

Stories of Impact Mental Health First Aid- April 2022

Funding Source: Bank of America

How many people attended and/or were impacted? 13

Success Story:

In partnership with the Women in Leadership nonprofit, a Mental Health First Aid training for formerly incarcerated women and women who are soon to be released from Springer Corrections Facility was scheduled to be held March 21st through March 25th. I served as a co-instructor in the course.

Participants traditionally join a one-day session where they engage in the training either in-person or online over a 1-2 day session (a total of 8 hours). Understanding that participants who are currently incarcerated would likely be available for a limited amount of times, the training sessions were held in two-hour blocks over four days. However, we found that there were further limitations for the currently incarcerated women who would often have to end the sessions earlier than expected due to their many restrictions and unexpected changes.

When the women were required to end the sessions early, they expressed their concern for not being able to complete the course and for what they perceived as an inconvenience to the rest of the group. In our third meeting, the group decided that they wanted to learn and finish the course together which meant that the sessions would have to continue past the scheduled date. The participants and instructors all rearranged their schedules daily to ensure the women who were incarcerated were not left behind. All the participants completed their training together on April 15th.

Part of what builds community is their willingness to support each other. As an instructor in a training that encourages supporting others and their journey through mental wellness, I was happy to be able to adjust my own schedule, knowing that my department and its commitment to serving all members of our community, would support my decision. I also learned that community members are willing to go the extra mile for valued resources.

Quote: "This training is so helpful. We need it to support other inmates who don't want to reach out to mental health services in the jail."

Name and role: LaKiesha Cotton, Project Coordinator, Mental First Aid Instructor