

New York City Department of Correction Trauma-Informed Care Report Calendar Year 2023

Training Data

Correction Academy Recruit Training

There are several trauma-informed care aspects built into the New York City Department of Correction's ("DOC" or "the Department") training curriculum for uniformed recruits, which are outlined herein.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training

MHFA Training is a collaboration between the Department's Health Affairs Division and the Correction Academy. The instructors provide MHFA training to in-service uniformed members of service ("MOS"), teaching them how to recognize the signs of distress in people in custody (PIC) who may be experiencing mental illness.

- ❖ A total of 1,949 staff members, inclusive of both MOS and non-uniformed staff, have been trained on this topic since 2019:
 - CY2019 – 1,210
 - CY2020 – 149
 - CY2021 – 154
 - CY2022 – 255
 - CY2023 – 181

In 2023, the Department resumed providing MHFA to PIC, specifically to those employed as Suicide Prevention Aides (SPAs). Trainings for PIC were paused in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department's goal is to consistently provide trainings once staffing levels increase.

- ❖ A total of 403 PIC have been trained on this topic since 2019:
 - CY2019 – 372
 - CY2020 – 0
 - CY2021 – 0
 - CY2022 – 0
 - CY2023 – 31

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training

CIT training is designed to teach MOS and non-uniformed staff the common signs and symptoms of mental illness, and to recognize those signs and symptoms during a crisis situation. The goal of CIT is to improve safety for both PIC and staff. Instead of dispatching a tactical team to a crisis situation, MOS are enabled to respond and utilize verbal de-escalation skills to defuse

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a situation where a PIC may be experiencing a mental health crisis, thereby ideally averting the need for use of force.

- ❖ A total of 281 staff, inclusive of staff from both NYC Health + Hospitals/Correctional Health Services (CHS) and DOC, have been trained on this topic since 2019:
 - CY2019 – 228
 - CY2020 – 24
 - CY2021 – 0
 - CY2022 – 8
 - CY2023 – 21

The Department recently received a \$250,000 grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance which will allow the Department to secure additional trainers as well as host additional training sessions. This grant will be spread out over a three-year period, beginning in CY24. As a result, the Department expects to be able to provide multiple trainings per year through CY27.

The Department's Trauma-Informed Care Guidelines

Trauma-informed care is defined as an approach that acknowledges the impact of trauma on individuals. In an effort to ensure that trauma-informed care is prioritized and integrated into all operations, the Department provides mental health awareness training as well as information on the impact of trauma to its employees. In order to ensure a trauma-informed care approach when implementing new policies and practices, the Department considers the following:

1. Examining the widespread impact of trauma and understanding the potential paths to recovery;
2. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma;
3. Responding by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into Department policies, procedures, and practices, and;
4. Seeking to prevent re-traumatization.¹

¹ SAMHSA. (2018). Trauma-Informed Approach and Trauma-Specific Interventions. Retrieved from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions>

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Programs that Incorporate Trauma-Informed Care

In CY23, the Department continued to expand programming that incorporates trauma-informed care. The Division of Programs and Community Partnerships (DPCP) led the way in these efforts.

DPCP is leading the implementation of various programs and practices for incarcerated women that support healing in the hope of creating futures that afford less adverse contact with the justice system. In collaboration with national experts and community partners, the Department developed a training on gender-responsive practices and trauma-informed care for all MOS and non-uniformed staff who work in the Rose M. Singer Center (RMSC), the Department's facility for women. In December 2022, DPCP partnered with the Correction Academy to launch the training and begin delivering it to new recruits. So far, the Department has trained a total of 324 MOS and non-uniformed staff in these areas.

To support incarcerated mothers in overcoming the trauma associated with being separated from their children, the Department implemented programming designed to help maintain and even strengthen these relationships. In partnership with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), the Osborne Association, and Hour Children, the Department offers the Visitation and Family Assistance (VAFA) program. In CY23, the Department continued to facilitate quarterly Community Engagement Days at RMSC, which allow for incarcerated mothers to spend time with their children while engaging in familial activities. These Community Engagement Days expanded to the men's facilities throughout the year, as well. Additionally, in CY23 the Department established a partnership with the Caribbean Women's Health Association to provide doula services for the incarcerated women in RMSC. These services include pre-natal care, birthing support, and post-natal care.

In late 2021, the Department was awarded two grants to further promote child-friendly visits, which have enabled the expansion of the VAFA program, construction of child-friendly visit spaces and hiring for Visit Facilitator roles. During CY23, the Anna M. Kross Center was closed, and individuals housed in that facility were transferred to other facilities throughout Rikers Island, including the Otis Bantum Correctional Center (OBCC), which reopened in CY23. To enhance family visitation throughout all facilities, the Department constructed a child-friendly visit space at OBCC, and similar spaces have now been constructed at the George R. Vierno Center (GRVC) and RMSC.

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In October 2022, the Department resumed its partnership with the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) to help facilitate off-island visits for incarcerated parents and their children, simultaneously expanding it to fathers for the first time. In CY23, the Department was able to facilitate CMOM visits for 128 PIC and 382 family members. The Department and CMOM have also begun planning a new initiative focused on installing interactive exhibits in each of the Department’s family visit areas. These exhibits are museum-quality and will be designed to support executive function and literacy skills in children. The visit areas are expected to be completed in RMSC and GRVC in Spring 2024, with similar exhibits being planned for all remaining facilities at a later date.

In CY22, DPCP hired a Director of Interventions and Special Population Services to programmatically respond to violence and manage restrictive housing settings within the Department. The Director currently supervises four Social Workers and two Intervention Specialists, all of whom work with PIC through a trauma-informed lens and specifically target their caseloads to include people who partake in acts of violence while incarcerated. Rooted in restorative justice practices, part of this initiative includes expanding family-based interventions, which mirrors elements of family counseling sessions, but revolve around goal-setting and reflective activities. The Social Workers and Intervention Specialists work with PIC and their families before, during, and after sessions, which is meant to show the resonance that individual choices can have. In CY23, this team conducted a total of 145 family interventions. More recently, this team has also taken on a role providing additional support to people who demonstrate self-injurious behaviors; this work is done across all Department facilities, and not just restrictive housing. This support involves infusing trauma-informed counseling techniques into wellness checks, in order to better understand what may be leading to self-harming behavior, so that the Department can work to better meet the individual’s needs.

And finally, the Fine and Performing Arts and Tablet Operations units, both under the broader DPCP umbrella, also provide trauma-informed care services. The Arts Unit regularly works in collaboration with facilities when a traumatic event may have taken place, to help route extra support to needed areas via a special project or program. The Tablet Unit has implemented a tool whereby PIC can submit support and/or request forms related to chaplaincy, counseling, LGBTQ+ Affairs, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and other areas of concern.

LGBTQ+ Affairs

In August 2023, the Department reorganized the LGBTQ+ Unit so that it now falls under the broader DPCP umbrella. The Unit currently has one Executive Director and three Program

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Coordinators. The Program Coordinators cover each jail on Rikers Island to offer needed support, including providing discreet ways for PIC to disclose their gender identity or sexual orientation, assisting with gender-aligned housing requests, and providing one-on-one gender and sexuality education to those exploring their identity. They also collaborate with external providers to offer supportive, responsive programming for LGBTQ+ PIC. For example, the Unit recently partnered with Destination Tomorrow, an LGBTQ+ center in the Bronx, to bring their Growth, Prosperity, and Sustainability (G.P.S.) program onto Rikers Island. This program provides educational courses and additional resources to at-risk LGBTQ+ individuals in the community for professional development, financial literacy, and social-emotional competency-based life skills.

Notably, in CY22, the Department took steps to help decrease the levels of gender dysphoria experienced by PIC who identify as transmen, transmasculine, and/or gender non-binary by approving the use of chest binders for use by PIC. Chest binders allow individuals to safely compress their chest and appear more traditionally masculine, which can decrease feelings of gender dysphoria. The Department worked with a trans-owned company called “gc2b” to obtain a large quantity of chest binders to provide to PIC at no cost. In CY23, the Unit worked in collaboration with the Department’s Law Library to provide name change services to PIC who identify as transmen, transwomen, and/or gender non-binary. Ensuring that someone’s legal name matches their chosen name is a critical component of gender-affirming care for those who identify as transgender and gender non-binary.

The Department continues to ensure that affirmation and LGBTQ+ responsiveness is prioritized throughout the programming that it affords. For example, in CY23, the LGBTQ+ Affairs Unit, in collaboration with the non-uniformed Recreation Unit, hosted a National Coming Out Day event for 36 PIC at RMSC. The event provided space for PIC to discuss their differing experiences with coming out, their range of emotions about doing so, as well as a community space for them to all come together.

New Initiatives

Gender Responsiveness Training

In CY23, the Training and Development Division (TDD) rolled out a revised Gender Responsiveness curriculum to staff assigned to RMSC as a condition of their facility assignment. As of December 31, 2023, TDD had trained 324 staff members Department-wide, 159 of which were assigned to RMSC. The Department’s Office of Administration recently developed the Scheduling Management and Redeployment Team (SMART), which has aided with scheduling

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MOS for trainings while still providing appropriate coverage to the facilities, and the TDD anticipates that this will help with scheduling future trainings. With the support of SMART, the Department will continue to train staff until all staff at RMSC have received the training.

Visit Process Training

In CY23, the TDD conducted the annual Visit Process Training. This training highlights the positive effect that visits have on both PIC and their loved ones. The training emphasizes the importance of employing a trauma-informed approach to security searches, such as the pat-frisk search, which can be particularly sensitive for transgender, gender non-binary, and gender-expansive visitors. Development of these training materials included input from the City's Commission on Human Rights. As of December 31, 2023, the TDD had trained 221 agency personnel assigned to visit areas and will continue to assign trainings and monitor compliance.

Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor Training

TDD partnered with Vertex LLC in CY23 to provide Department staff with the first 85 hours of the 350-hour Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor Trainee program (CASAC-T). This training equips participants with the knowledge and skills needed to observe, identify, intervene, and report on these behaviors. It also teaches how trauma can lead to alcoholism and substance abuse.

MHFA Instructor Training

In CY23, TDD partnered with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to deliver the MHFA Instructor Certification Course to the Department's instructors in the Correction Academy and the Health Affairs Division so that each is capable of delivering the program to in-service staff. In CY2024, TDD will be partnering with internal stakeholders, such as DPCP, the Correction Assistance Response for Employees (CARE) Unit, and Health Affairs Division, to deliver MHFA to the Department's non-uniformed staff members and volunteers who provide program support and operational assistance to the facilities.

Staff Wellness Training

The Department recognizes that trauma not only impacts PIC but staff as well. In CY21, TDD and the CARE Unit launched three online training modules for supervisors and managers related to staff wellness and trauma awareness: Tuning into Self, Connecting with Staff, and Supporting the Team You Lead. As of December 31, 2023, 131 members of the Department's supervisory staff had completed the first of these trainings, 199 had completed the second, and

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174 had completed the third. TDD hopes to expand the awareness of and use of these trainings moving forward.

Chaplaincy Services

In CY23, the Department continued to expand access to in-person congregate services. The Department has ten full-time and nine part-time Chaplains, who in addition to affording congregate services and religious studies, regularly tour housing units to meet with anyone who requests spiritual counseling. Staff are also able to consult the Chaplains in their facilities and/or utilize the CARE Unit, where faith-based, emotional, and psycho-social support is provided.

Mental Health Services

CHS, the direct provider of health care in the city's jails, maintains a service for PIC called the Health Triage Line. PIC can call the line directly from their tablet or using one of the phones in their housing area to speak directly with a CHS nurse Monday-Friday between 5:00am-12:00pm; PIC can also leave a message. The Health Triage Line allows for PIC to speak directly with a CHS nurse to discuss mental health concerns; to schedule appointments (i.e., nursing, medical, or mental health); to refill prescriptions; to request lab results; to ask about medications; and to inquire about any other health-related issue. The CHS nurse addresses individual concerns and, if necessary, places the PIC on a sick call list to be produced to the clinic by the Department.

Future Outlook

The Department remains committed to providing trauma-informed care to those in its custody. Addressing underlying trauma supports a safer and more humane environment for everyone living and working in the city's jails. The Department looks forward to continuing, if not expanding, these efforts in the year to come.