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NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health

Forensic Intensive and Sustained Engagement Teams (F-INSET)

F-INSET Manual Addendum

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Background

Forensic Intensive and Sustained Engagement Team (F-INSET) programs uphold a fidelity to the classic INSET model and add program enhancements to better support people who are involved with the criminal legal system. F-INSET support aims to reduce risk factors associated with involvement with the criminal legal system, including probation, parole, and incarceration.

F-INSET supports people at multiple intercepts to interrupt an individual's progression through and involvement in the criminal legal system. Programs also aim to bridge support gaps for people transitioning from inpatient and/or correctional settings to the community, achieving these goals through intensive peer-led support, emphasizing the importance of identifying life goals and supporting connections to the community, treatment, and natural and other supports.

Target population

F-INSET is intended for individuals who are at least 18 years of age, have mental health needs, and have a history or current involvement with the criminal legal system. This population often experiences significant challenges in accessing supportive care. This is exacerbated by the complexities of their legal situations. F-INSET aims to address the unique needs of these individuals by providing voluntary, specialized, peer-led mental health support, which acknowledges their lived experiences and facilitates effective interventions tailored to their circumstances. F-INSET seeks to support individuals impacted by the legal system in achieving their unique valued life goals, enhancing mental well-being, supporting rehabilitation efforts, reducing recidivism, and contributing to more positive outcomes.

Staffing Requirements and Training Expectations

Staffing Requirements

INSET recognizes the value of mutual support evident by the peer-led approach to engagement. As such, F-INSET should prioritize hiring staff who may also have lived experience in criminal legal and/or forensic settings whenever possible. Peer support staff workers will be New York Certified Peer Specialists (NYCPS or NYCPS-P) or be eligible to obtain their certification within approximately six months of employment.

The F-INSET team structure is as follows:

- Peer Team Leader
- 4 FTE Peer Specialists
- 2 Clinical Staff including a licensed master social worker (LMSW) or licensed mental health counselor (LMHC) and a nurse practitioner (NP)
- Administrative staff

For more information on team roles, please refer to section 3 of the INSET Program Manual. For all staff training requirements, please see the training section below.

Training Expectations

F-INSET staff must receive training that will support their work with the target population, honoring their unique life experiences during and after contact with the criminal legal system, regardless of role on the team.

Required trainings include:

- The Academy of Peer Services “Peer Support for Justice-Involved Individuals” specialization track. This track provides peer workers with more information about the experience of incarceration so that they can better support those who are both justice-impacted and living with a mental health diagnosis.
- The Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS) Academy for Justice-Informed Practices. The CUCS Behavioral Health-Criminal Justice Certificate Program is comprised of nine core courses that prepare people to work with justice-impacted individuals with behavioral health needs, unique to New York State.

It is expected that programs obtain additional training to understand the unique circumstances of people who are eligible to participate in F-INSET.

Suggested Trainings

Many unique life experiences and circumstances may contribute to a person’s involvement in the forensic mental health and/or criminal legal system, and vice versa. Programs should seek a deeper understanding of these experiences through trainings topics including but not limited to:

Implicit bias

Implicit bias training is designed to help uncover unconscious stereotypes and attitudes that impact decision making. This will be crucial to F-INSET due to how those who have had legal system involvement are perceived in society; there are also certain crimes that are more stigmatized than others. F-INSET staff must be aware of how this can impact support and seek out implicit bias training resources.

Older Adults

In New York State, the population of incarcerated people who are aged 50 and over has steadily increased despite an overall decrease in prison population (OSC, 2022). Older adults face unique challenges that require tailored support; as such, F-INSET should seek trainings to explore how to support these individuals, especially those who have been incarcerated for longer than they have been in the community or for the majority of their life.

Substance use

Some research suggests that approximately 65% of inmates in the United States have a substance use disorder (SUD), and another 20% without an SUD were under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol during their crime (NIDA, 2020). Additional training will equip the F-INSET staff with the knowledge and skills to effectively support people with substance use backgrounds and their unique recovery process.

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices could play an integral role in the F-INSET engagement model. Restorative practice addresses disconnection with one's support network due to an individual's involvement in the criminal legal system and circumstances leading up to it; restorative practice seeks to facilitate reconnection and healing for all involved. This approach directly aligns with the Social Support and Social Network Engagement component of the INSET model. For more information, please see section 2(d) of the INSET program manual. The NYS Office of Mental Health's Office of Prevention and Health Initiatives provides training and consultation at no cost.

LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ individuals are overrepresented in every stage of the criminal legal system, from juvenile systems through adulthood, and are more likely to have police contact than the general population (Bertram, 2024; Luhur et al., 2021). Gay, lesbian and bi individuals are more likely to be arrested than their straight peers, and transgender individuals in carceral settings face increased risk of violence from inmates and staff compared with their cis counterparts (Bertram, 2024; Donohue et al., 2021). The LGBTQIA+ population faces systemic discrimination and inadequate healthcare and mental health care, often leading to solitary confinement (Donohue et al., 2021). Specialized training will help F-INSET programs in supporting these and other unique experiences of prospective participants.

Women

Women are being incarcerated at rates far outpacing that of men while also experiencing higher rates of trauma reported before and during incarceration (Swavola et al., 2016). F-INSET programs should seek to understand the unique experiences and needs of women in the criminal legal system to best support them in successfully transitioning into their communities.

Gangs

F-INSET programs may serve individuals who are associated with gangs or other organized crime. Programs should look into resources that can support them in providing peer support to those who are active or transitioning out of gang affiliation.
Current NYS Penal and Mental Hygiene Law Programs should be aware of any changes to laws that impact participants. This will allow programs to understand the landscape participants face and increase their ability to provide support. It is imperative to note that F-INSET staff are not to provide legal advice to participants and should direct them to contact an attorney.

Community Partnerships

Expectations around outreach to community members and partners are similar to those of classic INSET. Community partnerships strive to connect with individuals who may benefit from the intensive support provided by F-INSET. Outreach to community partners that specifically work with forensic populations is crucial to the success of the F-INSET model and will be prioritized. F-INSET programs will identify strong community partners in their region and establish relationships with such entities including but not limited to:

- probation
- parole
- jails
- prisons
- Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)
- Psychiatric hospitals
- Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (Forensic ACT) Teams
- Re-entry groups
- Anti-violence groups (e.g. DCJS initiatives such as SNUG and GIVE)
- Court systems, including mental health court, substance use court, and behavioral health courts
- Aligning to Build Lasting Engagement (ABLE) teams
- Court Navigator program

F-INSET programs should also prioritize the development of partnerships with entities aimed at the intercepts where individuals enter or move through the legal system (e.g. crisis services, courts, jails, etc.). Programs will collaborate with community partners to connect with individuals that can benefit from intensive peer support. By doing so, F-INSET can interrupt an individual's progression through, or reentry into, the criminal legal system.

In establishing partnerships, F-INSET will emphasize the voluntary nature of the program with clear boundaries around their capacity to support individuals within the program's voluntary framework. F-INSET supports participants regardless of their involvement or connection to illegal activity. Programs are not responsible for disclosing this information to monitoring partners.

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