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Alternatives to Incarceration & Reentry in Westchester County, NY

AN OVERVIEW FOR ACTION PLANNING

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Executive Summary

This report offers an overview of Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs) and reentry services in Westchester County via an interactive ArcGIS map and a narrative description. The study also includes an overview of jail, probation, and prison recidivism rates in Westchester County and qualitative themes emerging from interviews with system-impacted individuals, service providers, and county leaders.

01

Mapping ATI/Reentry Services in Westchester County

CCA and Pace Haub Law developed an interactive ArcGIS map that geographically identifies organizations and agencies that offer ATI, reentry, and related services in Westchester County. The map includes 100 service provider sites, listing organizational locations, services and programs offered, contact details, and other key background information. Users can filter results by service category. A narrative overview of select programs and organizations is provided in the Appendix.

02

Westchester County Recidivism Rates

Jail recidivism rates within 12 months of release have trended downward from 2013-2021 for any conviction (from 29% to 21%) and for incarceration convictions (from 24% to 16%). However, when recidivism is assessed over a longer time period for each cohort year, recidivism rates continue to increase for at least 5 years after release.

Westchester County Probation recidivism rates show similar trends over time as jail recidivism rates, with rates for new convictions at 12 months post-probation completion showing a general decline from 2013 to 2021. Whereas at the 12 month point, probation recidivism rates for new convictions hover between 6% to 12%, at 60 months post-probation completion, the rates are between 25-33%. These jail and probation recidivism trends suggests a need for long-term reentry support to avoid further contact with the criminal legal system.

Parole recidivism rates in Westchester County have substantially declined for individuals returning to prison for parole violations within 3 years of prison release. Prison recidivism rates for new felony offenses in Westchester County have remained relatively steady over the same time period, oscillating between about 3% and 9%.

03

Qualitative Findings

The study engaged three stakeholder groups: 1) **system-impacted individuals** (37 participants); 2) **service providers** (20 participants); 3) **county leaders** (8 participants).

Across these three groups, the following overlapping qualitative themes emerged.

- **Housing** was deemed the greatest barrier to successful ATI / reentry success and the most pressing, and perhaps most challenging, priority. References to housing barriers included permanent, affordable housing, transitional reentry housing, supportive housing, youth-specific housing, and emergency housing.
- All three groups emphasized the need for **person-centered, sustained case management** that involves the expertise of credible messengers with lived experience, mentors who have the cultural competence to advise and relate to system-impacted individuals, and long-term relationships that help participants navigate a number of complicated systems and services. This emphasis was contrasted with a service delivery model that takes a "check-the-box," transactional, short-term approach and lacks trauma-informed, culturally competent approaches.
- All three groups put some emphasis on closing **transportation access** barriers and offering **substantive employment assistance** as a key to success. Transportation access was specifically emphasized in relation to meeting court requirements and/or rural parts of the county.
- All groups placed some emphasis on **enhancing health stabilization** as a necessary prerequisite to effective engagement in ATI programs and reentry services.

04

Steering Committee Priorities

Housing, Mental Health & Substance Use, Employment, and Coordinated Services were identified as the highest priority areas to enhance ATI/Reentry effectiveness in Westchester County by 17 survey respondents participating in the Westchester ATI/Reentry Planning Steering Committee.



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Director's Preface



As we prepared to present this report, we reflected on all of the amazing people, services, and goodwill we have experienced since this project began on April 1, 2024. In addition to the data collected and analyzed, I have personally met with hundreds of organizations, attended dozens of community meetings and job fairs, visited and toured numerous service programs, and held conversations with various providers, caretakers, stakeholders, volunteers, and participants.

My experience has been incredible. I have learned about Westchester's services and programs, listened to policy makers, providers, participants, and to anyone involved in this space. Though the data speaks for itself, I'd like to tease out the heart of the research from the perspective of an ethnographer.

The purpose of this project was to catalogue and review ATI programs and reentry services aimed at engaging some of the most vulnerable people in Westchester County – individuals who are either impacted by the criminal legal system and/or on a trajectory toward involvement. Specifically, this project focused on the intersectionality of services and the people they serve. **We wanted to understand what made service delivery effective and how these services contribute to the overall well-being of the individual served.**

Although not a homogeneous group, the individuals we are talking about share commonalities that may include histories of trauma, drug use, homelessness or housing insecurity, criminal legal system-involvement or familial histories with incarceration, foster care or engagement with other social services. Through numerous conversations over the course of a year, I found that individuals living in this space interpret "criminal legal system-involvement" as an extension of "The System." They make very little distinction between being criminal-legal system involvement and broader systems involvement. Most participants reported long (generational) histories with various systems of care and/or discipline through direct participation or through knowing someone who has been involved. **Many reported having long histories of "bad" experiences with "The System" – which may include social services, foster care, school discipline, incarceration – blurring the lines between systems of care and systems of discipline.** These histories and experiences inform and define a general attitude and feeling towards all things "system:" apprehension, fear, suspicion, distrust. Attitudes of distrust play out in encounters with service providers, often leading to angry and hostile interactions that prevent effective service delivery and undermine participant engagement and investment in programs and services.



A trauma-informed, human-centered approach to providing social services invites us to consider the narratives and perspective of the program participant, including the impact of traumas due to generational poverty and serialized engagement with social service agencies. A trauma-informed approach includes understanding why individuals seeking services appear angry or hostile and may help providers develop strategies to navigate the provider/participant relationship in this space. “Success” in the ATI/Reentry space is contingent upon the participant’s engagement and investment. Yet, often we find that engagement and investment depends on the participant’s trust and affinity with the program and/or service provider. **Repairing and rebuilding social and civic trust with the focus population is a prerequisite for increasing participant engagement, investment, and successful outcomes.**

The findings in this report confirm that trauma-informed, human-centered service models that are sensitive to the person’s individual and social histories, tend to have improved, life-changing outcomes. Restorative justice approaches and expanded credible messenger models that favor sustained navigational support “work” because they focus on rebuilding trust prior to and during participant engagement. Credible messengers operate as position subjects, utilizing their lived-experiences, nuanced understanding of “the culture,” and personal histories to engage and service the individual. The credible messenger is, at its core, about repairing and rebuilding those relationships of social and civic trust disrupted by histories of trauma. Participants of programs facilitated by credible messengers report not feeling judged, demeaned, or treated differently because they are poor, using substances, or unhoused. **People engaged in these services report feeling accepted and cared for—being treated like a human being. This rebuilding of trust often leads to increased engagement and more successful outcomes.**

This project could not have been completed without the constant input and support of the Westchester County ATI/Reentry Planning Collaborative Steering Committee and the community partners who made themselves available despite their heavy schedules. All of these stakeholders provided a wealth of insights and professional observations that helped to inform this report. The goal of this project has always been to produce something for Westchester County by Westchester County—based on the nuance of practices, traditions, culture, and histories that are unique to Westchester County and its unique population. This report reflects the great work being done throughout Westchester by state agencies, nonprofits, and stakeholders in the space of ATI/Reentry services and programs. **One thing is evident from this report: Westchester County is an incredibly caring and welcoming community.**

**Richard Rivera, Project Director
Assistant to the Executive Director for Special Initiatives, CCA**



Project Origin

In 2022, Dean Horace Anderson of the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University (Pace Haub Law), in partnership with Executive Director David Condliffe of the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), convened a broad spectrum of county stakeholders to create the Steering Committee of the ATI/Reentry Planning Collaborative. The Committee includes representatives from the Westchester County Departments of Correction, Probation, Social Services, Community Mental Health; the County Executive's office; the District Attorney's office; Assigned Counsel; the Legal Aid Society; and leaders from Westchester nonprofits involved in ATI/reentry service delivery. This diverse body aims to leverage its collective expertise to enhance alternatives to incarceration (ATI) and reentry services in Westchester.

In 2024, with generous funding support from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the Steering Committee of the ATI/Reentry Planning Collaborative charged CCA and Pace Haub Law to create an interactive map of Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry programs and services in Westchester County. Additionally, through qualitative interviews with individuals impacted by incarceration and/or supervision, service providers, and county leaders, the project sought to understand what aspects of ATI/Reentry programs and services were working well in the county, where there were opportunities for enhancement, and what areas should be prioritized.

The project also sought to develop a process for assessing county-level needs that would inform state funding allocations for ATIs and reentry services in data-informed and efficient ways. Due to CCA's statewide expertise in the field of ATIs and reentry services, the organization was well positioned to facilitate the development of this county-level assessment model that could be replicated in other New York counties.





Introduction

This report offers an overview of alternative to incarceration programs (ATIs) and reentry services in Westchester County, New York. Though we do our best to summarize key programs and services available in the county, it's important to note that our report, and its auxiliary interactive ArcGIS map, is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to capture all the organizations and actors involved in the broad network of services and programs that interface with individuals affected by the criminal legal system and/or incarceration (hereafter, "system-impacted individuals.")* Nonetheless, we outline key ATI programs and reentry services in Westchester with the hope of better informing the many providers and actors involved in improving the outcomes and wellbeing of system-impacted individuals. This report is intended to assist county leaders in the development of a coordinated, comprehensive action plan to improve the quality and delivery of ATI programs and reentry services in Westchester County.

This study sought to gain on-the-ground perspectives about the structural barriers that prevent system-impacted individuals from successfully completing mandated requirements and reintegrating into the community. We also wanted to understand the key factors that make success in ATIs and reentry programs more likely. To assess these questions, we conducted four focus groups with 37 system-impacted people, 20 one-on-one interviews with providers, and eight one-on-one interviews with county government leaders involved in funding, service delivery and coordination.

The findings highlight the following:

- systemic barriers to successful completion of mandated requirements and community reintegration;
- factors that are central to system-impacted individuals' success and ATI program completion;
- services and/or coordination needed to enhance ATI programs and reentry in Westchester County.

We hope these insights will inform the development of a data-driven county-level plan, driven by the Westchester ATI/Reentry Planning Collaborative Steering Committee, and aimed to strengthen and enhance the existing infrastructure of ATI programs and reentry services in the county.

*We use the term "system-impacted individuals" to refer to individuals who have been impacted by the criminal legal system, including being under supervision, incarceration or detention in a prison, immigration detention center, local jail, youth detention center, or any other carceral setting. The term is also meant to include those who have been convicted but not incarcerated, those who have been charged but not convicted, and those who have been arrested.



Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs)

ATIs offer pre-trial, treatment, and sentencing options other than incarceration from the time someone is charged with a crime by police to the sentencing stage of criminal legal system involvement. ATIs include diversion programs, community service, fines, restitution, probation, rehabilitation services, and restorative justice.

Some ATIs aim to divert people charged with a crime from pre-trial detention and, if the individual completes the diversion program, dismiss the charges altogether. An example of this type of ATI program in Westchester is the Opportunity Youth Part (OYP) Initiative spearheaded by Judge Jared Rice in New Rochelle (see the Appendix for an in-depth overview of the OYP Initiative).

Organizations that assist individuals to meet the ATI diversion requirements typically also offer preventative services for participants who may be affected by community disinvestment, criminalization, or the criminal legal system. This might include a young participant who has been referred by Family Court and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to the Department of Probation as a Person in Need of Supervision (PINS). Schools can also refer students to pre-PINS and PINS programs for status offenses such as truancy. The Children's Village (CV), Choice of NY (CHOICE), Youth Shelter of Westchester (YSOW), and 914United are examples of organizations in Westchester County that operate both preventative and diversion ATI programs for young people.

Other ATIs use specialty courts that divert program participants charged with a crime from incarceration if they engage in judicially required conditions, such as drug treatment and/or behavioral health treatment. Specialty courts can also dismiss charges altogether or reduce the charges or sentence. Examples of these in Westchester County include Drug Court, Mental Health Court, and Veterans Court (see the Appendix for full overview of Westchester's Specialty Courts). Probation supervision is also considered an ATI for individuals who have been sentenced. The Probation Department typically assists individuals to meet probation terms as well as connect them with services such as employment, health care, and other needs.

Finally, mitigation specialists offer court advocacy services in partnership with defense attorneys, seeking community-based sanctions for individuals while allowing them to keep their homes, jobs, school attendance and while addressing the issues that led them to criminal system involvement. An example of this type of ATI is provided by the Osborne Association's satellite office in White Plains, NY.¹



Reentry Services

Reentry services typically begin while an individual is preparing for release from jail or prison and, in best case scenarios, continue after release. Reentry services typically include the following:

- Assistance completing Department of Social Services (DSS) public benefit applications (e.g., SNAP; emergency, transitional, and permanent housing; Medicaid enrollment);
- Assistance obtaining documents and identification necessary for daily functioning (e.g., birth certificates, state identification);
- Establishing or coordinating continuity of care for physical and behavioral health conditions, substance use treatment, and/or prescription medications;
- Transitioning into a halfway house upon release.
- Family reunification services
- Assistance enrolling in educational programs to obtain a High School Equivalency (HSE), pursue a college degree, or training certificates
- Assistance completing employment applications, resumes, giving job referrals
- Assistance with digital and financial literacy, such as navigating smartphones, online applications, and (re)establishing credit
- Legal services providing assistance with records expungement, sealing, certificates of relief, etc.

In the [Appendix](#), we offer a full overview of key ATIs and reentry services in Westchester County.





The Benefits of ATIs & Reentry Services to Public Health & Safety

Alternatives to Incarceration programs and reentry services are critical in minimizing an individual's interactions with the criminal legal system, assisting with the adjustment back into their communities after incarceration, and reducing rates of recidivism. The work done by ATIs and reentry programs directly contribute to positive public health and safety outcomes. ATIs are more effective than incarceration at improving public safety outcomes,² decreasing the chance of future convictions,³ improving employment rates,⁴ and generating significant savings for taxpayers.⁵

A growing body of research also shows that incarceration is linked to detrimental health outcomes. The strict conditions of prisons can lead to dependence, helplessness, social-sensory disorientation, and social and temporal alienation.⁶ Leaving prison can also have a negative impact on the mortality rate of formerly incarcerated individuals. "In the first two weeks after being released from prison, the rate of death among formerly incarcerated individuals is 13 times higher than the rate for the general population."⁷ The risk of dying from a drug overdose upon release compared to the average individual is 120 times higher for the formerly incarcerated.⁸

Family and loved ones are also impacted when they are separated from incarcerated individuals, leading to increased economic instability and adverse health effects.⁹ Children can face great stigma, isolation, shame, and fear when their parents or guardians are incarcerated, and even exhibit symptoms of PTSD.¹⁰ The current prison system causes devastating public health and socio-economic consequences to individuals and their communities, both familial and neighborhood-based. As such, it is crucial that alternatives to incarceration are expanded. As opposed to a cycle of incarceration that deepens socioeconomic and health vulnerabilities, ATIs and reentry programs utilize approaches, treatment, and services that generate better outcomes for system-involved individuals.

ATIs are more effective than incarceration at improving public safety outcomes, decreasing the chance of future convictions, improving employment rates, and generating significant savings for taxpayers.



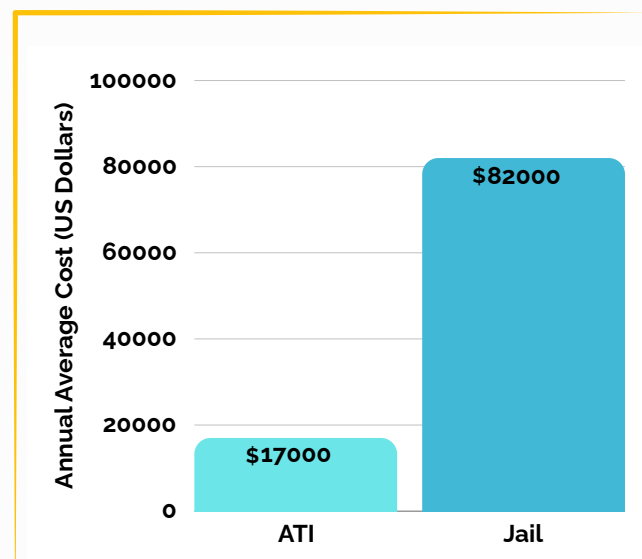
The Fiscal Rationale for ATIs and Reentry Programs

ATIs and reentry programs have proven to create economic gains for the locales in which they are implemented. States and counties that have expanded ATI programs and reentry services rather than incarceration have seen positive fiscal results. ATIs are generally more cost effective because they require shorter periods of control and are more effective in reducing future interactions with the criminal legal system. For example, ATI programs in Ohio proved to save between \$2,000 and \$11,000 per person by utilizing Community Corrections instead of prisons, where individuals would remain under the control of the state for longer periods of time.¹¹

According to the NY ATI Reentry Coalition's "Transforming Criminal Legal Outcomes in New York City" report, ATI and reentry programs already save City and State correctional systems more than \$100 million each year.¹² According to a 2016 case study from the Pew MacArthur Results First Initiative, cost-benefit analyses indicate that community-based investments produce greater return on investment over jail-based ones. The results from that case study showed the following benefits from ATI/reentry investments:

- **Between \$3.46 and \$5.54 in benefits for every \$1 spent on community based job readiness vs. jail time.**
- **Between \$2.42 and \$3.94 in benefits for every \$1 spent for behavioral health care vs. jail time.¹³**

In New York counties, the annual cost per participant of most ATI programs is around \$17,000 or less, which is drastically less than the estimated \$82,000 it costs to incarcerate an individual in a county jail.¹⁴





Positive Local Impacts of ATIs and Reentry Programs

Reentry programs that help formerly incarcerated individuals find stable employment are also integral to safer communities. A study conducted in Ohio found that stable employment substantially reduced recidivism rates for new felony convictions, both among those who had stable employment prior to incarceration and those who obtained it only after serving a prison term. Additionally, the study showed that the influence of stable employment on recidivism held across varying levels of conviction history.¹⁵

Further, formerly incarcerated individuals who participate in the full length of ATI programs have significantly lowered recidivism rates compared to those who do not reach program completion. In a study conducted within NYC, it was found that ATI programs

provide [a] rehabilitative effect on criminal behavior only for those participants who complete the program. Program completers have low recidivism rates, indicating that the ATIs have the potential to effect long-term behavior change. . . . [P]eople who complete the ATIs are more than twice as likely to remain free of conviction in the community as people who do not complete.¹⁶

The study's findings suggest that identifying factors that positively impact retention rates in ATI programs are critical for yielding the benefits of reduced recidivism.

Finally, housing stability is a critical structural factor in reintegrating system-impacted individuals into the community and reducing recidivism. Because formerly incarcerated individuals experience higher rates of homelessness than general populations, offering housing solutions is critical to reducing repeat criminal legal-system involvement.¹⁷ One study found that the implementation of Housing First Programs to system-impacted individuals managed to reduce the rate of arrests by a staggering 40%.¹⁸ Even programs such as transitional housing programs, in which temporary housing is provided so that a more permanent housing solution can be found, were highly effective. A New Way of Life, a program designed for women, found that of the 130 women they served, 99% stayed free from incarceration and 41 were able to find permanent housing.¹⁹ A transitional housing program with wrap-around services in Tompkins County, NY found that the in-program recidivism rate was 7%. Comparing residents' housing status before they entered the transitional housing program and after over a two year period, outcomes showed a 61.8% decrease in homelessness, a 26% increase in participants who secured permanent housing, and a 9.8% increase in participants who secured temporary housing.²⁰ In summary, there is strong evidence supporting the use of ATIs and reentry services to enhance public health and safety outcomes at lower fiscal and social costs than incarceration.



Westchester County Recidivism Rates

In this section, we present brief quantitative trends on Westchester County's jail, probation, and prison recidivism rates to outline the scale of ATI and reentry in the county. Before we present these trends, however, it is important to contextualize recidivism holistically.

The Root Causes of Recidivism

Recidivism rates do not necessarily offer in-depth insights about the structural barriers and contributing factors that may drive repeat criminal legal system involvement. Indeed, many factors can play a role in criminal legal system involvement that are not rendered visible by recidivism measures. For example, unhoused people are more likely to have criminal legal system involvement. One study showed that approximately 10% of people incarcerated in prison experienced homelessness prior to being admitted.²¹ Conversely, people who have been in prison are much more likely to be unhoused. A 2018 estimate found that formerly incarcerated people are almost 10 times more likely to be unhoused than the general public.²² Repeat incarceration increases the likelihood of homelessness. A study found that individuals who have been incarcerated in prison more than once have rates of homelessness that are 13 times higher than the general public.²³ For unhoused people with conviction records, recidivism rates are 4 to 6 times greater than the general population.²⁴ Similar patterns hold true for those who are incarcerated and released from local jails. A 2025 assessment by the Jail Data Initiative found that, among the jails that tracked individuals' housing status, 4.5% of jail bookings are of unhoused people. Unhoused people are more likely to be booked multiple times, and they are often held in jail longer than average lengths of stay.²⁵

A 2018 estimate found that formerly incarcerated people are almost 10 times more likely to be unhoused than the general public.

Individuals who have been incarcerated in prison more than once have rates of homelessness that are 13 times higher than the general public.

Similarly, those with past conviction records are more likely to experience employment discrimination. These employment challenges apply to individuals with major offenses and minor offenses²⁶ and even those with errors on their records.²⁷ The most common problem is hiring discrimination, but past conviction records also affect pay²⁸ and job quality.²⁹ Even with Second Chance Act reforms,³⁰ individuals with conviction records are often excluded from certain employment opportunities through licensing rules.³¹ The impact of conviction records on employment is not the same for everyone. In a study that assessed the impact of race and conviction records for Black and white candidates who applied for entry level jobs in person using resumes that had virtually equivalent qualifications, Black male applicants *without* a criminal record were less likely to receive callbacks than white applicants *with* conviction records. Meanwhile, only 5% black male applicants with conviction records were called back for interviews compared to 17% of white male applicants with records.³² Additionally, incarceration can create and/or exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions and disabilities, making reentry into the workforce even harder.³³ Beyond jobs, conviction records can block access to housing, public benefits, and other resources needed to rebuild lives.

Thus, the root causes of recidivism are multifaceted, influenced by structural and socio-economic factors as well as individual histories and choices.





Jail Census Counts

Overall, as Figure 1 below indicates, average daily Westchester County jail census counts³⁴ – including sentenced and unsentenced individuals – have decreased since 2015 despite an uptick between 2020 and 2022, likely due to rebound effects on jail populations following the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁵

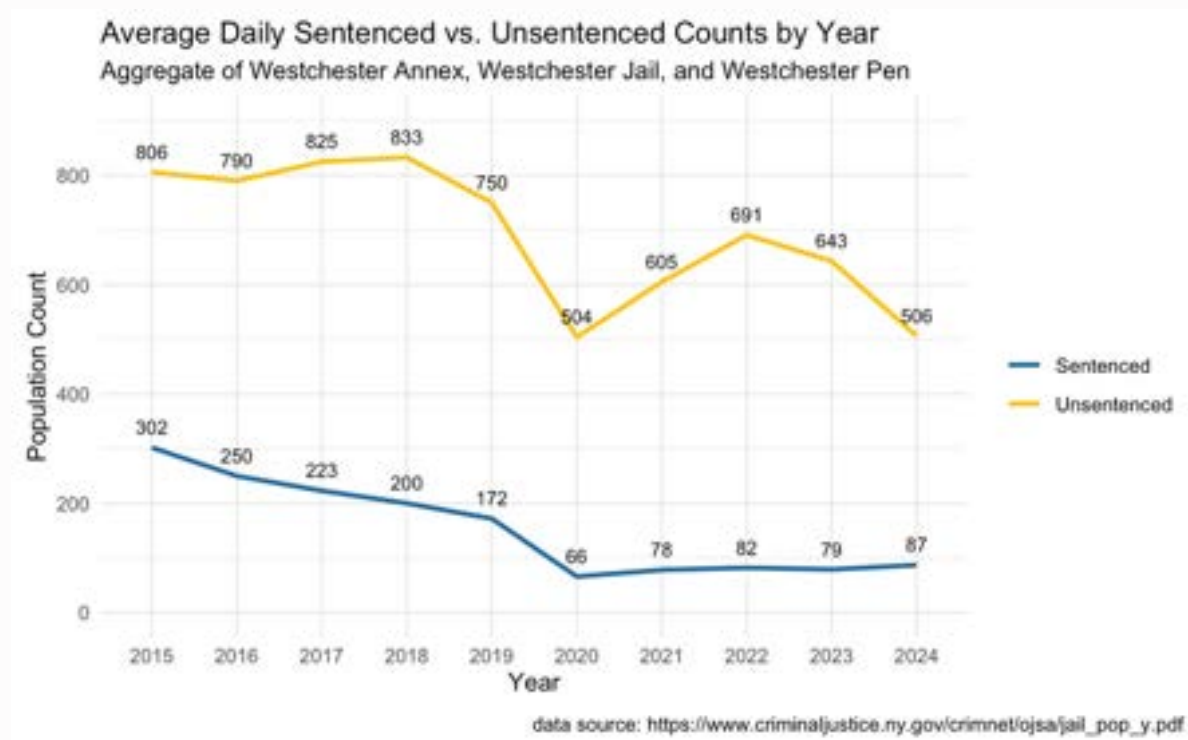


Figure 1. Westchester County average daily jail census counts, broken down by sentenced vs. unsentenced individuals.

Jail Recidivism Rates

Rates of recidivism for any arrest occurring within 12 months of release remained relatively steady between 2013 and 2022, hovering at around 40% (see Figure 2). We observed a slight uptick in the recidivism rate in 2022, though it is unclear whether this is random variation or reflective of an arising trend in recent years. Jail recidivism rates within 12 months of release have trended downward from 2013-2021 (data for 2022 is not available for these categories) for any conviction (from 29% to 21%) and for incarceration convictions (from 24% to 16%).

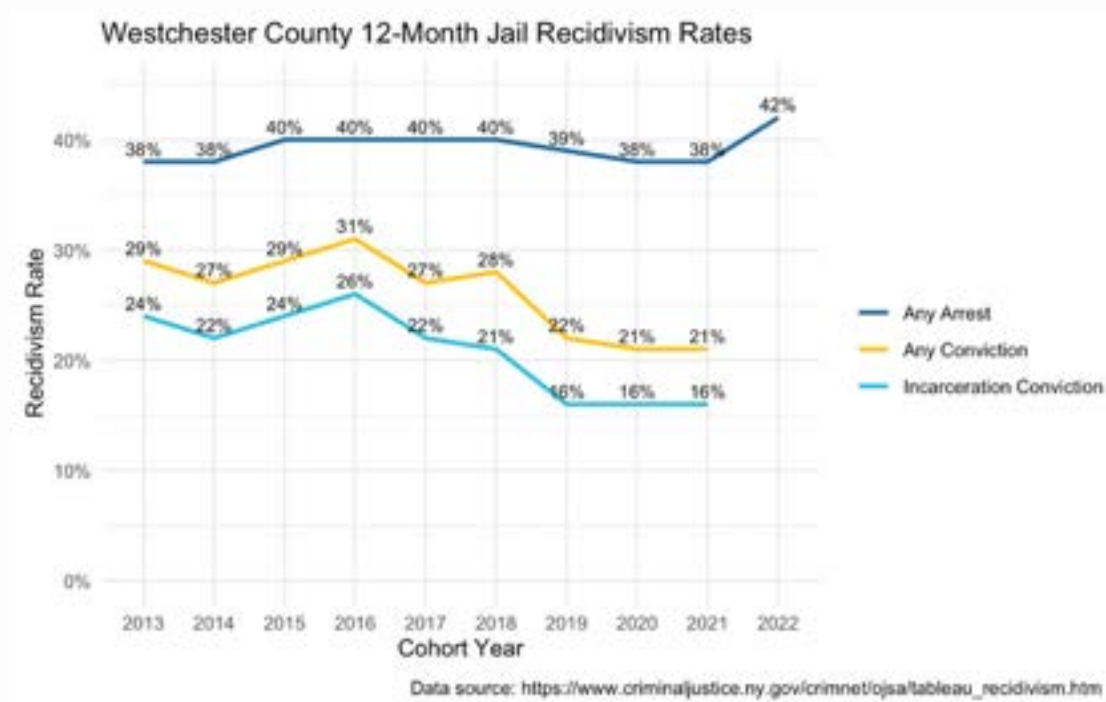


Figure 2. Westchester County jail rates of recidivism within a one year time span, broken down by recidivism type (any arrest, any conviction, incarceration conviction). Cohort year refers to the year individuals were released from jail, and the recidivism rate refers to recidivism within a 12 month time span from that release year.

It is important to note, however, that while 1-year recidivism rates for convictions have decreased over recent cohort years, when we assess recidivism over a longer time period for each cohort year, we see that recidivism rates continue to increase for at least 5 years after release, suggesting a need for continued reentry support and social services for these individuals.

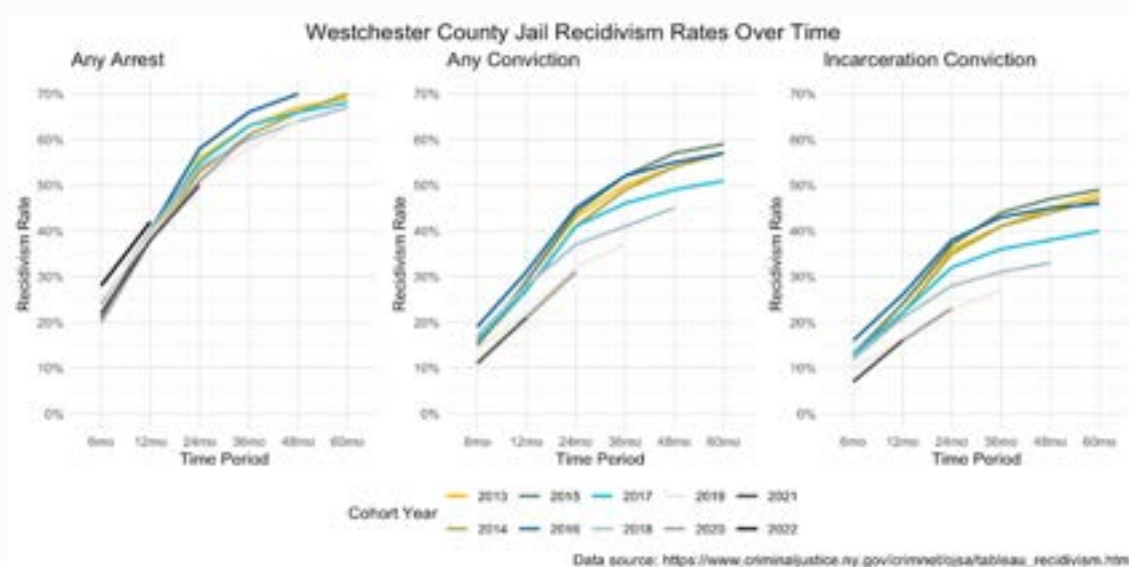


Figure 3. Westchester County jail recidivism rates over time, broken down by cohort year. Cohort year refers to the year individuals were released from jail, and the recidivism rate refers to recidivism within each specified span from that release year.



Probation Recidivism Rates

Westchester County Probation recidivism rates show similar trends over time as jail recidivism rates, with rates increasing between 2020 and 2022 for arrests, and rates for new convictions at 12 months post-probation completion showing a general decline from 2013 to 2021, the years for which the data is available (see Figure 4).

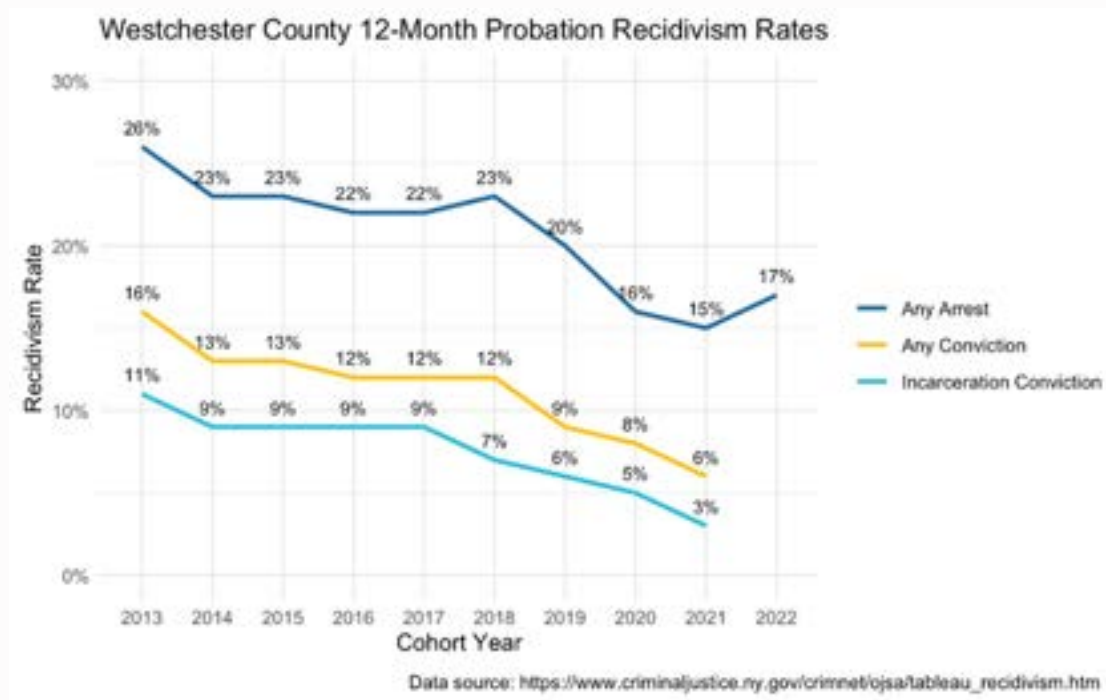


Figure 4. Westchester County probation rates of recidivism within a one year time span, broken down by recidivism type (any arrest, any conviction, incarceration conviction). Cohort year refers to the year an individual's probation ended, and the recidivism rate refers to recidivism within a 12 month time span from that year.

Similarly to county jail recidivism trends, when assessing probation recidivism rates for each cohort year over longer, five-year time periods, we observe increasing rates of recidivism. Whereas at the 12 month point, recidivism rates for new convictions hover between 6% to 12%, at 60 months post-probation completion, the rates are between 25-33%. (see Figure 5 below). Again, this suggests a need for sustained post-probation support to avoid further contact with the criminal legal system.

When assessing probation recidivism rates for each cohort year over five-year time periods, we observe increasing rates of recidivism.

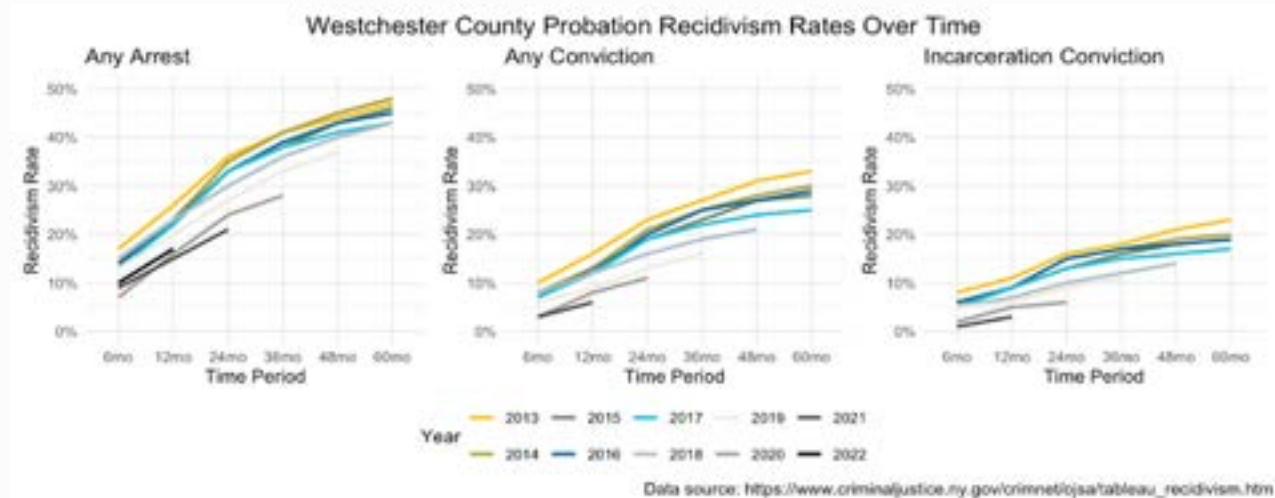


Figure 5. Westchester County jail probation rates over time, broken down by cohort year. Cohort year refers to the year probation ended for that group, and the recidivism rate refers to recidivism within a 12 month time span from the year the probation ended.

While recidivism rates – both jail and probation recidivism – for convictions have declined since 2013, the rise in recidivism for arrests suggests that there is work to be done to improve reentry outcomes for formerly incarcerated individuals and to decrease the likelihood of rearrest.

Prison Recidivism Rates

As of May 2025, 840 people whose county of offense is Westchester County were incarcerated in New York state prison, making up 2.67% of the total New York state prison population.³⁷ Recidivism rates have substantially declined for individuals returning to prison for parole violations within 3 years of prison release. For cohort years released between 2014 and 2020, the parole violation recidivism rate declined from 25% to 7%. This downward trend in recidivism for parole violations may in part be due to the Less Is More Act, enacted in September 2021, in addition to a broader push for this kind of policy reform in the years preceding this legislation. However, prison recidivism rates for new felony offenses in Westchester County have remained relatively steady over the same time period, oscillating between about 3% and 9% (see Figure 6).

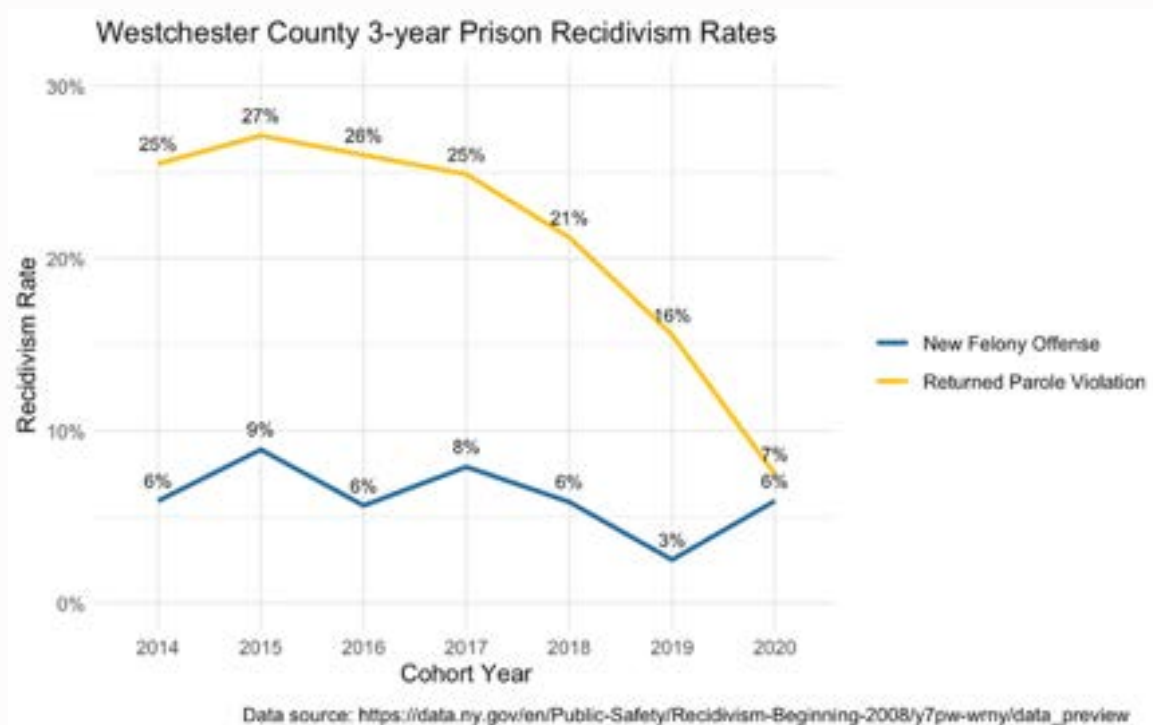


Figure 6. Prison recidivism rates for Westchester County indictments over a 3-year time span, broken down by recidivism type (new felony offense vs. parole violation). Cohort year refers to the year individuals were released from prison, and the recidivism rate refers to recidivism within 3 years of the release year.

In summary, between 2013-2022, we find that Westchester County's jail and probation recidivism rates for new convictions have trended downward in the short 12 months term but continue to increase over a longer 60 month term. Prison recidivism rates have remained steady over a 36 month term from 2014-2020 but have declined significantly for parole violations in that same time period. While recidivism rates measure one outcome amongst many for system-impacted individuals, the trends point to the need for sustained, long-term investment in structural and service supports for people impacted by incarceration and/or the criminal legal system in Westchester County.

Recidivism trends point to the need for sustained, long-term investment in structural and service supports for people impacted by incarceration and/or the criminal legal system in Westchester County.



Mapping ATI and Reentry Services in Westchester County

The project's Steering Committee identified the need for an extensive, central repository of ATIs and reentry services in Westchester. This resource would highlight thematic and geographic trends among existing services. To that end, CCA and Pace Haub Law developed an interactive map representing ATI, reentry, and related services in Westchester County. Student extern researchers from Pace Haub Law and interns from CCA contacted dozens of service providers across Westchester to identify and verify relevant providers. Daniel Farkas, Professor at the Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems at Pace University, then translated the data into an interactive, digital map with ArcGIS software. After a detailed verification process to ensure contact information and program offerings were accurate and available, the map now includes 100 service provider sites in Westchester County. It identifies providers' headquarters, service information, contact details, and other key background information. Users can filter results by service category, as seen in the service code glossary below. A companion [User Guide](#) instructs users on how to interact with the map.

Service Codes:

Housing (HOU); Transportation (TR); Substance Use & Treatment (SUT); Mental Health (MH); Food Insecurity (FI); Medical Care (MC); Career Readiness, Education & Life Skills (CEL); Peer Support and/or Mentorship (PS/M); Legal Services (LS); Mediation (MED); Referrals and Resources (RR); Faith-Based (FB); Family Services (FAM); Youth (YOU); Women (WOM); Men (MEN); Senior Citizens (SEN); LGBTQ+; Domestic Violence (DV); Veterans (VA)

This map was developed as a planning tool for the Steering Committee of the Westchester County ATI/Reentry Collaborative. The Committee may decide if/how the map is used externally, for instance, among providers to effectively coordinate services, or by system-impacted individuals to locate needed services.



Click on the
image to
interact with
the map





Qualitative Findings

Our qualitative research involved obtaining perspectives from system-impacted individuals (37 participants), social service providers that work directly with system-impacted individuals (20 participants), and county leaders (8 participants). While system-impacted individuals and social service providers provided important on-the-ground perspectives on ATI/reentry services in Westchester County, county leaders provided insights on the structures (e.g., staffing, funding, strategic initiatives) that undergird these programs and services.

We structured focus group and one-on-one interviews around four key areas of inquiry: barriers to success, keys to success, services needed, and recommendations for enhancing ATIs/reentry services in Westchester County. Providers and county leaders were also asked to comment on funding needs related to effective ATI/reentry service delivery.

We did not provide predetermined definitions of “barriers,” “success,” or “services.” We wanted participants to define these concepts from their vantage points. We asked prompting secondary questions related to housing, employment, health, transportation, court and/or supervision requirements, and service delivery quality so that we could concretize areas of focus for ATI/reentry in Westchester.

Our methodology for coding and analyzing qualitative data across all stakeholder groups focused on identifying the topics most discussed across all participants in each of the three stakeholder groups. We refer to these as “mentions.” Importantly, in focus group settings, it is common for three or four participants to speak directly to a topic area and to have other participants nod in agreement silently. As such, while not everyone spoke directly to these topics, we accounted for broad agreement among participants in our method of identifying key topics and areas of agreement. Among provider and county leaders’ interviews, which were conducted one-on-one, we similarly note the most frequently mentioned topics across each stakeholder group (providers and county leaders, respectively). Thus, the reader should keep in mind the total participant sample when gauging the significance of the mentions. What follows are the key themes for each group of stakeholders we interviewed, followed by a section identifying overlapping themes across the three stakeholder groups.



System-Impacted Participants

We conducted four focus groups (with a total of 37 participants) at three community-based organizations that work directly with people impacted by the criminal legal system and/or incarceration in Westchester County. The organizations that hosted the focus groups and assisted us in identifying participants offer a range of pre-trial diversion assistance, preventative services for individuals affected by the criminal legal system, and/or reentry services for people returning from youth detention facilities, county jail, or state / federal prison. Due to the youth-centered focus of the organizations we partnered with to recruit participants, the majority of the system-impacted participants we interviewed (73%) were between the ages of 18-24. This demographic is similar to the population disproportionately represented in the criminal legal system. The majority of participants (89%) indicated their gender identity as men and self-identified as Black/African American (46%), Hispanic/Latine (30%), two or more races (22%), or Native American (3%). Though Black and Latine emergent adults are over-represented in our sample, this age group is the most likely to interface with the criminal legal system, thereby providing important perspectives. Importantly, 27% of participants self-declared that they were living with a disability, mental health condition, and/or chronic illness and a small minority (14%) self-declared that they had struggled with substance use. Most participants (68%) declared that they had prior convictions while 32% were in pre-trial diversion or preventative programs and had never been convicted of a crime.

Housing

Housing was the topic most mentioned across the four focus group discussions (14% of all conversational comments provided) with system-impacted study participants. When analyzed by sub-theme (i.e., barriers to success, keys to success, services needed, recommendations), housing was identified as the most prevalent barrier to success. Below is a summary of key themes offered by system-impacted focus group participants related to housing.

Housing was identified as the most prevalent barrier to success by system-impacted study participants.



- Housing options are difficult to find post-release or when a young system-impacted individual can no longer live at home with their family.
- Many participants reported that shelters were a necessary step to later finding more stable housing, but the experience was harsh and restrictive; there were strong concerns over safety and security of personal property.
- Participants shared stories of couch-surfing at other people's homes, sleeping in staircases, cars, and even train stations to stay warm due to their inability to find temporary or permanent housing during or after criminal legal system involvement.
- Participants often describe challenges and delays during housing application processes due to missing documents like Social Security cards, personal identification, and birth certificates.
- Experiences with staff overseeing public housing were described as unhelpful and even antagonistic.
- Participants called for more affordable housing programs rather than temporary shelters.
- Strict curfews, probation periods, and transitional housing program restrictions often complicated progress towards meeting personal goals related to employment and other programming.

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Housing insecurity means you're not necessarily safe. You may be living somewhere, but you're not sure if you're going to be there for a while.

-System-Impacted Study Participant

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Person-Centered, Sustained Case Management with Credible Messengers & Mentors

Comments related to the relationships with mentors and/or social service providers who had lived experience with the criminal legal system and/or incarceration (sometimes referred to as "credible messengers") closely followed housing as the second most discussed topic by focus group participants (13.7% of all comments). Credible messengers and/or sustained mentorship relationships were identified as a central key to success for staying engaged in ATI programs and for effective reintegration in the community post-incarceration. Below are key themes raised by participants that best capture their feedback.

- Many youth participants shared that just knowing that someone was thinking about them made a big difference.
- Among the most effective attributes of credible messengers or sustained mentors was their dedication to staying present throughout the criminal legal system-involvement process, continuously checking in and offering reassurance. As one participant stated, *"They came and got me and took me out to eat. It was basically like, 'Yo, we are here to help you with your reentry.' And since then they've been there for me every step of the way."*
- Respondent consensus was that credible messengers and mentors proactively reach out, help participants self-define goals, encourage participation in supportive programming, and create positivity in otherwise difficult situations.

“

"[My mentor] don't want to see us stay in the same spot...and it's hard to find people like him. It is, bro. That's why I thank God for him."

-System-Impacted Participant

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- Examples were provided related to credible messengers and/ long-term navigation case managers supporting focus group participants with securing essential needs like personal documents (e.g., birth certificates, IDs), health insurance, attending Department of Social Services (DSS) in-person appointments, and securing employment by making personal referrals.
- Person-centered, sustained case management was sharply contrasted with case managers who were judgmental, uncaring, and transactional in their way of relating.

“

"Just the thought that someone is thinking about you makes it different... that made a difference to me."

-System-Impacted Participant

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Employment

Overall, employment was the third most frequently commented topic by focus group participants (8.4% of all conversational comments). Employment was identified among the most significant keys to personal success and avoidance of additional criminal legal system involvement. Areas such as securing employment, finding training opportunities, and job permanence with living wages were viewed as important factors for positive outcomes and as part of participants' transition from system involvement. Key points raised included:

- Job stability was a key challenge for system-impacted emergent adults. Participants indicated they were able to obtain jobs but struggled with attendance, leading to terminations.
- Many found internships to be a critical stepping stone to full-time employment, offering valuable experience in a less strenuous setting.
- Highly regarded components of employment support included building resumes, securing interviews, having personal referrals to employers, and developing skills to navigate the job market.

“

“They helped me make a good resume. Who does that? Look where it got me. It got me a job. I'm about to start making money, save bread, get my own apartment, and start off with life. God put me here to enjoy life. I'm still young. I got so much more.”

-System-Impacted Participant

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- Various participants highlighted the value of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training as a pathway to stable employment and wished for more accessible certification programs.
- Those with felony convictions faced additional hurdles in industries like security, but some shifted to alternative career paths.

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“My transition coming home...I don't have to watch my back for making money. I don't have to worry about it being a risk no more. Everything I do is legit.”

-System-Impacted Participant

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The Importance of ATI/Reentry-Specific Organizations and Services

The simple existence of an intervention/transition program for system-impacted individuals was, in and of itself, perceived as a motivating factor for participants, making up 7.4% of all comments. The existence of community-based organizations and staff devoted to ATI diversion and reentry programs were critical to participants' feelings of hope and positive outlooks. The existence of ATI/reentry-specific programs was the third most frequently cited topic under the "keys to success" area of inquiry. The most prevalent pieces of feedback included:

- Many participants joined an ATI program on their lawyer's recommendation, which provided them a path forward and helped to improve their sentencing and/or incarceration outcomes.
- Participants also expressed the critical role of judges in directing youth toward alternatives to incarceration or pre-trial detention and rehabilitative programming locally; many specifically mentioned the New Rochelle-based OYP program as an effective intervention opportunity.

“

"It's a good experience. They helped me to actually change. We volunteer places, learn new things. You can take your GED here. They got other classes... culinary, [operating] drones."

-System-Impacted Participant

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- Participants appreciated the ways ATI/reentry programs focused on turning their past behaviors into positive changes through education and self-improvement training.
- Many viewed mentors and program leaders as family, offering real advice and essential life skills.
- Beyond legal assistance, participants found opportunities for job training, education, and addressing other critical gaps in their lives to be important elements in their self-defined success.

“

"For my transition, I needed my ID, which they helped me with. But mostly for my transition, I needed the support to keep me focused, to keep me on time."

-System-Impacted Participant

”



Self-Motivated Behavioral Changes

Although much of the discussions centered on tangible interventions like housing, employment, and the critical work with credible messengers and/or mentors to access services and life skills, participants made many comments related to personal responsibility, and taking ownership of their own actions and behaviors. Participants clearly understood that they needed to make tough changes to allow any intervention to take hold and work. Overall, comments about their own behavioral changes made up 7.4% of all comments provided by topic (fifth highest). In a tie with the importance of ATI/reentry specific organizations, it ranked third for most frequently cited topic under the “keys to success” area of inquiry.

“

“[They helped with] small stuff that I didn't do before. Something like building] a schedule, independent financing, making sure I keep the money that I'm making, all that. It's forming me into a man rather than when I was getting locked up over and over again.”

-System-Impacted Participant

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Key points raised by system-impacted participants included:

- Many discussed developing self-discipline and life skills such as learning to manage schedules, finances, household responsibilities, and accountability methods that help them during their transition from criminal legal system involvement. As one participant emphasized, “It's just teaching us like how to maintain our household when we get our own spot.”
- Recognizing that personal changes take time, participants emphasized persistence and avoiding impulsive decisions that could set them back, including managing emotions as a key factor in avoiding conflict and legal trouble.
- Many learned that external help is limited, and an important factor to success is self-motivation and determination.
- Observing peers who remained stuck in past behaviors reinforced their determination to move forward and break negative cycles.





Community Engagement & Social Connectivity

Throughout the discussions, many comments centered on two topics that were not explicitly asked about but were among the top eight topics discussed and implied in participants' comments: 1) the need for community engagement opportunities and 2) the importance of social connectivity for system-impacted individuals. Mentions about community engagement and social connectivity made up 5.1% and 6.6% of all comments, respectively. Community engagement was the most frequently mentioned recommendation, particularly for youth. Social connectivity was ranked fourth among the most frequently mentioned comments related to the "keys to success" area of inquiry. The following areas provide the key takeaways from the participants' many comments related to these two needs and their impact on the positive outcomes.

"If the work that [org] is doing now was done back when I was younger, nah, I wouldn't have gone to jail. It's a fact."

-System-Impacted Participant

- Participants stressed the importance of dedicated places where they can seek mentorship, support, and emotional guidance without judgment.
- Several individuals believed that if they had access to structured community engagement programs (e.g., community centers with programming and support) earlier, they might have avoided incarceration and/or criminal legal system involvement.
- While programs exist for youth up to 18 years, participants emphasized a need for continued engagement opportunities for young adults transitioning into independence (ages 18-25).
- Some participants felt motivated to bring siblings or friends into ATI/reentry programs as a prevention method, reinforcing the idea that collective support strengthens individuals.
- A common frustration was that most community youth programs require payment, making it difficult for families to afford opportunities like sports and extracurricular activities.
- Participants shared that being part of a program helped shift their mindset, allowing them to focus on helping themselves and supporting others instead of returning to negative behaviors. As one focus group participant stated, *"When you run into someone else and relate to their story, you want to do better for yourself, and you want them to do better themselves too."*
- Conversational settings with peers who had similar struggles made it easier for individuals to reflect on their choices and work toward positive change.
- A culture of trust within programs enabled participants to open up about their challenges, helping them process emotions and find healthier coping strategies.



Transportation

Though mentioned less frequently, transportation was identified as a key barrier for system-involved participants who often need to meet various conditions related to court cases, and attend to critical gaps in their lives including employment, social service appointments, and court appointments. Transportation mentions made up 5.9% of all comments. Issues that were raised in relation to transportation included:

- Organizations that had the flexibility to assist participants using Uber rides, metro cards, or staff members driving participants to necessary locations were particularly impactful; this helped participants attend important classes, jobs, health appointments, and court appointments, particularly until participants had income sources of their own.
- Participants expressed struggling with long commutes requiring multiple buses, leading to frustration and missed classes or court appointments.
- Participants expressed that reliable transport options reduce barriers to program participation and allow youth to engage in structured opportunities, especially meeting court conditions.

Conclusion: System-Impacted Participants

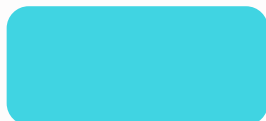
In conclusion, the most discussed topics among system-impacted participants were housing barriers, the significance of person-centered, long-term navigational support provided by credible messengers and mentors, and the importance of employment assistance for reaching independence and shifting from activities that might lead them to have repeat criminal legal system contact. However, these topics were nuanced by the importance of ATI/reentry-specific organizations and the resilience provided by community networks and social connectivity.



Housing



**Person-centered,
Long-term Support**



Employment Assistance



Service Providers

We interviewed 20 service providers to identify the structural and/or service barriers to meeting ATI court-mandated requirements and successful reintegration into the community post-incarceration. All providers interviewed worked directly with system-impacted people. Four providers worked within county government departments offering ATI and/or reentry services and 16 providers worked in community-based non-profit organizations that contracted directly with county government departments.

Social service providers working with system-impacted individuals described the ATI and/or reentry process as fraught with layered and interdependent barriers. Yet they also identify concrete pathways to success. This section synthesizes provider perspectives.

Housing

Housing was the most frequently mentioned topic among the 20 providers we interviewed, making up 25% of all comments analyzed. The absence of permanent and transitional housing options were identified as key structural barriers for system-impacted individuals engaged in their programs. Additionally, unsafe emergency shelter conditions and the lack of drop-in shelters where people can find safety and services were identified as unique obstacles, particularly for young emergent adults (18-25). The need for permanent and transitional housing was named as the most important infrastructural need by providers. One provider mentioned that housing is not just about the ability to provide shelter, "it's about having a space where one can grow, mature, and learn the fundamentals of independence."

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[Housing is] about having a space where one can grow, mature, and learn the fundamentals of independence."

-Service Provider

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Service Delivery Quality: A Need for Person-Centered, Long-term Engagement

The second most discussed topic among providers, making up 17% of all comments, focused on the quality and approach of **service delivery** in ATI and reentry programs. Providers spoke to the lack of a trauma-informed, human-centered approach among some service providers and court actors who interact with system-impacted populations. Some of the barriers to effective service delivery quality included the lack of credible messengers who had the necessary lived experience and frames to understand system-involved participants, and a lack of culturally responsive competencies among certain providers. As one provider noted, ***"Cultural competency is lacking. Without understanding participants' backgrounds, service effectiveness diminishes."*** Another provider noted, ***"It's difficult to fully meet clients' needs if you don't fully understand their situations."***

Other providers noted that their program participants are sometimes treated like statistics without regard for their overlapping vulnerabilities and/or traumatic histories. As one provider who works with emergent young adults stated, ***"Case workers look at these kids as statistics instead of as human beings. There is no human-centered approach that makes these kids feel seen and heard and cared for."*** Still others mentioned the inability of court actors to recognize individual barriers and circumstances. One provider that works directly with individuals who have to meet court supervision requirements noted, ***"Judges often fail to recognize individual circumstances, which creates barriers rather than opportunities."***

Providers overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of **person-centered, relational support**, which was mentioned 17 times across all interviews as a key to success. This included mentorship, the utilization of credible messengers with lived experience, and culturally responsive care. As one provider put it, ***"To us, the youth in our programs aren't just statistics. These youth are a part of our community and family... People need to know someone cares about them."*** Several providers talked about their program participants' ability to relate to mentors who had experience with criminal legal system involvement in ways that enhanced their likelihood to stay involved in programming and to achieve self-defined goals. As another provider mentioned, ***"Having credible messengers is critical because they can reach participants in ways others cannot, due to shared lived experience."***

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"Cultural competency is lacking. Without understanding participants' backgrounds, service effectiveness diminishes."

-Service Provider

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Transportation, Employment, Health

The third, fourth, and fifth most frequently discussed topics were transportation, employment, and health, making up 13%, 11%, and 8% of all provider comments, respectively.

Transportation was mainly discussed as a barrier to success and a service that needs to be enhanced in Westchester County. Providers described that without reliable private transportation, program participants often face challenges sustaining employment, completing job training or apprenticeship programs, attending court-mandated appointments, or meetings for public benefits and/or health care services. Having to take multiple buses with extensive travel time and/or not having bus routes in the northern part of Westchester County made access of services in certain areas difficult. Even when public transit is available, the cost of transportation can be a barrier for program participants who are unhoused and/or unemployed. Providers mentioned the importance of offering their program participants transportation assistance through rideshare platforms like Uber and/or free public transportation passes. Some providers mentioned that having the flexibility and organizational ability to drive program participants to appointments or arrange rides in times of emergency were critical to building rapport, trust and accountability.

Providers discussed **employment** primarily as a key to their program participants' personal success. Stable jobs not only empower their program participants to effectively meet ATI requirements and/or reintegrate into the community, they offer a pathway for individuals to avoid activities that make it more likely that they'll recidivate. Providers spoke to the importance of offering their program participants employment support like personalized job referrals and application assistance. Providers noted that these interventions not only connect program participants with income but also restore a sense of purpose and independence. They described the sense of self-worth that accumulates for program participants who engage in meaningful internships as a bridge to more permanent employment.

Having to take multiple buses with extensive travel time and/or not having bus routes in the northern part of Westchester County made access of services in certain areas difficult.



Access to **health services as well as mental health and/or substance use stabilization** were deemed critical elements to program participants' success by providers. As one provider stated, "Without addressing mental health, participants struggle to maintain employment and stable housing. Consistent mental health care is essential." At the same time, providers noted that access to these types of health services needed to be enhanced in the county. At times, accessing services took a long time. At other times, the location of services were inaccessible to program participants. One provider noted how their organization needed *"more comprehensive services targeted specifically at youth with mental and physical disabilities."* As system-impacted individuals are much more likely to face certain health risks and outcomes, providers noted the importance of having a reliable, timely health care infrastructure, particularly for people who were without income or low income.

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"Without addressing mental health, participants struggle to maintain employment and stable housing. Consistent mental health care is essential."

-Service Provider

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Coordinated Services, Funding Needs

When asked about how ATI/reentry services in Westchester could be enhanced, providers often mentioned the need for **better coordination among providers**, particularly across distinct support systems like social services, health services, housing services, and courts. This topic made up 7% of all comments analyzed. Some noted silos and fragmentation, often by geographic location (e.g., Yonkers, New Rochelle, Mt. Vernon, White Plains). Some providers described systemic inefficiencies as eroding the very fabric of meaningful assistance. As one provider noted, *"[We] need better connections between programs. Participants often get lost transitioning from one program to another due to lack of continuity."* Notable aspects mentioned include bureaucratic hurdles that are difficult for organizations to meet and impinge on providers' ability to effectively deliver services, a lack of connection and coordination among different service providers and programs, and inconsistent or fragmented information that prevents providers from offering comprehensive care.

Providers often mentioned the need for better coordination among providers, particularly across distinct support systems like social services, health services, housing services, and courts.



One provider noted the importance of streamlining the inside-outside connection for people released from Westchester County jail and the Department of Social Services. Currently, reentry services inside the jail set up individuals who are due for release with already completed DSS applications for benefits like SNAP, emergency shelter, etc. However, the absence of dedicated DSS staff who are trained to work with system-impacted individuals sometimes means that the pre-release work of reentry coordinators does not have the intended impact post-release. Some legal dimensions, such as the failure to seal individuals' records, also introduce barriers to employment and housing access. The uncoordinated nature of these services means that even when help is available, individuals can find themselves lost in the shuffle, undermining their potential for sustained success.

When asked about their organizations' most pressing **funding needs**, providers mentioned the need for resources to address staffing shortages. High case management loads were also tied to funding shortages, impacting both provider retention rates and/or service delivery quality. One provider shared, ***"We have a five person staff for nearly 300 kids... we had to put a cap on the program."*** Other issues raised were the need for pay increases and the need for professional development and training to sustain what is often challenging emotional work. As one provider questioned, "How are providers expected to give their clients their all when they need that same support and services themselves?" Finally, providers mentioned that additional funding would also empower certain organizations to make their services more widely available. As one provider noted, ***"Overall, we need more funding to support critical services that participants depend on."***

Providers also offered insights on **services needed** in Westchester that are currently lacking or not widely available. These included enhanced services for undocumented system-involved participants, services for people who have been convicted of sexual offenses, community centers for youth, and parenting classes.





County Leaders

To obtain the perspectives of county leaders, we conducted eight one-on-one interviews with seven Steering Committee members of the Westchester County ATI/Reentry Planning Collaborative and one non-member. The county leaders we interviewed serve as commissioners, deputy commissioners, or executive directors for Westchester County's departments of Correction, Probation, Community Mental Health, Social Services, and Transportation; the District Attorney's Office; Assigned 18b Counsel; Legal Aid Services. These county leaders offered their perspectives on key barriers to successful alternatives to incarceration and/or reentry and their recommendations for enhancing services and programs in Westchester County.

Health, Housing, Transportation

The most frequently mentioned topic among county leader interviews (making up 22% of all comments,) focused on health access and services, including the need for mental and/or substance use stabilization. Discussions about housing (14% of all comments and third most discussed topic) often came up as an interdependent barrier that prevented system-impacted individuals' ability to focus on their health and stabilization. While county leaders ranked the lack of permanent and transitional housing as the greatest barrier to ATI program completion and/or effective reentry, they cited access and utilization of health services as the second most significant barrier. As one county leader noted, "Housing is a huge issue, top of the list for people coming home."

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"Housing is a huge issue, top of the list for people coming home."

-County Leader

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Referencing that without mental health and substance use stabilization, system-impacted individuals could rarely focus on requirements or needs like employment, another county leader noted, "Employment, etc., is secondary to mental health stabilization."

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"Employment, etc., is secondary to mental health stabilization."

-County Leader

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When discussing **barriers to meeting ATI court requirements** (e.g., Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Veteran's Court), some county leaders recognized that the time it takes to conduct required health assessments, compile documentation, and coordinate with the courts and service providers can sometimes disincentivize Westchester participants who are eligible for ATI programs to engage. A few county leaders spoke to the need for more streamlined, timely processes for speciality courts. On the other hand, other county leaders noted that the lack of adequate staffing (i.e., high caseloads) and lack of access to documentation (e.g., identification, previous health records) necessary to complete health assessments required by ATI programs sometimes inhibits timely responses. Moreover, individuals may not be adequately prepared for or ready to engage the requirements of ATI programs available through specialty courts like Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Veterans Court.

A few county leaders spoke to the need for more streamlined, timely processes for speciality courts. On the other hand, other county leaders noted that the lack of adequate staffing (i.e., high caseloads) and lack of access to documentation (e.g., identification, previous health records) sometimes inhibits timely responses.

Relatedly, **transportation** discussions (making up 12% of all comments) focused on the challenges of accessing reentry services in rural parts of the county or the difficulty of traveling to certain courts if system-impacted individuals do not live near central hubs like White Plains. The lack of transportation was the third most frequently cited barrier to meeting ATI program requirements and/or successful community reintegration by county leaders. In discussions with county transportation leaders, paratransit in Westchester County has an extensive infrastructure for people with Medicaid, disabilities, and mental health conditions. It is not clear if these paratransit services are widely known to ATI and/or reentry service providers.





Service Delivery Quality: A Need for Person-Centered, Long-term Engagement

The second most discussed topic (17% of all comments) among county leaders was the need for person-centered, sustained case management support for system-impacted individuals. Providers and criminal legal system actors with **cultural competence and trauma-informed approaches; mentors who can provide regular accountability check-ins; credible messengers with similar lived experiences were all deemed important to person-centered, sustained case management and a central key to success.**

At the same time, county leaders also acknowledged that staffing shortages, lack of training, and/or high caseloads often prevented this kind of person-centered service delivery to take place. **Common scenarios involved ATI program participants needing to go to multiple places, providers, and appointments in order to meet court requirements but giving up out of frustration and/or an inability to complete burdensome paperwork or appointment requirements without sustained case management assistance.**

Coordinated Services, Funding Needs

There was broad recognition among county leaders interviewed that ATI/reentry services needed greater coordination across the county (10% of all comments). County leaders mentioned the need for better coordination between county jail pre-release reentry services and post-release reentry services, particularly in setting individuals up with health insurance, medications, DSS application and points of contact who can engage in long-term case management and service assistance. County leaders also mentioned the need for improved coordination among judges, health care providers, case managers, prosecutors, and defense attorneys to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of ATI programs. The OYP Program was mentioned as an effective model that might be replicated.

County leaders mentioned the need for improved coordination among judges, health care providers, case managers, prosecutors, and defense attorneys to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of ATI programs.



The most significant **funding needs** identified by county leaders were related to staffing shortages and case management (11% of all comments). Funding for additional staffing to ensure sustainable caseloads, as well as to process required assessments for ATIs in a timely manner, was the most common funding need articulated by county leaders. This topic came up most prominently in relation to staffing needs for the departments of Community Mental Health, District Attorney's Office, and Legal Aid. Yet county leaders also acknowledged the need for long-term case management during ATI program engagement and post-incarceration.

Finally, county leaders mentioned the **need for youth-specific and gender-specific services for women in the County**, as these system-impacted populations have different needs and barriers than adults and men.

Steering Committee Recommendations and Priorities

During a series of Steering Committee meetings in Feb-April, 2025, we polled Steering Committee members on seven broad areas to enhance ATIs and reentry services in Westchester County, mirroring the categories identified by a 2024 New York state-wide ATI/Reentry Coalition 2024 report.³⁸ The most highly prioritized areas identified by the 17 survey respondents during the Feb. 5, 2025 Steering Committee meeting are displayed in Figure 7. Housing, Mental Health & Substance Use, Employment, and Coordinated Services were identified as the top four priority areas to enhance ATI/Reentry effectiveness in Westchester County by the Steering Committee.

Prioritized Areas for Enhancing ATI/Reentry in Westchester

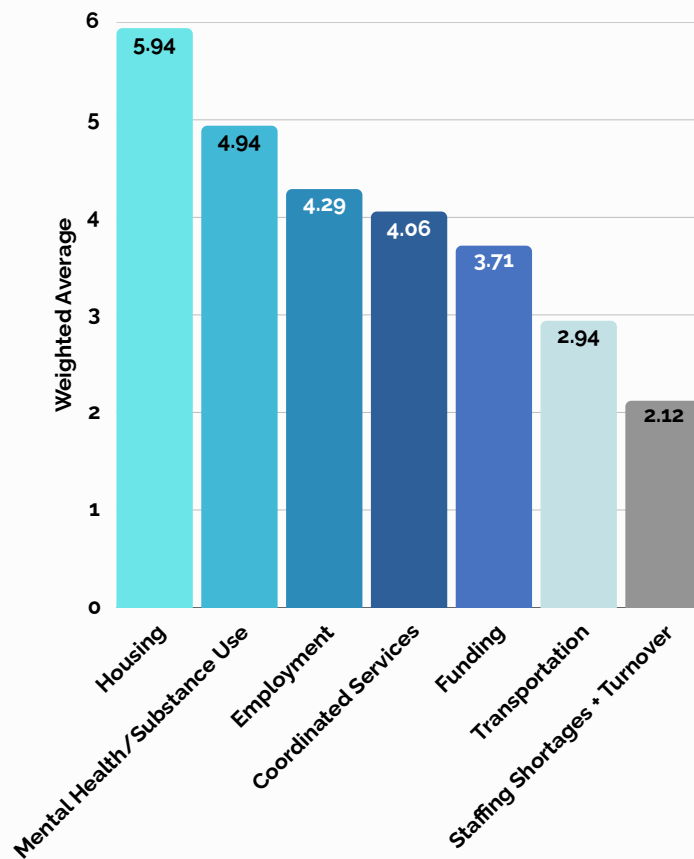
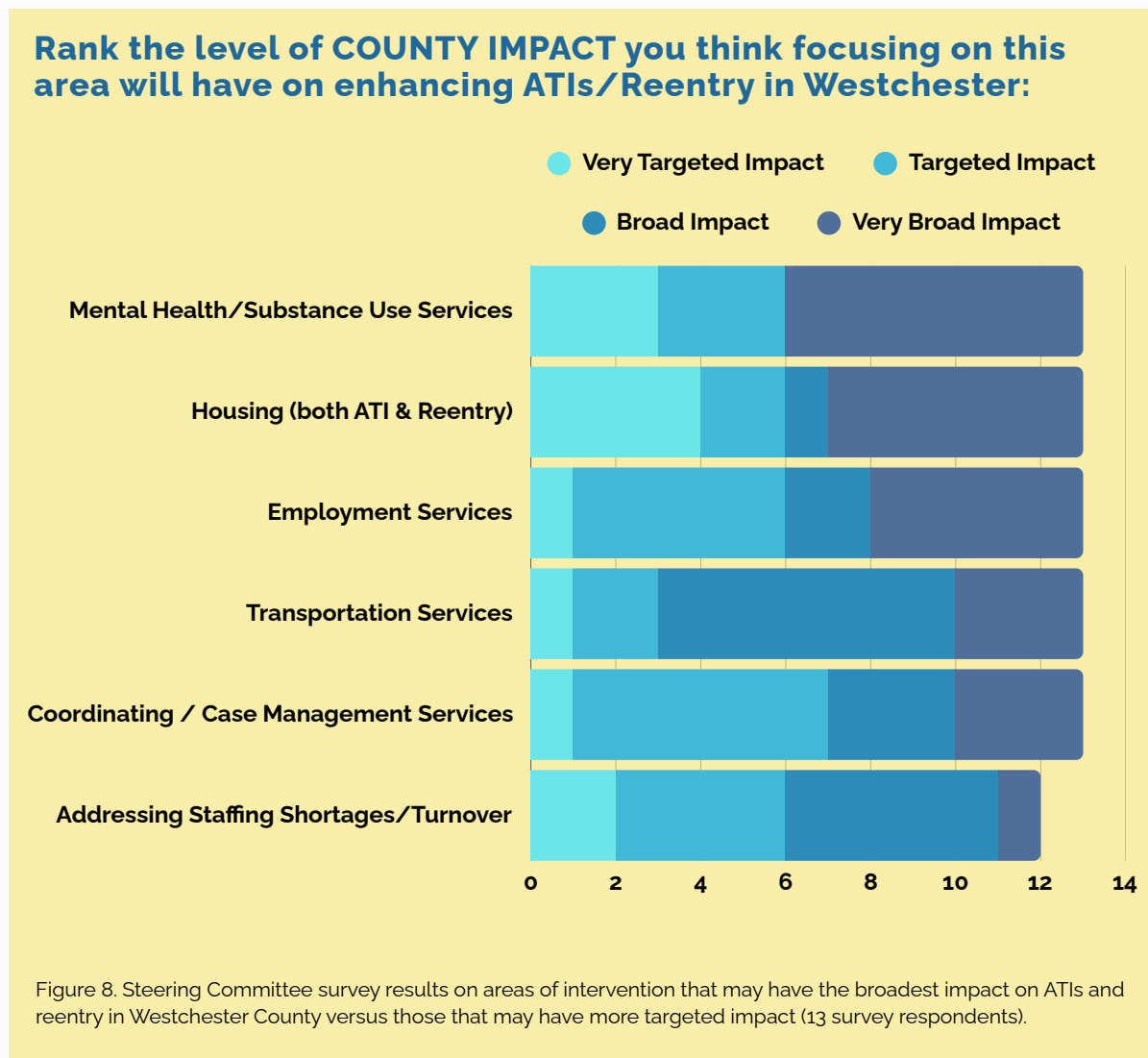


Figure 7. Prioritized areas for enhancing ATI/Reentry services in Westchester County by Steering Committee members (17 total survey respondents).



At the March 12, 2025 Steering Committee meeting, we asked Steering Committee members to consider which areas of intervention would have the broadest impact on ATIs and reentry effectiveness in Westchester County, versus interventions that might have more targeted impact but may still be needed. The results from this survey question are visualized in Figure 8 below, indicating that respondents thought that enhancing mental health/substance use services and housing would have the broadest impact. Respondents indicated that Coordinating / Case Management Services would have the most targeted impact.





Overlapping Qualitative Themes

Considering the findings from all three stakeholder groups—system-impacted individuals, providers, and county leaders—it is clear that there is overlapping agreement regarding four key themes.

First, **housing** was deemed the greatest barrier to successful ATI / reentry success and the most pressing, and perhaps most challenging, priority. References to housing barriers included permanent, affordable housing, transitional reentry housing, supportive housing, youth-specific housing, and emergency housing. Second, all three groups emphasize the need for **person-centered, sustained case management** that involves the expertise of credible messengers with lived experience, mentors who have the cultural competence to advise and relate to system-impacted individuals, and long-term relationships that help participants navigate a number of complicated systems and services. This emphasis was contrasted with a service delivery model that takes a “check-the-box,” transactional, short-term approach and lacks trauma-informed, culturally competent approaches. Third, all three groups put some emphasis on **closing transportation access barriers and offering substantive employment assistance** as a key to success. Transportation access was specifically emphasized in relation to meeting court requirements and/or rural parts of the county. Finally, all groups placed some emphasis on **enhancing health stabilization** as a necessary prerequisite to effective engagement in ATI programs and reentry services (see Figure 9).

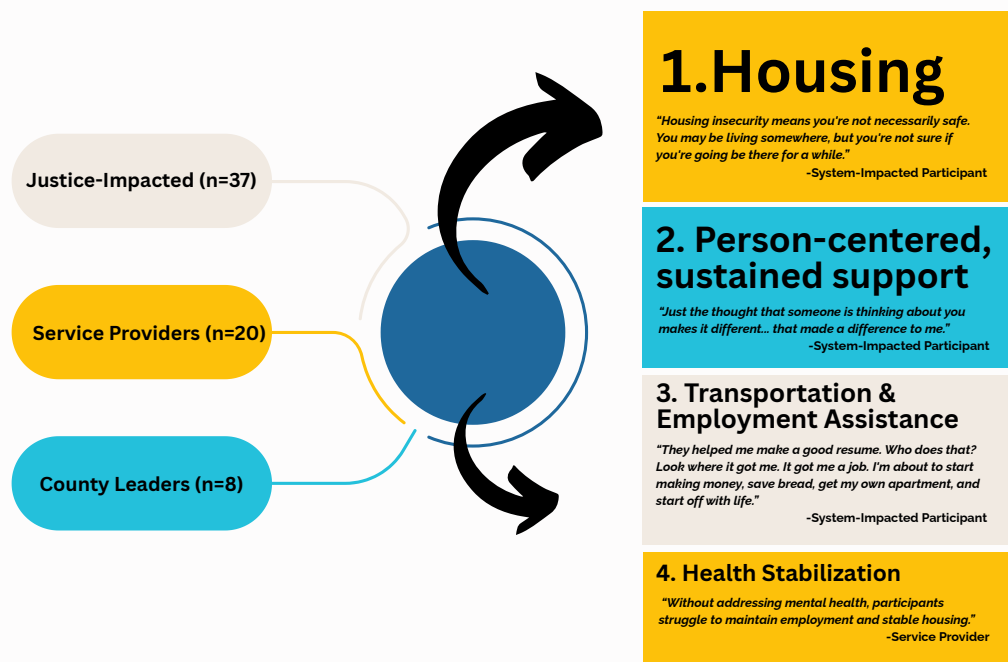


Figure 9. An illustration of overlapping qualitative themes among the three stakeholder groups interviewed.



Methods

Study Design

Qualitative interviews were designed to capture the perspectives of system-impacted individuals, providers, and county leaders on ATI programs and reentry services in Westchester County. We asked participants about elements that are integral to participants' success in completing ATI programs and/or court requirements as well as their own self-defined goals. We also asked about structural barriers that may stand in the way of participants' ability to meet ATI program / court requirements or effectively reintegrate into the community post-incarceration. Finally, we asked about service delivery, and the qualities that were central to effective service engagement. The study aimed to assess key elements needed for ATI/Reentry success, barriers that may stand in the way, and ways to improve service delivery or close service gaps.

Collection of Data

We conducted four focus groups with system-impacted individuals engaged in ATI programs and/or reentry services in Westchester County. To recruit participants, we partnered with three non-profit organizations who work directly with ATI/reentry program participants: 914United, YSOW, and CHOICE. A total of 37 participants were interviewed via four focus groups. Focus groups ranged from 60-90 minutes and were conducted in December 2024. Each focus group participant was given a \$75 gift card for their time. Although non-profit organizations assisted researchers with recruitment and focus group sign-ups, the non-profit organizations did not have access to the interviews, transcripts, or any of the coding and analysis activities thereafter. Prior to commencing the focus groups, all participants were informed of the study's purpose, risks, and confidentiality guidelines. Participants provided verbal consent to proceed with the interview. Additionally, all participants verbally agreed to be audio recorded using digital recorders.

We conducted one-on-one virtual interviews with 20 providers engaged in direct ATI/reentry services representing nine non-profit community organizations and three county-based departments. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes each. Notes were taken during the interview and used for analysis. Providers were not compensated for their time.

We conducted eight one-on-one interviews with county leaders overseeing departments that had direct or partial oversights over ATI/reentry services in Westchester County. These departments included: Department of Correction, Department of Community Mental Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Probation, District Attorney's Office, Legal Aid, Assigned 18b Counsel, and the Department of Transportation.



Coding & Analysis

Audio recordings of the focus group interviews were transcribed using professional services and de-identified to remove all personally identifiable information. The qualitative research team developed codes and definitions based on the key research questions that the assessment aimed to answer:

What elements are integral to participants' success in completing ATI programs, court requirements, and/or reentry goals post-incarceration?

What barriers, if any, do system-impacted individuals face in relation to housing, employment, health, transportation, and meeting court / supervision requirements?

What are the most effective service delivery approaches? What makes service delivery for ATI programs/reentry services ineffective?

Did participants have any recommendations for how to enhance ATI programs/reentry services in Westchester County?

First, deductive codes, subcodes, and definitions that aligned with the research instrument and key research questions were used to analyze the transcripts and interview notes. Second, inductive codes and definitions that emerged across multiple interviews were developed and integrated into the final codebook.

After coding all interviews, researchers aggregated counts per code (e.g., housing, employment, health, transportation) relative to keys to success, barriers to success, services needed, and recommendations to determine an aggregate count of topics discussed most frequently and the percentage of mentions for that code out of all comments coded. Researchers identified testimonies and quotes that were thematically representative of emergent themes.

As the principal investigator of this study was not affiliated with a university, no Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained. However, ethical research standards typical of IRB-approved studies were followed throughout the research process.



APPENDIX

Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) Specialty Courts, Diversion, and Youth Programs

Specialty Courts

Westchester County operates several specialized courts focusing on alternatives to incarceration, rehabilitation, and reintegration. These programs support individuals with histories of substance use, mental health challenges, and systemic barriers while offering pathways to recovery, employment, and community reintegration.

Mental Health Court

Westchester County's Mental Health Court provides treatment-based alternatives for individuals with a confirmed diagnosis of serious mental illness, who may in addition face additional complex issues such as substance use. Eligibility for these specialty courts, as determined by the District Attorney's Office and the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health, requires that participants enter into an agreement through the assistance of defense counsel.³⁹ The court offers both a felony and misdemeanor program, with the felony program lasting up to 24 months and the misdemeanor lasting 6 months to a year. For the felony program, participants must plead to both a felony and misdemeanor charge. With successful completion, the felony may be reduced and the individual may receive a misdemeanor conviction with a sentence of probation. When the felony program began in 2005, it focused on nonviolent felony cases, but now on occasion accepts violent felony cases. During their time in the felony part, individuals remain on interim probation. The assigned Probation Officer is from within the Probation Department's specialized Mental Health Unit.

For any individual pleading into the misdemeanor part, the expectation is that with successful completion, the charges will be dismissed or result in a violation. The Misdemeanor Wellness Court serves as a hub court and began in 2023. Participants for this part may be referred by any Town, Village or City Court in Westchester County, the County's District Attorney's Office, Department of Community Mental Health, Department of Probation, local defense bar and/or local law enforcement.⁴⁰



Participation in either part is voluntary and each participant is assigned a care coordinator and sometimes a peer mentor. Treatment plans are individualized for each participant and include a wide range of services, such as mental health treatment, housing assistance, education and job training.⁴¹ A large portion of participants face co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders.⁴²

Drug Court

Westchester County's Drug Court falls under Judicial Diversion (JD). A formal request for mitigation must be submitted by defense counsel and eligible individuals charged with crimes may request to apply and be screened for JD. Eligibility for Drug Court is determined during mitigation. New York State Criminal Procedure Law Articles 216 and 410.91 set out the eligible crimes.⁴³ No sex crimes are permitted for JD by statute, whether present, recent, or older cases. Drug Court does not take Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) cases. Per statute, prosecutors' consent for judicial diversion is only applicable to individuals charged with violent felony offenses and those with a prior violent felony conviction (with tolling). Prosecutors have the right by statute to request a hearing to oppose an otherwise eligible individual charged with a crime from participating in JD. Typically, the individual's attorney will offer Drug Court as an alternative to incarceration if the person has a history of substance use. In many cases, if the individual charged meets the Drug Court requirements, a judge may choose to dismiss the charges or the individual can plead to a lower charge.

Once a participant enters Drug Court, they must fulfill a number of requirements to complete the ATI program, which typically lasts one year. Operating under Judge Helen M. Blackwood in White Plains, the program follows a four-phase structure. With each phase, participants are required to appear in court less often (weekly, biweekly, and monthly). In addition to court appearances, participants are randomly drug tested, must attend personalized therapy sessions, report to a case manager from the court's Problem Solving Unit, and in some instances, complete community service. The goal is to help participants build connections in their community, forming safety nets that will be available to them after completing the ATI program.

The Problem Solving Unit plays a key role in case management, therapy referrals, and recovery planning. Unlike traditional courts, relapses are not penalized but addressed through therapeutic interventions. The program has a high success rate, with very few participants failing to complete it in recent years.⁴⁴



Veteran's Treatment Court (VTC)

Veteran's Treatment Court (VTC) is another specialty judicial diversion court focused on veterans who have committed low-level crimes and experience mental health or substance use issues.⁴⁵ Participants undergo a specialized screening process that includes reviewing their conviction history and military service record, a psychological evaluation, and participating in a treatment plan. Similar to other specialty courts, participation is voluntary. The Westchester County Probation Department is responsible for all phases of an individual's community service sentence.⁴⁶ Additionally, VTC partners with the Veterans Administration (VA) to provide therapeutic support to program participants. VTC also partners with Veteran Justice Outreach Officers, who connect participants to treatment, housing and community resources.

The VTC program lasts 12 months. Based on the facts of each case, eligible participants are required to plead to both a higher and lower charge before being placed on an interim supervised probation. This may entail a higher and lower felony charge or to a felony charge and a misdemeanor. Following completion of the program, participant success is determined when the lesser charge is offered and accepted by the participant. VTC does not offer complete case dismissals or the "clearing" of records.⁴⁷ There are also no punitive responses for relapses of participants.⁴⁸ Participants are assigned a dedicated Probation Officer to help them access community-based services and local, state, and federal agencies focused on Veterans Affairs.⁴⁹

Diversion Programs

Westchester County also offers a variety of youth-focused diversion programs.

Opportunity Youth Part (OYP) Initiative

Launched in October 2020 in the New Rochelle City Court, the Opportunity Youth Part initiative (OYP) supports emerging adults ages 16 to 24, who are facing misdemeanor or felony charges. The program connects participants with job training, education assistance, mentoring, and mental health and substance use treatment. Presided over by Judge Jared R. Rice, OYP holds weekly Thursday afternoon sessions that include a one-hour conference with service providers, attorneys, and mentors, followed by a one-hour participant follow-up calendar. In 2023, the program expanded to include a Thursday morning calendar.



Since its launch, over 300 individuals have engaged with OYP, with more than 140 participants successfully completing the program.⁵⁰ A significant portion of graduates leave without a criminal record, as the program allows participants to avoid incarceration. Due to the program completion success rates, many consider OYP a model for emerging adult justice programs.⁵¹

The program includes permanent assignments to a judge, attorneys, and case managers, independent clinical assessments, and individualized wellness plans. Referrals are made to workforce training, job fairs, educational opportunities, financial literacy, housing, and childcare programs. A Court Coordinator provides compliance reports on each participant on the weekly calendar and gives these updates to Judge Rice, the ADA, and defense attorneys. These updates help all parties involved monitor the progress of a participant and ensure accountability. These compliance reports also help the ADA know if and when a participant has earned a favorable disposition in his or her case – typically a one-year conditional discharge (CD). During that CD year, the participant still has occasional Court appearances, primarily for check-ins.

OYP partners closely with the pre-trial coordinators and case managers who work with CHOICE of NY. When Judge Rice determines that a young defendant meets the criteria for joining OYP, he connects them first to pre-trial coordinators who collect basic employment, schooling, and housing information about the participant. Since new participants are frequently asked to perform community service hours and some are required to sign on to a treatment program through TASC, the pre-trial coordinators make these connections for the participants. Once the new participants have demonstrated some compliance and progress, they are typically transferred to case managers at Choice. Case managers do more in-depth assessments of the participants and provide a broader range of services. For example, they can help participants secure SNAP benefits, refer them to Anger Management providers, connect them to organizations that offer workforce training, job fairs, and supportive housing opportunities.

Additional key partners include the Center for Justice Innovation (CJI) and g14United, both of whom provide programs that emphasize gun violence prevention, wellness, and workforce development. CJI's New Rochelle Community Justice Center (NRCJC) offers six-week career workshops, and the organization provides relaxation and recreation at their weekly Thursday Kick Back sessions at a nearby restaurant. g14United offers a nine-week gun violence prevention program to OYP participants.



An innovative component of the OYP initiative is restorative justice, which brings participants and those they harmed together in a conference overseen by a professional Mediator. This Mediation element adds to OYP's focus on repairing harm, offering life-changing opportunities for participants, and reintegrating them into their communities instead of emphasizing punitive measures. In lieu of traditional sentencing, OYP offers rehabilitative pathways, such as community-based service referrals, engagement in educational and workforce training programs, one-on-one mentoring, and judicial check-ins designed to encourage progress rather than penalize setbacks.

Participants experience structured guidance from the moment they enter the program. Each case is individually assessed, and participants work with case managers to develop a customized plan with realistic milestones. The program provides mental health and substance use treatment as needed, while ensuring access to essential life skills such as financial literacy, job readiness, and housing support.

Judge Rice connects OYP participants to caring adults and workforce, mentoring and educational opportunities with the goal of achieving better legal and life outcomes for each young defendant who appears before him. OYP partners with a wide range of government agencies, nonprofits, and academic institutions to provide holistic support. Moving forward, the program plans to expand restorative justice practices, enhance housing initiatives, develop parenting support programs, and strengthen partnerships with community service providers to increase access to resources.

OYP also fosters community engagement through events, including a retreat with 75 attendees, panel discussions, and a fireside chat featuring an author and entrepreneur in conversation with Judge Rice. Other initiatives include a mentor mixer, transitioning from a one-on-one model to a group mentoring approach; a holiday party; and an anniversary event recognizing 10 to 12 participants with awards and gift cards.

The OYP program connects participants to additional services provided by various organizations. These organizations include: Guidance Center of Westchester for behavioral health and anger management services; Lexington Center for Recovery for substance use treatment; Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime (TASC) for treatment facility placement; and Westhab for workforce training and job placement support. Additionally, the City of New Rochelle created an internship program, funded by the City of New Rochelle and overseen by CHOICE, which has provided full-time employment opportunities to several OYP participants.

Each of these alternative programs serves a unique population with the shared goal of reducing incarceration through rehabilitation, treatment, and community-based support. By providing specialized case management, treatment resources, and structured program phases, these programs help individuals stabilize their lives, reintegrate into society, and avoid future criminal legal system involvement.



Emerging Adult Justice Part (EAJP)

The City of Mount Vernon launched the Emerging Adult Justice Part (EAJP) of the City Court in June 2021.⁵² The mission of EAJP is to provide meaningful alternatives to traditional prosecution and incarceration for youth between the ages of 18-25.⁵³

EAJP is a court-driven collaboration between the Westchester County District Attorney's Office, the Defense Bar, the Court, and the Youth Shelter of Westchester (YSOW). YSOW has partnered with and helps serve 150 youth annually through its residential and community-based programs. For a more detailed description of YSOW, see "Community-Based Reentry Services" section below

New Rochelle Youth Court

New Rochelle Youth Court is a diversion program for individuals charged for the first-time between the ages of 7-17. Typical offenses might include disturbing the peace, harassment, shoplifting, trespassing, and vandalism. Youth are diverted by the Westchester County Family Court with the goal of reducing status offenses.⁵⁴ The Youth Court has been operating for twenty-six years and has trained nearly 300 students to serve as judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys, fielding cases that are diverted from the Westchester County Family Court.⁵⁵ The Court is a collaboration of the New Rochelle Youth Bureau, New Rochelle Police Department and the Westchester County Department of Probation.

Eligibility is based on an application form, academic grades, school attendance, an essay and a personal interview.⁵⁶ Applicants must be New Rochelle residents and in the 8th to 10th grade. Selection is determined by the Youth Court Executive Committee.

Fresh Start

Fresh Start is a diversion program launched in October 2021 by the Westchester County District Attorney's Office. The program aims to address the underlying causes of crime and enhance public safety by providing social services, counseling, and rehabilitation as alternatives to fines, convictions, and incarceration. It is a pre-arraignment diversion program for people who have committed non-violent, first-time, low level offenses. In the program's first year, approximately 200 participants successfully completed the program.⁵⁷ Participants are referred by the District Attorney's Office to the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health. Most individuals are charged with petty larceny, disorderly conduct, trespassing and other non-violent, low level offenses.⁵⁸ Upon successful completion of the program, the District Attorney's office will decline to prosecute the charges. If the program is not completed successfully, the individual is required to appear in court as originally planned.⁵⁹



Westchester Overdose Prevention and Treatment Initiative (OPT-In)

Another diversion program in Westchester County is the Overdose Prevention and Treatment Initiative (OPT-In). OPT-In launched in September 2023, as a pre-arraignment initiative that offers community-based treatment and services in place of prosecution for individuals arrested for misdemeanor drug possession and histories of substance use.⁶⁰ Following an arrest, participants are connected with a peer mentor who will guide them to healthcare providers and create individualized treatment plans. The program grants participants 30 days to focus on their treatment plan. If their treatment plan is successful, the District Attorney's office will decline to prosecute.

OPT-In partners with White Plains Public Safety, the Police Department, and the Urban League of Westchester.⁶¹ Additionally, White Plains healthcare partners, Innovative Health Systems, St. John's Riverside, White Plains Hospital and the Mental Health Association of Westchester are community partners.⁶²

County-Driven Reentry Services

Westchester County Department of Correction (WCDOC) offers a reentry program designed to support successful reintegration into the community upon release from jail. The program depends on interagency collaboration with key county partners, including the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH), the Department of Health, and the Office of Workforce Development. WCDOC also partners with several community organizations and institutions to provide reentry services, including but not limited to, the Youth Shelter Program of Westchester, Family Services of Westchester (FSW), CHOICE, Hudson Valley Community Services, Diggs Farm, Upon This Rock Ministries, AFYA Foundation, Sarah Lawrence College, Pace University, Southern Westchester BOCES, and 914United. These partnerships provide support to individuals reentering society as they face challenges related to securing housing, finding employment, accessing healthcare and mental health services, and continuing education.

The **Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH)** plays a key role in monitoring individuals with prior histories of mental health or substance use histories and facilitating continuity of care upon release. In preparation for release, DCMH provides referrals for case management, treatment, and support in the community. Several DCMH personnel are stationed within WCDOC serving as liaison among individuals with prior behavioral health diagnoses, WCDOC, and the community.



Lives Forward is a program jointly launched by the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health and Department of Correction in 2024. Lives Forward is a peer-led reentry program that recruits incarcerated individuals to train as Mental Health Peer Specialists and Certified Recovery Peer Advocates (CRPAs). Participants in Lives Forward undergo a six-week, 90-hour training program co-delivered by the Mental Health Empowerment Project (MHEP) and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD). Upon discharge from DOC, graduates of the training course can prepare to take the NY State examination in dual certification recognized by the New York State Office of Mental Health and the Office of Addiction Services and Support.

The program aims to expand annually, with a long-term goal of reducing recidivism and addressing workforce shortages in behavioral health. Participants are selected by corrections officials based on their successful recovery and willingness to take part in the program. Though employment is not guaranteed, graduates of the program may secure employment as paraprofessionals with community providers, courts, and crisis teams, helping others facing similar struggles. One of the challenges is the low compensation for certified peer roles.⁶³ Lives Forward was funded through the County Direct Opioid Settlement, in which \$5,594,894 was awarded in total.

Staff from the **Department of Social Services (DSS)** are stationed on-site at the county jail as part of a reentry team. Their role is to meet with individuals pre-release in order to develop a reentry plan that facilitates seamless service upon release. The goal is to ensure that individuals have a point of contact and clear plan, with DSS staff ready to provide support in the community. However, it remains the individual's decision whether or not to follow through. Particularly, DSS plays a vital role in facilitating pre-enrollment for Medicaid and housing assistance. For new Medicaid enrollments, federal regulations continue to require a 60-90 day processing period post-release, creating a gap in health care insurance coverage. For individuals who were previously Medicaid-eligible however, Section 1115 waivers allow incarcerated people to begin their reinstatement application pre-release, expediting health care coverage once released.⁶⁴ As part of these efforts, DSS Reentry Coordinators work with individuals during intake to assess needs, initiate applications, and help prepare discharge materials, including identification, benefits paperwork, and referral information.⁶⁵ While some people leave jail with these materials in hand, challenges remain for those without a qualifying diagnosis, literacy skills, or a phone.



Community-Based Reentry + Coordinated Services

914United

914United is an organization that provides long-term navigational support, reentry services, preventative services and mentorship to teens and young adults. 914United primarily serves system-impacted individuals as well as gang-involved or gang-influenced youth. 914United broadly serves about 65 people, with a more intensive focus on 18 program participants. 914United uses a Credible Case Manager model to provide navigational support and mentorship to program participants, assisting them with establishing personal goals, obtaining personal documents, securing jobs, and accessing additional services.

914United partners with the Westchester County Department of Correction (WCDOC) to provide discharge and reentry preparation to teens and young adults incarcerated at Westchester County Jail. In partnership with the DOC, 914United serves participants of the Young Offender Unit, a special unit at Westchester County Jail for young men ages 18-26, both at the pre-trial and post-sentencing stages of incarceration. The Young Offender Unit provides a higher level of supervision. Admission to the Young Offender Unit is ultimately by choice, however, participants are recommended to the unit by staff officers. The Youth Offender Unit program begins 30 to 60 days prior to release. 914United facilitates life-skills and leadership using curriculum-based programming designed to engage participants prior to release. 914United collaborates and coordinates this program with the DOC discharge team.

In addition to their collaborations with WCDOC, 914United offers several other programs. In partnership with My Brother's Keeper and the Yonkers Board of Education, 914United runs in-school programs at two schools in Yonkers. These programs are run by three 914United staff members and officially began in April 2025. Voices to Be Heard is an 8-week community-based program targeting dual-impacted youth affected by the criminal legal and child welfare systems. The program aims to equip youth ages 14-26 with leadership, policy, advocacy, and public speaking skills.⁶⁶ One Step Ahead is a program focused on career readiness, digital proficiency, and financial literacy. Participants learn essential skills such as how to write a resumé and cover letter and receive guidance on creating a LinkedIn profile to stand out in a competitive job market. Valley Bank and Yonkers Honda are partners of this program, providing valuable industry insight and job-readiness support. Fathering Forward is an upcoming program for young fathers. The program was soft launched in November 2024 with a full launch in 2025. Finally, 914United's Power of Movement program is a 4-week fitness program held in partnership with Fitness Factory in Yonkers, NY. The Power of Movement's pilot program served 40 participants.



CHOICE of NY

CHOICE of NY (CHOICE) is a large care management agency servicing Westchester County. CHOICE is the organizational partner of the OYP Initiative, assisting participants to meet court and program requirements.

CHOICE is headquartered in New Rochelle with two additional offices in White Plains and Peekskill. Program participants may be referred to CHOICE's care management services by completing Single Point of Access (SPOA) application through the County's Department of Community Mental Health, by other service providers, or by self-referral. Eligible participants must have two qualifying medical or mental health/substance use conditions (e.g., asthma and Bipolar Disorder) or one severe medical or mental health/substance use condition (e.g., HIV/AIDS). Once accepted, participants are assigned a CHOICE care manager with whom they meet twice a month, face to face, to develop a service plan.⁶⁷ A service plan is a list of the participant's goals with a realistic strategy for achieving these goals. CHOICE care managers typically serve as liaison between the participant's care providers and also assist participants with securing employment, finding housing, and transportation to and from appointments -- often using their own cars for transportation.⁶⁸

CHOICE offers pretrial services to every major city court in the county as well as two smaller courts in the county. Most notably, CHOICE and Judge Jared Rice's Court are connected in their delivery of services to youth program participants (ages 16-24) in the OYP Initiative.⁶⁹ The two operate as follows. First, an eligible program participant meets Judge Jared Rice in his OYP court in New Rochelle for their arraignment. On the same day, the participant meets with a member of CHOICE's Pretrial Services team, who provides them a variety of pretrial advocacy services. These services include assistance with supervised release and probation recommendations to Judge Rice, ensuring that the participant has adequate transportation to and from court, and providing participants with the appropriate clothes for court appearances. Next, Judge Rice and the Director of Criminal Justice Services work together to determine whether the participant is a good candidate for full participation in the OYP Initiative and care management services.⁷⁰

If it is determined that the program participant would benefit from these services and the participant agrees to receive these services, they are introduced to a member of CHOICE's case management team, who does a general intake and assessment. The case manager and the program participant develop a wellness plan together. This wellness plan is specific to each participant but always addresses five key areas: (1) mental health and well-being; (2) employment and employment training; (3) substance use treatment (if necessary); (4) educational support; and (5) housing and mentorship.⁷¹ This first stage of OYP participation, from the time of arraignment through the development of a wellness plan, up to disposition, typically lasts one to five months.⁷²



After developing their wellness plan, participants sign an OYP Participant Agreement which officially enters them into the OYP Initiative. Program participants are granted a six or twelve month Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal (ACD)⁷³ or a twelve month Conditional Discharge (CD).⁷⁴ Participants are then connected with CHOICE service providers who then directly provide the program participant with recommended services based on their wellness plan. Some of these services may include job preparedness training and assistance with finding a job, connecting with necessary mental and physical health services, applying for benefits like SNAP, and securing housing.⁷⁵

CHOICE also operates a Community Prevention Program that services young people directly from the community who may not have already been involved with the criminal legal system but are affected by systems of incarceration or criminalization. Participants of this particular program are usually referred by Family Court, Probation Officers, or members of the community. Though the program is separate from OYP, participants graduating from the OYP program are eligible to join the Community Prevention Program and receive additional care management services.⁷⁶

Children's Village

Children's Village (CV) is a historical charity founded in 1851 in New York state that provides ATI, diversion, in-home family support and prevention services to youth "engaged in criminal behavior" in New York City, Westchester County and across the state. Our research covered only those services offered at CV's Dobbs Ferry campus and one of its community based offices located in Westchester County. Programs offered in Dobbs Ferry include: the Greenburgh Eleven public school district, the Education and Employment Center (EEC), The Louis Jackson Rapid Intervention Center (RIC), CV Therapeutic Foster Boarding Home Program, WAY Home, and the Close to Home program. The Close to Home program is of particular interest to our research. A brief description of each program and eligibility requirements (where available) is below.

The Greenburgh Eleven Public Union Free School District is a fully accredited school district operated in partnership with CV located on CV's Dobbs Ferry campus. The school district has an elementary and middle school serving both boys and girls and a high school (Bethune Learning Community School) serving only boys. All schools follow the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) behavior management program and maintain a relatively low student-teacher ratio of 8:1. The school district offers services to both students who travel to and from campus daily ("day students") and youth who reside at CV.⁷⁷ The Education and Employment Center (EEC) located in Yonkers' Getty Square offers college and job readiness services, college tours, mentoring, summer employment, and other services to teens and young adults ages 14 to 24.⁷⁸



The Louis Jackson Rapid Intervention Center (RIC) is an OMH-licensed short-term intensive mental health service for kids aged 5 to 17 in foster care. RIC is a residential program and is open 24/7 for admissions. Through collaborative family work and intensive milieu supports, RIC'S 21-day model helps youth safely return to the same, or lower level of care, at the end of their stay.⁷⁹

The CV Westchester Therapeutic Foster Boarding Home Program identifies children in CV's care or that have been referred by the Department of Social Services that would benefit from a foster family (children from birth to 21 years of age) and pairs them with families in Westchester County.⁸⁰

CV provides support to system-impacted or foster care youth through their Working Alongside Youth (WAY) Home program. WAY Home works with youth, ages 11-26, providing guidance, support, and tools needed to transition back to community, and forge a successful path to independent living. A WAY Coach is matched with each youth, and they provide specific guidance and encouragement to help them attain their educational goals, apply for jobs, find affordable housing, and foster productive relationships with others.⁸¹

CV's Close to Home program "allow[s] teens who have been involved in criminal behavior to live in therapeutic residential sites near their homes and communities."⁸² Close to Home is an Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) initiative that started in 2012 in New York City, aiming to keep youth involved in the juvenile legal system close to their homes rather than being incarcerated in upstate New York youth detention facilities.⁸³ This residential program is located in Dobbs Ferry and services boys aged 6 to 20, providing both non-secure and limited secure housing options. This program is available to Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) or children under 18 who are found to be chronically truant or behaving "in a way that is dangerous or out of control, or often disobeys his or her parents, guardians or other authorities."⁸⁴ PINS designations are only available to status offenses and require a petition. During the PINS process, children may be referred to CV for residential services after all other diversion and probation services have been employed. Children may also be surrendered to the program by parents or guardians.⁸⁵

Youth Shelter of Westchester (YSOW)

Youth Shelter of Westchester (YSOW) is dedicated to providing alternative solutions to incarceration for young men and women facing legal challenges. With a dual program structure comprising a residential shelter and a community-based LEAD (Leadership, Excellence, and Development) Academy, YSOW addresses the complex needs of youth involved in the criminal legal system.⁸⁶



At the heart of YSOW's residential program is a 12-bed shelter that offers a homelike environment for young men aged 18-24 who are serving out their sentences. The program partners with all cities and counties in the 9th Judicial District to provide an Alternative to Incarceration for young men.

Their community based program, LEAD Academy, extends YSOW's reach to young people aged 16-25 from across the community, including those coming directly from incarceration, those who are parolees, those that are on probation, and some who have never even been arrested before. The academy provides a plethora of services, ranging from vocational training and educational support to mental health services.⁸⁷

YSOW operates as a community-based ATI program for youth charged in the adult criminal legal system. The organization operates under a rehabilitative rather than punitive approach. This approach is rooted in the principles of restorative justice, which emphasizes the importance of allowing youth to be seen as more than their crimes. Instead, YSOW aims to guide them towards constructive futures through support and guidance.⁸⁸

Annually, the organization serves approximately 150 youth through both residential and community-based initiatives. The Emerging Adult Justice Initiative, for instance, serves as a partnership with local judicial entities, working to explore alternatives to conventional prosecution and incarceration for young adults aged 18-25. Similarly, the YouthCRED program exemplifies a community-based anti-gun violence initiative, empowering young people affected by gun violence to lead outreach efforts that promote peace and understanding within their communities. In addition, the Motion for Justice program works diligently to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the communities they serve, addressing deep-rooted racial injustices in the criminal legal system.⁸⁹





Endnotes

¹ The core of the mitigation approach is the preparation of a detailed report on the personal history, experience of trauma, accomplishments and aspirations of the individual who is charged with the crime(s). The report is intended to enable the judge and DA to see a whole person who, in addition to the charges, has a family history, successes and challenges, and potential strengths on which to build. The report is based on extensive interviews with the individual charged, family members, friends, teachers, clergy and other community members. The report becomes the basis on which the defense attorney advocates for a reduced penalty, often coupled with an ATI program. It's also notable that mitigation is done with individuals facing both misdemeanor and some felony charges. (*Court Advocacy Services*, n.d.)

² (Mendel 2023)

³ (Barber et al. 2017)

⁴ (McCann, 2022)

⁵ (Cloud & Davis, 2023)

⁶ (Quandt & Jones, 2021)

⁷ (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018, p. 8)

⁸ (Binswanger et al., 2007)

⁹ (Pettit & Gutierrez, 2018)

¹⁰ (Beresford et al., 2020)

¹¹ (Marion, 2002)

¹² (Brinson et al., 2022, p. 9)

¹³ (Brinson et al., 2022, p. 9)

¹⁴ (Brinson et al., 2022, p. 10)

¹⁵ (Kolbeck et al., 2024)

¹⁶ (Porter et al., 2011, p. 28)

¹⁷ (Lutze et al., 2014)

¹⁸ (Nam-Sonestein, 2023)

¹⁹ (Marshall & Towler, 2021)

²⁰ (Ioanide, 2024)

²¹ (Lutze et al., 2014)

²² (Couloute, 2018)

²³ (Couloute, 2018)

²⁴ (Couloute, 2018)

²⁵ (Wang, 2025)

²⁶ (Vuolo et al., 2017)

²⁷ (Wells et al., 2020)

²⁸ (Western, 2002)

²⁹ (Uggen, 1999)

³⁰ (Mattson & Freel, 2024)



³¹ (Saleh et al., 2023)

³² (Pager, 2003)

³³ (Schnittker et al., 2012)

³⁴ Jail population counts are calculated by aggregating Westchester Jail, Westchester Annex, and Westchester Penitentiary.

³⁵ The aggregate average daily jail census for Westchester Jail, Westchester Annex, and Westchester Penitentiary declined from 1100 in 2015 to 585 in 2024|

³⁶ It's important to note that rearrest is not an accurate measure of recidivism as rearrest does not necessarily entail that charges are filed and/or that a person is convicted.

³⁷ (Correctional Association of New York, n.d.)

³⁸ (Jessa et al., 2024)

³⁹ (Office of the District Attorney, Westchester County, n.d.)

⁴⁰ (New York State Unified Court System, 2023)

⁴¹ (New York State Unified Court System, 2023)

⁴² (Hahn, 2015)

⁴³ (Article 216 CPL | Judicial Diversion Program Felony Offender, n.d.; Article 410 CPL | Sentences Probation Conditional Discharge, n.d.)

⁴⁴ Mary Ann Leibowitz (personal communication, November 12, 2024)

⁴⁵ (Westchester County, n.d.)

⁴⁶ (Westchester County, n.d.)

⁴⁷ (Westchester County, n.d.)

⁴⁸ (Westchester County, n.d.)

⁴⁹ (Westchester County, n.d.)

⁵⁰ Judge Jared Rice (personal communication, November 19, 2024)

⁵¹ Judge Jared Rice (personal communication, November 19, 2024)

⁵² (City of Mt. Vernon, NY, 2022)

⁵³ (City of Mt. Vernon, NY, 2022)

⁵⁴ (City of New Rochelle, NY, n.d.)

⁵⁵ (City of New Rochelle, NY, n.d.)

⁵⁶ (City of New Rochelle, NY, n.d.)

⁵⁷ (Office of the District Attorney, Westchester County, 2022)

⁵⁸ (Office of the District Attorney, Westchester County, 2022)

⁵⁹ (Office of the District Attorney, Westchester County, 2022)

⁶⁰ (Office of the District Attorney, Westchester County, 2023)

⁶¹ (Office of the District Attorney, Westchester County, 2023)

⁶² (Office of the District Attorney, Westchester County, 2023)

⁶³ N. Padilla, personal communication, June, 2024.

⁶⁴ (Albertson et al., 2020) See also: <https://www.lac.org/assets/files/Current-State-of-Medicaid-Reentry-in-New-York.pdf>

⁶⁵ L. Martinez, personal communication, April 2, 2025

⁶⁶ (g14United, n.d.)

⁶⁷ (CHOICE of NY, n.d.)



⁶⁸ Dotel, S. and Fata, S. (2025, Feb. 28). OYP Program. [Conference Presentation]. Housing Symposium in Support of Emerging Adults, New Rochelle, NY.

⁶⁹ Dotel, S. and Fata, S. (2025, Feb. 28). OYP Program. [Conference Presentation]. Housing Symposium in Support of Emerging Adults, New Rochelle, NY.

⁷⁰ Dotel, S. and Fata, S. (2025, Feb. 28). OYP Program. [Conference Presentation]. Housing Symposium in Support of Emerging Adults, New Rochelle, NY.

⁷¹ Stephanie Dotel, personal communication, January 8, 2025.

⁷² Dotel, S. and Fata, S. (2025, Feb. 28). OYP Program. [Conference Presentation]. Housing Symposium in Support of Emerging Adults, New Rochelle, NY.

⁷³ "An adjournment in contemplation of dismissal is an adjournment of the action without date ordered with a view to ultimate dismissal of the accusatory instrument in furtherance of justice. Upon issuing such an order, the court must release the defendant on his own recognizance . . . one year, after the issuance of such order, the court may restore the case to the calendar upon a determination that dismissal of the accusatory instrument would not be in furtherance of justice, and the action must thereupon proceed. If the case is not so restored within such six months or one year period, the accusatory instrument is, at the expiration of such period, deemed to have been dismissed by the court in furtherance of justice." (FindLaw Staff, 2024)

⁷⁴ "The defendant is released under certain conditions, like paying money back, going to a drug, anger management, job training or GED program, or paying a fine. If any of the conditions are not met, the defendant may be re-sentenced to a jail or prison." (New York State Unified Court System, 2016)

⁷⁵ Donell Keitt-McCall, personal communication, January 22, 2025.

⁷⁶ Donell Keitt-McCall, personal communication, January 22, 2025.

⁷⁷ (Greenburgh Eleven School District, n.d.)

⁷⁸ (Children's Village, n.d.-b)

⁷⁹ (Children's Village, n.d.-e)

⁸⁰ (Children's Village, n.d.-c)

⁸¹ (Children's Village, n.d.-a)

⁸² (Children's Village, n.d.-d)

⁸³ (*Close to Home | Division of Youth Development and Partnerships for Success*, n.d.)

⁸⁴ (New York State Unified Court System, n.d.)

⁸⁵ (Children's Village, n.d.-d)

⁸⁶ (Youth Shelter of Westchester, n.d.)

⁸⁷ Jordan Cormier and Akil Childs, personal communication, August 15, 2024.

⁸⁸ Jordan Cormier and Akil Childs, personal communication, August 15, 2024.

⁸⁹ Jordan Cormier and Akil Childs, personal communication, August 15, 2024.



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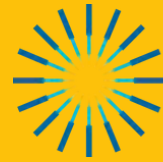


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