

WWW.VSCDC.ORG

2024 ANNUAL REPORT
VOICES FOR A SECOND
CHANCE

THE POWER OF OPPORTUNITY

GIVEN THE CHANCE TO SUCCEED



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

THE *VOICES FOR A SECOND CHANCE* PHILOSOPHY

The name of our organization, Voices for a Second Chance (VSC), reflects the core philosophy behind our interventions. At the heart of this philosophy is a commitment to uplifting the voices of individuals who have experienced the hardships and systemic inequities that often lead to involvement in the carceral system. These individuals are frequently pushed to the margins of opportunity. Without the support of community-based organizations like VSC, many risk fulfilling a narrative that is often used as a convenient explanation for rising crime in our Nation's Capital—a narrative that, in turn, reinforces the very barriers that hinder successful reintegration.

**“True peace is not merely the absence
of tension; it’s the presence of justice.”**

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., excerpt from *Stride
Toward Freedom***

WHEN YOU DO NOT INVEST IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS, THERE IS A HUMAN COST





A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO

For the past 13 years, I've had the profound privilege of walking alongside justice-involved individuals here in Washington, DC. Whether through family reunification, pre-release support, providing support groups for children and caregivers with an incarcerated loved one, and meeting clients where they are in their journey through incarceration, I've witnessed the transformative power of second chances.

Reentry is neither glamorous nor one-size-fits-all. It's deeply personal and uniquely individual, requiring immense compassion and humanity. For 55 years, Voices for a Second Chance (VSC) has been a cornerstone in this work—breaking down barriers and leading with empathy to ensure that those impacted by incarceration are not defined by their pasts, but uplifted and supported as they build their futures. At VSC, we believe that everyone deserves a second chance.

We know that reentry involves many challenges. It's not just about navigating the suitability of life after incarceration; it's about shifting the narrative of who is “deserving” of opportunity, stability, and hope. Far too often, society reinforces harmful misconceptions about justice-involved individuals. But at VSC, we see things differently. We see resilience. We see triumph. We see potential.

We've had the honor of witnessing powerful transformations—like the clients who reunited with their children after years of separation, creating a moment that will never be forgotten, or the individual who, after overcoming countless hurdles, secured permanent housing for the first time. These are the stories that fuel our commitment. These are the voices that remind us why second chances matter.

These are the moments that reaffirm why our work is so crucial. They remind us that second chances don't just restore lives—they transform them.

Through direct services such as case management, rental assistance, transportation, and connections to tailored resources, we are doing the hard, day-to-day work that makes these transformations possible. Every service we provide—whether it's a Smart Trip card to get to an interview, a gift card to put food on the table, or guidance to navigate legal hurdles—restores faith in what second chances can achieve. At VSC, we are changing lives, one individual at a time.

I am incredibly proud to lead such a compassionate, dedicated, and committed team. Their focus on our mission is what keeps us grounded in this work. They are the heartbeat of the organization, and I am constantly inspired by the way they show up for our clients and each other. I also want to include my Board of Directors for their support, and belief in my leadership and the VSC vision; their support has been immense. To my colleagues, and supporters of reentry—our funders as well as the DC Reentry Action Network, together, we are rewriting the narrative of what it means to be justice-involved and proving that transformation is not just possible—it's happening every day.

As we continue to lead, support, and show up in our own lives and communities, my call to action is this: remember that we are all deserving of a second chance—one rooted in hope and dignity. That belief must translate into bold, sustained investments in the reentry community. Because when we invest in second chances, we invest in a better future for all.

— Peace and Justice



PAULA C. THOMPSON
PRESIDENT & CEO

TABLE OF CONTENTS



I	VSC PHILOSOPHY
III	LETTER FROM PRESIDENT/CEO
1	MEET OUR TEAM
2	VSC OVERVIEW
3	WHO WE SERVE
5	YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS
7	A LOCAL VIEW
8	2024 IMPACT
9	VSC'S REENTRY ROADMAP
17	LESSONS LEARNED
18	BOARD OF DIRECTORS
18	PARTNERS & DONORS
20	SPECIAL VSC AWARDS
21	HOW TO DONATE



MEET OUR TEAM

(Front row from left to right) La'Nasa Clarkson, Isabelle Garcia, Eric Franklin, Paula Thompson, Antoine Coleman

(Back row from left to right) Charles Hopkins, Linette Woods, Basimah Caldwell, Lennox DaSilva. (pictures missing) Michelle Sermon, Diane Jones, Warren Strother

VSC OVERVIEW

OPPORTUNITIES SUPPORT PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

OUR VISION is to provide services that ensure the successful connection of justice-involved individuals to family, community, and resources.

This vision is actualized through **THE MISSION** for Voices for a Second Chance (VSC), which is to empower justice-involved citizens pre-and-post release to create, maintain and strengthen family and community ties, to improve their preparation for successfully transitioning back into our DC community, and to build better futures for themselves and their families. To accomplish its mission, VSC provides a community-based navigational program. This is further accomplished by utilizing institutional in-reach and citywide outreach to identify and support the needs of justice-involved individuals within the District who are transitioning back to their communities following confinement in the DC Jail or the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP), including halfway houses, or individuals trying to live productively within their communities while under community supervision. Participants are self-referred and identified through targeted in-reach to these facilities and agencies. Outreach is also provided to natural gathering places such as homeless shelters, low-income housing, or in high-risk neighborhoods throughout the city. These services have proven to meet the immediate needs of individuals post-release from jail, prison, halfway houses, or the court, which is documented to be a critical time to disrupt social factors that could influence reentry back into criminal behaviors. VSC offers our constituents a space that nurtures their humanity and desire to restore relationships, families, and communities. Our programming comprises four intervention levels to support VSC's mission.

WHO WE SERVE

94%

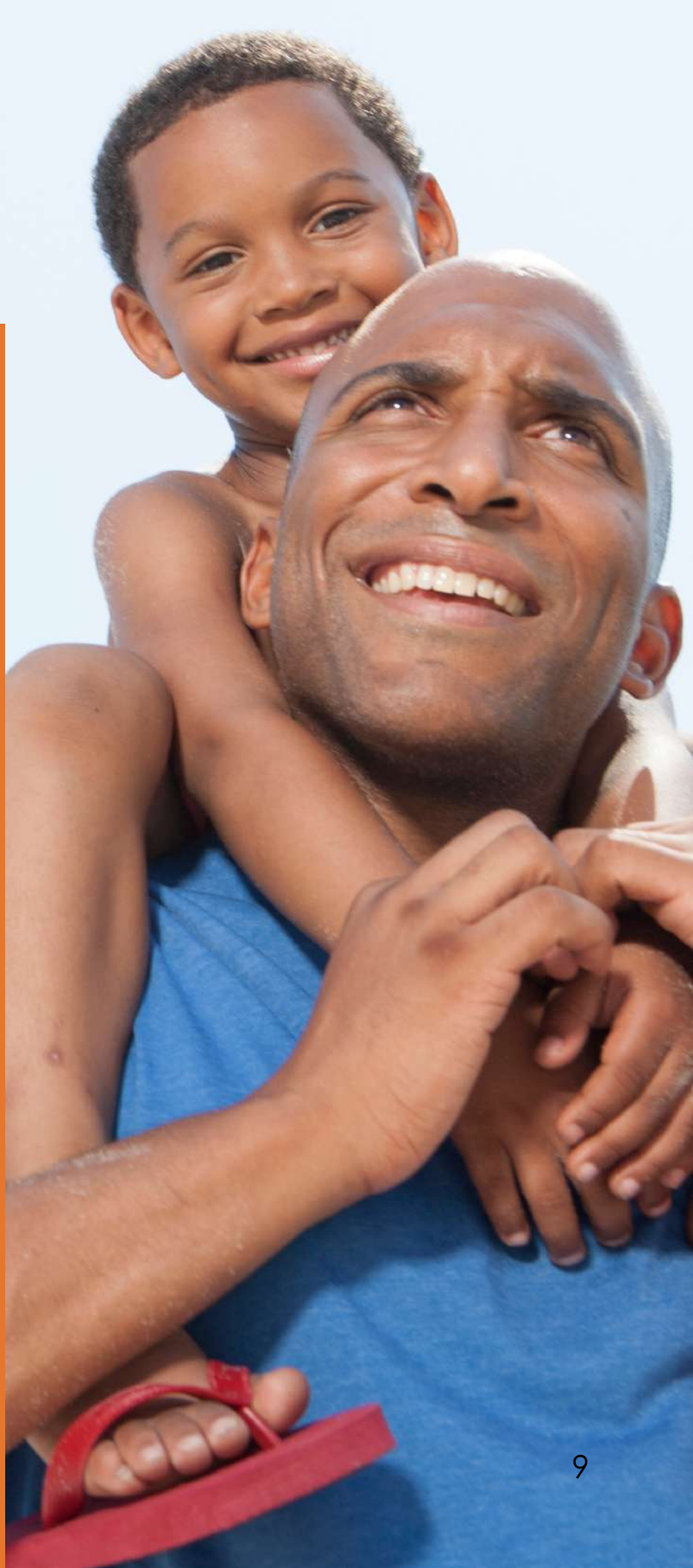
The majority of VSC clients are African-American males

84%

Are unemployed

67%

Are parents



52%

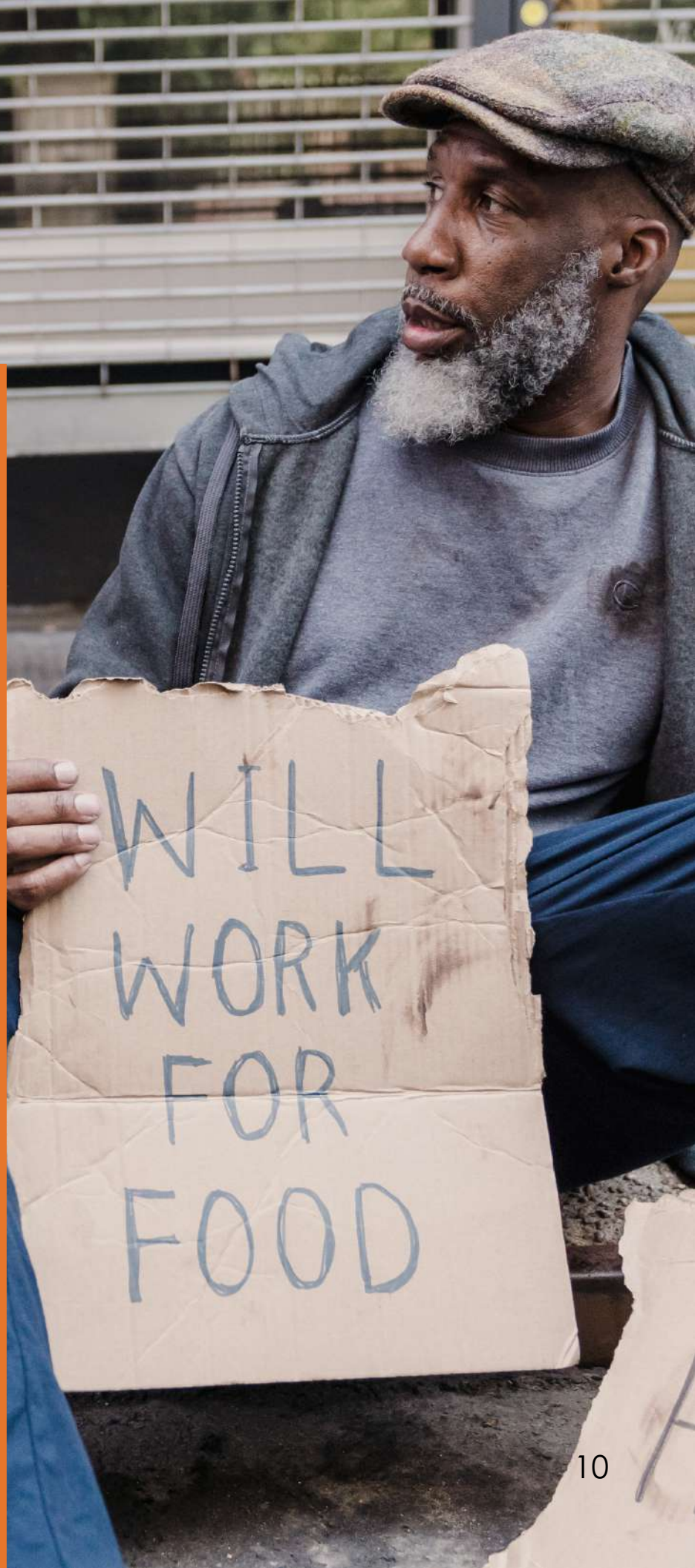
Reported a history of a
substance use disorder

46%

Reported a history of
mental health/
behavioral
challenges

62%

Indicated housing
insecurity which
includes living in a
shelter, temporarily
staying with relatives
or living on the streets



YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS ACTIVITIES

Building on strong client engagement, VSC expanded wellness programming to address physical and mental health needs, emphasizing self-care, stress relief, and family connection. Special activities were designed to promote stability and complement reentry planning. These events were well-attended, offering clients a meaningful outlet for relaxation, community-building, and peer support.



SECOND CHANCE AT PROM

When we polled VSC clients, we found that many had not been able to participate in their high school prom. Subsequently, VSC provided a Second Chance at Prom for participants and their families, complete with the Prom King and Queen.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY

VSC conducts an annual family focused holiday activity called Adopt-A-Family. The 2024 Adopt-A-Family initiative provided holiday support to 72 families and provided holiday gifts to 168 children of VSC clients. Our generous donors provided these holiday gifts.

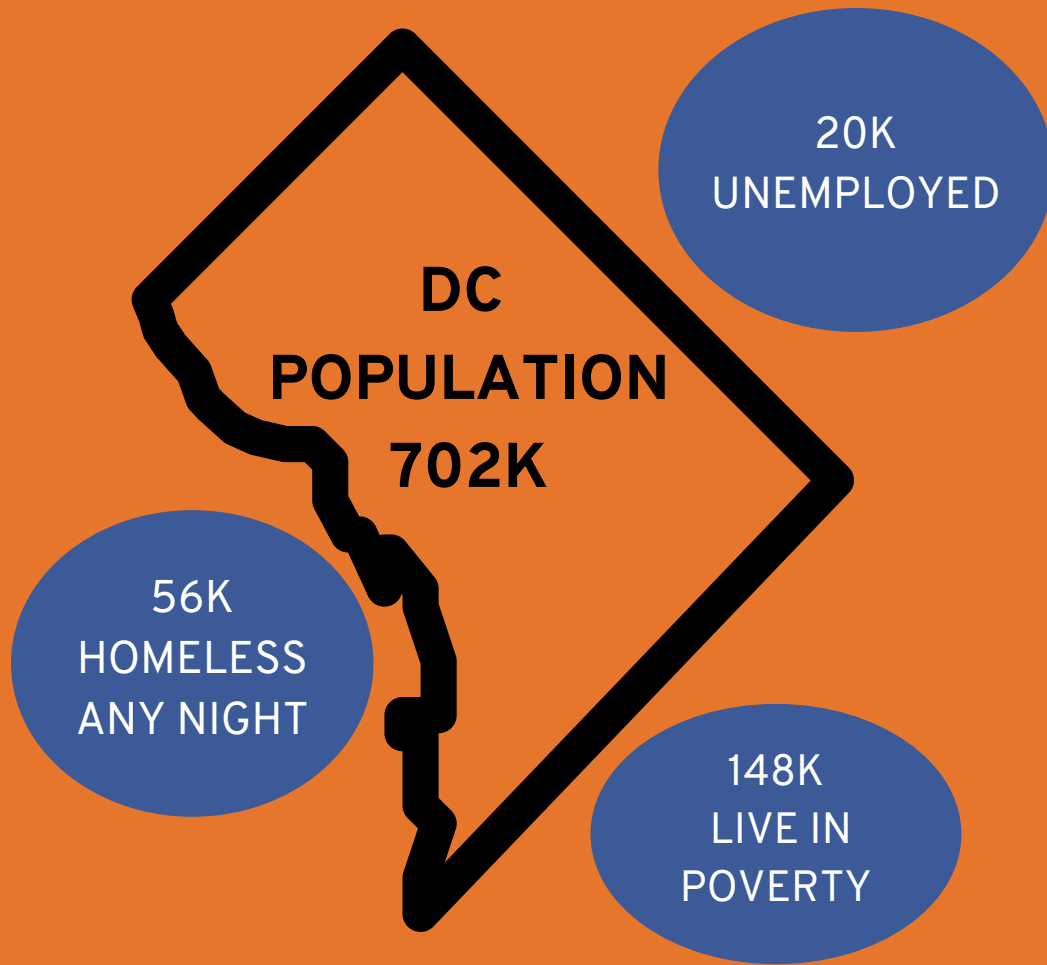
COAT DRIVE

Supporting our local reentry community, staff collected and distributed winter essentials to clients as part of our Coat Drive.

MOCKTAILS AND PAINT

The Sip and Paint wellness event was another success for clients to practice their creativity in a safe and fun atmosphere.





A LOCAL VIEW

In 2024, the DC census was 702,250. At that time, twenty thousand residents were unemployed. One hundred forty-eight thousand residents lived in poverty, and according to the point-in-time count, 5,616 experienced homelessness daily in DC.

2024 IMPACT

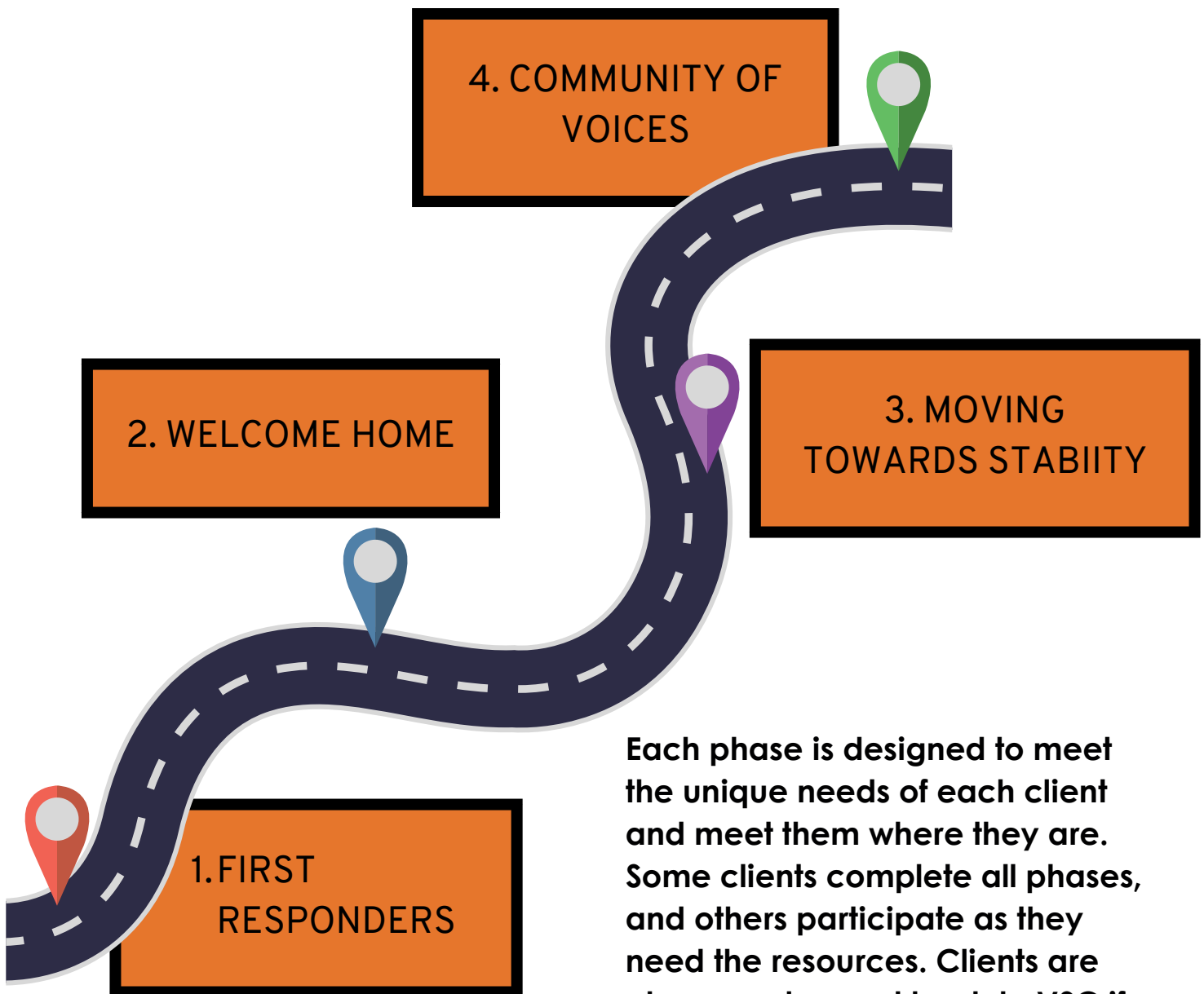
**1169 TOTAL
CLIENTS**

**568 NEW
CLIENTS**

**2036
OFFICE
VISITS**

5 REARRESTS

VSC'S REENTRY CONTINUUM OF CARE ROADMAP COMMUNITY-BASED CLIENT CENTERED NAVIGATIONAL PROGRAM



Each phase is designed to meet the unique needs of each client and meet them where they are. Some clients complete all phases, and others participate as they need the resources. Clients are always welcomed back to VSC if they require more support during their life maturation.



FIRST RESPONDERS PHASE

First Responders provide direct services and support to men and women incarcerated in jails, prisons, and halfway houses. For many incarcerated individuals, VSC is the pulse to the outside world and their families. Through our services and programs, we work in partnership with individuals to begin a plan prior to release that garners hope and vision for a successful reintegration. VSC conducted weekly visits to the DC Jail. In 2024, staff visited FCI Cumberland in Allegany County, Maryland, and FCI Petersburg in Hopewell, Virginia, to meet with DC residents about to be released.



Of the individuals seen in the jail prior to their release in 2024, the majority of them were African American males, and most were between the ages of 25 and 44. Fifty-three individuals were seen in the halfway house (Volunteers of America, Baltimore) or on home confinement (CORE DC) prior to release from FBOP supervision back into the community. Most of these men did not have a history of employment. Some were incarcerated at young ages. Of the 53 seen by VSC, 36 were parents, and 26 of those had children under 18 years of age. In spite of their history of behavioral health challenges, only twelve knew of their health insurance. VSC staff also saw twenty-five men in the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Cumberland facility who were preparing to be released.



WELCOME HOME PHASE

The Welcome Home Center provides office based, comprehensive, community support for justice-involved individuals returning from the DC Department of Corrections' Central Treatment Facility (CTF) and Central Detention Facility (CDF), the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP), and those under the supervision of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) and Pretrial Services.

Through a citywide navigational program, VSC conducts targeted outreach to address both immediate and long-term needs—particularly for individuals facing chronic illness, mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and a lack of stable support systems. By meeting people where they are, the Welcome Home Center promotes

stability, safety, and supports reintegration, which plays a critical role in reducing recidivism.

In 2024, there were 2036 office visits during the Welcome Home Phase. Of these, 352 clients visited the VSC office upon release or while under community supervision to begin reentry planning with case managers. A significant portion had been released from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The majority were African American males between the ages of 35 and 54, many of whom were experiencing housing instability—living in shelters, on the street, or temporarily staying with relatives. Only 53% reported having health insurance at the time of intake.

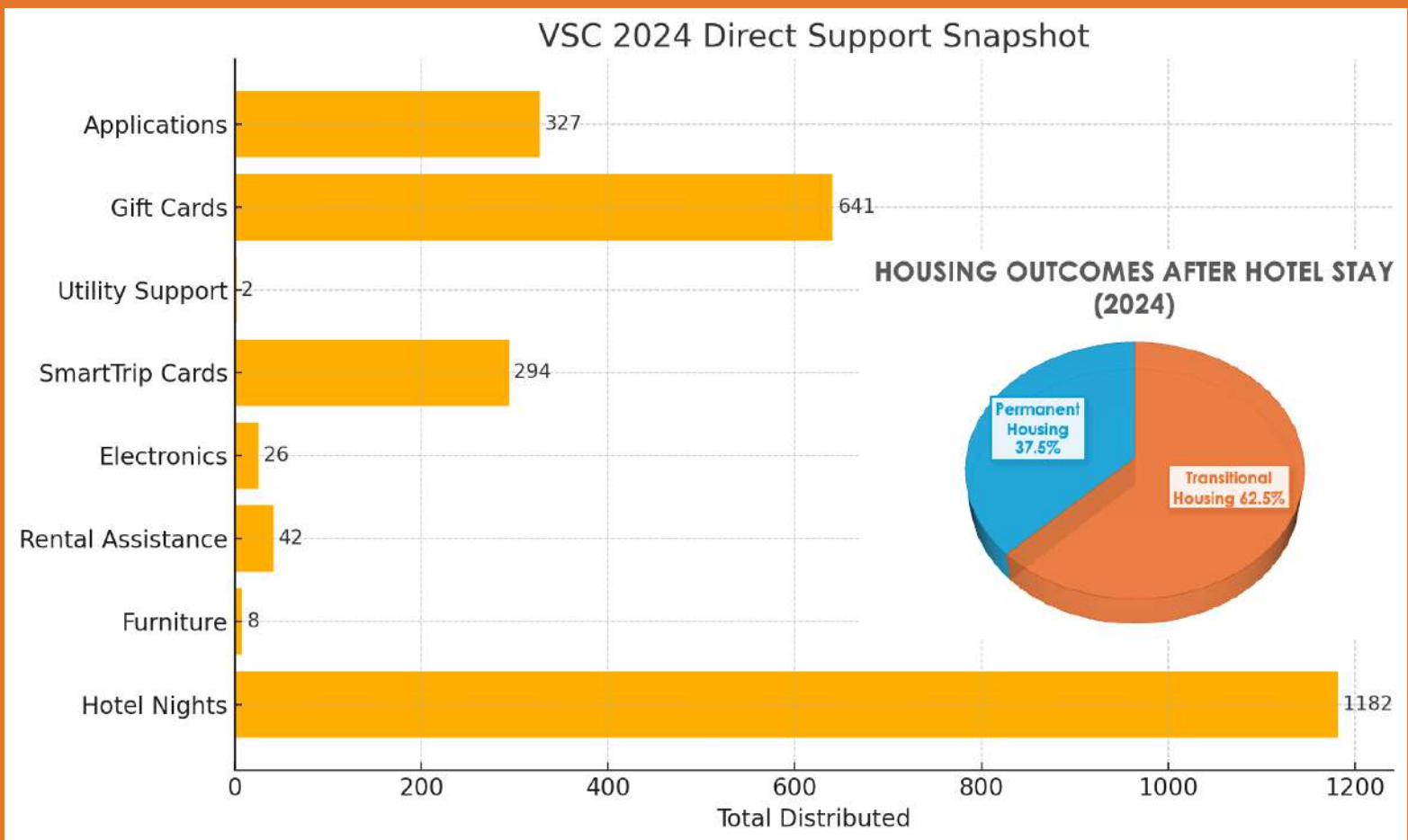


During the Welcome Home Phase, clients receive essential resources to support immediate stabilization after release. These include help obtaining identification, accessing food and health benefits, toiletries, clothing, and resume assistance. Recognizing that many individuals face homelessness upon release, VSC staff conduct targeted outreach, distributing meals and sharing information about available services.

In 2024, VSC staff made 260 outreach trips to tent encampments and areas where unhoused individuals gather where we dispersed 3,850 meals and information packets. They also partnered with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) to conduct 106 on-site visits at community supervision field sites. Additionally, through collaboration with The READY Center (a consolidated hub where returning citizens can access a wide range of services from Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and District government agencies), VSC connected with individuals immediately upon release from the DC Department of Corrections.

NEW TERRAIN PROGRAM

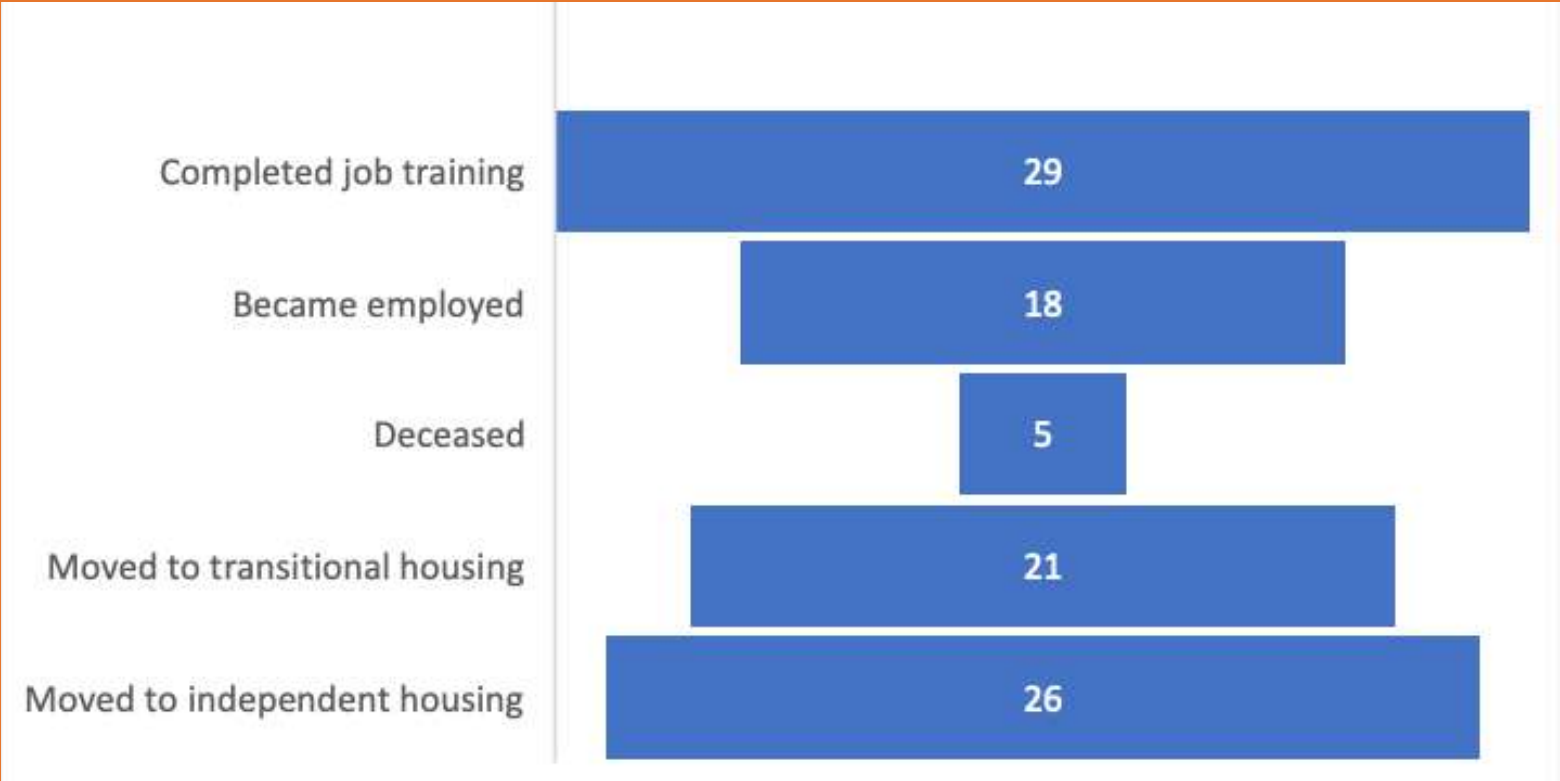
Upon release from incarceration, clients enter the Welcome Home Phase, and many find themselves homeless and without resources or family members to provide a place for them to stay. As a result, VSC developed the New Terrain Program. This program is designed to provide temporary housing in a hotel for homeless clients who meet the criteria. During the thirty-day stay, VSC staff work with these individuals to help them find and secure housing once they leave the hotel. In 2024, twenty-nine clients were provided with hotel accommodations. They received SmartTrip cards, laptops, cell phones, toiletries, and food. Other support provided to forty-two clients included rental and utility assistance and furnishings for apartments. Upon leaving the hotel, eight clients moved into transitional housing, and three were able to move into permanent housing. The remaining secured housing with family and friends.



MOVING TOWARDS STABILITY PHASE

Moving Towards Stability provides intensive case management, peer support groups, financial literacy education, family reunification assistance, and other critical resources to help clients progress toward stable housing, employment, and treatment as needed. During this phase, staff made 832 outbound referrals to partner organizations for support with employment, housing, treatment, and related services. As a result of these comprehensive efforts, 29% of participants completed job training, 21% moved into transitional housing, 26% secured independent housing, and 18% obtained employment.

CLIENT OUTCOMES (%)



COMMUNITY OF VOICES PHASE

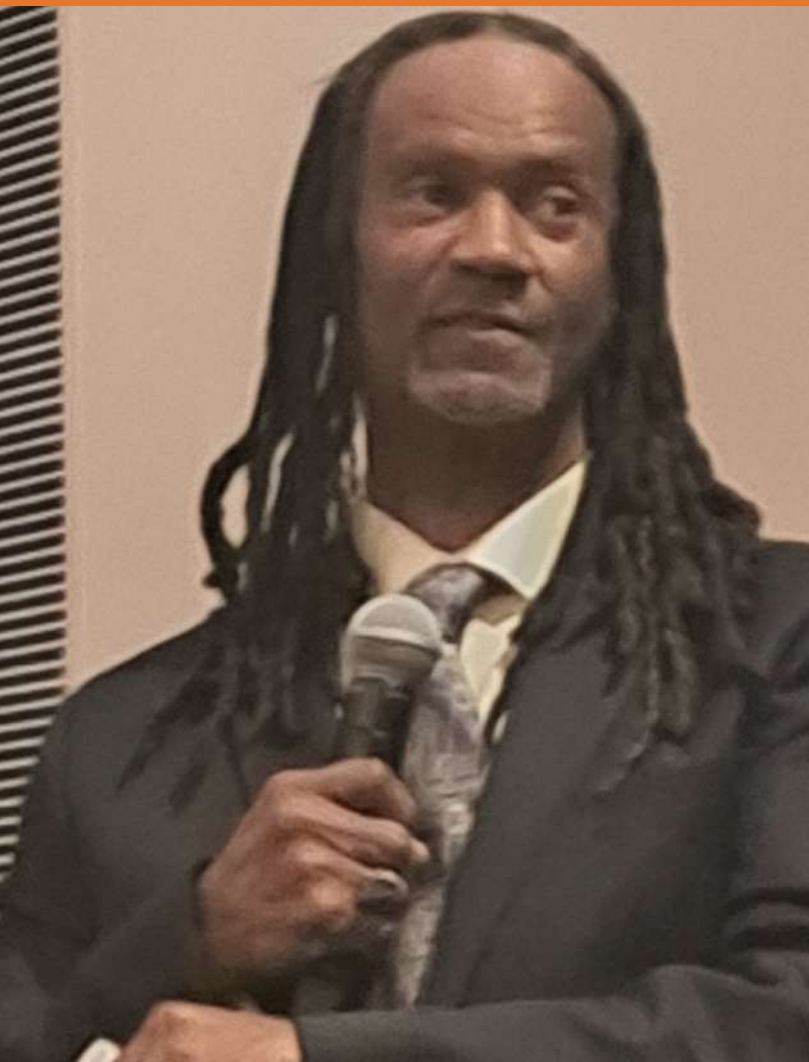
This phase involves several ongoing and new initiatives. In 2024, VSC completed the third cohort of the *TRAIN OUR VOICES* advocacy preparation to assist constituents in recognizing the power of their collective voices in impacting social justice and criminal justice reform. Throughout this 33-week training participants learn about the meaning and history of advocacy and meet with leadership in the criminal and juvenile justice system locally and nationally. The course culminated with a graduation ceremony that included staff, Board members, family, friends and stakeholders. A notable outcome from the first cohort is the *SOLUTIONS FROM THE YARD PODCAST*, which is moderated by program graduates. Now at 75 episodes, the podcast continues to spotlight topics and feature guest speakers addressing issues relevant to justice-involved individuals, offering critical perspectives from those directly impacted.



VSC recognized the importance of elevating the voices of justice-involved individuals through intentional partnerships with city agencies and community events. To achieve this, a new component was established to formalize partnerships, ensuring constituents' voices were actively represented in decision-making spaces impacting their success.

Building on the *TRAIN OUR VOICES* program, individuals with lived experience, some of whom are now VSC employees—developed a strategic advocacy plan highlighting justice-involved citizens' needs and priorities. VSC leadership and staff also engaged in key meetings, coalitions, and community events to strengthen relationships, advocate for policy change, and expand collaborative efforts.

TOV trainees shared their insights and expertise at various events, committees, and meetings, including:



- The Interagency Council on Homelessness
- National Returning Citizens Conference
- Testimony on the Mayor's Budget Submission
- DC Justice Lab Meeting
- Returning Citizens' Committee for the Department of Healthcare Finance
- Meeting with DC Councilmembers and Staff

LESSONS LEARNED

Each year, VSC reviews program data to improve services and better support client success. In 2024, a key concern was reengaging clients who only accessed services briefly. The staff made 1,884 follow-up calls to former clients. Most were African-American males between the ages of 18 and 54. An alarming observation was that 102 individuals reported mental health challenges, and 123 reported substance use disorders (104 past, 23 current). This emphasized the need for strong and appropriate long-term treatment and intensive case management for behavioral health challenges. VSC will use these insights to redesign interventions, enhance resources, and strengthen long-term engagement and follow-up.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

A spotlight on client voices and the power of second chances



"Train Our Voices had a tremendous impact on me and how I viewed advocacy. It helped me become more proficient in this space."

—Terrell Peters



"While I was incarcerated someone told me about VSC and when I was about to be released I reached out to them. They began to work on a plan for me so that when I was released the plan was already there, and here I am."

—Earl Kenney



"I was released under IRRA and I would like to see more men and women take advantage of programs like VSC."

—Erick Franklin



"While incarcerated for 21 years, I used to focus on the community, but when I got released what helped me the most to navigate in this city were programs like Voices for a Second Chance."

—Ashley Arrington

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JEREMY WILEY, BOARD PRESIDENT

KEVIN GLANDON, J.D.
ASSOCIATE, COVINGTON & BURLING, LLC

CLAYTON KOLB, TREASURER
LEAD ASSOCIATE, CIVIL COMMERCIAL GROUP,
BOOZE ALLEN HAMILTON

AMIA TRIGG, J.D.
SENIOR COUNSEL,
NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

INGRID GARDINER, TREASURER
SENIOR DIRECTOR, ALVAREZ & MARSAL

LAUREN ZEHYOUE, M.A.
POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS
STRATEGIST

**BRANDON MYERS, J.D.,
GENERAL COUNSEL**
LEGAL DIRECTOR, MOBILITY PRODUCTS &
OPERATIONS, UBER

PAULA THOMPSON, EX-OFFICIO
PRESIDENT & CEO

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS AND DONORS

BERNSTEIN FOUNDATION

THE DECK FOUNDATION

DC GOVERNMENT,
OFFICE OF VICTIMS SERVICES
AND JUSTICE GRANTS

EUGENE AND AGNES MEYER
FOUNDATION

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, HASHTA

HOWARD UNIVERSITY/MELLON
SOCIAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE

HEALTH HIV

LEGAL ACTION CENTER

DC ENGAGE

LANG FOUNDATION

CAPITAL ONE IMPACT FUND

PUBLIC WELFARE FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY HOUSE CHURCH

ST. ALBAN'S WSA

COVINGTON & BURLING LLC

UBER CORPORATE

CELEBRATING THE *BILLY CHANDLER FELLOWSHIP* HIGHLIGHTING FELLOWS ERIC FRANKLIN & ANTOINE COLEMAN



For over 40 years, Billy Chandler wore many hats at Voices for a Second Chance, offering wisdom, warmth, and unwavering commitment. More than a staff member, he was a trusted advocate and community connector, meeting with clients in nearby facilities and supporting their families through every step of reentry. His holistic, love-rooted approach recognized that healing extended beyond the individual to the entire community. Billy Chandler's legacy lives on in every connection we build, every life we uplift, and every second chance we help make possible.

At Voices for a Second Chance, we believe in the power of lived experience to drive change. Our Billy Chandler Justice Fellowship uplifts leaders who have been directly impacted by the criminal legal system. This year, we proudly recognize Fellows Eric Franklin and Antoine Coleman, whose resilience, insight, and dedication have strengthened our outreach, mentorship, and advocacy efforts. Their leadership reflects the spirit of the Fellowship; turning personal journeys into a force for transformation. We are honored to have them as part of the VSC family.



PRESIDENT AND CEO, PAULA THOMPSON, WAS RECOGNIZED AS THE WASHINGTON COMMANDERS' 2024 INSPIRE CHANGE CHANGEMAKER DURING THEIR DECEMBER 22ND GAME!

This prestigious honor from the NFL celebrates Ms. Thompson's incredible dedication to social justice and reentry work. Her recognition is not only a testament to her passion and leadership but also highlights the collective impact of the work we do at Voices for a Second Chance.



HOW TO DONATE

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 THE AGENDA FORWARD TO SUPPORT JUSTICE INVOLVED CITIZENS.



"WE'VE BEEN INSTITUTIONALIZED BUT WE REFUSE TO BE MARGINALIZED."

VSC CLIENT, MR. B.W.



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