What is the REACH program?

The Connection’s REACH ® program is aimed at reducing recidivism by providing housing and case management services to individuals transitioning into the community from the correctional system. We accomplish this goal by identifying and lowering criminogenic risk factors, providing employment assistance, enhancing financial skills, and helping individuals secure permanent housing in the community. Perhaps the most innovative part of the program is our use of a forensic peer support model, the effectiveness of which was demonstrated in a study titled funded by the Department of Justice’s Second Chance Act. The program serves particularly high risk-high need offenders returning to the community.

Who are our peer mentors?

Our peer mentors are men with lived experience with the criminal justice system. In addition to this firsthand knowledge, our chosen peers Jehan Raheem and Anderson Curtis both demonstrated a high degree of personal insight and a recovery mindset, coupled with a strong desire to help other men successfully rejoin their communities. In preparation for their work with clients, Jehan and Anderson received specialized training at Continuum South Central Support Services. Our peer mentors provided the men on their caseloads with ongoing support in program compliance, resource acquisition, and life skills. Face-to-face meetings up to three times a week were supplemented by telephone contact as often as needed, to ensure the highest degree of responsivity to client need.

REACH-UP Results

In a study (REACH-UP) designed and analyzed by Yale University researcher David Sells, PhD, 55 clients from the REACH program were randomly assigned to either the usual case management services, or a peer mentor plus case management services. Evaluation of program data using a binary logistic regression method revealed that the clients who were assigned mentors in addition to the usual services had a significantly lower rate of recidivism than clients who did not have a mentor. These significant findings are evident up to 10-12 months after the intervention, as seen in the following chart:
We are in the process of submitting articles on these results to peer-reviewed journals, and are working with an economist on a cost-benefit analysis. We are also analyzing other positive findings, including enhanced physical health status by self-report of mentored clients at six months after the intervention, and enhanced treatment alliance and goal congruence between mentored clients and the entire treatment team, also at six months.

**REACH and REACH-UP Award:**

In 2016, the REACH and REACH-UP initiative was honored as the Outstanding Criminal Justice Program in the Northeast by the National Criminal Justice Association.