

**New York City  
Department of Correction  
Local Law 123 of 2016  
CY2021**

**TRAINING DATA**

**Academy Recruit Training**

In September 2021, the Department welcomed its first class of recruits since 2019; another class was added in October 2021, and both classes totaling 75 members of service graduated at the end of January 2022. Currently, the Department has 48 recruits completing pre-service instruction at the Correction Academy; this class of recruits joined the Department in December 2021 and is anticipated to graduate in May 2022.

**Mental Health First Aid Training**

- ❖ A total of **7,637** staff members trained were since 2016 (both uniformed and non-uniformed)
  - 1,480 trained in CY2016
  - 2,649 trained in CY2017
  - 1,995 trained in CY2018
  - 1,210 trained in CY2019
  - 149 trained in CY2020
  - 154 trained in CY2021
  
- ❖ A total of **1,119** incarcerated individuals were trained since 2016
  - 54 trained in CY2016
  - 47 trained in CY2017
  - 646 trained in CY2018
  - 372 trained in CY2019
  - 0 trained in CY2020
  - 0 trained in CY2021

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training is a collaboration between the Department of Correction's Health Affairs Division and the Correction Academy. The instructors provides MHFA training to recruits and uniform staff with the goal of providing information on how to recognize the signs of distress among incarcerated individuals who may be mentally ill.

Due to the ongoing public health emergency, the Department curtailed MHFA training for the safety of members of staff (i.e., reduction in class size). In calendar year 2021, MHFA was provided to 154 staff members. The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) scaled back the THRIVE initiative and no longer supplies MHFA instructors and, at this time, the Department does not provide MHFA training to incarcerated individuals.

### **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training**

- ❖ A total of **993** individuals were trained between 2016 and 2021 (both DOC and H+H staff)
  - 246 trained in CY2016
  - 193 trained in CY2017
  - 302 trained in CY2018
  - 228 trained in CY2019
  - 24 trained in CY2020
  - 0 trained in CY2021

Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) training is designed to teach uniform and non-uniform staff members 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 the safety of both uniform and mental health staff and individuals with mental illness who come in contact with them. Instead of dispatching a tactical team to a crisis situation, an interagency (DOC & CHS) CIT responds and utilizes verbal de-escalation skills to defuse a situation where an individual is experiencing a mental health crisis, ideally averting the need for use of force.

During CY2020, due to the public health emergency related to COVID-19, 24 staff members were trained in CIT prior to the onset of the pandemic. The Department is working to resume this training by Summer 2022.

### **DOC'S TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE GUIDELINES**

The Department of Correction has worked extensively to incorporate mental health awareness training and to provide information on the impact of trauma on individuals across the Department. Trauma informed care is defined as an approach that acknowledges the impact of trauma on individuals. The steps for implementing a trauma informed approach are:

1. Realizing 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.<sup>1</sup>

### **PROGRAMS THAT INCORPORATE TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE**

Over the past five years, the Department has expanded programming that incorporates trauma-informed care. In 2021, the Division of Programs and Community Partnerships implemented a core program menu for people in custody that include trauma-focused groups using evidence-based curricula such as Seeking Safety, Beyond Trauma, and Exploring Trauma. These curricula focus on topics such as attaining safety from trauma or substance use, recovering from past trauma, and empowering individuals seek out healthy and productive futures.

In addition, knowing that many incarcerated women have a history of trauma, the Department's Executive Director of Women's Initiatives is leading the implementation of various programs and practices to support healing and futures with less contact with the justice system for women in the Department's custody. In collaboration with national experts and community partners, the Department developed a training on gender-responsive practices and trauma-informed care for all uniformed and non-uniformed staff who work in the women's facility. The training is expected to be implemented this year. To help incarcerated mothers overcome the trauma associated with being separated from their children, the Department implemented programming designed to help maintain and strengthen relationships between mothers in custody and their children. In partnership with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, the Osborne Association, and Hour Children, the Department offers the Family Visitation and Assistance (VAFA) Program, which provides incarcerated mothers and their families with support before, during, and after their visits with children. In late 2021, the Department was awarded two grants to promote child-friendly visits, which will enable us to expand VAFA to a male facility, establish child-friendly visit spaces, and onboard four (4) visit facilitators. The Department has also worked with the National Institute of Corrections to develop a family engagement form to identify and address mothers' child-related needs through a variety of services, such as parenting classes and Beyond Trauma, a trauma-focused group designed specifically for women. This form was implemented in March 2022.

The Department recognizes LGBTQ+ individuals in custody may have experienced trauma prior to their involvement in the criminal justice system and seeks to minimize further trauma while in our custody. The Department's LGBTQ+ Affairs Unit has implemented a series of specialized programs and services to enable LGBTQ+ individuals to seek support to address their needs. In 2021, the Department hired three (3) LGBTQ+ Service Coordinators whose responsibilities include one-on-one support of LGBTQ+ individuals in custody. LGBTQ+ people in custody have direct access to a LGBTQ+ Service Coordinator through the LGBTQ+ Hotline, which they can call from their housing area phones. LGBTQ+ Service Coordinators also regularly tour facilities

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

in order to engage with individuals from the LGBTQ+ community who are in custody and offer services and support.

In addition, an individual may discreetly request LGBTQ+ specific services by submitting a form electronically through their assigned electronic tablet. The forms are reviewed by the Director of LGBTQ+ Affairs and the PREA Unit. For individuals who have yet to receive a tablet, they may submit a service form to request LGBTQ+ services. The Special Considerations Unit (SCU) housing form and SCU Reconsideration form are also now available to access on the tablets as well, which allows individuals apply discreetly without meeting with staff in their housing area, in addition to the option of meeting and applying in-person with staff.

All DOC staff, contracted providers, and volunteers are expected to treat LGBTQ+ individuals in custody with dignity and respect, however the Department recognizes the importance of fostering community for those in custody who may feel marginalized. In June 2021, the Department launched the Pride Ambassador Program, in which a group of volunteer staff members, both uniform and non-uniform, received additional specialized training and committed to wearing a visible symbol that makes clear they can be a safe resource for LGBTQ+ individuals. Currently, there are over 100 Pride Ambassadors. Additionally, the Department launched the Gabby Foster Re-entry Network in early 2021, which is a re-entry network specifically for transgender, gender non-binary, gender non-conforming, and intersex people.

## NEW INITIATIVES

### *Risk Management Accountability Systems (RMAS) Training*

In response to the updates in Chapter 6 of the Board of Correction's Minimum Standards, which relate to restrictive housing, the Department developed and implemented a trauma-informed training on managing and understanding our population and applying a trauma-informed lens when dealing with crisis situations. These updated Minimum Standards specifically apply to how the Department works with individuals in custody who commit Grade I or Grade II violent infractions and are subsequently placed in programmatic housing area known as the Risk Management Accountability System (RMAS). RMAS is a tiered housing system designed to address serious violence behavior, in which each progressive level aims to encourage and support behavior modification. The Department developed and facilitated training for uniformed and non-uniformed staff who will be assigned to work in RMAS. This week-long training curriculum aims to educate staff through various modules on how trauma impacts behavior, how different types of trauma exposure have neurological and physiological effects on people, and how members of service can apply a trauma-informed, culturally competent, and person-centered approach to working with the incarcerated population. Course topics in the training programs include Working with Young

Adults in a Correctional Environment, Mental Health Awareness & Suicide Prevention, Procedural & Restorative Justice, and Conflict Resolution & Crisis Intervention.

To date, over 200 staff members attended some part or all of this training program; 170 uniform members have successfully completed the five-day curriculum, along with 29 non-uniform staff members. The Department anticipates that over 600 staff members will be fully trained by July 2022 to qualify for assignment in RMAS.

#### *Visit Process Training*

In CY2021, the Training & Development Division initiated updates to the training materials for all staff who have any interaction with the visitors of incarcerated individuals. The training highlights the positive and beneficial effects that visits have on both the persons in custody as well as their family and friends. The training also emphasizes the importance of employing a trauma-informed approach to security searches, such as the pat-frisk search, that is particularly sensitive to transgender, gender non-binary and gender expansive visitors. Development of these training materials and delivery is anticipated in late CY2022.

#### *Staff Wellness Training*

The Department recognizes that trauma does not only impact individuals in custody, but staff as well. In CY2021, the Department's Training & Development Division and CARE Unit successfully 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. These courses focus on mental, physical, financial, and other areas of health and wellness, as well identifying stressors in yourself and members of your staff. They were produced as online, self-paced eLearning modules for delivery via the Department's Learning Management System (LMS).

To date, 171 members of our supervisory staff have completed the Tuning into Self training module; 159 supervisory staff members have completed Connecting with Staff, and 137 supervisory staff members have completed Supporting the Team You Lead.

In addition, the Training & Development Division, in collaboration with the Desert Waters Correctional Outreach, a non-profit organization dedicated to the well-being of correctional staff, provided a series of training sessions to certify our instructional staff to facilitate a course entitled, Correctional Fatigue to Fulfillment (CF2F). This course identifies the symptoms of corrections fatigue, or the negative effect of the correctional environment on a staff members personality and well-being and encourages participants to create a pathway to corrections fulfillment, characterized as positive personal growth and professional development.

Correctional Fatigue to Fulfillment (CF2F) has been incorporated into the pre-service curriculum for all recruits and to date, 54 staff members have completed the training. The Training & Development Division has plans to rollout this training to in-service staff members in the coming months this year.

## **CONNECTING PERSONS IN CUSTODY AND MEMBERS OF STAFF TO CHAPLAINCY SERVICES**

Congregant religious services were suspended in December 2021 to reduce the amount of physical exposure and movement through the facilities and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 during the Omicron surge. As COVID positivity rates declined, the Department sought and received guidance from the Department of Health on how best to conduct these services safely, and is working to resume congregate religious services in a safe, modified manner by the end of April 2022.

In March 2020, when the pandemic began to spread and Department first suspended congregate services, a Chaplaincy Hotline was established for people in custody. The Chaplaincy Hotline enables people in custody to maintain direct contact with DOC chaplains to support their connection to their faith and values. This hotline continues to serve as a means for people in custody to connect with a chaplain to address faith-based care needs, to request bereavement support, and to request vital support around the unique trauma associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, individuals in custody can request religious materials through the hotline.

The Chaplaincy Hotline has remained a valuable way of maintaining a line of communication and direct engagement at a time in which the impact of physical interaction with others might be experienced as traumatic. Throughout the pandemic, many of our chaplains remained dedicated to touring facilities as well as engaging with people in custody via the chaplaincy hotline.

Currently, religious materials are available to access on tablets. Chaplains also conduct tours to afford on-unit faith-based guidance and counseling.

Members of staff can connect with chaplains in their facilities and/or call the Wellness Center, where faith-based, emotional, and psycho-social support is provided by DOC Wellness staff.

## **CONNECTING PERSONS IN CUSTODY TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Correctional Health Services (CHS), in partnership with the Department, maintains a Health Triage Line, previously known as the sick call phone line. People in custody can call the line from the housing area to speak directly with a CHS nurse between the hours of 5 a.m. and 12 p.m. or to

leave a message. The Health Triage Line allows people in custody to speak directly with a CHS nurse to discuss mental health concerns; to schedule appointments (nursing, medical or mental health); to refill prescriptions; to request lab results; to ask about medications; and to ask about any health-related issue. The CHS nurse addresses the caller's concerns, and, if necessary, the person in custody is placed on a sick call list to be produced to the clinic by the Department.

## CONCLUSION

The Department remains committed to providing trauma informed care to those in our custody and to our staff. Addressing underlying trauma supports safer and healthier facilities and communities. We look forward to continuing these practices in the year to come.