

Using Community Based PsychoEducational Support Groups to
Help with those Re-Entering Society

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Abstract

- This poster discusses the potential benefits of introducing programs through community centers that provide psycho-educational and skills-based support groups for people reentering society after being held in correctional facilities. These groups are aimed at providing support, resources, and skills for people suffering from PTSD caused by experiencing trauma either prior, during, or after incarceration. The groups are also designed to provide services to help with community reintegration. Additionally, this poster discusses the benefits of creating these programs in the communities to which the people are re-entering and of having these interventions be collaborated on and created with key community leaders to curate the services to better fit the needs and abilities of this population. Lastly, having these groups held within the community to better allow for community re-integration will also be discussed, and the importance of collaborating in these efforts with keystone community leaders.

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. To put this into further perspective, recent estimates show that one in 31 American adults is either on probation, on parole, or incarcerated on any given day.
- This presentation discusses the viability of creating psycho-educational and skills-based groups to help people re-entering society after incarceration by encouraging them to engage in trauma-based cognitive behavioral interventions to improve their mental health. Furthermore, to reduce this recidivism rate, I am proposing that these group intervention services be held in local community centers to help with community integration post incarceration.

- Lastly, I believe that collaborating on this project with local community leaders will help curate the services and integration provided by these groups to better address the needs of their community and those of the participants of this program.

Methods

- Participants of this group will be made up of 12 members who will engage in a two-year program consisting of psycho-educational support groups and skills-based programming.
- This will be done to provide resources and group therapeutic services aimed at combating the side effects that are symptomatic of post-traumatic stress disorder. These groups will meet bi-weekly for two hours and will entail: group therapy sessions, psycho educational materials to help promote self-efficacy and management of symptoms outside of services, and the promotion of social support outside of these groups through community integration at the community centers in which these services are held. Furthermore, by having these groups be skills-based and having these individuals work with case managers to obtain government documents (such as driver's license), healthcare, employment, allows for additional support. Ideally, in conjunction, these services will help provide support for those in this program on the micro, mezzo, and macro level to provide an overarching level of resources and support for those re-entering these communities.
- Additionally, those helping to run these groups and the community center would be from the community and would work in collaboration with leading figures from the community to better curate the services that are provided to the participants of this program. Lastly, community health workers would also be chosen from the local community to better provide services for improved community integration.

Benefits of Psycho-educational and Skills Based Group Therapy

- 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 (SS) and Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Model (TREM), both help to provide empowerment, trauma education, and skill building through utilizing cognitive restructuring, psycho-education, coping skills training, meditation, and peer support
- SS manual covers topics that address cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal needs of persons with PTSD and focuses on deficits found in the incarcerated population, including impulsiveness, social maladjustment, and emotional dysregulation
- This type of group therapy also focuses on teaching helthcoping methods, emotional control, and socialization techniques. By focusing on specific skills that patients lack, providers can help prepare patients for the treatment process and teach them tools to promote recovery and self-efficacy outside of the treatment center. Lastly, this style of therapy is malleable in how the skills based interventions can be curated for the needs of the patients

Benefits of Community Re-integration

- 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.
- Studies have found that engaging with a community health worker post incarceration have helped to curb recidivism rates due to the further allowance of finding needed services for those re-entering.
- 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, but also with qualitative data because surveys will be distributed to participants of the program monthly. The participants will rate the quality of the interventions on a scale of one to ten. Additionally, programming will also be rated qualitatively; participants will provide

written feedback on what they want to be altered regarding the program so it will be better curated for their abilities and needs.

- The effectiveness of the program will also be evaluated according to how many of the participants end up re-offending and by how many of the participants attend the entirety of the program.