

WELCOME

We'll begin shortly.

While you are waiting, please mute your sound.

CA Advancing PREA: Mental Wellness for Survivors in Detention

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10:30am-12:00pm PST



VALORUS®

Introductions



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ValorUS' Mission

ValorUS is committed to preventing and ending sexual violence by advancing equity and eradicating oppression.



JDI's Mission

JDI is a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention.



JDI's Core Principle

No matter what crime
a person may have
committed, rape is
not part of the
penalty.



Language



Image: Art created by a participant of JDI's therapeutic art programs in detention

Preferred Terms:

- Incarcerated Person
- Resident
- Survivor
- Avoid words like "insane" or "crazy"

Session Objectives



- Develop a basic awareness around the experiences of incarcerated survivors with mental illness
- Highlight voices from the field to establish a comprehensive understanding of mental wellness
- Explore actionable strategies to provide effective, trauma-informed support for survivors in detention through a mental wellness lens

Question

How does your agency respond to survivors with mental health diagnoses?

Defining Mental Illness

- “A condition that affects a person’s thinking, feeling behavior or mood.” ¹
- “Just another way for someone’s mind to be.” ²

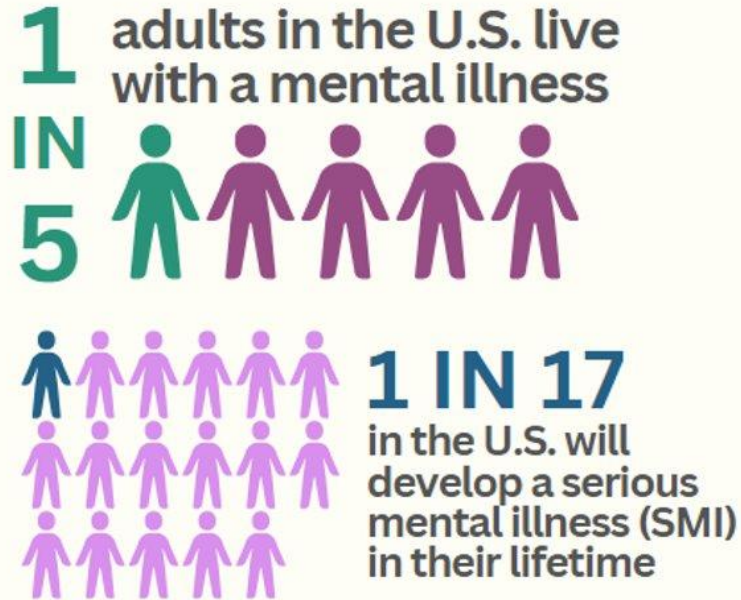


Self-Defined Experiences

- Neurodivergent / Neurodiversity
- Mad Pride
- Perspectives beyond psychiatry



Prevalence of Mental Illness



National Institute of Mental Health

Prevalence of Mental Illness in Detention

- 2 in 5 incarcerated people have a history of mental illness.
- Between 25% - 40% of people with mental illness will be incarcerated at some time in their lives.



Image: CDCR

Source: The National Alliance on Mental Illness : Criminal Justice Factsheet 2023

Trauma in Detention

- About 4 times the rate of childhood adversity (ACES) than the general population. ¹
 - Among incarcerated men 62%–87% have been exposed to past trauma. ¹
- The lifetime prevalence of PTSD among incarcerated women was 53%. ²
- One third of youth in detention suffer from PTSD. ³

Lack of Treatment in Detention

- About 3 in 5 people with mental illness go untreated while in state and federal prisons.
- Over 50% of those taking psychiatric medication at admission did not continue to receive their medication once in prison.
- Only 45% of people with mental illness receive treatment in jails.

Mental Illness and Sexual Abuse in Detention



Prisoners with serious psychological distress are **9X MORE LIKELY** to be sexually abused by another prisoner than those with no indication of mental illness.

Source: Allen J. Beck et al, *Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011-12* (Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2013). © Just Detention International

Challenges to Reporting

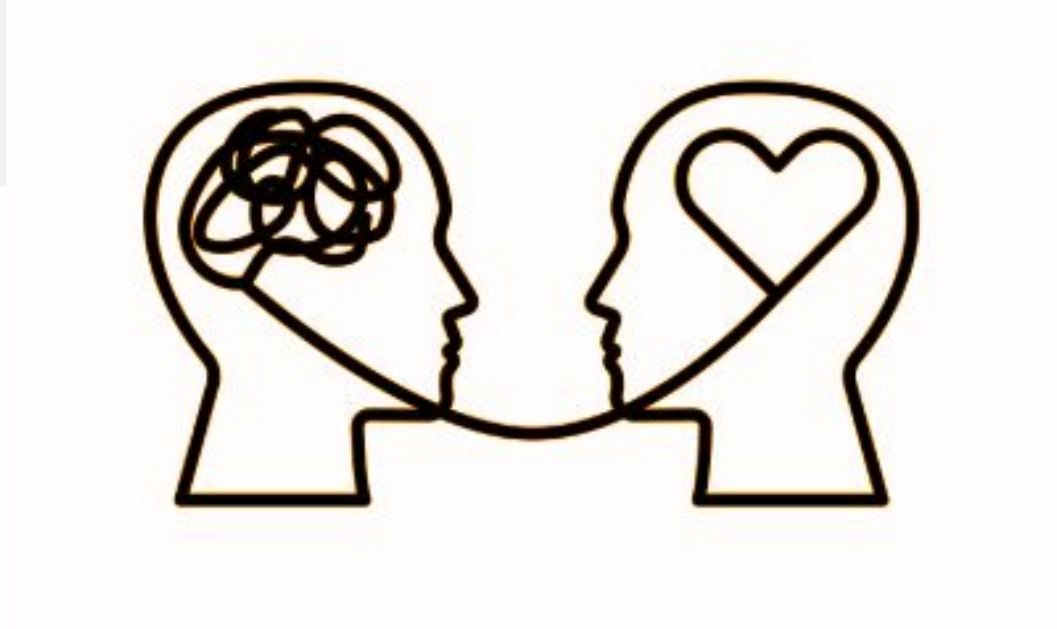
- Widespread staff perception that incarcerated people with mental illness lack credibility
- Communication and reporting
- Medication management
- Criminalization of trauma reactions

In their Own Words

“People look at me strange. I’m suicidal but refuse to say so due to the institution doing nothing to help but take my clothes and isolate me. So I’m not suicidal, I just think of it a lot more. My panic attacks are severe, my hallucinations and voices are more scary and my psych meds have been increased.”

— A survivor who was sexually assaulted by an officer in a CA state prison. He told multiple staff in the facility, but they covered it up. He was placed in segregation and told that no policies were broken.

Exploring the Approach: Mental Wellness



Question

What does mental wellness mean to you?

Defining Mental Wellness



Why is the Mental Wellness Approach Important?

- Stigma
- Misinformation
- Trauma responses
- “Referrals only” approach



Possibilities for Wellness in Detention

- Relationship with facility
- Detention culture
- Available resources
- Staff wellness



Image: Shutterstock

Core Values of Advocacy



Core Values of Advocacy

- Be patient and present
- Meet people where they are
- Encourage agency
- Believe survivors of trauma are knowledgeable
- Engage in problem-solving



Voices from the Field: Validate Experiences

“Would it be really frightening if that was happening [delusion]? Don’t engage with the delusion, but say, ‘that sounds scary – it sounds like you are feeling afraid.’ Join them in empathy, that’s the most powerful thing you can do.”

Linda McFarlane, MSW, LCSW
JDI’s Executive Director



Actionable Strategies and Helpful Skills



Ways Advocates Can Help

- Know what you can provide and how to talk about your services
- Consistency and connection
- Training for volunteers, on-calls, part time, overnight staff



Image Credit: RJJA

Helpful PREA Standards to Know

- §115.16 Ensures information of rights under PREA are accessible to those with disabilities and/or with limited English proficiency.
- §115.341 Screens residents for mental illness/disability as a risk factor for sexual abuse
- §115.382 Affirms initial access to emergency medical and mental health services and ongoing care for sexual abuse

Differences between

ADVOCATE	MENTAL HEALTH STAFF
Reports to rape crisis center	Typically reports to detention facility
Has satisfied state requirements for sexual assault counselor status and provides trauma-informed emotional support	Licensed to provide clinical mental health therapy or medication management
Often takes a creative, grassroots, community based approach to advocacy and support	Creates longer-term treatment plans that may include psychiatric medication
Helps survivors to identify coping skills they already have and offers new ones	Helps facility identify survivors of abuse, helps clients process trauma and abuse
Provides confidential emotional support to incarcerated survivors, regardless of reporting status	Mandated reporter of sexual abuse and sexual harassment that happens in a detention facility

Question

What barriers might prevent incarcerated survivors from seeking support through the mental health services provided by the facility?

Barriers to Seeking MH Support

- Lack of:
 - Knowledge about services available
 - Culturally-relevant services
 - Services, in general
- Confidentiality concerns
- Fear of stigma and real life consequences
- Distrust in system

Connection and Consistency

- Be consistent
- Be creative and collaborative
- Provide journals, art supplies, etc
- Allow for stillness or movement



Art Created by Participant at Disability Pride, CIW 2024, shared with permission.

Encourage Agency at Every Opportunity

- Review consent forms to ensure accessible language
- Discuss limits to confidentiality
- Conduct knowledge checks



Communication Tips

- Speak slowly and give the survivor time to respond
- Move slowly and avoid quick or expansive gestures
- Use a calm, even tone of voice
- Watch/listen for signs of distress
- Take any signs of abuse seriously

Develop Partners Inside and Out

- Connect with relevant stakeholders
- Understand how you can supplement work done by MH staff
- Reiterate confidentiality

Experiences in Advocacy



Credit: Just Detention International #PrisonersToo Campaign

Vanessa Sapien

- JDI Mental Health Program Director
- Twenty years of experience as a sexual assault counselor
- Leads JDI's direct service work at the California Institution for Women



California Institution for Women

Services Offered:

- Individual counseling
- Therapeutic art workshops
- Mindfulness
- Group Therapy
- PREA Peer Education
- Pilot Programs
- Wellness Council



Image: CIW by JDI

Keep in Mind

- You are an invaluable resource
- You have the skills needed to support incarcerated survivors with mental illness
- You have support and there are opportunities to continue learning

Questions



Feedback Survey

Thank you for helping us
improve our trainings!



Additional Resources

- Mindfreedom
- Mad in America
- NAMI
- Fireweed Collective
- Wildflower Alliance
- National Empowerment Center
- Painted Brain



For More Information

For additional information, please visit:

- Just Detention International's Advocate Resources:
www.justdetention.org/advocate-resources
- ValorUS' Advocate Resources:
<https://www.valor.us/category/prea/>

Direct questions to:

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