

NEWSLETTER

Q&A

with Laura Taylor,
Owner, Community
Connect



Q&A with Laura Taylor, Owner, Community Connect

Laura Taylor is the founder of Community Connect, a platform that accelerates service linkage for individuals transitioning from incarceration to community life.

You had over a decade of experience in corrections before starting a referral platform to improve service linkage for people who are incarcerated. How has your corrections background informed the development of the referral platform and the overall mission of your business, Community Connect?

I worked as a casework manager at Branchville Correctional Facility from 2010 to 2014, then started working privately in community reentry until I began developing the Community Connect platform and opening my own company.

When I was employed in reentry in correctional settings, I believed that the reentry process was working as well as it could for the technology that existed at the time. But I kept seeing the same folks returning to incarceration again and again. I learned that this

was typically the result of them not knowing where to go for help once they were released or how to navigate the social and human services system. This was especially true for people who had been incarcerated for a long time and who weren't familiar with changing technology, like filling out an online form versus making a phone call. From the inside, I saw a gap between organizations that wanted to help and their ability to get inside the facility to reach the people who needed them.

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Hushabye Nursery: Healing for Babies with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome and their Families

The rate of opioid use among women in state prisons and jails is estimated at 20 percent. A 2019 study examining admissions of pregnant adults of 13 state prisons found that in July of 2016, 3.9 percent (65 of 1,646) of the women admitted were pregnant, and a similar rate was observed in December of the same year. Recent years have shown an increase in the incarceration rate among women, as indicated by the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 2021 Jail Inmate Statistical Tables, which reported a 22 percent increase from 2020 to 2021. These rising numbers may contribute to a concerning consequence: babies born with opioid withdrawal symptoms to a parent involved with the criminal justice system.

[Read More](#)

SAMHSA's GAINS Center Works to Develop Guidance for Treatment Courts Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach

Being trauma informed means understanding that past experiences can profoundly affect individuals' functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Trauma-informed systems recognize the impact of trauma and respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices. After learning about trauma-informed practices, courts have requested additional guidance on implementing these practices in treatment court settings. In 2023, SAMHSA's GAINS Center engaged in a three-part process to develop and update existing guidance for trauma-informed treatment courts.



SAMHSA's GAINS Center Invites Communities to Apply for Two Opportunities: Developing Trauma-Informed Training Capacity and Sequential Intercept Model Mapping Workshops

SAMHSA's GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation, operated by Policy Research Associates, Inc. (PRA), known nationally for its work regarding people with behavioral health needs involved in the criminal justice system, is soliciting applications from communities interested in two opportunities:

- **Train-the-Trainer (TTT) events** to teach local trainers to deliver its *How Being Trauma-Informed Improves Criminal Justice System Responses* curriculum
- **Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping Workshops**, both traditional workshops and workshops focusing on opioid and other substance use are available

Click the following buttons for the full details and to apply for either opportunity, or keep reading below to learn more.

[Access the Full Details and Apply for the Trauma TTT](#)

[Access the Full Details and Apply for the SIM Mapping Workshops](#)

Developing Trauma-Informed Training Capacity through TTT Events

Applications due November 17, 2023

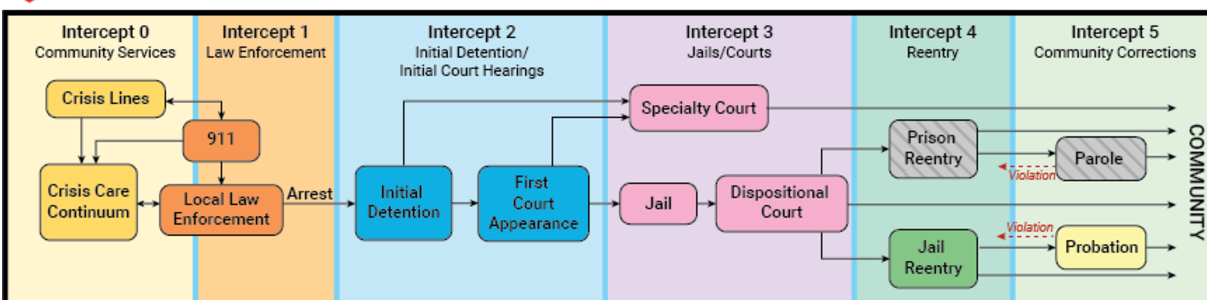
The GAINS Center is offering a series of TTT events to teach local trainers to deliver its *How Being Trauma-Informed Improves Criminal Justice System Responses* curriculum. The target audiences for this training are community-based **adult** criminal justice system professionals, including reentry staff, drug court personnel, community corrections officers (probation, parole, and pretrial services), law enforcement officers (including local Crisis Intervention Team trainers), and mental health and substance use disorder treatment service providers and peers who work with justice-involved **adult** populations. While not required, priority will be given to sites that have not previously completed the training, and whose prospective participants include those working in drug courts or as

staff in a reentry program. Preference will be given to applicants that serve marginalized and/or underserved populations.

SIM Mapping Workshops

Applications due November 21, 2023

SIM Mapping Workshops are designed to bring together a local, cross-system, multidisciplinary group from a particular jurisdiction (typically a county) to facilitate collaboration and to identify and discuss ways in which barriers between the criminal justice and behavioral health systems can be reduced through the development of integrated local strategic action plans. SIM Mapping Workshop participants are expected to be drawn, in large part, from local criminal justice and behavioral health agencies and organizations.



Abreu, D., Parker, T. W., Noether, C. D., Steadman, H. J., & Case, B. (2017). Revising the paradigm for jail diversion for people with mental and substance use disorders: Intercept 0. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 35(5-6), 380-395. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2300>
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Option 1: Traditional SIM Mapping Workshops

The GAINS Center is soliciting applications from communities interested in "traditional" SIM Mapping Workshops that focus broadly on identifying and responding to the needs of adults with mental and substance use disorders who are involved or at risk for involvement in the criminal justice system.

Option 2: SIM Mapping Workshops to Develop Comprehensive, Community-Wide Strategic Plans for Addressing Opioid and Other Substance Use

The GAINS Center is also soliciting applications from communities that are particularly interested in developing comprehensive, community-wide strategic plans for addressing opioid and other substance use and better identifying and responding to the needs of adults with substance use disorders who are involved or at risk for involvement in the criminal justice system.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance's Crisis Response and Intervention Training (CRIT)

Curriculum: Free Training Resources for Law Enforcement [Webinar]

November 2, 2023, 2:00-3:30 p.m. ET

For law enforcement officers, responding to situations involving individuals with behavioral health conditions (including mental health and substance use) and developmental disabilities in a safe, effective manner can present significant challenges.

Responding to demands for accessible, standardized, and high-quality training, CRIT was developed by the [Academic Training Initiative to Inform Police Responses](#), with the support of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA).

CRIT is a 40-hour training curriculum designed to support law enforcement officers in their responses to individuals experiencing crises in their community.

Hosted by BJA's Academic Training Initiative, this webinar will provide an overview of the CRIT curriculum and its development, describe the resources available to agencies through the online [CRIT Toolkit](#), and discuss the implementation of CRIT in the field. We will also describe opportunities for agencies seeking support (i.e., funding, technical assistance) in the delivery of CRIT.

[Register and Learn More about the CRIT Curriculum](#)

Flashback on Mental Health Courts



[Is Diversion Swift?: Comparing Mental Health Court and Traditional Criminal Justice Processing](#) | June 2012



[A Multi-Site Study of the Use of Sanctions and Incentives in Mental Health Courts](#) | June 2012



[Q&A with Judge Rhathelia Stroud](#) | December 2020

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5600 Fishers Ln | Rockville, MD | 20857 US

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