WHAT HOPE LOOKS LIKE...
... IT LOOKS LIKE A WELCOME HOME
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Welcome to the Voices for a Second Chance 2021-2022 Bi-Annual Report. I am really excited to share our work with you over the past two years. But more importantly some of our clients wanted to share their experiences as well and why this work is so essential. These two years have been both rewarding and revealing. They were a continuous reminder of the work we have ahead to strengthen the city services.

As VSC dug out from under the deadly COVID infections that spread across the city in 2020, we observed the impact it had on clients seeking services. VSC is rebuilding our client numbers and making sure that we are touching as many clients as possible who require our support.

When we were prevented from entering the DC Jail because of Covid related medical lock down our population decreased. VSC was also impacted by changes in the Halfway House assignments. Because of the closing of the DC Halfway House, during these past two years the Bureau of Prisons diverted DC Code offenders to other Halfway House facilities in Baltimore and Delaware. This made it difficult for DC residents to receive local support as they transition back to the city. In 2021 VSC staff had to quickly reach out to those facilities to introduce our services so that we could provide in-reach to those clients in Delaware, in addition to those housed in Baltimore. Our Mobile Outreach made this a successful resource to those who would otherwise not be connected to the city services.

VSC resumed our partnership with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), which is the agency responsible for individuals on community supervision, probation, and parole in DC. VSC was able to participate in the in-reach that CSOSA recently reestablished which provided prisons around the country video conferencing sessions. This in-reach, through CSOSA’s Resource Day, enables VSC staff to talk to prisoners scheduled for release to DC so that we can let them know about our services and how to contact us upon release. VSC also entered into an Agreement with CSOSA to provide support and VSC intake at one of their field sites. This partnership provides an opportunity for VSC to engage individuals under probation, parole or supervised release in the community as an extension of our Welcome Home phase.

Based on input from our constituents and staff, VSC sought to address homelessness among those released from incarceration or halfway houses. We introduced a new program component, New Terrain, to assist clients who need help in their goal towards stable housing.

The ever-shifting sands in the DC reentry landscape required VSC to constantly pivot our outreach and programs to make sure that those who need us can receive our support. We continue to provide our field-tested programmatic phases. These phases have been defined as a result of the over fifty years of experience in serving this population and encouraging feedback from our clients. VSC found it necessary to define the phases so that we could measure the movement of clients along a continuum of support.

Most recently we added the Community of Voices because it became clear that power comes from being able to articulate individual needs and push for the resources to assist in actualizing the full potential of our clients. Many individuals who come through VSC have had a long-standing need to be seen and heard. Sometimes this need has gotten them into the criminal justice system. Often clients felt that they were invisible from very early on in life. Philosophically, VSC embraces the premise that all citizens deserve to be seen and heard, especially when it comes to advocating for their needs. Consequently, we are very excited about the Train Our Voices 33-week curriculum and training we now provide our clients.

As you will see in these pages, VSC is always ready to evolve and serve. It is clear that our staff love the work that they do. Fifty percent of them have lived the experience of incarceration and their commitment is evident in our success rates. Thank you for taking time to join in reviewing our past two years serving DC residents and joining us by believing in the future of those we assist.

Proudly in Peace and Love,

Paula Thompson
Executive Director
THE MISSION OF VSC IS TO ENSURE THAT JUSTICE INVOLVED CITIZENS CAN SUCCESSFULLY REINTEGRATE INTO THEIR COMMUNITIES FOLLOWING INCARCERATION.

HUMANITY, COMPASSION, AND EMPATHY LEAD AND INFORM OUR SERVICE MODEL; EVERY INDIVIDUAL, NO MATTER WHERE OUR INTRODUCTION OCCURS — DURING INCARCERATION OR POST-RELEASE — VSC WELCOMES THEM HOME WITHOUT JUDGMENT.

To empower justice-involved individuals while they are incarcerated and newly-released.

To create, maintain & strengthen family and community ties through innovative services that improve behavioral health, promote recovery and rehabilitation, and create opportunities for a successful transition back to the community and reunification with family.

We are committed to helping people regardless of their past choices, present struggles, or future obstacles — to build the capacity and courage to change their lives.

We tailor our services to each individual’s unique needs, risks, and strengths and sincerely believe the most effective programs are evidence-based, culturally appropriate, family-focused, and trauma-informed.

We remain committed to engaging our community by leveraging partnerships and resources to maximize our clients’ opportunities for success.

We work to elevate the voices of our clients to build their collective power to influence lasting change.
WHY VSC SERVICES & SUPPORTS ARE IMPORTANT...

01
Improve capacity for justice-involved and returning citizens to become productive citizens

02
Transform returning citizens to become leading advocates of policies and laws preventing full access to citizenship

03
Establish a family-centered approach to disrupt patterns that lead to incarceration

04
Create viable housing for returning citizens

Getting identification seems like an easy task. Many take for granted the benefit of having a birth certificate or social security card, but these documents are important to become an American citizen again. You cannot get a job, housing, or treatment without these documents to verify your identity. Reestablishing them is an important step in reestablishing one’s place in society and their commitment towards achieving personal goals. It is so much more than training people in life skills. It is helping them regain their life and freedom.

Statistics consistently show the disparity of incarceration for these clients. The high percentage of men and black men in particular that are incarcerated should be an embarrassment to this city and this country. There has not been a significant change in the demographic for decades. Although VSC serves anyone, the majority of our clients are black men which impacts the health and well-being of black families.

VSC believes in hope and support that will overcome individual challenges and provide what we know works for our constituents. Expanding that support will expand our reach and the success stories that follow will also expand to others.
Michael Dickerson El, a Tain Our Voices Graduate.

Programmatic Phases

PROGRAMES & INITIATIVES

Office-based and community outreach support for justice involved citizens
In-reach support in jails, prisons and halfway houses

FIRST RESPONDER PHASE

WELCOME HOME CENTER

Sustainable bridges towards goal actualization while enhancing voices of the collective
Focuses on transitional care to enhance stability, including person-centered and peer support

MOVING TOWARD STABILITY

COMMUNITY OF VOICES

OUR APPROACH IS WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE...
“Ever since I’ve been home, Voices for a Second Chance has been with me on my journey.”

During this phase, clients receive in-reach support in the DC Jail, the Federal Bureau of Prisons and Halfway Houses in Baltimore and Delaware. VSC’s Mobile Outreach team travels to Baltimore and Delaware to screen participants’ and help them identify their immediate needs once they are released. Assisting with this pre-release reentry planning provides residents with information on how to connect to VSC upon release to continue and execute their reentry plan. Without VSC they are so far from family, friends, and services they might not otherwise get the help they need to get ready for a successful transition back to the city. VSC staff also engages residents of the DC Jail to provide services and support before they are released. Information is provided to imprisoned DC Code offenders who are scheduled for release using video conferencing with prisons across the United States.

“With them I got my birth certificate, social security card, and I had job opportunities. Without them who knows how long it would have taken me to receive my birth certificate and Social Security card. And just the opportunity to express myself and just to be back in society with the help of Voices for a Second Chance, it means a lot to me that they have my back on this journey and I just want to thank Voices for a Second Chance.”

Mr. Paul Moore initially connected with VSC at the Volunteers of America halfway house in Baltimore during VSC’s First Responder phase. He was later released to the DC CORE Home Confinement Program and placed on Electronic Monitoring. He continued his connection with VSC and asked for help getting his vital documents and for assistance following up on his reentry plan. Mr. Moore was committed to working on his reentry plan. He was referred to and enrolled in the DC Department of Employment Services Project Empowerment program for job readiness and workforce development. Upon completion of the program, Mr. Moore obtained employment and has remained employed. He successfully completed home confinement and has transitioned to supervised release under CSOSA. Mr. Moore continues to work diligently with VSC and has successfully completed his mission of obtaining job placement and getting his vital documents. Currently Mr. Moore is working with VSC for placement in a HVAC training course to create a career path.
“I’ve been with VSC for a very long time.”

During this phase, clients update their assessments as needed to continue to enhance their Reentry Plans. The focus during this phase is office-based case management with VSC’s Peer Reentry Navigators. Clients can receive stability backpacks that include clothing, food, and personal products, etc. They also start to work with VSC Staff on getting their TANF and Medicaid benefits, their identification (drivers or non-drivers licenses, birth certificates, social security cards, etc.) and referrals for treatment, employment, training, housing and medical follow up. During this phase, VSC also conducts Mobile Outreach to community hot spots, tent encampments, and shelters to canvas for justice involved individuals who could benefit from our services. Individuals released from the Jail, prison and halfway houses continue their connection to VSC during this phase of transition back to the DC community. They are welcomed home.

“...they’ve always been here to help me each time I’ve been incarcerated. But, this time, coming home from incarceration has been extremely different, thanks to my VSC family. They’ve helped me set reachable goals, and I’m moving forward to a good place. I’m proud of my progress.”

Mr. John Morgan was released from DC jail on July 5, 2022. He had been incarcerated several times throughout his lifetime. This time, however, Mr. Morgan made the decision to stay clean and sober. He returned to VSC for support during this transition. VSC staff assisted Mr. Morgan in obtaining his vital documents and connecting him to social services. We enrolled him in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and got his Medicaid benefits reinstated. Mr. Morgan was proactive in following up with his employment and housing referrals. Currently Mr. Morgan is maintaining employment at a local restaurant and is housed in the Emery Work/Bed program. He continues to work with his VSC Reentry Navigator to help him stay on track.
“With the help of the New Terrain program…”

We instituted the New Terrain Pathway to Stability Program. As a result of this program’s flexibility, VSC staff are able to provide whatever the client needs to assist with maintaining stabilization. This includes immediate short-term housing for individuals who are homeless upon release and need time to begin to work on housing options with VSC staff support. This phase includes the Just Law program to provide information on legal rights. Clients also receive support as they move from temporary housing to transitional housing to permanent housing. This support is in the form of security deposits, first month’s rent and rental assistance for clients needing more support. VSC continues to track and document client progress, group participation and referrals. To assist clients with Staying on Track, VSC provides a peer support network of individuals with similar experiences to help clients navigate through their journey.

“…I was able to receive a laptop computer to research educational programs, attend remote therapy sessions, and identify independent housing. Due to my good work ethic, and dedication to my job, I was offered a higher position and an increase in pay. I continued to meet with VSC to secure SNAP and health care benefits as well applying for permanent housing.”

Mr. J.C became a VSC client after he was released from Volunteers of America (VOA) halfway house, in May 2022. He served two years in the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP). Upon his release from the halfway house he was ready for a fresh start but unsure where to even begin. He is a 33 year old male and has two sons ages 11 and 8. During his short time at VOA, VSC was able to provide him with his vital documents needed to transition back into society. Once J.C. was released from VOA he was living in a hostel on a week to week basis. He worked very closely with VSC to work on his reentry case plan objectives. J.C. started receiving treatment services and was able to complete a housing voucher application in hopes to be matched to the appropriate housing program. VSC helped J.C. construct a resume, while continuing his job search. He was accepted into a transitional housing program and because of his focus and hard work, he is currently living in his own home, working two jobs and building his relationship with his children.
Finding their power by using their Voice - VSC engages clients in finding their voice and trusting their perspective on the transformation of the system to be a part of restoring justice and equity. VSC has developed a Train Our Voices (TOV) curriculum and materials based on the lessons learned from history and the civil rights struggles that have led up to the challenges our constituents face today. This thirty-three-week training component enables VSC to expose clients to speaking at DC Council meetings, and to know how to collaborate with groups locally and around the country who are influencing Capitol Hill on the barriers and needs of justice involved individuals and returned citizens. VSC works with local partners who promote clients to become engaged in these networks that offer understanding and opportunities for system change. VSC has developed an integrated approach to systemic change guided by the experiences and input provided by our constituents. Their voices provide guidance to VSC’s intervention strategies.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF VOICES PHASE

“After serving 48 years, 9 months, 15 days, and 16 hours, I had my parole transferred to the District of Columbia because they had more resources for men and women returning to society. Despite this I did not have a clue on what to do. Everything was different.”

A few months after Charles was released, his parole officer told him about an event that was providing resource information for men and women coming home. He attended and was introduced to Voices For A Second Chance. Through VSC, he was exposed to various support groups, including Staying On Track, that helped him navigate his return to society. Another support group that made a significant impact was Training Our Voices. Training Our Voices is a program by VSC that teaches men and women how to be an effective advocate. He learned how to be patient, know who he should direct his concerns to, and get results. It gave him confidence and purpose.

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Charles Hopkins

If I was to give one word about my work at VSC it would be, ‘committed’.

After approximately 33 weeks of training, he graduated and was selected to be the co-facilitator of the next cohort.

Charles is committed to the mission of VSC to provide services to men and women coming out of prison and ensuring that those services and those people understand that when they come through the doors of VSC they are coming as though they will be welcomed and greeted with open arms. Charles explains, “No matter what, you will get what you need from the programs at VSC before you leave. I can say that because I was one who came out of prison.”

PHOTO: COURTESY OF VSC

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**WHO WE SERVE**

Client Demographics

Total Number of Clients from 12/21 until 12/22 = 1121

### RACE OF CLIENTS
- 93% WHITE
- 5% BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
- 1% ASIAN
- 1% AMERICAN INDIAN

### CLIENT GENDER
- 89% MALE
- 10% FEMALE
- 1% TRANSGENDER

### PARENTAL STATUS
- 53% CHILDREN
- 47% NO CHILDREN

### BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS
- 71% YES
- 29% NO

### CLIENT AGES

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<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>18-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
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<tr>
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<td>9%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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### HOUSING STATUS
- 42% WITH RELATIVES
- 5% HOMELESS
- 9% HOUSED
- 4% HALFWAY HOUSE
- 27% TRANSITION
- 10% NO FIXED ADDRESS

VSC uses a narrow definition of ‘unstable housing.’ If an individual resides in a homeless shelter, halfway house through a public law placement, transitional housing, hotel or motel, or has no fixed address, he or she is deemed as having “unstable housing.”
VSC served 1121 individuals. VSC partnered with thirteen community-based organizations in 2021-2022 to provide follow up and support to their referrals to our organization. In addition, VSC receives walk-ins. We received 575 referrals during that time period, 107 of those were walk-ins.

FBOP is the Federal Bureau of Prisons, DOC is the Department of Corrections (DC Jail), The Halfway Houses are located in Baltimore and Delaware, and CSOSA is Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for DC (this agency provides supervision of those on probation and parole).

VSC CLIENTS CAME FROM

- FBOP: 27%
- DOC: 41%
- HALFWAY HOUSE: 28%
- CSOSA: 4%

VSC STABILITY SUPPORT PROVIDED OVER TWO YEARS

- BIRTH CERTIFICATE: 223
- SOCIAL SECURITY CARD: 176
- SNAP/MEDICAID ENROLLMENT: 179
- BACKPACKS: 258
- TRANSPORTATION: 796
- FOOD BAGS: 512
- MEALS/LUNCH BAGS SERVED IN THE COMMUNITY: 5900

TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS: 1121

- WELCOME HOME PHASE: 35%
- FIRST RESPONDER PHASE: 65%

REFERRAL PROCESS

FROM VSC

TO VSC

0 200 400 600 800 1000
Lessons learned during Covid reminded us of the vulnerability of marginalized communities when it comes to medical care and follow up. Social determinants of health can be a major obstacle to individuals seeking and receiving appropriate medical intervention. These social determinants are barriers that can include transportation, childcare, or even basic survival needs like food and shelter. For men and women who have returned from incarceration it can be overwhelming to get the treatment required for healthy living. Even connecting them to their benefits can be a major hurdle. As a result, VSC joined forces with a local wellness outreach model, Urgent Wellness, through one of the Managed Care Organizations to more successfully connect this population to care. This involved training staff on the use of basic medical equipment, like blood pressure monitors, thermometers, oximeters, Covid tests, PPE, and Narcan use. They were also trained on connecting these individuals to social support resources and conducting wellness checks. This outreach occurred in housing developments, as well as on the streets of underserved neighborhoods.

VSC STAFF CONDUCTED
3697 WELLNESS OUTREACH CONTACTS WITH INDIVIDUALS AND MADE 674 DELIVERIES OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES...
New Terrain

New Terrain was created because of the challenges VSC clients faced that impeded them from becoming stable citizens. The first twenty-four to forty-eight hours following release is the time period that can make or break the success of reentrants. Many are released without clothing, personal care items or a place to stay. The VSC staff work closely with eligible clients to provide them with a range of supplies and short-term housing. As clients find permanent housing, VSC stands ready to help them get started with security deposits, rental assistance, furniture, etc.

Family Support

Families are seriously compromised while family members are incarcerated and even upon release. One of the special events that VSC conducts focuses on these family members. Holidays are often particularly difficult. One of our special projects is Adopt-A-Family. VSC staff raised funds from twenty-eight donors which enabled them to provide holiday gifts to forty-three families and 101 children over the two years.

**NEW TERRAIN**

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<tr>
<td>GIFT CARDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELECTRONICS (laptops, phones, tablets)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RENTAL ASSISTANCE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BILLS ASSISTANCE</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>FURNITURE</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>WINTER COATS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOTEL ROOMS</td>
<td>20 1,200 NIGHTS</td>
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</tbody>
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Training Our Voices graduates began a podcast called Solutions from the Yard to elevate their lived experience as returning citizens. The first season is complete and the second season is underway. Session topics and guests are developed and facilitated by formerly incarcerated individuals to identify solutions post incarceration.
LEFT TO RIGHT: Antoinette Jones; Brian LaBoard; James Matthews; Chelsea Canterbury; Margot Kirkland; Charles Hopkins; Michael Dickerson El; Devon Pina; Jayla Felder; Isabelle Garcia; Paula Thompson; Hazel Sanchez.

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The partnership provided to VSC by these funders and supporters helps us grow and make a difference in the lives of those who are often unseen – men and women who are justice involved in DC.

- American Airlines Foundation
- AT&T Aspire
- AT&T Charitable Corporation
- Bernstein Foundation
- DC Government, Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
- DC Government, Office of Community Services
- Capital One Impact Fund
- Community House Church
- Covington & Burling LLC
- Eugene and Agnes Meyer Foundation
- Howard University Mellon Foundation
- Social Justice Institute
- Legal Action Center
- Lang Foundation
- Public Welfare Fund
- Share Fund
- Uber Corporate
- Urgent Wellness

We will continue to work with our clients to identify what new needs we can accommodate as we move into the future. We will be investing in workforce development and employment as we move forward. We recognize that the three most important opportunities for success for justice involved individuals are employment, housing and treatment.
“I DIDN’T COME OUT OF PRISON WITH A BAG OF MONEY, I DIDN’T HAVE A HOUSE AND I DIDN’T HAVE A CAR...

ALL I HAD WAS HOPE.”

— Charles Hopkins, Tain Our Voices Graduate
WHAT HOPE LOOKS LIKE.