

## TJC Leadership Profile: Lisa M. Calderon



**Lisa M. Calderón** is the Director of the Community Reentry Project in Denver where she works with formerly incarcerated persons for their successful transition back into the community. She received her Master's degree in Liberal Studies from the University of Denver, and law degree from University of Colorado at Boulder. As a former legal director of a battered women's program, Lisa is qualified as an expert witness on issues of domestic violence and victim advocacy. Lisa is involved with several community-based initiatives to create more opportunities for low-income women, youth of color, and formerly incarcerated persons. She is a commissioner on the Denver Crime Prevention and Control Commission and was appointed to the State Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Council.

**What makes a successful TJC leader?** The TJC process requires the willingness of both criminal justice representatives and community providers to come to the table and commit to staying engaged through challenging conversations. The Crime Prevention and Control Commission provided the structure for this process, and the TJC initiative provided a roadmap for implementation. As a result of our year-long visioning process, we were able to collectively develop a sense of ownership among all participants that kept us working together toward a common purpose. Our common ground was that we all wanted to stop the cycle of recidivism and increase public safety. We all understood that developing lasting solutions required long-term planning and upfront investment in training a core team of individuals including executive leadership and direct service providers. This approach allowed us to develop a continuity of services initiated within the jail by Life Skills staff, and then handed off to community partners for transitional services and client support. The TJC initiative enabled us to build our capacity by targeting our limited resources toward medium and high-risk populations by implementing validated assessments and evidence-based methods. As the Chairperson of the Community Reentry Committee, I helped to navigate perspectives, ensuring that community voices did not get eclipsed by systems officials, while at the same time, cultivating an exchange where community providers also learned from criminal justice experts.

**What are your tips for getting support from system stakeholders for the TJC Initiative?** It's important that the collaboration not be criminal justice-system dominated. In the initial stages, I insisted that we move the Community Reentry Committee meetings from criminal justice system boardrooms into the community. That was symbolically important to have our meetings in rotating community spaces so that providers felt they were on a more equal playing field with systems officials. Now, after working together for several years, we have our meetings both in community and justice system spaces because we have developed that trust that all of our voices are equally important. You need to have community partners that are vocal advocates for the needs of clients, but can also be effective collaborators with the city. Those aren't mutually exclusive concepts—the city needs to institutionalize reentry, and the community needs to be at the table informing policy and providing input to inform the changes that need to occur within the system.