

**New York City  
Department of Correction  
Trauma-Informed Care Report  
Calendar Year 2022**

*Pursuant to Local Law 123 of 2016, the Department shall produce an annual report regarding its use of trauma-informed care. Such report shall include but not be limited to information regarding the number of employees trained in such care, a description of the guidelines promulgated pursuant to local law provisions, and any programming that utilizes trauma-informed care. Each report shall include a comparison of the current year to the prior five years, where such information is available.*

**TRAINING DATA**

**Academy Recruit Training**

As with many law enforcement and public safety agencies across the country, the New York City Department of Correction (“the Department”) continues to experience challenges with staff recruitment and retention. In September 2021, the Department welcomed its first class of recruits (N=64) since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are several trauma-informed aspects built into the training curriculum for recruits, several of which are outlined herein.

Since 2021, the Training and Development Division (TDD) has trained three cohorts of Correctional Officer recruits. The aforementioned cohort was combined with a smaller cohort from October 2021, bringing the total to 87 individuals, resulting in a graduating class of 75 in January 2022. The TDD began training an additional recruit cohort in December 2021 that encompassed 53 individuals, resulting in a graduating class of 45 in June 2022. In June 2022, another cohort of 129 individuals began training and eventually graduated 108 officers in December 2022.

The TDD is currently training 87 Correctional Officer recruits, from a starting cohort of 97. This current class is the first to be trained in the state-of-the-art NYPD Academy in College Point, Queens. They are expected to graduate in May 2023.

**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 all recruit classes and to uniform staff with the goal of providing information on how to recognize the signs of distress among incarcerated individuals who may be experiencing mental illness.

- ❖ A total of **6,412** staff members have been trained since 2017 (including both uniform and non-uniform staff)
  - 2,649 trained in CY 2017
  - 1,995 trained in CY 2018
  - 1,210 trained in CY 2019
  - 149 trained in CY 2020
  - 154 trained in CY 2021
  - 255 trained in CY 2022
  
- ❖ A total of **1,065** incarcerated individuals have been trained since 2017
  - 47 trained in CY 2017
  - 646 trained in CY 2018
  - 372 trained in CY 2019
  - 0 trained in CY 2020
  - 0 trained in CY 2021
  - 0 trained in CY 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have an impact on Departmental training operations in CY 2022. As a result, MHFA training for incarcerated individuals did not happen for the third consecutive calendar year. The Department has worked to strengthen its relationship with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) so that this training can resume being provided to incarcerated individuals on a regular basis moving forward. In CY 2023, DOHMH staff will be providing training to incarcerated individuals that already work as Suicide Prevention Aides in the facilities, with the goal of expanding that training in the future.

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

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 safety for both uniform and mental health staff, as well as incarcerated individuals with mental illness. Instead of dispatching a tactical team to a crisis situation, an interagency CIT – comprised of Department and Correctional Health Services (CHS) staff – responds and utilizes verbal de-escalation skills to defuse a situation in which an individual may be experiencing a mental health crisis, ideally averting the need for use of force.

- ❖ A total of **755** individuals have been trained since 2017 (including staff from both the Department and CHS)
  - 193 trained in CY2017
  - 302 trained in CY2018
  - 228 trained in CY2019

- 24 trained in CY2020
- 0 trained in CY2021
- 8 trained in CY2022

The pandemic continued to have an effect on Departmental training operations. Eight staff members were trained during the lone training that took place during CY 2022. The Department plans to resume CIT training again with more regular frequency beginning in April 2023.

### **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 has implemented mental health awareness training in recent years and provided information on the impact of trauma to employees across the Department. The Department takes the following steps when implementing new policies and practices to ensure a trauma-informed approach:

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.<sup>1</sup>

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

In CY 2022, 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.

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 also create futures with less 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 uniform and non-uniform staff who work in the Rose M. Singer Center (RMSC), the Department’s women’s facility. In December 2022, DPCP partnered with the Academy to launch the training and deliver it to the

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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>

new recruit class. During CY 2023, the Department will facilitate this training to uniform and non-uniform staff assigned to RMSC.

To support incarcerated mothers overcoming 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 (MOCJ), 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. The Department has recently been able to expand this model to the men's facilities, beginning with the Anna M. Kross Center (AMKC), and with plans to next expand to the George R. Vierno Center (GRVC). In CY 2022, the Department also began facilitating quarterly Community Engagement Days at RMSC to enable incarcerated mothers to spend time with their children and family members while enjoying a meal and engaging in children's activities. Similarly to VAFA, these Community Engagement Days recently expanded to the men's facilities and are held throughout the year.

In late 2021, the Department was awarded two grants to promote child-friendly visits, which will enable it to expand VAFA, establish child-friendly visit spaces, and onboard four Visit Facilitators. In CY 2022, the Department onboarded one of the Visit Facilitators and established a child-friendly area in the Anna M. Kross Center (AMKC), a men's facility. The Department also began facilitating activities to enable incarcerated fathers to play and bond with their children. In October 2022, the Department resumed its partnership with the Children's Museum of Manhattan to facilitate off-island visits for incarcerated parents, expanding it to fathers for the first time.

Also in 2021, DCPC implemented a core program menu for incarcerated persons that includes 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 to seek out healthy and productive futures.

In CY 2022, DCPC 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 three Social Workers and five Intervention Specialists, who work with people in custody 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 both incarcerated persons and their families before, during, and after sessions to help people understand the impact that their choices have on their families and their broader communities. More recently, this team has also taken on a role providing additional support to people who demonstrate self-injurious behaviors across all Departmental facilities. The goal in this is to infuse trauma-informed counseling techniques into a “wellness check” to help the Department better understand what needs are not being met both inter-and intra-personally that led to a person in custody self-harming.

Furthermore, the Fine and Performing Arts and Tablet Operations units, both under the broader DCPC 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 an area via a special project or program. The Tablet Unit is currently working on reimagining and rolling out a previously successful tool where persons in custody may submit request forms for support or special/additional needs related to chaplaincy, counseling, LGBTQ+ affairs, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and other areas of concern.

The Department recognizes that LGBTQ+ individuals in custody may have experienced trauma prior to their involvement with the criminal justice system and, as a result, seeks to further address trauma for those individuals. Notably, in CY 2022, the Department took steps to help decrease the levels of gender dysphoria experienced by people in custody who identify as transmen, transmasculine, and/or gender non-binary by approving the use of chest binders in custody. 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 receive a large quantity of chest binders to provide to people in custody at no cost.

The Department also continues to ensure that affirmation and LGBTQ+ responsiveness is prioritized throughout programming. For example, a transgender woman participated in the Children’s Museum of Manhattan trip for mothers and their children. Beyond the tangible means of trauma-informed programming, the DCPC continues to work in close collaboration with the Executive Director of LGBTQ+ Affairs to increase general staff knowledge and, in turn, staff ability to provide supportive, affirming, and responsive programming to this population.

## **NEW INITIATIVES**

### **Gender Responsiveness Training**

In CY2022, the TDD and the DCPC collaborated on curriculum revisions to the Gender Responsiveness Training. These updates were completed in Fall 2022 and were delivered as a one-day interactive training program to the recruit cohort that graduated in December 2022. Moving forward, all staff (uniform and non-uniform) assigned to RMSC will be prioritized for this training as a condition of their facility assignment, to be completed by the end of CY 2023.

### **Visit Process Training**

In CY 2021, the TDD initiated updates to the training materials for all uniform staff interacting with visitors of incarcerated individuals. The training highlights the positive effect that visits have on both persons in custody and their loved ones in the community. 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 the materials also included input and feedback from the City's Commission on Human Rights.

Full delivery of the one-day training began in September 2022 for all public-facing, uniform Visits staff. As of December 31, 2022, the TDD has trained 217 agency personnel assigned to these areas and will continue to use the Learning Management System to assign and monitor training compliance.

### **Staff Wellness Training**

The Department recognizes that trauma not only impacts individuals in custody, but staff as well. In CY 2021, the TDD and the Department's Correction Assistance Response for Employees (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. To date, 181 members of the Department's supervisory staff have completed the Tuning into Self training module; 187 supervisory staff have completed Connecting with Staff; and 150 supervisory staff have completed Supporting the Team You Lead.

In addition to this, the TDD, in collaboration with Desert Waters Correctional Outreach, a non-profit organization dedicated to the well-being of correctional staff, provided a series of training sessions to certify the Department's instructional staff to facilitate a course called Correctional Fatigue to Fulfillment (CF2F). This course identifies the symptoms of corrections-related fatigue, the negative effect of the correctional environment on a person's well-being and encourages participants to create a pathway to correctional fulfillment, which is characterized as personal growth and professional development.

CF2F was incorporated into the pre-service curriculum for recruits. In CY 2022, 202 uniform staff members completed the training. The TDD has plans to roll out this training to in-service staff members in the coming months of CY 2023.

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

In CY 2022, the Department continued to expand access to in-person congregate services, which were suspended in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department also onboarded three full-time Chaplains, who in addition to affording congregate services, regularly tour housing units to meet with anyone who requests spiritual counseling. Meanwhile, members of staff can continue to connect with chaplains in their facilities and/or call the CARE Unit, where faith-based, emotional, and psycho-social support is provided by the Department's CARE staff.

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

CHS, the Department's independent health services provider, 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 5:00 a.m. and 12:00 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 a safer and more humane environment. We look forward to continuing these efforts in the year to come.