

Appendix B

Prioritizing Stakeholder Input and the Risk, Needs and Responsivity Model (RNR) Model to Enhance the Reentry System

The plan described in this RFP began with staff developing 1) a service inventory, a set of skills and resources that would ideally be included in a comprehensive Reentry System and 2) an inventory of the unique needs and service barriers faced by the various populations in the ACJ. These documents were shared with ACJC representatives, reentry service coordinators, probation officers and incarcerated individuals, who were asked to rank the elements of each by importance.

The 80 incarcerated people presented with this list of services ranked professional skill-building and mental health services among their highest needs. The results of additional assessments conducted by the [Pennsylvania Prison Society](#) and the [University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work](#) reinforced the need for mental wellness services by individuals in and leaving jail. Responses to open-ended questions indicated that the lack of activities and programming in the Jail contributed to their feelings of loneliness, stress and depression. Additional public comments made to the Jail Oversight Board emphasized the need for additional supports and activities at the Jail. Staff used these results, in combination with literature about criminogenic needs, an analysis of the Jail population, and an understanding of the existing and emerging resources that can be built upon, to create the model detailed in this RFP.

The risk, need and responsivity (RNR) model suggests that justice systems can best achieve intended outcomes when 1) the intensity of justice system supervision matches an individual's risk of recidivism (criminogenic risk) and 2) interventions focus on the conditions that contribute to an individual's criminalized behavior (criminogenic needs). Based on RNR, the ACJC is making changes to provide individuals with the services they need most, prioritizing behavioral health concerns that may interfere with participation in other programming. These changes include creating a dedicated risk assessment unit in probation, providing enhanced case-planning training for probation officers, and working toward data-driven service matching for everyone entering the Jail.

The RNR model is based upon the belief that mental health challenges typically do not cause crime directly but can interfere with participation in other services ([Bonata & Andews, 2007](#)). Unaddressed distress can worsen or be perceived as noncompliance, interfering with engagement in services. Thus, RNR best practices recommend stabilizing any mental or physical health symptoms – including withdrawal from drugs or alcohol – before other interventions can proceed.

According to a report from the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), approximately 26% of people incarcerated in local jails meet the threshold for serious psychological distress and 44% have been told by a mental health professional that they had a mental disorder. In Allegheny County in 2022, 59% of incarcerated people who were Medicaid-enrolled at the time of arrest (N=4,414, 65% of the total population) visited the emergency department at least once in the 12 months prior to their arrest. Twelve percent experienced an inpatient hospitalization and 38% accessed

mental health treatment, including clinical services such as individual and group therapy and non-clinical services such as case management and peer support.

In the community, untreated mental or physical health symptoms can exacerbate other needs or lead to interactions with the justice system. We are hopeful that upcoming improvements to Allegheny County's crisis response system will reduce the overlap between behavioral health symptoms and the justice system; however, the ACJ must be equipped to serve the incarcerated population with mental health needs. This RFP does not address changes to medical services provided in the ACJ but aims to complement them with treatment-related mental and physical health support programs to assist people in their recovery and equip them with skills to continue doing so beyond incarceration.

Once an individual's behavioral health needs have been stabilized, they are matched to programs that address additional needs, providing services that are most closely related to their risk and, that will support them in thriving in the community. These programs should also develop the values, communication strategies and interpersonal skills needed to navigate successful community living.

Personal Attitudes, Beliefs and Thoughts

The way people navigate the world and interact with others is influenced by their personal attitudes and beliefs formed throughout their lives. For some people, past experiences can create strong negative attitudes that impact criminal behavior. Research has outlined the relationship between cognition, feelings and actions, and suggests that supporting a person to change their attitudes, beliefs and thoughts can have a long-term positive impact on their behavior ([Beck & Haigh, 2014](#)).

Substance Use

People who are involved in the justice system have high rates of substance use disorder (SUD), co-occurring SUD and mental illness (COD), and overdose. Due to the association between substance use and criminal behavior and its impact on an individual's risk of reoffending, the RNR model considers substance use to be a significant need. A review of ACJ intakes in 2021 indicates that at least 60% of individuals entered the ACJ with COD. Of the 2,684 accidental overdose deaths in Allegheny County between 2016 to mid-2020, 30% had involvement with adult probation and 19% were booked in the ACJ at some point in the prior year. Among the 510 people who died of an overdose and were incarcerated in the prior year, 161 (31%) died during the first 30 days following release and 269 (53%) died during the first 90 days, highlighting the need for SUD-related services as part of Allegheny County's reentry services system.

Understanding these needs, DHS has prioritized increasing the availability and accessibility of evidence-based medication-assisted treatment (MAT) in the ACJ. In addition to the recently released RFP to expand the availability and accessibility of methadone treatment for incarcerated individuals, DHS and the ACJC are initiating practices to connect all individuals receiving MAT with a peer support navigator upon release. Other services such as counseling, harm reduction education and recovery groups can also help address incarcerated individuals' SUD needs.

Employment and Work Performance

Reentry systems must consider the intersection between involvement in the justice system and socioeconomic status to interrupt the cycle of poverty that contributes to and/or is influenced by incarceration. When addressing employment-related needs within the RNR model, interventions should be tailored to an individual's specific circumstances and preferences as much as possible. For example, some individuals may benefit from job readiness training, while others may benefit from vocational or entrepreneurship training, or require more intensive employment services. Addressing these needs can help individuals develop the skills and resources necessary to obtain and maintain employment, reducing their likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior.

In Allegheny County, 62% of individuals booked in the ACJ from January 2021 through August 2023 (N=14,524) received income supports (SNAP, TANF or SSI), and 63% were enrolled in Medicaid 12 months prior to arrest. Each of these programs has income eligibility criteria indicating the need to promote economic opportunity for individuals exiting from the ACJ.

Around 65% of individuals who exited the Jail from 2017 through 2022 were employed at least once during the six months after release; however, less than half maintained employment for four consecutive quarters (one year) in the calendar year after their release. Among those who obtained any employment following release, the median earnings was \$4,189 per quarter, which translates to an annual salary of \$16,756 (just above the [federal poverty line](#) for a single individual). Joblessness and poverty often pre-date incarceration, meaning that without intentionally targeting these issues for incarcerated people, they will cycle through the system only to be disadvantaged further.

Meaningful Relationships and Family Dynamics

DHS has worked with justice system and community partners to improve the local response to intimate partner violence (IPV) by providing Battering Intervention Programs (BIP) in the ACJ. Current BIP offerings are structured as a set of curriculum-based psycho-educational groups that aim to hold offenders accountable and ensure victim safety. In addition to BIP, DHS has also prioritized offering parenting-related programs for both mothers and fathers in the ACJ, including topics related to communication, conflict management, commitment and expectations. Programming that intentionally focuses on developing and maintaining relationships throughout criminal justice involvement can mitigate the harmful effects of parental incarceration on children, including future involvement in the justice system, and the tendency of incarceration to disrupt a parent's ability to feel included in a unified family.

Interests, Passions, Identity

A lack of personally meaningful ways to participate in the community (e.g., work, school, recreational activities) can increase susceptibility to antisocial or criminal behavior. This suggests the importance of fostering prosocial hobbies and skills in carceral settings. Research shows the benefits of providing opportunities for incarcerated individuals to participate in out-of-cell extracurricular activities ([Gaes, 2009](#)). These activities, including exercise and arts-based programs, increase participants' feelings of safety and capability and provide an opportunity to

create meaningful relationships and ways to cope with the stresses of incarceration. Participants can also acquire new skills like collaboration, loyalty and service, as well as interpersonal skills and interests that are applicable to community-based settings and serve to foster a positive self-concept.

Research has shown that how people spend their free time is crucial to long-term success ([Schriro, 2009](#)). Leisure is a fundamental part of the human experience. Regular meaningful activities can promote improved physical health, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, and community involvement, all of which shape quality of life and a sense of purpose.