

# HARM REDUCTION AT THE CENTER OF INCARCERATION

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REIMAGINE JUSTICE

Everyone within a correctional facility—both the people confined there and the staff—is exposed to trauma at a significantly higher rate than the general population. In this sense, the institution itself is traumatic. And because of the connective tissue that exists among all of us, the effect of this inherently traumatic system spreads beyond the walls of an institution and into families and communities.

Structural and procedural transformation of correctional facilities is imperative to promoting harm reduction at large. Chicago Beyond created the STAAC framework to guide necessary shifts in correctional system policy, procedure, and training to support the health of the people

confined in the facility and their families, correctional staff and their families, and the broader community.

## STAAC IN ACTION

More than 5 million children in the U.S. have experienced parental separation as a result of incarceration (Peterson, Cramer, and Fontaine 2019). Recognizing the trauma that results from this separation, Chicago Beyond partnered with the Cook County Sheriff's Office and a local children's museum to pilot family-friendly visitation using the STAAC framework, demonstrating that harm reduction can occur within correctional institutions.

## THE STAAC FRAMEWORK TO PROMOTE HARM REDUCTION IN CORRECTIONS

**Safety:** The people who are confined, staff, families and the community feel physically and psychologically safe and are held accountable when they cause harm. Interpersonal interactions, programs, resources, signage, procedures, and more all promote a sense of safety.

**Transparency and Trust-building:** The people who are confined, staff, families and the community must be made aware of policy, institutional operations and data points to build trust and collaboration between these groups. To effectively reduce harms that occur in correctional institutions, they must be continuously monitored by the community.

**Agency:** The people who are confined, staff, families and the community have the tools and resources to support their own healing and support the healing of their peers. Although correctional institutions historically inhibit agency among people who are confined and their families, the centralization of harm reduction requires these institutions to actively increase the ability of these two groups to act in their own best interest towards healing.

**Asset-based Approach:** The facility administrators and policy makers believe in the strengths of the people who are confined, staff, families and communities and build upon

these strengths to promote voice, build resilience, and influence harm reduction through language, programs, policies, procedures and training. These groups also believe in the strengths of each other and build upon those strengths.

**Connectedness:** Positive interpersonal interactions are essential to harm reduction. The facility actively promotes positive interpersonal connectivity and seeks to minimize power dynamics within and across the people who are confined, staff, families and communities to reflect the collective responsibility of harm reduction.



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