



Healing Justice:

**Enhancing Health Outcomes
with Peer Support
from Pre-Entry to Re-Entry**

Agenda

- Introductions
- Overview and Objectives
- Challenges, Barriers and Gaps
- Why Peer Support?
- Peer Support At Every Intercept
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Introductions

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Session Overview and Objectives: What Are We Learning Here?

This presentation explores how justice, healing, and recovery are interconnected, and highlights the unique role peer professionals play in supporting individuals across each stage of the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM).

- Impact of peer professionals on health and justice outcomes for adults and youth
- Examples of strong cross-sector partnerships
- Connections between health, justice & peer specialists

Challenges, Barriers, and Gaps

1. Overrepresentation of people with behavioral health needs in the legal system (i.e., higher rates of mental health and SUD among justice involved individuals, disproportionate impact on BIPOC community, etc.)
2. Gaps in care lead to poorer health outcomes (i.e., accessibility, continuity of care, limited supports and services for the full continuum, trauma-informed care, etc.)

The Results?

- Higher rates of re-engagement with justice AND health systems.
- Poorer health and recovery outcomes.



PEER SUPPORT

The act of people who have similar lived experience giving each other encouragement, hope, assistance, guidance, and understanding that aids in healing and/or recovery.

WHY PEER SUPPORT?

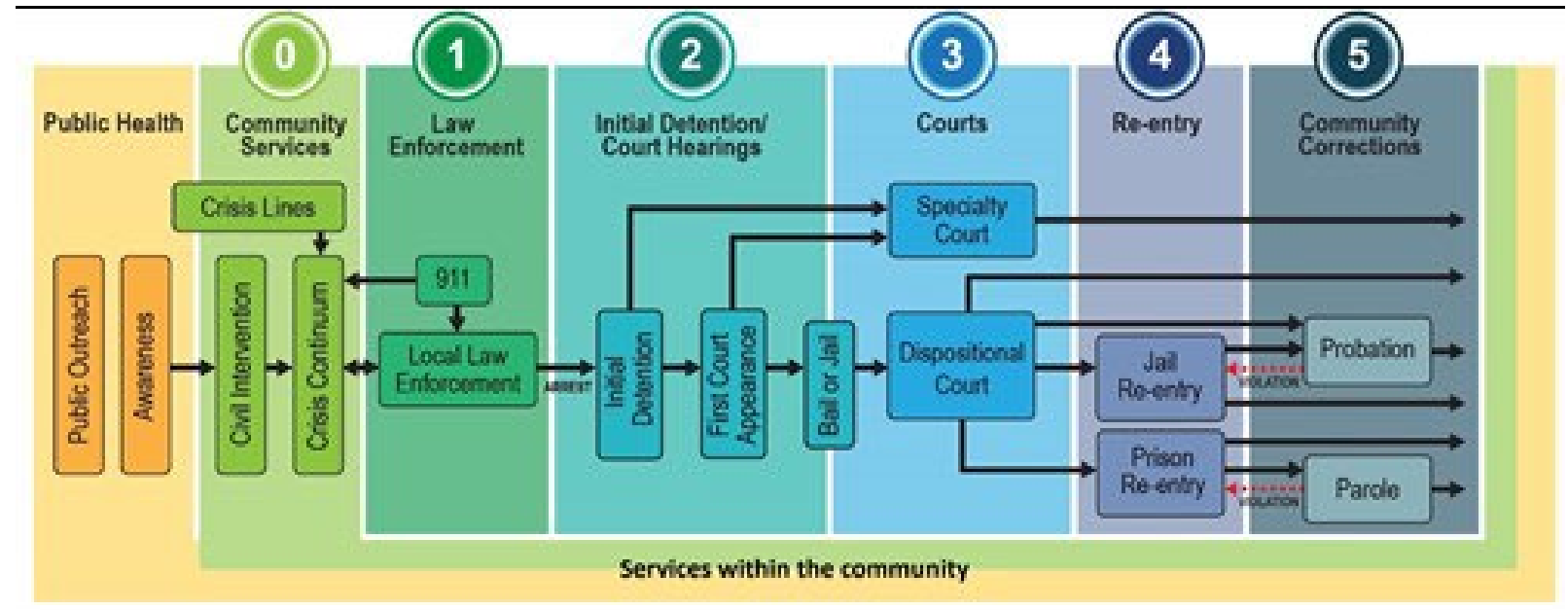
- Lived experience = unique credibility & trust
- Trauma-informed, person-centered, recovery-oriented, strengths-based, evidence-based
- Bridges systems: health, justice, education, community
- Restores hope and human connection

WHO ARE PEER PROFESSIONALS?



- Peer Specialists support individuals in developing and sustaining their own recovery journeys.
- In addition to lived experience, peer specialists undergo formal training and complete supervised hours to receive a state certification from the Texas Certification Board.
- Peer Specialists are trained on relevant practices such as active listening, motivational interviewing, and goal setting/planning.
- Must complete CEUs and re-certify every two years.
- Ethics complaint and review process.

Peer Support can (and should) be successfully integrated into every intercept point to achieve better health and recovery outcomes for people.



PEER PROFESSIONALS IN THE SEQUENTIAL INTERCEPT MODEL (SIM)

Peers can help people stabilize earlier, avoid crisis, and build long-term wellness, which translates into fewer hospitalizations, better mental health outcomes, and reduced criminal legal system involvement.

- Recognize early signs of crisis and **support before escalation**.
- **Share grounding techniques** and coping strategies.
- **Model** hope and recovery.
- Create welcoming, **judgment-free environments**.
- Help with **basic needs, wellness planning, and resource connection**.
- Promote peer **connection** and **community belonging**.



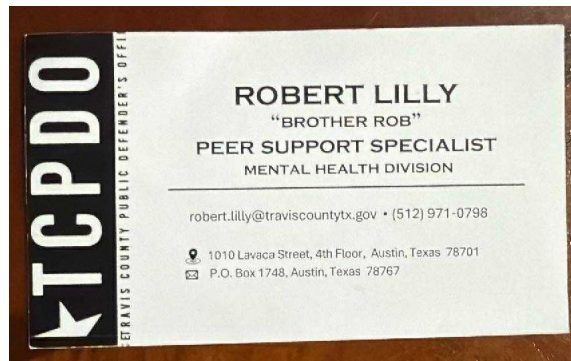
EXPANDED MOBILE
CRISIS OUTREACH
TEAM (EMCOT)



COMMUNITY SERVICES (0)

Peers can be a calming support for individuals during the detention and court hearing processes. Often, they connect people to helpful services and supports before their first appearance, and can help explain court processes in plain language, reducing fear and confusion.

- **Motivational interviewing** to explore goals and support decision-making
- **Resource navigation** to connect individuals with treatment, housing, or benefits
- **Warm handoffs** to service providers for continuity of care
- **Trauma-informed engagement** to build trust and ensure emotional safety



INITIAL DETENTION/ COURT HEARINGS (2)

Peers can act as a steady support system to help participants navigate trials and program requirements and support participants in aligning the court process with their overall goals.

- **Goal setting and future planning** that connect court obligations to personal dreams and growth.
- **Mentorship and role modeling** to show positive outcomes after system involvement
- **Collaborative problem-solving** to address barriers like transportation, attendance, or family communication



Travis County Family Drug Treatment Court:
Parenting In Recovery



*Creating a foundation where families
take root and grow.*

COURTS (3)

Peer professionals support individuals in planning for transitions related to exiting incarceration and re-entering society. They can teach life skills and navigate services that will assist in sustained recovery, often being able to share their experiences with those same services.

- **Transition and reentry planning** to identify goals, needs, and supports before release.
- **Life skills education** (budgeting, time management, communication, self-care) for community success.
- **Resource mapping** to identify and prioritize local supports and opportunities.



Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Reentry Program

REENTRY (4)



Peers help explain supervision conditions in plain language and can support people with compliance procedures (drug testing, curfew, check ins, etc.). Peer professionals can reduce strain on probation officers by addressing needs outside of supervision's traditional role.

- **Model accountability** and provide requested reminders for appointments.
- **Accompany** individuals to supervision appointments to ease anxiety and support self-advocacy skills.
- **Co-facilitate** support groups.
- Support people in **navigating technology** to meet their needs.



COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS (5)

**No Examples Could Be Found On Peers
Working Alongside Law Enforcement in Texas**

- Station **peers at precincts or central booking locations** to intervene before charges are filed.
- **Participate in cross-training** — peers learn about law enforcement procedures, and officers learn about recovery principles, trauma-informed care, and lived experience perspectives.
- **Joint debriefs and reflective practice** with officers after interactions to strengthen mutual understanding and refine approaches

LAW ENFORCEMENT (1)



Creating a Culture Change

While the use of peer specialists within the judicial system has increased, the need and potential for growth is extensive.

The integration of peer professionals helps **deviate from the “us vs. them” mentality**, encouraging collaboration and mutual understanding among behavioral health providers, law enforcement, courts, and communities and **reducing the stigma surrounding people with behavioral health challenges**.



HEALTH OUTCOMES

FOR ADULTS RECEIVING PEER SUPPORT IN THE SIM

MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING	PHYSICAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH	RECOVERY & RESILIENCY
Increased sense of hope, purpose, and belonging	Better self-care and management of chronic health conditions	Higher engagement and retention in recovery programs
Reduced stigma, shame, and isolation	Lower substance use and reduced relapse rates	Enhanced self-management and problem-solving skills
Improved emotional regulation and coping skills	Fewer emergency room visits and psychiatric hospitalizations	Strengthened resilience and ability to navigate setbacks
Reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, or trauma-related stress	Increased commitment to medications and treatment plans	More sustained long-term recovery outcomes

HEALTH OUTCOMES

FOR YOUTH RECEIVING PEER SUPPORT IN THE SIM

MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING	PHYSICAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH	RECOVERY & RESILIENCY
Better coping skills and emotional regulation	Early identification and support for behavioral health challenges	Strengthened identity and resilience through role models with lived experience
Reduced stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma symptoms	Reduced risky behaviors (substance use, unsafe sexual activity, self-harm)	Improved problem-solving and conflict resolution skills
Decreased feelings of loneliness, stigma, or being misunderstood	Increased engagement in wellness activities and healthier lifestyle choices	Greater involvement in shaping their own treatment and recovery plans
Increased hope, optimism, and motivation for the future	Fewer emergency interventions or hospitalizations	Stronger ability to set goals and make future-oriented decisions

JUSTICE-RELATED OUTCOMES FOR ADULTS RECEIVING PEER SUPPORT IN THE SIM

Reduced risk of initial justice system involvement through early support	Fewer arrests and re-arrests due to stabilized mental health and supports	Lower recidivism and reduced return to incarceration
Improved understanding of legal processes	Reduced use of jail/prison for people with behavioral health needs	Greater stability post-release through connections to housing, employment, and services
Better engagement with court orders, conditions, or probation	Increased access to treatment courts	Decreased costs associated with incarceration and emergency/crisis services
Stronger community reintegration and pro-social engagement	Reduced violations and revocations	Increased equity and fairness in justice system outcomes for marginalized populations

JUSTICE-RELATED OUTCOMES

FOR YOUTH RECEIVING PEER SUPPORT IN THE SIM

Reduced fear and trauma associated with detention or court hearings	Decreased school-to-prison pipeline outcomes (suspensions, expulsions leading to justice involvement)	Stronger support systems during critical developmental transitions to adulthood
Improved stability in housing, education, and vocational pathways	Greater compliance with probation or diversion program requirements	Reduced use of detention for youth with behavioral health needs
Reduced racial and ethnic disparities in youth justice outcomes	Reduced likelihood of justice system contact through early identification and support	Improved understanding of legal processes, rights, and expectations
Better access to youth-appropriate treatment and rehabilitation services	Lower recidivism rates after release from detention or residential facilities	Long-term reduction in adult justice system involvement by addressing needs early

Best Practices and Considerations for Implementing Peer Support Throughout the SIM

- Hiring peers/contracting with organizations who employ **peers with state (Texas) certifications**.
- Hiring peers/contracting with organizations who employ peers with **lived experience with the judicial system**.
- Reevaluating and adjusting **agency hiring and onboarding criteria** to Align with Potential Backgrounds of People with Lived Experience.
- Support participation in **regular debriefs** after calls to share lessons learned and improve coordination.
- Ensure peer professionals are allowed to maintain **confidentiality and ethical boundaries** — peers don't share personal recovery details of participants without consent.

For questions about how to implement peer support in your organization/agency, contact **Texas Peer Professionals** at: Info@TXPeerProfessionals.Org

TPP Mission: To elevate the peer profession in Texas by honoring lived experience, empowering peer professionals, championing fidelity to professional values and standards, and organizing for collective impact.



Q&A

Any Questions?

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