

A person wearing a blue beanie and a dark jacket is seen from behind, looking out over a city skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the buildings. The city is densely packed with buildings, and a road or highway runs through the center of the frame.

PEERR

**Prison Emergency Early Release
Response**

Facilitating successful reentry for Illinois' returning residents

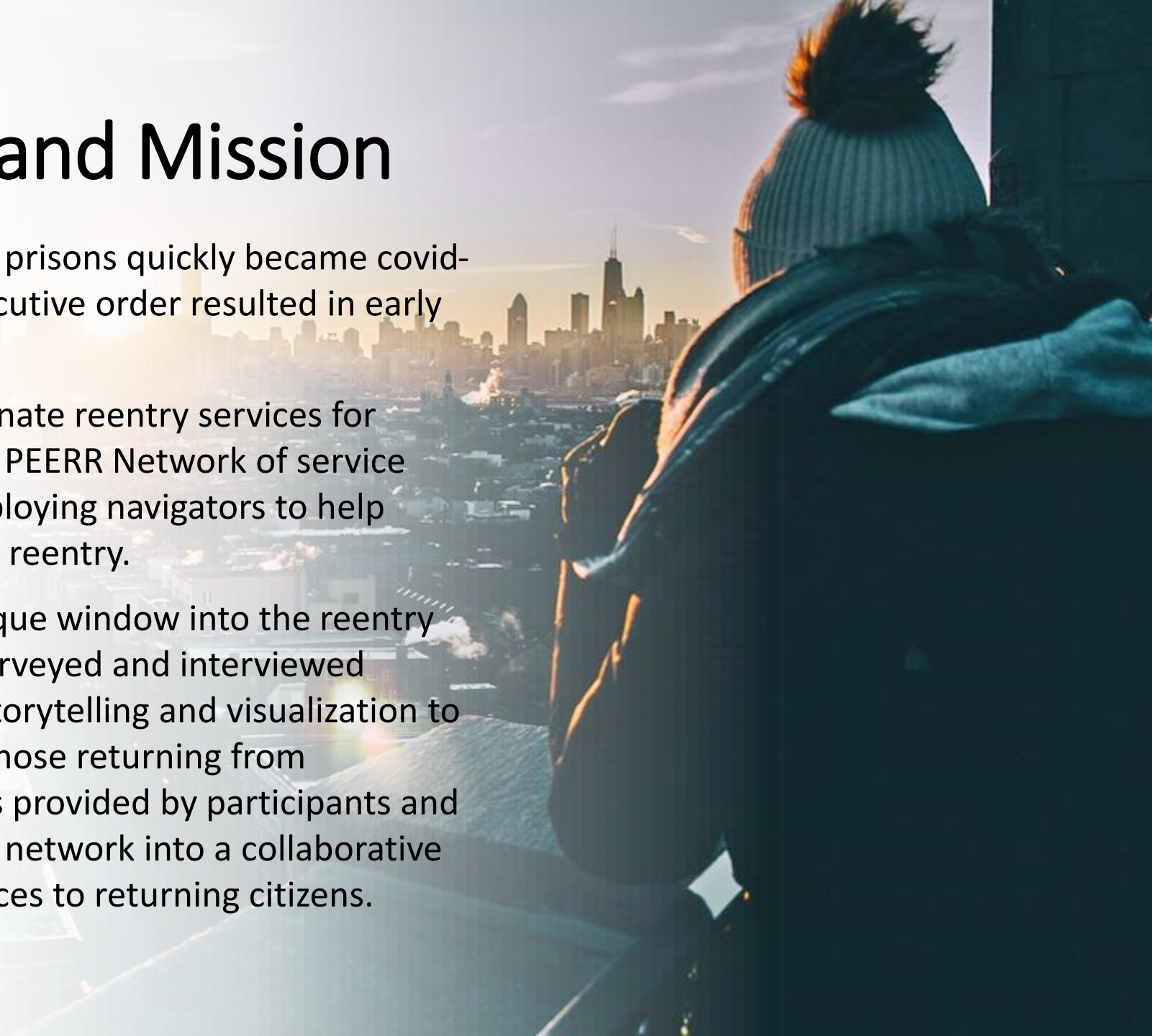
PEERR 1.0: Meeting the emergency

PEERR 1.0: Origin and Mission

As dense congregate settings, jails and prisons quickly became covid-19 "hotspots." Governor Pritzker's executive order resulted in early release of 1,680 people.

Safer Foundation stepped up to coordinate reentry services for Chicago and Cook County, creating the PEERR Network of service providers, launching a hotline, and deploying navigators to help returning citizens surmount barriers to reentry.

This large-scale release provided a unique window into the reentry experience. Working with Safer, we surveyed and interviewed participants, using journey mapping, storytelling and visualization to shed light on the challenges faced by those returning from incarceration. Grounded in the insights provided by participants and network partners, we transformed the network into a collaborative pilot program, providing bridging services to returning citizens.



PEERR Participant Demographics

Participants were overwhelmingly Black, male, and young.

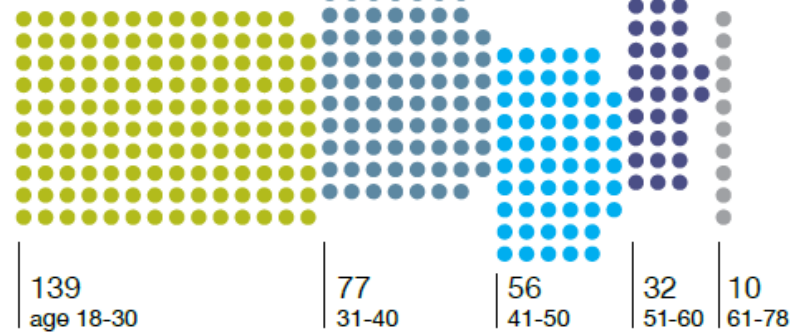
PEERR™ DEMOGRAPHIC

323 participants

GENDER



AGE



BACKGROUND



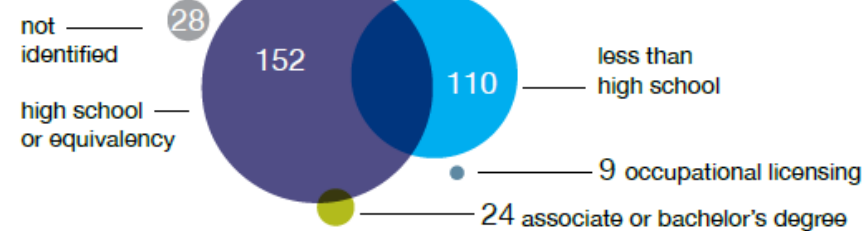
RACE



AVERAGE PARTICIPANT

- Black
- Male
- 18-30 years old
- High school or equivalency

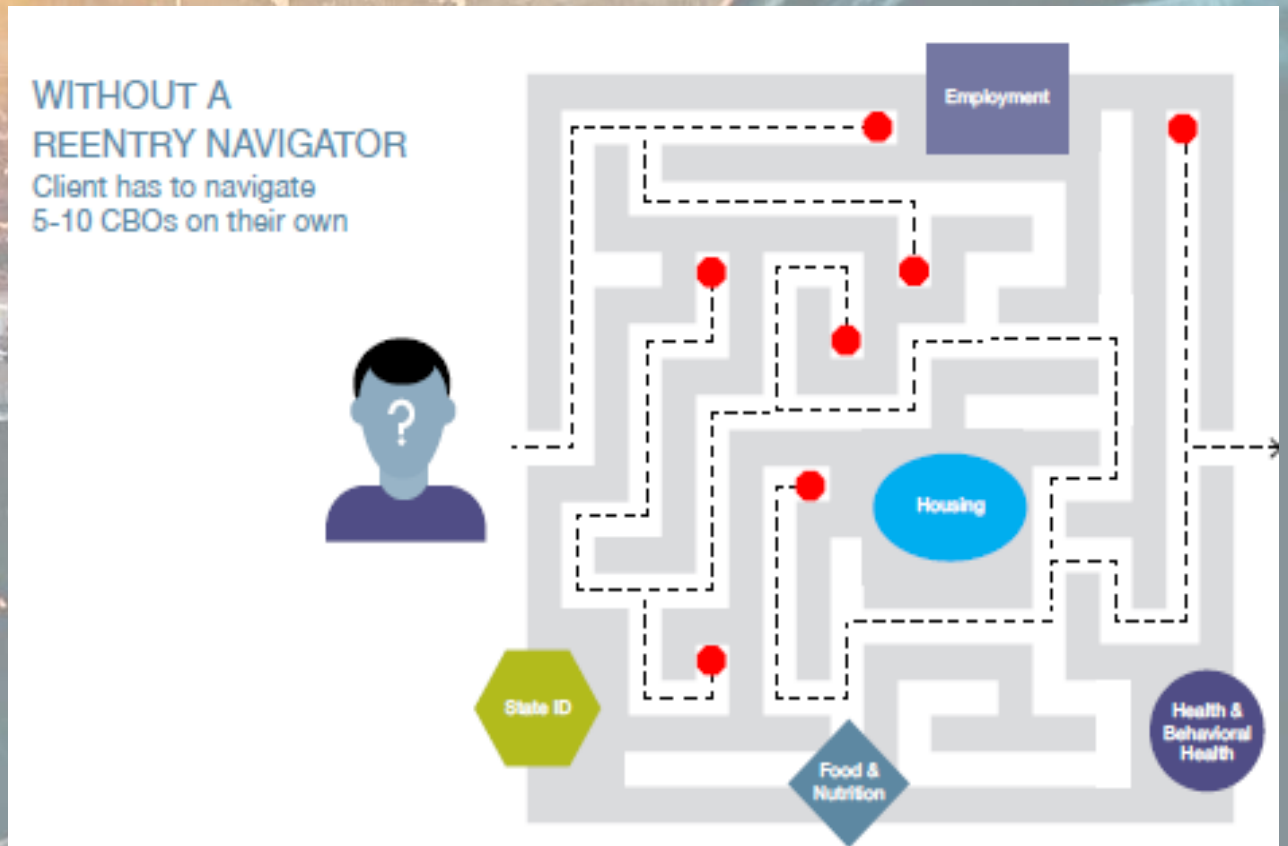
EDUCATION



Reentry Challenges

Community based organizations can assist returning citizens, but find and working with them can be its own challenge.

- Basic financial needs and access to technology
- Access to a State issued ID card
- Continuity of health and behavioral healthcare
- Housing and family support



Case Study of a Reentry Journey

DISCHARGED

Gary was discharged from IDOC on April 15th. He went directly to his sister's house upon discharge. He received a packet of materials upon release about his conditions of parole and he got one month's worth of medication for his diabetes.



TECHNOLOGY GAP

Gary doesn't have a cell phone, computer or laptop. Applications for benefits and services Gary needs are online. His sister lets him use her smart phone, but she doesn't have a computer so he is completely reliant upon her cell phone to submit applications for benefits and to look for jobs. This adds to the tension between Gary and his sister.

NO HEALTHCARE INSURANCE

Gary's diabetes flared up and he doesn't have a Medicaid card. He has difficulty applying for Medicaid because he still doesn't have a state ID. Gary spent the day sitting at the Emergency Department at Cook County Hospital so he could get treated for his diabetes and get more insulin.

NO STATE ID OR SSN

Gary can't access his bank account without a state ID. His sister wants him to help pay for food and to reimburse her for clothing she bought for him, but he can't get money out of his account nor can he deposit his benefits until he gets a state ID.

NEEDS A JOB

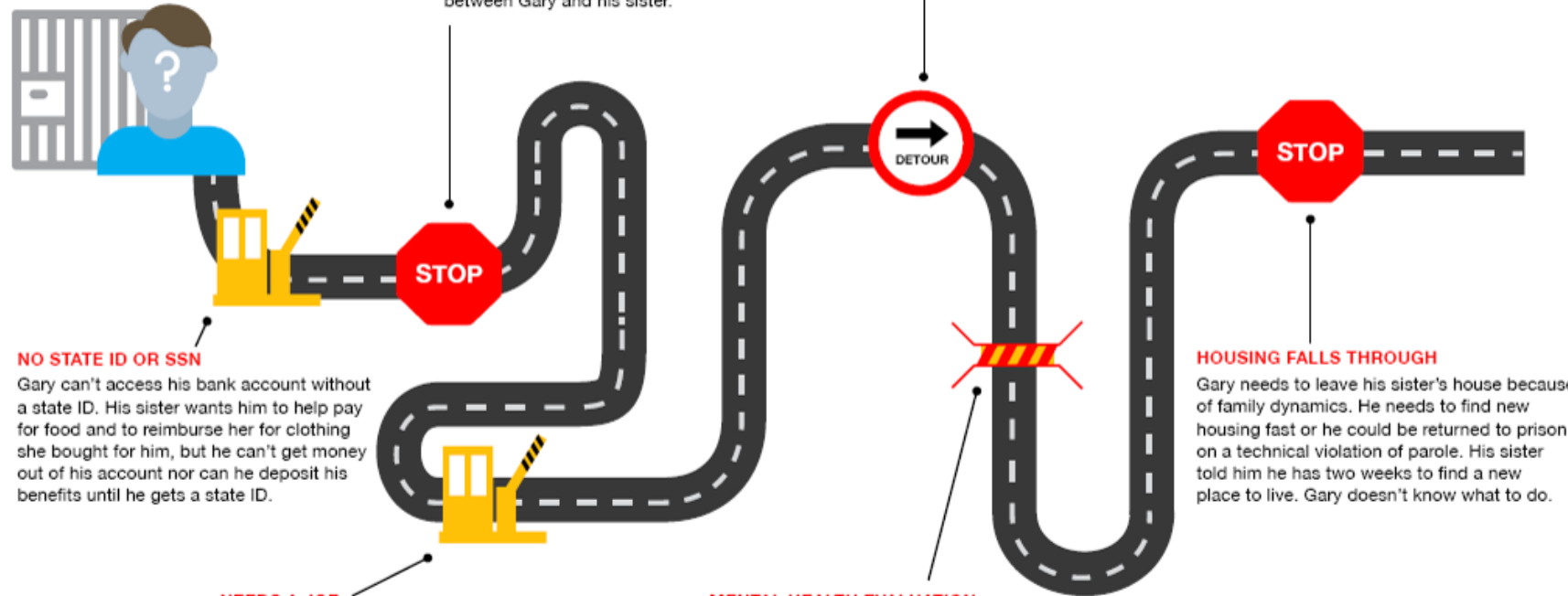
Gary can't apply for work without a state ID. He's also worried about going to interviews because he doesn't know how to talk about the fact that he has a record. Until he gets a job, he can't afford to get a cell phone so he has his own phone number for potential employers.

MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATION

Gary needs a mental health evaluation as a condition of parole. He received a referral for behavioral health when he was at the Cook County Hospital ER, and he calls the office several times but he doesn't have a cell phone, so he can't leave a call back number.

HOUSING FALLS THROUGH

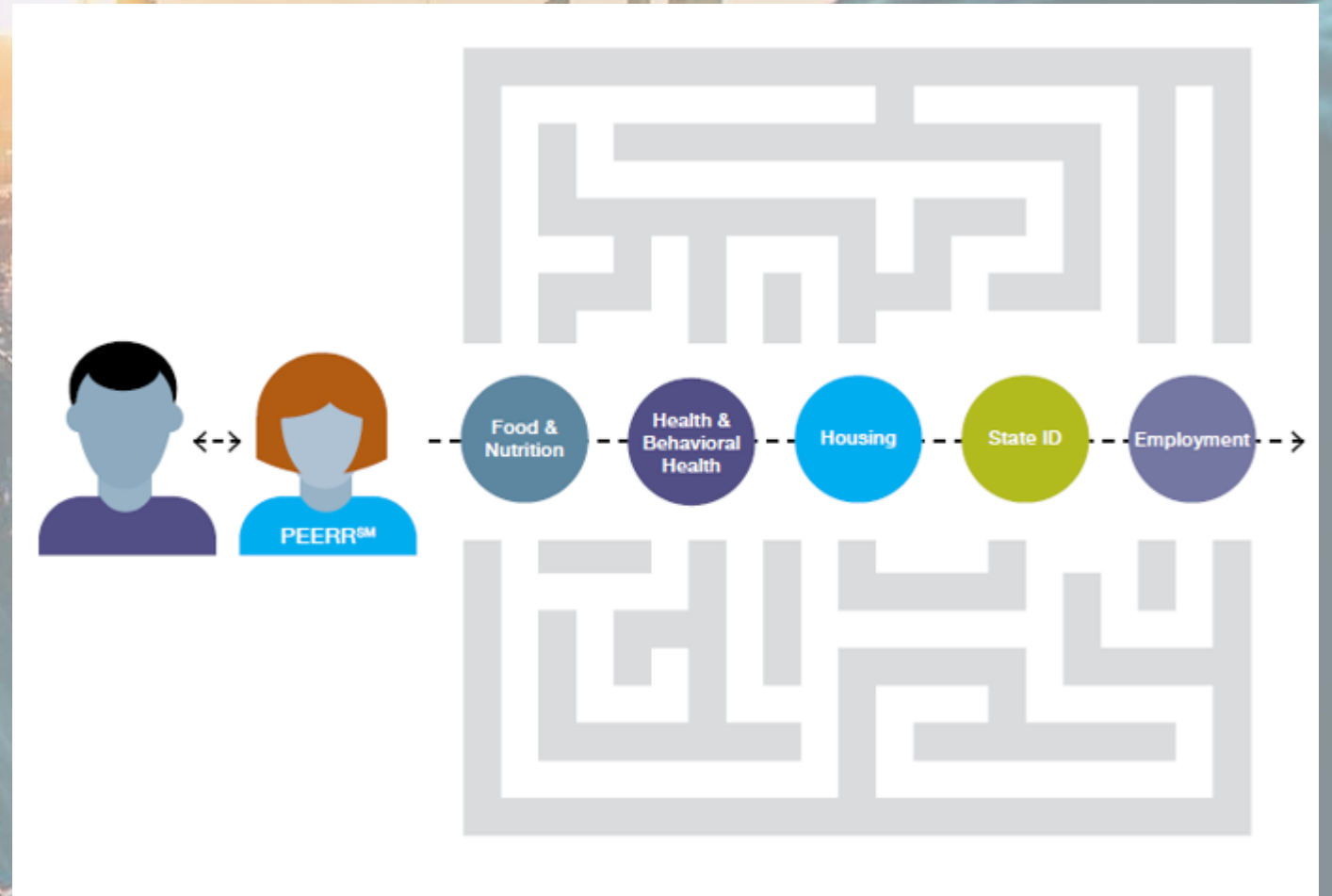
Gary needs to leave his sister's house because of family dynamics. He needs to find new housing fast or he could be returned to prison on a technical violation of parole. His sister told him he has two weeks to find a new place to live. Gary doesn't know what to do.



The Navigators

Reentry Navigators helped returning citizens navigate barriers.

Connecting to food and health services, having a place to stay, getting a state ID, and finding a job are all essential parts making it in the community. Failing at any one of them can mean a return to incarceration.



PEERR Network

Navigators connected returning citizens to services provided by Network partners.



Community partners:

Habilitative Systems, Inc
Healthcare Alternative Systems, Inc
Heartland Alliance Health
Housing Choice Partners
KAM Alliance
Legal Council for Health Justice
RISE Reentry
Transforming Reentry Services
Trilogy
Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC)
University of Illinois Hospital & Health System
Women's Justice Institute

The Response

Essential services make it possible for those returning from incarceration to stabilize in the community.

- Food and nutrition
- Income
- Employment
- Access to technology
- State identification
- ~~Medical and behavioral health~~
- Coverage
- Housing stability
- Parole mandates



Results Achieved

94

received help accessing SNAP benefits

58

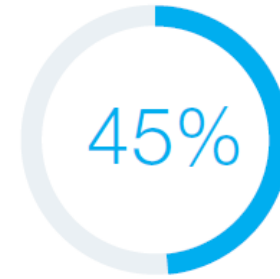
58 were assisted in getting their stimulus check, of which 4 were referred to our Tax Fraud specialists due to identity theft

60

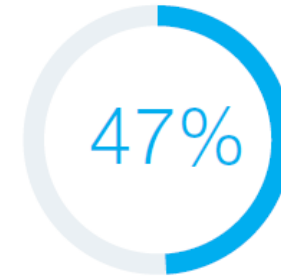
received a smartphone from Safer

160

requested help with employment



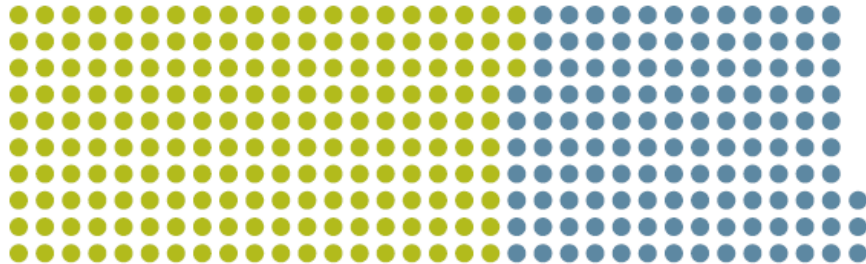
45% of returning residents had inactive Medicaid Coverage



47% had a chronic medical condition or mental health condition at IDOC

60%

did not have state IDs



HOUSING UPON RELEASE of 323 participants

244
went home to family / friends

62
halfway house

7
renting
5
Adult Transition Centers

1
living on the streets

60

did not have access to a smartphone

139

did not have access to a computer

104

did not have access to internet

Services Provided

PEERR received **660 direct referrals** and **1,029 hotline calls**. We had **323 active clients**.

PEERR provided:

- Care packages distributed - **112**
- Cell phones distributed - **42**
- Medical benefit assistance - **146**
- SNAP application assistance - **94**

- Stimulus check application assistance - **58**
- Referrals made - **288**
- Employment assistance - **160**
- Job starts - **39**



Moving Forward



The PEERR Network emerged as an effective, collaborative approach for providing services to returning residents to facilitate their reentry. It demonstrated the substantial positive impact of holistic wraparound services and a strong network of care.

Support from navigators and network providers increased access to basic needs and services, and improved social connectedness and a feeling of belonging and purpose. These outcomes were achieved because participants were given a fair chance to access all the services they needed to successfully reenter society.

To make this approach a sustainable part of public policy, the partners applied for a Healthcare Transformation Collaborative to demonstrate alternative payment models to support a benefit package of services that Medicaid managed care organizations will pay for.

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