Interview guide and topics for discussions with program and partner administrators and staff

Pathway Home Grant Program Evaluation

April 2022

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROGRAM AND PARTNER ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF

This guide is the source of topics for semistructured interviews with three types of respondents: (1) Pathway Home grant program administrators, (2) correctional facility and other partner administrators, and (3) Pathway Home frontline staff. Not every topic will be asked of each respondent; tailored protocols with appropriate subsets of questions will be developed for each respondent type.

Part I. Introduction (5 minutes)

My name is _____, and this is my colleague _____ and we are from Mathematica/Social Policy Research Associates/Council of State Governments Justice Center. We are part of an independent research team contracted by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to study the implementation of the Pathway Home grant program. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this conversation. Your participation is very important to the study.

To help us better understand how your program is working, we would like to ask you some questions about your experiences delivering the program. Our team will use your responses in conjunction with other data sources to identify themes to describe the overall experience of implementing the program. Your name will never be mentioned in a report, though we might use quotes from your interview to illustrate findings without using your name. If we choose to quote you, you will only be identified by your title. While it is possible that you might be identified by your title, we will do our best to minimize the chance of that occurring.

My colleague and I will be taking notes in order to document what we hear during our discussion, and we would like to record this discussion. The audio recording of the discussion is just to help us remember what you say in your own words and will not be shared with anyone outside our research team. Are you okay with us recording the interview to improve the accuracy of our notes?

We have about [60/90 minutes] for our discussion. Do you have any questions before we begin recording? Ok, we're going to turn on the audio recorder now.

Interview guide topic areas

- Role in the grant program and other organization roles

- Length of involvement with the organization and with the program

- Training/educational background and prior experience related to duties on Pathway Home program

- General training and educational background

B. Local Context

- Types of jobs available to individuals after their release from incarceration

- Employer support toward hiring individuals with justice involvement

- Employment skill gaps for population (e.g., basic literacy and numeracy, vocational or technical skills, credentials, etc.)

- Barriers and perceptions to avoiding recidivism (e.g., mental health or substance abuse problems, unstable housing, lack of family support, neighborhood crime context, etc.)

- Availability of other reentry services in the community

C. Organization Background

- Pathway Home program alignment to the mission of respondent organization

- Support for program within respondent organization

- Organization's prior experience serving justice-involved individuals before and/or after release

D. Grant and Program Planning

- Decision to apply for grant

- Selection of correctional facility partners

- Correctional facility partner involvement in grant planning and writing

- Process for rolling out the program after the grant was awarded

- Modifications to the grant since it was awarded

- (For intermediaries) Changes in the number or composition of subgrantees

- Challenges during planning that affected implementation

- Impact of COVID on planning

E. Intermediary information

- Key criteria for selecting subgrantees

- Division of Pathway Home responsibilities across subgrantees

- Extent to which subgrantees implement a uniform service model

- Guidance and support provided to subgrantees

- Communication of information to subgrantees

- Data and reporting responsibilities across subgrantees

- Performance measurement across subgrantees
- Successes in coordinating across subgrantees
- Challenges coordinating across subgrantees

F. Pathway Home Operations within the Correctional Facilities

- Correctional facility partner involvement in planning
- Alignment of correctional facility culture with vision of program
- Operational and logistical issues faced when implementing Pathway Home program (e.g., access to internet, security access for program staff, changes in protocols for jail staff, etc.)
- Grantee perspective of program implementation within correctional facility
- Challenges and successes of integrating the program within correctional facility

G. Partnerships

- Main partner organizations that are involved in the program (e.g., partners in corrections/law enforcement, housing, public assistance, etc.)
- Selection of partners
- Previous experience working with partners
- Coordination and colocation between grantee and partner staff
- Shared decision making for the program and approach to coordinating the program among the various partner agencies
- Factors that support collaboration with partners
- Sharing of participant information and other data across partners
- Type of contract, subgrant, or memorandum of understanding in place with each of the Pathway Home partners
- Monitoring partner implementation of the program (use of quality/fidelity measures, use of protocols for processes)
- Changes in partnerships
- Challenges working with partners

H. Relationship with Employers

- Main employers involved in Pathway Home
- Establishing employer relationships
- Representation of employer interests during planning stage
- Employer involvement in the provision of services through Pathway Home
- Encouraging employers to hire people returning from incarceration

- Whether employer partners have hired Pathway Home participants

- Challenges and successes in getting employers to participate in the program

I. Administrative Structure and Staffing

- Overall structure of oversight and staffing for the program

- Primary staff roles and responsibilities

- Facility partner involvement in hiring Pathway Home staff

- Staff turnover

- Staffing challenges related to COVID

- Management of day-to-day program operations

- Program staff training and professional development

- Facility staff training and professional development

- Whether case managers work with both Pathway Home and non-Pathway Home participants

- Whether case managers have both pre-release and post-release Pathway Home caseloads

J. Participant Recruitment and Enrollment

- Outreach strategies

- Enrollment and intake process

- Eligibility criteria

- Focal population for Pathway Home services

- Incentives for enrollment

- Cohort vs. rolling enrollment

- Challenges related to recruiting participants

- Number of people who express interest but do not participate in Pathway Home

- Influence of COVID on recruitment and enrollment

K. Pre-release Services and Participant Access

- Implementation of pre-release program services

- Where and how pre-release services are delivered

- Supports provided by facility partners to deliver pre-release services

- Usability/functionality of the facility space use for program services

- Availability of internet access

- Special accommodations for the program or for staff

- Challenges with the logistics of participant access to the pre-release program services (including COVID-related)

L. Pre-release Services: Case Management

- Use of an individual development plan, or IDP, for each participant

- Use of interest or skill assessments to determine the types of services that should be offered to a participant

- Typical caseload for case managers

- Average length of time participants receive case management

- Whether caseload is solely program participants

- Typical case management topics

- Frequency of case management sessions with participants pre-release

M. Pre-release Services: Employment and Support Services

- Typical sequence of services for participants while incarcerated and whether certain services are required as a condition of PH eligibility

- How long participants are active in the program before they are released

- Involvement in supporting employment training within the facility

- Types of employment services offered

- Whether employment services are specific to a particular industry

- Whether services provided result in a credential or certificate and anticipated completion rate

- Types of support services offered

- Non-Pathway Home services within the facility that participants can receive (e.g., mental health, substance abuse treatment or groups, cognitive therapy, other pre-release services.)

- Challenges providing employment and supportive services to participants pre-release (including COVID-related)

N. Transition to Post-Release Services

- Description of the transition process

- Structure of "hand-off" of participants at the time of their release to the community-based program services

- Information shared by facility partners to support transition to post-release services

- Strategies used to ensure that participants come to the community-based program site

- Frequency and content of case management post-release

- Referrals to other community-based services to support reentry

- How often community resource lists are updated

- Other supports or wraparound services available (e.g., housing assistance, mental health treatment, parenting or relationship counseling, etc.)

- Tracking participant receipt of non-Pathway Home services

- Relationship with probation/parole providers

O. Post-Release: Employment and Support Services

- Typical sequence of services for participants and duration of each phase

- Customization of services

- Types of job-related services offered

- Whether employment services are specific to a particular industry

- Types of post-release supportive services offered

- Challenges with providing post-release services to participants (including COVID-related)

P. Participant Outcomes

- How grantees track employment and recidivism outcomes

- Follow up services and maintaining contact with participants

- Participants' ability to find jobs

- Whether participants who find work are able to stay employed

- Whether participants have returned to incarceration after being released

Q. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

- Changes made to how the program is delivered based on participant participation and outcomes

- Component of Pathway Home with biggest impact

- Biggest successes and challenges in starting up and carrying out the program

- Other challenges affecting whether program participants are able to achieve positive employment and recidivism outcomes

- Program improvements to better serve this population

R. Sustainability

- Interest in continuing Pathway Home program beyond the grant period

- Factors for determining whether the program will be sustained beyond the end of the grant

- Obstacles to sustainability

- Potential sources of funding identified to support program

- Program components respondent would like to sustain

- Key program elements for successful program