



Doors to Wellbeing Quarterly

Newsletter

HOLDING HOPE

By: Dennis and Lee Horton

It's hard to explain how it feels to be taken to prison in handcuffs and shackles or the sound prison doors make as they close behind you. To say it is traumatizing is an understatement. Every person experiences their own unique set of feelings but most if not all, in the beginning, feel some version of trapped, alone, and vulnerable. Your mind races in twenty different directions and every sense in your body is on high alert. For many, this will follow them for years, and for the rest whose lives were unmanageable or who are unwell but did not know they were unwell before prison, it will only get worse making prison life very difficult to navigate. Confrontations, fights, depression, breakdowns, anxiety attacks, and ultimately solitary confinement is what is in store.



This is why we believe that the Certified Peer Support Specialist (CPS) and the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Programs are probably the best things that could be offered to people in prison. We know this first hand because we were them and Peer Support and WRAP was our saving grace. Our names are Lee and Dennis Horton and we served twenty-eight years of a Life without parole sentence for a murder we did not commit. It was a nightmare and navigating prison life was the hardest thing we had to overcome. Mental issues were magnified and getting through each day was a challenge. It felt like our lives were out of control and at any minute was going to fly apart. This went on for years until we became Certified Peer Support Specialist and later WRAP facilitators.



When the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections established CPS and WRAP programs for inmates they had a profound effect on the culture of the PA DOC, helping to transform the lives of the men around us as it was transforming ours. Violence, individuals in solitary confinement, staff/inmate confrontations, etc., decreased and the mood of the institution changed for the better. Men and women who had gotten lost in the system now had a compass to find their way out and tools to deal with those feelings of being trapped, alone and vulnerable. CPS held the hope for those who couldn't hold it for themselves and WRAP gave many who had given up a way forward to finding a path to a better future.

In the end, Peer Support in prison helped us to find our way through the quagmire of the prison system to freedom. In February of 2021 we won our release and now live as free men in society. We offer Peer Support to whoever needs it and have become Advanced Level, WRAP Facilitators conducting WRAP seminars in communities to inspire change.

ANNOUNCING THE NEW JUSTICE-INVOLVED PEER SUPPORT COUNCIL

Council Mission:

NJIPSC mission is to provide national support and networking to advance the benefits, values, and diverse access of peer-supported, peer-operated, and peer-led initiatives for justice-involved individuals/returning citizens.

Council Description:

This group is organized and facilitated to build a National Networking and Mutual Learning Council focused on Peer Support that is provided within jails, prisons, and post-incarceration by networking and inclusion of diverse peer-supporters who are working on, developing, and supervising peer-led approaches for returning citizens and those incarcerated across the nation.

Peer Specialists currently operating, seeking to work on, looking to develop, or simply curious to learn more about forensic peer support services, training or employment are encouraged to join NJIPSC online groups. Each session will focus on working in wellness, networking support, current events in peer run services, and addressing system priorities as defined by the group members.

The group meets online every two weeks with the support of Doors to Wellbeing, a SAMHSA funded National Consumer Technical Assistance Center of the Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery.

[Click here to apply](#)

WASHINGTON LISTENS SUPPORTLINE: A PACIFIC NORTHWEST RESPONSE TO COVID

By Laurel Lemke



Washington Listens (WA Listens) is a time limited Washington Healthcare Authority project funded by a Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The program goals are:

- **Support Washington through the COVID-19 outbreak**
- **Build resilience in Washington to improve recovery from the disaster**
- **Be there for those who need support**

The support line, which opened June 2020, is the backbone of the program. Phone support specialists represent teams from several partner organizations and tribes statewide. Crisis Connections is the contractor facilitating the phone line: offering technical knowledge, equipment and dedicated staff. Crisis Connections oversees several other phone line programs (including a Warmline) that serve the emotional and physical needs of individuals in Washington State.

Phone operators were initially prepared for their roles through online training provided by FEMA Crisis Counseling and Assistance Training. The COVID disaster prompted different operating approaches. Instead of responder pairs going into the community to contact persons impacted by a disaster, WA Listens outreach was conducted through public service announcements, emails, attending online meetings and leaving cards at businesses. A Facebook page was created to share information, encouragement and resources. Operators answer phone calls from 9 to 9 weekdays and from 9 to 6 on weekends. Most callers want to be heard and to have conversations, operators may share resources and have the capacity to transfer persons experiencing crises to the Crisis Line.

The WA Listens program was designed to support persons who feel sad, anxious, or stressed due to the events related to the COVID outbreak. The program has also served persons impacted by wildfires, floods, weather extremes and other stressful occurrences. Initially funded for a year, the program has been granted an unprecedented three extensions as the impact of COVID continues. At the time of writing the program has submitted a fourth program extension through June 2022.

INTERESTED IN FAMILY LEISURE?

Participate in our research study!

We are looking for participants who are an:

1. adult parent between the ages of 18 and 65
2. with a diagnosis of a schizophrenia-spectrum disorder, bipolar disorder or depression;
3. have a child who is between 7-15 years old and is interested in participating in family leisure with you;
4. have legal visitation rights, joint custody or full custody of your child, with at least weekly contact and;
5. have a desire to engage in more leisure activities with your child.

**You may be compensated up to
\$60 in gift cards for your time**



**If interested contact us at:
TUCollab@temple.edu**

Peer Specialist Webinar Series

**Join us for our
monthly webinars -
last Tuesday of
each month!**

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our webinars**



**DOORS TO
WELLBEING**

*Doors to To Wellbeing is a Program of
the Copeland Center*

**LOOK FORWARD
TO OUR NEXT
NEWSLETTER!
...JULY 2022**



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