

PREPARING FOR IMPACTFUL REENTRY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Community Reentry Certification:

Why a Reentry Practice Model is the Key to High Impact Outcomes

Successful community reentry programs utilize community organizations to support people returning from incarceration. These organizations implement a variety of programs, including mentoring, employment services, cognitive interventions, restorative justice, and other social supports. What it means to “do” reentry can mean a lot of different things. Not all reentry practices have the same impact and research is divided on whether reentry programs ultimately impact recidivism. This means that understanding which services provide the highest impact and return on investment can be a challenge. This is where the *NRWC Community Reentry Specialist Certification*, can be a tool for programs to balance innovation with science and increase their impact.

Common Features of Impactful Reentry Programs

For decades, research has focused on developing evidence-based practices to produce better outcomes for people. In recent years, it has become a standard of public policy and granting entities to require that programs adopt research driven approaches. While many improvements have been made, we are discovering that there remains a gap between what programs are intended to do, and the outcomes they produce. While program services and components vary across communities and agencies, the features of effective programming are strikingly similar. A practice model helps build reentry specialist skills and capacity in effective strategies that show successful outcomes.



What's a Practice Model?

A practice model is a framework that focuses on skill building and the application of new tools. Unlike traditional training, that often never makes it into daily practice, a practice model helps people apply new learning directly to their work and blend high impact strategies into their existing program models. A practice model is a tool that helps practitioners advance their skills, understand and link theories and principles to each other, and then blend them into practical strategies and aspects of their day to day work. Unlike other certification programs, the *NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification* is extremely flexible and adaptable. It has been developed specifically for reentry organizations that are innovating and trying new activities that may have never been tried before. Therefore, rather than imposing practices onto community organizations, it helps community organizations connect their innovations to effective and research driven principles.

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As organizations grow, it can be difficult to keep everyone committed to the mission and focused on the same things, and that can impact the quality of services provided. Designed to assist programs apply research into daily practices and prevent drift, the *NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification* provides a roadmap to reentry specialists and administrators for actualizing their mission while ensuring the key components which produce positive outcomes are not lost.

Why Get Certified?

Community reentry programs often have a lot of systemic challenges to face. From pursuing funding to stay open to hiring enough staff to meet the need, reentry programs need highly qualified, passion driven reentry specialists who can deliver impactful and effective services to all of their participants. In many cases, training and development of reentry specialists can take a back seat to meeting the needs of the people they serve, not to mention the funders who are looking for results. The *NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification* is a framework that can be used to ensure that the overall approach to reentry case management, as well as program activities, are firmly grounded in research and principles.



The *NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification* provides a pathway for reentry specialists to develop their own skills and deepen their impact. The concepts, tools, and strategies are designed to be easy to use and apply in daily practice. Synthesizing research from multiple disciplines, the *NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification* applies the most up to date science on motivation, adult learning, behavior change, and cognitive skill building tools. This certification was designed to democratize access to the skills and tools that can help move the needle in reentry program outcomes. Its strength-based approach is one of a kind, recognizing the central role of community support and supportive alliance as driving principles. The Certification supports community reentry programs to build upon the strengths of their community connections and relationships to drive case management and programming.

The NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification

No matter how strong the science behind a practice, people and communities cannot benefit from the innovation or program if it is not delivered as intended. The *NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification* provides reentry specialists with the tools, skills, and competencies to deliver high impact, outcome-based reentry services to the people, families, and communities they serve. The innovative practice model offered within the certification provides up-to-date, practical information on how to assist people successfully navigating their reentry into the community. The following modules make up the foundation of the *NRWC Reentry Specialist Certification* and are critical to building strong, sustainable, and effective reentry programs in our communities.

1 Supportive Alliance

Building and fostering a supportive alliance with participants should be at the foundation of all reentry programming. The research is clear that a supportive alliance, or meaningful relationship, between those providing reentry services in the community and those receiving services is vitally important to an individual's long-term success, and far more important than the application of any specific theory, technique or model. [1] Reentry specialists will build upon their rapport and trust building skills in this module while being guided by the research on other important considerations that impact psychological safety and supportive environments.



[1] Lowenkamp, Holsinger, Robinson, & Cullen, 2012.

2 *Motivational Mentoring*

Motivational Mentoring is an overall approach to working with participants built on empathy, autonomy, and partnership, that strengthens a person's desire to pursue their own goals around their return to the community. Motivational mentoring is the way we blend skills, like Motivational Interviewing, into our day-to-day conversations and activities. Effective reentry specialists understand when, how and with whom to blend motivational techniques to build upon a person's desire to change their life and stay focused on their goals. [2]



3 *Goal Planning*

The use of assessments to set goals, target needs, and build on strengths is a critical part of determining what services are provided to who and why. People are unique, complex and change over time. The work of goal planning involves using assessments to guide service provision to tailor your work and activities to the people you serve. Reentry specialists will learn the importance of transformational goals that address internal drivers of success such as mindset, impulse control, and self-regulation. [3] Developing highly individualized, specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time driven goals that address the unique needs and strengths of the people being served is also a competency that is developed in this module.



[2] Campbell & Dyck, 2014

[3] Andrews & Bonta, 2010

4 *Skill Building*

Every interaction is an opportunity to positively shape behavior and response and support growth. Part of the learning process involves skill practice and feedback with other people in action. Supportive practice of positive communication, problem solving, and coping skills is an important part of helping people reach their goals and overcome obstacles. [4] In this module, reentry specialists are provided with tools such as cognitive interventions and skill building activities that they can use with participants to help them navigate difficult situations, practice new skills, and build on strengths.



5 *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*

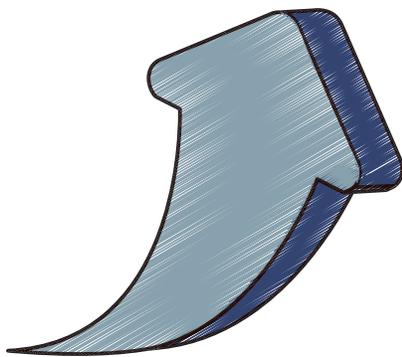
Engaging in our own learning and development is critical to effective practice. Reentry specialists who reflect on their work, receive feedback, and build their own skills are able to effectively blend high impact strategies into their work and connect their day-to-day activities to evidence-based practices. Reentry specialists and participants alike benefit from reflecting on how they are doing, what's working and what is not. Reentry specialists will learn how to use data collected through the measurement of practices and feedback to develop their own professional goals and inner coach to accelerate their impact, advance their career development, and improve program outcomes.



4 Trotter, 2009

Conclusion

Innovations that change the way we think about reentry are coming from communities most impacted by over incarceration. Those communities are best positioned to provide programming that responds directly to the people they serve, in the context in which they live. Well planned and intentionally implemented reentry programs have an impact on individual lives and neighborhoods and are best positioned to impact broader criminal legal system reform.



For innovative programs to gain traction and funding, they must show outcomes. Having a strong foundation in research-based practices can help reentry programs do more than broker services and create lasting change in people's lives. Tools like practice models can level up practitioners skills and ensure programs are paying attention to implementation so they can do more of what works, less of what doesn't and more efficiently allocate resources to see long term positive impact in their community. Also, when community organizations become learning organizations, and measure what they do, they can better leverage resources and funding, contribute to the body of research to advance new evidence-based practices, and tell the stories of the lives they are impacting in their communities.



RESOURCES FOR PREPARING FOR IMPACTFUL REENTRY PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

- **The Alliance for Community and Justice Innovation** acji.org
- **The National Reentry Workforce Center** thenrwc.org
- **The Latino Coalition for Community Leadership** latinocoalition.org
- **The Individual Needs and Strengths Identification Tool©**