

Bridging the Cultural Gap: Collaboration between the Health Care System and the Ex-convict Population

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PRESENTATION FORMAT: 15 minute oral presentation

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: The Public Health Community At Large

ABSTRACT: The Problem: People coming home from prison face a number of challenges in making a successful adjustment. They are preoccupied with getting basic needs met and see health care as a luxury. Though this population cuts across many demographics, their common prison experience forms a unique subculture. Studies have shown that they are 12.5 times more likely to die within the first two weeks of release than the general population and that one in twelve were hospitalized within 90 days.

Our Approach: Clearly prisoners need to understand the impact that good health has on their success in the community. Health care providers need to understand how ex-convicts perceive institutions, authority and health. We respond to this by facilitating direct interaction between prisoners and ex-convicts and health care providers. This interaction includes one-on-one conversations, small and large group discussions, and evaluation.

Our Conclusions: Health care providers need training and exposure to the ex-convict subculture. One in 33 people in the U.S. is on supervision, so the likelihood of encountering members of this population is high. Health care professional institutions need to include curricula about this subculture. Ex-convicts need education and support to understand their own role in health promotion.

OBJECTIVE(S): Identify ex-cons as a vulnerable subculture with unique needs and experiences that impact health. Identify specific health concerns and barriers faced by ex-cons. Equip participants to adapt their practices and policies to better serve this group.

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