting Survivor Reentrants
Resource Manual

Emergent Space
Statistics of incarceration rates and sexual violence
Highlights and Lessons Learned narratives
Key findings and recommendations

Forms and documents created to capture data and create resources
Resource tools: Returning Home Resource and BLESS Tool
Reentry and COVID
BLESS Tool Booklet

Primer for Local Reentry staff and Council Partners

Provide basic information on responding to disclosures of sexual violence

Service providers encouraged to seek additional info/training on sexual violence

Last page (13) can be used as a quick reference guide
“Welcome Home” Resource and Guide

Contains info about sexual violence and local support contacts

For those reentering community

Intended to be included in any welcome home info packet

Guide is for service providers working with reentrants
Key Findings and Recommendations
Key Informant Interviews

- Who we Interviewed: Service providers in Orange County who work with reentrants
- 3 individual provider interviews that lasted 90-120 minutes, and a focus group at a substance use treatment facility with 6-8 providers over two sessions of 90 minutes each
- Main Interview Question: *What are the priority needs of people who have experienced incarceration and sexual violence?*
“Having the right staff is key. If anyone judges them or hurts them with information, they will immediately shut down. (Need to) break down barriers from childhood trauma that taught "don't trust, don't talk, don't feel”

- Focus Group Participant

**Recommendations**

- Train Housing staff in basic SA advocacy
- Increase comprehensive, integrated services that includes sexual assault advocacy
- Reduce disincentives to share trauma with social service staff
- De-stigmatize and increase access to mental health treatment-inside and outside prisons
Linked to homophobia and gender stereotypes about vulnerability and communication.

Increased stigma for men to disclose sexual assault.

Language of perpetration often uses male gendered pronouns.

Need for male-centered programming.

Men don’t see themselves reflected in the movement.

Funding like VAWA is defined by gender (female/woman/cis).

High Impact of Peer Relationships.

Peer Navigators.

Train Survivor re-entrants as advocates.

Normalize experience of trauma, reduce stigma.

Support Groups.

Work Inside Prisons.

Gender-Affirming, knowledgeable services for LGBTQAI+ survivors.

Reform laws that disproportionality impact LGBTQ individuals.

Men don’t see themselves reflected in the movement.

Compounded Trauma.

Need for gender diverse and gender-affirming programming.

Recommendations:

• Society-wide gender and sexual diversity awareness.

• Make language around perpetration/victimization gender neutral.

• Increase representation of men and boys in SA movement.

• Need to encourage inmate-led programming.*

• Psycho-education about Trauma and PTSD in multiple settings, including non-clinical.
**Recommendation Summary**

**Hierarchy and intimidation** is a big part of **prison culture** and enforced upon inmates and within their subcultures.

- Advocate for billing structure flexibility to allow treatment without diagnosis
- Change gender norms
- De-stigmatize and increase access to mental health treatment
- De-stigmatize incarceration
- Increase funding for re-entry services
- Offer programs that indirectly address SV, framed as “community gathering” to target norms change. Don’t use words like “survivor”, “trauma”, “help”

**Societal/Systems**
- Develop trauma-informed advocacy training for all treatment/housing staff
- Integrate SA information into 12-step or Drug/Alcohol treatment groups
- Add permanent SA advocate role in treatment settings

**Agency/Relationship**
- Increase self-worth and self-autonomy
- Empower decision making
- Increase sense of personal safety

**Individual**
Ways you can use “SSRP” Resources:

- Incorporating Key Findings in your work
- Share materials with other service providers in area
- Train on using them
- Incorporate resource materials in your own direct service provision
- Increase professional development among staff and community service organizations
Questions
We’d love to hear from you!

Courtney@nccasa.org

anna@nccasa.org

www.nccasa.org