

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

THE NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE

In Human Services and Community Justice

JOHN JAY COLLEGE
INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE
AND OPPORTUNITY

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UNIVERSITY
OF
NEW YORK

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The John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity (the Institute) is a center for research and action at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY. The Institute is committed to providing opportunities for people to live successfully in the community after involvement with the criminal legal system. Capitalizing on our position within a large public university and recognizing the transformational power of education, our work focuses on increasing access to higher education and career pathways for people with conviction histories. The Institute's comprehensive and strategic approach includes direct service, research, training, and technical assistance.

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Summary

In 2019, the John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity (the Institute) launched a training program to prepare people with lived experience in the criminal legal system for employment and promotions in human services. The Institute believes that workforce and leadership development for people with lived experience in New York City’s criminal legal system are crucial for reform of that system and for an equitable pandemic recovery. This report offers key learnings of the Navigator Certificate in Human Services and Community Justice (the Navigator Certificate) to others who share the Institute’s commitment to leadership development and career pathways for people impacted by the legal system.

The report features essential elements of program design, highlights the journeys of Navigator students, and celebrates alumni perspectives.

The Institute gratefully acknowledges the vision and support of the NYC Mayor’s Office of Criminal justice (MOCJ), which in 2017 asked the Institute to develop a “forensic peer navigator” certificate training. As part of the Mayor’s “Jails to Jobs” initiative (now known as the Community Justice Reentry Network), MOCJ sought to prepare people directly impacted by the criminal legal system for jobs helping others make the transition from jail and prison to communities in NYC.

In response to MOCJ’s guidance, the Institute examined human services workforce access for people impacted by the criminal legal system and the labor market needs of employers. **Rooted in the Institute’s core values of spurring systemic and individual change, the needs assessment explored:**

- What lay at the heart of success in the human services workforce for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system?**
- What obstacles prevented formerly incarcerated people and others with legal system involvement from getting hired for human services jobs, retaining their jobs, and advancing?**
- What training already existed, and where were there gaps in training? How could a new training be complementary rather than duplicative? How had certification trainings been realized in mental health/behavioral health fields?**
- What jobs were available, and what competencies were required for those jobs?**
- What competencies were required to advance from entry-level jobs, and how could the Institute strengthen career pathways for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system?**

In the training design process, the Institute engaged with people impacted by the criminal legal system who were working in human services, employers at nonprofit and government agencies, training providers, and partners in academia and professional studies. We also convened an advisory committee reflecting similarly diverse stakeholder perspectives. We thank our many partners (please see Acknowledgments) for sharing their insights about the power of peers and credible messengers, and for sharing the challenges that people with lived experience face in doing this crucial, life-saving and system-changing work.

Takeaways from the Research and Design Process

TAKEAWAY 1

There is a growing demand for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system in an array of jobs across the human services sector.



Coinciding with a tight labor market, in the years before the pandemic these job opportunities increased not only in nonprofit reentry organizations that have traditionally hired formerly incarcerated people, but also in child welfare, health, other human services, and criminal legal system agencies that previously did not hire people impacted by the system as a standard practice. People with lived experience in the criminal legal system now hold job titles as varied as credible messenger mentor, community navigator, violence interrupter, peer specialist, community health worker, youth worker, and youth development specialist; these jobs specifically value the workers’ lived experience and skills.

TAKEAWAY 2

Health/behavioral health systems in New York State have also recognized how important it is to hire people with lived experience and have demonstrated the benefits of certification for jobs with “peer” designations.



Medicaid reimbursement is an ongoing source of funding for several peer titles. Aspects of peer certification in health fields, especially collaboration among employers and government licensing/funding agencies, offer interesting models for the criminal legal field. But peer workers and advocates have also expressed concerns about the lack of career ladders and about depressed salaries for peers at the low end of the already low human services wage scale.

TAKEAWAY 3

Too often, however, jobs for people with lived experience in the legal system have not provided living-wage salaries, benefits, professional skills development, and opportunities for advancement.



Can these jobs point to true reform of a racist criminal legal system, or do they, by failing workers economically, offer a new example of systemic racism? The racism of mass incarceration¹ has been exacerbated by barriers to workforce participation—the “collateral consequences” of legal system involvement.² Reversing the harm of legal system involvement requires more than an expansion in low-wage and part-time job opportunities for directly-impacted workers.

TAKEAWAY 4

Tremendous potential for system reform exists when people with lived experience in the criminal legal system lead others out of that system.



This potential can only be realized with funding for jobs that offer living-wage salaries, benefits, and career pathways.

In the New York City human services ecosystem, when nonprofits create jobs with salaries that support people and their families and lead to real career ladders, this also has the potential to interrupt structural racism within non-profit work.³

TAKEAWAY 5

Navigator Certificate design decisions emerged as the Institute considered the historic and ongoing racism in the criminal legal system and discrimination faced by people who have been involved in that system. The Institute set out to:



- Offer a certificate training for justice system-impacted people without creating a new barrier to workforce entry, and without inadvertently limiting people to jobs with the peer title.
- Acknowledge the pride in peer and credible messenger job titles felt by people who do this work, while avoiding possible stigma for our students and graduates. A decision was made, with the support of MOCJ, to name the certificate in a way that does not imply involvement in the criminal legal system. This choice aligns with the spirit of New York City’s Fair Chance Act, which prohibits employers from asking about conviction records before extending a provisional offer of employment.⁴ This choice also reflects the Institute’s priority that students and graduates can list the Navigator Certificate on a resume, housing application, or financial document without concern about implying involvement in the criminal legal system.
- Train people in the skills and knowledge needed across a spectrum of human services jobs titles.

The Navigator Certificate

— An Overview

The Navigator Certificate prepares people with lived experience in the criminal legal system for employment and promotions in human services. The curriculum builds core competencies identified by people with lived experience already working in the field and by the Institute’s employer-partners. Developed in conjunction with John Jay College Continuing and Professional Studies and academic faculty, the Navigator Certificate is also an on-ramp to starting, or going back, to college. This Certificate is the College’s first “non-credit to credit” training. **People who earn the Navigator Certificate are granted six undergraduate credits when they enroll in related human services degree programs at John Jay College, as well as a growing number of colleges with articulation agreements: Borough of Manhattan Community College, Bronx Community College, and St. Francis College.**

An intensive, semester-long training, the Navigator Certificate focuses on leadership development. With an emphasis on critical thinking and communication skills, along with fundamental human services ethics and competencies—theory and practice—the Navigator Certificate creates a foundation for leadership in many jobs and community contexts. Students and graduates

see new possibilities for themselves. In addition to advancing their careers in human services, alumni have also pursued policy advocacy, community activism, entrepreneurship, and more. Our students and graduates envision many pathways and make a variety of choices for their futures (see Alumni Employment and Education).

Core values emerged from the needs assessment and led to the creation of a Navigator Certificate that:

- Prepares graduates with the foundational knowledge, critical thinking, and portable skills to thrive in an array of human services jobs;
- Is recognized and valued—but not mandated—by funders and employers, so as to boost employability for graduates without creating a barrier to employability for non-graduates; and
- Offers college-level coursework and scaffolds interested graduates into degree programs.
- **The Institute website has program information and applications** www.justiceandopportunity.org/career-pathways/navigator

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NEW YORK CITY MAYOR’S OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (MOCJ)

MOCJ recognizes the power of peer roles and, through the Navigator Certificate training, has supported preparation for people directly impacted by the criminal legal system to be engaged on the frontline of system reform. MOCJ support for the training achieves several key goals for the City:

- Strengthening the criminal justice field by expanding the pool of trained candidates for entry-level jobs and professional advancement;
- Supporting directly impacted people in their successful engagement in the workforce;
- Fundamentally shifting the delivery of services, when people with lived experience are the ones providing care to others involved in the legal system; and

- Increasing access to higher education through a certificate training that leads to college credits and connection to supports to enroll in and graduate from college.

The Navigator Certificate is part of a larger MOCJ strategy to expand employment for people with lived experience in direct service staff and supervisory positions. Staffing for MOCJ-funded pre-trial services includes “Community Engagement Specialists” who, along with social workers and case managers, provide alternatives to using law enforcement for community-based supervision and support.⁵ MOCJ’s Atlas program, still in development, is expected to employ “credible specialists.”⁶ MOCJ-funded ATI and and reentry programs, as well as the Crisis Management System, employ people with lived experience in human service roles.

Recommendations from Navigator Certificate advisors and other stakeholders

FOR TRAINING DESIGN

Expand the definition of “peer” to include immediate family members in the target pool of students with “lived experience in the criminal legal system.”

Create training opportunities for people with lived experience who don’t yet have a high school degree and want to pursue work as navigators, mentors, and other peer/credible messenger roles.

Begin training for human services positions while people are in prison so they are prepared to continue training and start working when they are released.

FOR BETTER COORDINATION ACROSS THE PEER TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT ECOSYSTEM

Explore how colleges and training programs can collaborate to align their credit requirements so students can easily transfer credits and ultimately earn degrees.

Develop technology skills training to increase workforce access and success on the job.

Develop training for supervisors to provide effective supervision for peer/credible messenger employees and contribute to their ongoing professional development.

Educate funders on the importance of supporting professional development for peer positions.

Develop a comprehensive City-wide resource guide for education and training options, as well as a central source of labor market information/job bank for peer positions.

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Needs Assessment

To design the Navigator Certificate, the Institute undertook an assessment process to examine human services workforce access for people impacted by the legal system and the labor market demands of employers. We also considered how certificate trainings had been realized in human services fields for people with other types of lived experience. Based on the needs assessment process, the Institute designed a curriculum for the certificate program in which students develop a set of core competencies that position them to be hired and to advance in the human services workforce. The Institute launched the inaugural Navigator Certificate cohort in spring 2019 and completed seven cohorts through 2022.

Design changes continue as the program's value is tested and proven in the job market. COVID-19 has presented additional challenges. By maintaining ties with students, alumni, and employers, the Institute learned valuable lessons that helped the program adapt during the pandemic and respond to an evolving job market.

The needs assessment process included focus groups, interviews, review of online material from existing programs, and examination of relevant news media and scholarship. The process began in September 2017 with a focus group of employer-partners in reentry and other human services agencies, facilitated by Dr. Dara Byrne, John Jay College Dean at that time. The needs assessment culminated in a convening of stakeholders (people working in credible messenger and peer jobs, training providers, government decisionmakers, and philanthropists) in December 2018, facilitated by the Institute and Cyrus Garrett of the Obama Foundation, formerly director of the NYC Young Men’s Initiative.

Rooted in the Institute’s core values of driving systemic and individual change, the needs assessment process was an opportunity to explore access to education and employment for people impacted by the criminal legal system.

The power and challenges of jobs that value lived experience

The deep connections possible between people with similar life experiences are increasingly understood as key to helping people change their lives. The slogan declared by JustLeadership USA and other formerly incarcerated people and advocates, “Those closest to the problem are closest to the solution,” expresses the power of this approach to both individual and systemic change. **The impact of peer and credible messenger work has been shared in personal narratives in many public forums⁷ and documented in independent research.** For example, an evaluation of credible messenger mentoring in NYC’s Arches program showed reduced rates of new felony convictions among program participants, supporting the widespread belief among workers and advocates that bonding over shared life experience drives personal transformation.⁸ Another study found that young adults participating in a work readiness program staffed with credible messenger mentors at the Center for Employment Opportunities in NYC “increased the likelihood of obtaining a full-time job by 75%” and “worked significantly more hours of transitional work than participants in the comparison group.”⁹ Such personal and professional transformations have too often been

elusive in traditional human service and criminal legal system interventions. People working in credible messenger and peer roles are demonstrating that a different approach to “services”—including mentoring and support, which can in turn make other services more sensitive and accessible—leads to positive change. “The relationship is the intervention,” as April Glad, Senior Program Officer at the Pinkerton Foundation, has observed.

The current¹⁰ interest in employing people with lived experience in the criminal legal system to help others get out or stay out of that system signals the potential for reform on multiple levels: the transformative impact and positive outcomes for participants in programs staffed by people with lived experience; the restorative impact on those staff members, who are now acknowledged as community leaders; and crucial shifts in the values and cultures of government agencies and nonprofits delivering these programs. For example, acknowledging the value of personal experiences in professional roles is a direct challenge to the dominance of “aspects and assumptions of white culture,” including communication norms such as “don’t discuss your personal life” and “don’t show emotion.”¹¹

However, this potential for reform can only be realized when jobs for people with lived experience are well-paid and offer career pathways. **Credible messenger and peer jobs that do not offer benefits and living wages risk reinforcing, rather than dismantling, systems of oppression.** The Arches evaluation noted that “mentors are often underpaid for the extensive work they do. Mentors receive an hourly wage during official hours, but their work extends beyond the nine-to-five schedule. Full- and part-time mentors both work on-call around the clock.” The evaluation found that reliance on part-time mentors, who must find other jobs to make ends meet, “can lead to high rates of turnover, which in turn negatively affects youth outcomes.”¹² In addition to the impact on participant outcomes, part-time and low-paid peer positions also negatively affect peer workers, who need robust full-time salaries, health insurance, and paid leave.

Norms of employment in tension with work rooted in lived experience

The close bonds and 24/7 support offered in many peer and credible messenger roles are more commonly found in other community contexts such as family, church, sports, etc. Generating a feeling of closeness—what the Urban Institute’s Arches evaluation refers to as the “family atmosphere”—is a hallmark of this work. People are hired in mentoring or navigating roles similar to that of a friend or family member, with expectations that the workers will be available at all times and for any issues that arise to threaten stability for people they work with, but these services are being provided in the context of employment, i.e. by mentors who are employees. People working in mentor, navigator, peer, and credible messenger roles are hired for their ability to build relationships, operate with a trauma-informed lens, and meaningfully share their lived experience; yet they are working in environments with specific missions, contracts, program goals and targets, communication protocols, and agency liability, which can be difficult to navigate. Even when peer workers have job responsibilities and boundaries that are acknowledged as different from other workers, boundaries of employment still apply.¹³

The dilemma of **how to implement peer and credible messenger work in a way that respects both the integrity of the relationships and the norms of employment surfaced repeatedly during the needs assessment.** Many stakeholders also described challenges in the workplace when program participants and people working in peer and credible messenger roles have similar experiences of prior trauma.

Peer workers need far more than technical or hard skills training to navigate these tensions successfully along with the other demands of their jobs. “Employability skills” (also referred to as “soft skills”) are essential to address the nuanced and complex situations that arise in the workplace for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system. Employability/soft skills identified by nonprofit and government employers and people with lived experience working in human services include:

- Asking for help
- Taking initiative
- Responding to supervisory feedback
- Being punctual and responsive to workplace requests
- Communicating effectively
- Practicing self-care and emotional self-regulation

Culture Clash: Workplace culture vs. carceral culture

These skills are essential and challenging for all workers, not just those with lived experience in the criminal legal system; however, people who were formerly incarcerated often face a particular conflict between their experiences of carceral culture and work culture. Norms of behavior and body language in the workplace are vastly different from those in prison.¹⁴ Skills necessary for survival in prison may be misinterpreted or penalized in the workplace, and skills necessary to succeed in employment can feel difficult or hazardous to people with lived experience in the criminal legal system. For example, people who were incarcerated may interpret supervisory direction or professional feedback as authoritarian directives, similar to those experienced in prison. A supervisor at an agency employing people with lived experience in the criminal legal system describes the dilemma:

“I have had a person consistently accuse me of talking down to them whenever I attempted to give them direction...I wanted to acknowledge their feelings but I felt it was getting in the way of reaching our office goals.”

Taking initiative and asking for guidance—actions which draw attention to a worker and can help them succeed and advance—may feel dangerous rather than desirable to people who have experienced punitive responses to “standing out” in a prison setting. Making direct eye contact, which could precipitate a fight in prison, is an expectation in the workplace,¹⁵ These are just a few examples of how adapting to prison life in order to survive in the carceral system clashes with workplace codes of behavior and communication.¹⁶

Workers with lived experience may also find prison norms against “snitching” in tension with workplace expectations. People with lived experience who progress along the human services career ladder to roles supervising peers can find this culture clash to be a difficult double bind. One supervisor said,

“When working with formerly incarcerated individuals and being formerly incarcerated myself, we tend to bring our jailhouse ways to the work environment. When you report someone for continued unprofessional behavior, they consider that snitching, when in reality you are putting that person on notice that this can’t continue.”

Many of the Institute’s employer-partners had already hired people with lived experience, and wanted to hire more. However, they helped clarify that gaps in employability skills could cost people their jobs or prevent them from being hired in the first place, even when employers were totally committed to hiring people with lived experience, and even when employees with lived experience were totally committed to their jobs. Employers also highlighted their need for access to training on how to provide effective supervision for navigator, mentor, and other credible messenger roles. Training on effective supervision is crucial, and relates directly to developing a racial justice lens and creating an organizational culture where systems-impacted employees can thrive and advance.

Peer certification models from behavioral and mental health fields

In developing the Navigator Certificate, the Institute reviewed peer training and peer jobs available in health sectors. Models for Medicaid-reimbursed peer positions have been developed in the mental health and substance use treatment systems. NYS Office of Mental Health and NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports provide guidance about the types of work peers can do that are billable.¹⁷

Stakeholders have pointed to the profound impact peer workers have on the people they support within these health systems. Notably, peer engagement also has a financial dimension within these systems. For example, when peer workers increase the number of people showing up for medical appointments, there are benefits for the individuals receiving care as well as for the providers who can bill Medicaid for those “kept” appointments. Here are illustrations of the double impact of peer workers:

Certified Recovery Peer Advocate (CRPA) role at the Richmond University Medical Center

Jason Pisano, the Workforce Coordinator for the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness, in 2021 recounted the impact of the peer role: *“Having a CPRA, we have noticed an increase in appointment retention in some of the ‘tougher cases.’ Those clients that might not feel 100% on board with treatment [for example, those who are] court mandated, [those who say] ‘I’m doing this for my family,’ and those who believe that if it’s not their drug of choice it’s not an issue, etc. These clients seem to benefit from the special connection our peer provides.... Having a peer co-facilitate groups has proven very helpful for client engagement. A good peer can use personal experience to help others feel comfortable and relate.”*

Effective engagement by peers also creates opportunities for others in the system to generate revenues. *“The ability to utilize the CPRA for community support or outreach allows the clinicians to staff the office and provide sessions as necessary.”*

Precinct-based peer support through Brooklyn CLEAR

Jeffrey Coots, Director of the From Punishment to Public Health Initiative at John Jay College, also reports the positive impact of peers in a post-booking diversion program targeting people arrested for misdemeanor drug possession and given Desk Appearance Tickets. The program is designed to reach people in the twenty days between their arrest and their arraignment date in court. After an assessment conducted by a social worker, people have the option to proactively engage in the social service of their choice; if they do so, the District Attorney dismisses the case, which is dropped prior to arraignment and thus never shows up on a background check. Coots observes that the peer worker, who responds directly to the precinct, interacts *“in the moment of crisis and builds a relationship. People stay in the program because of the engagement by the peer.”*

A natural experiment unfolded in this program in 2020, when the peers were unable to meet clients in the precinct because of COVID restrictions, and the success rate of connecting clients to services dropped significantly. In 2021, when peers were back to work in the precincts, they engaged over 360 clients facing a broader set of charges, including petit larceny (i.e. shoplifting) and helped to resolve cases for over 140 individuals prior to their arraignment. The benefits of being connected to social services and not having a criminal arrest record are substantial for program participants, and, as Coots points out, *“keeping cases out of court reduces costs.”*

Transparency about the value of peer workers—improved care for the people served, financial soundness for employers of hiring peer workers, and savings to costly public systems—should lead to reinvestment in the peer workforce. Such reinvestment should include living wage entry-level salaries, opportunities for increases, and ongoing professional development.

Concerns about peer models that have been identified within health systems should be considered carefully in determining how these models might be adapted for the criminal legal system. Wages are often depressed for peer-designated jobs and are at the low end of the already low compensation for work in the human services field.¹⁸

An analysis of NYC labor market data for 2020 published by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Peer and Community Health Worker

Workforce Consortium found that the “median estimated annual ‘Market Salary’ for peer roles is \$32,000. If we only looked at posted salary information (included in 55% of the job postings), the median salary is \$35,000.”¹⁹ The “living wage” in New York City for a single adult with no children during a comparable time period was estimated at \$32,742,²⁰ so the labor market data suggest that many workers in peer roles were not earning a living wage if they were single adults, and even higher proportions were not earning a living wage if they had children. Medicaid reimbursement, a sustainable source of funding for agencies large enough to have a Medicaid billing administrative infrastructure in place, may not be an option for agencies (including newer grassroots agencies) that do not have capacity to bill Medicaid and are on the front line of criminal legal system reform through the use of mentors, violence interrupters, and other credible messenger roles.

Peer training and employment in mental health and substance use treatment systems

Government and nonprofit agencies as well as higher education institutions in NYC are demonstrating innovative approaches to peer training and employment within the mental health and behavioral health systems that also intersect with the criminal legal system.

Certification for peer support in New York State’s mental health field began in 2015. Training is offered through the Peer Academy to become a New York Certified Peer Specialist, “a person who, by virtue of special knowledge, training, and experience, is uniquely able to inform, motivate, guide, and support persons in recovery from a mental health condition, diagnosis or major life disruption.”

²¹ Howie the Harp, a program of Community Access, offers training by peers, for peers.²² Peer Specialist jobs exist in mental health programs based in clinics, hospitals, and community programs. As an example of a career pathway, NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation has Peer Specialist I, II, and III job titles, with associated increases in responsibilities and salary.²³

The nonprofit Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES) offered the first alternative to incarceration in New York for people with serious

mental illness facing felony convictions and provides a range of mental health clinical services and court advocacy, that include peer support. CASES hires certified Peer Specialists to join multi-disciplinary behavioral health teams, and Senior Peer Specialists are responsible for supervising peer staff. Peer workers not only offer support to program participants but also engage in mutual support for each other as colleagues.

In the substance use treatment field, a partnership among NYC Small Business Services (SBS), New York Alliance for Careers in Health Care (NYACHC), and the City University of New York (CUNY) paved the way for Certified Recovery Peer Advocate trainings at three CUNY campuses that offer college credit.²⁴ The nonprofit Exponents offers trainings taught by peers, for peers who seek employment in the substance use treatment sector.²⁵ OASAS has instituted requirements for certified peer workers in the staffing structures for licensed substance use treatment programs, which creates demand for certification.

More rungs on the peer career ladder are emerging, with efforts to develop career pathways for peer workers across health, mental health, and behavioral health.²⁶ A NYC Health & Hospitals Peer Academy²⁷ offers free training for positions as peer counselors in NYC’s hospital system, with trainees eligible to receive NYS Certified Peer Specialist and Certified Recovery Peer Advocate credentials.

Are models of peer certification from the health sectors adaptable for the criminal legal field?

At the time of designing the Navigator Certificate, there was no criminal legal system model comparable to those in the health fields for training and certification for peers. “Forensic” elements were in place some existing training programs, such as a robust criminal legal system component of Howie the Harp’s Peer Specialist training. A new, peer-led effort, the NYC Justice Peer Initiative is underway to expand and leverage the power of Justice Peers to contribute to criminal legal system transformation.²⁸ In other jurisdictions, health-sector based trainings and jobs also include “forensic” programs.²⁹

A wide range of job titles in the criminal legal system value lived experience. Some roles, particularly in gun violence prevention and youth justice, capture the value of lived experience in the title “credible messenger.” Some employers have broadened their recruitment practices to seek candidates impacted by the criminal legal system for job titles that do not explicitly reference lived experience.³⁰

The potential stigma of the peer label presents a risk for people impacted by the criminal legal system.

NYC’s Fair Chance Act³¹ gives job applicants the right not to reveal their conviction record until they receive a conditional offer of employment. While peer certifications and peer titles are a source of pride for peer workers, in the criminal legal field they may also have the effect of implying a conviction history. Listing these certifications or titles on a resume or application can leave job seekers vulnerable to discrimination in employment searches and in other contexts such as bank and housing applications.

Some credible messengers in the criminal legal field have also objected to establishing certification for their work. They have questioned the idea that knowledge or skills learned in a training would make someone more qualified to do their work than life experience. There is also a concern, shared by workers and advocates, that creating a certification in the criminal legal field could have the unintended consequence of establishing a new barrier to workforce entry for people who are already subject to overt discrimination and implicit bias because of their criminal legal system involvement. Individuals who do not obtain certification but who are otherwise

qualified to do a mentor, navigator, or other credible messenger job could find themselves excluded from the job market.

For these reasons, the traditional benefits of an “industry-recognized credential”—a credential mandated by a funder or licensing agency and required by an employer—need to be weighed against the potential downsides in the context of the criminal legal system. Research and anecdotal information from the behavioral health field suggest that peer workforce models from these fields have many strengths but need to be adapted with caution. The integration of peers into mental health care has had some unintended consequences, highlighted in a study of peer support work in Pennsylvania. This study found that “peer workers frequently remain underpaid and unable to advance professionally. The institutionalization of peer support serves as a barrier to worker entry and retention and highlights tensions between the consumer-driven origin of the recovery field and the current mental healthcare system. The institutionalization of roles defined by experiential expertise, such as peer support, has the potential to reduce the very centrality of experiential expertise, reproduce social inequalities, and paradoxically impact stigma.”³²

To address the concerns of people with lived experience in the criminal legal system, adaptations of peer models from the health fields would need to ensure options for meaningful career pathways:

- **Skills development from training and apprenticeship to entry level employment and ongoing professional development;**
- **Robust wages and benefits at entry level, followed by multiple levels of advancement and salary increases;**
- **Portability into related fields, and pay increases through lateral moves across employers; and**
- **Support for directly impacted individuals who wish to pursue professional routes without the peer designation.**

Training for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system

Training options have expanded in the criminal legal field for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system who currently work, or seek employment, in mentor, violence interrupter, and other credible messenger roles.

The Institute for Transformative Mentoring (ITM), based at The New School, offers a semester-long, three-credit training for “credible messengers (formerly incarcerated men and women)” who are already working in mentor positions to “help young people navigate community violence and avoid the criminal justice system.”³³ Employers refer workers in credible messenger jobs to this training. With the slogan “healed people heal people,” the training “is structured using restorative justice practices and interactive learning to support participants in engaging deeply with the material and each other. The college-level course covers trauma-informed care, youth development, history of mass incarceration and a social justice framework, and career advancement.”

The **Credible Messenger Justice Center**, a partnership of the NYC Department of Probation, CUNY, and Community Connections for Youth, is a “training and research center, policy and practice thought leader, and program incubator for an approach to social reform” with trainings that include:

- A menu of trainings covering topics relevant to credible messenger work, such as Risk Assessment and Safety Planning, Gang Awareness;
- A multi-session Credible Messenger Institute that offers “support, coaching, and development in both personal and professional aspects;” and
- A four-course (16 credit) certificate in Community Leadership in partnership with CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, as well as a non-credit bearing, six session certificate training.³⁴

These training and educational opportunities reflect a shift toward interventions that rely on people with lived experience at the forefront of youth justice and violence prevention. With the NYC Department of Probation as a partner, the CMJC focuses on hiring and training people with conviction histories as a strategy for effective community-based public safety. As a technical assistance provider for other jurisdictions, CMJC also supports replication of the Arches credible messenger mentoring model nationally.

Notably, the CMJC and ITM trainings have not resulted in the creation of an employer- or funder-mandated credential. Even without such a mandate, these trainings help to distill the core practices and competencies needed to do credible messenger mentoring work. *The Atlantic* reported on the experience of Mark Mertens, who participated in a multi-jurisdiction CMJC training in 2019 as leader of the Division of Youth & Family Services in Milwaukee County. Mertens “said it’s easier to follow in the footsteps of a codified program like Arches. It also helps that the workforce is increasingly credentialed, as would-be credible messengers get trained in motivational interviewing, substance-abuse counseling, and restorative justice. “There are starting to be some established practices around the work.”³⁵

As credible messenger work continues to grow, with the quality of work supported through training and professional development, **it is essential for the criminal legal field to create more full-time jobs with robust wages and benefits.** Although the Urban Institute Arches evaluation in 2018 noted the need for more full-time jobs for credible messenger mentors, the criminal legal sector has continued to rely on many part-time mentor jobs with requirements for 24/7 availability.³⁶ Living wage jobs with benefits are core to addressing racial inequity as the criminal legal field brings more people with lived experience—who are disproportionately members of historically overpoliced Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities—into the human services workforce.

Navigator Certificate Design

The Institute's survey of available trainings informed plans to complement and expand on this ecosystem. The Institute did not want to duplicate existing credible messenger training. Nor did the Institute seek to replicate certification trainings in the mental and behavioral health spheres, which could with relative ease add a specialization to address the overlap in criminal legal issues with behavioral and mental health issues.

Taking into account the variety of jobs that value lived experience in the criminal legal system, the Institute also decided not to tie the training to one job title, which would limit the value of the certificate to the labor market demand for that job.

With the support of MOCJ, the Institute opted to drop both the "peer" and "forensic" designations from the title of the Navigator Certificate. Additionally, the Institute did not advocate for MOCJ or employers to require the Navigator Certificate for a specific job title. The Navigator training prepares students to pursue and thrive in peer roles as well as other human services jobs.

Design Values

Program design values emerged from the needs assessment process that (1) guide the Institute’s services for certificate students and (2) strengthen students’ access to the human services workforce.

- Draw on the wisdom of people with lived experience already working in human services, and on the expressed needs of employers seeking to hire directly impacted workers.
- Prepare students with the foundational knowledge, lens of critical thinking, and portable, in-demand skills to be hired and promoted in a growing array of human services jobs.
- Connect classroom to workplace through field placement/internship as well as class exercises.
- Engage academic and professional studies partners across John Jay College in developing a certificate that is valued by employers and translates to academic credit.
- Build support across the human services sector and criminal legal field for living-wage jobs and career pathways that value relevant lived experience.

• My job is to engage the clients and let them know how important health care is. I have clients who haven’t been to dentist in fifteen years...I feel like super special, not too many people can do my job. You can have ten degrees and you still couldn’t identify with my clientele. I have a high retention rate of getting guys to come back and see doctors. I like what I do, it’s rewarding... I think the Navigator Certificate is a strong program. It was impactful in my life. 🙌

— NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

A career pathways approach nested in academia

Working at the nexus of academia, research, policy, and direct service practice, the Institute brought together John Jay faculty partners with partners at nonprofit and City agencies that serve—and hire—people impacted by the justice system. Crucially, the creation of a new certificate program also provided the opportunity for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system working in human services to be partners in the program’s design. From this partnership a plan emerged to:

- ① **Center the experience of directly impacted people.** People with lived experience in the criminal justice system are members of the advisory committee, participated in focus groups and interviews, and are on the teaching team for the Navigator Certificate. Alumni give feedback and return as advisors to the program. In this way, directly impacted people are involved in every aspect of design, implementation, and adjustment as the program constantly evolves.
- ② **Partner with employers in a Career Pathways model.** The Institute partners with employers to identify in-demand skills and core competencies, develop curriculum, refer workers to the training, host field placements for students, hire graduates, and provide ongoing feedback.
- ③ **Partner with John Jay Undergraduate Studies to align the Navigator Certificate training with college coursework and create an onramp to higher education.** The certificate curriculum introduces the key theoretical concepts of human services to build understanding of the social construction of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, as well as the economic forces that shape human services. Knowledge of community level data and demographics allows our students to situate their own experience in a broader context and be more effective leaders and advocates—in their workplaces and in their communities. The Institute credits and thanks Dr. Jama Adams, John Jay College Associate Professor of Africana Studies and lead faculty for the Navigator Certificate, and Dr. Jessica Gordon-Nembhard, Chairperson of the Africana Studies Department, for creating this foundational course.

- ④ **Draw on Adult Learning Theory to create transformational training that connects classroom learning with work.** The Navigator Certificate curriculum design is informed by a particular focus on learning and learning transfer to ensure that the education and skills introduced in the classroom setting are transferred to the participants’ real-world employment or field placement settings.³⁷ The training is designed not only for knowledge acquisition, but also to contribute to personal transformation--the development of self-awareness about our impact on others that is essential to be effective in the workplace. The Institute credits and thanks David Mensah, a lead instructor for the Navigator Certificate, for centering the principles of Adult Learning Theory in his classes and helping the Institute extend this design approach to the entire program.

“I was nervous about going back to school [for the Navigator Certificate]. It had been years. Dr. Jama [Adams] didn’t hold our hand, he made us feel that we were worthy, that our background is nothing to be ashamed of, and it gives us a leg up. Society makes you feel shameful for your past, [but Dr. Adams] didn’t. He said to use this as a way to move forward and help others.”

— NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

Stakeholder recommendations

For training design

In addition to the design principles above, recommendations from the Institute's Career Pathways Advisory Committee and other stakeholders also guided development of the Navigator Certificate curriculum and overall program approach. Advisory committee discussions influenced many aspects of program design and other Institute efforts, and the resulting recommendations are likely to be of interest to others developing training and jobs in human services for people with lived experience:

- **Expand the definition of “peer” to include immediate family members in the target pool of students with “lived experience in the criminal legal system.”** Most Navigator students are formerly incarcerated or have other direct involvement in the criminal legal system, and the Institute also accepts people whose immediate family members are directly impacted. The advisory committee—and eventually the Navigator students themselves—expressed in the strongest terms that it is essential to recognize the impact of incarceration on family members and to incorporate family members into community healing and criminal legal system reform. The wisdom of this inclusive definition of “lived experience in the criminal legal system” has been borne out in the program, as Navigator students who were formerly incarcerated become more deeply sensitized to family concerns by learning alongside students whose family members were incarcerated. Similarly, Navigator students who were not incarcerated gain a new awareness about the prison experience from their fellow Navigators. This inclusivity ensures that all students emerge from the program better prepared for their work and able to engage with families.
- **Create opportunities for people with lived experience who don't yet have a high school degree and want to pursue work as navigators, mentors, and other peer/credible messenger roles.** It was not possible for the Navigator Certificate to offer college credit (a

requirement set by our funder and a priority for our stakeholders) and accept students without a high school degree. However, the Institute developed a new HSE Connect program which offers preparation for the High School Equivalency exam with wraparound support specifically for adults aged 24 and up impacted by the criminal legal system. A partnership with the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC), this program is a pipeline to higher education. Students who obtain an HSE have a “warm hand-off” to the Institute's college access programs and the Navigator Certificate.

- **Begin training for human services positions while people are in prison so they are prepared to continue training and start working when they are released.** The advisory committee has urged the Institute to look for opportunities to initiate training for people who are incarcerated and wish to pursue employment in human services upon release. The Institute is aligned with this goal and will explore opportunities to offer in-prison training as well as create bridges from prison programs to the Navigator Certificate.

In December 2018, prior to the launch of the Navigator Certificate program, the Institute convened a meeting of stakeholders, including people directly impacted by the criminal legal system, training and education providers, employers, and private and government funders. The Institute had shared a “map of the landscape” that described training and employment opportunities for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system. This landscape document focused on the fields of health/mental health, substance use/recovery, and criminal justice/violence intervention. The goal of the convening was to initiate an ongoing conversation among stakeholders, leading to greater connection and coordination across the ecosystem of training resources and job opportunities.

For coordination across the peer training and employment ecosystem

- **Explore how colleges and training programs can collaborate to align their credit requirements so students can easily transfer credits from one program to another.** Within the City University of New York (CUNY) system, historically, each CUNY campus has had its own policies and practices for providing credit for prior learning. This has created challenges for effective credit-transfer between CUNY campuses as well as from non-CUNY programs. CUNY has created a University policy on granting credit for prior learning and is in the midst of evaluating these processes. Note: CUNY now has a webpage featuring supports for students with conviction records: www.cuny.edu/civics/support-student-conviction-records/
- **Develop training for supervisors to provide effective supervision for peer/credible messenger employees and contribute to their ongoing professional development.** This must address the importance of changing organizational culture to be able to effectively and equitably integrate peer positions. (See section on the Institute’s Collective Leadership Supervisor Training, below.)
- **Educate funders on the importance of supporting professional development for peer positions.** Nonprofit agencies that employ peers (typically those which also provide peer services) often have to improvise their own professional development for peer positions, stretching their already-tight budgets.
- **Encourage funders to dedicate specific, ample support for providers to work together.** Nonprofits are typically instructed by funders to “collaborate” and build a “continuum” of services and resources. At the same time, funders pressure nonprofits to be able to identify and disaggregate the outcomes resulting from their specific intervention – which inherently discourages true collaboration with complementary or supplementary services and resources provided

by other organizations. In addition to directly funding “collective action” initiatives or projects, funders need to recognize these often require a third-party coordinator/facilitator, and be willing to support the full costs of effectively coordinating services and resources.

- **Develop a comprehensive City-wide resource guide for education and training options, as well as a central source of labor market information/job bank for peer positions.** A centralized collection of resources and services would serve as a hub for service providers as well as people seeking resources, enabling providers to more effectively make referrals for people as needed. While a digital guide is the obvious route in today’s world, hard copies of the guide are also necessary for use in correctional facilities where people do not have internet access.

While many of these recommendations still need to be addressed in the evolving field of credible messenger/peer workforce development, some resources emerged to strengthen the field:

- The Credible Messenger Justice Center maintains an online listing of career opportunities for credible messengers cmjcenter.org/careers/
- The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Peer & Community Health Worker Workforce Consortium created a matrix of New York State health-related peer certifications and credentials docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15oBjDTgCC4S0bhLwMGRmi5HyDnlWwlLRBTwNcPaCW7E/edit#gid=0
- The Peer & Community Health Worker Workforce Consortium published labor market data in 2020, with analysis of online job postings for jobs with “peer,” “credible messenger,” and “violence interrupter” in the title. musercontent.com/760aea3c07df7a33b39b8b811/files/02266974-bd0c-44fc-b122-6bf1b1e7dfba/NYC_Peer_Workforce_2020_Workforce_Analysis_v2.pdf

Navigator Certificate Implementation

Building on the core wisdom of our students' lived experience, the Navigator Certificate prepares students to enter and advance in the human services workforce. The curriculum is designed to develop a set of competencies that employers and people with lived experience in the criminal legal system have identified as crucial for workplace success.

Students in the program also develop competencies needed for success in higher education. The Navigator Certificate learning objectives align with those of the John Jay College undergraduate major in Human Services and Community Justice. Students learn the skills needed for following a syllabus, decoding academic articles, producing written assignments, and using technology for higher education. They also develop time management and help-seeking skills appropriate to the demands of taking two college-level courses. Navigator students who are interested in pursuing a college degree are referred to the Institute's College Initiative (CI) which supports them in their academic journey.

Core competencies

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS (“SOFT SKILLS”)

- Understands workplace norms and boundaries
- Takes responsibility and initiative, asks for feedback
- Able to practice stress management and self-care
- Communicates effectively with program participants, coworkers, and supervisors

FOUNDATIONAL HUMAN SERVICES JOB SKILLS (“HARD SKILLS”)

- Brings cultural competence and sensitivity to gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality to interactions
- Listens empathically and can identify “Stages of Change” and use evidence-based Motivational Interviewing skills³⁸
- Works effectively with people impacted by trauma, racialized capitalism, and multiple social service systems
- Navigates social service systems and effectively links people with services
- Able to implement service processes (e.g. intake, assessment, paper and online referrals)
- Writes effectively for basic human services (email etiquette, referral letters, case notes)
- Able to apply technology skills in human services context (basic office software, mobile platforms, online search for services, online search for criminal justice status information)
- Guides people impacted by criminal legal system using knowledge of legal rights and of the system

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT SUCCESS SKILLS

- Decodes academic articles
- Meets basic academic writing requirements (including citations)
- Manages time and assignments

PEER SUPPORT SKILLS

- Uses peer-to-peer strategies to seek support, give support, and enhance learning in academic context
- Uses peer-to-peer strategies to seek support for workplace challenges and to find job opportunities

The Navigator Certificate learning objectives are in the Appendix.

• **What I got [from the Navigator program] was how to look for services, how to properly navigate resources. That was key. They have to be appropriate for what you’re doing.**

• — NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

Program logistics

Prior to the pandemic, the Navigator Certificate class was held in person, twice weekly, typically Tuesday and Thursday nights, 6-9pm, for sixteen weeks. Additional intensive immersions were offered: Social Resilience Model training (2 days), Motivational Interviewing (2 days), & Work Readiness Classes.

Students spent well over 100 hours in classes and a minimum of ten hours at a field placement/service learning project. At the start of the semester, orientation sessions included tech skills onboarding, welcome tours of the John Jay Campus, and introduction to the culture of the Navigator Certificate program. After the semester, a festive community graduation was held to celebrate our students' tremendous efforts and achievements with family, friends, and community.

Covid-19 and Remote Learning
 The Navigator Certificate is so focused on community-building and the development of human skills—learning that happens best in-person—that the transition to remote learning required a fundamental reorientation of the program, rethinking teaching strategies and leveling-up student tech skills. To make these changes, the Institute cancelled the spring 2020 cohort when CUNY shut all campuses. Over the spring and summer, the Institute offered online workshops to keep students connected to each other and build student comfort with remote learning. These students were invited to return to a fully online fall 2020 cohort. Ten students opted into the fall cohort to earn their Navigator Certificate online. The Institute offered fully remote cohorts in 2021 and hybrid cohorts in 2022.

• After the Navigator program, I wanted to go back to school. I owed money on old student loans. I had a bad track record. I spoke to Desiree [Gomez, academic advisor at the Institute's College Initiative], she really stepped up with everything and gave me confidence. She said, 'you're people-centered.' We took my student loans out of deferment, I have a payment plan and settled accounts with my old school where I did my associates.

• One of my big concerns, before the Navigator program, was that I live in my own little bubble, and it takes me a while to let other people in. Even though I do social work, I'm very isolated. Groups are very awkward for me when I have to interact outside of friends and work, where there are rules you follow. Being in Navigator with all those people in that college-style setting showed me I could do it. If I was able to do Navigator and get along with people, it shouldn't be that bad going back to school—I know I can handle that interaction with other people without incident. I'm going to be with all these people and all these personalities, and now I know I'm ready to deal with that. And at work too, you don't have to like people to help them, you just have to know how to point them in the right direction to get them the resources.

— NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

Helen (Skip) Skipper

Spring 2019 Cohort

Walking into the Navigator Certificate classroom was like a culture shock! I walked in thinking I knew everything – I was already a Peer Supervisor working at DOHMH (New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene) but I was introduced to a whole new ecosystem where words had different constructs and meanings. A world where ‘agency’ did not mean the place where you went to beg for services but meant your own innate capacity to act on your behalf!

I leaned into this newfound knowledge. The Navigator classes ignited a fire within me. I learned of the world of higher education – the benefits of academia and where that could take me, and more importantly, the power of my advocacy. I developed my critical and analytical thinking and used that to define where I was going and what I wanted to do. I realized that I am needed in this space of criminal justice reform. The thoughts and talents of all of us with lived experience are so vitally needed. Being traumatized by this broken system and using those lived experiences as fuel to inform and fodder to reform is tantamount to a call to glory!!

This system tried its hardest to break me – but the Navigator program pulled the pieces together and then built me back up. In pulling in the teachings, I realized the objective for me was to continue with my education. I have a Masters of Life and a Ph.D. in Lived Experiences, but to be the change agent that I needed to be, I needed a formal college education – the rhetoric that would gain me entrance into the policymakers’ lair.

I am no longer begging for a seat at the table – I am the table – policymakers need to come sit with me!

So, the Navigator training put that fire in me. I’m proud to announce that I went right into St. Francis College, and I am the first person from the St. Francis College Justice Initiatives (formerly Post-Prison) program to be invited into the Honors classes!

I used to think my strength and expertise lay in Behavioral Health, but the Navigator program showed me the machinations and mechanisms that comprise the intersectionality of behavioral health and criminal justice, and that is where I focus my research, my studies, and my career trajectory. I major in Criminal

Justice and will be taking my education to a Ph.D., as I am intent upon conducting ethnographic research on gender-responsive issues during incarceration and re-entry. I will also become a “Convict Criminologist,” which is a criminologist who uses their lived experiences to conduct research and inform policies.

After the Navigator program I was hired as Peer Coordinator at the New York City Criminal Justice Agency and was then given two promotions, to Senior Manager of Peer Services. Taking the Institute’s Collective Leadership Supervisor Training strengthened my supervisory know-how, and I had a team of 15 peers reporting to me directly. Everything the Navigator program taught was directly applicable to my work. It’s a framework to move into human services for people in the class who aren’t working yet. I was already working, and the class dispelled some of the myths and notions I had.

The Navigator program gave us copies of the readings, all the supplies, books, and Metrocards – everything we needed. The program opened the door for us, and gave us what we need to stay in the class – the supports we need to keep learning.

I would like to point out the sense of community we fostered through the Navigator program. Meals were provided, and we ate together as a community – as a family. We traveled together back and forth, arranged study dates, and really embodied “all for one and one for all.” There were people in the class for whom this was entirely new, and we banded together. We went to each other’s house and worked on our assignments together to make sure we were successful. And through my positive experiences with that, I built the community component that is instilled within my current work team where we have daily huddles to greet the day and each other, and have an informal space to talk about challenges and celebrate each other!

Note: In 2022, Skip became the inaugural Executive Director of the NYC Justice Peer Initiative (JPI). In a joint application, JPI and CASES were selected by SAMHSA as a winner of the Recovery Innovation Challenge, which seeks to identify innovative practices in behavioral health that advance recovery on the ground and in the community. Skip also received the inaugural “Rising Star” award from College and Community Fellowship.

Essential practices³⁹

The Navigator Certificate teaches more than a basic curriculum or employment skills. It is a leadership development program designed to build a sense of community that extends into students' daily lives, and skills that graduates will use throughout their professional and personal journeys.

- ① **Self-care practices.** Teaching and practicing self-care is foundational to our training for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system. Navigator students witness and participate in self-care during their training, so that they can continue these practices at work and model self-care for the people they work with. Our students are doing transformational internal work during the training and will be expected to do intensive transformational work on the job, too; retraumatization can happen in personal, educational, and work settings. We offer a two-day immersion in the Social Resilience Model (SRM)⁴⁰ near the start of the semester-long Navigator Certificate, followed up by six SRM practice sessions over the rest of the semester. Students are taught practices for strengthening and loving the self, gaining ability to access resilience that emerges through SRM grounding and visualization practices. Directly impacted individuals co-facilitate the SRM practice, so that our students are learning self-care from people who have faced similar challenges and can more specifically guide our students in implementing self-care practices in their lives.
- ② **Cohort model.** Unlike a traditional college course or professional training, the Navigator Certificate's intensive individual learning is nested in a supportive peer community. The intentional peer support starts during Navigator student orientation, continues through the semester, is celebrated in a graduation, and continues through alumni networks. Students work together in small groups to prepare for class, supporting each other in meeting the challenges of college coursework. The strategies of peer support are woven throughout the curriculum, from peer editing techniques taught in writing classes, to the peer coaching tool taught in the core employability skills curriculum. Students create chat groups on social media platforms (not administered by the Institute) as a way to support each other in fulfilling the demanding attendance and coursework requirements. Our goal is that the Navigator students will build social capital, taking this peer support model from the Navigator Certificate community, staying in touch with each other as well as the staff, and creating support systems for themselves in their workplaces.
- ③ **Human skills.** Termed the “keys to new economy opportunity” by Burning Glass,⁴¹ the human skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, analytical skills, and creativity are embedded in the teaching and learning of the Navigator Certificate. Navigator students work in teams throughout the semester, building their communication and problem-solving skills as they study and complete assignments.
- ④ **Transformational teaching and the practicum model.** Every aspect of the Navigator Certificate is designed to be used. Assignments are not theoretical academic papers, but reflective practice opportunities, asking students to write about how their classroom learning relates to experiences in their field placements and work places. Transformational teaching also relies on nontraditional pedagogy, such as the leadership development coaching that is embedded in our core employability skills training and a mentorship approach by Navigator instructors.
- ⑤ **Building a “family atmosphere” and meeting basic needs.** When the Navigator Certificate meets in person, the Institute provides hot, nutritious meals, eaten together as a community. Students receive Metrocards for travel to the John Jay campus, and to field placements. Many Navigator students experience food insecurity and economic distress, so food and transportation support are essential to a nurturing environment in which students can focus on their learning and growth because basic needs are met. The Institute provides all course texts and educational supplies free of charge, as well as providing Internet hotspots and lending laptop computers.

- ⑥ **Wraparound services.** The Institute links Navigator students with other support services as needed, including housing, health, and mental health services.
- ⑦ **Portable skills such as writing for human services and tech for human services.** The Navigator Certificate is designed to link any peer or credible messenger job to wider webs of work opportunities, supporting upward mobility within an organization, as well as lateral and upward mobility across organizations and across human services (such as a shift from substance use/recovery or gun violence prevention into reentry or health services). Navigator Certificate core competencies such as Tech for Human Services and Writing for Human Services are applicable across many jobs and sectors. For example, writing skills taught in the Navigator Certificate are universal (use of active tense, use of appropriate detail) but grounded in human services considerations (intended audience and their need for information, confidentiality, etc.).
- ⑧ **Employment services and career pathways.** Each Navigator student must complete an up-to-date professional resume and a career plan prior to graduation. Institute staff work with Navigator students who are not yet employed in human services to identify areas of interest and link students with host sites for a service learning/field placement opportunity of ten hours or more in a direct service (not administrative) environment. For Navigator students who are employed in human services, the field placement is a chance to explore new areas of work outside their current job description. Previous Navigator students have been able to try out new responsibilities, with the support of their supervisor and Institute staff, ultimately leading to an expanded job portfolio and pay increase. Institute staff have assisted alumni in their job searches and have helped overcome barriers to human services employment in correctional settings. While the pandemic has affected these services, they remain at the core of the vision for the Navigator Certificate.
- ⑨ **Educational pathways.** The Navigator Certificate is an intentional onramp to higher education. Navigator students who are interested in starting or

going back to college are referred to the Institute's College Initiative (CI). CI staff join the Navigator orientation and community meals so that there is a developing relationship and a "warm hand-off" to academic advisors who can assist Navigator students and alumni with identifying a college program that best suits their needs, clearing up old debts or other financial barriers, submitting college and financial aid applications, and linking them to CI mentors. Navigator alumni who enroll at John Jay receive six credits (three credits for one of the core courses in the Human Services and Community Justice major, Africana Studies 145, and three credits toward an elective in this major, Counseling 280). Several other colleges (BMCC, St. Francis College, and Bronx Community College currently, and others anticipated) also award undergraduate credits for related human services degrees.

- ⑩ **Workplace boundaries and personal transformation.** The Navigator Certificate strives to deepen our students' awareness of the nuances of peer and credible messenger work in order to maintain appropriate relationships with program participants, co-workers, and supervisors. The Navigator Certificate teaches students about ethics, in alignment with the learning objectives of John Jay's Human Services and Community Justice major. But Navigator Certificate workplace preparation is not as simple as requiring employees to adhere to ethical standards, even when the standards are tailored to peer roles. Instead, we aim to foster in students a sophisticated internal sensitivity to boundary concerns, and enhance their capacity for positive relationships with supervisors so they feel confident requesting guidance when it's needed.

In some areas of peer-designated work, ethical boundaries for peers have been clearly delineated as different from boundaries for other professionals. For example, people training for Certified Recovery Peer Advocate and other peer roles in the substance use recovery field learn in their training that while ethics would prevent clinicians from going to the home of a client for a meal, or from inviting a client into their own home for a meal, these kinds of close personal experiences can be an accepted and even desirable part of the peer role.

Yet, even when boundaries are different for peer roles, boundaries are still important, and they vary across programs and organizations. Guidelines may be imposed by a government funder or by agency policy. There is no single set of rules to be memorized by people with lived experience, who are being asked to build transformative relationships with program participants (or prospective participants) and abide by the particular policies of their program and the agency that employs them. And there is no way to predict all the potentially challenging situations that can arise in a human services job.

That is why the Navigator Certificate aims to develop a consciousness rather than teach a set of rules. What emerged in the Navigator design process, through dozens of conversations with directly impacted workers and with employers, is the need to train resilient, thoughtful workers who are attuned to boundary considerations, aware of what motivates their desire to help others, and feel comfortable seeking guidance from supervisors and others at their agencies.

As anticipated, Navigator Certificate students who are working in a variety of roles that value lived experience have shared some of their boundary challenges in the class. Here is a work situation that a Navigator student encountered:

I do outreach in parole offices, connecting with the people as they come in to meet with their parole officers. One time I went across the street to get pizza for lunch, and one of the men saw me coming out of the store. I could tell he was hungry. I wanted to give him my food. If I did that, the other guys would see me and want pizza too. Plus I was hungry myself. The next time I met with my supervisor I asked if we could buy pizza for everyone in the outreach group. He checked it out, and we got that in the budget.

Finding a sustainable way to address people's food insecurity and hunger in the context of building strong relationships with them is a relatively simple example of the kinds of boundary and ethics issues workers with lived experience face daily. Serious situations of boundary-crossing in human services settings can include workers getting involved in romantic relationships with program participants, inviting program participants who don't have housing to come stay in a worker's home, and workers becoming aware of, or involved in, illegal activities. While these challenges have always been part of human services work, the dimension of personal involvement and personal risk is different for workers who have been hired explicitly to create personal connections. Violations of complex boundary issues and agency policies have serious consequences for peer workers. These complex issues must be discussed in order to create an agency culture that supports employees with lived experience similar to those of program participants. Within a supportive agency culture, the personal connections built by workers with lived experience are powerful and offer the context for healing, healthy choices, and transformation among the people being served.

Listening to and sharing lived experience: Dimensions of Motivational Interviewing

The Navigator Certificate curriculum includes an intensive introduction to Motivational Interviewing (MI). Recognized as an evidence-based practice to reduce recidivism, MI is widely used in programs within the criminal legal system; in addition, MI skills are also in demand across an array of human services programs and interventions. In NYC, MI training is offered to a broad range of human services professionals as an “evidence-based, person-centered counseling method” that “offers tools to engage community members in compassionate, respectful, and collaborative helping relationships.”⁴²

With its focus on empathic listening and mirroring, MI is particularly valuable for workers with lived experience in the criminal legal system. For peer and credible messenger workers who have life experiences similar to the program participants they work with, there may be a temptation to think “if I can do it, you can” or “you should do it the way I did it.” MI skills can help protect against the tendency to believe that one’s own solutions are the answer to other people’s problems—a tendency that arises in all human services workers, not only those with lived experience. Instead, MI emphasizes empathic listening to surface a program participant’s specific motivations and goals, leading to a much stronger level of buy-in to whatever action steps the participant chooses.

The Institute credits and thanks Dr. Bukky Kolawole for partnering in the development of a unique MI-based curriculum that grounds choices about self-disclosure of lived experience within a human services context. The curriculum combines the deep connection and engagement of sharing personal stories with the empathic listening, reflecting, and affirming skills of MI. Navigator students are supported in a process of self-reflection about how and when they choose to share their own stories in the service of their work with other people. This has benefits for Navigator students, who may encounter an expectation about self-disclosure in the workplace that has the potential to be exhausting or re-traumatizing, as well as for the program participants that Navigator students and alumni will serve.

Sammy Santana

Fall 2019 Cohort

Before I began the Navigator program, I worked as a peer advocate at the Brooklyn Peer Advocacy Center. I didn't have a certificate, but I was working full time. While I was in the Navigator program, I also completed Academy of Peer Service certification, so I became a Peer Specialist. I needed three references for that certificate, and other Navigator students wrote letters for me. After graduating from the Navigator program, I got a raise and was promoted to Manager of Brooklyn Self-Help.

The Navigator program was good for networking and interacting with people. In our field, we are isolated. The peer advocate movement is new, so I'm the only person who can understand what I'm doing. In Navigator classes, you learn about the whole reentry field--cleaning rap sheets, and reentry programs that can offer additional services. The clientele at Brooklyn Self Help have a diagnosis or serious mental illness and also are affected by the criminal legal system. So in Navigator, I learned all the resources available, I made all these connections and broadened my resources. It opened a lot of doors.

After Navigator, I was ready to tackle everything with the participants in my program. I felt more prepared, I felt I had more to offer them than when I started in the position. If there was something I couldn't do myself, I knew who to point you to in the right direction. The Navigator program is hands on, it's kinetic. You have the informational components, and then the interaction with the instructor giving you one on one feedback. You have the cohort experience, other people you interact with and exchange ideas. Even if you don't agree you get this feedback. With Navigator you learn 'this is why, this is the reason.' During the pandemic, my work shifted online. I created online groups from scratch, set up the zoom and conference calls. As program manager, I was responsible for recruiting, attendance records, progress notes, monthly reports, demographics—all the record keeping. [The Institute's] Tech class was important to prepare for record keeping I had to do when I started the manager position. Doing progress notes [in the Navigator class on Writing for Human Services], I thought, maybe at some point I'll have to do this....Well, that's the exact thing I had to start doing at work.

I was living in a transitional shelter during most of Navigator, and moved into an apartment about three months after the program. Every other week I'll get a call from a friend, and people I don't know come out of nowhere, saying "people told me you can get resources, can you help me?" I'm the guy they go to. I feel more comfortable. I have the knowledge and the tools, let's make it happen.

It wasn't until I was getting feedback from other people in the Navigator program that I was able to shine. I thought, 'Maybe they're right, I am good at that.'

The Navigator program is well thought out, with the additional support services for it to be successful. You have some people who might be working and some not working. Everybody got a Metrocard and a meal before class. Little things like that were important. Even the backpack with the supplies, and the computers to borrow. Some of us might not have access to that. Some participants didn't have that, and they were grateful not to have to find some weird way to get a Metrocard or pass out from not eating.

My goal is to have a leadership role at a nonprofit organization. After the Navigator Certificate, I was selected for the Institute's Fellowship program at the David Rockefeller Fund, where I advised on grant-making. I had concerns about working closely with a new team, but it turned out to be an excellent experience. The passion that everyone shares for wanting to better the world through the DR Fund creates a respectful, communal atmosphere. Not once did I feel out of place or that I didn't belong. The collegial environment changed the dynamic from "people I work with" to "people I collaborate with."

Note: In 2022, Sammy became the Assistant Store Manager at the Housing Works Thrift Shop in Brooklyn.

Navigator Certificate Students & Graduates

Eligibility

The Navigator Certificate is open to students who have lived experience in the criminal legal system (directly impacted or have immediate family who is directly impacted) and want to work in human services.

Students must:

- Be 18+ years old
- Have a high school degree or equivalent
- Have basic tech skills
- Complete an online application
- Provide a reference letter

Considering the college-level rigor of the program and because of what we know about adult learning—that teaching is most effective when adults can use what they're learning—the best matches are:

- People who are currently working in entry-level roles and can immediately apply their learning at their workplaces; or
- People who have some prior college experience, including college in prison.

A total of 98 students earned the Navigator Certificate in Human Services and Community Justice from 2019 – 2022.

• **For the first time in my life**
• **[in the Navigator program]**
• **I felt this is where I belong.**
• **Being among other formerly**
• **incarcerated, it gave me the**
• **drive to say 'My work is**
• **valuable.**

— NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

Post-program employment and education

The Institute reached out to alumni to hear their perspectives on whether the program met the goals of:

- **Preparing people with lived experience in the criminal legal system for jobs and promotions in human services, and**
- **Building academic readiness and generating interest in starting or returning to college.**

Two-thirds of the alumni from our first two cohorts (29/44 graduates from spring and fall of 2019) participated in focus groups, interviews and/or online surveys regarding their experiences after completing the Navigator Certificate.

• **You feel more prepared, and you feel ready to look for a job after Navigator. Sometimes there's this intimidation—how do I compare to the sixty other people applying? What am I bringing to the table that's going to be appealing to them? I have this certificate, this proves I've gone above and beyond and put time into it.**

• — NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

• **I look at my community with a different eye and see the disparities. The Navigator class made me feel more confident that my role in the organization matters, even entry level, because that role helps achieve the overall goal. So I don't see it as less-than, but the opportunity to do the best that I can in that position.**

• — NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

Alumni economic mobility*



of alumni respondents **increased salary**



of alumni respondents **experienced employment gains**

a new job, a promotion, or expanded job duties

Many alumni experienced major salary growth. At 16-22 months post-program, there was an increase from three to ten respondents earning more than \$46k. The top salary range increased from \$46k-55k to \$71k-80k.

OTHER GAINS

Of the 29 people in this sample:



8 gained **benefits** (health insurance, paid leave, etc)



5 were **promoted** to a supervisory role



5 went from working part-time to **full-time employment**



4 went from no employment to **full-time jobs in human services** (3 earning \$41k-\$45k, and 1 earning \$36k-\$40k)

ALUMNI JOB TITLES

The breadth of work Navigator graduates do across the spectrum of human services is reflected in the array of job titles shared by survey respondents:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>Acting Director</i> | <i>Manager of Peer Services</i> |
| <i>Care Navigator</i> | <i>Mortuary Technician</i> |
| <i>Case Manager</i> | <i>Peer Bridger</i> |
| <i>Certified Recovery Peer Advocate</i> | <i>Peer Counselor</i> |
| <i>Co-Founder/COO</i> | <i>Peer Specialist</i> |
| <i>Community Activist</i> | <i>Program Manager</i> |
| <i>Community Health Worker</i> | <i>Senior Coach</i> |
| <i>Development Associate</i> | <i>Senior Peer Bridger</i> |
| <i>Home Health Aide</i> | <i>Senior Peer Supervisor</i> |
| <i>House Manager</i> | <i>Supervisor of Work Experiences</i> |
| <i>Housing Specialist</i> | <i>Training Associate</i> |
| <i>Lead Employment Training Specialist</i> | <i>Youth & Young Adult Mentor</i> |
| | <i>Case Manager/Career Development Facilitator</i> |

EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

Three alumni respondents were not employed at 16-22 months post-program. They identified the following barriers to employment:

- COVID-19
- Difficulty knowing where to job search
- Prior criminal legal system involvement

*29 alumni responded to a survey sent in April 2021 to all 44 alumni of cohorts 1 & 2 / Spring & Fall 2019. The data on this page is based on their responses.

Alumni leadership

Navigator Certificate alumni are leaders and community builders. Entrepreneurial alumni have started their own nonprofits, providing services for immigrants and for young people, and a business. Other alumni have served as policy advocates and volunteer leaders. Several serve as advisory committee members for the Navigator Certificate. Two completed training as community researchers, earning research ethics certification and working as members of an Urban Institute research team.



Served as policy advocates



Volunteered at food pantries



Started a new networking platform for formerly incarcerated people



Started a new nonprofit to assist immigrants and mentor young people



Received bonus for performance during pandemic



Served as community researchers (with ethics research certification)

• **The Navigator Certificate was a great learning experience...I was still in the course of reentry, I'm not that far away. I jumped in full body... criminal justice reform is still personal for me. I got a lot out of the Navigator program...My perception has changed. Community resources need to be advocated for in communities like mine. It helped me identify the intersection between mental health, substance abuse, and the criminal justice system. That was a huge turning point for me.**

— NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

• **I see the need in my community. I got a chance to intern with Osborne in court advocacy...I got to see where we are as a people, we're in trauma and trouble, we need help. There's needs going unmet and issues not addressed, and those of us who have an opportunity to go under the surface and assist, it's important. It's one of the reasons I decided to stay in school and study.**

— NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM

Alumni education

For Navigator Certificate students interested in higher education, the program provides:

• “The writing class, and having the college culture, a little taste of it from Navigator, the time on Blackboard [learning management system]—all of that was new prior to Navigator. So when I went to Hostos, I knew how to work my way around...A lot of professors are surprised at the way I respond. I do a lot of reaching out in one-on-one hours. Knowing how to address the professors, that I learned from Navigator. It gives me that little edge to get through. My first semester I have a 3.5 GPA. I’m an older guy. I haven’t been to school in almost thirty years. To come out and accomplish this, I owe it all to the Navigator program.”

— NAVIGATOR CERTIFICATE ALUM



A supported **first experience of college-level coursework** for students with no prior college



A **path back to college and degree completion** for students who had some prior college experience



6 undergraduate credits toward a related human services degree after enrollment at colleges with articulation agreements

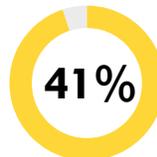
(CUNY: Borough of Manhattan Community College, Bronx Community College, John Jay College; also St. Francis College)



Links to education services for students seeking a second degree or other certificate trainings



Direct connection to the Institute's College Initiative (CI) program, which offers assistance with college applications and financial aid applications, along with peer mentoring



of alumni in first three cohorts **sought CI services for higher ed**



Alumni college enrollments

3 at John Jay College

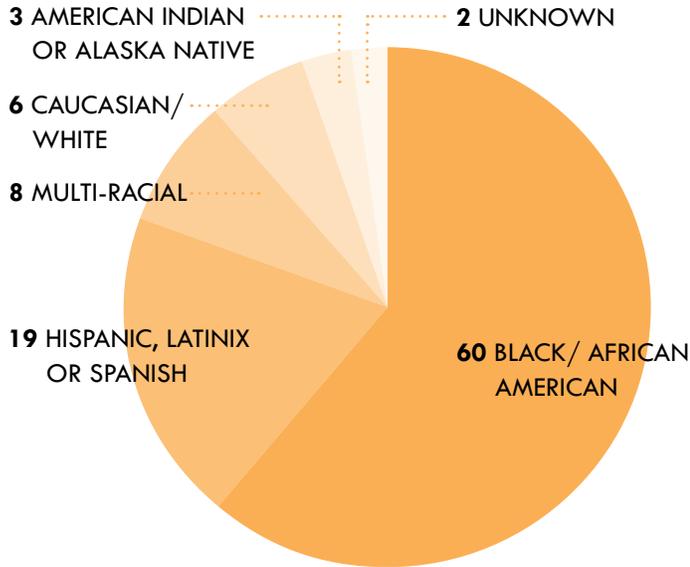
2 at St. Francis College

1 at SUNY Empire State College

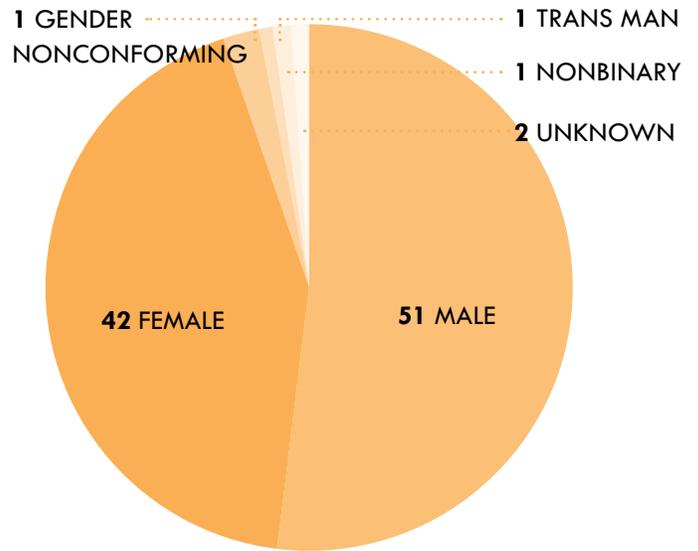
Demographics

This section contains information for the 98 Navigator Certificate alumni, 2019-2022.

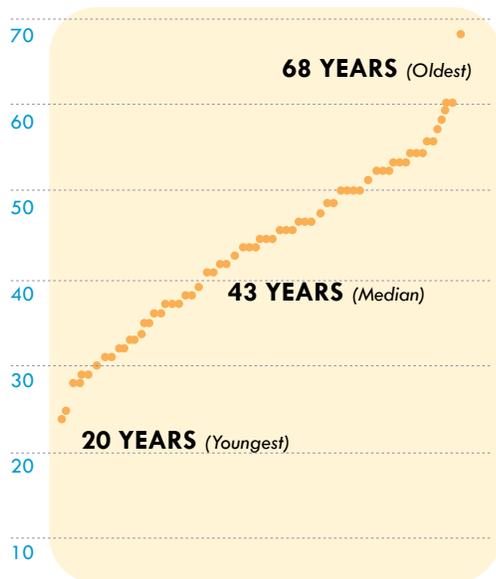
RACE



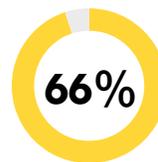
GENDER



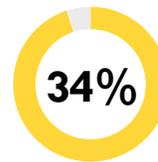
AGE AT INTAKE



HOUSING DURING PROGRAM



Living in private residence

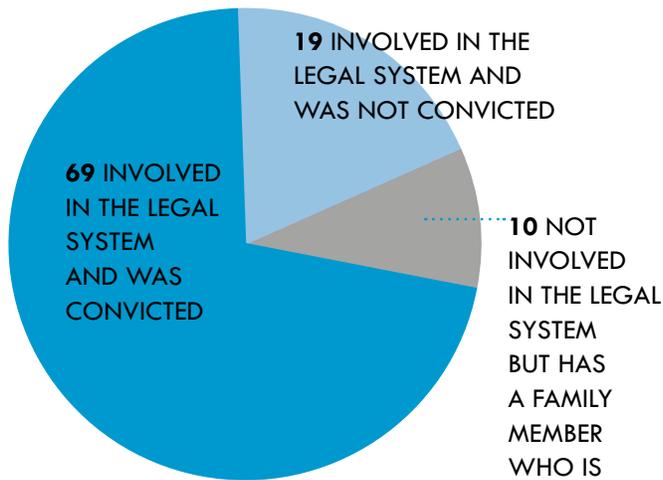


Living in housing other than private residence, including **halfway house, scattersite, supportive and transitional housing, shelter, residential programs,** and other housing.

Legal System Involvement & Referral Sources

This section contains information for the 98 Navigator Certificate alumni, 2019-2022.

LIVED EXPERIENCE IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM (N=98)



LENGTH OF INCARCERATION (N=77)*



* INCLUDES ALUMNI WHO WERE IN PRISON AND THOSE WHO WERE IN JAIL AND NOT CONVICTED.

SOURCE OF REFERRALS	NUMBER OF REFERRALS
Academy of Peer Services	1
Baltic Street Inc.	2
Center for Employment Opportunities	2
Center for Urban Community Services	2
Community Health Action of Staten Island	1
Exponents	12
Exodus Transitional Community	1
Fortune Society	12
GOSO	2
Housing Works	3
Justice Leadership USA	1
Osborne Association	6
Parole Officer	2
Probation Officer	1
Samaritan Daytop Village	2
Second Chance Reentry	1
The Institute's College Initiative	3
The Institute's Prison-to-College Pipeline	4
The Institute's Other Services	2
Women's Prison Association	3
Word of Mouth/Other	35

98

Workforce Access & Organizational Culture

Realizing that investments in tech skills training and supervisory training would be integral to the success of the Navigator Certificate, the Institute proposed a new Tech 101 course and the Collective Leadership Supervisor Training to the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, which approved development and delivery of these training programs.

Tech 101: Introduction to technology for the workplace

Developing digital technology skills is absolutely essential for success in the workforce, including the human services workforce, for people who are formerly incarcerated. Even jobs that are conducted in the field rather than the office require digital skills; in fact, many navigator positions require use of tablets and other mobile devices. From online job search to communication via email, people with lived experience in the criminal legal system need digital skills to find and retain employment.

Tech 101 was developed as an in-person, entry-level course that introduced fundamental technology skills needed in

today's workforce and gave students hands-on experience with technology in workforce readiness applications. This course was designed for people with lived experience in the criminal justice system who are completely new to computers or who want more instruction to prepare for an entry-level position in today's market.

In a classroom setting, students were provided with a laptop computer and Internet connection. The course introduced the Microsoft Office Suite and Google G-Suite, with a focus on teaching tech skills directly applicable to job search (e.g. using internet search skills to look for jobs, using Microsoft Word skills to develop a resume, etc.). Students also learned about online privacy and managing their online footprint. Fast Company featured Tech 101 noting that "for people that served sentences that began before computers were widely available, our current tech landscape is inscrutable."

Like the Institute's other in-person trainings, Tech 101 was suspended in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. The Institute has continued to address student technology needs in other ways, including giving students tablets and hotspots for internet access and providing one-on-one remote tech tutoring. As part of the pivot to remote tech skills instruction, all students served by the Institute receive a tech assessment and have access to the Northstar Digital Literacy training online, with individual tech tutoring as needed from Institute staff to scaffold the Northstar online curriculum. A revamped, remote Tech class is also being offered.

Collective Leadership Supervisor Training

Training for supervisors is often the best way to invest in the development of all employees and produce mission-consistent outcomes. However, targeted training to supervisors of people impacted by the criminal legal system has the potential to shift organizational culture at a crucial time, when many employers seek to increase the diversity of their workforces and expand hiring for people who were formerly incarcerated.

The Institute developed the Collective Leadership Supervisor Training (CLST) in partnership with David Mensah, a leadership development trainer and executive coach who has also served as lead instructor for the Navigator Certificate. The 21-hour course was designed in response to employer-partners and people with lived experience working in human services who identified key issues related to communication, professional boundaries, and employee experiences of trauma. The training is delivered in three full-day, in-person sessions, or seven 3-hour online sessions. The training increases supervisors' capacity to convey workplace expectations and performance feedback, builds their trauma-informed supervision practices, and develops a "collective leadership" approach that makes space for initiative and leadership by employees at all levels.

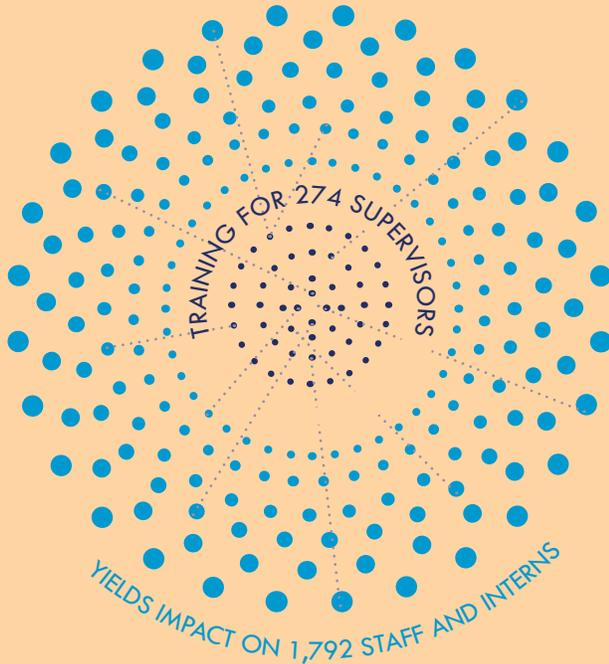
The course is offered over approximately ten weeks in order to allow time for practice and reflection between training sessions. Supervisors are expected to report back to the class on successes/challenges in their efforts to practice the skills learned and to receive additional training and coaching.

Learning Objectives for Supervisors

- ① **Coaching and Giving Feedback:** strengthen supervisory skills including relationship building, listening, coaching, and giving effective feedback.
- ② **Initiative, Accountability and Leadership:** increase capacity to foster supervisees' initiative, self-accountability and practical leadership regardless of their level of authority.
- ③ **Self-Reflection and Asking for Feedback:** refine the use of supervision practices to assess the supervisor's own effectiveness and close the gap between supervisory intention and the actual impact of supervisory intervention on those supervised.
- ④ **Supervision and Trauma-Informed Best Practices:** strengthen the fundamental supervisory practices to work with all employees, including those impacted by trauma. Learn to provide trauma-informed supervision without diagnosing or providing treatment.
- ⑤ **Organizational Culture:** learn to read and interpret organizational culture systems in order to supervise effectively within these systems, as well as challenge these systems to expand in order to support a more equitable diversity of staff, management, and leadership.
- ⑥ **Professional Boundaries:** increase awareness of the role that effective professional boundaries play in a healthy organizational culture and then model and supervise staff to develop and maintain effective boundaries.

Collective Leadership Supervisor Training Impact

Ten Collective Leadership Supervisor Training cohorts have been held from fall 2019 through summer 2022, training 274 supervisors who were responsible for supervising 1,792 staff and interns.



These trainings have deepened supervisory capacity across the spectrum of NYC human services organizations, from youth justice and reentry to behavioral health, housing, and employment programs. In post-program surveys, supervisors described their experience in the training as follows:

“life-changing and transformative...many of my reflex practices are now being revamped.”

“I now have the tools to actually cultivate the leadership skills of my supervisees rather than having them rely on me for direction...I’m much more conscious of how I can do better about creating leadership culture.”

“I am committed to hiring individuals with lived experience and now feel better prepared to offer the support and structure to set any employee from any background up for success.”

“this training...has changed the way I lead.”

Is responsive to employers: Our employer-partners acknowledged that, alongside hiring people with lived experience in the criminal legal system for human services work, it’s essential to build skills among supervisors.

Equips supervisors to **expand workplace culture** to support all workers, including workers impacted by the legal system and other systems.

Addresses ways that community and individual staff **trauma can impact supervisors:** Creating a culture where trauma is acknowledged and healing can happen but supervisors aren’t expected to be therapists.

Is a **workforce development strategy** for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system: nearly a third of enrolled supervisors are directly impacted, so this training is a strategy for supporting their promotions in the human services workforce.

Is an **investment in supervisors with a broader impact** on all staff and, ultimately, participants.

Acknowledgments

Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

The John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity thanks the NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice for supporting the Navigator Certificate in Human Services and Community Justice. We are particularly grateful to Sarah Cassel, Director of Diversion and Reentry Initiatives at MOCJ, for her guidance and partnership.

Career Pathways Advisory Committee

The Institute extends deep thanks to the members of the advisory committee for the expertise and time they have devoted to the development of the Navigator Certificate, Tech 101, and Collective Leadership Supervisor Training. The many years of experience and breadth of perspectives represented by this dedicated group are the foundation for the Institute's evolving career pathways approach.

The Institute also honors the memory of Russelle (Rusti) Miller-Hill, who was a member of the committee from its inception in 2018 until she passed away in 2021. Rusti was a fierce advocate who made sure that committee discussions always centered the employment needs and career aspirations of people inside, and returning from, prison. Rusti's passion

inspired her leadership in many roles. She was Reentry Coordinator for the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, guiding supports for people post-incarceration. At the Columbia University Center for Justice, Rusti was a member of the 2020 Women Transcending Collective Leadership Institute, and she was a Justice Advisory Committee member at the New York Women's Foundation. In 2014, the Legal Action Center awarded Rusti the Arthur Liman Public Interest Award for Criminal Justice and Health Advocacy. We remember Rusti's extraordinary leadership and are grateful that the graduates of the Navigator Certificate, in bringing lived experience to leadership in human services, are continuing Rusti's powerful legacy.

Jamie Alleyne-Morris, DRF Fund Fellow, Navigator Certificate Alum
Wesley Caines, Bronx Defenders
Gisele Castro, Exalt
Alison Dieguez, CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance
Kenneth Edwards, Center for Employment Opportunities
Albert Fermin, Technology Training Advisor
Tracie Gardner, Legal Action Center
Gyasi Headen, Osborne Association
Tyrone Gardner, Mentors on the Move 4 Life, Navigator Certificate Alum
John Gordon, Friends of Island Academy
Parker Krasney, NYC Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity
Russelle Miller-Hill, Advisor, In Memoriam

Danielle Mindess, Midtown Community Court
Courtney Ramirez, Family Engagement & Youth Advocacy, Division of Youth and Family Justice, NYC Administration for Children's Services
Nyasha Rivera, Legacy Makers International
Sammy Santana, DRF Fund Fellow, Navigator Certificate Alum
Shaquala Santiago, GOSO
Joshua Serrano, NYC Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity
Lily Shapiro, Fortune Society
Thern Shivers, New York Communities for Change, Navigator Certificate Alum
Helen "Skip" Skipper, NYC Justice Peer Initiative, Navigator Certificate Alum
Abraham Tejeda, NYC Commission on Human Rights
Amanda Trainor, Women's Prison Association

John Jay College Partners

The Institute is deeply grateful to our many partners across John Jay College for turning the vision of a “non-credit to credit” program into a reality. We are very proud that the College dedicated its resources to make this first-of-its-kind for the College available to students impacted by the criminal legal system.

Karol Mason, President
Yi Li, Provost
Dara Byrne, Former Dean

Africana Studies
Dr. Jessica Gordon-Nembhardt, Chair
Dr. C. Jama Adams
Dr. Joseph Maldonado

Counseling & Human Services
Dr. Robert Delucia, Chair
Dr. Katherine Stavrianopoulos, Chair
Betty Taylor-Leacock, M.S.Ed., PD, LMHC

SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge)
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Continuing and Professional Studies
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Office of Public Safety
Diego Redondo, Director
Quanessa Johnson

Navigator Certificate in Human Services and Community Justice

Faculty & Guest Lecturers

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Giselle Castro, MSW, exalt
Ronald Day, Ph.D., Fortune Society
Liz Gaynes, J.D., Osborne Association
Albert King, Osborne Association, Social Resilience Model Facilitator
Bukky Kolawole, Psy.D., Relationship HQ
Laurie Leitch, Ph.D., Threshold Global Works
David Mensah, M.Div, WAVE Training and Consulting
Frantz Michel, Navigator alum, Social Resilience Model Facilitator
Ellen Piris Perez, J.D., Community Service Society
Ikim Powell, exalt

Stakeholders

The Institute thanks the many individuals who contributed in a variety of ways to the development of the Navigator Certificate and the Institute's Career Pathways approach, by participating in focus groups and interviews, reviewing report drafts and providing feedback, participating in the stakeholder convening, and/or inviting Institute staff to visit their training programs.

Rev. Rubén Austria, Community Connections for Youth

Ana Bermudez, NYC Department of Probation

Jim Becker, Richmond Community Foundation
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Nadine Brown, Queensborough Community College
CRPA Training

Elaina Camacho, Housing Works

Ife Charles, Center for Court Innovation

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Khalil Cumberbatch, Fortune Society

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Ken Gill, Rutgers School of Health Professions

April Glad, Pinkerton Foundation

Eric Grossman, formerly Women's Prison Association

Julie Kempner, formerly Hunter College

Dona Pagan, Exponents

Joshua Laub, NYC Department of Education

Ann-Marie Louison, Center for Alternative Sentencing and
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Kristin Morse, Center for New York City Affairs,
The New School

Sarah Nusbaum, New York Alliance for Careers in
Healthcare, NYC Small Business Services

Saj Rahman, formerly Institute for Transformative Mentoring

Paul Richards, NYC Department of Probation

Akil Salter, Osborne Association

Laura Senkevitch, formerly Fortune Society

Shira Shavit, Transitions Clinic Network

Amy Spagnolo, Rutgers University

Josephine Troia, Queensborough Community College

Veronica Vargas, formerly Homeboy Industries

Ashwin Vasan, formerly NYC DOHMH

Christopher Watler, Center for Employment Opportunities

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Epiphany-Trinity Hinds

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Melannie Insignares

Gerald Maitre

Denisse Martinez

Aya Mohamed

Keasha Passe

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Ashley Rodriguez

Elena Sigman

Amint Trawally

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Will Schwartz

Leigh Sugar

David Thorpe

Cynthia Treanor

Karina Velez

Sonja Okun, Program Design Consultant

Appendix: Navigator Certificate Learning Objectives

The Navigator Certificate is an intensive program, the equivalent of two college level courses. To support Navigator students in gaining the core competencies, the Certificate has a broad set of learning objectives to equip graduates for a wide variety of jobs and further academic coursework. The learning objectives also focus in depth on the areas that people with lived experience and employers identified as crucial, and where the Institute brings particular expertise to fill a training need.

Learning Objectives

A. Foundational knowledge of human services and community justice. Introduction to concepts and building understanding in the following areas:

Social construction of race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality

Racialized capitalism (impact of systemic racism and capitalism on individual choices—human services work within the existing political economy)

Human services sector: the roles and functions of government agencies and community-based organizations in the creation and delivery of human services.

Human services profession and ethics, including history, values, and approaches to helping people and communities.

Community development and community-based approaches to justice

Understanding of who is impacted by the criminal legal system: individual and community level data and special needs (race, health, gender, mental health, impacted communities)

Helping processes: working with people who have experienced trauma and violence, substance use/treatment, and the criminal legal system

Community activism

Criminal legal system 101: introduction to the NYC and NYS systems

Know your rights: introduction to legal protections for people with conviction records who seek employment and housing

B. Human Services (“hard”) Skills
Skills development and practice in the following areas:

NYC Social services and referral strategies (how to find and access services; includes introduction to intake/assessment)

Stages of Change & Motivational Interviewing

Finding voice & listening: Drawing on lived experience as part of engaging people in services and supporting people in making positive choices. Using Motivational Interviewing skills, students will develop a theoretical framework and practical skills for engaging people in human services. Students will explore how their lived experience with the criminal legal system can inform their listening to the people they work with

Social Resilience Model: Neuroscience of self-regulation + emotional self-regulation skills for trauma-informed practice

Writing for human services: practical writing skills for professional emails, referral letters, and case notes

Technology for human services: using mobile devices in the field, accessing human services databases, making online referrals, finding online information about criminal justice status.

C. Employability (“soft”) skills

Skills development and practice essential to human services workplaces (and applicable to all workplace settings):

Collective Leadership: taking responsibility, reflecting on one’s work, asking for feedback from others, using peer coaching to facilitate leadership in others

Organizational culture: navigating workplace norms and expectations

Workplace boundaries: gaining clarity about roles and seeking help with boundary challenges

Communication: understanding and being responsive to different communication styles, shifting communication approach to increase effectiveness

Self-care and emotional regulation using the Social Resilience Model

D. Higher Education (student success) skills

Navigator Certificate students additionally develop competencies needed for success in higher education. These competencies are developed through engagement with Institute staff and through the formation of a supportive peer network among Navigator students. Students learn the skills needed for managing workload, reading a syllabus, and reading academic articles. They also develop time management and help-seeking skills appropriate to the demands of taking two college-level courses.

Reading for academia: decoding academic articles, reading/following a syllabus

Writing for academia: writing brief papers that bring together lived experience/workplace experience/field placement experience with human services theoretical content; citation style and best practice

Technology for academia: Blackboard learning management system

Time management and help-seeking: time-blocking and deadline planning, self-identifying areas of concern and seeking assistance from staff and/or faculty

Student peer support: peer-to-peer learning offering mentorship in areas of strength and seeking

Endnotes

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2. Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, 5 (2003):937-975, https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/pager/files/pager_ajs.pdf.
3. Michele Weldon, "Nonprofits So White: New Report on Lack of Inclusion Offers Strategies," Race to Lead, An Initiative of Building Movement Project, June 2020, <https://racetolead.org/nonprofits-so-white-new-report-on-lack-of-inclusion-offers-strategies/>. See also Anastasia Reesa Tomkin, "How White People Conquered the Nonprofit Industry," *Nonprofit Quarterly*, May 26, 2020, <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/how-white-people-conquered-the-nonprofit-industry/>.
4. NYC Commission on Human Rights, "Fair Chance Act," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/fair-chance-law.page>.
5. NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, "Office of Pretrial Justice Initiatives," <https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/office-of-pretrial-justice-initiatives/>.
6. NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, "Atlas," <https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/atlas/>.
7. The Credible Messenger Justice Center sponsors an annual conference <https://cmjcenter.org/conference/> which is one of several forums where the impact of the work has been shared by those directly involved. The healing power of this work was also shared at the Pinkerton Symposium on Credible Messenger Mentoring, held in April of 2018, <https://justiceandopportunity.org/event/pinkerton-symposium-intersection-healing-justice-credible-messenger-mentoring/>.
8. Mathew Lynch, Nan Marie Astone, Juan Collazos, et al., *Arches Transformative Mentoring Program: An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City* (New York: Urban Institute, 2018), vi-vii, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/evidence/Arches_Final_2018.pdf. "Arches participants are significantly less likely to be reconvicted of a crime. Relative to their peers, felony reconviction rates among Arches participants are 69 percent lower 12 months after beginning probation and 57 percent lower 24 months after beginning probation... Qualitative findings show that participants report very close and supportive relationships with mentors, attributed to mentors' status as credible messengers, their 24/7 availability for one-on-one mentoring, and a "family atmosphere" within the program." For additional research on Credible Messengers, see also Rod Martinez, Mari McGilton, Azhar Gulaid, Davon Woodley, Helen Skipper, Lauren Farrell, Mel Langness, Romel Shuler, Janeen Buck Willison, *New York City's Wounded Healers: A Cross-Program, Participatory Action Research Study of Credible Messengers*, Urban Institute, December 8, 2022, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/new-york-citys-wounded-healers-cross-program-participatory-action-research>.
9. Center for Employment Opportunities, "Effectively Reaching Young Adult Job Seekers with Prior Justice Involvement," (blog), March 17, 2021. <https://ceoworks.org/blog/effectively-reaching-young-adult-job-seekers-with-prior-justice-involvement>.
10. Hiring people with lived experience in the criminal justice system is not a new idea. To mention just two examples, this was a core principle of the Department of Labor-funded Court Employment Project (predecessor to CASES) and Project Crossroad funded in 1967.
11. Judith Katz, *Some Aspects and Assumptions of White Culture in the United States* (Troy, NY: The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc., 1990).
12. Mathew Lynch, Nan Marie Astone, Juan Collazos, et al., *Arches Transformative Mentoring Program: An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City* (New York: Urban Institute, 2018), vi-vii, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/evidence/Arches_Final_2018.pdf.
13. Even grassroots organizations led by formerly incarcerated people and employing people impacted by the criminal legal system face these challenges because they too must function within the traditional nonprofit landscape of funder requirements, contracts, nonprofit governance, etc. Violence interruption and other credible messenger/peer work that is primarily in the field rather than in the office may face fewer culture clashes, but still operates within the human services ecosystem; workers must follow certain rules to collect a paycheck..
14. As American society more closely explores racism and racial bias, it has been observed that norms in most nonprofit and government human services workplaces in NYC reflect white cultural values. Examples of white cultural norms that are valued in the workplace include "self-reliance" and "independence and autonomy." (*Some Aspects and Assumptions of White Culture in the United States* Judith H. Katz ©1990, The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc.) The carceral state strips people of independent decision-making and autonomy—the antithesis of what is required to prepare people for success in the workplace.
15. Indeed Editorial Team, "How to Improve Your Eye Contact," *Career Guide*, June 15, 2022, <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/eye-contact>.

16. An analysis of “prisonization” describes “the process by which inmates are shaped and transformed by the prison environments in which they live...The process of prisonization includes some or all of the following psychological adaptations: dependence on institutional structure and the relinquishment of autonomy; hypervigilance, interpersonal mistrust, and suspicion; emotional over-control, alienation, and psychological distancing; social withdrawal and isolation; incorporation of exploitative norms of prison culture; diminished sense of self-worth and personal value; and posttraumatic stress reactions to the pains of imprisonment...These prisonization effects jeopardize the personal and behavioral characteristics required to be effective parents and employees upon release.” Craig Haney, *Psychological Impact of Incarceration: Implications for Post-Prison Adjustment*, Office of Justice Programs, National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 2002, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/psychological-impact-incarceration-implications-post-prison>.
17. New York State Office of Mental Health, Office of Addiction Services and Supports, *New York State Community Oriented Recovery and Empowerment Services, An 1115 Waiver Demonstration of Adult Rehabilitation Services Operations Manual for Designated Providers*, October 2021, 18, <https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/bho/core/core-services-operations-manual.pdf>.
<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/bho/core/core-services-operations-manual.pdf>.
18. In “Essential or Expendable? How Human Services Supported Communities Through COVID-19 and Recommendations to Support an Equitable Recovery,” the Human Services Council reports on underfunding in the nonprofit human services sector. “Over the past several decades, government has transferred most legally mandated social services to the nonprofit sector to save on costs. Although government is a meaningful funder for many nonprofits, the investment simply isn’t enough. Nonprofits report that an average of 77 percent of revenues came from government contracts in 2020 and what they do pay often came late. The nonprofit sector is treated the way it is because of who they serve and who they employ. Government savings are borne on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities who get reduced services and a workforce that is predominantly made up of women and people of color who are paid poverty-level wages.”
<https://humanservicescouncil.ftlbcnd.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/HSC-Taskforce-Report-Essential-or-Expendable-How-Human-Services-Support-Communities-Through-COVID-19.pdf>.
19. NYC Peer & CHW Workforce Consortium, *NYC Peer Workforce Job Posting Analysis, 2020 Year in Review*, https://mcusercontent.com/760aea3c07df7a33b39b8b811/files/02266974-bd0c-44fc-b122-6bf1b1e7dfba/NYC_Peer_Workforce_2020_Workforce_Analysis_v2.pdf.
20. MIT Living Wage Calculator, Counties and Metropolitan Statistical Areas in New York, listed the “living wage” in Bronx, Kings, New York, and Queens Counties as \$17.99/hour, which annualizes at \$32,742 for a 35-hour work week. By 2022 the living wage increased to \$21.77/hour, which annualizes at \$39,621 for a 35-hour work week. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/36/locations>.
21. New York Peer Specialist Certification Board, “NYCPS P Application Jan 2018,” accessed December 10, 2020, <http://nypeerspecialist.org/>.
22. Community Access, Howie the Harp (HTH) Advocacy Center, <https://www.communityaccess.org/our-work/education/jobreadiness/howie-the-harp>.
23. Gita Enders, MA, CPRP, Director of Peer Services, NYC Health + Hospitals, presentation at a meeting of the Peer Workforce Consortium, December 17, 2020.
24. New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare, “Case Study: Certified Recovery Peer Advocate,” <https://www.nyachnyc.org/case-studies/crpa>. Queensborough Community College offers over 90 hours of training, including a non-credit CRPA Certification Workshop and a three-credit Addictions and Dependencies course. Queensborough Community College, “Grant-Sponsored Programs and Partnerships,” <https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/conted/Grant-Sponsored-Programs1.html>. The QCC CRPA training model has been replicated at Bronx Community College and at Staten Island Community College.
25. Exponents, “Training for Professional Development,” <https://www.exponents.org/training-for-professional-development/>.
26. Academy of Peer Services Virtual Learning Community, Job Search Strategies, provides information about jobs and tips for creating open jobs reports, <https://aps-community.org/job-reports/>.
27. NYC Health + Hospitals, “NYC Health + Hospitals Launches Peer Academy Training Program To Support Behavioral Health Patients in the Health System,” December 6, 2021, <https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/pressrelease/peer-academy-training-program-launches-to-support-behavioral-health-patients/>.
28. News about the Justice Peer Initiative is available on the website of fiscal sponsor CASES, <https://www.cases.org/2022/09/30/big-news-cases-the-justice-peer-initiative-win-the-recovery-innovation-challenge/>.
29. See, for example, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), Department of Corrections (GDC), and Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network (GMHCN), “Forensic Peer Mentor Program,” <https://medicaid.georgia.gov/behavioral-health-services/forensic-peer-mentor-program>.
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31. NYC Commission on Human Rights, *Legal Enforcement Guidance on the Fair Chance Act and Employment Discrimination on the Basis of Criminal History*, updated to reflect amendments in 2021, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/fair-chance-act.page>.

32. Wallis E. Adams, "Unintended consequences of institutionalizing peer support work in mental healthcare," *Social Science & Medicine* 262, (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113249>.
33. The New School, "Institute for Transformative Mentoring Home," <http://www.centernyc.org/itm-home>.
34. The Credible Messenger Justice Center, "About the Center," <https://cmjcenter.org/about-the-center/>.
35. Ted Alcorn, "Reporting for Work Where You Once Reported for Probation," December 13, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/12/credible-messengers-reform-criminal-justice-system/603514/>.
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37. In adult learning theory, learning refers to the classroom-based learning and learning transfer refers to the incorporation of the learning into the professional setting. Mary L. Broad and John W. Newstrom, *Transfer of Training* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1992).
38. While the Navigator Certificate offers an intensive Motivational Interviewing training, it does not include training on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Both are considered evidence-based practices that can reduce recidivism, commonly used in programs serving people involved in the criminal legal system. However, there are many CBT curricula to choose from, with no clear favorite in NYC or across the US. Rather than dedicate the time to teach one CBT curriculum, which might be applicable in only a subset of our students' workplaces, the curriculum focuses on foundational skills that are broadly applicable across human services.
39. The Institute refers to these as essential practices, rather than best practices, because they are fluid and in formation. They were developed based on information from directly impacted individuals, from other training providers, and from faculty. These practices can change as needed based on the global pandemic and other shifting needs of our students.
40. Threshold GlobalWorks, "An Introduction to the Social Resilience Model," <https://www.thresholdglobalworks.com/about/social-resilience/>.
41. Burning Glass (now known as Lightcast, <https://lightcast.io>) is an analytics software company that offers labor market data including job growth and skills in demand. Information about "human skills" was included in a presentation by CEO Matthew Sigelman, to CUNY Adult Continuing Education programs in 2021.
42. The CUNY School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS), in partnership with the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity) and the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH) offers Motivational Interviewing training to a range of nonprofit organizations to increase mental health supports to their communities and improve mental health and other outcomes. <https://sps.cuny.edu/about/news/recovery-all-us-academy-community-behavioral-health-expands-offerings>.

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