



Request for Quote to Provide Credible Messenger Training for Reentry Peer Support Teams

The Camden County Department of Corrections was awarded two reentry grants from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in 2020 to support individuals with a Substance Use Disorder as they transition home following a period of incarceration. The two grants propose developing Reentry Peer Support Teams. The Peer Support Teams Model that is being proposed merges the Peer Recovery Model with the Credible Messenger (CM) Model, a model that is a holistic, comprehensive approach to justice that transforms and improves individual lives, rearranges relationships between communities and the justice system, and empowers neighborhoods to use the resources they have within to maintain public safety. Each Peer Support Team will be comprised of two Peer Support Specialists, pairing together one individual with lived recovery experience and one individual with lived experience in the criminal justice and incarceration systems. Peer Support Teams will be trained in the CM Training, Peer Recovery Core Competencies and effective substance use and cognitive behavior interventions for post-release interactions with program participants. The Peer Support Teams will offer peer mentorship as well as peer recovery group activities. The peer groups will also allow for motivation and empowerment through experience to be the basis of group exercises, many of which will address the psychoeducational topics often rooted in CBT. Peer Support Teams will be coordinated, supervised, and supported by a teams Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselors (CDAC). It is anticipated that the community-based provider will be procured in October or November 2021 with the recruitment and selection of 8 Peer Support Teams being completed in late 2021/early 2022 with potentially 16 total peers. The request for quote is to provide the NuEntry Opportunity Specialist (NOS) Credible Messenger training to the Peer Support Teams.

Overview

NuEntry Opportunity Specialists are men and women who have lived the same incarceration experience as Returning Citizens and provide guidance by helping them problem solve and connect to community resources, while focusing on individual needs. The specific and individualized nature of programming provides Returning Citizens with the tools necessary to become law abiding and contributing members of society. The main goal of this “NuEntry” initiative is to prevent further involvement within the judicial system while providing the support necessary for a successful transition back to the community. NuEntry Opportunity Specialists are rooted in the philosophy that people learn best from those who have been in similar situations

History

The Meet Them at the Gate initiative was founded in 2019 by a group of five (5) core members who have served in state prisons for a combined 150 years. They came together to respond to the realization that there were no supports, or extremely limited supports, available to assist citizens when they returned to society after being incarcerated. This realization highlighted the overwhelming need within our society to aid with the process of reentry. New Jersey Department of Corrections reported that in 2015, the most recent data available, there were 9,017 inmates released from DOC facilities. Of those 9,017; 51.4% were rearrested within 3 years, 38.4% were reconvicted within 3 years and 30.4% were reincarcerated within 3 years. These staggering percentages illuminate the need for meaningful, impactful reentry support.

Most notably missing in reentry support is the connection with peers who have themselves navigated the process and who understand the mental, emotional, and physical struggles involved in re-acclimation as well as the processes that must be taken to secure employment, housing, etc.. The specific needs of Returning Citizens are not being met as most re-entry programs offered are “one-size fits all” services and do not focus on individual needs, an aspect that is essential to the success of returning individuals. Meet Them at the Gate fills this essential gap in services.

Meet Them at the Gate originated with individuals returning to Camden County funded by county government. The program boasts great success as measured by their extraordinary reputation within the community as well as having the capability to serve individuals from 7 of the 12 state prisons in NJ. This funding request would allow for programming to be expanded to include those returning to Mercer County as an add-on pilot program. It is assumed that, after successful outcomes, more funding will be required to expand services within the county.

Transformative Justice Initiative Credible Messenger 2 Day Training

Tentative Outline

This course will include two and a half (preferably consecutive) days of training and 20 total hours of instruction time, with a 1-hour lunch break each day. The instruction will include lectures and small and large group discussions. Training will be held 2-3 times a year if needed by new members with additional supportive training sessions in between.

Day 1

900-9:15 am	Welcome and Introductions
9:15-11:00 am	Credible Messaging & TJI
11:00- -12:00 pm	Understanding Individual Needs based on lived experience- Application of Intake & Individual Need Assessment using best practices from within.
12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00-2:30 pm	Race Equity – A Deep Dive into Structural Racism and Poverty Manifestations
2:30-4:30 pm	Complex Trauma & Trauma-Informed Engagement
430-5 pm	Wrap Up and Next Steps (Preview of Day 2 Curriculum)

Day 2

900-9:45 am	Light Snack and Day 1 Reflection Session (Mirroring Emotional check-in Group)
9:45-11:00 am	Guazabara Insights Cultural and Social Consciousness Education
11:00- -12:00 pm	Motivational Interviewing
12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00-2:30 pm	Large Group Discussion – 4 Motivation / Stages of Change

2:30-3:30	Mentoring: Navigating the Barriers of the NuEntry Process
3:30-4:30 pm	Wellness Planning, Self-Advocacy and The Political Determinants of Health
4:30-5 pm	Summary, Wrap Up, and Feedback

Day 3

9:00-9:15 am	Welcome and Brief Overview of previous days
9:15-11:00 am	Role Of NuEntry Opportunity Specialist/ Credible Messenger
11:00- 12:00 pm	Family and Community Engagement practices
12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00-2:30 pm	Wrap up

Transformative Justice Initiative

Being in Service of others

Bridging the gap between politics and people

Transforming the landscape of humanity

The Genesis

Transformative Justice Initiative is a registered LLC consultancy agency comprised of formerly incarcerated “citizens” with the lived and shared experiences in Carceral Spaces. Transformative Justice Initiative, also known as TJI, was founded in 2019 Ibrahim Sulaimani and Antonne Henshaw – two juvenile lifers – who returned home after serving 30 years of a punitive 30 to life sentence.

NuEntry

Following their return, Antonne and Ibrahim quickly discovered their release to be a new beginning or as they redefined it a “NuEntry.” Not only did they find the world totally unfamiliar to them but what was more alarming was finding that the so-called reentry service providers to be both inept and dismissive towards the immediate and specific needs of those returning to society after serving long-term prison sentences.

Structural Violence

One such provider was NJ Reentry Corp. As such, upon hearing so much about said Corporation, many lifers who reached the end of their sentences enthusiastically began reaching out to NJ Reentry. Sadly, they received no response. It wasn’t until later that Ibrahim and Antonne learned from a former NJ Reentry employee that this practice was a matter of policy - they were to discard the letters of request for assistance: our letters were referred to as “Jail Mail.” Thus, TJI was borne out of struggle.

Transformative Leadership

Transformative Justice Initiative is a multifaceted operation. It uses Credible Messengers and peer-on-peer mentoring to work communities to end violence. We assist communities with system-involved youth, returning citizens, and community release programs by connecting them with needed resources to be successful.