



Pennsylvania Update

FALL 2020

WELCOME

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the Pennsylvania Update, a publication of GEO Reentry Service Centers (RSC) throughout the state. As our state, country, and world face unprecedented challenges, I'm glad to share with you stories of RSC staff and participants adapting and continuing to work toward changing lives. This issue also features celebrations of recovery and continued service to our communities.

Thanks for your support and at any time, let me know if you have questions.

Regards, John Hogan, Area Manager, Pennsylvania

BERKS COUNTY RSC

National Recovery Month

On September 28, the Berks and Lancaster RSCs came together to celebrate National Recovery Month. The 2020 theme, identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), was **"Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Connections."**

To make those connections and give voice to each RSC reentrant, staff handmade t-shirts, identifying a unique quote exemplifying recovery for them. The shirts, adorned with the Recovery Month logo and purple ribbons, were handed out to reentrants, visitors, and community members. The purple ribbons reinforce the positive message that behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover.

We want everyone in and out of our programs who are in recovery (as well as those who support them), to know we all have victories to celebrate and their life has innate value.

Ms. Martinez, Substance Use Disorder Counselor at the Berks County RSC, baked cake pops individually wrapped with purple ribbons to distribute in celebration of recovery.

Connection is the root of recovery – connection to self, to others, and to community. Helping each reentrant connect to themselves, their recovery process, and their sober future is one of the ways GEO Reentry Services continues to support and celebrate the achievements of each and every reentrant.



CAMBRIA COUNTY RSC

Tails of Pawsitivity Update



At the beginning of 2020, the Cambria County RSC team collected items to donate to the Cambria County Humane Society. This included a monetary donation to assist with the adoption fee for a dog named Schultz (pictured here). Schultz had been at the shelter for a while and is an older dog who needs to be an only pet. Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, it took a little longer than usual to find a new home. The Humane Society worked with a local rescue group which helped find Schultz a new home.

LUZERNE COUNTY RSC

Luzerne RSC Celebrates National Recovery Day



Staff at the Luzerne County RSC recently celebrated National Recovery Day as a way to celebrate reentrants' positive effects in the program. Sporting matching "National Recovery Month" t-shirts, staff made coffee and cookies available to all who entered the facility that day. Although it is a small token, reentrants were pleased to know their progress does not go unnoticed.

Recovery Day is held during National Recovery Month, which celebrates those whose lives have been transformed and enhanced through recovery programs.

PHILADELPHIA ERIE OUTPATIENT RSC

COVID-19 Can't and Won't Stop Us

The impact of COVID-19 and the year of 2020 have definitely proved to be challenging, but as change agents we didn't let that stop us at the Philadelphia Erie Outpatient RSC. Our goal is to stay connected with reentrants and always do our best to meet their needs. Because of the pandemic, we have also had to be mindful of the safety of reentrants as well as staff. We knew changes would need to be made in the way we delivered treatment. We also knew things would look different, but how different was unclear. How would we ensure reentrant needs were met during these trying times? How would we make sure staff members were safe?

The staff, with the guidance of the Area Manager and direction from the governor, closed the facility to reentrants. In-person services were ceased and preparations were made for virtual visits. After closing the facility, a spreadsheet was created with contact information for all reentrants including their supervising parole officer. RSC staff then reached out to reentrants via telephone to make them aware of the changes and inform them they would be contacted by their counselor. All active participants received daily check-in telephone calls from staff to secure email addresses while checking on their well-being.

Eventually, treatment began with reentrants having individual sessions via telephone. The Program Manager also reached out to reentrants randomly to continue checking on their well-being. We wanted reentrants to know they were not in this alone, we cared for their well-being, and we were here if they needed us.

Next, we moved to telehealth via Microsoft Teams. All groups and some individual sessions are held via this virtual platform. While there



have been technical challenges and other barriers, this has proven to be successful in reaching out and staying connected to reentrants.

In order to keep the staff safe, when entering the facility, each staff member has a wellness screening with a temperature check and a series of questions to answer. After being cleared, staff can enter the building. Staff members are designated days to clean and disinfect the facility at least twice daily. Staff wear masks in common areas and whenever anyone enters their office. We meet weekly to discuss any changes in procedures, provide updates on the virus, and give reassurance of what is necessary to stay healthy.

What has this pandemic taught us? How to be more creative, versatile, and empathetic. Has it been without it challenges? No, but COVID-19 can't and won't stop us! Why? Because we are change agents who support the goals of our reentrants. Our mission is to have a safe and secure facility where reentrants learn to be productive citizens in their communities and do not recidivate. Our mission is still the same, it's just carried out in a different way!

LYCOMING COUNTY RSC

Lycoming County Reentry Services Center Copes with COVID-19

The Lycoming County RSC has gone to great lengths to ensure that reentrants are still engaged in services during COVID-19 restrictions. Adjustments made to daily operations and programming have allowed reentrants to continue receiving support targeting both criminogenic needs and basic needs.

During these unprecedented times, treating a person's mental health is just as important as treating physical health. The RSC has recognized this need, and put new policies in place to respond to the demand. At the beginning of the state shutdown, a first step the RSC took to continue providing essential services, was implementing tele- as well as videoconference services to reentrants. Case Managers continued to check in with reentrants and provide both group and individual programming to during the shutdown.

As some restrictions were lifted, the RSC started seeing reentrants for individual sessions at the facility. Policies and precautions were implemented to follow all CDC guidelines. These procedures include, but are not limited to: anyone entering the facility is required to wear a mask, a wellness screening is completed on all visitors, temperatures are taken on all visitors and staff, social distancing is implemented through marked spaces on the floor, and check-ins are scheduled to ensure the capacity limitation is not breached. Additionally, the facility is cleaned and sanitized several times each day. These procedures are still in place as more programming is gradually being reintroduced on-site.

The RSC has a goal to begin group programming on-site beginning October 5, 2020, with continued social distancing and CDC guidelines being followed.

LANCASTER COUNTY RSC

Reaching Out During Challenging Times

Globally, 2020 has seen change and challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected each person differently, but it has also impacted systems, programs, and some of the very structure that allows GEO Reentry Services to continue to be the industry leader in recidivism risk-reduction services. The staff at the Lancaster RSC found it absolutely necessary to get “back to basics” of great engagement and building rapport in order to meet the new challenges of service delivery during COVID-19.

Since March 2020, services at most GEO Reentry Services sites have been conducted via telephone or video conferencing. Conducting sound, cognitive-behavioral treatment, via telehealth presented unique challenges. Namely, how do staff connect with reentrants when there has been no in-person interaction? How can a reentrant build trust in someone they have never even met? How can they build a rapport with someone by just hearing their voice over the phone?

Alicia Eltman, Case Manager at the Lancaster RSC, proposed and designed a post card to mail to all reentrants. The post card includes photographs of all staff, contact information, and simple reminders of important stabilization factors GEO Reentry can assist with, including employment, basic needs, and early compliance with Parole conditions. In order to foster healthy therapeutic alliance, it was absolutely necessary for reentrants to “put a face to a name.”

Responses to the post cards were positive (in both attendance, and rapport building) and allowed each participant to start the program with some feeling of connection to our staff. “Without the foresight to predict a return to ‘normal,’ staff can take comfort in the fact that their relationships with clients will remain integral in maintaining our goal of public safety and productive reintegration.” (Delaney, M., Tools to Support Remote Client Contact For Community Corrections Part One. connect.APPA-net.org, 06.29.20)

DAUPHIN COUNTY RSC

Dauphin County RSC Helps Harrisburg Schools with Donations

By: Karen Collins

Great job!! By the staff and participants at the Dauphin County RSC in Harrisburg, for a very successful school supply donation drive. Jacqueline Schap, Program Manager, came up with the idea that would serve to both help the community and involve participants in a productive assignment. Ms. Schap contacted an alumna of her college, Ms. Powell, who is now a learning support teacher in the Harrisburg school system that was in need of supplies.

“We are inspired by the sense of community shared within the Dauphin County GEO Reentry Services Center,” said John Hogan, Area Manager for GEO Reentry Service Centers in Pennsylvania. “The participants demonstrated their willingness to help others in need and part of the essence of this step in MRT is, ‘giving back and becoming a good force in the world.’ ”

The non-residential programming provided at Dauphin County RSC includes Moral Reconation Therapy® (MRT), coordinated by Aquila Webb, Case Manager. MRT programming normally includes community service as a way for reentrants to give back to their community. Due to the pandemic and its restrictions, reentrants at the RSC could not get out to do the usual community service that RSC reentrants usually perform. As a substitute, Ms. Schap and Ms. Webb organized the school supply drive, which gave reentrants a shared experience of the importance of receiving the right tools for learning, whether it be pencils and notebooks, or evidence-based reentry services in order to succeed.

“We were very pleased to see our participants so eager to contribute school supplies for the district,” said Ms. Schap. “Many of our participants have children in the Harrisburg school system, and our participants did a great job by supplying Ms. Powell with an abundance of donations that will help the children learn and experience a successful start to the school year.”

Reentrants were generous in their contributions of school supplies and expressed gratification and upliftment that comes with an act of selfless service. The Harrisburg school system began the school year as a hybrid process of in-person and at-home learning. One important item needed was specific envelopes, allowing teachers to mail homework to the homes of students. The RSC donated a score of envelopes which were extremely helpful, as well as ample amounts of hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, pencils, markers, notebooks, pens, and more.

Congrats on the great effort that connected Dauphin RSC reentrants with their community and helping students get off to a good start with this challenging school year!



PENNSYLVANIA RSC SERVICES

Pennsylvania RSC Services During the Pandemic

Providing participant services that enhance public safety in Pennsylvania is our top priority. In the early response to the uncertainty of the national COVID-19 pandemic, staff developed and implemented creative program modifications to enable continuous and uninterrupted services. As an essential service provider for a vulnerable population, our goal was to keep vital programs and supportive services available while maintaining responsible practices.

Service Modifications:

- Daily check-in calls replaced in-person check-ins to maintain engagement and accountability
- Treatment services delivered via one-on-one/group teleconferences, video communication or online-based platforms

Public Safety Benefit:

- Daily contact helps keep program participants accountable
- Continued delivery of evidence-based programming decreases the likelihood of recidivism

Participant Benefit:

- Participants have the necessary information and support they need
- Participants have continued support during the pandemic

We are working hard every day for the partners and the participants we serve. Given this vulnerable population, it was essential that we kept these vital programs available, and we will continue to work to bring other innovative approaches to service delivery.

LUZERNE COUNTY MARCH - MAY

ENGAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK-INS		
Required Check-Ins	6,632	94%
Participant Check-Ins	6,202	

INDIVIDUAL COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT (ICBT)		
Sessions Scheduled	1,091	85%
Participants Attending Session	922	

TELE-CONFERENCE/VIDEO-CONFERENCE GROUPS		
Groups Scheduled	1,750	75%
Participants Attending Group	1,320	

LYCOMING COUNTY MARCH - MAY

ENGAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK-INS		
Required Check-Ins	3,658	95%
Participant Check-Ins	3,467	

INDIVIDUAL COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT (ICBT)		
Sessions Scheduled	625	90%
Participants Attending Session	562	

TELE-CONFERENCE/VIDEO-CONFERENCE GROUPS		
Groups Scheduled	326	88%
Participants Attending Group	288	

CAMBRIA COUNTY MARCH - MAY

ENGAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK-INS		
Required Check-Ins	5,229	94%
Participant Check-Ins	4,922	

INDIVIDUAL COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT (ICBT)		
Sessions Scheduled	1,487	82%
Participants Attending Session	1,219	

PENNSYLVANIA REENTRY SERVICE CENTERS

RSC - Berks County	400 Washington Street, Suite 1202	Reading, PA 19601	T: 610.478.8800	F: 610.478.8800
RSC - Cambria County	499 Manor Drive	Ebensburg, PA 15931	T: 814.471.1801	F: 814.472.4699
RSC - Dauphin County	2151 Greenwood Street	Harrisburg, PA 17104	T: 717-561-9600	F: 717-561-9620
RSC - Lancaster County	439 East King Street	Lancaster, PA 17601	T: 717.391.8202	F: 717.291.8206
RSC - Luzerne County	125 N Wilkes-Barre Blvd, Suite 4	Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702	T: 570.208.4858	F: 570.208.4874
RSC - Lycoming County	330 Pine Street	Williamsport, PA 17701	T: 570.323.1274	F: 570.323.1659
RSC - Philadelphia Erie	3768 L Street	Philadelphia, PA 19124	T: 215.744.9601	F: 215.743.7230

If you have questions about any of the information contained in this newsletter, please contact the facility staff.