



# OFFERING A PATH FOR A NEW TOMORROW

# 2020

A YEAR IN REVIEW

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VOICES FOR A SECOND CHANCE

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“Without the help that we need we lose hope. It is why it is so important to have people who we can identify with and who relate to where we are to help us achieve.”

— VSC CLIENT

## LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Paula Thompson**  
Executive Director

**WITH ALL OF THE CHALLENGES** that accompanied 2020, it has been revealing to see the impact of the pandemic on economic hardships and medical fatalities. The influence of COVID also left its mark on the legal justice system and support to marginalized communities. Men and women were placed on early release from incarceration or were placed on home confinement because COVID was rampant in these institutions. The prediction that crime would rise as a result was not actualized in spite of the fact that many of the support services in the community as well as government agencies had to shut their doors. Consequently, VSC found the need to pivot services and resources to continue to address the expansive needs of those who are justice involved.

As described in this year in review, VSC modified its program components, over the last fifty years so that we could expand our mobile and video capability to accommodate

the extensive needs of our constituents in the community, in halfway houses, and in the DC Jail. We moved to four programmatic components which include pre-release with our First Responders, post release and community supervision with our Welcome Home Services, sustaining progress during reentry through our Moving Toward Stability and supporting client self-confidence and influencing systemic transformation through the Community of Voices component. During 2020, VSC found these services to be very successful with a positive impact on lowering the recidivism rates of our clients.

Everything we do at VSC is designed to offer a path for a new tomorrow for our constituents who, in some cases, have been incarcerated in federal prisons across the United States for decades. It is our intent to provide them with hope and opportunities to actualize their best future. We look forward to maintaining our ongoing work with other community-based organizations and government agencies to wrap a broad continuum of support around each individual we serve. We remain committed to using the lessons learned from our clients to improve what we offer as we move forward.

We couldn't have accomplished all of this without the tireless work of a committed staff who understands our vision and constituents and without the support of our funders and the community of partners we work with who have dedicated themselves to improving services to justice involved men and women in our city.

In Unity and Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the "P" and "n".

Paula Thompson

# ABOUT VSC

“We have to do these things for ourselves and once we get to a level we seek to attain, we must help others.”

— VSC CLIENT

## PHILOSOPHY

VOICES FOR A SECOND CHANCE (VSC) embraces the philosophy that upon release from incarceration or while on community supervision, our clients deserve to be treated with dignity and respect in a humane and family like environment. Thus, VSC mirrors the community we serve. We have 67 years of the staff's lived experience of incarceration. Many of our staff represent a history of incarceration and/or health challenges which provide us with a keener understanding of our clients' needs. Incorporating a family centered approach by

striving to reconnect the family network, we recognize how important this is for regaining stability. The headquarters for office-based reentry navigation support is in a home environment within walking distance from the DC Jail. We work hard to create a relaxed home environment for people who often don't have homes upon their release from incarceration. As our name points out, we believe that everyone deserves a second chance once they have served their time.

## VISION STATEMENT

To provide services that ensure the successful connection of justice involved individuals to family, community and resources.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Voices for a Second Chance (VSC) is to empower justice-involved citizens pre and post release to create, maintain and strengthen family and community ties, to improve their preparation for successfully transitioning back into our DC community, and to build better futures for themselves and their families.

“The stigma is that we continue to be a plight on society in spite of the fact that we show we can contribute to society and want to succeed.”

— VSC CLIENT



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF VSC (2)



64%

64% INDICATED A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER OR A HISTORY OF SELLING DRUGS



90%

90% IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS NEEDING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT



84%

84% ARE UNEMPLOYED



97%

97% WERE HOMELESS



63%

63% OF OUR PARTICIPANTS ARE UNSKILLED



216

VSC MANAGES AN ONGOING CASELOAD OF APPROXIMATELY 216 MEN AND WOMEN



## OUR CLIENTELLE

“There are more numbers of us who are showing we can succeed. It is a pleasure to be involved in a organization that understands this and hires us.”

— VSC CLIENT

**VOICES FOR A SECOND CHANCE (VSC)** provides community-based resources, located across the District of Columbia, to justice-involved persons transitioning back to their communities from the DC Department of Corrections Central Treatment Facility (CTF) and the Central Detention Facility (CDF) in the DC Jail, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP), and those under the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) and the Pretiral Services Agency (PSA) community supervision. VSC provides a navigational program which utilizes citywide outreach to identify and address the needs of justice-involved individuals

within the District who are transitioning back to their communities or trying to live productively within their communities. Program participants are self-identified, or identified through targeted outreach at the Jail, within the FBOP facilities, in the Halfway Houses, or out in natural gathering places such as homeless shelters, low-income housing, or in high-risk neighborhoods throughout the city. These services have proven to meet the immediate needs of individuals post-release which is documented to be a critical time to disrupt environmental factors that could influence reentry back into criminal behaviors.

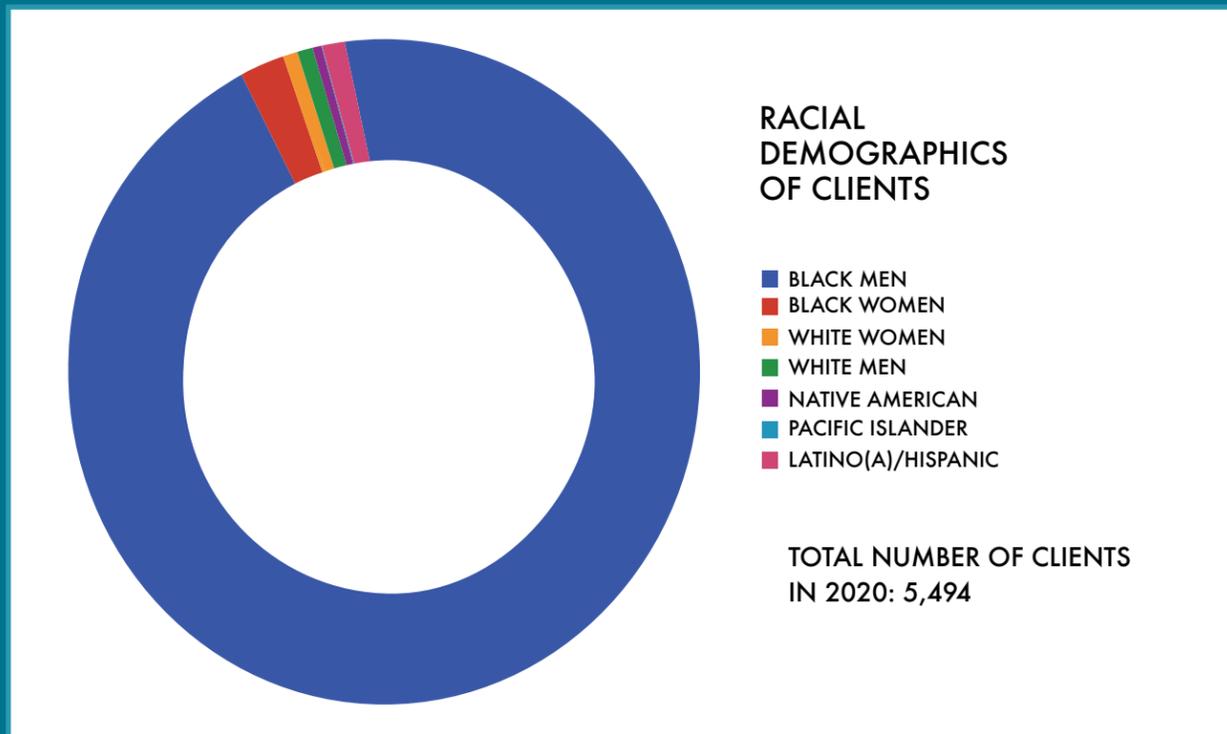
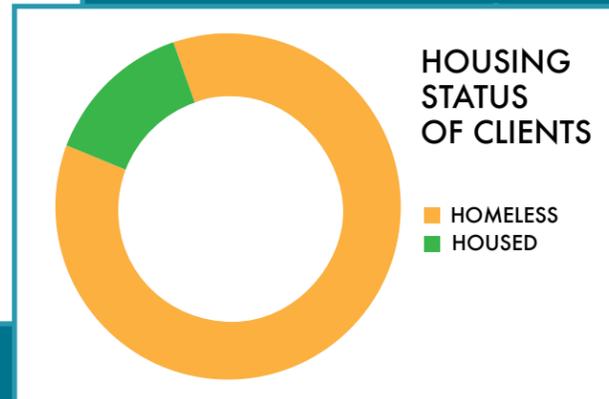
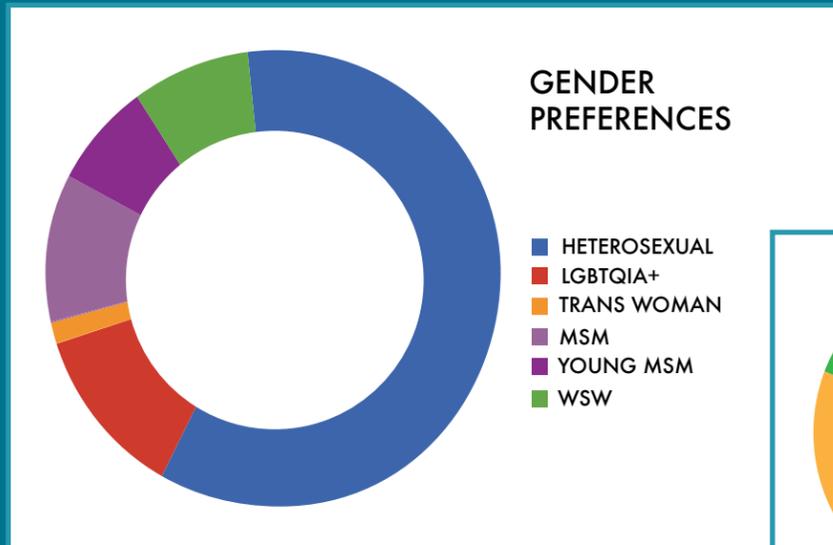
PHOTO: PEXELS/ALEX GREEN

## OUR POPULATION: GENDER, HOUSING & RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS



# 99%

99% PERCENT OF OUR CLIENTS ARE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES (MANY HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED FOR DECADES)



## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

FIRST RESPONDER SERVICES | THE WELCOME HOME CENTER | COMMUNITY OF VOICES

**BY ADJUSTING THE WAY** services were provided in 2020, VSC staff could better target vulnerable constituents. For example, increasing mobile outreach enabled staff to provide flexible case management wherever they were needed. In 2020 VSC staff set up Pop-Ups in neighborhoods to distribute Narcan, Covid Supplies and information on VSC. The combined impact of Covid and Opioid use were fatal in some areas of the city. VSC's mobile services also gave staff the ability to reach citizens in need of basic medical supplies (thermometers, diabetes kits, etc.), PPE and to connect individuals to follow up services, including primary medical care. Our realignment of programmatic support resulted from listening to our consumers who helped to guide our responses to their needs. Clients indicated that knowing that VSC staff understood them, supported their journey and acknowledged how overwhelming things could be for them, meant they could feel less traumatized by the combined impact of the pandemic and the challenges of being justice involved in the city.

VSC offers our constituents a space that nurtures their humanity and their desire to restore their relationships, families and communities by meeting them where they are. As a result, VSC is divided into the following program components designed to offer comprehensive care coordination and services for constituents' sustained progress as they work their way towards appreciating their worth and finding self-sufficiency.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF VSC

**10**  
FIRST RESPONDER SERVICES  
OUTREACH AND DIRECT SUPPORT IN JAILS/PRISONS AND HALFWAY HOUSES

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THE WELCOME HOME CENTER  
MOBILE AND OFFICE-BASED REENTRY CENTER FOR RETURNING CITIZENS

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MOVING TOWARD STABILITY  
EDUCATION, PEER SUPPORT GROUPS, HEALTH & LEGAL SUPPORT

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COMMUNITY OF VOICES  
ELEVATE CLIENT VOICES TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE AND SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION

## FIRST RESPONDER SERVICES

OUTREACH AND DIRECT SUPPORT IN THE DC JAIL/PRISONS AND HALFWAY HOUSES



**THE VSC FIRST RESPONDERS** focus on in-reach to the incarcerated population in jail, prison, and halfway houses. VSC staff uses virtual intervention when we are restricted from entering facilities because of COVID as well as mobile outreach to provide information and assist with prescreening and beginning reentry planning prior to release.



### SUPPORT SERVICES

- 'Reentry' Case Management
- DOC Jail In-Reach and Mail Collection
- Federal Bureau of Prisons In-Reach
- Halfway House On-Site Support

“What distinguishes a group that works best for clients is if there is a concrete service that will follow up and follow through to see that the work is getting done until the end.”

— VSC CLIENT

## THE WELCOME HOME CENTER

MOBILE AND OFFICE-BASED REENTRY CENTER FOR RETURNING CITIZENS



**THE WELCOME HOME** component provides a mobile and office based reentry center that assists individuals who have left the DC Jail, the prisons and the halfway house, or are on community supervision. The VSC reentry navigators provide immediate stabilizers (identification, reinstating medical benefits, assist with social security benefits, TANF, food stamps, clothing, short term housing, etc.). This component also includes the much-needed referrals and case management through community outreach to shelters, neighborhoods, and tent encampments to engage those who are often without the social networks or supports for stabilization.

Integrated into the outreach is VSC's floating support services via our Mobile Welcome Home Center. These services provide a responsive outreach approach to justice-involved individuals and community residents. Under this service component, outreach staff can provide interventions across the District. This includes linkages to community resources that include substance abuse treatment, detoxification services, inpatient treatment, medical supplies, food, housing, employment, financial assistance, and other basic life necessities. VSC provides outreach to areas of the District where individuals are at a higher risk of poverty and crime. Individuals are self-referred if interested in the services provided by VSC. VSC accepts walk-in and telephone intakes from our community partners in DC DOC, the READY Center, MORCA and other agencies throughout the DC metropolitan area.



PHOTOS: (FROM LEFT) PEXELS/ANTHONY SHKRABA; (THIS PAGE) PEXELS/ALEX GREEN, PEXELS/MUHAMMADTAHA IBRAHIM, MAX'ALI & DALILA BROOKS

### SUPPORT SERVICES

- Halfway House Transition To City
- Reentry Navigators
- Early Stabilizers: Identification, Medical Benefits, SSI, TANF, Food Stamps, Clothing, Short Term Housing
- Referrals and Case Management
- Community Engagement – Outreach to neighborhoods, shelters and tent cities
- Compassionate Release Case Management
- Virtual Support Groups

“VSC provided a support group for returning citizens. It was helpful to me because I didn’t know how to navigate in that space. They understood my discomfort.”

— VSC CLIENT

## MOVING TOWARD STABILITY

EDUCATION, PEER SUPPORT GROUPS, HEALTH & LEGAL SUPPORT



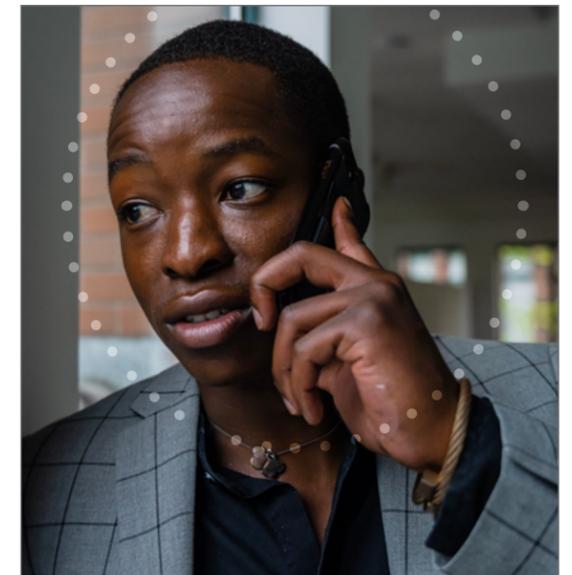
**MOVING TOWARDS STABILITY** incorporates intensive case management, peer support groups and information on connections to housing, employment, treatment and education. Integral components include ‘know your legal rights’, ‘financial



PHOTOS: (FROM LEFT) PEXELS/OLADIWEI AEGBILE; (THIS PAGE) PEXELS/PNW PRODUCTION

literacy’ and other critical flexible resources necessary for ongoing stability.

Recognizing the 2020 challenges of COVID in communities of color and the disparity in the provision of education and lifesaving equipment and vaccinations, VSC began an Urgent Wellness Intervention. Staff have been trained to provide screening and linkage to medical services and to address the social determinants of health care. Once again this requires flexible mobile community outreach to marginalized neighborhoods to provide wellness checks, the dissemination of personal protective equipment for COVID, medical equipment distribution and follow up. This also entails behavioral health support (mental health and substance use disorder services), behavioral health screening and referrals to treatment and respite care.



### SUPPORT SERVICES

- Education
- Staying on Track (Peer Support Group)
- Housing
- Employment
- Health
- Urgent Wellness
- Behavioral Health Screening & Treatment (Mental Health & Substance Use)
- Safe Sex Supply Distribution
- Just Law (Knowing Legal Rights)
- Narcan Distribution

“It is because they get it and have the same experience, so they become the examples.”

— VSC CLIENT

## COMMUNITY OF VOICES

ELEVATE CLIENT VOICES TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE AND SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION



**FINDING THEIR POWER** by using their Voice - VSC has begun to engage clients in finding their voice and trusting their perspective on the transformation of the system so that it can restore justice and equity.

The process of decarceration around the country and in DC has demonstrated the possibilities of effective community-based solutions. We remain committed to engaging our community by



“We have to do these things for ourselves and once we get to a level we seek to attain we must help others.”

— VSC CLIENT

leveraging partnerships and resources to maximize our clients' opportunities for success. To do this we want to elevate the voices of our clients. We recently had the opportunity to recommend several clients to speak on a national program about the challenges they faced as returning citizens and to advocate for the resources that would better meet these challenges and barriers to their success. We would like to expand partnerships using other avenues for the Voices of a Second Chance to be heard. To make this happen we will continue to invest in the stages of self-knowledge-and-advocacy as a central component of our work with clients. We would like to continue to build our curriculum and materials based on the lessons learned from the Transitions Education and Action Manage-

ment program. In addition, we want to expose our clients to speaking at DC Council meetings, and to know how to collaborate with groups around the country who are educating Capitol Hill on the barriers and needs of justice-involved individuals and returned citizens. We will work with our local partners who promote clients to become engaged in these networks that offer understanding and strength from those who have also lived experience. As we move forward, we will hire facilitators from local and national peer support groups to work with our justice involved and returned citizens as they progress through our curriculum towards stability and self-awareness so that participants learn to use their voices for power.

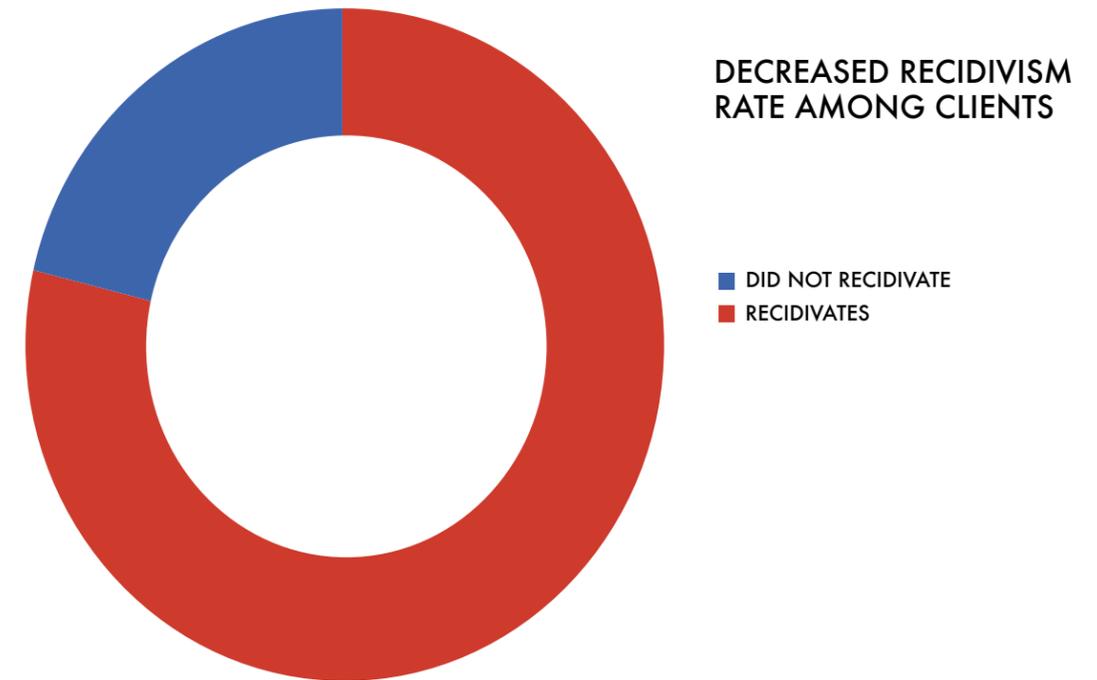
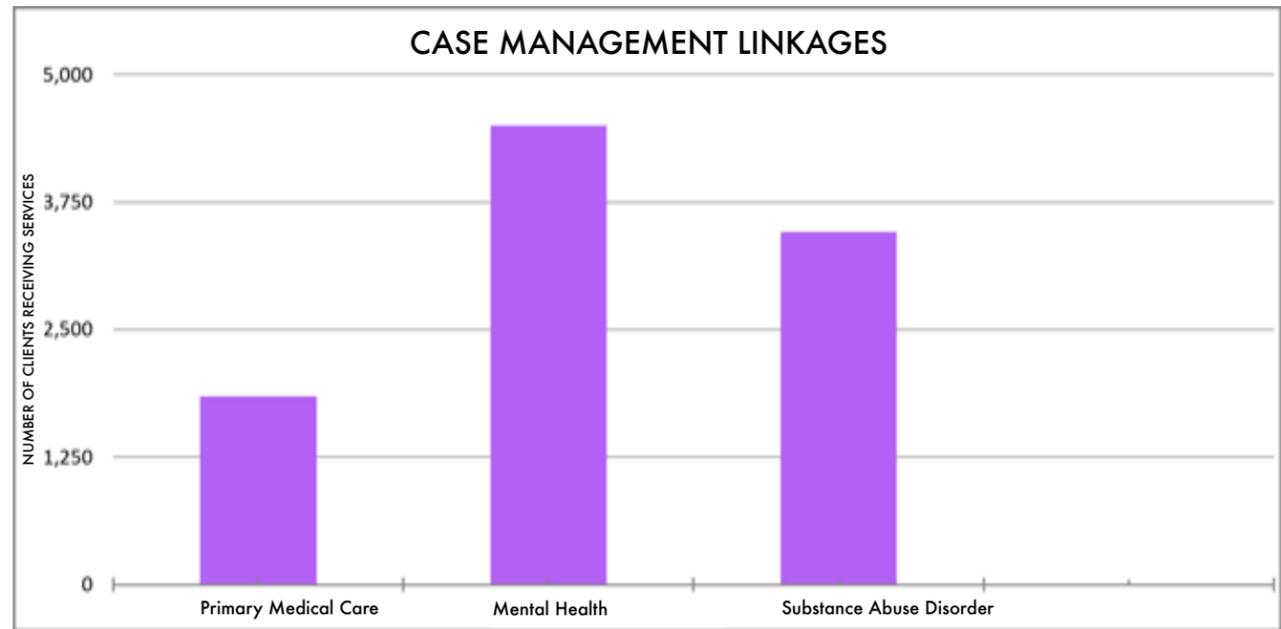
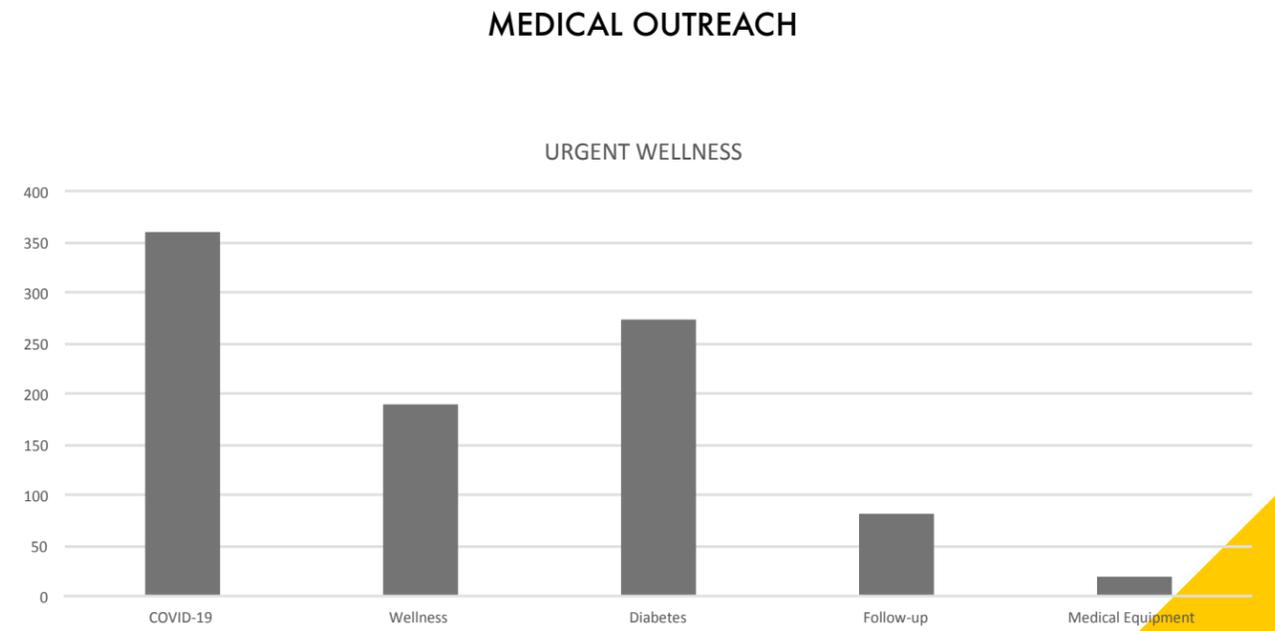
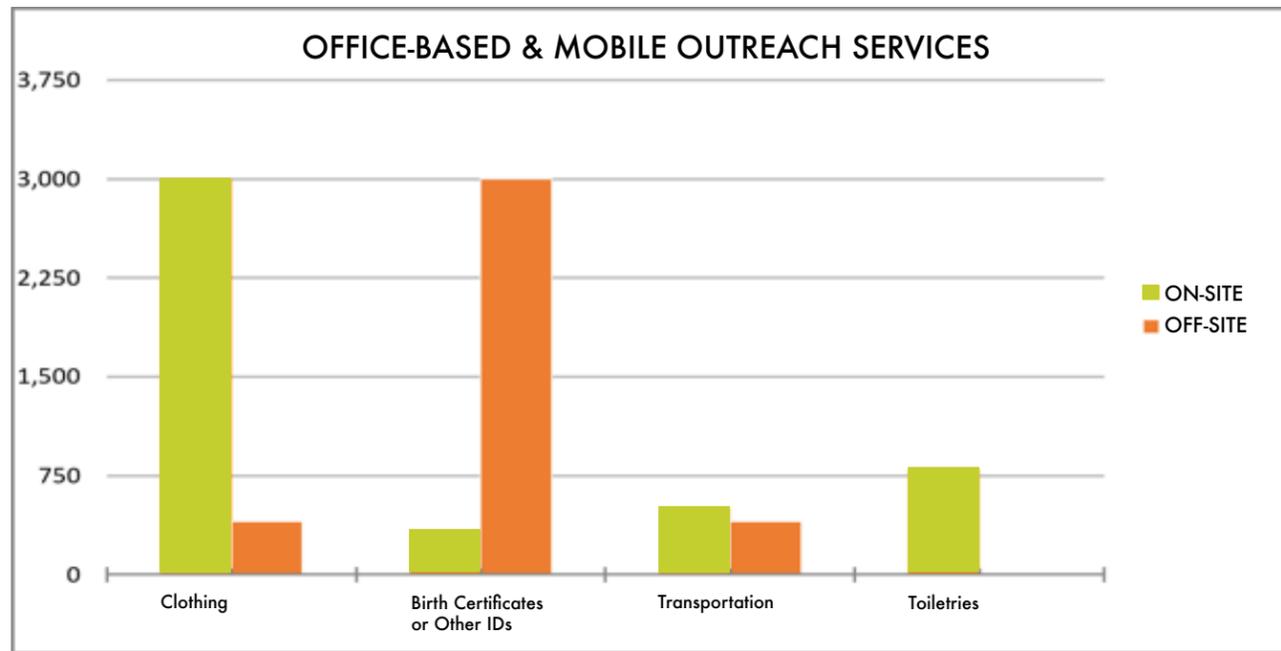


## ACCOMPLISHMENTS & OUTCOMES

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020: OFFICE-BASED & MOBILE OUTREACH SERVICES, CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES RENDERED, MEDICAL OUTREACH & DECREASED RECIDIVISM RATE AMONG CLIENTS



PHOTOS: (FROM LEFT) COURTESY OF VSC (4)



# OUR TEAM

## VSC BOARD & STAFF



VSC Board (in order of appearance): Ingrid Gardiner, Treasurer; Betsy Biben; Yusef Rabb; Brandon Myers, General Counsel; Paula Thompson, Executive Director; Lauren Zehyoue; Deborah (Devo) Ritter; Sara Lemke von Ammon; Nancy Ware; Jeremy Wiley (not pictured), Chair and Clayton Kolb, Secretary

VSC'S STRENGTH is its staff. With the dedicated commitment and expertise exercised by the people who support our clientele, we have the opportunity to reach a wider breath of beneficiaries who can use our services. This is the work force that contributed to our success in 2020. As our team grows, we carry the torch in leading the path toward a more supported and supportive future.



Shelby Bing  
Program Assistant/  
Community Outreach



Margot Kirkland  
Program Director



Carl Johnson  
Case Manager



Duane Johnson  
Community Outreach



Diane Jones, LICSW, LCSW-C  
Clinical Director



Brian LaBoard  
Re-Entry Navigator



Miles Lateef  
Community Outreach Navigator



James Matthews  
Community Outreach Liaison



Raymond Phillips  
Reentry Case Manager



Michelle Sermon, MS, MSW  
Clinical Supervisor



Anthony Tate  
Community Outreach



Unimke Ugbong  
Case Manager



Anna Villatoro  
Bilingual Outreach/  
Program Support



Deirdre Washington  
Executive Assistant/  
Finance Manager

PHOTOS: (FROM LEFT) COURTESY OF VSC (1/5)

# FUNDERS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

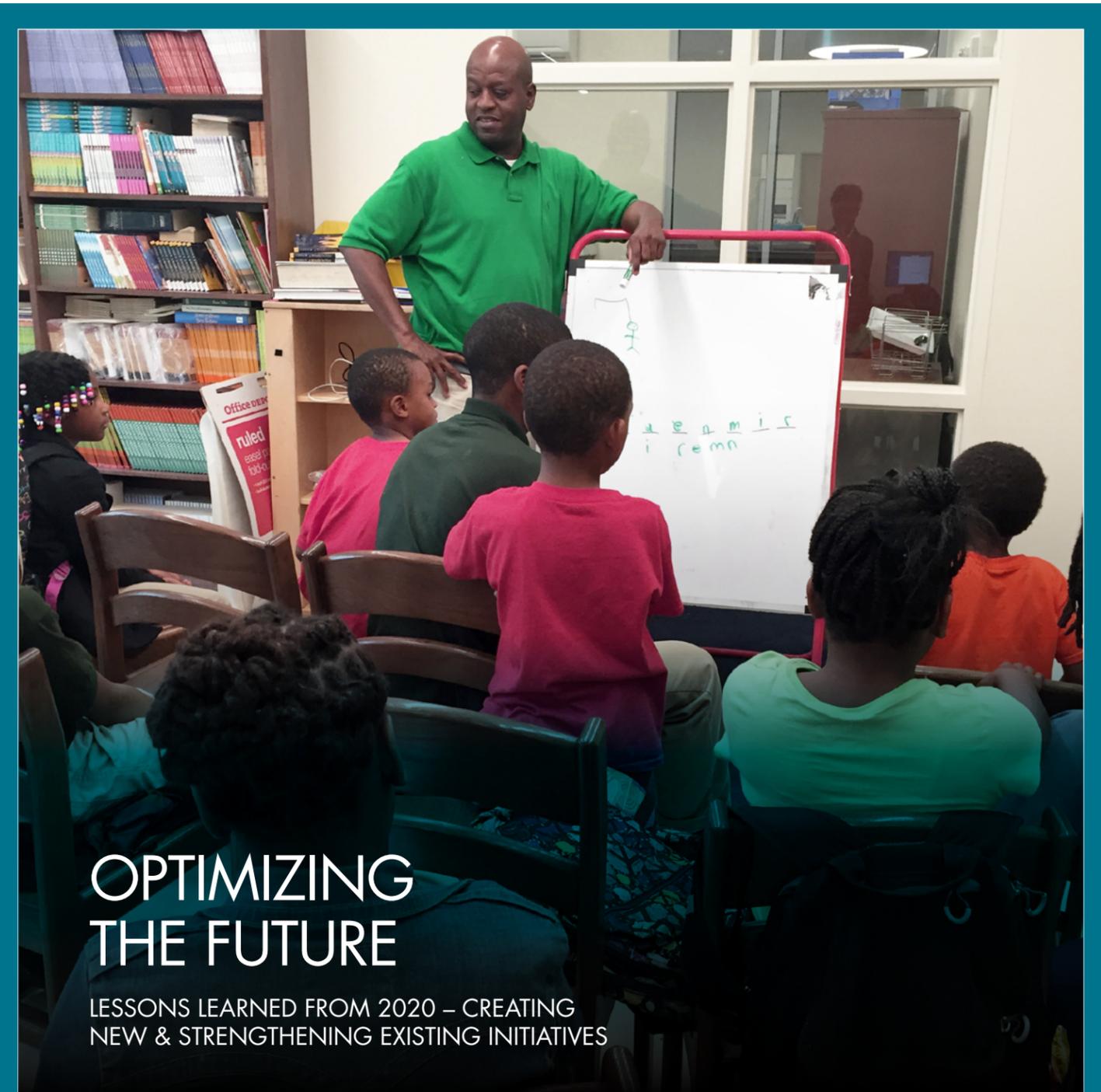
A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS AND FUNDERS

WITH ALL OF THE UNEXPECTED trials resulting from COVID in 2020, VSC had to shift to provide innovative and enhanced services and support for justice involved individuals in DC. Without our government, foundation, individual donors and corporate partnerships, VSC would not have been able to accommodate the hardships we saw among this marginalized population. We want to thank our funders for working

with us to ensure a compassionate and flexible response to the demands required by our clients. Their support enabled VSC to provide mobile services within hard-to-reach communities and locations; personal protection equipment, educational materials and outreach to address COVID; and special program support to stabilize clients and facilitate their successful reintegration into the DC community.

- The Arcana Foundation
- AT&T Corporate Contribution Fund
- Clifford Chance Law Firm
- The Community House Church
- Covington Burling, LLC
- DC Office of Community Services
- DC Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
- The Greater Washington Community Foundation
- The Lang Foundation
- The Legal Action Center
- The Meyer Foundation
- Pepsi Corporation
- Public Welfare Foundation
- The Share Fund
- Urgent Wellness
- Workers of St. Alban's/St. Alban's Parish

(Funders listed in alphabetical order)



## OPTIMIZING THE FUTURE

LESSONS LEARNED FROM 2020 – CREATING NEW & STRENGTHENING EXISTING INITIATIVES

VSC CONTINUES TO identify areas of opportunity for serving justice-involved individuals who often experience gaps in service. VSC recognizes the devastating impact of the Coronavirus pandemic globally and specifically the decimation on already under-resourced impoverished communities of color, specifically African American and immigrant

populations. VSC will work in tandem with other DC Community based organizations to ensure issues and gaps are addressed. By elevating these issues, VSC will bring attention and thus solutions to effectuate the state of reentry in the District through strategic advocacy, mobilization of stakeholders, and organized leadership.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF VSC; (BACK COVER) PEXELS/PIXABAY



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