A SUPPORT GROUP FOR INCARCERATED WOMEN REENTERING THE COMMUNITY WITH SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS: A GRANT PROPOSAL

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Introduction

• In 2013 there was a total of 2,092,400 people incarcerated in federal and state correctional facilities. For those incarcerated in 2013, 213,700 are female (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). The number of women incarcerated may seem small compared to incarcerated men, however the number of women in jails and prison has been on the rise.

• According to Glaze and Kaeble (2014) the population of females in jails has been increasing 3.4% annually since 2010. This is the fastest growing population involved in the correctional system.

• Women incarcerated in jails or prisons are often diagnosed with a mental illness. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA; 2012), women on probation or parole were 3 times more likely to have a serious mental illness compared to the general population.
Purpose

• The purpose for this project is to develop a support group for recently released women inmates who have a severe mental illness.

• The intention for this project is to write a grant that would provide funding for a program to implement this support group and provide these women with necessary skills, interventions and resources to help as they reintegrate into the community.

Goals

• The goal of this project is to help women offenders who have a severe mental illness reintegrate safely into the community after released from jail or prison.

• Assist in the development social skills and addressing common issues that may hinder their reintegration process.

• reduce the chances of reoffending and inpatient psychiatric hospitalization.
Social Work Relevance

- Addressing the many issues with successful reintegration of incarcerated women with severe mental illness has many correlations with social work and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (2008). The NASW value that stands out is Dignity and Worth of a Person. This value states that social workers treat every person in a caring and respectful manner.

- Incarcerated women with mental illness have an endless amount of stigma working against them. This population may not be the priority for assistance and seem to be forgotten about by society. Social workers may be the only access to treatment these women have. For this reason it is necessary to address their specific needs and assist in providing their best chance at recovery.
Cross-cultural Relevance

• Women have been the fastest growing population in corrections since 2010. Researchers estimated 1,264,100 females were supervised by adult correctional systems by the end of 2010, up from about 1,078,400 in 2000. This growth rate for incarcerated women is double that of incarcerated males in 2010 (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014).

• The women imprisonment rate for U.S. prisons per 100,000 U.S. residents in 2013 was 57 White, 113 Black, 66 Hispanic, and 90 other (Carson, 2014).

• These women have many differences than their male counterparts when comparing their reasons for incarceration, mental health, substance abuse, and history of trauma.
Methods

• **Target Population:** The target population for this grant will be women 18 and over with at least one severe mental illness. The women being served will also be recently released from prison or jail under Assembly Bill 109 and a resident of Los Angeles County.

• **Strategies used to identify funding source:**
  - Visiting the California State University, Long Beach Library.
  - Internet search on www.grants.org was completed using key words: “mental health,” “women,” “Incarcerated women” and “reintegration.”

• **Funding source selected:** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) was selected as a potential funding source. SAMHSA acts on knowledge that behavioral health is essential for overall wellbeing, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people recover from mental and substance use disorders (SAMHSA, n.d.).
• **Sources used for the needs assessment:** State resources were analyzed from California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). Several county data sources were also utilized including, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH), Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDHP), the Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership (LARRP), and any public data related to AB 109 and the target population was utilized throughout the project. The writer of this grant met with the administrator for the TABS 109 program.

• **Projected budget and categories:** The estimated program cost is $111,972 with $97,972 requested from the funder. These program costs cover personnel, equipment, and materials. In-kind support is included in the total program costs.
Grant Proposal

• **Program Summary:** The purpose for this grant is to develop a support group for recently released women inmates who have a severe mental illness. The intention of this group is to provide the necessary skills, interventions and resources to help as they reintegrate into the community. The support group will be used to help these women with social skills, develop coping skills, and build a social support system with other women who are experiencing similar circumstances.

• **Population Served:** The target population for this grant will be women 18 and over with at least one severe mental illness. The women being served will also be recently released from prison or jail under Assembly Bill 109 and a resident of Los Angeles County.

• **Program Objectives:**
  1. Increase the gender-focused services available to women exiting prison and jail.
  2. Assist in the reintegration process for women with a severe mental illness and exiting jail or prison.
  3. Assist in the reintegration process for women who have experiences with trauma and substance use.
  4. Build connections with local law enforcement facilities and build upon Telecare program.
  5. Evaluate and increase awareness of gender-focused services to the offender population.

• **Program evaluation:** In order to measure the effectiveness of the Women's support group, the coordinators and group leaders will conduct pre-and post-test surveys.
Lessons Learned

- Researching material on the topic of incarcerated women with severe mental illness expanded the writer’s knowledge on the needs of this underserved population.

- One characteristic of that surprised the writer was their many differences from incarcerated women incarcerated men and their needs when it comes to reintegration.

- The most unexpected part of the research was the characteristic of trauma experience with incarcerated women. Research shows that women have more experiences with trauma and this trauma may be connected with their charged offense (Dehart et al., 2014; James & Glaze, 2006).

Implications for Social Work

- The development of this grant is in line with the NASW core values of “Service” and “dignity and worth of the person” (NASW, 2008). This grant provides needed services to a population that is often ignored.

- The development of the Women’s group will give social workers the opportunity to address the increasing population of women entering and exiting the criminal justice system.

- This project will also be an example for future social work programs to develop additional services that address mental health, substance use, trauma, and incarceration.
References


