



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Corrections Certifies Inmates as Wellness Facilitators

First-of-its-kind training aimed at addressing effects of trauma in prisons

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) today announced that it has provided advanced training to a select group of inmate Certified Peer Specialists (CPSs) to help address mental health issues and reduce the incidence of violence in prisons. The DOC training is believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

Among the 500 inmate CPSs who provide counseling to other inmates suffering with mental health issues, 17 have been certified as Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP®) facilitators, a program provided by Vermont-based Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery.

WRAP is an evidenced-based tool that helps individuals address distressing feelings through a personally developed response. The goal is to certify all CPSs in the state's 25 prisons as WRAP facilitators.

“It is ground breaking to have state prison inmates as certified facilitators who will now be able to facilitate WRAP sessions with other inmates,” Lynn Patrone, Department of Corrections mental health advocate said. “When individuals develop their own WRAP, they are able to maintain continual wellness and address feelings or symptoms that may cause distress.”

The goal of the program is to use one's WRAP to maintain wellness every day. This tool offers a structured plan to address distressing feelings, anxiety and life issues to prevent a person from experiencing a crisis.

In addition, 39 DOC staff members have received WRAP facilitator certification to assist co-workers in maintaining positive mental health while working in a stressful environment.

The training is part of DOC's system-wide effort to reduce stress levels in prisons that can lead to misconducts and violence, amid a growing number of inmates facing serious mental illness. About 8 percent of the prison population has been diagnosed with serious mental illness.

Copeland Center for Wellness & Recovery's values-based training and technical assistance supports efforts to ensure holistic wellness tools are available to promote mental wellness for everyone who lives and works behind prison walls and fences.

“This training opportunity also increases inmates' employment skills and enhances their marketability in the community workforce,” Patrone added.

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