



Program Outcomes

REENTRY RECOVERY

March 2016 - January 2019

A community-based recovery support program for individuals with substance use or co-occurring substance use and mental health challenges who are returning from local jails to the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, Virginia.



“

What I got out of the program is learning that I can always do better than what I did in my past. I learned not to redo my mistakes with their help. Strength In Peers helped my recovery by being there every step of the way encouraging me by telling me I was a good person. The most important thing about my peer support specialist was that she has a beautiful heart. I love and cherish her every day that she helped me. If it wasn't for her I probably would have made the same mistakes and acted out of character without thinking. I have woken up every day to do better than the day before. The most important thing I got out of my peer experience is the understanding that even though it's a hard process to go through it's all going to be better at the end.”

- Yasminelly Ortiz Ramos

REENTRY CHALLENGES

Individuals returning to the community often face the following challenges:

HOUSING

- Emergency shelters run seasonally or fill up
- Affordable housing is limited
- Cost of deposits and rent
- Navigating housing assistance program

FOOD

- Locating and getting to food banks and soup kitchens
- Applying for SNAP benefits
- Saving money from employment to eat

EMPLOYMENT

- Dependent on the individual's work experience, skills and education, criminal record, and the job market
- Many employers require a home address on job applications

TRANSPORTATION

- Limited bus routes and schedules
- Barriers to reinstating driver's licenses
- Cost of personal transportation and fuel

ID CARDS

- Cost of replacing birth certificates and ID cards
- Transportation to DMV

RECOVERY

- Living in unhealthy or unsafe environments around other individuals who are still using alcohol and/or drugs
- Barriers to participating in recovery services, such as time, work schedules, and cost
- Lack of trauma-informed services or assistance navigating complex programs and systems

OUR MODEL

Peers are at the forefront of our program model. They fostered hope and supported individuals prior to release through workshops, support groups and one-on-one visits. They also supported individuals' recovery and reentry into the community through intensive one-on-one peer support, assistance navigating community services and systems, help to apply for housing and employment; and transportation to important appointments. Strength In Peers also partnered with other community organizations to offer participants case management and behavioral health treatment. Services were designed to be flexible and mobile to engage individuals who might not otherwise seek support.



OUR PARTICIPANTS

- Strength In Peers conducted outreach with 613 individuals prior to their release.
- We provided reentry support to 261 individuals prior to their release.
- Our team formally enrolled 149 participants post-release.
- 84% of our participants had a severe substance use challenge and 43% had a co-occurring mental health challenge.
- The ages of our participants ranged from 19 to 65 with an average age of 38.4 years.
- The demographics of our participants were 26% female, 74% male, 19% African American, 5% American Indian, 67% white (non Hispanic), and 7.4% Hispanic/Latino.
- The average length of participation in the program was 6.7 months.

OUR OUTCOMES

Strength In Peers has shown significant improvements among participants:



Employment: 61.1% employed at 6-month follow-up compared with 17.8% at enrollment, a 243.8% rate of change



Housing: 71% house at 6-month follow-up; 43.3% in stable permanent housing at 6-month follow-up compared to 3.3% at enrollment, a 1,200% rate of change



Mental Health: a decrease at follow-up in the number of days of reported anxiety and/or reported depression



Substance Use: 87% decrease in injection drug use; 54.4% reporting abstinence at 6-months follow-up compared with 15.6% at enrollment, a 250% rate of change



Justice Involvement: only 22% reported some days of incarceration in the 30 days prior to follow-up

SUSTAINABILITY

Strength In Peers has built on the Reentry Recovery program to solicit additional grant funds. Services have grown under the new Back on Track Recovery Program that focused on individuals with substance use challenges who are homeless or unstably housed. The program continues to recruit from local jails since so many individuals are released into homeless and unstable housing situations. Unfortunately, grant funding is never sustainable. Local governments must invest in recovery and reentry programs if they desire for people with substance use challenges to be successful after incarceration.

“

I found out about Strength In Peers through the Community Services Board (CSB). I was down and out. I thought I had no one who would ever understand me. Strength In Peers has been there for me. They have helped me find housing and even taking me to appointments. More importantly, they snapped me back into reality when I really needed it. Their program has not only helped me with staying clean and sober it has also shown me my worth and the importance of giving back. I am now 104 days clean and still standing strong.”

- Stephanie Thomas

ABOUT US

Strength In Peers is a nonprofit, peer-run organization that serves Harrisonburg City and Rockingham, Page and Shenandoah Counties in Virginia. We are comprised of individuals who are in active recovery from substance use, mental health, and trauma-related challenges. Grounded in our lived experiences, we envision a world where we have an abundance of recovery options and are supported in our right to decide our recovery pathway. Toward our vision, our mission is to offer hope, support and advocacy for those seeking recovery so that they can build resilience and thrive in their lives and communities.

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