

Beyond Bars Program Details and Job Description

The Beyond Bars program will help Vermonters who have been incarcerated build resilience and help meet their full potential through progressive employment, peer mentorship, and connection to desired supports and services by:

- 1) Forming and nurturing partnerships with entities across the rural behavioral healthcare system of care to ensure rural Vermonters leaving Vermont's Correctional Facilities who are managing substance use disorders and wish to be employed have the best possible chance of sustaining SUD Recovery and employment.*
- 2) Providing training for rural Vermonters in Recovery, post correctional facility release to help them increase their educational attainment and employment skills to facilitate career advancement and progressive employment.*
- 3) Providing technical assistance and training for employers to help them become comfortable employing justice-involved rural Vermonters in Recovery and help them develop the skills needed to successfully retain these employees and advance them into positions with greater compensation and remuneration within the progressive employment model.*
- 4) Providing Mental Health Peer Support, SUD Recovery Coaching, and concrete assistance across the social contributors of health to help mitigate the housing insecurity, food insecurity, transportation, and childcare barriers that threaten stable SUD recovery and employment.*
- 5) Synthesize and articulate the learnings associated with the execution of the preceding initiatives into a "best practice" white paper framework, and engage in legislative education and advocacy to sustain funding for the Beyond Bars scope of work initially funded by HRSA, through state of Vermont funding and philanthropic support ongoing, while also sharing this*

with key stakeholders nationally who are well-perched to leverage and scale these successes in other states and territories.

Theory of Change:

Justice-Involved Vermonters who have not historically enjoyed job success, good health, and happiness through existing resources and services need a novel approach to thrive. The problem is not lack of available resources, but fear and misunderstanding about existing resources, lack of confidence that they can overcome significant barriers and trauma, and lack of connection to people who have successfully overcome similar barriers, navigated complex and intimidating services, and forged success in their own lives - who are skilled in empowerment frameworks which increase confidence and hope, resilience, skill, and asset development.

The success of Peer Mentoring Beyond Bars participants will hinge on the development of a trusting relationship based on shared lived experience of adversity. To succeed, Peer Mentors will have to be people who have overcome significant challenges (like incarceration, homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges etc) and forged successful lives who are skilled at navigating complex systems, work environments, and cultural norms, and supporting people in skill and goal development.

We believe it will be critical to connect formerly incarcerated Vermonters to Peer Mentors within 90 days after they are released from a correctional facility - when justice-involved Vermonters have the greatest greatest risk of suicide, fatal overdose, re-offense, and reincarceration.

Finally, to be successful, we believe Peer Mentorship will have to have to be centered on 4 values:

1. Establishing trust and buy-in slowly through relationship development via frequent, informal, interactions in community-based settings where participants are comfortable that do not include paperwork or eligibility screening methodology.
2. Continuing the frequency and informality of the support in participant's places of work once they are employed.
3. Undergirding all activities with the message that we believe participants can be successful at the top level of their chosen field, and providing skill development and educational opportunities to make that possible.
4. Ensuring that clients, not Peer Mentors, direct goal setting and the articulation of what success looks like for them.

Programmatic Overview

Beyond Bars participants will be formerly incarcerated Vermonters who have returned to the community post-incarceration who are interested in employment and working to overcome challenges they might have with addiction, mental health, trauma, or other barriers to the enjoyment of their full health, happiness, and potential. Participants will be people who are interested in skill development, educational attainment, and mentorship and wish to engage in career advancement through progressive employment opportunities.

Within 90 days after they are released from a correctional facility participant's Probation Officers will pair them with Peer Mentors. Peer Mentors will be people who have overcome significant challenges (like incarceration, homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges etc) and forged successful lives who are skilled at navigating complex systems, work environments, and cultural norms, and supporting people in skill and goal development.

These mentors will begin to build a trusting and supportive relationship with the participants based on the modality of Intentional peer Support - a strengths-based asset development and resilience enhancing milieu which helps people overcome mental health challenges, addiction, and underlying trauma.

Peer Mentors will work with participants to articulate urgent needs (addiction and mental health-related recovery supports, housing, food, transportation, childcare etc etc) and embed themselves in interagency teams in their communities to help ensure participants access available resources as quickly and easily as possible. Specific teams Peer Mentors integrate into will vary depending on the needs of program participants and what is available in the communities they live in but will most often include the Individual Career Advancement Network, Coordinated Entry, Probation and Parole Reentry team meetings, Housing Review Teams, and Vermont Agency of Human Services Local Interagency Teams.

Peer Mentors will work closely with participant's Probation Officers to provide additional service navigation to ensure they are connected to desired services and resources like the Vermont Agency of Human Services Hireability employment support programs, Recovery Centers and Recovery Coaches, Substance Use Disorder Treatment Providers, Medication Assisted Treatment Providers, Vermont Cares harm reduction programs, Mental Health Drop in Centers, Restorative Justice Centers, Mental Health Designated Agencies, MAT providers, Community Action economic relief organizations,

food pantries, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, Adult Basic Education and Community College of Vermont classes.

Peer Mentors will provide education and awareness of available resources, and support in accessing desired programs, but will ensure the participant's they support direct the process of which services are pursued - based on their own goals, not the goals Peer Navigators hold for program participants.

Peer Mentors will help participants identify sectors, employers, and positions they are interested in and help them connect to Invest EAP ICANs, Hireability, the Vermont Department of Labor, The Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation, Working Fields, Working Bridges, and other employment support organizations to help participants secure jobs with employers compatible with these goals, who are willing to also host Peer Mentors throughout participants' employment.

Peer Mentors will work with participants and employers to identify advancement opportunities within their organizations that are good fits for participants goals, talents, and skills, and identify additional skill development and educational attainment that might be necessary to achieve those career advancement goals.

Peer Mentors will then help connect participants to the organizations and programs that can help them attain that education and develop those skills while continuing to support them in their current employment and in their educational/skill development endeavors - with the modality of Intentional Peer Support.

Peer Mentors will have an extremely small case load due to the quantity and quality of support they will need to provide Beyond Bars participants, and the need to also be embedded in a significant amount of community-based coalitions and meetings while also having a regular presence in participants' places of work. No Beyond Bars Peer mentor will work with more than 5 participants.

Peer Mentor Job Description:

Peer Mentors report to and are supervised by the Recovery Vermont Executive Director/Beyond Bars Program Director. Peer Mentor will be working in a hybrid work environment which includes remote telework and virtual meetings and in-person peer support with participants in the community, and job support at participant's places of work. There are no lifting or other physically strenuous components associated with these positions.

Each Peer Mentor will have a maximum "caseload" of 5 individuals (participants) all of whom will have recently returned to the community from incarceration, have challenges with substance use disorder and or mental health, and have a goal of employment. Beyond Bars Peer Mentors will help participants reach their employment and other life goals by performing the following duties:

- Engaging in Intentional Peer Support and Recovery Coach Academy training.
- Participating in weekly full team Recovery Vermont staff meetings.
- Participating in regular team meetings and supervision sessions with the full Peer Mentor Team and Beyond Bars Project Director
- Participating in regular community-based meetings with program participants' Parole officers, case managers, and other supports to help coordinate services and immediate needs post-incarceration. These will vary depending on location and individual need but will most often include DOC reentry meetings, Coordinated Entry or Housing Review Team meetings, and Local Interagency Team Meetings.
- Connecting participants to Invest EAP ICAN, Hireability, and Working Fields supported employment programs and associated case managers - who will secure initial employment starts for participants with employers willing to engage in the Beyond Bars program.
- Connecting participants to their local Turning Point Center or other recovery resource for Recovery Coaching and substance use disorder-focused recovery groups as desired
- Connecting participants to their local mental health drop and/or other mental-health related supports and other desired community-based resources.

- Providing Mental Health Peer Support for participants on an as needed basis.
- Helping participants coordinate with a variety of community-based partners to meet their immediate needs post-release involving food, transportation, housing, childcare and other “social contributors of health” as needed, and utilizing Beyond Bars flexible funding to help secure these “concrete supports” in coordination with Recovery Vermont’s Executive Director and Accountant.
- Spending time at participants’ places of employment with participants to help them navigate workplace culture and expectations (unspoken expectations surrounding dress code, timeliness, workplace behavior, managing co-worker and supervisor relationships etc).
- Identifying participants’ career growth goals in their places of employment and working with their supervisors to identify what additional training and education will be needed to secure those more advanced positions.
- Connecting participants to education and training opportunities to make career advancement possible.
- Keeping records to indicate how many people are being served, what their key struggles, challenges, barriers, successes, and goals are; and capturing “stories of success” in compelling ways to help secure ongoing funding for the Beyond Bars program
- Regularly and effectively communicating records, success stories and challenges to Working with Beyond Bars grant evaluator and Project Director to help formulate the white paper and evidence-based practice for Beyond Bars moving forward.
- Testifying in the legislature about the impact of the Beyond Bars program with the Beyond Bars Project Director.
- Other duties as needed and assigned.

