

National Institute of Corrections Virtual Conference 2016 Transcript for Interview with Mane Martirosyan and Kayla Brady

Announcer: This is the podcast of the National Institute of Corrections Virtual Conference. Please join us November 9, 2016 for our third annual conference titled *Leading with Innovation*, where you will receive a full day of presentations, innovative chats, and networking all brought to you by NIC. Visit us at www.nicic.gov/go/VC2016 to register.

And now... here's a sneak peek!

National Institute of Corrections: I want to begin by reading the summary that I have here of your presentation. So, this workshop, based on discharge planning, will inform employees of correctional settings and surrounding community partners about the importance of preventing recidivism by networking and coordinating care with one another.

Research shows that continuums of care between such networks can reduce risks of homelessness, illicit drug use, and recidivism. All while improving mental health status. Providing such services to assist individuals tangled in the criminal justice system can promote success upon release from incarceration. This presentation will introduce the concept of a successful discharge planning program that breaks connections between an inmate and the jail while establishing connections between the person and the community to reduced recidivist outcomes.

I think the best way to begin this interview is actually for you to begin talking about your backgrounds. So, we'll just alternate. Let's first start with Mane' and then we'll go on to Kayla. So Mane', can you begin, please, by telling us about your background and how you became involved in this project?

Mane Martirosyan: Yes, sure. So, I started my employment with

Louisville Metro Corrections in 2003. So this December will mark my 13th year with corrections. I started in different civilian positions, working in records, classification, identification labs.

In 2013, I graduated from the University of Louisville with my master's in social work. A year after that, our social worker decided to move on from the position in jail. So it became available and I applied and got promoted to the position. So since 2015 March, I have been the senior social worker of Metro Corrections.

Historically, we've been running reentry programs in jail so having a dorm of 30 men who are getting ready to get released. So, the social worker would do life skills with them, kind of job search, maybe resume building, things like that to prepare them to get released from jail.

However, when I got into this position, our Director Mark Bolton had just visited Chicago Cook County Jail. And he had seen the discharge planning that they were doing in their jail, which is pretty big, way bigger than our jail, of course. So when he returned from Chicago, he decided that we would need discharge planning as well. Because we have our "familiar faces," we used to call them frequent flyers, who are coming in and out. Since then, I became the discharge planner of Metro Corrections.

NIC: So, what exactly do you do as the discharge planner?

Martirosyan: So, with Director Bolton, we started the Familiar Faces Action and Community Transition Program last year. And it kind of went into full effect in June and July of 2015. What we do is we take referrals everywhere, from inmates, from their case workers, from the court system, judges, the public defenders, prosecutors. And those are inmates who have the basic needs that have not been met.

And we help them find a shelter bed or treatment bed in the community. We help them with clothing, seasonally appropriate clothing because we started a clothing bank. We help transfer them straight from jail as a warm handoff to the community bed that we find for them. We release them with close to 30-day supply of their medications. If they don't have an ID, we help them get their state ID. So, we pretty much have all these networking and communicating with the community agencies. And telling them what's going on in jail and what we need their help with. And the majority of those agencies have been pretty helpful. Because of that networking and communication, we've been able to establish our FFACT

Program to be pretty successful up to this stage.

NIC: All right, and Kayla, can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you became involved?

Brady: I jumped on board with Corrections here in Louisville in February of this year. Prior to that, I worked for about a year and a half in an opioid treatment program as a substance abuse counselor. So my head was already in the game. So work with individual with substance abuse issues at this job seemed ideal. Because I have an undergrad in criminal justice and then the master's in social work. So it just felt right to step in this kind of role and help people that need their basic needs met while being able to get them in treatment or give them clothes, medicines, and such. But still having a little bit of knowledge in the back of my mind of what people are actually going through on a day-to-day basis when they're facing withdrawals or triggers, and lack of coping skills, and stuff like that.

I graduated with my master's in 2014, so it's all still pretty new to me, too.

NIC: And what were you doing prior to...I'm sorry, prior to 2016? Were you just...so you graduated?

Brady: I have been in the medication-assisted treatment program.

NIC: Okay.

Brady: It's not with Corrections. It's like a local private clinic here in Louisville, Kentucky, that provides medicated-assisted treatment with methadone and Suboxone to heroin and opium addicts.

NIC: Is that a chronic problem in Kentucky that you're finding right now?

Brady: Oh, yes, ma'am.

NIC: Okay. So, Kayla and Mane', you're both now working for the Department of Corrections. How do you work together to bring this Familiar Faces Action Community Transition Program together?

Martirosyan: So, once Kayla jumped on board, as she said, in February, the idea was that for the first time ever, we got a second social worker at the jail. For the two of us to be able to help more

people, of course. So when Kayla jumped in to help us out, I trained her to be able to take on the FFACT Program because we had some other programs in mind that we needed to start.

So now, Kayla is fully engaged with the FFACT Program and she takes the referrals and does all the work with it. I mean we still work hand in hand but I've moved on and started our PAACT Program, which stands for Pathway Advocacy and Alliances for Community Treatment. Pretty much more with substance abuse and medication-assisted treatment, along with some other grants and funding that we have received for other programs.

So we refer people to each other still. We cover for each other in each other's absence and our work is pretty close to each other. We have the same contacts. We share networking opportunities. We get to meet the same providers, work very closely.

NIC: And so what you have in the facility where you have more than one social worker, this is actually something that's not the norm. Is that correct? I mean is it usually...

Martirosyan: That's correct, yeah.

NIC: Yes. So this is...

Martirosyan: Sorry. We have historically only had one senior social worker for the entire Corrections and we normally have close to 2000 inmates. So for us to have two senior social workers is pretty great. Our Director, Michael Bolton is very treatment oriented. Feel like that's the key to get the recidivism down since we're always overcrowded. So that's what brought us to hiring a second social worker in order to help more people to stay out of jail.

NIC: And so this FFACT Program, so for the director to be supportive of bringing on more staff to, you know, help facilitate that program, you must be seeing some good outcomes from this?

Martirosyan: Yes, absolutely. Last time when we ran our numbers was a few months ago, however, we had 64% success rate. Meaning that 64% of the individuals that we had helped to get connected in a community had not returned to jail. And those are individuals who we call "familiar faces." Meaning that they are always in and out, just cycling in and out. So for them to stay away from jail for a long period of time is

something very new. And that's the success that we've been looking for.

NIC: Wonderful. So now, we're at this point where you have a program, you're finding success. Is this something that you think can be spread throughout your entire state or is this something that's just in your facility that you have now?

Martirosyan: We have it in our facility, however, we have so many requests for us to share what the program is about. Because we do like talking about the program and its success everywhere we go. Director Bolton goes to many meetings with other jail directors nationally. So we get a lot of inquiries about the program. So I think not only just state-wide but nationwide, the program is getting a lot of kind of popularity. Because a lot of the other jails are seeing the same issues, the same "familiar faces," cycling in and out. And if we don't do anything, the problem is just going to keep growing.

Brady: Now, I'm gonna jump in and say, you know, Kentucky, we've got a lot of smaller towns and smaller counties. So something like this would be really beneficial for them if their resources are available. So what we like to do here in Louisville, with our discharge planning program, is we can provide the transportation for the inmates upon release to these treatment beds. Whereas if they're in smaller counties, you know, they may need to have like a separate officer designated maybe just for transportation. Because they would more than likely have to take them out of town. Maybe to Louisville or to Lexington, Kentucky, or Elizabethtown are the three bigger cities that we have here.

So I think it's important to be able to teach surrounding counties in the state about the success of it. I think it will also be a challenge because Louisville has a lot of resources but I'm not sure about, you know, the little rural counties and such.

NIC: And that's actually a very good point that you make. Because a lot of programming that we see in the mid-sized to large jail may not always be applicable to the small jail. You know, they really struggle sometimes with trying to bring those programs that you see nationwide into their smaller community. That's an excellent point.

But the solution or, you know, the suggestion that you provide is also a very good one. And hopefully, you'll be able to talk a little bit more about that in your presentation. Like, you know, how maybe if there aren't enough resources in one jurisdiction, maybe there can be some

interstate agreements, where you're collaborating and sharing resources and things like that. So what other sorts of things can we expect from this presentation?

Martirosyan: There will be more kind of numbers and statistics on homelessness, mentally-ill inmates who due to lack of mental institutions are now coming to jails and prisons and are homeless on the streets. More detailed information on how to connect with local community agencies and make that networking happen. Make that kind of agreement happen that they're here for us and we're providing them with referrals and this is working. So more detail about the program.

NIC: Will it be something like a blueprint that people can walk away and say, "I can, you know, get started and start talking to my leadership about this right now?"

Martirosyan: Absolutely yes, absolutely.

NIC: Okay, great.

Martirosyan: Actually, it's a very basic kind of program, nothing very complicated. So everyone can hear and see how they can adapt it to their own community, how it would work. Maybe some aspects might not work and some others that didn't work for us might work for them. So, I think they can definitely take something away and build on it.

NIC: Okay. All right. So is there anything that I didn't ask you that you would like to add, or, you know, tell us about your program, or your presentation, or anything?

Martirosyan: I think I will just add that this is the most rewarding job that Kayla and I have had. Helping and seeing the kind of the shining eyes of the homeless men and women when you tell them what you can do for them, what the agency can do for them that nobody has done ever before. And just when they see the caring they haven't seen before, that kind of makes our jobs worthwhile. Even sometimes the frustrations and everything go away when we have our successful, warm handoffs. Especially with the more complicated cases.

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