

Supporting Survivor Reentrants Resource

Learning to Serve Those Returning Home

*A Collaborative Partnership by
The North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Orange County Local Reentry Council
and Orange County Rape Crisis Center*





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This resource is for collaborators across North Carolina to support survivors of sexual violence who are reentering our communities. In it we lift up the work of the Orange County Local Reentry Council (OCLRC) and the Orange County Rape Crisis Center (OCRCC), share the tools we developed, and the lessons we learned together.

PART ONE centers on survivor reentrants' needs and highlights some of the ways our team worked through challenges to improve services for the reentry community.

PART TWO walks through the Resources the team developed and the Findings from the Key Informants Interviews with programmatic recommendations.

We invite you to join with us in our efforts to serve and support survivor reentrants in reducing sexual violence among the justice-involved while strengthening responses to sexual violence on a national, statewide, and community level.

It is our sincere hope that this resource, Supporting Survivor Reentrants, will inspire you to create cultures of healing for ALL in your communities.

*Dreams**Hold fast to dreams**For if dreams die**Life is a broken-winged bird**That cannot fly.**Hold fast to dreams**For when dreams go**Life is a barren field**Frozen with snow.**-Langston Hughes, 1902-1967*

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When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry,
a sea we must wade.
We've braved the belly of the beast,
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,
and the norms and notions
of what just is
isn't always just-ice.
And yet the dawn is ours
before we knew it.
Somehow we do it.
Somehow we've weathered and witnessed
a nation that isn't broken,
but simply unfinished.

--Amanda Gorman, "The Hill We Climb"

PART ONE: The Needs of Survivor Reentrants

Prologue

This resource is for you. In it, we lift up the needs of reentrants who are also survivors of child sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and/or sexual violence before, during, or post-incarceration.

While understanding the priority of meeting basic daily needs for those returning home, reentrants also bear the trauma, stigma, and shame of sexual abuse which are significant barriers to accessing support for sexual violence. We wanted to develop a resource that would give information about local services in a low impact way to reach and connect reentrant survivors to services.

It became apparent in the course of this project that service providers needed a better understanding of sexual abuse and resources, a shared language, and skills to engage with those who choose to disclose sexual violence. To develop these resources, we wanted to draw from the lived experiences of survivor reentrants. While there is information available from our national partners, we wanted local participants in the form of a focus group that reflected local needs and local resources.

To do this, **we needed to build and draw on collaborative partnerships on the grassroots level.** NCCASA collaborated with the Orange County Rape Crisis Center and the Orange County Local Reentry Council to develop resources and training that would reach survivor reentrants. As we talk about how this happened, we highlight roadblocks and resilience the team experienced during the process.

Besides the expected challenges of inequities and service gaps for survivors returning home, COVID, as we all know, changed the landscape for all of us in every area of our lives. Throughout the many months we worked together, we showed up for each other, as each team member experienced the heaviness, trauma, and loss of that season. And, as our LRC and RCC friends carried the burden and impact of COVID in their work as it further marginalized the already marginalized, more creative solutions emerged. We practiced flexibility and found ways to adapt to an ever-changing environment in such a way that the end result was much better than what we had originally imagined.

Throughout this resource you will find edited transcripts from the NCCASA 2021 Biennial Conference Workshop in which the team discusses various aspects of working together for you to get a sense of our relationship and how we worked together. **We invite you into the story of the collective impact of this partnership.**



Who are Survivor Reentrants?

Reentry Simulation

For those without lived experience of incarceration, we must be educated to be able to enter into those experiences without patronizing or responding paternalistically. One of the ways available to us is participating in Reentry Simulations. Let's take a brief walk together through NCCASA's experience.

Just inside a meeting room of the Southern Services Building in Chapel Hill, NC, a line formed. Each participant received a bag containing a card with a checklist and several tickets. The number and types of tickets in each person's bag varied, representing resources: a driver's license, bus tickets, 10 dollars, or 100, identification, or housing voucher, for example. The checklist varied from person

to person too, listing daily obligations of the week: check in with Probation, drug test, housing, recovery and employment services, and unbelievably, even a place to sell your plasma to meet financial obligations.

Tables filled the room, representing agencies and services: Department of Motor Vehicles, plasma purchasing business, transportation, religious support, food bank, shelter, medical, and, of course, **"jail"** which was a catch-all title for all detention facilities. Participants experienced what it was like to be released from correctional facilities and reenter the community with a day filled with obligations that, if not fulfilled, meant **"jail"**. This meant more than visiting tables and checking off boxes. We kept "time," marking off hours in the days, and days of the weeks within that hour. With each passing hour, stress accumulated: if you weren't in your shelter by your curfew, **"jail"**. There were lines. There was information you didn't have when you got to the table, which meant getting in another line for an ID, or a bus ticket--oh--you have a fever? You failed your drug test? You don't have enough money for food? Or this cost you a bus ticket. No bus ticket? Go to that line to sell your plasma for money. No ID? Go over there. You didn't know you needed this or that? Sorry. Curfew called while in line to check in with probation? **"jail"**. Participants got testy, loud, frustrated, and creative. Some gave up and decided it was easier to stay in **"jail"**. Other participants, experiencing the same frustrations, shared their resources, advice and encouragement. Some raised their voices saying this exercise was impossible. It wasn't fair.

The Reentry Simulation emphasized what seemed an impossible feat: avoiding returning to "jail". It also highlighted how reentrants needed these things all at once: identification, transportation, housing, employment, and recovery services. Add that to the complexity of reuniting with family, reconnecting with or regaining custody of children, court dates, drug tests, multiple appointments, and check ins.

Also significant was how similar the experiences was to advocacy and case management services for survivors of human trafficking, who were almost always in a revolving door with court or correctional facilities, who were also strapped with formidable criminal records that penalized them from necessary services and community support. They also carried the burden of sexual abuse that happened as adults, and almost always as children. And then, of course, the sexual abuse that is so prevalent in correctional facilities, adding the wounds of trauma to the challenges and stigma of incarceration.

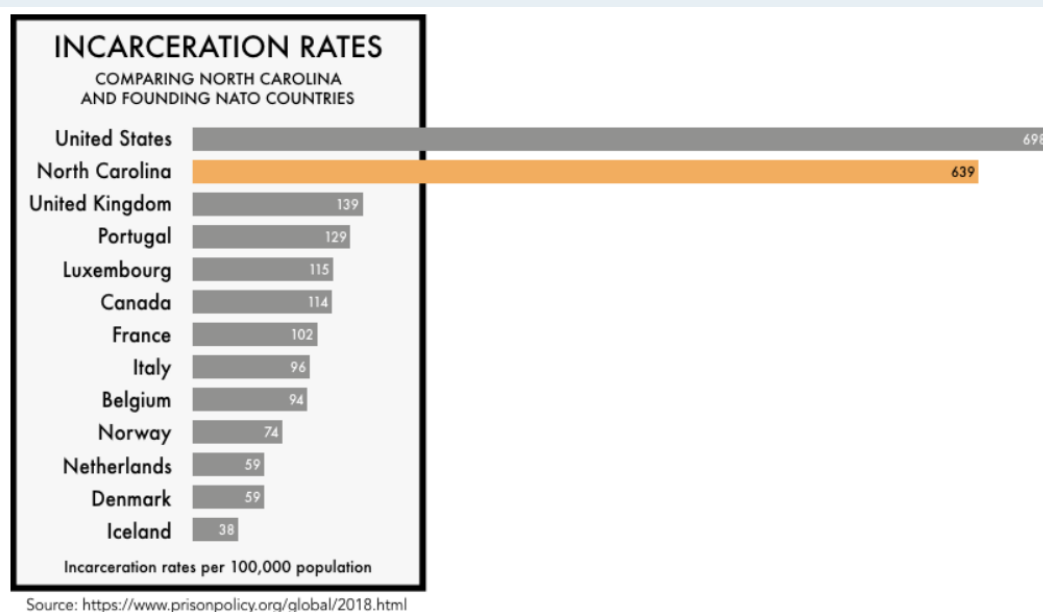
It was evident that the Local Reentry Councils functioned as multi-disciplinary teams, led by those with lived experience: a community of reentrants, survivors, peer support, faith leaders, recovery specialists, and those from the criminal legal system as learners and supporters.

The strength of these “teams” are that the voices and experiences of reentrants are centered, and those from the criminal legal system are there to learn and support and lend a hand. **Those working in the Sexual Violence/Anti-Human Trafficking fields needed to be here, learning and supporting.**

As we reflected on our experience, it was overwhelming to think how many reentrants must be survivors of sexual violence, especially as we think about incarceration rates with marginalized populations overrepresented in the carceral system. **It deserved a closer look.**

The Story the Numbers Tell

North Carolina Incarceration, Reentry and Recidivism Numbers¹



- ❖ North Carolina has an incarceration rate of 639 per 100,000 people (including people held in prisons, jails, immigration detention facilities, and youth detention facilities), meaning that it locks up a higher percentage of its people than many other countries do.

- ❖ Racial and Ethnic Disparities:
 - NC State total population / prison and jail population:
 - White 65% / 36%
 - Black 22% / 55%
 - Latino 8% / 6%
 - Native 1% / 2 %
- ❖ Yearly, 22,000 prisoners are released from NC's prison system
- ❖ Nationally, 60% of reentrants are unemployed within one year of release, and 77% of reentrants nationally will be arrested within five years of release

Statistics on Sexual Violence ²

Sexual violence, or sexual assault is any unwanted sexual contact in which consent was not given. In North Carolina, minors under the age of 16 cannot give consent to sexual activity.

- ❖ One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old
- ❖ One in five women in the United States experienced completed or attempted rape during their lifetime
- ❖ 1 out of every 6 American women have been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime (14.8% completed, 2.8% attempted)
- ❖ Nearly a quarter (24.8%) of men in the U.S. experienced some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime

Statistics on Sexual Abuse in Detention ^{3, 4, 5}

- ❖ Approximately 200,000 people are sexually abused behind bars every year in the U.S. Remember this is the number of people, not incidents. Most of these people are victimized multiple times

- ❖ Studies show that corrections staff are as likely to commit sexual abuse as are those incarcerated
- ❖ 1 in 10 former adult state prisoners reported being sexually abused while in detention
- ❖ Transgender women are at an incredibly heightened risk of sexual abuse. It is estimated that 40% of transgender women in U.S. prisons and jails experience sexual abuse each year
- ❖ It is estimated that in women's prisons, some 80% or more of people have experienced prior sexual abuse (or) domestic violence
- ❖ 7.1% of those in youth detention reported being sexually abused

*The Experience of Black Girls*⁶

At this point, it is important to note an especially vulnerable group that disproportionately experiences sexual abuse and the trauma of detention: girls, specifically girls of color. These findings are from the seminal work The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story:

“The proportion of girls — especially girls of color — in the juvenile justice system is increasing. The rate of girls' involvement in juvenile justice is growing disproportionately at key determinative points in the criminal justice process, including the decision to arrest and detain girls.”

- ❖ African-American girls constitute 14% of the general population nationally but 33.2% of girls detained and committed
- ❖ Native American girls are also disproportionately involved in the juvenile justice system: they are 1% of the general youth population but 3.5% of detained and committed girls

- ❖ The disproportionate rates of confinement in residential placements for girls of color are most accurately revealed when viewed per capita:
 - Native American girls are in residential placements at a rate of 179 per 100,000
 - African-American girls at a rate of 123 per 100,000
 - Latinas at a rate of 47 per 100,000
 - By comparison, 37 per 100,000 of non-Hispanic white girls are confined
- ❖ 82% of all victims under 18 are female

Females ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault.⁷ Because girls of color make up a disproportionate amount of those in youth detention, they are also experiencing and carrying the burden of the majority of abuse that occurs in detention settings.

As we think about building on the foundation of this project, let's think about systemic change -- funding and implementing early interventions for girls of color.

Additionally, Black women are overrepresented in experiencing sexual violence: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a study in 2011 that found that Native American/Indigenous women (27.5%) and Black women (21.2%) experienced rates of sexual violence in their lifetimes at rates significantly higher than the national average in the United States.⁸ Close to 14% of Latina women experienced sexual violence within their lifetime. They are also overrepresented in correctional facilities. "Sexual Violence in Communities of Color WOCN, Inc. FAQ Collection" describes how Black/African/African American women make up nearly half of the nation's female prison population intersects with their overrepresentation in experiencing sexual violence.⁹

What story do these numbers tell?

It is safe to conclude that a significant percentage of reentrants are survivors of some kind of sexual violence, who have experienced abuse either in childhood, as an adult, while in correctional facilities, and/or post release.

How, then, we must ask, are survivors in reentry accessing services?

*What barriers do they face? Are those services accessible? What resources do they need? **How can a community create cultures of healing for those who have experienced sexual abuse?***

A Portrait of the Reentry Community

The following is an edited transcript from the NCCASA 2021 Biennial Conference Workshop in which OCLRC staff share their experience with the audience in order to paint a portrait of those they work with.

Who are our neighbors in the reentry community?

Some people are numbers people, and some people are qualitative people, so to have a better picture, I'll talk about both. In the year that I've been with the Orange County Local Reentry Council, I've worked with around 100 people coming home from incarceration: 90% of those are male. Of those males, 63% are African American, 33% are white, and about 4% are other, which leaves about 10% female.

To my surprise, and what I'm learning to navigate this year, is that most of the reentrants and clients I work with have been over 50 years old, and they're nearing middle to late life. 25% are in their 40s, and the age gets lower and lower. We only have about 19% that are in their 30s, 14% in their 20s.

A big point that I want to hit home with is when it comes to reentrants or those who are incarcerated, immediately you think of crime. Immediately you think of an offense, but what I want to say about our caseload is that all of them are someone's child. They may be a parent. They may be a brother, a sister, a mother, or an aunt. All of them are friends to somebody. **So, I really want to put that humanity framework on this as we talk about our client caseload. This is what has been so wonderful about this project.** Also, of that 90% (male) and that 10% (female), 100% of our client caseload have been unseen and underserved survivors of sexual assault.

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survivors of sexual assault.**

What do your clients need?

It's really hard, almost impossible, to unpack trauma when you're in survival mode, and that's what reentry is. When you leave incarceration, you come out, sometimes with a gate check, and sometimes you don't. A gate check is funds a person receives when exiting prison. The amount depends on the length of time served. It is typically meant to be used to get a bus ticket, basic needs etc. Mind you, it is not much at all—one client served 8 years and only received a gate check for \$40. Sometimes you have housing, most times you don't. **Sometimes you have people that love and care, and are there to be your insular support. A lot of times, you don't. A lot of times their first point of contact is us and their probation officer: not the loving, natural support system that a lot of us have.** So we initially don't get a lot of clients who come to us ready to talk about issues like this (sexual abuse).

“ **It's really hard, almost impossible,
to unpack trauma when you're in survival mode,
and that's what reentry is.** ”

What they need from us is as follows: They need **housing**, you know--who wants to live on the street? A lot in our caseload unfortunately does. That is their home plan: the corner of a street, sometimes. They need **clothing**. Most times they leave with the white shirt and the khaki pants and the new balance shoes that they wore in prison. And if they're lucky, if they have a loved one who sent them money to buy an extra pair of socks, or extra shirt, or extra underwear, they leave with that too, but most often that's not the case.

They need **food**. We all gotta eat right? They need **documentation**. Sometimes prison programmers are really good about making sure people leaving to go home have their documentation, like a prison ID card and their social security card, and what's called a jacket (a folder where you leave your important documents). Most often, that's not the case. Oftentimes we're scrambling to connect with other local service providers to help get some type of identification, so we can get these folks connected to services that they really need out of the gate.

"A lot of times [a reentrant's] first point of contact is us and their probation officer: not the loving, natural support system that a lot of us have."

We're looking for **transportation**. We're connecting people to medical providers and getting their **medications** set up so when their 30-day supply they get when they leave prison runs out, they have that, so there's not a lapse in their mental health care and their **healthcare**. We really try to access their connections and their communications. If you have a loved one incarcerated or if you've experienced working in this realm, you know their access to connection and **access to communication** is very limited. We're trying to make sure that they have a telephone, minutes on a phone, a way to be autonomous when they need to call somebody to access something.

And then another part is, you know, when they've done all of this, the A through Z - just trying to get their feet on the ground, just trying to meet Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we're going to try to help them get connected to some type of employment to reduce recidivism. And then we continue to work with them and their goals, and connect them to the next, appropriate resources, which might be a connection to FIT (Formerly Incarcerated Transition Program). If there's disclosure (of sexual abuse), we get them connected to Orange County Rape Crisis Center. We make those connections for them.



Meet Our Team

North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault

The North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) is an inclusive, statewide alliance working to end sexual violence through education, advocacy, and legislation.

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 includes the training institute, supporting rape crisis centers, resource sharing and technical assistance, legislative and policy work, anti-human trafficking outreach, prevention education, working with colleges and universities, and providing access to language services.

NCCASA is a national training and technical assistance provider, through the Resource Sharing Project, providing support to other US states and territories.

Orange County Rape Crisis Center

Founded in 1974, the Orange County Rape Crisis Center is a non-profit agency serving survivors of sexual violence in Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, and surrounding areas. Their free and confidential services for survivors and their loved ones include 24-Hour Helplines, therapy, advocacy and accompaniment, support groups, workshops, and case management. OCRCC also offers a wide range of community engagement and prevention education programming. Many OCRCC services and programs are offered in Spanish.

Orange County Local Reentry Council

The OCLRC works directly with reentrants within a network of community partners to provide support and service coordination to reintegrate formerly incarcerated individuals to their community.

The Local Reentry Council's mission is to reduce recidivism, increase public/community safety, create a network of individuals and organizations assisting returning individuals, maximize the use of existing resources and services; and develop innovative responses to address gaps in resources and services.

The following is an edited transcript from the OCLRC Coordinator in which he answers the question: *What is a Local Reentry Council (LRC)?*



The LRC is a new initiative started with the NC Department of Public Safety with the idea of bringing together resources in a given community, usually done by the county. There are 17 LRCs across North Carolina, and in the Triangle, you have one in Raleigh, Durham, and in Orange County. **The purpose of the LRC is to coordinate resources in a given community in an effort to provide assistance for returning citizens and their families that will facilitate a better transition from incarceration back into society.** We serve two roles in that. One is that the Orange County government was awarded a grant to serve as the base for that collaboration, and **my job as the coordinator is to help to develop that partnership and that network of community** service providers. The other part is that we provide case management and work with individuals who are getting out and set up an action plan to help them with their transition.

We work with anyone from law enforcement to other county agencies such as the Department of Social Services. We work with Housing and Community development. We work with volunteer groups such as religious organizations. We work with Corrections, so we have a partnership with Orange County Correctional. Before COVID-19, we used to go into the prisons, and that particular prison had a reentry program, and we would go and speak, have reentry fairs, and different activities like that.

We work with just anyone in the county that provides a resource, and we identify the gaps in services in order to 1) stop the duplication of services, and 2) allow people to connect with services easier. So, we get those conversations going amongst service providers, whether that's mental health, substance abuse, or employment.

The executive committee is the governing body of the LRC. Right now, we have about 10 areas represented, and so we look at the different areas that work with folks reentering. You have corrections, law enforcement, you have housing, you have employment, mental health, substance abuse. We have individuals from those areas working together, and we set the number at about 12, but right now we are at about 10 on that executive committee.

**“We work with anyone in the county
that provides a resource,
and we identify gaps in services.”**

Then we have our advisory committee. Those stakeholders are anyone from judges, to the district attorneys, to defense attorneys. This group is kind of a group that can go out and get the word out on what we're trying to do. For example, this past Christmas, I was contacted by the FIT program, which is another transitional program that works with folks with some type of chronic illness. They had a person that had just lost their job and was in need of help around Christmas, especially keeping the lights on, so I reached out to the LRC, and a lot of members from the Advisory Committee (responded), in one particular instance the Sheriff of Orange County actually didn't even email me back-- he called me on the phone right away and said, "well, we got it, you know just tell me what was needed."

Then **we have the LRC at large, which is made up of a number of agencies and community groups.** Anywhere from the Oxford House dealing with substance issues to Freedom House, dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues, as well as county organizations and nonprofits, like Fathers on the Move, who work with me and reentry.

The LRC is that group of agencies, and **we all meet in a quarterly meeting, and we set up the larger quarterly meeting to address different issues that are going on in the Community.** So, we may talk about housing and have a speaker come and address whatever the issue is and **hopefully get a dialogue going to work on solutions.** We try to get certain conversations started, and, at the same time, try to introduce maybe a new service provider in the area.

LRC educated our team on the need of survivors who were returning home, and especially the way the LRC works together to care for one another. As we developed these resources, we knew we could count on this network of relationships to share and support what we were bringing into their community.

Just Detention International

JDI is a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention. Founded in 1980, JDI is the only organization in the U.S. – and the world – dedicated exclusively to ending sexual abuse behind bars. The central principle behind JDI's work is that **when the government removes someone's freedom, it takes on an absolute responsibility to keep that person safe. No matter what crime someone may have committed, rape is not part of the penalty.**

JDI works to hold government officials accountable for prisoner rape; challenge the attitudes and misperceptions that allow sexual abuse to flourish; and make sure that survivors get the help they need. All of their work is informed by the wisdom and experiences of prisoner rape survivors.

Since 2013, NCCASA has relied on the knowledge and expertise of the PREA Resource Center, American University, Washington College of Law and most notably Just Detention International (JDI). JDI is a national partner and technical assistance provider that keeps survivors and their healing centered in their work.

Additional information and JDI resources can be found in the Appendix.

The Team Discusses Initial Challenges

OCRCC: When I originally heard about this project, I thought, well great--not only will I learn more about this population and working with this population but also the complexities of serving those with multiple traumas. **You know the intersection of the trauma of incarceration and the trauma of sexual violence and with all of that to take into account. We did a lot of work working through how to make the key informant interviews of survivor re-entrants trauma-informed.**

You know about someone's survivor status in a way that would be you know, appropriate and trauma-informed and we had discussed okay--how will we go about this? We talked about how one person would be conducting the interview, but we would also have an advocate there that would be an intern or a staff member present from RCC at the interview for emotional support for the person participating in the interview, so if there was ever a time that they needed to stop

and take a break. The Advocate would be there in order to support them to do that, while someone else would be conducting the interview itself.

OCLRC: Yeah, you know and, and this was part of some of the conversations we had with the development of the BLESS tool. You know, outside of just being in survival mode, also with the majority of our caseload who tend not to disclose information like that. With the rate of sexual violence that occurs inside of prisons, a high number of folks that we deal with possibly have gone through that type of trauma, but one thing about our society is that a little more shame is cast.

The rich conversations that we had as this team, you know, being able to discuss some of those things and look at that as being a factor, not only in why interviews may have been at a certain low, but also the importance of creating the BLESS tool to help us have those conversations whenever something did arrive.

"One of the main things that we learned was about the cost of disclosure. It's a gamble to share one's experience of trauma."

NCCASA: I just wanted to say that it took us many different phases of this process to realize that we were not going to get any interviews from re-entrants who are also survivors and work through all the different reasons that that was not going to happen. One of the main things that we learned was about the cost of disclosure, and how it's a gamble to share one's experience of trauma, and that's why it was challenging to really, you know, complete things the way we had originally envisioned.

At the beginning, because we did try several different ways of recruiting people, and had a lot of conversations around how to incentivize participants. And we got a lot of input from JDI folks around drafting interview questions that were trauma informed and asking things in the right way and setting up everything so that it would be a safe, affirming space for engaging and learning, so it was really valuable, important, and challenging because we wanted to get it right.

NCCASA: We immediately saw a focus group was not going to work and--yeah--and every time we hit a wall it taught us something, I mean it was like oh man we're not getting these interviews. But then, like, wait a minute--what is this telling us?

One of the things we knew was access to technology was going to be a challenge. We knew the reality of the **digital divide**. What we had not factored in was the **advancement** of technology. When you're thinking of someone who's been inside for 10 or 20 years--you know-- what this is? (holds up a cell phone). How do you help someone who is older and overwhelmed with technology? That was just one of the issues. So we had to come up with a plan that took that into consideration.

The Value of Collaborative Partnerships

Teamwork and Lessons Learned

The project team met weekly to develop the Supporting Survivor Reentrants Resource . Meeting weekly was a large commitment, but so much was changing due to COVID, with agency capacity, and OCLRC experiencing a larger than normal caseload of elderly reentrants with significant health needs. As mentioned previously, we were not receiving any responses to participate in the key informant interviews which was central to the resource tool we were developing, so we had to discuss alternate paths to the specific information we needed.

Additionally, our team not only strengthened a strategic partnership for a local response to sexual violence, **it become a safe learning community in which we supported one another in the time of COVID, national civil unrest, and racial reckoning**. Sometimes we showed up at our virtual meetings excited and inspired in our work, but often we showed up exhausted and overwhelmed. **We practiced the habit of checking in with each other before we got down to business. It wasn't just a bullet point on an agenda; check ins were sincere efforts to support each other, giving ourselves space to be human.**

Because these relationships were built on trust and respect, we were better equipped to tackle difficult topics together. One in particular was the difficulty of talking about sexual violence and the culture of silence that exists among justice-involved men specifically. We also worked through the secondary trauma experienced by OCLRC staff from disclosures and a need to navigate those experiences.

OCRCC began to provide support and technical assistance to LRC staff. We recognized discomfort about naming sexual trauma with clients. There was the complexity and different perspectives of “dealing with” sexual abuse in reentry spaces. There was the extremely complicated challenge of creating a trauma-informed and safe process by which to virtually interview survivor reentrants. And **how to be trauma-informed with the systems that cause so much harm?**

"Because these relationships were built on trust and respect, we were better equipped to tackle difficult topics together."

OCRCC expressed the need to learn more about working with reentrants, especially as they reflected how few they seemed to work with. Other lessons learned for OCRCC included unpacking the complexities that reentrants face when accessing certain resources, and **the importance of using language that would include, and not alienate**. They considered how survivor reentrants may also be people who have caused harm, highlighting the need that sexual assault advocates and service providers manage their own feelings about this. Additionally, they examined the impact of some agencies' reporting requirements conflicting with the confidentiality constraints of others, and how that would impact survivor reentrants.

Other ways we worked together included collaborating on cross training and discussed different ways LRC could speak with clients about sexual violence at intake participated in the OCLRC quarterly meetings, providing updates on the project to the community partners.

To continue building on the foundation in working with survivor reentrants, the Orange County partners are currently exploring support groups for reentrants, providing “off site” advocacy, ongoing cross training, and training for other service providers. They are also working to ensure that other local service providers who may receive disclosures of sexual violence or abuse know that their local rape crisis centers can provide them technical assistance and emotional support.

Stories that Emerged

This next section chronicles **four significant conversations that emerged from our collaborative partnerships:**

- 1) how COVID-19 impacted reentry work,**
- 2) how practicing Emergent Space can assist service providers working with reentrants survivors,**
- 3) achieving a shared language around sexual violence in order to talk about it, and**
- 4) offering resources to survivor reentrants while taking into account the “cost of disclosure” and what it means for them.**

COVID and Reentry

The following paper and annotated list of research articles was developed by our Project Assistant as the team grappled with the challenges of COVID.

How Does COVID-19 Affect Reentry?

COVID-19 has been especially harmful to incarcerated populations because they aren’t able to be socially distanced and don’t always receive adequate personal protective equipment. This can all heighten the spread of the virus in a small, spatially close population. The Equal Justice Initiative explains how overcrowding has and will continue to cause more COVID-19 deaths in prisons. Because correctional facilities have also reduced the number of staff, this has allowed more abuse and violence to happen within these facilities. The ramifications of inadequate action for keeping incarcerated populations safe during the coronavirus outbreak has been extremely harmful, and even the response of releasing prisoners has not been adequate enough to stop the spread of the virus and protect incarcerated people.

The Prison Policy Initiative also assigned grades to each state’s response to COVID-19 in jails and prisons. They graded each state based on access to personal protective equipment, reducing capacity, executive orders calling for faster releases, and regularly updated public information on the state prison system. No state made above a D-, in a scale that was adjusted below the 10-point traditional grading scale. This shows how the response to COVID-19 in jails and prisons was not just subpar but minimal. **The Equal Justice Initiative cited that “incarcerated people are infected by the coronavirus at a rate more than five times higher than the nation’s overall rate.”**

The death rate of incarcerated people is also higher than the national average. This is concerning, especially because incarcerated people have less access to medical services and it is nearly impossible to distance from other people.

Decarceration and community re-entry in the COVID-19 era details how health and social inequity are negatively impacting incarcerated people and how the government has a responsibility to care for this population. Being formerly incarcerated dramatically reduces opportunities for people, and “considering the restricted agency of people who are incarcerated, the government has a fundamental obligation to care for this population.” Also during COVID-19, jobs and resources became more scarce. Formerly incarcerated people are five times more likely to be unemployed than the general population, which makes it even harder to reenter the workforce.

Reconnecting with family members and friends is also harder during COVID-19. The risk of having COVID-19 then spreading it to loved ones can strain relationships.

An annotated list of sources on this topic is found in the Appendix.

Emergent Space and Reentry Work

Our Project Assistant connected a need to her work in Emergent Space and Emergent Strategy with NCCASA to produce the following paper on how service providers can use emergent space. The following is the introduction, and the paper in its entirety can be found in the Appendix.

This document was inspired by the experience of a local service provider who works with people reentering the community, and who received a disclosure from a client about a lifetime of sexual abuse and trauma. This was a distressing experience for the service provider who was not prepared for it. Oftentimes, service providers can be in situations where they are not able to prepare to give service or feel uncomfortable due to the time or space. This was a distressing experience for the service provider that she was not prepared for. Oftentimes, service providers can be in situations where they are not able to prepare to give service or feel uncomfortable due to the time or space.

This document aims to find ways that we can create emergent spaces even when it's uncomfortable, unexpected, or distressing. Emergent space comes out of adrienne marie brown's *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. **We will go through the principles of emergent space, and see how each can be used in order to aid service providers in creating an emergent space that helps them and the people they serve navigate difficult conversations with care for each other.**

Achieving a Shared Language around Sexual Violence

NCCASA: We talked a LOT about the need for shared language. There was just a lot of different feedback and perspectives from the team: How do we even talk about this? Especially, how do we communicate information about service for something when we don't even know what to call it? We can't completely talk in code. We did agree that we needed to settle on a shared language that connects with reentrants.

OCRCC: I think the first thing that we want to say about it, is that we didn't come to any clear conclusions or solutions. We did have a lot of really, really, really important conversations around language, and **language was kind of a good conduit for us to talk about the different frameworks that we're using in, LRC world versus rape crisis center world.**

We found that there's some language that just doesn't really register outside of the rape crisis center world. In our work, we tend to use the words *sexual assault*, *sexual abuse*, or *sexual trauma* somewhat interchangeably. The conviction and the specific sort of legal details of a person's experience are way less important than the survivors' understanding of what happened to them. But every survivor uses a different word or words to describe what happened to them, and, in many cases it doesn't include the words trauma, abuse, assault, or sexual at all. Often it's like 'this thing happened', or 'that thing that was going on'. There are some more specific code languages for different practices that were very new to me, related to some of the tradeoffs and the safety tradeoffs that folks make while they're incarcerated.

So, in building the tools that we were developing for service providers, we decided to use all the language in all the different places, and included information about why we were doing that. It's going to sound different to different people. Some of this language is going to land differently with different folks.

There's some language that just doesn't resonate outside of the rape crisis center world.

The most important thing to remember, though, is that **the language you use to describe "sexual violence" matters way less than the language that the survivor is using**, and once a survivor is talking to you about their experience, switch over to what they're saying, reflect their language back. That's the most important thing.

For a lot of survivors and a lot of survivor groups, the terms *sexual assault* and *sexual trauma* tend to evoke the sense of a particular incident, like a one time incident, and if you're coming from a context of trauma, rape or assault might not even register as a particularly traumatic event or incident. It's part of this whole context of trauma that somebody experienced while incarcerated or prior to their incarceration.

Because sexual violence is so societal normalized in prisons and jail settings, the names that we give it all just sound a little bit too clinical, and, honestly, a little bit privileged. Right? Like *that's just something that happens to middle class white women. That's not the same thing that happened to me.* Exactly--because historically **rape crisis services weren't set up with them in mind.**

We all tend to use, in our efforts to put the locus of responsibility on the assailant, language that really does that. However, if folks made trade offs while incarcerated in order to survive, the way that they talk about their experience might involve more reflection on the choices that they actively made to engage in a certain way.

Whereas, in the rape crisis movement, we've been falling all over ourselves for five decades to try to say like 'no, you didn't choose this. This is something that somebody else did to you.'

But what was really important for OCRCC to learn through this process is that, like that in itself, can actually be very disempowering and very alienating for somebody for whom the choices that they made to survive are things that they are kind of holding on to. It can actually feel shaming for us to say 'no, that wasn't, you know, that wasn't your fault, because they're not seeing it as a fault issue, it was just a choice that I had to make.

“The language you use to describe “sexual violence” matters way less than the language that the survivor is using.”

OCLRC: I think this was a key piece, and I think part of what got the conversation started on that was the need to, as an LRC, to have language to use with our clients. We discussed this early on in the process. In our intake we ask the question: 'have you ever been physically abused?' or anything like that, and that was the gist of it. We didn't try to get any further than that. And so we want to know *what type of language do we use* to further that conversation, and more so if the conversation comes up again, *how do we respond?*

The "Cost of Disclosure"

NCCASA: Let's talk about the cost of disclosure. **What would it take for someone (LRC) described, you know, say, a 55-year-old black man who was just released from incarceration to call or walk into the local Rape Crisis Center?** We know that's not likely, but even stepping back, how likely is it that they would even talk about their own trauma and experience of sexual abuse? What does it mean for them outside (post-release) and on the inside? What is the cost of disclosure?

OCLRC: I think the important first step is to acknowledge a little bit what the cost of disclosure is prerelease, so you know, while you're incarcerated, there's the cost of disclosure, and there's fear around it. The **fear of being labeled a demeaning name, of not being believed. For example, going to a Corrections Officer (CO) or trusted bunk mate and not being taken seriously. There is also a fear of punishment or retribution.**

What if you've been sexually assaulted by a CO, and you go to another CO to report it, but the two of them are buddies. **Disclosing could cost you another charge.** There is also a fear of (being put in) isolation.

Disclosures also go against the grain of prison culture. Prisons are very hierarchical and coercive. That control, hierarchy, and coercion is also another type of currency, so it's a fear of losing that currency in an institution where currency is already scarce anyway. Fear is, I think, the biggest reason why people choose not to disclose.

Now we move a little bit: you have your release date, you got your duffle bag, you got your gate check, and you're lined up outside, and you hit the gate. What's the cost of disclosure once you leave that gate?

Now, I'm going to say it's the same thing because, like we all know, when we work with trauma, trauma is not linear. You don't experience trauma, get to the gate, and the trauma is done.

This institutionalized prison culture that you've been conditioned to for years does not leave you when you hit the gate. It's conditioned into your movement, into your speech, into the way you operate, into the way you approach transactions. It doesn't leave. The cost of disclosure to some of the people that we are working with, our clients, is the same type of fear.

If I disclose this to her, if I disclose this to him, what are they going to think of me? What are they gonna call me? What are they thinking in their head? Am I not going to get access to the service? Am I not going to get housing? Am I not going to get connected to food stamps? Are they going to deny me this? Are they going to look at me like I'm dirty? Are they going to want to meet with me because I may or may not have something?

"This institutionalized prison culture that you've been conditioned to for years does not leave you when you hit the gate."

You know these are all the things that are going through a person's head, and it's the same that it was inside. Because that conditioning, that institutionalization, does not leave just like that. So yeah, there's a huge cost. There is a huge cost: *our client caseload is 90% men. We live in a culture where we're still grappling with this hierarchy and this control, that tells us what a man is supposed to look like, and how a man is supposed to behave, and how a man is supposed to have certain types of emotions.* In the rape crisis movement it is commonly referred to the socialization of men.

We deal with and work with older men. 43% of our caseload are 50 and older, and they still have this old school, you know, thought, this condition, that they are supposed to man up. You deal with it. You know snitches get stitches even on the outside, you know, like 'I'm not a punk,' 'I'm not this.' All of this goes into the cost of disclosure.

And that's only touching on our men. Women make up 10% of our caseload. Women they disclose, and you know, 'they must have been asking for it', like, 'why do you need to try to fix yourself up while you're incarcerated'? You know, what you must have been doing, or you know, not having the respect that they're desiring on the outside, when they come home. Feeling shameful and being filled with shame and embarrassment when they talk to people or loved ones about what's actually happened to them, so the cost of disclosure is incredibly high. That's my input.

OCLRC: Yeah. I would add to the cost of disclosure. It can also run into 'now I have to try to deal with this', you know, because a lot of times it doesn't just start with the event, you know it may have happened in incarceration, but some of these things happen when folks are children, and having to address certain things is hard. It's hard for a lot of folks to address traumatic instances, and then we see a lot of barriers that we deal with, from mental health to substance use, which are things that stem from a lot of sexual abuse.

One of the biggest things on this side of services (dealing with reentry), most of the folks that we deal with that we know may have some type of sexually violent past-- some are previous perpetrators. But we never deal with their sexual (trauma) history and what has happened to them. It's a lot that goes into that disclosure, and a lot of times folks run from it, not of any fault of their own, but that's what happens. Once you open up, it's a lot for a person to try to unpack, and, you know, instead of dealing with that fear, 'Let me just try to suppress it a little bit longer'. That's really the thing in prison; **you suppress it because not only do you have to worry about someone shunning you, but you have to worry about your life, you know, at the end of the day. *It could cost your life to disclose.***

NCCASA: I mean you all said it. I don't think that we have anything to add to that, right now, so thank you for being vulnerable and sharing that.

This represents the very honest experiences of these community partners working out difficult truths. Everything is not going to be resolved and every place is a starting point to build on what we have learned.

If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy,
and change our children's birthright.
So let us leave behind a country
better than the one we were left with.

--Amanda Gorman, "The Hill We Climb"



PART TWO: Products and Process

Resources that Connect Survivors to Services

The team developed the BLESS Tool, and the Returning Home Resource and Guide for local reentry council staff, partners and individuals returning home. **These resources along with the forms and other materials we created are located in the Appendix.**

We strongly recommend training on the use of these tools. It is best to collaborate with rape crisis centers, or reach out to NCCASA to connect you with training and local programs. **We invite you to think about ways you may adapt and use them in your own community.**

BLESS Tool

This resource was created at the request of the OCLRC for language and recommendations on how to talk with others about sexual violence. Everything about this resource--font, colors, format, and reading level-- is designed for greatest accessibility.

One challenge was that the resource needed to be of sufficient length to give an adequate overview of sexual violence for LRC staff and to be useful as an immediate reference. It is not meant to be a comprehensive manual.

OCRCC: It is highly, highly, highly unlikely, and the numbers have shown that in terms of clients that we've interacted with, that survivor reentrants are going to come to the OCRCC directly for services, realizing that the best way to help support survivor reentrants is to support those who are directly supporting them. That support is the BLESS tool.

This resource is meant to hold a delicate balance between providing context, data, information, and skills to learn, practice, and adapt to whatever service provision setting you're in. This is specifically designed for those working at LRCs with survivor reentrants but can also be adapted to any service provider working with survivor reentrants who are likely to receive a disclosure of sexual violence that occurred before, during, or after incarceration.

The tool discusses the language that the team has used, stresses the importance of using the language the person making the disclosure is using, gives our very expansive definition of what is sexual violence. Like what (LRC) mentioned, violence is very broadly construed as an activity that would cause any amount of harm, physical or psychological, to the survivor.

We also provide information about the intersection of human trafficking with incarceration and gives insight into different contexts, with different language that could be used. We also discuss transactional decisions necessary to keep yourself safe from severe harm or even death in a human trafficking situation that could also include threats against your family or children. The "About Disclosures" section highlights the importance of remembering that many survivor reentrants will be men, and that there is stigma and sociocultural barriers around that.

We emphasize that when you receive a disclosure, you are not meant to be the end all be all. **It is important to respond in a way that is going to be supportive to the person and to listen to them, but that doesn't mean you are there to complete or even start their healing journey.**

In the BLESS tool, we highlight Believe, Listen, Empower, Support, prioritize Safety. We also include 'Try this' boxes that suggest language to use with survivor reentrants, but it's very adaptable.

There is also a note about confidentiality and privacy policies, which will be different in different settings, so we review what those policies are in an LRC setting, as well as what they are in a rape crisis setting. And then it gives you a bit of a script for talking about your confidentiality and privacy policy.

The safety section was originally intended to mean safety at the time of the disclosure. As we unpacked that, it ended up becoming as if we were going to perform a full safety plan or assessment, but we had to prioritize our collective vision and focus on keeping the person physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe at the moment of disclosure and for when they leave the office.

Another important point to highlight is that receiving disclosures can be difficult, stressful, tiring, exhausting, and can trigger past experiences of sexual harm and interpersonal violence, so we recognize that's possible and offer ways to help to take care of yourself safe after a disclosure. We also included local and national helpline numbers.

The first few pages of the tool are meant to be utilized in conjunction with the training. The first pages should be annotated and revisited many times. The last page is meant to be a 'tear off' or photocopied cheat sheet that you could hang in your office and have as an immediate reference.

The OCRCC Flyer encourages Orange County service providers to contact OCRCC if they receive a disclosure and need to process with an advocate. This is an example of how local reentry councils and rape crisis centers/programs can collaborate and work together on creating their own local responses and resources.

The Returning Home Resource and Guide is the capstone of our entire project: to provide information in a trauma informed way that is also most accessible to those returning home in understandable but noninvasive language. We needed to achieve the delicate balance of speaking about sexual violence in a way that would not cause harm or re-traumatization and that would not make the reader feel singled out or targeted.

We added a one-page **Guide** that provides information to LRCs on how the Returning Home Resource can be used. It is not a "page two" when distributed as outreach. *The Guide is only for service providers.*

The Contact Card would also be in the “packet” of resources as a way for someone to safely keep the information with no reference to sexual violence or rape crisis services, once they had read the resource tool. This adds an element of privacy and confidentiality. Local partners can create one with their own contact information:

Returning home and need someone to talk to?
FREE and CONFIDENTIAL
You are in control of the conversation
24/7 Helplines: Call (919) 967-7273 or Text (919) 504-5211

Learning From Survivors and Service Providers

NCCASA and OCRCC had opportunities to learn from those with lived experience and from those who worked together in the community supporting and sharing resources with one another. The LRC’s quarterly meetings were valuable spaces for resource sharing, education and learning about the needs of the reentry community. In these meetings we had opportunities to update the community partners on the development of our resources. In April, Second Chance/Reentry Month, we provided training on the BLESS Tool and sexual violence. At the NCCASA 2021 Biennial Conference the team introduced the BLESS tool and discussed the creation of these resources, and key findings from the interviews.

Forms and Flyers

To gather the information from those with lived experience, and in a trauma informed manner we needed to develop procedures that also took into account the COVID regulation of Orange County government agencies, and the nature of reentry work. **Below is an annotated list of these documents, forms and flyers. These materials can be found in the Appendix.**

- **The Key Informant Interview Invitation to Participate Flyer** design prioritizes accessibility. The colors, font size and style, grade level language is intended to reach as many participants as possible. These invitations were individually distributed by LRC staff and service providers. Our intent was to strike a balance between engaging potential participants but also not to overwhelm someone with the thought of talking about a very private issue.

- **Key Informant Interview Invitation Response** gives instruction about interview and information about interview locations and online access.
- The **Consent Form** provides information about the interviews: how they would be conducted, how the information would be collected and used. The team took significant time to carefully consider the limited uses of participants' information and to carefully construct a form that was transparent, straightforward, accessible, and reassuring.
- **Key Informant Interview Protocol Team Orientation Guide** underwent the most revisions, as we continued to learn more about how reentrants access information, modes of transportation, and communication. Understanding of and access to the latest technology was a concern and challenge, especially given the remote service provision during COVID. Meeting with participants in person always remained the preferred method of conducting the interviews due to the sensitive nature of the communications, however, fluctuations in COVID safety protocols and how best to observe these protocols was always at the forefront of our planning and adapting. Asking reentrants to talk about their very private and personal experiences of sexual abuse while prioritizing physical safety, especially for elderly men, proved to be the biggest challenge.

Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

The Evaluation Findings Infographic can be found in the Appendix.

Method

The project team aimed to collect 8-12 interviews with individuals who had experienced both incarceration and either sexual violence or human trafficking at some point in their lives. Participants were originally solicited through the LRC case load via flyers and word of mouth from case managers. As no participants volunteered, we expanded our request to the greater LRC community of external service providers, and decided to invite service providers to do interviews, as well as asked them to recruit potential re-entrant participants from their networks of clients. By the end of the project, we collected 3 service provider interviews, and conducted a focus group at a local substance use treatment facility with approximately 10 staff persons present.

Some of our findings came in the form of clearer solutions, or steps to take towards these solutions. Some findings are in the form of a deeper understanding of the challenge of serving survivor reentrants.

*The following are **Programmatic and Service Recommendations from a Societal, Agency/Relational, and Individual Level***

➤ SOCIETAL LEVEL

1. Advocate for billing structure flexibility to allow treatment without diagnosis

Many service providers lamented the fact that they have to put paperwork first, and interpersonal dynamics second. The necessity for funding to come through and be documented as linked to a specific diagnosis creates problems because many survivors will not disclose immediately during initial intake. People may be reluctant to share other personal information like mental health or substance use for fear that information will be used punitively later on. Allowing for treatment and residence in a stable facility without documentation of these issues allows for the initial stability that is necessary for disclosure to occur in a trusted environment.

2. Change gender norms

Many providers expressed that they notice a tremendous difficulty for men to share experiences of trauma. They see this as a direct result of male socialization to deny one's feelings and not express vulnerability. This socialization to repress one's emotional experience has tremendous negative impacts for men in terms of mental, emotional and physical health. Men need targeted programming with groups and individually to unlearn norms and socialization that teaches them that they are not allowed to discuss their trauma or have needs. This reflects what providers have shared about men who have been socialized as men, but we acknowledge that gendered socialization is complicated. Non-binary and trans men share some of these experiences, but not other experiences.

3. De-stigmatize and increase access to mental health treatment

Societal and community level de-stigmatization of mental health treatment creates an environment where everyone feels comfortable reaching out for help.

Mental health and competent, culturally responsive treatment is a basic healthcare right. Advocate for increased funding for community mental health and free mental health care.

4. De-stigmatize incarceration

Formerly incarcerated individuals face oppression stemming from harmful stereotypes and myths about criminality and the criminal legal system. Prejudiced treatment from social service personnel or other gatekeepers compounds trauma from sexual assault by shaming reentrant survivors and decreases their confidence to ask for what they need, advocate for themselves, and rebuild their lives.

5. Increase funding for re-entry services

Re-entrants have many complex needs that are precipitated from the incredibly de-stabilizing experience of incarceration, especially for those who lack family or strong support networks. Re-entrants who have comprehensive support with meeting basic needs like secure housing, employment and access to food are more likely to be able to have energy and capacity to work on healing trauma. If reentry councils and surrounding support organizations have more financial agency, they can assist survivor re-entrants in becoming stable more quickly so they can move on to accessing things like therapy and trauma treatment which are not possible during an acute crisis and struggle to secure basic needs.

6. Offer programs that indirectly address sexual violence, framed as “community gatherings” to target norms change. Don’t use words like “survivor”, “trauma”, or “help”.

Many survivors (especially men) do not wish to be identified as sexual assault survivors by those around them, but can still benefit from the healing aspects of healthy community and social relationships. Communal events that focus on other themes, like health, sports, holidays, music and neighborhood connection should include information about healthy relationships, violence prevention and outreach materials. This ensures that the people who are least able to reach out or identify as survivors can still have access to information and the normalization of talking about healthy relationships and non-violence in a community setting.

7. Review and reform laws that disproportionately impact LGBTQ individuals to reduce unsafe incarceration

Decriminalize sex work and repeal anti-sodomy laws. For reference: Policy — Black and Pink Massachusetts

8. Eliminate use of solitary confinement for trans prisoners to protect them from violence

We do not have safe solutions for housing LGBTQ individuals, therefore we need to evaluate what laws disproportionately impact queer and trans people. Housing people with their gender assigned at birth could make some people feel unsafe, and housing people with their affirmed gender could make others feel unsafe. Trans prisoners are put in solitary confinement (which is considered an additional punishment, and highly detrimental to mental health) in order to separate them from other prisoners who may assault them. Their vulnerability to transphobic violence within the prison culture are acknowledged in this way, though the solution being applied results in further abuses and trauma. Reducing incarceration overall will reduce the amount of trans and gender-nonconforming people in situations where they are vulnerable to violence.

9. Train staff in complex intersections of LGBTQ experience and incarceration / sexual violence

Use resources and training materials from groups that advocate for queer and trans inmates to enhance the ability of staff who serve LGBTQ survivors to understand and empathize with the unique discrimination and vulnerability faced by queer and gender non-conforming individuals in detention. Understanding that prison systems and cultures replicate misogynist, gender-based power hierarchies and the use of violence and coercion to maintain power imbalance will allow providers to respond to survivors who have experienced violence motivated by homophobia and transphobia in a more compassionate and skilled manner. Compassionate and skilled responses allow survivors to feel safe seeking more resources for healing.

➤ AGENCY/RELATIONSHIP LEVEL

1. Develop trauma-informed advocacy training for all treatment/housing staff

The first systems contact many reentrants have is with reentry workers, in a structured housing facility and/or in a drug and alcohol use, or recovery, facility. These are spaces where trauma is likely to be activated, and survivors will have the

opportunity to connect with others and obtain resources. That connection is only possible if the space and staff are safe, respectful and trauma-informed. Providing comprehensive training on sexual assault and trauma to staff will increase the likelihood that they can respond in appropriate ways when survivors need help. Being believed and receiving a compassionate and grounded response to a disclosure increases the likelihood that the survivor will go on to access further resources for healing instead of shutting down again.

2. Integrate Sexual Assault information into 12-step or Drug/ Alcohol treatment groups

Offering information about sexual assault in combination with other experiences like substance use “bundles” sexual assault with other experiences that are seen as normal to get help for. Talking about trauma from sexual assault or abuse in other spaces can help de-stigmatize the experience and create a culture that encourages seeking support and resources for many kinds of struggles. The aim is to decrease feelings of shame, embarrassment, and being overwhelmed.

3. Add permanent Sexual Assault (SA) advocate role in treatment settings

Having a permanent staff person who is identified as and has training in sexual assault advocacy can further normalize the presence of these conversations. Discussion of SA and the visibility of the advocate can be a signal to survivors that there are trustworthy people who want to help them. It also increases their accessibility, and eliminates the obstacle of being referred out to a separate rape crisis center, which can feel too “othering” for some individuals. Having yet another new appointment and relationship they have to navigate can make the choice to simply not get treatment or talk to anyone about their experience seem more appealing. Alternatively, an advocate housed at a Rape Crisis Center (RCC) could have temporary hours at a treatment and housing facility every week, which would establish them as a reliable, consistent presence in the facility, and facilitate the building of trusted relationships.

➤ INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

1. Increase self-worth and self-autonomy

Experiences of incarceration and sexual violence both damage a person’s sense of personal dignity, autonomy and self worth. People who have experienced multiple

occurrences of incarceration and sexual violence both damage a person's sense of personal dignity, autonomy and self-worth. People whose power have been taken away often lose a sense of value in their own opinions, preferences, needs and choices. This value can be strengthened through many types of positive interactions from one on one, to group situations, and empowering interactions with systems and service personnel. Anyone who works in positions remotely linked to spaces where survivors might be living or obtaining resources should be mindful to restore and reflect positive self-perception back to individuals.

2. Empower decision making

Experiences of incarceration and sexual violence both forcibly remove a person's ability to make their own choices. Linked with autonomy and self worth, as described above, giving back decision-making power in as many ways as possible is crucial for restoring self-worth, confidence and wholeness for any individual. This could be as simple as letting someone decide which chair to sit in during an intake, whether or not they want water, or a large decision like making a police report.

3. Increase sense of personal safety

Give survivors and re-entrants the ability to choose what makes them feel safe. Safe housing is a significant resource that many take for granted. Having a safe and healthy space to live in is the foundation of securing other forms of safety. This allows survivors to make other choices about who and how they interact with, where they go, and what activities they participate in. Personal safety is also linked to having the ability to access services without fear of it being used against them. This means that practicing confidentiality and transparency about how information is being used impacts survivors' sense of safety and ability to trust those who are offering help. Being able to choose what personal information to share, and how it is used increases a sense of autonomy and safety. This right to privacy extends to having non-surveilled spaces and bodily autonomy.

Next Chapter: Building on this Foundation

Now it's your turn. We hope that you are now inspired and equipped to begin creating cultures of healing in your own communities by using this resource and the skills we've shared.

There are many ways to continue building: finding your own voice and language to connect community partners around the reentry community, bringing systems change and advocacy into the juvenile justice system, taking these services inside pre-release, building networks to connect survivors to services, and increasing your own knowledge, skills, and expertise.

When day comes we step out of the shade,
aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

--Amanda Gorman, "The Hill We Climb"



Endnotes

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Appendix

Supporting Survivor Reentrants Resource



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BLESS Tool

Supporting Survivor Re-entrants who
Disclose Sexual Abuse



Purpose: This resource was created for Local Reentry Council staff to reference when a survivor re-entrant discloses previous or current experiences of sexual abuse.

- More than 1 in 3 women experienced sexual violence involving physical contact during her lifetime.¹
- Nearly 1 in 4 men experience sexual violence involving physical contact during his lifetime.¹
- One in five women and one in 71 men will be raped at some point in their lives.²
- One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old.²
- 46.4% lesbians, 74.9% bisexual women and 43.3% heterosexual women reported sexual violence other than rape during their lifetimes, while 40.2% gay men, 47.4% bisexual men and 20.8% heterosexual men reported sexual violence other than rape during their lifetimes.²

Approximately 200,000 people are sexually abused behind bars every year in the U.S. Remember this is the number of people, not incidents. Most of these people are victimized multiple times:

- Studies show that **corrections staff** are as likely to commit sexual abuse as are prisoners (incarcerated people).
- **1 in 10 former adult state inmates** reported being sexually abused while in detention.
- **7.1% of youth in juvenile facilities** reported being sexually abused while in detention.
- Transgender women are at an incredibly heightened risk of sexual abuse. It is estimated that 40% of transgender women in U.S. prisons and jails experience sexual abuse each year.
- It is estimated that **in women's prisons, some 80% or more** of people have experienced prior sexual abuse (or) domestic violence.

BLESS Tool

Given these numbers, it is very likely you are working with someone who is a survivor of sexual violence.

Even though many would rather not talk about it, because of its prevalence, **those in the Human Services field must be equipped to understand the basics about sexual violence** and how to connect people to resources, especially as it pertains to reentry work. **The terms *sexual violence*, *assault*, *harm*, and *abuse* will be used interchangeably in this resource to provide the broadest understanding of unwanted sexual activity or childhood sexual abuse.**

We acknowledge the limitations of these terms to accurately reflect people's experiences. We also acknowledge the discomfort people experience in talking about it--this includes not only survivors, but LRC staff as well, who also may be survivors. Re-entrants may not feel safe in disclosing sexual abuse. **This trauma-informed resource takes those things into account and provides staff with skills to help survivor re-entrants navigate that difficult space.**

In your interaction with re-entrants as Local Reentry Council personnel, you may receive disclosures of past or current sexual harm. Many survivors choose not to talk about any past experiences of sexual trauma, even when prompted by people they trust. Resources for sexual assault should always be available, even when a client does not disclose.

This resource was created for LRC staff for reference when a survivor re-entrant discloses previous or current traumatic experiences of sexual assault, sexual abuse, or sex trafficking. Disclosures may be made at any time and in a variety of settings, but discussions about sexual abuse are best in a private, confidential, 1-on-1 setting where and when the survivor feels safe. Contact your local rape crisis center for additional resources or further assistance.

BLESS Tool

What is Sexual Violence?

- **Sexual violence exists on a continuum** and includes rape, or any unwanted sexual activity. It also includes any childhood sexual abuse and sexual contact that is prohibited by law. People use sexual violence to hurt, humiliate, gain control, or exert power over someone else. It can also be used to coerce others to perform labor or other activity.
- Sexual violence can be coerced by threats, bribes and manipulation. It can also happen by abuse of authority. **All of these are common in detention settings.**
- **Even if a person doesn't say no, make any outcry, resist, fight back, or call for help, it does not mean they have consented** to sexual activity. Also, people who are drugged or incapacitated cannot consent to sex. Incarcerated persons cannot consent to any sexual activity with staff.
- Sexual violence can be **perpetrated by strangers, acquaintances, family members, caretakers, or those in authority.** It can even be committed by **someone's consensual sexual partner.**
- **Those at greater risk for experiencing sexual abuse include people with cognitive delays, developmental disabilities, mental illness, people who identify as LGBT+, and those with previous sexual victimization.**
- Survivors of child sexual abuse often struggle with unwanted memories and trauma into adulthood, but may be **very reluctant to talk about what happened.**
- Detainees cannot consent to sexual activity with staff because they are in their care. **All sexual contact between staff and detainees is prohibited and considered abuse, according to the Prison Rape Elimination Act standards.**

BLESS Tool

Human Trafficking and Incarceration

Human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, is a type of sexual violence. **It happens when someone is forced or coerced by physical and/or sexual violence to sell things, work for someone, or trade sex for something.** Forced sex to pay off a debt or to buy or rent anything is a type of human trafficking.

- **Sometimes people are “bought” and “sold” without the survivor knowing it.** “Currency” can be drugs, commissary items, or paying off a debt. Phrases like “prison husband,” “getting married,” “hooking up,” or being called someone’s “ho” or “punk” may indicate human trafficking.
- **Protective pairing** is when a detainee is forced or coerced to provide sex to someone in exchange for safety.
- **A trafficker may be physically and sexually violent towards someone they traffic, but also show affection, or provide protection.**
- **Re-entrants may have been forced to engage in transactional sex as a means of survival** while incarcerated or prior to incarceration.
- **A trafficker can continue the control post-release,** and force a re-entrant to pay off a debt they incurred while incarcerated. A re-entrant **can be recruited while incarcerated** into trafficking situations post release, by a false job offer, for example.
- **This kind of sexual violence can be very confusing** to a survivor, and they can blame themselves, or be too afraid or ashamed to talk about it. The terminology around “human trafficking” may not be helpful or relatable to the survivor. **How the survivor defines their experience is completely up to them and is their right. We should mirror the language they use to talk about what has happened to them.**

BLESS Tool

About Disclosures

- **Many formerly incarcerated survivors (especially men) do not relate to terms like 'victim', sexual violence, etc.** A disclosure will not always involve this terminology.
- **The way men talk about sexual violence can feel very different than how women talk about it.** Men may use more explicit, or direct language which may feel confusing.
- Disclosures may look like someone referring to 'some stuff that happened' or 'I had to do some stuff.'
- And even though **sexual violence is never the survivor's fault, they may talk about like it was a choice, or the best option available to them, or even protect/defend their abuser. They may minimize or normalize the harm. This is normal for survivors, especially for those who have experienced sexual abuse within correctional settings.**
- **Staying "quiet" about trading sex or sexual abuse is a choice of safety- a tradeoff.** Admission of victimization will be seen as weakness. Disclosing or reporting sexual abuse, or rape while incarcerated can compromise a survivor's sense of physical and emotional safety. There is fear of retaliation or that the information will be used against them.

If you receive a disclosure, or if someone wants to talk about what happened to them, remember what you can and cannot do in the moment. You are not expected to be a therapist, solve the problem, or make it better. **In the moment, your only responsibility is to be a safe, nonjudgmental recipient of the disclosure.** You may be the first person they have ever disclosed to, and your response can influence whether they share again or seek further support. You can counter society's responses of shame, disgust, and blame with nonjudgmental support. Rely on the expertise that you already have in working with re-entrants. You already understand the trauma of detention from your work and perhaps your own lived experience.

BLESS Tool

BLESS is an acronym that can guide you to respond to disclosures of sexual abuse in a trauma-sensitive and safe way.

Believe: Be present and nonjudgmental. Avoid asking "Why" questions (e.g. "Why didn't you say anything before?") because they can come across as blaming. Focus on responding calmly and with assurance.

Try this: "I hear you," "I believe you," or "I'm sorry that happened to you."

Listen: This is often the thing survivors need most. **Listen attentively and give your full attention to the survivor. Active listening means you are trying to understand the feelings behind what the person is saying- not waiting to jump in with your own opinion or solutions.** Often well-intentioned attempts to direct, warn, advise, teach, find out more information, or even heap praise on the survivor can backfire because it takes the survivor focuses on what you have to say rather than on what they want to say. Avoid trying to connect with the survivor by saying things like "I know how you feel" or pretending to understand something you do not. You may feel like you aren't doing enough, but don't underestimate the importance of this step.

Try this: Reflect what you're hearing- the emotions- back to the person speaking. You may consider phrases like "It sounds like you're feeling _____. Is that right?, or "It is normal and okay to feel _____. If you don't understand something, ask, "Would you like to talk more about _____?"

BLESS Tool

Empower: Sexual violence takes away the survivor's control over their life. Sexual trauma in addition to the trauma from incarceration--constant surveillance, strip searches, solitary confinement, and witnessing the physical and sexual violence of others can compound feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. **Make every effort to let survivors make their own decisions. Frame questions in a way that prioritizes their choice. Help them understand their options.** You may have strong opinions about what the person ought to do- for example, file a police report or seek medical attention. You can share those as options, but it is important that you do not pressure or force them to take any steps they don't want to take. **Provide all the information they need from them to take the next step. Respect their choice to decline services.** Providing information empowers while pressuring someone to follow a course of action disempowers. Your language should reflect a person-centered approach. If a survivor chooses to engage in legal, medical, or any other kinds of resolution, they may benefit from trained advocacy. You can help them connect with your local rape crisis center or survivor advocacy center.

Try this: "You deserve support. Would you like me to call anyone?". Also consider asking questions that help the person gain control of the moment such as "Do you want to get up and walk around?" or "Do you want some water?".

A Word about Confidentiality:

Provide all the information a survivor needs to be able to take the next step in empowering, including clear information about the limitations of confidentiality. It builds trust to be honest and transparent about what you can and cannot keep confidential.

BLESS Tool

Letting the person know you will protect their privacy and will not use anything they say against them in the course of your work together. Below are some non exhaustive exceptions.

Questions for LRC Personnel:

- ➔ Beyond being a mandated reporter for cases of caregiver abuse, are you **accountable to any other policies related to your role that limit confidentiality**, for example, if a survivor discloses sexual abuse from detention staff per Prison Rape Elimination Act standards?
- ➔ **Does your organization have a protocol for mandated reporting?** If anyone else besides Child Protective Services must be notified, it is important to communicate that to the survivor.

Rape crisis center advocates provide their services while observing the following:

- ➔ **Confidentiality & Limits:** Everything that a person shares with rape crisis center advocate is confidential unless the person threatens harm to themselves or others, discloses abuse or neglect of child, or discloses abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult.
- ➔ **Advocate Privilege:** Communications between rape crisis center advocates and a person seeking or accessing services (i.e., client) are privileged. This means that rape crisis center advocates cannot share information about the client, including their name or other identifying information, without written consent from the client. The client is the one who decides for what purposes their information can be used.
- ➔ **Limits of Advocate Privilege:** There are instances when a court will order that information be shared by rape crisis center advocate, but the information or service records can only be released under very specific circumstances.

BLESS Tool

Local rape crisis centers can be powerful allies in serving survivor re-entrants because of their confidentiality policies. Be prepared to know how to make referrals when appropriate.

***Try this:** Before we keep talking, I'd like to go over some safety and privacy information. Is that ok? I also want to let you know that what we talk about will be confidential, which means I'm not going to share it with anyone outside our agency, unless you share information about a specific plan to hurt yourself, someone else, or if a minor, or someone with a caregiver is being abused. Do you have any questions about that?*

Support: Survivors should know they are deserving of support no matter the circumstances of their assault. Offer appropriate support based on your role. Avoid statements such as "I'm here for you- anything you need." You may not be available 24/7 for them, but your local rape crisis center can be. Similarly, avoid making promises you can't keep. For example, don't say "Everything is going to be alright"- you don't know that, and it can come across as empty and insincere. Be mindful of community supervision, parole, and probation restrictions when helping a survivor connect to services. Also, **be aware of not projecting your emotions into the situation. This can be difficult, but essential to center what the survivor is saying and how they are feeling, not how you are feeling about it.** There should be space to process your own feelings later.

Try this: "You deserve support, and I want to give it. How would you like me support you right now? Moving forward?", "Can I connect you to someone else to talk more in depth and support you more than I can?"

BLESS Tool

prioritize Safety: Disclosing past experiences of sexual violence can be draining and make the survivor feel especially vulnerable. These feelings can also make a person feel unsafe physically and emotionally/psychologically (depending on a variety of factors like physiological response to trauma/PTSD, societal gender norms, self-blame, self-guilt, etc.). Your recognition of and reaction to a survivor's feelings of unsafety can go a long way in reassuring them that their disclosure was received by an appropriate, trustworthy source.

Ask them how they are feeling. If they express feeling unsafe, unsure, or ambivalent about disclosing, reassure them that you are a safe person to share with (within the confidentiality limits of your organization or role). Ask them what you can do in the moment to help them to feel more safe. Do they need to get up and move to a different room? Do they need a referral to an agency that can find them a new place to live? Do they need to find an activity to take their mind off of the trauma they just shared? **Listen and respect what they know about keeping themselves safe. You can ask what has worked for them in the past, and what they are able to do now.** Identify the survivor's strengths and assist them to adapt these strengths to the current situation.

Try this: "Remember what I said about breaking confidentiality--outside of those reasons, I don't talk about any of this outside our meetings. Now, what are your plans tonight? Do you feel good about where you're staying?" Don't be afraid to ask if the survivor is having thoughts of self-harm. Provide referral to the suicide hotline if they are.

BLESS Tool

Recognize your own feelings. It's normal to have feelings and reactions to a disclosure of sexual violence. As the recipient of that disclosure, you have held space for strong emotions. You may have personal experiences with sexual violence as a survivor or loved one of a survivor, and hearing someone else's disclosure can stir up personal feelings and unwanted memories as well. Anticipate this and consider your needs. Practicing self-care is important after a disclosure. Identify ahead of time a safe person to debrief with. You may want additional support to talk about your reaction while observing your limits of confidentiality.

Your local rape crisis center is a resource for friends, loved ones, and any service providers working with survivors of sexual violence. **Don't hesitate to call for support in processing your experience with a disclosure. You are not wasting their time; that is what they are there for.**



References

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2. National Sexual Violence Research Center. (2015). Statistics about Sexual Violence. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf.

BLESS Tool

Essential Partnerships

It's important to establish collaborative partnerships with local and sometimes national service providers for education about referral processes and each other's work through cross training. It's important to be familiar with your local resources for sexual violence survivors, and in some cases your work can be strengthened with a formal agreement outlining how you'll work together. Here are some helpful things to know about your local rape crisis or victim's services provider:

- **Orange County Rape Crisis Center** provides a 24/7 Helpline: 919-967-7273, text 919-504-5211. There is also an online chat option on their website: ocrcc.org
- The **North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault's NC Rape Crisis Directory** provides contact information to your nearest rape crisis program: nccasa.org/get-help/
- **The Rape Abuse and Incest National Network RAINN** Resources- Nationwide refers callers to local service providers: rainn.org/resources
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** National Suicide Prevention Lifeline , 1-800-273-8255, suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Just Detention International provides a survivor packet to people who have been sexually abused in detention and other resources for survivors and service providers. Find Local Services – Just Detention International: justdetention.org/resources/survivor-resources/find-local-services



Orange County
Rape Crisis Center
Support. Education. Advocacy.



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SUPPORT SURVIVOR REENTRANTS WHO DISCLOSE SEXUAL ABUSE

Believe: Be present and nonjudgmental. Avoid asking "Why" questions (e.g., "Why didn't you say anything before?") because they can come across as blaming. Focus on responding calmly and with assurance.

Try this: "I hear you," "I believe you," or "I'm sorry that happened to you."

Listen: This is often the thing survivors need most. Listen attentively, giving your full attention to the survivor. Avoid trying to connect with the survivor by saying things like "I know how you feel" or pretending to understand something you do not.

Try this: Reflect what you're hearing- the emotions- back to the person speaking. You may consider phrases like "It sounds like you're feeling _____. Is that right?, or "It is normal and okay to feel _____. If you don't understand something, ask, "Would you like to talk more about _____?"

Empower: Sexual trauma on top of trauma from incarceration can compound feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. Help them understand their options, and empower them by letting them make their own decisions. Provide all the information they need for them to take the next step, including any limits to your confidentiality. Respect their choice to decline services.

Try this: "You deserve support. Would you like me to call anyone?". Also consider asking questions that help the person gain control of the moment such as "Do you want to get up and walk around?" or "Do you want some water?".

Support: Avoid saying "I'm here for you- anything you need". You may not be available 24/7 for them, but your local rape crisis center can be. Avoid making promises you can't keep such as: "Everything is going to be alright"- it can come across as empty and insincere.

Try this: "You deserve support, and I want to give it. How would you like me support you right now? Moving forward?", "Can I connect you to someone else to talk more in depth and support you more than I can?"

prioritize Safety: Disclosures make a person feel vulnerable and unsafe. Your recognition of and reaction to these feelings reassures that their disclosure was received by a trustworthy source. Ask them what you can do in the moment to help them to feel more safe, what they know about keeping themselves safe, what has worked for them in the past, and what are they able to do now? Identify strengths to adapt these to the current situation.

Try this: "Remember what I said about breaking confidentiality--outside of those reasons, I don't talk about any of this outside our meetings. Now, what are your plans tonight? Do you feel good about where you're staying?" Don't be afraid to ask if the survivor is having thoughts of self-harm. Provide referral to the suicide hotline if they are.

Did someone recently disclose to you that they were raped or sexually assaulted and you weren't quite sure what to say or do?

The Orange County Rape Crisis Center (OCRCC) provides support, education, and advocacy to survivors of sexual violence. OCRCC, and other rape crisis centers, also provides the same services to friends, family members, and ANYONE working with or supporting a survivor of sexual violence. This includes service providers and case managers!

If someone you are supporting or working with recently disclosed to you and you are feeling uncertain about your response or you are having difficulty processing what you heard, please connect with a trained advocate at OCRCC via our 24-hour Helpline.

Call (919) 967-7273

Text (919) 504-5211

Chat by visiting ocrcc.org

Is your organization interested in receiving training on how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence? Visit our website to fill-out a training request form.



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Returning Home

*People returning home are handling a lot of things.
Some things can be hard to talk about,
like any **unwanted sexual contact or activity**
that may have happened on the inside,
or even sexual abuse that happened in childhood or teen years.*

There are ways to get connected to a place that can help.

- You could talk to a local service provider who has experience talking about these things.
- You could call their helpline: **(919) 967-7273**, text **(919) 504-5211**, or use the chat feature on their website: **ocrcc.org**
- You could call another helpline if you are outside Orange County: **1-800-656-4673**, or look at their website: **rainn.org**
- For a resource written by those who work with formerly incarcerated survivors, call **(213) 384-1400** ext **110** to reach **Just Detention International**

These resources are...

- Free— there is no cost at all
- Available to All-- including those returning home
- Private and Confidential- nobody will ask you for your name, or try to contact your or ask for your contact info.
- FOR YOU- you can share whatever information you choose, and you can end the conversation when you choose: **You are in control of the conversation**
- Helplines are available 24/7- Helplines are always answered

FACTS:

- **You deserve to be believed**
- **You deserve to be listened to**
- **You deserve to be supported**
- **You deserve to have all the information you need to take the next step**



Returning Home Resource Guide:

For Local Reentry Councils Working with Reentrants

The Returning Home Resource provides information to individuals returning home who have experienced sexual abuse at any point in their lives. It provides information about accessing local and national programs for support for sexual trauma. The information in the RHR takes into consideration the barriers re-entrant survivors face in disclosing or even talking about any kind of unwanted sexual activity or childhood sexual abuse. **This Guide provides information to LRCs about the RHR with suggestions on how to use the RHR with reentrants. This Guide is intended only for service providers.**

- **The Main Text Box** is a statement about survivors who are also reentrants that provides education on sexual violence. It provides language on how to access help, and normalizes talking about a difficult subject. **The terms sexual violence, assault, and abuse are used interchangeably to provide the broadest understanding of unwanted sexual activity or childhood sexual abuse.**
- **The Get Connected section** provides options for accessing local or national helplines. Local services are the county's nearest rape crisis programs.
 - For information about your county's local rape crisis program: nccasa.org/get-help. RAINN directs callers to local services, and Just Detention International provides info on PREA, and assists survivors and service providers.
- **The Resources section** describes what to expect and emphasizes the things that are important to justice-involved individuals
- **FACTS** are statements intended to reassure and empower.

How Local Reentry Council Direct Service Providers Can Use this Resource

- The Returning Home Resource can be included in any "Welcome Home" packets along with other resources. **This is a low impact way of providing information on sexual abuse.**
- It can be provided at the initial point of contact with a new client in a general way that feels natural and does not single out sexual violence services as an identified or assumed need.
- It can be provided as a specific resource to meet a client's specific need at their request, or when a client discloses an experience of sexual abuse.
- **LRCs can incorporate language from the RHR or use it as a foundation to build on with language that is more relatable to clients.**

If you have any questions about other ways to provide support for survivors, please reach out to the rape crisis community. These services are not only for survivors but also for those who are helping.



**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 RAPE CRISIS CENTER**



Orange County
Rape Crisis Center
Support. Education. Advocacy.



Three organizations, NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Orange County Local Reentry Council, and the Orange County Rape Crisis Center, are working together to learn how to better connect people who have been recently released from prison or jail with the community resources they need to heal from experiences of sexual violence and/or human trafficking.

We would like to interview people who have:

- ✓ Recently re-entered their communities from prison or jail; and
- ✓ Experienced some form of sexual violence or human trafficking at some time in their life, including during, before, and after incarceration;

You will not be asked to discuss any experience of sexual violence or human trafficking directly. Discussing trauma is not a requirement for this interview.

We want to learn about individual's post-incarceration experiences accessing the support services that would help someone who experienced sexual violence. These support services may include information, counseling, therapy, support groups, crisis intervention, and accompaniment to legal or medical services.

The goal of this project is to provide Local Reentry Council staff with training, materials, and resources to connect their clients to sexual violence support services. Your participation will benefit others who have shared experiences.

Interviews will take place remotely as a confidential video or phone interview with project staff. Everything you share in your interview is private, except if you share any information about a child being harmed, or if you plan to harm yourself or others. Anything you discuss will be combined with all of the interviews and summarized in a report. Your name will also be removed from the recording and notes, so the project staff will not know your identity. You can choose not to answer a question or to end the interview at any time, for any reason.

At any time, including the end of the interview, you will be able to request sexual violence support services, or the opportunity to talk with an advocate.

You will receive a \$20.00 gift card at the time of the interview for your participation.

If you are interested in participating, contact Montia Daniels by email: SSRP@nccasa.org or call or text by phone at 919-889-5521 by September 30, 2020.



Dear Interview Participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in the interview process. There are a few things you'll need to know and prepare for before the interview.

You can choose to participate in the interview at either of our two interview locations or online through Zoom. If you choose to interview through Zoom, you can use the dial-in option on any cellular device or through a link on a smartphone, laptop or tablet.

Our first site location is the **Southern Human Services Center** at [2501 Homestead Road Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#).

Our second site location is the **Orange County Rape Crisis Center** at [1506 E Franklin St #200, Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#).

The last option is to use Zoom which you can access through a link. You can also use the dial-in method using the Meeting ID. For more information on how to operate Zoom and use any of its features refer to this guide : [How to use Zoom on your computer or mobile device — a quick guide for video meeting basics](#).

Upon arrival at the onsite locations, you will be escorted to a private room by an Orange County Rape Crisis Center advocate. You will speak to a staff member or NCCASA or Orange County Rape Crisis Center for the interview. I will also be on the call to take notes. You will be given a printed sheet of the interview questions, headphones, and a writing utensil if you want to write down your responses. The Orange County Rape Crisis advocate will also be able to engage with you and help you process the experience of the interview.

All information that you share in the interview is confidential. Everything you share in your interview is private unless you share information about a child being harmed in specific ways, or if you plan to harm yourself or others. Anything you discuss will be combined with all of the interviews and summarized in a report. Your name will also be removed from the recording and notes, so the project staff will not know your identity. You can choose not to answer a question or to end the interview at any time, for any reason.

You will receive a \$20.00 gift card at the time of the interview for your participation.

Again, thank you for your participation in this interview process. We look forward to interviewing you soon. **If you have any questions or concerns before the interview, please feel free to contact me at xxxxx@nccasa.org or call or text by phone xxx xxx xxxx.**

Sincerely,

Montia Daniels
Supporting Survivor Reentrants Project Assistant



Supporting Survivor Reentrants Project (SSRP)

Consent to Participate

1. Introduction

The Supporting Survivor Reentrants Project (SSRP) is a collaboration with three community service agencies in Central North Carolina that aims to improve services and resources for previously incarcerated individuals who have also experienced sexual violence or human trafficking. The three agencies are North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA), the Orange County Local Reentry Council (LRC) and the Orange County Rape Crisis Center (OCRCC). We will be conducting virtual interviews with voluntary participants to get their opinion about the best ways to offer information and support to people who have had these experiences.

2. Participation is Voluntary

It is your choice whether or not you want to participate in an interview. There will be no consequences if you decide not to. You can refuse to participate at any time, and can stop the interview after it starts if you want to.

3. Funding and Support

This project was supported by the Federal Grant Award 2017-WF-AX-0040 Project Number PROJ014313 awarded by the NC Governor's Crime Commission. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily reflect the views of the Governor's Crime Commission or the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

4. Who is eligible to participate?

In order to participate, someone must have been incarcerated at any time and also experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse before, during or after incarceration. Those who have worked with LRC who have also experienced sexual assault are also eligible to participate.

5. Procedures

If you decide to participate you will be interviewed by a team member from either NCCASA or OCRCC through an online video service called Zoom. You will set up an appointment to go to either the Southern Human Services Center or the Orange County Rape Crisis Center in Chapel Hill. An associate will be there to show you to the room with the computer for the interview, and they will also be available to answer questions or talk about how you feel after the interview. You will be asked about whether or not you knew about or used support services in regards to sexual violence after leaving incarceration. You will be asked if these services were useful to you. You will NOT be asked about your experiences of sexual violence. You can share or not share whatever information you feel comfortable with.

6. How long will it take?

The interview itself will take around an hour. Depending on your transportation needs, you should add extra time to your whole trip for traveling and finding the correct building and room.

7. What are the benefits to me?

The benefits of participating in the study are that you might feel good about helping others by sharing your experiences. There may be no direct benefits besides this.

8. What are the risks to me?

There might be risks of feeling uncomfortable, stress or anxiety when talking about your experiences. However, talking about experiences of abuse is not required. There is a slight risk of an accidental release of your identity or breach of confidentiality due to human error, but this is very unlikely.

9. Confidentiality and Privacy

Everything you share in your interview is private unless you share information about a child being harmed in specific ways, or if you plan to harm yourself or others. Only the interviewers will read what you said. Your name will also be removed from the recording and notes, so project staff will not know your identity.

10. How will my information be stored?

If you agree to let us film your interview, the recording will be stored in a secure online space. It will be transcribed into written notes as soon as possible, and the recording will be erased. Your real name will not be on the notes or video recording. You will be assigned a participant number that will go on your files.

11. Compensation

You will receive a \$xx.00 gift card at the time of the interview for your participation.

12. What if I have questions?

If you have questions, you can ask the interviewer or assistant at any time during your visit. If you have a question regarding support services, you can use the information provided for the Orange County Rape Crisis Center, or speak to the advocate who brought you to the interview space today. If you have an interview-related question you can email Anna Wallin at anna@nccasa.org. If you have a question about the project you can email Courtney Dunkerton at courtney@nccasa.org. You can also call or text xxx xxx xxxx.

Participant's Agreement: I have read the above statement, or it has been read to me. The study has been explained to me. My questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the study.

Name	
Signature	Date

SSRP Interview and Protocol Orientation Guide

I. Protocol Summary

This cheat sheet is a summation of the main parts of this document, and it also details what you should do from the time a participant walks into the building to the time they leave.

Preparation

1. Gather all of the necessary materials for the interview
 - Envelopes (#10 & 9x12)
 - Water
 - Snacks
 - Pens and Pencils
 - The gift cards
 - Masks, hand sanitizer or wipes
 - Tablets
 - Hard copy of interview
 - Consent form
 - Receipt form for gift card
2. Place the consent form, hard copy of interview, pens and pencils by the tablet where the participant will be sitting. Turn the tablet on and already have it onto Zoom.
3. Place the mask, hand sanitizer or wipes by the door so that the participant has access as soon as they walk in
4. Have the snacks and water in an accessible place where you can offer it to the participant or they can take as they come in or leave out
5. Keep the gift cards, envelopes, and receipt for the gift card in a place you can store it until the interview is over. When the interview is over, have someone stand by the exit of the interview space to provide them with the gift card.
6. As the interview time comes closer, be near the entrance so you can greet the participant.
 - Tip: Be prepared for people to get lost since this may not be a place they've been to before and it's in a large building. You can stand outside the door of the entrance to the ORCC if someone is late (possibly because they are lost).

Upon Arrival

1. Once the participant arrives, greet them and welcome them.
2. Walk the person to the place where the interview will take place and
3. Show the participant how to work Zoom. (Ending the call, seeing the red light when recording, etc.)

If the interviewer is there in person:

1. Turn on Zoom and angle the camera so the notetaker (Montia) can see both you and the participant.
2. Don't forget to still ask to record the interview.
3. Introduce yourself and the notetaker, proceed with step 4

If the interviewer is on Zoom:

1. Make sure your camera and microphone are on for the interview.
2. Thank the participant for being here and ask the participant if you can record the interview.
3. Introduce yourself and the notetaker, proceed with step 4
4. Explain that the paper in front of them is the consent form and ask them to sign it before the interview
5. Then explain that the hardcopy is an outline of the interview questions, where they can write answers also and hand them in after the the interview
6. Explain that the interview will only be about an hour long and to come out of the place where the interview is when it's over, then they will be given a gift card

During the interview (for the interviewer)

1. Introduce yourself with your name, occupation, and explain what your occupation does.
2. Start off by asking the questions about them that are very lighthearted (questions you'd ask someone you've just met.
3. Move onto the more difficult questions, but keep in mind that they're not obligated to answer any of the questions. Let them know that they're able to skip questions
4. Share that you appreciate them sharing their experiences if they choose to.
5. When closing out the interview, thank them for their time and also reassure them that all of the information they shared was confidential

After the Interview

1. Once they come out of the room, thank them for their time, ask them if they'd like to debrief or talk to someone about what their feeling or experiences
2. If so, debrief with them.
3. If not, hand them their gift card and also let them know about resources at the LRC and ORCC.
4. Walk them out of the ORCC.

II. Extended Protocol

Introduce yourself

At the beginning of the interview, it's important to introduce yourself with your name and position. When working in reentry, advocacy work, and rape crisis centers, there can often be jargon and field-specific language that you use on a daily basis. Try to explain your position without using field-specific language. Make sure you explain what your position entails, while also keeping it short and concise. Avoid using acronyms, because they may not be familiar to the interviewee. (i.e. say the Prison Rape Elimination Act instead of PREA)

For example:

My name is _____. I'm a project assistant for the Supporting Survivors Reentry Project. I help out where needed throughout the project, and I work closely with the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Explain the Project and Consent

Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project is to learn how we can better connect formerly incarcerated people to sexual violence and human trafficking resources, and we aim to improve services and resources for previously incarcerated individuals who have also experienced sexual violence or human trafficking.

Specifically, the resources that the project aims to improve are those relating to services provided by the rape crisis centers, counseling, and other services targeted towards people who've experienced sexual violence and/or human trafficking. This project also aims to improve services by the Local Re-entry Council and facilitate enhanced organizational partnerships.

In this project, we acknowledge that formerly incarcerated people may have had other factors that influenced their reentry process and may have even contributed to sexual violence and human trafficking. For example, if a person was houseless, that puts them at a greater risk of being vulnerable to sexual harassment and human trafficking. While we are focused on sexual violence and human trafficking, the experiences of participants can be *intersectional* meaning that their experience is based on multiple identities or experiences.

Also, this project's creation is based on the need for better and improved resources for this specific population. The population we are researching is comprised of mostly men that often aren't included in conversations about sexual violence and human trafficking, and half of these men are men of color that can carry cultural stigmas about men experiencing sexual violence and trafficking. Through the interview process, we hope to gain key insights about this

population and their experiences to improve and specialize resources specifically for this population.

While we hope to gain key insights from this population, we should also recognize that this is an extremely vulnerable population. Due to this, it's important to keep all of their information confidential and thoroughly explained to the participants.

Consent to Participate

The [SSRP Consent to Participate](#) document details what information participants need for informed consent. The participants should know that the project is voluntary, where the funding comes from, and if they are eligible to participate. One important thing they should know is the way the interview will be set up. The interviews will be through [Zoom](#) and that the interview will take about an hour. For their time, the participants will receive a \$50 gift card.

Due to the vulnerability of this population, it is important to emphasize that the information will be confidential and the way that it will be kept confidential. Only the interviewers and the SSRP Project Assistant Montia Daniels will have access to the interviews. The interviews will also be anonymous, and the personal information collected will only be used to dispense gift cards.

The risk of participating in the interview should also be emphasized, so participants can make an informed decision by knowing the risk and benefits of participating. While talking about trauma and abuse isn't necessary for participation, it can cause stress and negative emotional effects if the participants do choose to talk about traumatic experiences. However, they will have the opportunity to speak with an Orange County Rape Crisis Center advocate after the interview for support and to talk things through with. There is also a risk of *accidental* release of the information. This is very unlikely because of the security measures we will have in place, but they should still be aware of this small possibility.

While going over the consent to participate, don't:

- Pressure participants into signing the form or agreeing to be interviewed
- Try to bribe the individual with the \$50 gift card or offer additional funds
- Guilt participants into interviewing
- Leave out information about the risk and negative effects of the interview

While we want to have interviewees for the project, we want those interviewees to be informed about the interview processes and procedures, first and foremost.

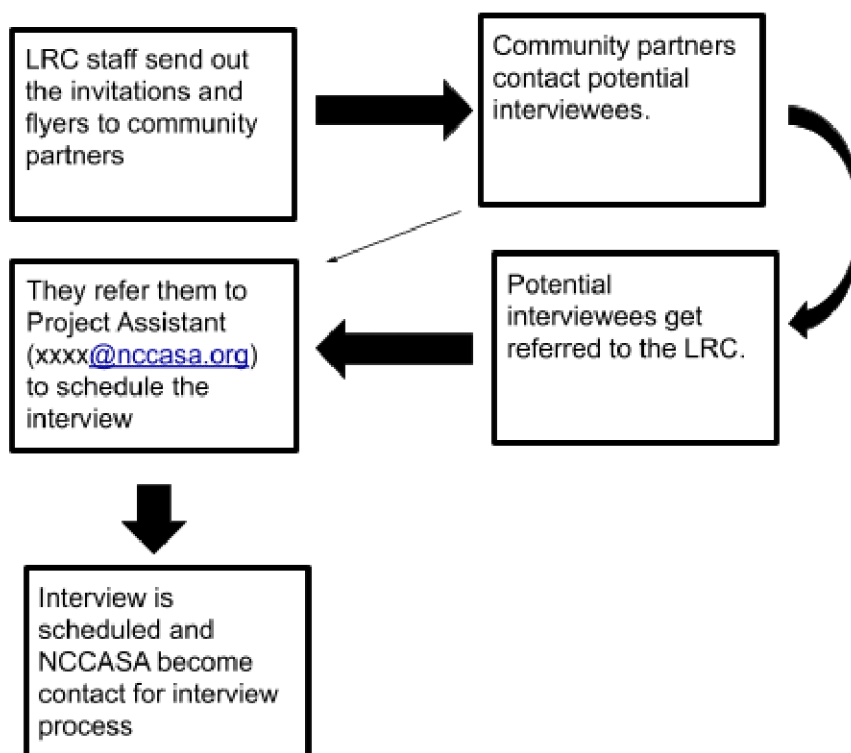
Recruitment Action Plan

The Supporting Survivor Reentrants Project relies on the ability to interview key informants who are reentrants who've experienced sexual violence or human trafficking at any point in their life.

These interviews are necessary for creating training and resources that are informed by survivors. The Recruitment Action Plan will guide the process of recruiting interviewees in a trauma informed and survivor centered way.

Invitation Procedure

The Local Reentry Council (LRC) will be a liaison between the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA), the Orange County Rape Crisis Center (ORCC) and community partners that have access to reentrants. To broaden the amount of people we could reach as potential interviewees, the LRC and NCCASA will reach out to community partners to ask if they can contact any one to be a part of the interview process. Those community partners will direct the potential and interested interviewees to the LRC or to the SSRP Project Assistant. The LRC will then direct the potential participants to the SSRP Project Assistant. The assistant will then schedule the interviews. This information is replicated in a flow chart below:



Follow-Up Procedure

Next, the project assistant will contact the LRC or the community partners directly to see how many people were contacted and how many were interested. Those that are interested will be

directed to the project assistant to schedule interviews. Those who did not respond but were invited will be followed up with.

What ways can we follow up with people in a trauma informed way? We don't want to cause harm by asking multiple times about participating in interviews about sexual violence, but we need to see if they'd want to participate.

Email Invitation

Dear Community Partners,

The LRC is partnering with the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) and the Orange County Rape Crisis Center (ORCC) for the Supporting Survivor Reentrants Project (SSRP). We are interviewing participants that will inform the project team in developing a resource packet for survivor reentrants & revise LRC processes & protocols as it relates to service provision. Training for LRC's and rape crisis programs will be developed to share information learned from this project. To better understand what reentrants need, we are seeking to interview reentrants who've experienced sexual violence and/or human trafficking at any point in their lives.

The interviews will be confidential, and the participant's names will be detached from the interviews. The participants are not required to talk about experiences with sexual violence and human trafficking. We are offering \$50 for those who participate in the interviews. These interviews will aid us in creating resources for reentrants who've experienced sexual violence and/or human trafficking and the community partners that support them. Next, there is language that you as a community partner or service provider can use to talk about sexual violence.

RAINN's "[Tips for Talking with Survivors of Sexual Assault](#)" has a few common phrases and terms that people can use to make people who've experienced sexual assault feel heard and believed. I'd like to note, however, that while RAINN refers to people who've experienced sexual assault or violence as survivors, many people who've experienced sexual violence or assault may not see themselves as victims or survivors. This especially applies to the population we are interviewing. Men, especially men of color, may not see themselves as survivors or victims due to cultural narratives of who gets to be a survivor or victim. It's important to be careful using the terms victim and survivor for this reason.

If you know anyone who could participate in this interview process, please contact SSRP Project Assistant (name) at ssrp@nccasa.org or call xxx-xxx-xxxx.

III. How to Talk About Sexual Violence

The Reasoning for the Order of Questions

In the BARCC “How to Talk About Sexual Violence: Curriculum 2”, the organization has a three-part model that is used in order to facilitate discussions about sexual violence during the reentry process. Their model is meant to be used over the course of 3-6 months where the client can build a relationship with the person providing services. Since we are conducting a one-time interview, this presents a challenge, because we are asking participants to talk about traumatic events with someone they aren’t necessarily familiar with. However, we can use BARCC’s guide to try to establish comfort and communication throughout the interview and facilitate conversations about traumatic experiences while reducing harm.

BARCC’s Three-Part Model:

- 1. Impersonal, Direct Questions**
- 2. Non-clinical Trauma Questions**
- 3. Symptomatic Questions**

The order of the questions reflects this model. While the participants know the interview is about sexual violence, the questions, in the beginning, are not directly related to sexual violence. You should bring up questions that you may ask anybody upon the first meeting (i.e. Do you have any kids? Where are you from? etc.) This will help you build rapport with the participants, so they feel comfortable answering more difficult questions later in the interview.

The next questions provide an opportunity for the participant to bring up the questions, but many of them don’t state sexual violence explicitly. This is intentional because these questions are used to see what the participants thought were their main concerns. You should listen to see if sexual violence and/or human trafficking are brought up in those questions. If so, you can probe to see if they are willing to expand upon their experiences. If not, wait until they are talked about explicitly in later questions.

Directing Services to Participants

During the interview process, participants have the opportunity to discuss their experiences that may be traumatic. Recalling traumatic experiences can bring up negative emotions and case them to relive the experience. It’s important that we provide the option to receive support after the interview process. Participants will have the opportunity to speak with an Orange County Rape Crisis Center advocate after the interview to debrief, process, or receive other forms of support. However, there may be times during the interview process that you may need to provide support.

In the next section, we will go through how to affirm people who’ve experienced sexual assault and also more ways to talk about sexual assault and other forms of trauma.

Talking About Sexual Violence

If a participant discloses information about sexual assault or any other trauma or harm, it is important to show that you're listening to their experience and that you affirm their experience. RAINN's ["Tips for Talking with Survivors of Sexual Assault"](#) has a few common phrases and terms that people can use to make people who've experienced sexual assault feel heard and believed. I'd like to note, however, that while RAINN refers to people who've experienced sexual assault or violence as survivors, many people who've experienced sexual violence or assault may not see themselves as victims or survivors. This especially applies to the population we are interviewing. Men, especially men of color, may not see themselves as survivors or victims due to cultural narratives of who gets to be a survivor or victim. It's important to be careful using the terms victim and survivor for this reason.

Just Detention International's (JDI) webinar ["Vulnerable and Underserved: Victim Advocacy for Incarcerated Male Survivors of Color"](#) explains many statistics specific to incarcerated male survivors of color. For incarcerated male survivors, the perpetrators are equally staff and other inmates. Even though we aren't interviewing minors, incarcerated men of color could've also experienced sexual assault in juvenile detention centers. In juvenile facilities, staff commit sexual abuse more often than other juvenile inmates, and of these staff, they are mostly women. These experiences can also come up during the interview process even if it happened when they were still minors. It's also important to keep in mind that while 86-90% of males who are behind bars nationally are Black and Latino, in Orange County it's almost 50% white and 50% of color. For both white men and men of color, however, using sexual verbiage can deter them from interviewing or talking about experiences of sexual violence.

JDI's webinar also contextualized sexual violence and reporting that violence in detention facilities. Incarcerated people may be in protective pairings, where one exchanges sexual services to a more powerful inmate for protection from other inmates. In these pairings, the more powerful inmate may also force or coerce one into performing sexual services to other inmates. This is human trafficking. Incarcerated people can also experience sexual violence from staff members through excessive strip searches or pat downs, where staff members are touching incarcerated people inappropriately. These forms of sexual violence are important to be aware of. Protecting pairings are forms of prison violence and also human trafficking. While formerly incarcerated interviewees may not name their experiences in this way, it's important for you to be able to identify those behaviors as human trafficking and sexual violence and take note of them.

Probing

In the SSRP Key Informant Interview Questions document, there are notes where you can probe for information if an interviewee brings up instances of sexual violence and human trafficking. Even though this information can be very useful to us, we should also be mindful while probing. As noted before, interviewees are not required to talk about their traumas in the

interview process. If at any point in the interview process that the interviewee decides to cease participation or not answer certain questions, we will respect this decision and not probe any further or coerce into answering questions. The participant will still receive a \$50 gift card, even if the interview is cut short or they refuse to answer certain questions.

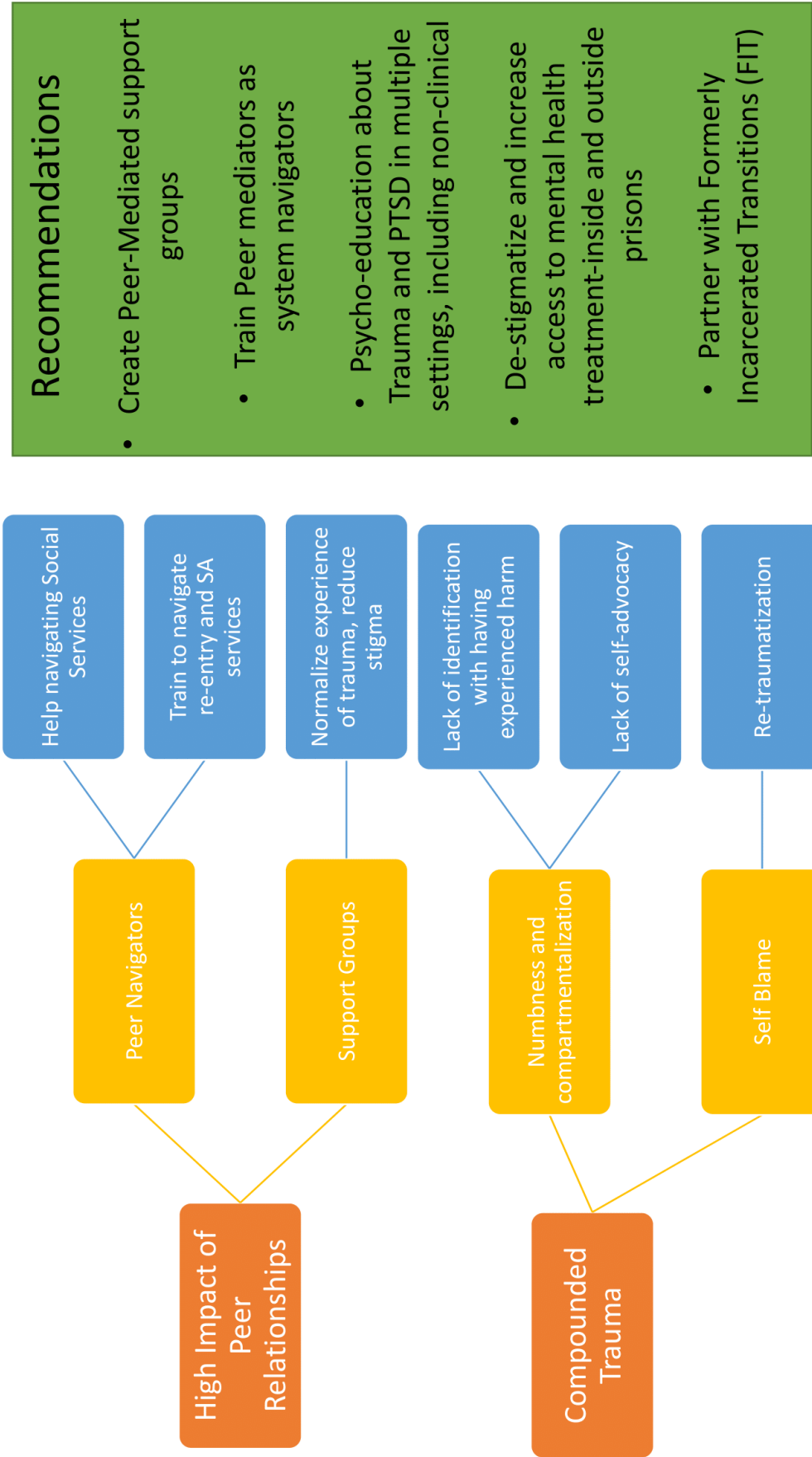
Also, if the participant is avoiding certain questions or interview questions that are meant for probing, respect this boundary. Different interviewees may have different levels of comfortability with talking about experiences of sexual violence and human trafficking. Many of us assume men don't want to talk about sexual violence or human trafficking, but this can also be a space and outlet for people to voice experiences of sexual violence and human trafficking while receiving support. It's important to assess our own assumptions of sexual violence and how our frameworks include and exclude incarcerated men of color.

IV. General Tips for the Interview Process

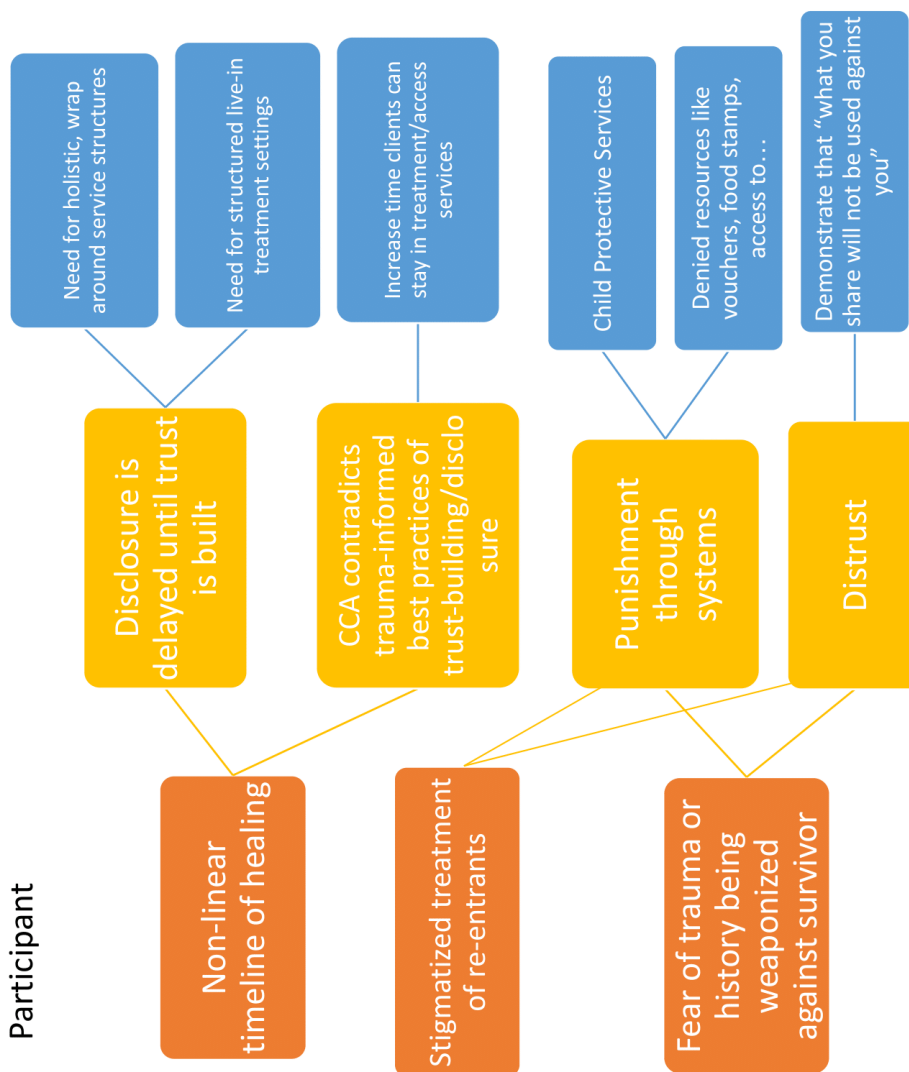
In the interview, the participant may give you permission to record. If so, one can start recording an interview, and the notetaker takes general notes. While taking those notes, for any phrases or important parts of the recording, also note the time or point in the interview in which it was said. This will be helpful in drafting the final report for this project, in the event that we need to use direct quotes. If you are not given permission to record, you will need to take more detailed notes about what was said while also including the time where you can. You should take the notes on your laptop and then transfer those documents onto the flashdrive. Because the information in the interviews is confidential, make sure the notes from the interviews are kept confidential also.

The interview process should take about an hour. The interview questions should help guide the conversation, but it's also okay to ask some follow-up questions or let a participant talk more about some questions than others. Because of the online format of the interview, it's important to be flexible in the interview process. It's also important to be patient. The online format may make it more difficult for older participants to navigate the interview platform. You should also make them aware that if they do have trouble, an ORCC advocate may be able to help them with technical issues.

There will only be about 8-12 interviews in all. Participants have until [extended date] to reach out about participating to be a part of the interview process.



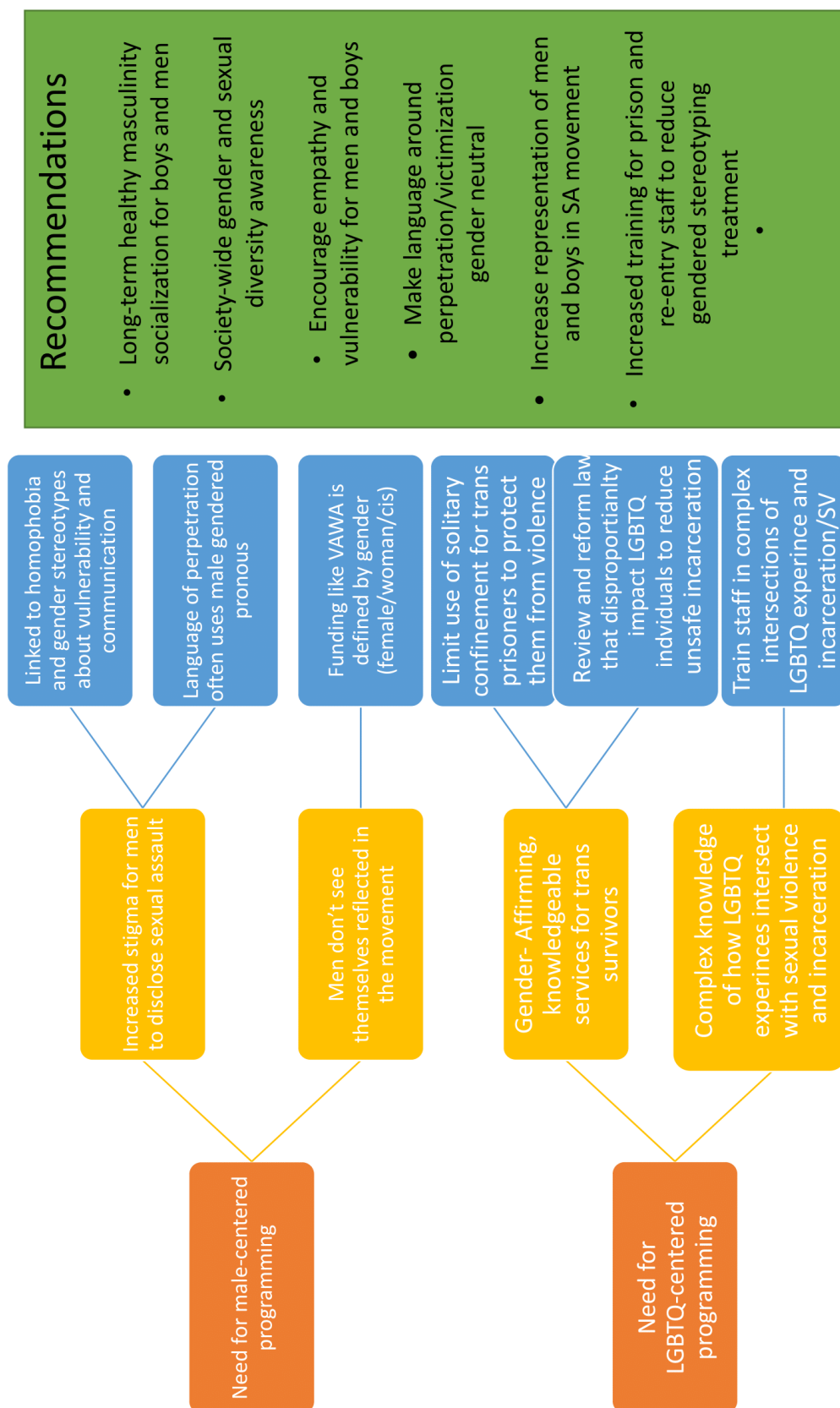
"Having the right staff is key. If anyone judges them or hurts them with information, they will immediately shut down".
 (Need to) break down barriers from childhood trauma that taught "don't trust, don't talk, don't feel" - Focus Group Participant

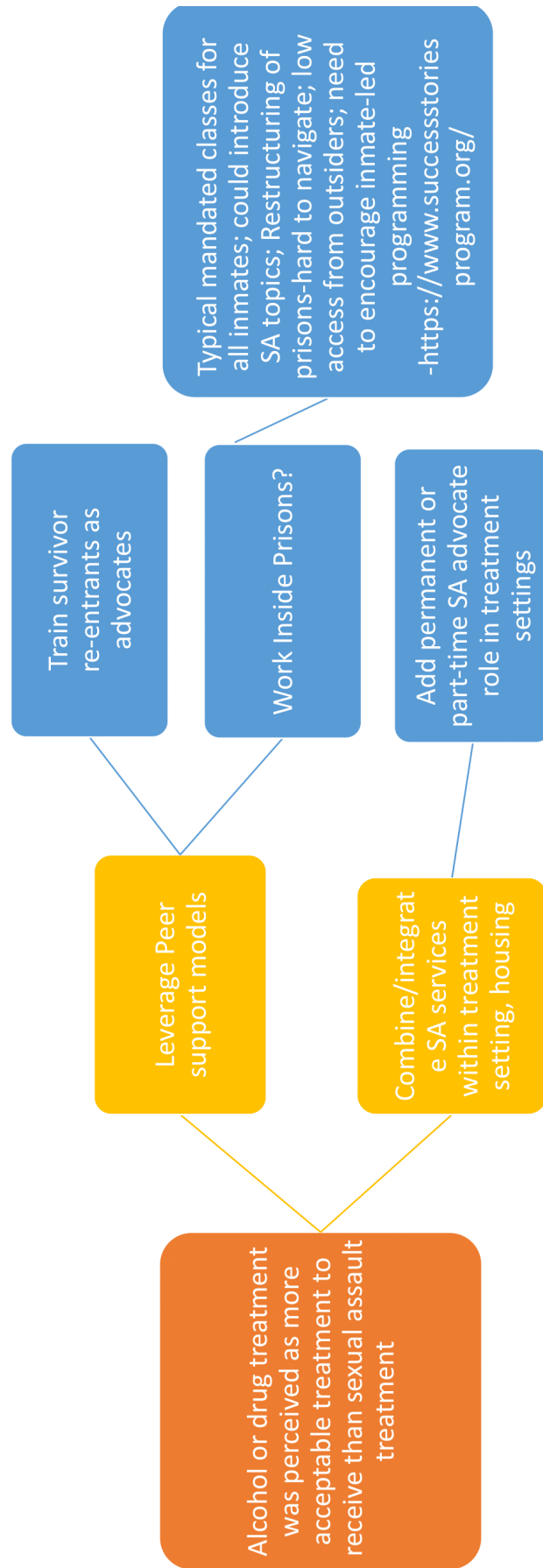


Recommendations

NOTE: First Disclosure will likely occur in housing or treatment setting

- 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





Recommendation Summary

Societal / Systems

- Review and reform laws that disproportionately impact LGBTQ individuals to reduce unsafe incarceration*
 - Decriminalize sex work
 - Repeal anti-sodomy laws
- Make language around perpetration/victimization gender neutral
- Long-term healthy masculinity socialization for boys and men
- Society-wide gender and sexual diversity awareness

Agency / Relationship

- Limit use of solitary confinement for trans prisoners to protect them from violence
- Evaluate gendered housing, and house LGBTQ inmates by their preference
- Make language around perpetration/victimization gender neutral
- Train staff in complex intersections of LGBTQ experience and incarceration/SV

Individual

- Increase self-worth and self-autonomy
- Empower decision making
- Increase sense of personal safety

Recommendation Summary

"Hierarchy and intimidation is a big part of **prison culture** and enforced upon inmates and within their subcultures": Ultimately we have to address how the legal, justice and prison systems reinforce toxic power dynamics that perpetuate cycles of violence on a structural level, feeding community and interpersonal violence in our cultures.

Societal / Systems

- 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"

Agency / Relationship

- 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

Individual

- Increase self-worth and self-autonomy
- Empower decision making
- Increase sense of personal safety

COVID and Reentry: Annotated Sources

“Those released from prison find reentry much harder due to COVID-19”

by Samantha Max

- This article details how COVID-19 is affecting formerly incarcerated people are having a harder time getting access to jobs, healthcare, and support systems
- Shows that COVID-19 highlights and worsens the already wide gap in employment between people who have been formerly incarcerated and those who haven't

“Failing Grades: States’ Responses to COVID-19 in Jails & Prisons”

by Emily Widra and Dylan Hayre, Prison Policy Initiative

- This is a formal analysis that shows how different states responded to the coronavirus. Most states made a D- and below. No state made above a D+.
- The states were graded on whether they declared a state emergency, if they enacted executive order for release of incarcerated people, and provided protective equipment to staff and inmates.
- Many jails and prisons were still overcrowded and did not give everyone personal protective equipment or allow for social distancing

“Reentry Reforms Are More Critical Than Ever Amid the Coronavirus Pandemic”

by Sarah Figgat

- This is a comprehensive list that shows what lawmakers, people who run jails and prisons, organizations and individuals can do to help support formerly incarcerated people.
- This article is particularly informative because it focuses on the issue of incarceration from a structural and individual standpoint. It advocates for lawmakers to change policy while also advocating for funds to be allocated directly to formerly incarcerated people.

“Covid-19’s Impact on People in Prison”

by The Equal Justice Initiative

- This article highlights how people who are incarcerated have a higher chance of contracting and dying from COVID-19 than the general population.
- The initiative attributes this to overcrowding and vulnerable populations
- Reducing the number of correctional staff due to COVID-19 has also made incarcerated people more vulnerable to abuse and violence.
- Jails also often do not provide incarcerated people with adequate health care to prevent the spread of the virus.

“Leaving Prison In The COVID-19 Economy”

by Cardiff Garcia

- Follows the story of a transgender man, Cade, who struggled with reentry
 - Couldn't get a new idea after transitioning because DMV was closed
 - Couldn't get into the shelter because everything was closed or had a waitlist of up to 90 days
 - Hasn't been able to find a job and says that the lack of income "almost makes me want to go back to my old ways"
- Describes how people have a hard time getting a job once released and even harder when staff is limited at service industry jobs
- Second chance employers: people who don't look at criminal history first and are willing to hire formerly incarcerated people

"Returning from prison and jail is hard during normal times — it's even more difficult during COVID-19"

by Wanda Bertram

- "As we reported in 2018, people who have been to prison are nearly 10 times more likely to be homeless than members of the public at large."
- Housing is even more important now because of hygiene and social distancing
- Also "quality of life" offenses can put people back in jail

EMERGENT SPACE AND REENTRY WORK

Our Project Assistant connected a need from a local service provider to her work in Emergent Space and Emergency Strategy with NCCASA to produce the following paper. More resources are linked in the Appendix.

How Service Providers Can Use Emergent Space

This document was inspired by the experience of a local service provider who works with people reentering the community and who received a disclosure about a lifetime of sexual abuse and trauma. This was a distressing experience for the service provider who was not prepared for it. Oftentimes, service providers can be in situations where they are not able to prepare to give service or feel uncomfortable due to the time or space. **This document aims to find ways that we can create emergent spaces even when it's uncomfortable, unexpected, or distressing.** Emergent space comes out of adrienne marie brown's *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. **We will go through the principles of emergent space, and see how each can be used in order to aid service providers in creating an emergent space that helps them and the people they serve navigate difficult conversations with care for each other.**

What is EMERGENT SPACE?

The booklet “Emergent Space: Finding an Alternative” is co-authored by Shareen El Naga, Montia Daniels, and Chris Croft. Emergent space comes out of the work of adrienne marie brown and many conversations between the co-authors about the pros and cons of brave spaces and safe spaces. Emergent space uses the six core elements of emergent strategy to create a space that combines the positive aspects of safe and brave spaces.

The six core elements are:

1. Has a fractal nature, acknowledging the relationship between small and large.
2. Is adaptive.
3. Emphasizes interdependence and decentralization.
4. Is non-linear and iterative.
5. Fosters resilience and opportunities for transformative justice.
6. Continues to create more possibilities.

There are also applications for each of these core elements which we will go through and apply to service providers. Emergent spaces are also applied through a focus on harm reduction, creation generative conflict, and a focus on making the space accessible. Emergent spaces also encourage establishing and planning for evaluation.

Reframe Health and Justice defines harm reduction as “a necessary and effective part of the drug use, sex work, and anti-violence care continuum which recognizes and helps accelerate a person’s survival.” Harm reduction originated out of substance abuse work, and it created a way to reduce the harm caused by substance abuse even when a person was still using. In emergent spaces, we use harm reduction in a social setting where we reduce the harm that can be caused through our words and actions. Some of the conversations that will be had in emergent spaces will be difficult but even when hurt or harm is brought up in the conversation, the goal is to minimize that harm as much as possible while still speaking our own truths and acknowledging others. We realize that this is a very delicate balance, and while this task may seem daunting now, we hope that at the end of this document you have the tools you need to feel confident using harm reduction strategies in emergent spaces. In these spaces, you may also experience unavoidable conflict, but it’s important to focus on what type of conflict is being created.

Emergent spaces aim to create generative conflict instead of counterproductive conflict. Generative conflict, as outlined in “Emergent Space: Finding an Alternative”, “holds repair and growth as its goals and ideals; is between people who are collaborating toward greater understanding and equity, and who listens to and hears each other; is solution-oriented.” Generative conflict also focuses on decentralizing because it focuses on the problem instead of the need to be right. This, however, is not true in counterproductive conflict that “has being right or proving the other wrong as its goals and ideals; loses sight of collaboration; causes participants, particularly those with marginalized identities, to feel unheard or unseen; is not solution-oriented”, according to “Emergent Space: Finding an Alternative.” We want to focus on creating generative conflict, not only because it is efficient, but also because by actively listening to each other, we are creating a space of growth and learning. We can’t begin the process of creating spaces for generative conflict, however, if everyone doesn’t have a seat at the table.

Accessibility is a key component of creating an emergent space, because in an emergent space, we want people to be able to attend and learn if they want to. Emergent spaces are about removing barriers in society but also in the space itself. We can make sure our emergent space is accessible by asking these guiding questions from “Emergent Space: Finding an Alternative”: “What time is the meeting? Is it while people are working or otherwise engaged? Does it conflict with other activities focused on equity? Is it in a wheelchair/blind/deaf accessible area? Did you consider language accessibility?” These questions are aimed to make sure the facilitators have considered the different ways people can show up to a space. We will also be discussing how this changes in a virtual environment and how service providers can consider accessibility with their clients. Lastly, emergent spaces consider how you can improve the space and the conversations within it.

In order to learn more about the space, it can often be a good idea to evaluate the space so you can work on and continue to improve it. Evaluation can be formal and informal, and there are many different ways of measuring and gauging how the conversation and space was and felt. Different organizations may use different evaluations depending on the nature of their work and the goals, but it’s good to use this information to create more possibilities for the space and ensure everyone is benefitting from the space.

These themes will be brought up throughout this document and have unique applications for service providers. We will go through many of these themes as we take a look at each of the six elements of emergent strategy and apply them to emergent spaces for service providers.

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ELEMENT ONE: Has a Fractal Nature

The first element of emergent strategy is that it has a fractal nature. A fractal nature acknowledges the relationship between things that are large and small. An example of this would be the relationship between the individual and the community. Service providers have a unique placement in the fractal element of emergent space. Service providers are individuals with their own complex backgrounds, but they have lots of interactions with the communities they're a part of. This close connectivity to the community keeps their service provider in touch and able to tap into the needs of the community. This position allows for service providers to have a significant impact on the communities they serve, but they also have to tap into their own needs when serving their communities.

Below, are some question that service providers can ask themselves to check into their own needs and emotions while providing for others from PsychCentral:

1. Have I been letting myself feel my feelings?
2. What can I learn from a mistake or not-so-great decision I made this week?
3. What am I feeling right now?
4. What's one way I can play today or this week?
5. How can I soothe myself without falling into the rabbit hole of substances like alcohol?
6. What inspires me?
7. What's a beautiful sight, scent, taste or sound that I've experienced lately? Or what sight, scent, taste or sound do I want to experience? And how can I experience it more often?
8. What empowers me?
9. What am I doing right now that I don't enjoy or maybe even makes me miserable? Can I delegate it, ask for help or simply forget it?
10. Where am I hurting?
11. Where am I healing?
12. Who can I reach out to who might need my support, who might need someone to listen?
13. How can I be kinder to myself right now?

These questions can be answered at any time to determine how you're feeling and what steps you can take towards your own wellbeing. Being a part of a larger community that you can make a difference in is rewarding, but it's okay to acknowledge that it can also be stressful and providing these services can even drain you emotionally. Creating an emergent space starts with the individual and grows into a community effort. The first step is to do the self work and check in on yourself. Then, you can work on creating an emergent space in your community.

On the community level, you can create an emergent space by acknowledging your role in the community and continuing to listen, encourage, and uplift the members of your community, especially those who are marginalized. A fractal nature doesn't just apply to the individual to the community, but it also applies to our actions. Even our smallest actions can transform into larger steps towards a better and more inclusive community. The next five core elements will also help us understand how we can specifically make our communities emergent spaces.

ELEMENT TWO: Is Adaptive

Emergent spaces are adaptive in the sense that they change due to various factors in the conversation and space. For example, who is in the space, where is the space, and what are people talking about are all factors that can change the nature of the emergent space. As service providers, the nature of your work can generally be adaptive. Sometimes, you provide services unexpectedly or take on new environments. Adaptability is a skill that many service providers have mastered, but what does it mean to be adaptive in an emergent space with a community. To be adaptive in an emergent space, you're allowing change to be an integral part of the growth for the people in the space. In being open to change, we are also being open to growth.

in an emergent space, you can adapt to the needs of your client by adapting the time, place, and manner of the conversation. You can ask your client if they'd feel comfortable having the conversation somewhere else, at a different time or having the conversation in a different way. Since the nature of this work is adaptive, you can prepare for different situations so when you get into them, you feel more comfortable and prepared with your client.

Some questions you can ask yourself are:

- Do I have any alternate place where we can have this conversation?
- Do I have a plan to debrief and reconnect if we can't finish this conversation today?
- What other language can I use, if they don't respond well to technical language?
- Is there anything I can offer for the client to feel more comfortable?
- Is there anything I can do for myself to feel more comfortable in this space?

Adaptability is key in service provider work. While it can be hard to be adaptable because it takes us out of our comfort zones, we can practice adaptability by having alternatives in place to help us with it.

ELEMENT THREE: Emphasizes Interdependence and Decentralization

Interdependence

in the framework of emergent space is when people, experiences, and things are simultaneously connected and dependent upon one another.

Interdependence is important in emergent spaces because the space relies on the idea that we can grow through the conversations we have, the experiences we hear, and the way we interact with each other. As service providers, you can grow from interactions with your clients the same way they grow from interactions with you. Interdependence is also allowing ourselves to rely on others for help and realizing that it's okay to need help and support. We live in a society and culture that emphasizes self-sufficiency and self-help, and it characterizes needing help as a sign of weakness. In creating an emergent space, we have to unlearn the idea that we should avoid asking for help when we need it. Our society also breeds distrust in ourselves and our communities. We have to foster trust within ourselves by believing that we are capable of things we want to accomplish. In order to foster trust in our communities, we have to realize where the distrust stems from.

Many marginalized communities distrust different organizations and systems because those systems and organizations have historically caused harm in those communities. For example, many organizations may work with law enforcement agencies in order to achieve a common goal. However, the Black community has a deep distrust for police and sheriff departments because of state violence, murders, the War on Drugs and the racialized criminalization of marijuana. Trust in these communities can't be bridged overnight and often can't be bridged with one person, one project, or one interaction, but it's where it starts. As service providers, you can focus on minimizing harm and rebuilding that trust, so your clients can trust you. Emergent space also focuses on decentralization.

Decentralization in an emergent space is when we don't make one person the spokesperson or the president but spread the responsibility to all of the members of the group. Decentralization is letting go of hierarchies and the need to uplift only one person. It allows for many people to be able to take initiative and responsibility for the organization. It also decentralizes privileged voices and gives marginalized people the space and voice they deserve to voice their own stories. Decentralization also makes us have to depend on each other. When we all have the responsibility over organizations, projects, and for providing services to clients, we have to rely on each other. We can practice decentralization in our organizations by letting go of the strict hierarchical structures, and we can practice

it in our conversations with clients by prioritizing their stories and experiences and letting them speak. It's also important to allow the client to define their own experiences.

ELEMENT FOUR: Is Non-Linear and Iterative

Emergent spaces are non-linear and iterative, meaning that you can go back to different topics in the conversation. Emergent spaces foster growth and healing, and growth and healing is done in a non-linear and iterative way. By making the space like this, you also allow people to feel more heard throughout the experience. Sometimes we don't feel heard the first time or even the second time, and an emergent space shows that it's okay to repeat yourself to feel heard and acknowledged, especially for marginalized folks. For service providers, this can mean that you are listening and allowing a client to repeat themselves to be heard, allowing the client to go back to revisit certain topics, and creating a space for the client to grow from revisiting topics and experiences. With the time restraints and heavy caseloads that many service providers are under, this can be time consuming and difficult.

However, it can be just that more valuable because through this process you are building trust that can allow you to further help the client and direct them to more resources. It is also valuable because you are allowing the client to heal and grow through the repeated conversations and interactions. Oftentimes, when we revisit something, we can find new aspects about an experience that can lead to our growth and healing.

A non-linear and iterative emergent space creates an opportunity for growth and for others to feel heard. It can also offer a way for service providers to interact outside of their clients and within their agencies and organizations. In a meeting or amongst co-workers, you can practice creating an emergent space. You can allow your co-workers to revisit topics, and you can revisit them yourself to feel heard or find a resolution. In the process of creating generative conflict, you can use the non-linear and iterative nature of emergent space to revisit ideas for solutions and allow everyone to feel heard.

ELEMENT FIVE: Fosters Resilience and Opportunities for Transformative Justice

This element of emergent space is especially important for service providers who offer services to those who've experienced trauma. Many service providers are operating within systems that have caused harm or they have to interact with systems that cause harm.

Through creating an emergent space, you have the opportunity to encourage transformative justice. Transformative justice is a new way of conceptualizing justice outside of punitive systems like jails and prisons, police departments, school

detention centers, etc. We can create ways of holding each other accountable that focuses on healing and rehabilitation instead of punishment. Emergent spaces allow for this transformative justice for service providers

ELEMENT SIX: Continues to Create More Possibilities

The last element of emergent space is that it continues to create more possibilities. Throughout all of the elements there are new ways to continue to conceptualize and implement an emergent space. Emergent space came out of adrienne marie brown's Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. And the inspiration for adrienne marie brown's work came from Octavia Butler's short stories of altered realities that had Black people at the forefront who were filled with creativity and endless possibilities. Butler's stories weren't just filled with lessons, but a guidebook on how to reimagine our societies. Brown inspired us to create a space based on her imaginings of new worlds and societies that were grounded in our tethered connection to each other and the earth. She drew information from the relationships found in nature in order to model our own reimagined societies and connections. Lastly, we took this guide to reimagining our societies to reimagining our spaces and daily interactions with each other.

We hope that this space and this specific guide can help you reimagine the way you provide services to your clients and the way you see yourself and role in your communities. In creating an emergent space, we hope that you'll be able to expand the possibilities for yourself, your organization or agency, and those you serve.

ACCESSIBILITY

While we're in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can create more possibilities when it comes to the way we communicate with each other, and we can also find new ways to support each other. The pandemic has caused major shifts in our society including the way we work and go to school. Many jobs and schools have moved to a virtual environment in order to connect us even when we're distanced from one another. Moving to a virtual environment has made jobs and schools more accessible to people with disabilities and people with compromised immune systems, but it has been inaccessible to those who don't have internet access nor an electronic device that can connect to the internet. This creates a barrier to people who aren't able to access the internet, and it makes it more challenging for people to receive the services they need.

Resources

- The Sexual Violence Continuum [THE SEXUAL VIOLENCE CONTINUUM](#)
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center [Returning and Healing](#)
- [The Sexual Abuse To Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story](#)
- North Carolina [Reentry Programs and Services](#)
- Orange County Local Reentry Council
- NCCASA
 - [Unpacking PREA: The North Carolina Approach to Victim Services Behind Bars Webinar Series | NC Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)
 - The North Carolina Approach: Creating and Navigating New Relationships to Better Serve Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Assault [The North Carolina Approach.pdf](#)
- Just Detention International
 - [No Bad Victims: Why Rape Crisis Advocates Should Work Inside Corrections Facilities](#)[Vulnerable Detainees: Survivors of Previous Sexual Abuse](#)
 - [Mental Illness and Sexual Abuse Behind Bars](#)
 - [The Very Basics about Sexual Abuse in Detention](#)
 - [The Prison Rape Elimination Act Standards: An Overview for Community Service Providers](#)
 - [Why Didn't They Say Anything? Key Barriers to Reporting Sexual Abuse in Detention](#)
 - [Mapping It Out: A Tool to Get Started on Providing Victim Services for Incarcerated Survivors](#)
 - [Other resources JDI provides:](#)
 - **Resource Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse Behind Bars**, a state-by-state guide to support services for survivors who are still incarcerated, those who have been released and loved ones on the outside who are searching for ways to help. **The guide for North Carolina** includes counseling, legal and support services that JDI believes can be helpful to survivors. JDI also provides a survivor packet for survivors who write to them.
 - **The packet includes *Hope for Healing***, a self-help guide for survivors as they rebuild their lives after an assault. The packet also includes the Resource Guide for the state where the survivor resides, and information about survivors' rights and how to report abuse.
 - **Survivor Packets** can be requested by contacting Operations Director Leelyn Aquino-Shinn: laquino@justdetention.org or by phone: 213-384-1400 ext. 110. Formerly incarcerated survivors may call to receive a referral to a local rape crisis program, or to learn about potential opportunities to be involved in advocacy efforts on behalf of survivors of sexual abuse in detention.



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Your belief and your work will speak for you - Maya Angelou

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