

Using Community Based PsychoEducational and Skills Support Groups to Help with those Reentering Society



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Abstract

This poster discusses the potential benefits of introducing programs through community centers which provide psycho-educational and skills based support groups to those who are re-entering society after being held in correctional facilities. These aforementioned groups would be aimed at providing support, resources, and skills for those suffering from PTSD due to experiencing trauma either prior, during, and/or after incarceration. Additionally, the benefits of creating these programs in the respective communities of those who are re-entering and of having these interventions be collaborated on and created with key community leaders from these communities in order to curate the provided services to better fit the needs and abilities of this population. Lastly, the benefits of having these groups being held within the community to better allow for community re-integration will also be discussed.



Introduction

As a nation, the United States has the highest prison recidivism rate in the world, roughly 52%. Furthermore, Illinois is one of the states currently leading the country in recidivism rates. In 2016 it was reported that out of the 71,551 new convictions, roughly 89% of them were reoffenders. Additionally, in the United States, 44% of those who are released from prison reoffend within the first year.

While working at the Federal Defender program during my first year, I was able to see firsthand how inadequate and punitive the current government services are in helping to provide support for those who re-entering society after being incarcerated. These experiences led me to believe that the current system regarding re-entry to society for those who were recently released could be improved to provide a more substantial support network in the form of community and rehabilitation.

The length of this program would run for two years, with those that complete the program would graduate and would be allowed to stay on as 'mentors' for the next cohort of this program as a mentor in order to provide additional community support

Methods

In order to lessen this recidivism rate I am proposing that these group intervention services be held in local community centers for two years in order to help with community integration post incarceration. It is of my belief that collaborating on this project with local community leaders will help to better curate the services and integration provided by these groups to better help the needs of their community and those of the participants of this program. Surveys would be distributed to participants of this group monthly in order to keep the workings of this group fluid by allowing for feedback and curation of the groups to the participants needs as this will in turn allow for higher rates of group participation and attendance. Groups will also be co-facilitated by two social workers chosen by community leaders in order to help with better community integrations and understanding.

Group Therapy Benefits

-Allows for the use of exposure therapy, which has been proven to provide a past-focused intervention that explores emotions and thought processes related to traumatic experiences such as PTSD, and is proven to be effective when conducted in safe and supportive environments.

-Seeking Safety and Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Model, both help to provide empowerment, trauma education, and skill building

-Covers topics that address cognitive, behavioral, and the needs of persons with PTSD and focuses on deficits found in the incarcerated population, including impulsiveness, social maladjustment, etc.

Community Re-integration Benefits

-Allows for social support outside of groups, as well as allowing for the implementation of institutional services such as healthcare, employment, housing, etc in order to better the participants health.

-Helps to create a sense of community for those who have been isolated, which can in turn be beneficial to one's psychological needs around community.

-Allows participants to engage more effectively to changes in a more realistic and flexible manner, eg, learning about technology that may have changed while they were incarcerated

Evaluative Measures

The efficiency of these groups would be evaluated primarily by quantitative data, and also with qualitative data, as surveys will be distributed to participants of the program monthly where they will rate the quality of the interventions on a one to ten scale. Additionally, programming will also be rated qualitatively in that participants will provide written feedback on what they might wish to be altered in regards to programming in order to allow for programming to be better curated towards their abilities and needs. The effectiveness of the program will also be evaluated by how many of the participants end up re-offending as well as how many of the participants attend the entire duration of the program.

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