



2017 STATEWIDE RECIDIVISM REDUCTION GRANTEE

## District of Columbia Department of Corrections


### Success Story

**The District of Columbia Department of Corrections (DC DOC) implemented tablet-based cognitive behavioral interventions that allow its clinicians and case managers to work more effectively with residents preparing for reentry into their communities.**

In 2017, the DC DOC was awarded a Second Chance Act grant with the goal of reducing recidivism, and in 2018, developed a five-year Districtwide Recidivism Reduction Strategic Plan. The strategic plan focused on identifying ways to prepare individuals who were incarcerated to reenter District neighborhoods, improve reentry outcomes, and reduce recidivism.

The strategic plan identified areas that significantly impact the likelihood of recidivism, and as a result focused on strengthening areas related to independent living. Through the strategic planning process, the DC DOC identified the need to leverage technology to implement tablet-based cognitive behavioral interventions to serve individuals returning to the community.

Tablet-based cognitive behavioral interventions have the potential to enhance the impact of substance use, mental health, and general case management services provided to DC DOC residents. Additionally, the use of the tablets provides opportunities for residents to complete the cognitive behavioral therapy lessons at their own pace. The tablets also allow residents to review and update their reentry planning efforts independently, in between visits with their case manager.



In the first six months of implementation, the DC DOC delivered tablet-based programming to nearly **450 more residents** than it would have otherwise been able to serve without the technology.



## Lessons Learned

**The DC DOC developed a data collection strategy prior to program implementation.** Data showed the tablets increased access to behavioral health, reentry, and education services in a much more efficient and cost-effective way than hiring new staff. This data helped the DC DOC staff make a strong case to the Mayor's Office to increase the budget to support buying an additional 1,000 tablets, which was approved just before the beginning of the COVID-19

pandemic. The additional tablets facilitated a quick transition to virtual legal and social visits for residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The addition of the tablet-based programming also enabled the DC DOC to implement trauma-informed programming in jail isolation units by connecting residents to behavioral health clinicians, as well as stress management and wellness programming and materials.

### What worked?

**Key factors that contribute to the program's success are:**

- Program staff and uniformed officers collaborating on tablet roll out and implementation.
- Securing buy-in from case managers and clinicians.
- Ensuring that staff from all divisions understand the impact of the tablet intervention on participant behavior and reentry success, allowing for a smooth and uniform implementation.
- Providing tablet orientation tailored to the participants' level of experience with technology.
- Rolling out the behavioral health program in alignment with an unrelated, tablet-based education program, which allowed residents to receive both programs—increasing the reach of cognitive behavioral therapy beyond the originally identified participant population.

### Challenges to Implementation

Most of the challenges were related to staff availability to manage the program; specifically, building program staff capacity to provide one-on-one assistance to the increasing number of residents requesting the cognitive behavioral therapy program. To address this, case managers with clinical backgrounds were trained to support residents.

Additional staffing needs also arose during implementation, including the need for staff with the sole responsibility for tablet management: handling the day-to-day logistics of distributing tablets, managing users, assigning programming, and collecting data. Additional staff were hired to support these needs, to include a dedicated tablet manager and quality assurance assistant.

### What's next?

**DC DOC is providing its staff and community partners with Core Correctional Practices trainings.** The trainings are designed specifically for correctional staff and criminal justice workers to build their core skills to support cognitive behavioral programming. These training opportunities will enhance the tablet-based reentry programming by better equipping correctional staff on the units to interact, guide, and assist residents with the tablet-based program.

**For more information, contact:**

**LaToya Wesley-Colm, PhD**, D.C. Department of Corrections Supervisory Grants Management Specialist  
202-671-2545 | [latoya.wesley@dc.gov](mailto:latoya.wesley@dc.gov)