Instilling Holistic Safety: How We Can Reimagine Our Approach Toward Safety in Corrections

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The National Institute of Corrections is a federal agency established to provide assistance to strengthen state and local correctional agencies by creating more effective, humane, safe, and just correctional services.

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Webinar Takeaways

- Analyze different correctional systems to determine what factors are contributing to a lack of safety.
- Explain to system stakeholders how health, value, personal agency, connectedness, and trust all contribute to safety so as to guide policy changes that reduce systemic harms.
- Articulate why and how lived experience groups – like correctional officers, people incarcerated, and survivors of crime – must be engaged to make system change successful.
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REHABILITATION

The action of restoring someone to health or normal life through training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness

Source: Oxford Dictionary
TRAUMA
Understanding trauma

Trauma is commonly understood as an event that is experienced or witnessed by a person as harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting consequences on the person’s mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and social wellbeing.

Yet this individualized understanding of trauma in the legal system misses:

- The depth and range of the impact of trauma
- The problems with the system itself, not the individual
- Opportunities to support the men and women who work in institutions, not just individuals who are incarcerated and are most commonly understood to be system-impacted

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Individuals confined and working within carceral institutions experience high levels of trauma

**PEOPLE INCARCERATED**

- **Trauma**: 99% report experiencing >1 traumatic event in their lifetime that involved violence directed towards them.

- **PTSD**: 60% experience moderate to severe symptoms for PTSD.

**CORRECTIONAL STAFF**

- 73% have seen someone hurt or killed on the job.

- 34% of correction officers in security roles meet the criteria for PTSD, 5x the national rate.

Source: Wolff et al., “Trauma Exposure and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Incarcerated Men”. Journal of Urban Health 2014; Wolff et al., “Patterns of Victimization Among Male and Female Inmates: Evidence of an Enduring Legacy”. Violence and Victims 2009; Officer Health and Wellness: Results from the California Correctional Officer Survey; I Am Not Okay from One Voice United; Bureau of Justice Statistics; Desert Waters Correctional Outreach
The reality is that trauma affects ALL of us.

Trauma that originates in jails and prisons radiates through communities and is on a constant loop, spreading to individuals and ultimately back to the institution.

- Trauma
- Prison / Jail
- Returning People
- Visiting Families
- Staff
- Home
- Work
- School
- Community Events
- The Broader Community

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"THE ENEMY IS THE CORRECTIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY."

- Officer William Young

Source: One Voice United's Blue Ribbon Commission on Correctional Staff Wellness
Do I Have the Right to Feel Safe?

Unified a diverse, never-before-seen coalition of stakeholders behind holistic safety.
HOLISTIC SAFETY is creating the conditions for all community members – inside and outside of correctional walls – to be and feel protected, resilient, and whole.
Being safe requires us to feel safe

- Personal Agency: Our capacity to determine our own future, from making day-to-day choices to identifying and accessing the resources we need.
- Value: The idea that we must respect and invest in our shared humanity and individual strengths.
- Safety: Our earned — not blind — belief in people to not only fulfill their responsibilities but to also act in a manner beneficial to themselves and others.
- Health: The physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing we need to thrive, not just be injury-free.
- Connectedness: The concept that we are all intrinsically bound as human beings and we are served best when our ties are positive and strong.

Whether through lived experience or rigorous studies, we know when these areas are deficient, safety declines. Alternatively, when they are present, people incarcerated and staff thrive.
People feel safe when they are part of the solution

- People formerly incarcerated
- Families impacted by incarceration
- Union leaders
- Survivors of crime
- Community organizations in areas most impacted by incarceration

Staff and people incarcerated face a duality of harm, yet they are rarely engaged in solution-making spaces.
When people are part of the solution, change lasts.

This work is not just about the ‘what’. It is also about the ‘how’.

When we engage people incarcerated and staff in a process that centers their wellbeing and shifts how we notice, problem solve and act, we generate the buy-in needed for change to last.
The Holistic Safety Action Alliance (HSAA) is intended to put this framework in motion nationwide

**The concept**

The HSAA is a year-long program in which a cohort of urban jail administrators from Cook and San Francisco County partner with corrections staff, people detained, and community experts to develop strategies to reduce the isolation experienced by all parties. Recognizing the impact of isolation on safety, administrators will aim to shift policies, practices and resource flows to address:

1. **Physical isolation.** How do we increase quality, out-of-cell time?
2. **Interpersonal isolation between staff and people incarcerated.** How do we combat the ‘us vs. them’ culture?
3. **Emotional isolation for staff.** How do we add supports to let staff thrive?
4. **Emotional isolation for people incarcerated.** How do we add supports to let people incarcerated thrive?

**HSAA Partners**

The HSAA is guided by the premise that being safe requires us to feel safe and that people feel safe when they are part of the solution. Therefore, each institution will partner with:

1. **Other cohort institutions and administrators** through monthly meetings organized by Chicago Beyond to share progress and build community.
2. **Internal Advisory Councils** of frontline staff and people detained that they are creating to proactively influence reform efforts.
3. **Chicago Beyond’s National Advisory Council,** comprised of expert leaders with experience being incarcerated or working in the system.

Throughout the year, Chicago Beyond will be providing structure, workshops, and connective tissue.

*Each HSAA Ally is solely responsible for the creation and implementation of its own policies, practices, and procedures for its respective institution. Chicago Beyond will not recommend, create, or implement any policies, practices, or procedures through the HSAA.*
Video on Holistic Safety
Together we can drive transformative change

- Take tangible actions aligned with the holistic safety framework to reduce isolation in your facilities.
- Establish a sustainable infrastructure for collaboration with people incarcerated, correctional staff and other people impacted by the system.
- Promote the culture shift to ensure holistic safety is understood, embraced and practiced.
The power starts with us.

What is one way you can center holistic safety?
Stay connected

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Do I Have the Right to Feel Safe?
Questions and Answer Time!

What questions do you have?

Chat them now!
Selected Resource for Further Exploration

https://chicagobeyond.org/doi/havetherightt/feelsafe/
Thank you for participating!

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