ABOUT EVIDENT CHANGE

Evident Change promotes just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice. For more information, call (800) 306-6223 or visit us online at EvidentChange.org and @Evident_Change on Twitter.

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Appendix: Simple Outreach Message Template
Many individuals who have been impacted by the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems have unaddressed needs and traumas that have led them to, and kept them in, a cycle of justice system involvement.

There is no one-size-fits-all method or solution when it comes to changing the trajectory of people’s lives. We all come from a variety of backgrounds with different needs, perspectives, and levels of willingness to change. Many states have started requiring assessments to help understand system-involved individuals’ risk of re-entering the system and their needs contributing to system involvement, but not much guidance is given on what to do next.

That is where this Provider Outreach Guide comes in. This tool guides agencies in their journey to create a more well-rounded service array to meet the needs of the people they serve.

At Evident Change, we believe our social systems should help people reach their greatest potential, not create barriers to their success. That’s why we partner with systems professionals and communities to get to the root of their biggest challenges, and we give them the tools and knowledge to achieve better outcomes for everyone involved. Because when we join forces with those who work in our systems and the people they serve, we make those systems—and our society—more equitable from the inside out.

The following chapters will help guide you and your organization to make strong community and cross-system connections that will ultimately improve the way people are treated and served.
PRACTICING ADVOCACY IN SUPERVISION

In the criminal justice system, there is a strong desire to serve system-involved individuals and do what is best for them, yet there is not much training for staff in the way of advocacy. Advocates stand up for the people they serve and make space for them to be heard and included in the decision-making process, not just doing what the organization considers to be the best approach (which may or may not benefit both parties equitably).

It’s been said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. You could have the best intentions for helping someone and end up hurting them by making decisions on their behalf and assuming to know what’s best for them. Without considering the person’s input, you could focus on a symptom instead of targeting the root issue. A case file can give an overview of the person’s history, but only the person can share the story of how their past shaped them into who they are today. They are the experts on their own lives. Practicing advocacy in supervision requires input from the individuals being supervised and a balance between surveillance and support.

Surveillance can be necessary for public safety, but if violations are met only with consequences and little to no support, there is no room for growth. Being an advocate means taking the next step after a pattern of negative behavior has been recognized to ask the individual what need they are trying to meet through the negative behavior. Once the need is identified, you can work together to find a solution; this also helps build buy-in. When people are involved in the planning and decision-making process, they are more likely to be open to following through with the interventions.

In the upcoming Desistance-Focused Interventions section on building human agency, we will learn more about how to create spaces where input from the individuals being served is encouraged and used to create lasting change. This is taking advocacy in the organization a step further by giving the people being served a collective space where they can advocate on their own behalf.
BALANCING RECIDIVISM AND DESISTANCE

According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), “recidivism refers to a person’s relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime. It is measured by criminal acts that result in rearrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the person’s release.”

Recidivism is important inherently because it tracks each person’s interaction with the criminal justice system after the initial intervention that was meant to adjust their behavior. The issue is that recidivism fully focuses on negative behaviors and failure to follow the conditions of probation or parole, with no measurements that track positive changes in behaviors. There’s a saying: “You can’t turn the Queen Elizabeth II on a dime,” referring to how it takes time and effort to turn a massive ship in another direction. The same rings true for changing deeply rooted behaviors—it doesn’t happen overnight. It takes time, effort, and individualized resources that meet each person’s specific needs.

This is where balance between recidivism and desistance comes into play. According to Desistance-Focused Criminal Justice Practice, a paper recently released by NIJ, “desistance is intended to measure the process by which those who previously participated in criminal behavior move toward stopping the behavior or ending a criminal career.” The focus of this measurement is on tracking progress and positive change rather than failure. This is not to say that tracking failure is not important, but if failure is the main or only focus, it is all you will see and come to expect.

As we move through this guide, consider how balancing surveillance with individualized services and supports can make a deeper impact on the root causes of an individual’s criminal behavior. It is understood that a certain level of oversight is needed to ensure the safety of the community; however, this must also be matched with positive interventions and supports that can help keep people on track. In the following section, we share some of the interventions that have been proven to increase desistance.
DESISTANCE-FOCUSED INTERVENTIONS

Shifting the focus from recidivism to desistance is no easy task, especially when resources are limited and laws are constantly changing around the country. This is precisely why it’s important to devote time and energy into creating a toolbox of service providers and interventions to serve a variety of needs. It’s been said that if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Building a more expansive toolbox gives you the ability to make decisions based on each individual’s needs instead of trying to force a one-size-fits-all solution.

The following interventions and descriptions were adapted from NIJ’s Desistance-Focused Justice Practice. Some of the listed supports may be offered through your organization already, while others will require new connections to service providers. In the Developing an Outreach Message and Avenues for Outreach sections, we will offer more guidance for reaching out to new providers and organizations.

BUILDING HUMAN AGENCY

On a basic level, human agency is a person’s ability to make choices for themself based on their best interests and the meaning they’ve ascribed to it, according to the British Journal of Social Work’s Human Agency and Social Work Research. In correctional systems, much of this agency is taken away in favor of formal controls to maintain order. Formal controls are important, but they don’t always create space for people to develop their own sense of agency and healthy pro-social decision-making skills.

To build agency on the system-involved people’s behalf, they will now be referred to as “individual” or “person.” This is a reminder that each person has their own story; generalizing them based on their circumstances and/or offenses does them a disservice. People deserve better than to be generalized based on their history or current circumstances. The goal of building agency is to empower individuals to create better futures. Each individual win is a win for the system.

The goal of supervision is to guide individuals through their evolution into better decision makers. Assessment tools are used to discover each person’s strengths, risks, and needs, which can help inform conditions of supervision and court orders. However, buy-in from the individual is necessary for those efforts to be successful in achieving behavioral change.

For lasting behavioral change to take root, a person must develop their own intrinsic motivation and meaning for making pro-social decisions. Giving them space to build a sense of agency also allows them to develop self-advocacy skills to ask for what they need to be successful. Success is an individual journey that looks different for everyone. The following strategies can be used to create spaces for building agency and advocacy for these individuals.

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Town hall meetings are a dedicated space for people—both staff and the people they serve—to share their feedback directly with leadership and those who are making decisions on their behalf.

According to Expert Program Management, a town hall meeting allows:

- Management to keep everyone up to date on important information;
• People to ask questions to management and give their feedback; and
• Everyone to understand the organization’s goals and values.

As with any other intervention, conducting a town hall meeting has advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it requires planning, scheduling, and an open mind to receive honest feedback; on the other hand, it creates a space to incorporate thoughts from all levels within the organization into the conversation.

A great example of a town hall meeting—held inside a jail—can be found in a 2011 Los Angeles Times article titled “Sheriff Lee Baca Listens to Inmate Complaints at Town Hall Meeting.” This article not only covers Sheriff Baca’s motivations for conducting the meeting, it includes some of the feedback he received from the people serving time in the jail.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are similar to town hall meetings, but they usually are more topic-focused and intimate. Focus groups are used to open a group dialogue concerning an issue or potential change.

When an organization is considering adding or changing service providers, it is always a good idea to include and consider input from those who are going to be affected by the change. Depending on where change happens in the organization, it could affect both staff and the individuals they serve.

According to the Community Tool Box’s resource on conducting focus groups, focus groups are a great way to actively encourage participants—not only to express their opinions, but also to respond to other members and questions posed by the leader. Focus groups offer a depth, nuance, and variety to the discussion that cannot be captured in a survey. They are a great way to quickly gather in-depth information about a group’s thoughts and opinions.

The Community Tool Box resource also offers guidance for creating and conducting focus groups and analyzing the outcomes received from the sessions to guide future action.

SURVEYS

Surveys are a great way to ask specific questions and gather aggregate data that can be analyzed for trends. Some individuals may not feel comfortable with sharing their thoughts in a group setting; survey tools allow them to participate anonymously. Surveys can be quick and simple and created internally, or they can be a task that you pay an outside entity to provide.

For those considering an outside entity to conduct such a survey, here is an example of an output report from the 2018 Inmate Survey report, conducted by G.A.R. Criminal Justice Consulting. This report details the survey methods as well as the outcomes of those who were incarcerated in that jail at the time.

Online surveys can be a great tool for those with access to computers and/or mobile devices. For
those in custody, a written survey or printed question prompt would be the best way to collect feedback.

**SUGGESTION BOXES**

Suggestion boxes are a way to gather individuals’ feedback on a regular basis concerning different topics of interest. Suggestion boxes could include forms that initiate feedback regarding a variety of things, such as services/programming challenges and successes, suggestions for future service delivery, food, and conditions of confinement/supervision. Please note that since these are anonymous, you may receive random or unrelated feedback or remarks.

Each of these strategies offers a different level of participation from the people being served and supervised, but they share the goal of gathering feedback. Sharing feedback with decision makers can be empowering, but it is most impactful when it is translated into action and change.

**COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY**

According to NIJ’s desistance article, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a tool used to change unhealthy cognitive distortions and help guide people to develop more pro-social coping and problem-solving strategies. Using this tool does not require a licensed therapist. Staff can choose from a variety of curricula to provide this approach with the people they work with.

CBT was found to be most effective among youth and people who have been victims of other crimes or traumas, according to a 2016 study by Thomas Feucht and Tammy Holt.

**PROCEDURAL JUSTICE APPROACHES**

The concept of procedural justice is predicated on the idea that people are more responsive to criminal justice interventions when they appear to be delivered in a procedurally fair manner. Perceived legitimacy can be increased by gathering input from those who are (or have been) incarcerated or on supervision and incorporating the input into changes in policies, practice, and procedures. Inviting people to share their experiences and any unfair, inconsistent, or divergent treatment they’ve received shines a light on potential darkness that organizational leadership may not have known about otherwise.

An example from the NIJ article explains how. Procedural delays faced by parole boards fed into incarcerated individuals’ frustration with the system, and it carried over into the community as well. These delays made a negative impact on the individuals and their families and ultimately proved to be a barrier to desistance. Improving outcomes starts with improving procedures and relations between the system and the people it serves.
PRISON/JAIL VISITATION

Many criminal justice interventions are built on sociogenic theories (i.e., focus on external change) that rely on informal social controls to increase desistance. Informal social controls are external people and circumstances that encourage a person to change. These changes are referred to as “turning points.” Social turning points can include anything from getting married and/or becoming a parent, to obtaining full-time employment, to changing one’s network of friends.

Allowing an individual’s informal support system to visit or connect with them through video chats, letters, or other means of communication can help encourage the individual to reach a turning point. It is also a great way to build and nourish pro-social relationships that people may already have with their families and support systems so that they will have more success when they are released.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

In the same spirit of external change, attending church or religious services can lead to internal changes that can have similar properties and outcomes as other turning points, like marriage or employment. A new spiritual connection has the potential to shift a person’s view of the world and their role in it. It can also connect them to a community of people who will encourage them and cultivate pro-social relationships that help foster desistance. This intervention is strictly voluntary and will only truly be effective for individuals with strong self-selection (i.e., individuals who choose to join and participate on their own.).

Partnering with churches and religious organizations can also be a way to connect people to free resources, pro-social mentors and volunteers who may be able to conduct group sessions or teach new skills or hobbies.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a tool used to guide a person through the stages of change by helping them to challenge their resistance to change. Once they understand their own personal resistance, they will be able to work through those barriers better and develop an internal motivation to change, ultimately leading to desistance. A variety of curricula can help teach justice workers how to use MI to guide individuals through their journey toward behavioral change.

PROGRAMMING FOR YOUNG ADULTS

According to the University of Rochester Medical Center, “the rational part of a teen’s brain isn’t fully developed and won’t be until age 25 or so.” Teens and young adults tend to think with the emotional part of their brain, the amygdala, whereas mature adults think with the rational part of their brain, the prefrontal cortex. People age 18 to 25 are led by their emotions; this
makes them impressionable as they try to make sense of themselves and their choices. Their level of maturity can shape how they interact with older individuals and their ability to benefit from available services.

Incorporating age-appropriate programming and housing practices for the younger population can help guide them through their brain development and help them grow toward desistance. A variety of curricula and life-skill trainings on the market can be incorporated into programming and supervision practices.

Connecting younger individuals with supportive and pro-social mentors is another great way to help guide them as their brain continues to develop. Introducing them to supportive people who can offer guidance or those who may have overcome similar situations in the past can help them create strong positive bonds. These connections can help them establish new thought patterns or neural pathways for problem solving, goal setting, and other important life skills.

**FAMILY COUNSELING**

As mentioned earlier, informal social controls, such as family and friends, can facilitate the push that individuals need to move toward the turning point. Various forms of counseling, whether it be relationship/marital counseling or parenting counseling, can help individuals build the relational skills necessary to successfully reintegrate into their family and community. Counseling can also reinforce the importance of healthy and pro-social relationships.

Depending upon the availability and location of counselors in your area, this may be a valuable service to consider providing through virtual platforms, especially for those in a jail or prison setting. This can also help broaden the amount and type of counselors available to serve the people you work with.

**DESTIGMATIZATION**

According to labeling theory, people involved in criminal behavior are, to a certain extent, acting based on a pre-existing label given to them by the criminal justice system and society. In essence, they act based on what others already think of them and how they are treated. Destigmatization is the process of removing labels and other obstacles that inhibit desistance.

When people are released from custody, they can have every intention of getting a job or housing, but if they are met with constant rejection because of their criminal history, their pathways to success are limited. Companies may not explicitly label them as a felon or criminal, but requiring them to disclose their criminal history on a job application tends to have the same impact. The stigma associated with criminal justice involvement makes a statement before the person even has a chance to introduce themself.

With limited viable opportunities to make a living, some people may be led back to their old criminal lifestyle as a means for survival. Reversing this
cycle through destigmatization will involve shifting the way society sees and interacts with people with a criminal history so that they are seen as people first. For example, some jurisdictions have passed legislation that expunges or seals a person’s criminal record after a certain period without being convicted of a new offense. Other jurisdictions have incorporated ceremonies to celebrate benchmarks in supervision as individuals move toward a lifestyle of desistance.

HALFWAY HOUSES
For some individuals, returning home upon release will be a smooth and easy transition, but for others, this may not be the case. After an extended period of incarceration, readjusting to the real world may take time. According to a study by the Macrothink Institute, people who served longer sentences benefitted from a step-down housing option and tended to recidivate less than those who were released on parole. It is worth noting that these housing options, also called halfway houses, are less prominent, but transitional programs, vocational training, and additional community-based supports could have a similar impact.

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION
Employment and education were cited in the NIJ article as potential forms of informal social control that can help lead to desistance. This concept was also reinforced by the findings in the Macrothink Institute study mentioned earlier. According to that study, people on parole who had a higher need for vocational skills were more likely to recidivate. When people are released back into society with no additional marketable skills, there is a higher probability that they will return to the behaviors and situations they were in prior to their incarceration. The combination of education and marketable skills increases the available pathways people can take toward their vision of success and desistance from criminal behavior.

With the potential impact of this intervention in mind, it is worth noting how accessible tools related to skill learning and sharing have become over the years. A simple Google search for “online certification programs” produces over 1 billion results. Granted, not all of these results will be worthwhile pursuits, but the possibility of finding a program that fits the needs and/or desires of someone you’re working with is much higher compared with just a few years ago.
“NO WRONG DOOR” APPROACH

When someone is in crisis or is experiencing mental, behavioral, or emotional challenges, the last thing they want to hear is that the supervising organization doesn’t have the services needed to help them. A “no wrong door” approach means that no matter what type of help a person needs, they always will be connected to a service provider or organization within their community that can help them in their time of need. Wraparound and multidisciplinary teams are two examples of this approach. They require agencies and providers from different service areas to collaborate with one another and provide “warm hand-offs” within their network.

Warm hand-offs consist of directly contacting the referring organization, sharing information with the individual’s permission, and establishing the initial face-to-face meeting. This type of connection can help the individual in building trust with the new provider and not having to retell their story. It will also help give the partner organization an idea of the type of services and support the individual may benefit most from. When people can seamlessly connect with the right providers, as opposed to trying to find services on their own, they can focus on what really matters: their health and success.

If the past few years have taught us anything, it is the necessity of pivoting to new and more creative ways of doing things and reaching people. There are many opportunities to expand our reach and connect with organizations and providers that are outside of the immediate vicinity. As you consider connecting with new service providers and community-based organizations, it is also important to keep in mind that in-person services are not the only solution.

Building partnerships and referral networks within and outside your community is essential to creating easy access to care. The Developing an Outreach Message section will guide you in creating a template letter to share with potential partner organizations.
MEASURING DESISTANCE

Turning away from previous illegal behaviors and moving toward desistance does not happen overnight. Change takes time, a shift in thinking and actions, and consistency. According to the NIJ article on desistance-focused criminal justice practice, there are three ways to measure when someone has desisted from their previous behaviors: deceleration, de-escalation, and reaching a ceiling. The following descriptions draw from that article.

DECELERATION

Deceleration is measured by a reduction in the frequency at which an individual participates in criminal activity rather than stopping completely. To track this type of desistance, you must compare the individual’s average number of arrests before the criminal justice intervention with the number after the intervention. When deciding on time periods to compare, be sure to include only times when the person was in the community; including the time when they were in custody will skew the data and paint an inaccurate picture of their desistance journey.

It is also important to factor in the person’s age throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system. According to an NIJ article, “accumulated knowledge about the relationship between age and crime implies that a 20-year-old is significantly more likely to be involved in criminal behavior than, say, a 40-year-old would be, independent of any impact of imprisonment in deterring future criminal behavior.”
DE-ESCALATION

De-escalation refers to a reduction in the seriousness of a person’s criminal behavior. For example, in the process of their desistance journey, someone may go from multiple burglary convictions to support a drug problem to just arrests for drug possession or use. The person has not fully moved away from the root issue, but the change in criminal behavior illustrates a potential shift in their thinking and actions.

For this measure to be accurate, a hierarchy of crime seriousness must be created and operationalized. If your organization doesn’t have one already, you can use this one from the Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook. Once this hierarchy has been established, metrics will need to be put in place to compute the average crime seriousness score, and the time periods to be included in the pre- and post-intervention phases. It is worth noting that this measurement will be dependent on the accuracy of the reporting of criminal behavior. If criminal behavior is underreported, the outcomes of this measurement could be inaccurate.

REACHING A CEILING

Reaching a ceiling refers to the point where a person ceases criminal behavior. It can be referred to as the inverse of recidivism. Recidivism tracks new arrests within a certain time period, but this measure tracks the client’s success at not picking up new charges within the time period.

As with the other measures, there are drawbacks related to the length of the follow-up period and underreporting. For example, if an organization follows up with someone for only two years and the person does not commit a new offense until the two-and-a-half-year mark, that person will have been inaccurately represented as having reached their ceiling of criminal activity. If their criminal activity is not reported, this will also skew the perceived outcome.

As your organization considers adding services to your service array, it is important to keep these measurements in mind to track the success of each intervention. The following section offers questions to consider as your organization embarks on this outreach journey to add or increase the amount of desistance-focused interventions.
Before engaging in outreach activities, it is important to evaluate your organization’s current service array and note any gaps in service provision. The following questions and considerations were adapted from *The Non-Profit Marketing Guide* (Miller, 2010) and can help you with your program gap analysis. Below are some questions and issue areas to consider when assessing your program’s outreach capabilities.

**CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH EFFORTS**

- What types of services does your organization currently provide in-house?
- What existing referral partnerships does your organization have?
- Are all staff aware of the complete service array, including referral partnerships?
- How can your organization maximize existing partnerships?
- What impact does referral making have on workload? How many referrals do staff make on average per case?

**SIMILAR SERVICE PROVIDERS (PROVIDERS WHO SERVE THE SAME POPULATION)**

When expanding your outreach network, it is important to consider other agencies and organizations that serve the same population or provide similar services. This could include neighboring county organizations, social service agencies, schools, and/or treatment centers. Use the following questions and prompts to gain insight into the benefits of partnering with similar providers.

- What services does your organization provide (e.g., supervision, education, mental and/or behavioral health treatment)?
- What other organizations in your area work with the same population and/or provide similar services?
  - List any contacts you have for these organizations.
  - What knowledge and program materials could you exchange?

- Do partner or referral organizations have updated contact information for staff within your program and at your organization?
- How often does communication occur?
- What process is in place to update contacts?
- Does your organization have a point of contact to handle outreach? If so, do they also research and identify potential partnerships?
- What outreach efforts have already been done, and have they been effective?
• What sets your organization’s program apart from the organizations listed previously (e.g., voluntary versus court-ordered services, secure facility versus non-secure, centrally located versus community-based)?

• How could both organizations benefit from a partnership?
  » For example, providing services closer to the individual’s community, providing caseload support during staffing shortages.
  » What would need to be done to establish a partnership?

• What gaps in services does your organization have, and how can these gaps be addressed through partnership with a similar organization?

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience will be organizations that serve the same or similar populations. Pinpointing this audience will help you design targeted messaging about your program, desired services, and benefits of partnership. The following questions can help identify the target audience.

• What additional services would your organization benefit from? Consider the following categories.
  » Individual service needs (e.g., cultural and/or religious beliefs and needs)
  » Desired outcomes for individuals being served/supervised (e.g., stable housing, employment training and assistance)
  » Provider location and/or ability to provide services remotely (e.g., individual access to transportation and/or internet access)
  » Cost of services for organization and/or the individual
  » Required credentials and other legal obligations

• What shared goals do your organization and your target audience share?

• Who will be the key decision makers for this group, and how can you connect with them?
AVENUES FOR OUTREACH

Outreach is the process of finding and reaching out to potential partners to build connections. The success of these efforts will depend on which communication platforms are used and which platform your target audience is likely to respond to. The following list offers a few ways to engage with new partners.

- **Email**: Quick and easy way to connect and share resources.
- **In-person visits or phone calls**: Great way to make personal connections and open conversations about shared goals and potential partnerships.
- **Website**: A central place where people can find more information on your program, potentially apply to provide services, and/or connect with your team.
- **Advertising**: Online ads can reach a large audience in a short amount of time, depending on where they’re placed. Brochures and printed materials are a helpful way to share program information with new people that they can reference later.
- **Social media**: Great way to connect and engage with a variety of people across the world. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are also helpful when looking for programs in a specific area.
- **Publicity**: Media coverage of your organization and the work you are doing can help promote your organization and can connect new potential supporters or service providers to your program.
DEVELOPING AN OUTREACH MESSAGE

According to Page One Power’s Basic Guide to Effective Outreach (Dennis, 2018), email is one of the most common methods of communication. The following features can help build an effective outreach email.

- **Clear subject:** Make your subject line direct and clear. The subject line for emails lets the recipient know why you are contacting them and the nature of your request. It is good practice to mention your organization by name and include a call to action, such as “Add this resource” or “Resources to share with families in crisis.”

- **Message clarity:** Explain your message clearly and as directly as possible. Consider the readability of your message. Is it easy to follow the flow of what you are trying to share? Try reading your message aloud to ensure that your motives are clear and easy to understand.

- **Brevity:** Make your message concise. Consider the length of your message, and try to avoid long paragraphs. Give the reader a high-level overview of your program, and allow them the space to follow up with you for more details. Your message should be long enough to explain your purpose but concise enough to keep the reader engaged.

- **Call to action:** Include next steps for the reader to take and a direct contact person for them to follow up with. Include the benefits of connecting with your organization in the body of your message and prompts for the reader to take follow-up actions. These actions can include visiting your website and reaching out to the established point of contact for more information.

- **Signature:** Include an email signature with contact information. The email signature should include the contact person’s job title and contact information. This gives the reader a better understanding of your role and ensures they have a point of contact for follow-up.

After you create your outreach message template, which includes the features above, ask someone on your team to review it and update it accordingly. Once your message is finalized, you are ready to start sharing your message with organizations. An example outreach message can be found in the Appendix.

Please note that emailing a specific person at an organization is always better than emailing a general inbox. If you cannot find contact information for the appropriate staff member, try calling the organization and ask for the best point of contact.

Not every email that you send will get a response, but that doesn’t mean it has not been forwarded to their network. Depending upon the level of leadership, a follow-up email may be necessary to ensure that the message was received and did not get deleted by accident or sent to their junk mailbox.
Setting Outreach Goals

Defining your organization’s goals for outreach and the steps needed to accomplish them will help keep everyone involved on task. Goals shouldn’t be focused just on new partnerships; they should include improving current partnerships as well. As you create the steps for accomplishing each goal, make sure to consider all parties that will need to be involved and what will be needed from each one. Use the following questions and prompts to develop your outreach goals.

- Which current referral partnerships could be improved and maximized?
- Ideally, what would your organization’s service array consist of?
  - Which service areas are lacking?
  - Where could additional options for service providers be added?
- What additional services could improve outcomes for your system-impacted individuals?
- What is needed to establish and maintain regular communication between partners?
- What policies and agreements need to be in place for your plan to succeed?
- Is your leadership aware of the outreach activities you want to engage in? What role will they need to play in the outreach process?
- Will outreach and potential new partnerships be sustainable within your current staffing structure? If not, what do you need to make these efforts sustainable?

Strategy Metrics

- Describe how you will measure the effectiveness of your outreach efforts.
- Which measures are primary and secondary?
- How will these metrics influence the plan revisions?
- What are some qualitative measures to focus on that can be collected through observation, interviews, focus groups, or other anecdotal means (e.g., the direct impact of services on individuals or changes in life outcomes)?
- How often will your team meet to discuss progress and revise the outreach strategies?
- How will desistence be measured? How will that data be collected, and what will be done with it?

Short-Term Steps

- Which staff members will be conducting outreach?
- How much time will they dedicate to outreach each week/month?
- Define specific steps you plan on taking within the next six months.
- Define what success will look like after you’ve completed these initial steps.
- What next steps would need to be taken to exceed or maintain this level of success?
**LONG-TERM STEPS**

- What systems can be put in place to ensure continued outreach efforts?
- What referral partnerships need to be maintained? Make a list of these contacts and keep them up to date.
- What new referral partnerships need to be made? How often will this list be revisited/updated?
- How do you plan to maintain relationships with partnering organizations despite staff turnover? What would need to happen for new staff to learn about the new service array during their training?

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- How will your program measure the effectiveness of your outreach efforts?
- How often will your team meet to discuss progress and revise the outreach strategies?
- How will you know when you have reached your goal?
- Determine what processes need to be in place to ensure continued outreach efforts.
- Develop a continuous quality improvement (CQI) plan.
The following table includes suggested tasks for an organization to consider as it begins its outreach campaign. As you go through the list, it is good practice to regularly review and refine your outreach efforts through CQI. You can do this by noting things that didn’t work or took longer than expected, and brainstorm ways to improve the process.

For your outreach efforts to be effective, it is best to assign tasks to each team member, set deadlines for completion, and meet regularly to discuss everyone’s progress. It is also important to consider your referral process and the time it takes for individuals to receive services. Being able to improve or streamline any part of the referral and/or outreach process can make a big difference in the success and sustainability of your outreach efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Assigned Staff</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>CQI Needed?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write out the process for individuals seeking services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider areas that can be streamlined or shortened</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct program analysis to determine outreach capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine target audience and program outreach goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create draft outreach letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Assigned Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share draft outreach letter with team members to get feedback and edit it as needed</td>
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<td>Finalize outreach letter and save template in a shared folder</td>
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<td>Research potential referral partners within service area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send outreach email with program information to potential partner organizations</td>
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</table>
REFERENCES


APPENDIX: SIMPLE OUTREACH MESSAGE TEMPLATE

Hello [Insert Name],

I hope this email finds you safe and well. My name is [Insert your name], the [Insert job title] for [Insert organization name]. We [Insert concise description of services your organization provides] for [Insert population you all serve]. We have recognized that there is a growing need for services and support for system-impacted individuals in our area, and we would like to partner with you all to build a resource network.

If you are interested in learning more about [Insert program/organization name], please feel free to contact me for more information or to schedule a virtual meeting with your team. I can be reached by email or you can give me a call at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, so we can schedule a day/time that works best for you.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please feel free to forward this message to your network. I look forward to hearing from you soon as we work to ensure that every person receives the services and supports they need.

Thank you,

[Insert signature]