

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW
VOICES FOR A SECOND CHANCE

DIRECT

SERVICES INFORM CHANGE



VOICES FOR A SECOND CHANCE
BRIDGING THE GAP: FROM INCARCERATION TO COMMUNITY

www.VSCDC.org

**VOICES FOR A
SECOND CHANCE**

The name of our organization, Voices for a Second Chance (VSC), reflects the underlying philosophy of the interventions we provide. Central to this philosophy is the elevation of the voices of those who have experienced the hardships and inequities that have often led them to become involved in the carceral system. They can frequently be found living on the fringes of opportunity. Without the support of community-based organizations like VSC, many would fulfill a narrative that has become a convenient excuse for the escalation of crime in the city. Unfortunately, that narrative increases the barriers against successful reintegration for many in the city.

678,972...

THOUSAND

... is the approximate number of residents living in Washington D.C. (excluding those who are homeless and/or reentering the city from incarceration).

Executive Office of the Mayor, 2023 Census Data Highlights July 1, 2023

10,924...

THOUSAND



...is the estimated number of men and women who cycle through the D.C. Jail system annually.

D.C. Department of Corrections Facts and Figures, Fiscal year 2023

ABOUT
10,000...

THOUSAND

**... men and women are under
community supervision (probation,
parole or supervised release).**

CSOSA FY 2024 Congressional Budget Justification (FY 2022 data)

ALMOST
1,000...

1/

000

THOUSAND

**... men and women returned to the
District of Columbia from the Federal
Bureau of Prisons in 2023.**

Federal Bureau of Prisons Statistics Inmate Release Numbers to D.C. 2023



**Over half of VSC's
population traditionally
come from Wards 7
and 8.**

**{ AS A CITY, we cannot afford
to ignore these numbers. }**

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Community Members:

As we reflect on the past year, it is important to acknowledge the significant challenges faced by individuals returning to our communities from incarceration. Upon release, many of these individuals return to neighborhoods marked by high unemployment rates, insufficient affordable housing, and strained resources. These conditions create formidable barriers to successful reintegration.

African American residents made up 87.80% of the 2023 D.C. Jail population (DOC 2024 facts and figures), while the D.C. population was 43.9% Black (Census Bureau 2023 data).

However, at Voices for a Second Chance (VSC), we are dedicated to helping these individuals realize their potential and supporting their journey towards becoming productive, tax-paying contributing citizens of this city. Our mission is to ensure that justice-involved individuals are not only included in the plans for the future design of Washington, D.C. neighborhoods but also become integral in strengthening these communities. We believe in fostering environments of opportunity and upward mobility for all families.



VSC'S MISSION: To ensure that justice involved and formerly incarcerated citizens can successfully reintegrate into their communities following incarceration.

Letter from the Executive Director cont.

The racial and gender inequity that dominates the national criminal legal system is exemplified by these numbers in our clientele. The need is great, but the resources are scarce. VSC is committed to changing this narrative and contributing to the success of these individuals as they reintegrate into the city.

In 2023, 92% of the VSC population were African American and 85% were male.

As you review our achievements in 2023, we hope you will join us in helping justice-involved men and women in D.C. become strong leaders in our communities and fulfill their potential. We do not believe they need to be defined by their history but rather by the promise of a future of opportunity and support. This report highlights the successful path that VSC staff undertake to walk with them as they embark on their journey towards stability. It is not an easy journey for them, however, at VSC we recognize the challenges and reinforce the rewards. We believe that by providing these much needed 'Direct Services We Will Inform the Change' needed to fortify their success.

Humbly With Hope and Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Paula Thompson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Paula Thompson
Executive Director



FOR MORE THAN fifty years, VSC has been a beacon of hope and light to those who have been touched by the criminal justice system...

Letter from the Board President

Dear Friends, Supporters and Those Who We Serve,

On behalf of the Voices for a Second Chance Board of Directors, I am proud to present the 2023 Annual Report. As you will see in the annual report, 2023 was a year of significant growth, activity, and accomplishments. Reflecting on the past year, we are reminded once again that these accomplishments require a great team of servant leaders. I would like to express our deep appreciation and tremendous pride in the whole VSC family. Their dedication, hard work, compassion, and creativity in serving those in our care is truly extraordinary, and I'm honored every day to work along-side them.

For more than fifty years, VSC has been a beacon of hope and light to those who have been touched by the criminal justice system and are seeking to rebuild their lives and families and return successfully to their communities. Our belief and commitment to those we serve is steadfast, but we recognize that our work and services must always evolve to meet the changing needs and realities of those in our care. As you will see in the experiences and perspectives shared in the following pages, VSC continued its extraordinary work in 2023.

I want to express my deep appreciation to all of our clients, staff, friends, supporters, and stakeholders for their collective contributions in 2023 and for joining all of us in believing in the futures of those we serve.

– Jeremy Wiley



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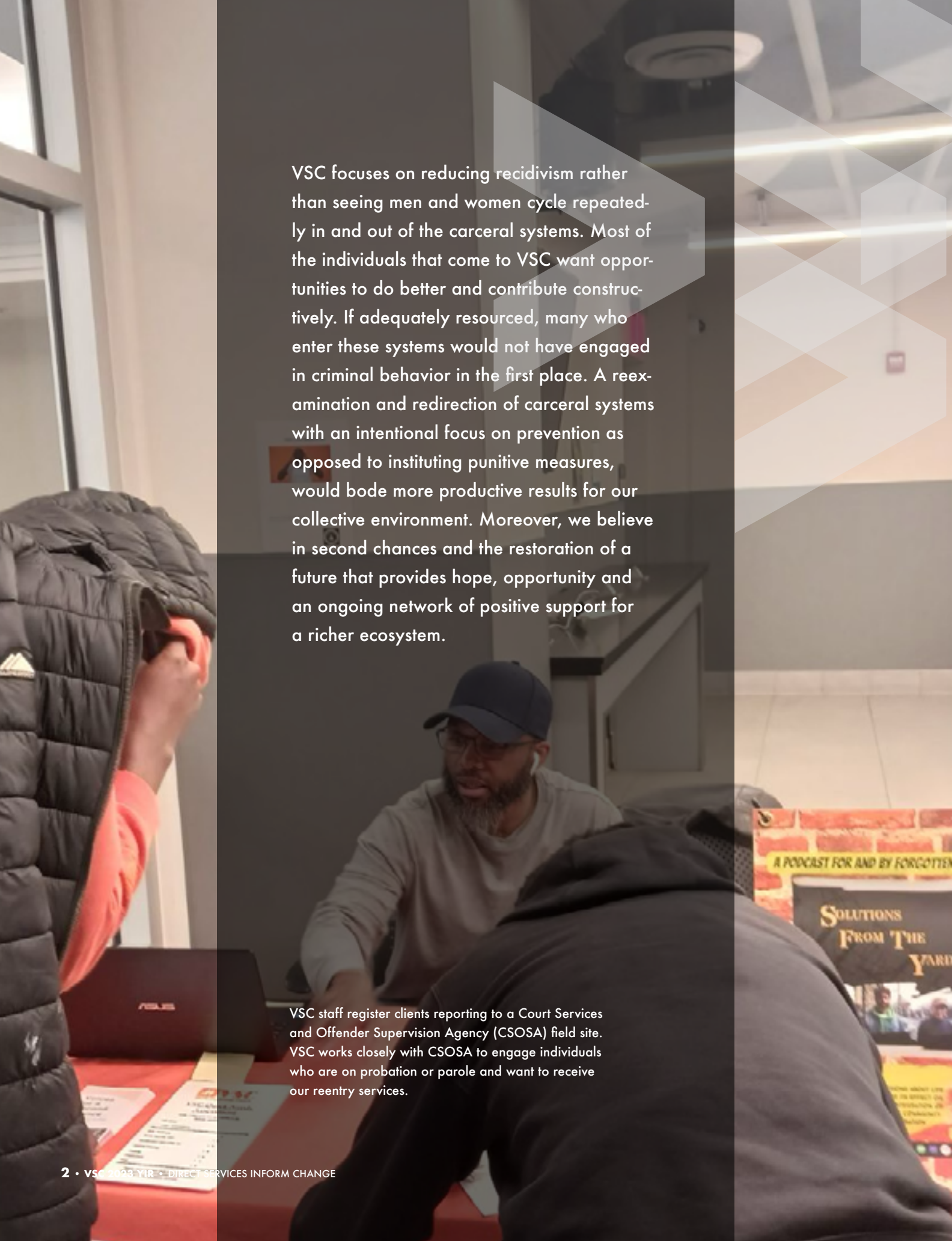
Table of Contents



a. (Facing Page) Group circle with clients.
b. New Terrain intake. **c.** VSC clients receive training and employment with D.C. Central Kitchen. **d.** VSC clients receiving Welcome Home Backpacks with dignity essentials.

DIRECT SERVICES INFORM CHANGE 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

i	Introduction
xi	Letter from the Executive Director
xv	Letter from the Board President
3	Reentry Services: The Big Six
4	2023 Service Needs
5	Goals
6	Values
7	How VSC Clients Shape Interventions (Demographics)
16	Phases of Intervention
24	VSC Team (Staff, Board Members & Executive Committee)
25	Partners



VSC focuses on reducing recidivism rather than seeing men and women cycle repeatedly in and out of the carceral systems. Most of the individuals that come to VSC want opportunities to do better and contribute constructively. If adequately resourced, many who enter these systems would not have engaged in criminal behavior in the first place. A reexamination and redirection of carceral systems with an intentional focus on prevention as opposed to instituting punitive measures, would bode more productive results for our collective environment. Moreover, we believe in second chances and the restoration of a future that provides hope, opportunity and an ongoing network of positive support for a richer ecosystem.

VSC staff register clients reporting to a Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) field site. VSC works closely with CSOSA to engage individuals who are on probation or parole and want to receive our reentry services.

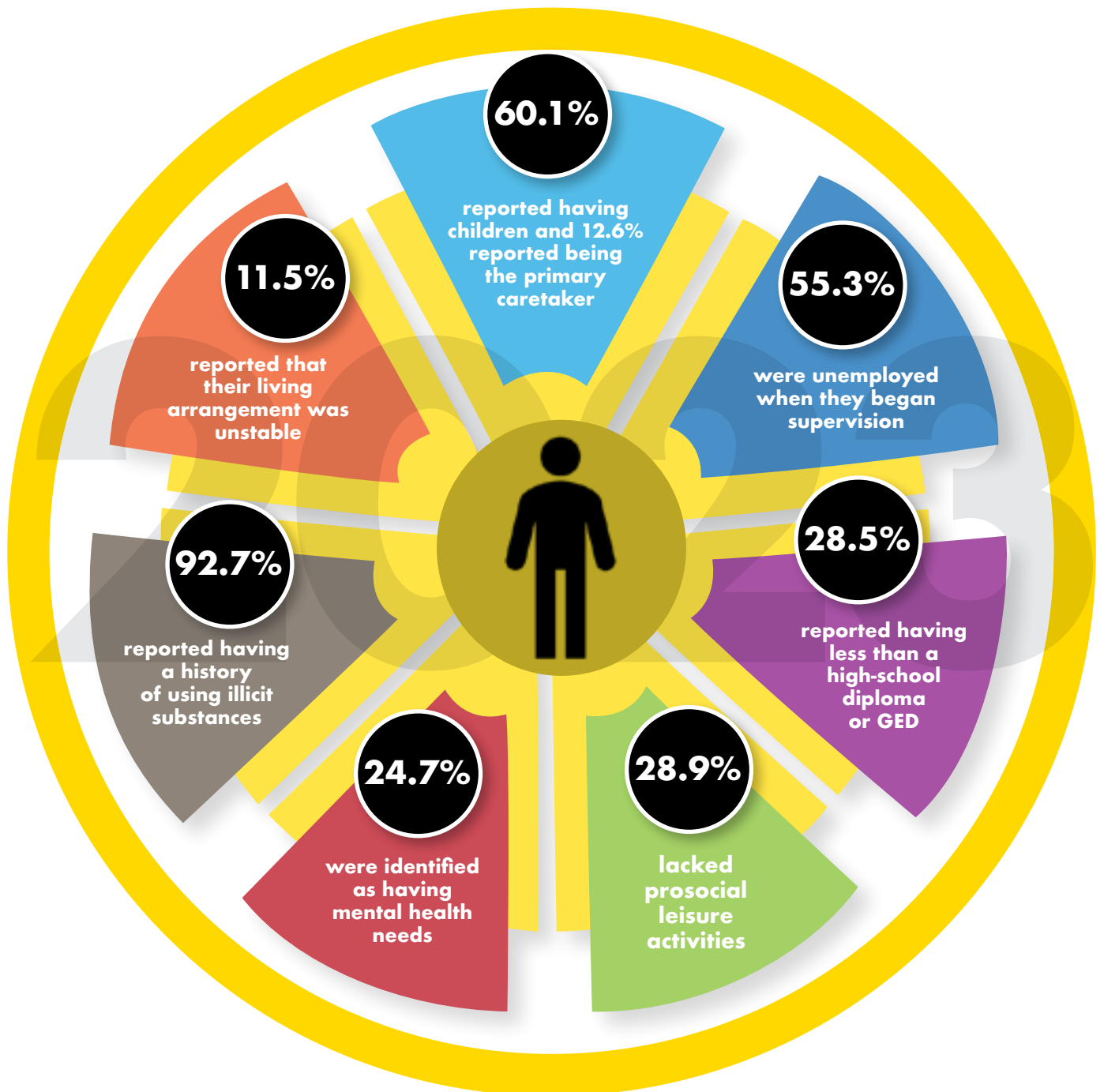
Reentry Services: **THE BIG SIX**



Individuals are assessed to determine what services would assist them in successfully completing their supervision. CSOSA's Community Supervision Population (CSP) data shows that the support services needs of individuals under supervision are substantial, and addressing those needs is essential to reducing recidivism.

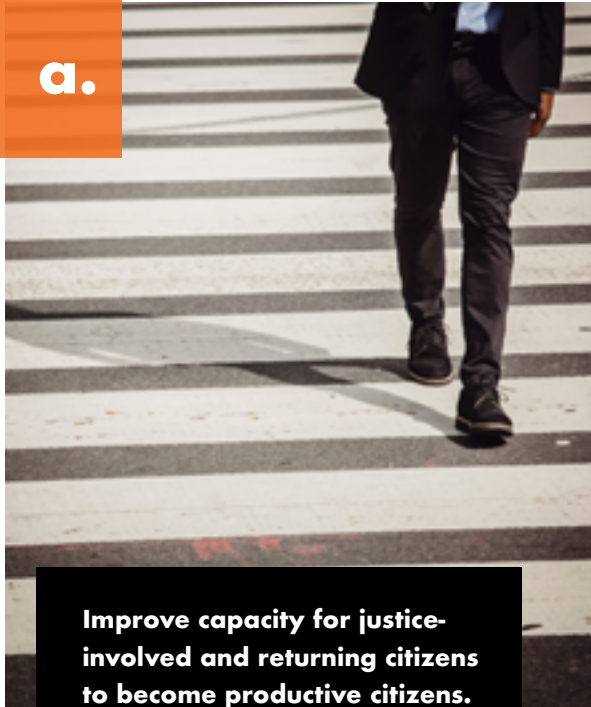
Service Needs

For Individuals Under Community Supervision in Washington, D.C.



Goals

a.



Improve capacity for justice-involved and returning citizens to become productive citizens.

b.



Transform returning citizens to become leading advocates of policies, practices and laws that prevent full access to citizenship.

c.

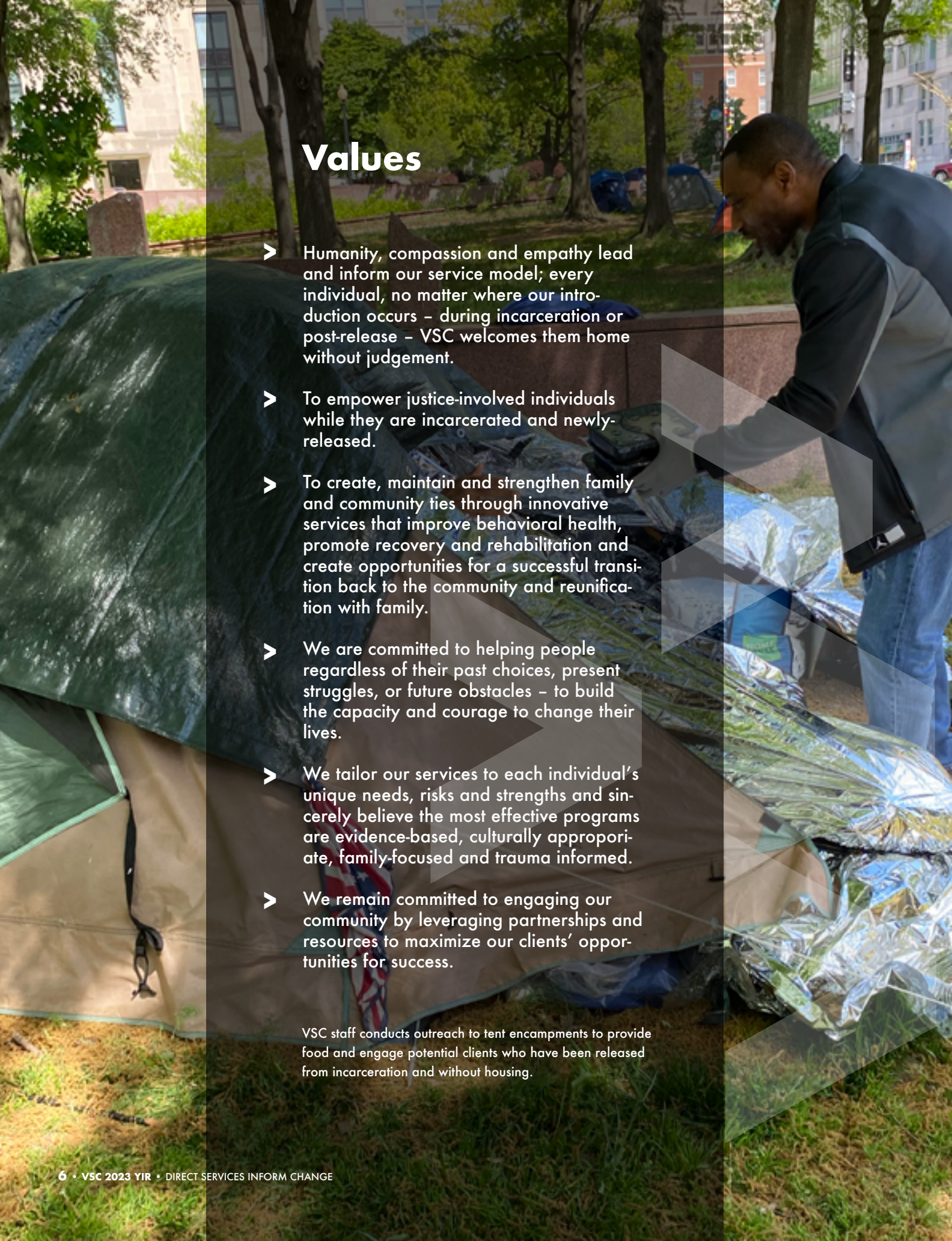


Establish a family centered approach to disrupt patterns that lead to incarceration.

d.



Create viable housing for returning citizens.



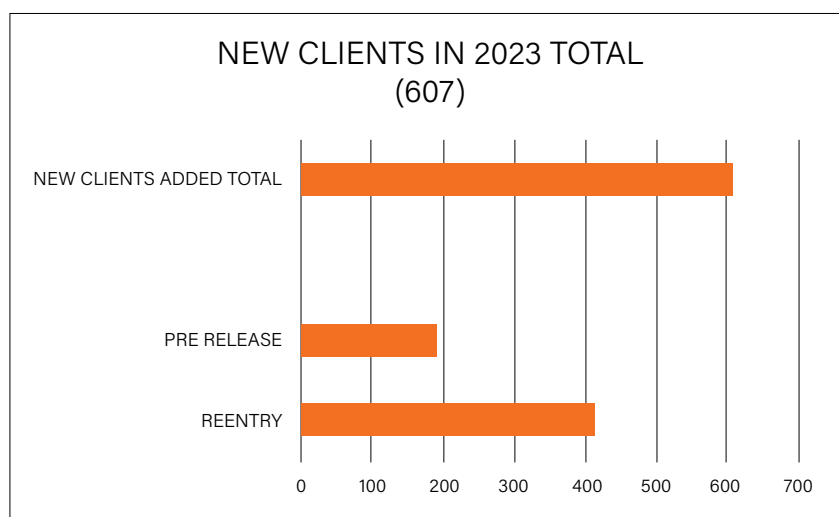
Values

- Humanity, compassion and empathy lead and inform our service model; every individual, no matter where our introduction occurs – during incarceration or post-release – VSC welcomes them home without judgement.
- To empower justice-involved individuals while they are incarcerated and newly-released.
- To create, maintain and strengthen family and community ties through innovative services that improve behavioral health, promote recovery and rehabilitation and create opportunities for a successful transition back to the community and reunification with family.
- We are committed to helping people regardless of their past choices, present struggles, or future obstacles – to build the capacity and courage to change their lives.
- We tailor our services to each individual's unique needs, risks and strengths and sincerely believe the most effective programs are evidence-based, culturally appropriate, family-focused and trauma informed.
- We remain committed to engaging our community by leveraging partnerships and resources to maximize our clients' opportunities for success.

VSC staff conducts outreach to tent encampments to provide food and engage potential clients who have been released from incarceration and without housing.

How VSC Clients Shape Our Interventions

By the end of 2023, VSC had 1,728 on the caseload. This included various intervention phases for clients serviced during the year. This information is derived from the electronic case management system that VSC uses to monitor agency services, client needs, and progress.

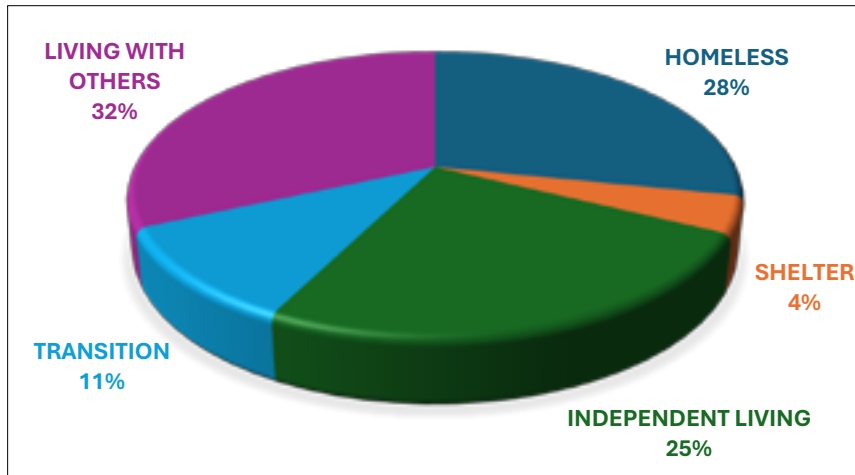


VSC provided initial contact with close to 200 individuals while they were incarcerated or in the halfway house (during the First Responder Phase). Over four hundred new clients engaged with VSC during the reentry phases (Welcome Home, Moving Towards Stability and Community of Voices), focusing their efforts on actualizing their reentry plans. Over 400 new clients engaged with VSC during the reentry phases (Welcome Home, Moving Towards Stability and Community of Voices phases), focusing their efforts on actualizing their reentry plans.



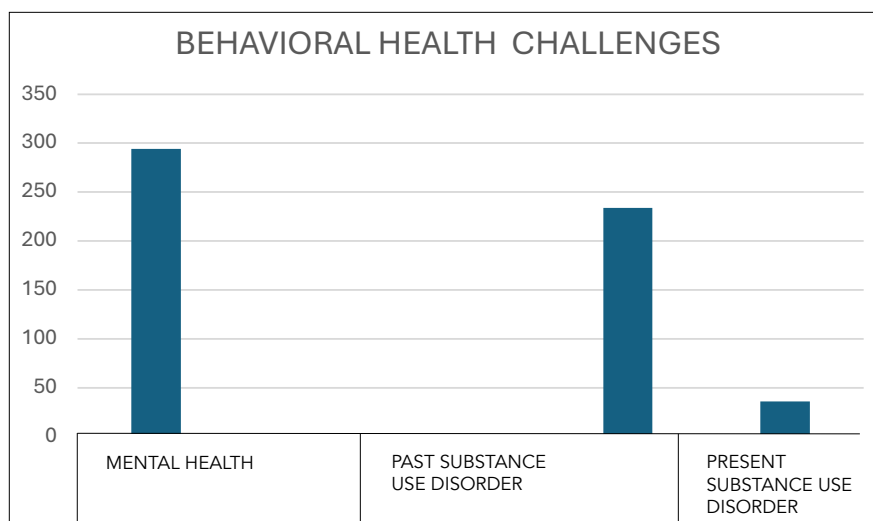
The second largest percentage of clients are homeless upon release from incarceration.

PHOTO: PEXELSTIMURWEBER



Adequate housing is a challenge for this population in the city. The status of the majority of our clients is to live with others. This often means couch surfing with friends and relatives.

FORTY EIGHT PERCENT of the new clients that came into VSC in 2023 have a history of mental health challenges.



Thirty eight percent of the new clients had a past history of substance use. Approximately 6% reported present substance use upon entry into VSC services in 2023.

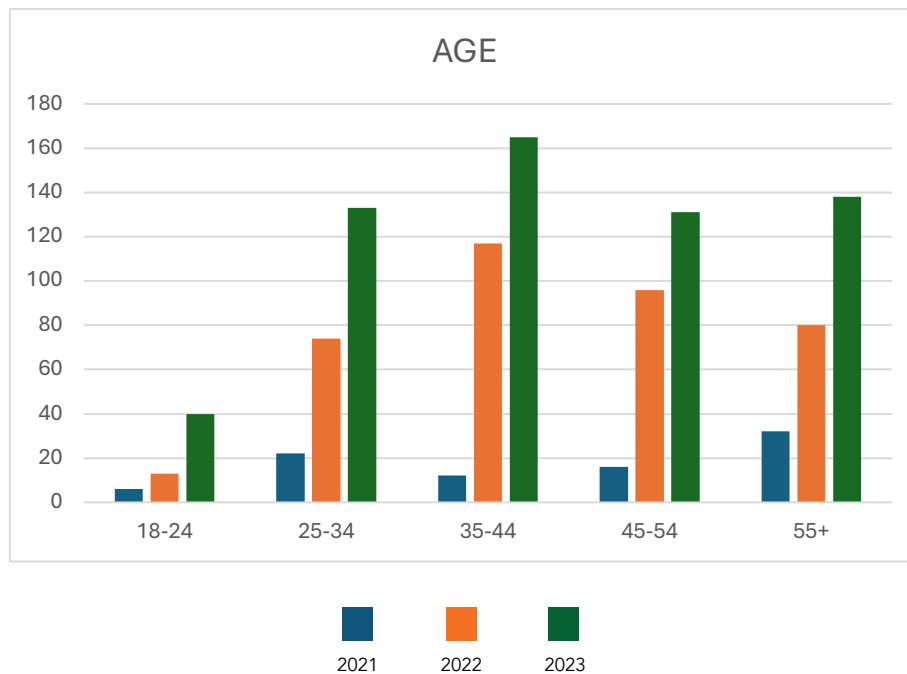


The majority of our clients in 2023
clustered within the ages of 25 and up.

PHOTO: DALILA BROOKS

VSC has seen an increase in the ages of our clients in each age category over the past three years. In 2023 VSC saw a significant increase in the number of individuals over fifty-five, our second largest age group. This meant that we needed to identify appropriate resources for our more mature clients. This was challenging because this age group has more physical disabilities that require benefits, and special housing accommodations.

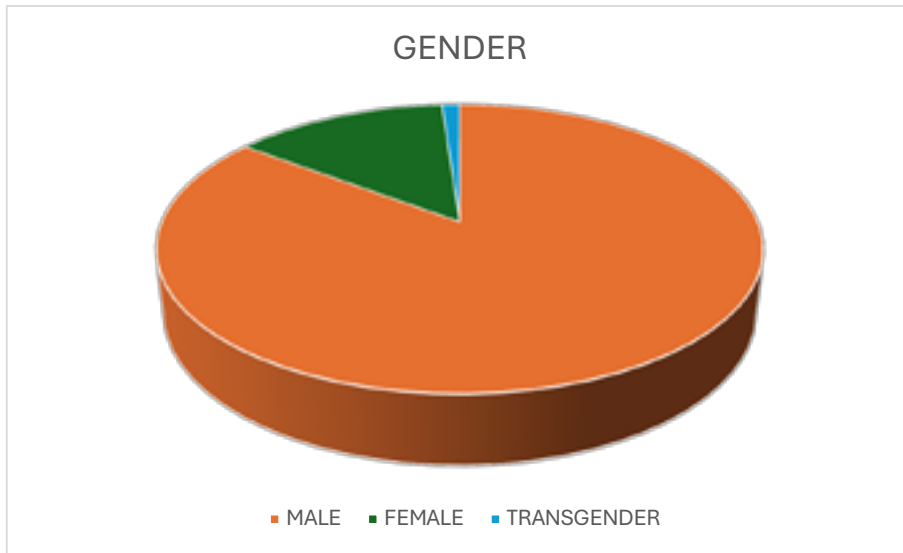
VSC CONTINUES to see an increase in clients under the age of twenty four. However the highest number of our population were between 25 and 54.



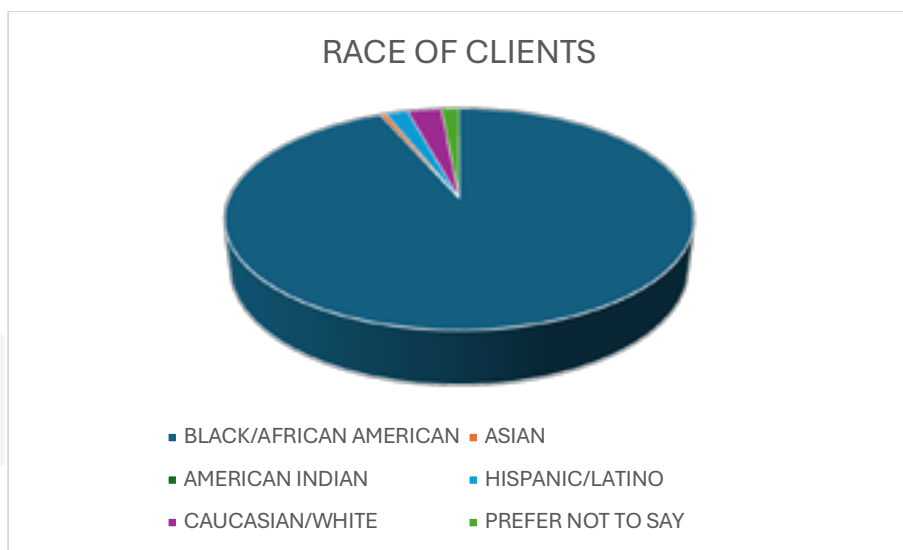


Consistent with the national demographic, VSC's population is predominately African American males.

PHOTO: DALILA BROOKS



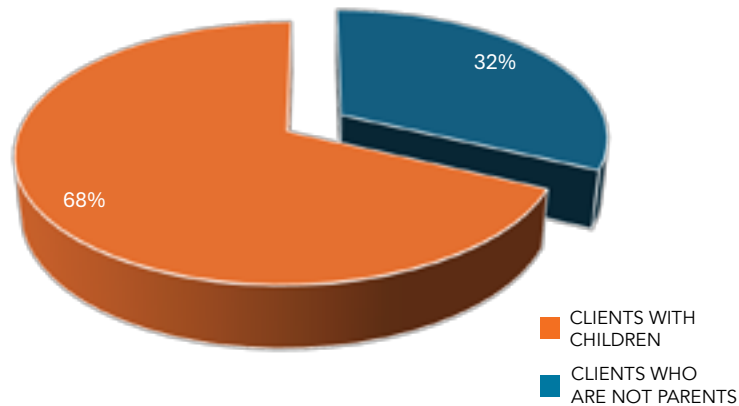
THE DISTRICT has incarcerated a disproportionate number of African American males when compared to the total racial makeup of the city.





"A father's love is the foundation for a child's self-esteem and self-worth." -Unknown

CLIENTS WITH CHILDREN IN 2023



THE MAJORITY of VSC clients
in 2023 were parents.

This means that we had to incorporate relationship sessions with our clientele. Many do not have a connection to their children and upon release they were interested in reconnecting.

Phases of Intervention

Over the past fifty years, since the inception of VSC, we have learned a lot from our constituents. As a result, we have formulated four phases of intervention that help men and women learn about our services before they are released from incarceration or as a result of our community outreach.

Upon their release or assignment to community supervision, we welcome them to our facility for support. As they proceed on their journey towards stability we provide additional support with housing, employment, and support groups.

For those who demonstrate an interest in learning to offer their voice to justice reform, we offer tools and information as part of our Community of Voices.

VSC



FIRST RESPONDER



WELCOME HOME



**MOVING TOWARD
STABILITY**



COMMUNITY OF VOICES



FIRST RESPONDER >>

During the First Responder phase (prior to release), staff screened, and supported 193 new clients in the Jail and Halfway Houses. VSC also participated in two videoconferences hosted by CSOSA that included several prisons across the country that had individuals scheduled for release within six months. These videoconferences provided information on VSC and other community resources so that upon release individuals would know where to go for reentry assistance. VSC staff also prepared reentry plans for individuals scheduled for release under Second Look and the Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act of 2016 (IRAA).



WELCOME HOME >>

During the Welcome Home phase (upon release) VSC received a total of 1902 office visits. There were 414 cases carried over from 2022 and 222 new clients who entered the Welcome Home phase in 2023 and completed a reentry plan with staff. For individuals who were at risk of homelessness and met the criteria, VSC provided fifty-one men and women temporary hotel stays. During this phase VSC staff assist clients with completing their reentry plans (a fluid plan over time) which initially includes helping them acquire critical identification, food, enrollment in Medicaid and public assistance, and basic survival kits. VSC staff also made 658 referrals to other community based and government resources to help clients fulfil their reentry goals during this phase for employment, training, treatment, housing, etc.



NEW TERRAIN PROGRAM

The New Terrain Program was initiated to provide recently released men and women short-term housing in a hotel for at least thirty days so that staff could begin assisting them with reentry planning. The program is first offered to clients during the Welcome Home phase of the intervention; however, the ultimate goal is to assist men and women with moving from short-term temporary housing to transitional housing and ultimately to acquire permanent housing.

Because there is such a housing shortage in D.C., particularly for low-income applicants, the New Terrain program became a popular option for returning citizens transition from incarceration and a life-line for others. During their time in New Terrain, VSC provides them with dignity essentials (toiletries), clothing, transportation assistance, snacks, food vouchers, and intensive case management. They are initially assisted with getting birth certificates, identification, and other vital records. As clients progress into permanent housing VSC helps with security deposits, furniture, and household items. The goal is to help VSC clients navigate a new terrain as they reacclimate to the city.

SERVICE

NUMBER PROVIDED

Birth Certificates	97
Social Security Cards	47
SNAP/Medicaid Applications	39
Gift Cards	507
Smart Trip Cards	73
Electronics (phones, tablets)	25
Backpacks (Toiletries/Undergarments)	106



NEW TERRAIN PROGRAM CONT.

It has proven to be a lifeline for many clients, whether they are returning home to D.C. after decades of incarceration or for those who are receiving VSC case management services and find themselves in dire need of assistance to Stay on Track. The New Terrain 30-day Hotel stay is the bridge for many VSC clients who are at risk of falling into homelessness and recidivism during that vulnerable period following release from incarceration. It is a safe shelter that helps ease the pathway into Moving Towards Stability which can include transitional and permanent housing.



VSC
VOICES FOR A SECOND CHANCE
BRIDGING THE GAP: FROM INCARCERATION TO COMMUNITY

VSC provides a Welcome Home backpack of toiletries and clothing for men and women recently released from incarceration.



MOVING TOWARD STABILITY >>

The Moving Toward Stability phase is designed to offer additional tools that connect clients to ongoing opportunities for success. Those who continue with VSC during this phase participate in progressive housing support, Staying On Track group sessions, and peer support groups as part of the networking and social support component.

ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Moving Toward Stability Groups	39
Completed Job Training	41
Became Employed	63
Moved to Transitional Housing	36
Moved to Independent Housing	37
Rental Assistance	34
Furniture Assistance	8



COMMUNITY OF VOICES >>

The final phase of intervention, Community of Voices, focuses on advocacy and elevating the voices of those impacted by the carceral legal system. VSC believes that hope and support will overcome individual challenges and provide what we know works for our constituents. Expanding that support will expand our reach and the success stories that follow will also expand to others. Most importantly, we are in the work of believing in a future which connects all of us. This translates to an awareness of the intergenerational trauma that is still perpetuated in the Black and Brown communities today and has a profound impact on how we see our future. That is why VSC incorporates a historical perspective in our Train Our Voices advocacy and training curriculum which also includes meetings with key policy and agency leaders. This approach constantly reminds VSC clients of the resilience and strength within communities of color and among the justice involved population.

VSC has invested in a phase within our programming which emphasizes our Collective Voice. However, Finding their Power using their Voice is a concept that is infused throughout our work to engage clients in finding their voice and trusting their perspective on the transformation of the system so that it can restore justice and equity. VSC continues to expand the tools clients need to elevate their solutions for systemic change.



VSC's podcast (Solutions From the Yard) evolved from our advocacy training, Train Our Voices and is hosted by three returning citizens who were VSC clients. It will be picked up by SIRIUS XM. We want to continue to identify other tools that clients can use to expand their advocacy outreach and make an impact on criminal justice reform in D.C.

Staff



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Lead Associate, Civil Commercial Group
Booze Allen Hamilton

Partners

The partnership provided to VSC by these funders and supporters helps us grow and make a difference in the lives of those who are often unseen – men and women who are justice involved in D.C.

- American Airlines Foundation
- Bernstein Foundation
- D.C. Government,
Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants
- Capital One Impact Fund
- Community House Church
- Covington & Burling LLC
- Eugene and Agnes Meyer Foundation
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Social Justice Institute
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Go to www.vscdc.org, click on the “DONATE” button in the upper right hand corner of the site and upon completion of the form, click the “DONATE” button at the bottom of the page.

We welcome volunteers, donors, sponsors and supporters as we move this agenda forward to support justice involved citizens.



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