

# **Build-Out of Student Services Report: Findings from the Process Evaluation**

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The [Manhattan District Attorney's Criminal Justice Investment Initiative](#) (CJII) contracted with the [Vera Institute of Justice](#) (Vera) to conduct a process evaluation of the [College and Community Fellowship's](#) (CCF) Build-Out of Student Services (BOSS) project. The BOSS project consists of reentry programming based in New York City that develops education and career skills specifically among formerly incarcerated women. CCF is funded under CJII's diversion/reentry portfolio. BOSS programming at CCF consists of three elements: the Academic Support Program (ASP) for college-enrolled/aspiring women, the Career Advancement Program (CAP) for women focusing on job placement, and Uplift Mentoring (UM) for connecting women to peer support. This report presents the main findings of the process evaluation conducted from December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022.<sup>1</sup> The process evaluation goals were to (1) evaluate the implementation fidelity of CCF's programming, (2) understand the scope and impact of CCF's BOSS programming, and (3) understand participants' perceptions of the programming.

## Purpose

Vera conducted multiple research activities throughout the study period, including collecting administrative data provided by CCF, administering surveys of active program participants, conducting interviews with active program participants and staff, reviewing operations and curriculum materials, and gathering participant observations of program workshops/events. The purpose of these activities was to

- understand implementation fidelity of CCF's programming;
- understand how participants were recruited for and enrolled in CCF programming;
- describe participants in terms of demographics, academic accomplishments, and career advancement;
- measure program outcomes (in terms of participation and completions);
- describe participants' and staff's perceptions of programming; and
- identify program strengths and recommend areas for improvement.

## Findings

- **Over the course of the study, 175 people participated in CCF programming:**
  - 88 percent of participants enrolled in ASP (and may or may not have also been co-enrolled in other programming);
  - 52 percent of participants were Black women;
  - 21 participants graduated with postsecondary degrees or credentials;
  - 13 participants secured a job or internship placement; and
  - \$72,750 was distributed to participants in the form of stipends.
- **Implementation achievements:**
  - Enhanced CCF's student services overall.
  - Launched CAP to provide career exploration, readiness, and placement assistance in gainful career-based employment.
  - Expanded ASP's multigenerational components—such as conducting caregiver-child study sessions, holding an annual retreat for children of reentering caregivers, and working with financial institutions to establish savings accounts for these children—that are designed to strengthen families and communities.
  - Equipped formerly incarcerated women in New York City with the education and career skills they need to be competitive in the labor market.

➤ **Core program strengths:**

- **Participants reported overwhelmingly positive experiences in programming, particularly related to ASP and CAP staff, who provided support above and beyond their job roles.** Program participants described how CCF staff provided support and encouragement in addition to academic counseling or financial aid advising, which made them “feel seen and important.” Participants highlighted CCF staff’s understanding of and responsiveness to their specific needs related to being formerly incarcerated, such as living in assisted-living housing or being under community supervision.
- **Participants repeatedly highlighted program staff in all three programs for their commitment to supporting program participants.** Participants described many instances of staff’s flexibility and support tailored to students’ individualized needs. The committed staff “made sure [to follow] through for the [participant] on the other end” and were clearly an integral part of all the programming. As one participant told Vera: “When I first started school, it was a new world to me, and my counselor at the time helped me so much. I would call her stressed out due to not understanding something, and she always took her time to listen to me and direct me. I wouldn’t have a college degree without CCF.”
- **The programming cultivated a strong, supportive community among participants that respondents, especially those with children, identified as a valuable resource.** Participants described how connecting with other program participants at community events and program gatherings, such as Sister Circles, cultivated a “sense of community” and provided networking opportunities.
- **Financial support, including stipends, transportation and housing aid, and other economic resources, helped participants establish stability, a prerequisite to pursuing their career and academic goals.** Participants most often cited financial support as the most important and impactful aspect of participating in CCF programming, as it allowed them to continue working toward their academic and career goals.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, CCF modified the implementation of some programming, specifically CAP and UM, at different points in time across the study period. CCF originally designed CAP to be implemented as a sequential series of modules (with one programming module completed at a time) and adapted it to also be offered as a self-select model at the end of 2021. CCF originally designed UM to include currently incarcerated women, engaging them in CCF programming prior to release in order to provide a pipeline to other CCF programming upon reentry. However, CCF was never able to gain entry to correctional facilities to recruit currently incarcerated women. Thus, CCF was unable to implement that component of the program. Because of these programmatic changes over the course of the study period, this historical cohort might not be representative of the current program.

## Recommendations

Vera researchers identified common themes primarily through active participant surveys and interviews with participants and staff, substantiated by administrative data from CCF. The data points to six key recommendations to improve CCF’s BOSS programming:

- 1. Reconsider co-enrollment prerequisites for programs.** Co-enrollment in ASP was a prerequisite for enrollment in CAP services. Staff pointed out that this created a barrier to access for participants who were interested in CAP services but were unable to enroll in a college program at the time. Removing this barrier would increase the number of eligible participants and may increase enrollment in other components.

**2. Allow for more flexibility in the timing of required programming components, such as offering workshops and peer mentor meetings at multiple time slots and outside typical business hours.** Less rigid time-restricted components would expand access for participants and alleviate the stress of conflicting obligations, particularly for working student-caregivers.

**3. Expand career advancement information and strategies for student-caregivers specifically.** Many participants discussed the difficulty of managing the demands of work and school at the same time. They highlighted how participation in this type of targeted programming helped them balance those demands and mitigate stress.

**4. Increase retention efforts in the Peer Mentoring Program.** Retaining participants in the program longer may increase the available pool of peer mentors, as mentees can transition to a mentor role.

**5. Reduce staff turnover and strengthen continuity of communication when new staff are hired.** Participants cited staff turnover as one of the greatest challenges to participating in programming as it resulted in breakdowns in communication and posed a threat to the continuity of programming. Although participants praised staff commitment and support, they also said that staff turnover resulted in the loss of built-up trust and familiarity. When possible, CCF should consider providing additional communication mechanisms for participants to reach staff, such as texting, and prioritizing uninterrupted staff-participant advising.

**6. Expand resource referrals to include extracurricular academic activities for children living with participants, such as tutoring services, in order to provide more support to parent/caregiver participants and their families.** CCF should solicit regular feedback from parent/caregiver participants regarding what types of other extracurricular activities for children would be valuable and consider partnering with external organizations for referrals.

## Conclusion

The impact of programming such as CCF's BOSS project may not be easily quantified in a short evaluation like this. The staff and program participants whom Vera surveyed and interviewed for this evaluation described how valuable being a member of the community was to them and how much they appreciated a network of women who shared and understood their experiences. The impact of this kind of programming goes beyond individuals and extends to their families and communities.

## Introduction

In 2020, 549,600 people reentered society from state and federal prisons across the United States. An estimated one in 66 adult U.S. residents were under community supervision at the end of 2020.<sup>2</sup> In New York alone in 2020, 18,289 people were released from New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) facilities.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, according to the most recent available follow-up data from people released in New York in 2018, 32 percent returned to DOCCS custody within three years, and among those, the median time to return was within 10 months.<sup>4</sup> Given this context, promoting successful reentry is a vital component to reducing criminal legal system involvement.

Prior research has shown a connection between economic mobility and successful reentry, as economic hardship—such as poverty—is linked to higher susceptibility of being involved with the criminal legal system. For example, adults living at the poverty level are three times more likely to be arrested than those who do not live in poverty, and a person is 15 times more likely to be charged with a felony if they earn less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level.<sup>5</sup> To this end, two areas of reentry policy hold particular promise: employment and education. Employment has been identified as a “turning point” that promotes upward economic mobility for some, particularly older individuals.<sup>6</sup> This upward economic mobility may ultimately result in less criminal legal system involvement. Policies that provide resources, such as post-release work programs, are generally successful at teaching job skills, promoting employment, and reducing recidivism.<sup>7</sup> A 2018 meta-analysis also points to the benefits of educational programming: people who participate in postsecondary education programs in prison have 48 percent lower odds of being reincarcerated and those who participate in any educational programming while incarcerated have 12 percent higher odds of obtaining employment post-release than those who do not.<sup>8</sup>

Although there is a robust body of literature on reentry and recidivism, the majority of reentry research focuses on men, even as prison populations in facilities for women have grown faster than men’s over recent decades.<sup>9</sup> Increased rates of incarceration of women have led to increased numbers of women being released from correctional facilities and back into communities each year. From 1979 to 2019, the number of women released from prison in the United States increased from 8,837 to 75,525, or approximately 855 percent.<sup>10</sup> Further, women not only experience incarceration differently than men, in part because educational and vocational programming is often lacking in prisons designated for women compared to those designated for men, but women also have different patterns of criminal legal system involvement.<sup>11</sup> In New York, the most recent three-year follow-up data showed that women had a lower rate of return to incarceration (25 percent) than men (32 percent).<sup>12</sup> Still, women, and particularly women of color, face formidable economic challenges on release back to their communities, as they are more likely to be unemployed and/or experience homelessness than formerly incarcerated men.<sup>13</sup> Although both men and women returning from incarceration face challenges related to education and employment, women returning from incarceration are more likely to encounter additional, complex challenges, such as serious and repeated trauma in various forms and primary caregiving responsibilities, pointing to a need for specialized and gender-informed reentry programming.<sup>14</sup> In addition to employment and education, those challenges can also include addiction, housing, transportation, family reunification, external childcare, parenting/caregiver support, and physical or mental health needs.<sup>15</sup>

The [Manhattan District Attorney’s Criminal Justice Investment Initiative](#) (CJII) contracted with the [Vera Institute of Justice](#) (Vera) to conduct a process evaluation of the [College and Community Fellowship’s](#) (CCF) Build-Out of Student Services (BOSS) project, which is reentry programming based in New York City that develops education and career skills specifically among formerly incarcerated women. CCF is funded under the diversion/reentry initiative/portfolio within CJII. BOSS programming at CCF consists of three elements: the Academic Support Program (ASP) for college-enrolled or

college-aspiring women, the Career Advancement Program (CAP) for women focusing on job placement, and Uplift Mentoring (UM) to connect women to peer support.<sup>16</sup> (For a brief summary of each program, see “Summary of CCF programs” on page 6. For further details regarding the curriculum, programmatic activities, and eligibility requirements of each program, see “Appendix A: Detailed Description of Programming” on page 20.) This report presents the main findings of the process evaluation conducted from December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022. The process evaluation goals were to (1) evaluate the implementation fidelity of CCF’s programming, (2) understand the scope and impact of CCF’s BOSS programming, and (3) understand participants’ perceptions of the programming.

## Summary of CCF program services and BOSS project goals

Founded in 2000, CCF is a nonprofit organization that supports women with criminal legal system involvement while they obtain college degrees and leadership skills that promote self-efficacy and civic engagement. CCF’s mission is to “enable women with criminal justice involvement to earn their college degrees so that they, their families, and their communities can thrive.”<sup>17</sup> CCF addresses barriers to reentry on the individual, institutional, and systemic levels, serving more than 650 people across three program areas: College & Career, THRIVE Technical Assistance, and Policy & Advocacy.<sup>18</sup>

Under the diversion/reentry initiative/portfolio within CJII, CCF received funding from the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office to launch the BOSS project in 2019. The BOSS project sought to expand the capacity of CCF’s existing higher-education and workforce-development programs. Additionally, the project aimed to enhance, expand, and improve coordination among CCF’s interventions across a spectrum of outcomes-based reentry services for New York City women. The services for these women spanned from their pre-release preparation; to their post-release socioeconomic stabilization; to their eventual college graduation, professional advancement, and realization of social capital as civically engaged and socially contributing New Yorkers.

## Methodology and Data Collection

### Research activities and data collection

Vera conducted multiple research activities throughout the study period of December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022, including collecting administrative data provided by CCF, surveying active program participants, conducting

## Summary of CCF programs

### Academic Support Program (ASP):

Five-phase program to support women through the stages of education, from college readiness to degree completion, including programming targeting student-caregivers.

### Career Advancement Program (CAP):

Five-phase program to support women in skill assessment, skill development, job placement, and career advancement.

### Uplift Mentoring (UM):

Year-long program consisting of first a 12-week curriculum focusing on college and career education, followed by continued mentorship from fellow formerly incarcerated women with college degrees.

(Further details regarding the curriculum, programmatic activities, and eligibility requirements of each program are provided in “Appendix A: Detailed Description of Programming” on page 20.)



interviews with active program participants and staff, reviewing operations and curriculum materials, and gathering participant observations of program workshops and events. The purpose of these activities was to

- understand the implementation fidelity of CCF's programming;
- understand how participants were recruited for and enrolled in CCF programming;
- describe participants in terms of demographics, academic accomplishments, and career advancement;
- measure program outcomes (in terms of participation and completions);
- describe participants' and staff's perceptions of programming; and
- identify program strengths and recommend areas for improvement.

CCF provided Vera with two years of aggregated data regarding participants' demographics, enrollment, completions, program exits, participation in program components, stipend/financial aid disbursements, and time from initial screening to activation of services. This data was aggregated by quarter, program, and existing or continuing versus newly enrolled participants. The data collected varied slightly from quarter to quarter as programming evolved over the study period.

Vera collected anonymous survey responses from 29 CCF participants from January to October 2022, with a response rate of 28.5 percent. Of the surveys received, 10 respondents reported enrollment in more than one CCF program. Regardless of co-enrollment, at the time of the survey 18 respondents were enrolled in ASP, four were enrolled in CAP, and 12 were enrolled in UM. Vera administered surveys electronically and included questions about program enrollment, engagement, and satisfaction. Vera also completed interviews with 13 CCF participants who were currently engaged in ASP, CAP, and/or UM in Fall 2022, focusing on their experiences, levels of satisfaction, and recommendations for future programming, with a response rate of 15.7 percent. Vera conducted interviews remotely via Zoom. Respondents received a small stipend for participating. Additionally, Vera conducted interviews with four CCF staff members from January to December 2022, focusing on program operations, program strengths and struggles, and recommendations for improvements.

Lastly, Vera reviewed operations and curriculum materials provided by CCF and engaged in participant observations of multiple program workshops and events over the course of the study period as part of information gathering and context building. In accordance with COVID-19 protocols, Vera primarily conducted participant observations remotely over the study period and included workshops or events focusing on topics that included financial literacy, health, caregiving to children, domestic violence, and legal rights. Vera was able to attend a celebratory year-end event in person in October 2022.

## Limitations

Although Vera was able to achieve the main objectives of the process evaluation, there were significant challenges that should be noted to contextualize the findings presented. First, the proposed CCF programming implementation under the BOSS project was altered and delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022, undermining the implementation fidelity of some program components. (See "Contextualizing the study period" on page 8 for further detail.) This resulted in multiple changes to how Vera collected administrative data over the course of the study period and some inconsistencies when comparing data across quarters.

Second, because Vera was not able to conduct any data collection in person and modified its planned research activities to comply with the COVID-19 restrictions, Vera staff were limited to conducting interviews and observing programmatic events or workshops remotely, rather than in person. These COVID-19 restrictions prevented Vera staff from building in-person rapport and may have negatively impacted participants' engagement with surveys and interviews, as Vera staff was not able to follow up in person with program participants regarding participation. This challenge



limited the analysis that Vera was able to conduct with regard to staff perspectives in particular, as staff were often unresponsive to requests for interviews. Further, CCF underwent high staff turnover during this period, which may have been due in part to COVID-19, resulting in Vera losing access to experienced staff, as newly hired staff were not yet knowledgeable enough to interview.

Lastly, Vera conducted the process evaluation over a two-year study period, which provided a limited snapshot into CCF program participation and may not have been an adequate time frame to accurately capture program completion rates, particularly in ASP, because it typically takes longer than two years to complete an academic degree.

## Findings

### Contextualizing the study period

CCF adapted the BOSS programming in real time, evolving to meet the changing needs of participants in the unprecedented context of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. However, because CCF implemented some of the BOSS programming differently at different points in time across the study period, this historical cohort might not be representative of the current program.

For appropriate context, the World Health Organization characterized the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic on March 11, 2020.<sup>19</sup> On March 13, 2020, the United States declared a state of national emergency, which was terminated on May 11, 2023.<sup>20</sup> New York City rapidly became the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States.<sup>21</sup> From March to May 2020, approximately 203,000 laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases were reported to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.<sup>22</sup> To mitigate COVID-19 transmission and prevent additional infections among city residents during this initial outbreak and subsequent waves of the pandemic, state and local governments implemented strict restrictions, including school closures, travel restrictions, and social distancing mandates.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, BOSS project services and activities transitioned from in person to remote when possible, but this created barriers to implementation initially as people everywhere adopted new technologies. ASP and CAP staff and participants were not allowed to congregate for services or events, and many college programs were suspended or transitioned online. BOSS programming originally included the Peer Mentoring Program, which engaged women pre-release from incarceration. However, COVID-19 restrictions prevented all access to currently incarcerated women from 2020 to 2022, and the program had to be redesigned without the pre-release component. CCF implemented UM instead as a peer mentor program without involvement of currently incarcerated women and targeted only formerly incarcerated women post-release. As a result, CCF could only partially restore the Peer Mentoring Program, and it did not serve as a pipeline for currently incarcerated women to the ASP and CAP programs as originally intended. Further, the omission of pre-release women from the Peer Mentoring Program resulted in not achieving the goal of expanding CCF's student-recruitment outreach to cover the majority of New York City's pre-release women incarcerated across New York State during the study period.

CAP also underwent programmatic modifications during the study period, although to a lesser extent than the Peer Mentoring Program. Halfway through the study period, CCF launched an additional trimmed-down version of CAP programming called CAP Select, which offered the same career programming and internship placement but allowed enrollment into specific segments of the program instead of the entire curriculum. This change in CAP was primarily driven by participants' needs. Potential and current CAP participants shared that they were interested in specific aspects of CAP but did not have the ability to commit to the whole program or to be co-enrolled in other programming (an original requirement for CAP). Although the original CAP model (renamed CAP Max) consisted of completing three job skills development modules, CAP Select allowed program participants to self-select offered modules as needed. This means these participants were not

participating in the same course of programming as previous participants in CAP Max over the study period—or in the program curriculum as originally designed.

Lastly, CCF staff turnover undermined the implementation of all three programs. The rate of job quitting in the United States was higher in 2021 than any time in the recorded preceding two decades, and this staff turnover reduced CCF’s capacity to implement programming as intended.<sup>24</sup> As a result, remaining staff faced challenges related to absorbing additional duties, working under a high participant-to-staff ratio, and training newly hired, inexperienced staff. It is also important to note that CCF’s executive director of 14 years transitioned out of the role from CCF in Summer 2021. Amidst all of this, CCF staff delivered high-quality programming over the study period, but strains on staff and staff turnover may have contributed to adaptations in program implementation.

## Implementation achievements

- Enhanced CCF’s student services overall.
- Launched CAP to provide career exploration, readiness, and placement assistance in gainful career-based employment.
- Expanded ASP’s multigenerational components—such as establishing caregiver–child study sessions, holding an annual retreat for children of reentering caregivers, and working with financial institutions to establish savings accounts for these children—that are designed to strengthen families and communities.
- Equipped formerly incarcerated women in New York City with the education and career skills they need to be competitive in the labor market.

## CCF enrollment

Vera examined the administrative data CCF provided to describe the people who participated in one or more of the three programs over the course of the study period. During the evaluation period, 175 total unique individuals participated in one or more CCF programs. This includes existing and newly enrolled participants in the first reporting period and newly enrolled participants in each subsequent reporting period. (See “Appendix B: Demographic Tables: CCF Participants from December 2020–December 2022” on page 22 for complete demographic information).

- Of the 175 unique participants, 52 percent identified as Black/African American, 17.1 percent as Hispanic/Latina, 14.9 percent as white, 6.4 percent as multiracial, 3.4 percent as other race, 0.6 percent as Asian/Pacific-Islander, and 5.7 percent as unknown.
- Of the 175 participants, nearly 80 percent were ages 30–59. Within that range, 31.4 percent were ages 30–39, 25.1 percent were ages 40–49, and 22.3 percent were ages 50–59. Sixteen percent were ages 18–29 and 3.4 percent were more than 60 years old.
- At the time of enrollment, the 175 participants resided across New York City and the surrounding areas. Nearly one-fifth (19.4 percent) resided in Queens, 18.9 percent resided in lower and midtown Manhattan, 6.9 percent resided in Harlem, 18.9 percent resided in the Bronx, and 16.6 percent resided in Brooklyn. Nearly 14 percent (13.7 percent) resided in surrounding areas outside of New York City and 2.9 percent lived in Staten Island.
- At the time of enrollment, approximately 41 percent of the 175 participants were parents or caregivers to school-aged children.
- At the time of enrollment, most of the 175 participants were unemployed (62.9 percent). Approximately 25 percent were employed full-time and 10.9 percent were employed part-time.
- Of the 175 total participants, the majority (77.7 percent) had been released from jail/prison more than 12 months prior. Nearly 14 percent had been released within the past 7–12 months, 5.7 percent had been released within the past 4–6 months, and 1.7 percent had been released within the past 0–3 months.
- At the time of enrollment, 35.6 percent of participants had completed some college or vocational school. One third (33.3 percent) reported having completed high school or a GED,

16.1 percent reported completing an unspecified college degree, 2.3 percent reported completing an unspecified vocational degree or certificate, and 8 percent reported completing some high school.<sup>25</sup>

Participants continued enrollment through multiple quarters, and new enrollees made up a small proportion of total participants each quarter. Participants may have been enrolled in only one program but were often dual or triple enrolled. See Table 1 for a breakdown of program enrollment by quarter.

**Table 1. Total participants per quarter, regardless of co-enrollment**

Existing and newly enrolled participants in each quarter

|                                     | ASP | CAP | PMP/UM | Total unique participants across all programs |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|--------|---|
| <b>December 2020–February 2021</b>  | 86  | 21  | 15     | 102   |
| <b>March 2021–May 2021</b>          | 103 | 19  | 23     | 113   |
| <b>June 2021–August 2021</b>        | 87  | 24  | 31     | 104   |
| <b>September 2021–November 2021</b> | 83  | 17  | 30     | 95  |
| <b>December 2021–February 2022</b>  | 63  | 19  | 21     | 76  |
| <b>March 2022–May 2022</b>          | 75  | 22  | 12     | 88  |
| <b>June 2022–September 2022</b>     | 96  | 16  | 41     | 107   |
| <b>October 2022–December 2022</b>   | 66  | 13  | 19     | 83  |

Participants may or may not have been co-enrolled in more than one program per quarter and may have enrolled in multiple quarters.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

People could also co-enroll in programming. Due to the aggregated data included in this analysis and the lack of longitudinal data on individuals, Vera is unable to provide accurate counts of co-enrolled participants over the course of the study period by specific co-enrollment configuration. Disregarding co-enrollment, 154 people participated in ASP, 43 participated in CAP, and 57 participated in the Peer Mentoring Program (PMP)/UM at some point over the study period.

The remainder of the findings presented are organized by program, as each program had differing levels of enrollment and engagement over the study period. The majority (88 percent) of participants over the study period enrolled in ASP at some point, partially because it is a prerequisite for co-enrollment in other programming for a period. Second, as discussed in the “Contextualizing the study period” section on page 8, ASP did not undergo structural modifications to its programming over the study period, unlike CAP and PMP/UM.

## **Engagement and retention in CCF programming**

### **Academic Support Program**

The data showed that CCF provided support to ASP participants in two main ways: preparing newly enrolled students for college applications and supporting continuing students in their academic journeys. CCF quickly engaged newly enrolled participants in services in their first quarter. There were high retention rates of both continuing and newly enrolled participants; that is, participants continued to engage with services over multiple quarters and only a small portion of participants exited the program without graduating from their academic programs. Both continuing and newly enrolled participants engaged with academic counseling at high rates, yet continuing participants engaged with other program components at higher rates than newly enrolled participants. These patterns of engagement are unsurprising, as newly enrolled participants would be directed to focus on getting acclimated to the program and prioritizing academic counseling initially, compared to returning participants who may have developed the capacity to engage with program components beyond academic counseling. Lastly, the majority of eligible participants in ASP engaged with and received support from the supplemental multigenerational programming (MultiGen) that was designed to strengthen families and communities and included organizing caregiver–child study sessions, holding an annual retreat for children of reentering caregivers, and working with financial institutions to establish savings accounts for children.

#### *Newly enrolled participants: Enrollment, retention, and college readiness*

Over the course of the study period, CCF was able to engage new participants in programming relatively quickly. CCF staff were able to screen participants and initiate service usage for those enrolled or co-enrolled in ASP in 12 days or less, on average. All newly enrolled ASP participants entered the program at either the College Readiness Phase, for students who are preparing to become college ready, or the College Access Phase, for students who are ready to enter college in the following two semesters or are in pursuit of earning up to 12 college credits. In practice, this means that newly enrolled participants were able to engage with CCF staff to complete a college-readiness consultation or individual academic counseling fairly quickly following their initial screening. CCF was able to successfully retain the majority of newly enrolled participants. Over the course of the study period, only six of 81 (7.4 percent) newly enrolled ASP participants exited the program the same quarter they began.

When looking at participants’ college application and enrollment statuses, Vera found that it typically took more than one quarter before most participants began taking classes. During the study period, the majority of newly enrolled ASP participants (participants who enrolled in ASP that quarter) remained in the pre-application phase in their first quarter; that is, they did not submit a college application their first quarter and/or planned to submit an application in the future. During this phase, ASP participants received support from ASP to complete financial aid applications, retrieve prior transcripts, and navigate college admissions bureaucracy.

### *Continuing participants: Enrollment, retention, and college access*

Although only reported in the aggregate, the data showed that the majority of ASP participants re-enrolled in programming following their first quarter and remained engaged in programming for multiple subsequent quarters. In fact, the average time of engagement between initial and last service engagement ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 years for most of the study period, down from a high of nearly 6.5 years from December 2020 to February 2021. Further, only 25 continuing participants exited programming without graduating over the study period. This suggests that most of the ASP participants continued engagement with CCF over most, if not all, of the two-year study period.

Continuing participants received different kinds of support from ASP programming compared to newly enrolled students. In contrast to newly enrolled participants, the majority of returning ASP participants were enrolled in college classes and had enrolled in a prior quarter. In fact, Vera found that, on average, 67.7 percent of returning ASP participants each quarter were taking college classes and had enrolled in a prior quarter. Of these returning students, the majority were enrolled in either bachelor's or associate's degree programs. On average, 44.6 percent of continuing students were enrolled in bachelor's degree programs, 38.8 percent were enrolled in associate's degree programs, and 16.6 percent were enrolled in graduate degree programs. Further, most of the students, whether newly enrolled or continuing, were enrolled at the City University of New York.

### *Engagement with ASP components*

Participants were most engaged with the academic counseling component of the program. Most ASP participants attended at least one academic counseling session each quarter. Overall, an average of 83.3 percent of participants attended at least one academic counseling session each quarter during the study period, and participants averaged 2.6 sessions each. Of note, the average participation of new participants each quarter slightly surpassed that of returning participants. On average, 97.1 percent of new participants attended at least one academic counseling session in their first quarter, compared to an average of 81.3 percent of returning participants in the same quarter. However, returning participants who attended at least one academic session attended more academic counseling sessions on average (3.1) compared to new participants (2.1) in the same quarter.

After academic counseling, participants enrolled or co-enrolled in ASP were most engaged in ASP community meetings, though at a much lower rate. Over the course of the study period, an average of 41 percent of participants attended at least one meeting per quarter. However, this was driven largely by returning participants. On average, 45.4 percent of returning participants attended at least one ASP community meeting per quarter, compared to only 6.6 percent of newly enrolled participants in their first quarter. Further, returning participants attended an average of 1.5 meetings per quarter, whereas newly enrolled participants averaged only 0.2 meetings in their first quarter.

Additionally, CCF offered supplemental programming called MultiGen, which emphasized a multigenerational approach to services. This programming, aimed primarily at ASP participants but also open to CAP participants, specifically targeted support to participants who were parents/caregivers via family-friendly events and monetary stipends. Over the course of the study period, eligible continuing participants engaged with these services fairly regularly. That is, on average, approximately 45 percent of returning ASP participants who were parents/caregivers to school-aged children, youth, and young adults ages 0–18 enrolled in MultiGen programming each quarter. No newly enrolled eligible ASP/CAP participants enrolled in MultiGen programming in their first quarter. Over the two-year period, CCF distributed 89 total MultiGen stipends. Most, if not all, participants in MultiGen programming received a stipend each quarter, and some participants received more than one stipend per quarter. CCF distributed approximately \$55,500 in MultiGen stipends to eligible participants. MultiGen participants could receive up to \$1,000 per semester for full participation, which included attending four workshops, one one-on-one session with a facilitator, and one family activity. CCF reduced stipends for participants who did not complete all segments of the program in the semester.



## **Career Advancement Program**

CCF staff engaged newly enrolled CAP participants in service usage relatively quickly. Over the course of the study period, the average time from initial screening to service usage was approximately 13 days. In fact, by the end of each quarter, all new and existing CAP participants actively enrolled had successfully progressed through the intake and skills and readiness assessment phases and were in either the Career Prep Phase, receiving career preparation skills and coaching, or the Career Success Phase, with a job placement and on-the-job coaching.

The CAP program had a strong retention rate. Over the course of the study period, CAP participants were engaged with services for a little less than one year on average (approximately 349 days from the time of first to last service usage). Only 14 participants (32.6 percent of CAP participants) exited the CAP programming early—without an internship or job placement—and only one of those was newly enrolled in their first quarter. That is, nearly all participants remained engaged with programming beyond their first quarter.

### *Engagement with CAP components*

Participants were most engaged with the on-the-job coaching and/or career coaching components of the program. Nearly all CAP participants attended at least one on-the-job coaching and/or career coaching session each quarter. Overall, an average of 96.8 percent of participants attended at least one on-the-job coaching and/or career coaching session each quarter during the study period. Of note, 100 percent of new participants each quarter attended at least one on-the-job coaching and/or career coaching session, compared to an average of 93.9 percent of returning participants per quarter.

After on-the-job coaching and/or career coaching, participants who enrolled or co-enrolled in CAP were most engaged in CAP-specific workshops, though at a much lower rate. Over the course of the study period, an average of nearly 23 percent of participants attended at least one CAP-specific workshop a quarter. However, this was driven largely by returning participants. On completion of CAP, participants become CAP Fellows. CCF assisted CAP Fellows with job placements and on-the-job coaching to support retention. (See “Appendix A: Detailed description of programming” on page 20.) Over the course of the study period, CCF placed 11 fellows (25.6 percent of CAP participants). Of the 11, eight received a 30-day retention bonus, seven received a six-month bonus, and two received a one-year retention bonus.

Regarding financial support, CCF distributed 21 total CAP-specific stipends totaling \$2,025 to CAP participants over the course of the study period. Of those, 95 percent were awarded to continuing program participants.

Additionally, as mentioned previously, CCF expanded CAP during the project to include a CAP Select option, which CCF implemented in order to make services available to people who were not first enrolled in ASP or were unable/did not want to enroll in the full CAP curriculum. CAP Select offered a la carte services that participants could self-select. After CCF created this option, it referred to the full CAP curriculum as CAP Max and gave CAP Select participants the option to transition to CAP Max. From December 2021 to December 2022, five participants engaged with CAP Select services and none of them transitioned to CAP Max.

## **Peer Mentoring Program/Uplift Mentoring**

New participants were enrolled in PMP/UM in half of the quarters included in the study period. During the four quarters in which new participants were enrolled, the average time from screening to initial service usage for those enrolled or co-enrolled in PMP/UM ranged from two days to about eight weeks.

PMP/UM retained program participants an average of just more than eight months (approximately 247 days from the time of first to last service usage). Twenty total participants exited the peer mentoring programming early, meaning they did not complete the curriculum, and six of those were newly enrolled in their first quarter.

#### *Engagement with peer mentoring program components*

Participants were most engaged with the one-one-one mentoring sessions component of the program. The majority (86.2 percent) of the peer mentoring participants over the course of the study period attended at least one one-on-one session each quarter. Of note, 93.8 percent of returning participants each quarter attended at least one one-on-one mentoring session compared to an average of 63.3 percent of new participants per quarter. On average, returning participants attended 3.5 one-on-one mentoring sessions per quarter compared to new participants, who attended an average of 1.4 sessions per quarter.

After one-on-one mentoring sessions, participants enrolled or co-enrolled in the peer mentoring programming were most engaged in group mentoring sessions (Sister Circles), though at a lower rate. Over the course of the study period, an average of 71.6 percent of participants attended at least one group mentoring session per quarter. An average of 68.4 percent of returning participants attended at least one group mentoring session each quarter compared to an average of 80 percent of new participants (in the four quarters there were new enrollees). On average, returning participants attended about two group mentoring sessions a quarter, and new participants averaged one session in their first quarter.

Regarding financial support, CCF distributed 156 total stipends totaling approximately \$15,225 to PMP/UM participants over the course of the study period.

### **Additional disbursements and supportive services referrals**

Total number of financial disbursements from the BOSS project, by disbursement type:

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| ➤ Education (such as books, paying off school debt)       | 276   |
| ➤ Transportation (such as MetroCards, parking passes)     | 106.5 |
| ➤ Non-education emergency funds (such as rent assistance) | 27.3  |
| ➤ Other   | 11    |
| ➤ Childcare (such as day care costs)                      | 0     |

Total number of referrals to supportive services by CCF program staff for

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| ➤ Health care                   | 31 |
| ➤ Other                         | 30 |
| ➤ Legal advice                  | 23 |
| ➤ Personal financial counseling | 20 |
| ➤ Housing                       | 10 |
| ➤ Workforce development         | 3  |
| ➤ Benefits access               | 1  |



## Completions

Participants had to engage in different components and meet different expectations in each of the three CCF programs in order to successfully “complete” the program. For ASP, CCF considered participants to have completed the program once they successfully graduated from their academic programs and obtained their credentials. There was no time limit to completion for ASP participants. Over the course of the study, 21 participants (13.6 percent of ASP participants) successfully completed ASP. For CAP, CCF considered participants to have completed the program once they successfully completed all components of the curriculum, including finishing the Career Readiness Phase and Career Prep curriculum modules, submitting a professional portfolio (including a resume, sample cover letter, and sample thank-you letter), and participating in a mock job interview. Job or internship placement, although highly encouraged, was not a requirement of CAP completion. There was no time limit to completion for CAP. Over the course of the study, 13 participants (30.2 percent) completed CAP or transitioned to CAP Fellows (of these, as mentioned previously, 11 CAP Fellows, or 84.6 percent, were successfully placed in a job or internship). For UM, CCF considered participants to have completed the year-long program once they completed both the mentoring curriculum and subsequent mentoring sessions portion of the program. Over the course of the study period, 51 mentees (89.5 percent of UM participants) completed the mentoring curriculum and 25 mentees (43.9 percent of UM participants) went on to complete the entire program.

## Participant and staff perceptions of CCF programming

In addition to the analysis of administrative data, Vera conducted a survey of current CCF participants and held interviews with CCF program participants and staff to better understand their perceptions of CCF programming. Vera asked participants to describe their experiences with the program(s), what aspects they found most valuable, and what areas could be improved. This section provides the key findings from Vera’s analysis. (See “Appendix C: Additional Survey Findings” on page 30 for supplemental survey information).

### Core program strengths


The surveys and interviews revealed four program elements integral to its success.

**1. Participants reported overwhelmingly positive experiences in programming, particularly related to ASP and CAP staff, who provided support above and beyond their job roles.**

Program participants described CCF staff providing support and encouragement in addition to academic counseling or financial aid advising, which made them “feel seen and important.” Participants highlighted CCF staff’s understanding of and responsiveness to their specific needs related to being formerly incarcerated, such as living in assisted-living housing or being under community supervision.

**2. Participants repeatedly highlighted program staff in all three programs for their commitment to supporting program participants.** Participants described many instances of staff flexibility and support tailored to students’ individualized needs. The committed staff “made sure [to follow] through for the [participant] on the other end” and were clearly an integral part of all the programming. As one participant told Vera: “When I first started school, it was a new world to me, and my counselor at the time helped me so much. I would call her stressed out due to not understanding something, and she always took her time to listen to me and direct me. I wouldn’t have a college degree without CCF.”

**3. The programming cultivated a strong, supportive community among participants that respondents, especially those with children, identified as a valuable resource.** Participants described how connecting with other program participants at community events and program gatherings, such as Sister Circles, cultivated a “sense of community” and provided networking opportunities.



“I wouldn’t have a college degree without CCF.”

**4. Financial support, including stipends, transportation and housing aid, and other economic resources helped participants establish stability, a prerequisite to pursuing their career and academic goals.** Participants most often cited financial support as the most important and impactful aspect of participating in CCF programming, as it helped them to continue working toward their academic and career goals.

#### Academic Support Program

- **Among ASP participants Vera engaged with, the majority agreed that “program staff helped [them] make progress toward achieving [their] academic goals.”** Seventy-three percent of survey respondents who answered this question agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Participants described staff providing both detailed academic advising and emotional support in navigating through stressful administrative processes. One respondent described how CCF staff had spent hours in the office with her, reviewing paperwork and making phone calls to consolidate her loans. As a result, she was able to enroll in college and attributes “everything because of CCF. So since then, I’ve stuck with CCF.” Another ASP participant described a similarly supportive experience with CCF staff:

In the beginning I felt taken care of. I didn't have the money for transcripts or application fees, and it was like they knew it and didn't make me ask for the help. They just handled it. It meant a lot. Feeling accepted and having clear expectations to meet made me want to be active, and CCF delivered on everything they promised. When I was in school during the pandemic, my counselor checked in with me and made sure I had what I needed for virtual learning. I felt seen and important. My counselor reassured me and gave me the encouragement to keep working toward my goals, and she gave me really good advice.

- **Participants often cited financial support as an important aspect of ASP in making progress toward academic goals, including funds for transcripts, books, MetroCards, and tuition.** When asked if the financial support they received in ASP helped them achieve their academic goals, seventy-five percent of survey respondents in ASP who answered this question agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Of that subset that found financial support important, 58 percent identified financial support as the most helpful component of the programming.
- **Participants who had received resource referrals cited them as helpful, but some participants were unclear on how to access this resource and therefore were unable to capitalize on it.** In one example, an ASP participant described knowing about available assistance to purchase textbooks, but they were unable to successfully access the resource before their courses started, resulting in them purchasing the books themselves:

I spoke to [my CCF academic counselor] about the books. I have to send her [a list of] the books that I need, and they order them and send them to me. I have not figured out how to do that. So, once I figure it out, maybe by next semester they can order me some books. But this semester, I ended up spending my own money on the books I needed, because I couldn't figure it out. I was like, “Well, I need the books.”

When staff were able to directly connect program participants to referred support services, participants found them very helpful: “The staff was able to guide me through with setting up tutoring, which I most definitely needed.”

- **Many participants found the academic advising, tutoring/learning support, and community meetings that they were able to use helpful in achieving their academic goals and expressed that increased availability and opportunities for engagement would improve services further.** More than half of ASP survey respondents that provided responses reported

family responsibilities, job demands, legal requirements, and/or conflicting schedules as the most difficult challenges to participating in programming opportunities.

- **Participants identified financial hardship and housing instability as the greatest challenges they faced in participating in the program.** As one respondent described, “Because being released from prison, we are behind many others as far as social economic status . . . and the lack of funds can be a major stress and can deter us from achieving our goals. Survival [or] having stability and basic necessities seem far more important.”

“Feeling accepted and having clear expectations to meet made me want to be active and CCF delivered on everything they promised. . . . I felt seen and important. . . . My counselor reassured me and gave me the encouragement to keep working toward my goals, and she gave me really good advice.”

- **Program participants pointed to staff turnover as the most important area for improvement.** Many participants described building positive relationships with individual CCF staff and then struggling to maintain engagement with CCF programming after that staff member left. As one participant put it, “That could be a real headache because you get like, you know, it’s like a meeting of minds when you meet somebody new and they’re there to support you. How your reaction is to each other, how do you respond to one another, how you process each other’s thoughts, and you get to learn [from] one another and then you get so caught in with one person and then next week they tell you, ‘This person’s no longer there.’”

- **Overall, ASP participants reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with the programming they received and agreed that they would recommend the programming to others.** Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents enrolled in ASP who provided a response reported that they were “extremely satisfied” with their experience, and 86 percent of those who responded said they would recommend ASP to others. Additionally, participants described relying heavily on CCF staff for support, especially during the pandemic: “In the beginning of the pandemic, they also changed the community meetings to virtual, and they weren’t like lectures. We shared our fears about the virus and learned how to take care of ourselves from each other. CCF played a really important role in making me able to stay focused and connected while the whole world was falling apart.”

### Career Advancement Program

- **CAP participants reported positive experiences with program staff and the career coaching they received.** Many participants described how CCF staff would provide on-call career coaching and extend their available hours, providing guidance on topics such as professional communication and using technology in the workplace. One participant praised the CAP career coach as “phenomenal, patient, and understanding with the barriers that a formerly incarcerated or returning citizen might have.”
- **Participants in this program found the job development and skill-building components valuable aspects of the programming.** Participants described how the resume building and interviewing skill building helped them “figure out how to sell the things that [they] did” in order to “develop where [they] wanted to go with [their] career.”
- **Participants highly valued and appreciated the financial resources available in this program.** Participants described receiving financial resources such as MetroCards,

professional clothing, and job retention bonuses while enrolled in the program. They also described feeling proud when CCF staff celebrated their career accomplishments.

- **Participants most often pointed to academic pressure and time management as the most challenging aspects of participating in the program.** They described struggling to “balance being a working student-caregiver” with completing some of the program requirements, such as the professional portfolio.

## Uplift Mentoring

- **The UM participants Vera engaged with unanimously agreed that their peer mentors helped them make progress toward achieving their career and education goals.** Participants valued peer mentors for their supportive communication, knowledge, and experience navigating postsecondary education after incarceration.
- **Respondents in this program described experiencing a supportive community of program participants.** Participants told Vera that other program participants supported them and that the community events, such as Sister Circles, contributed to their progress in achieving their goals. According to respondents, UM fostered a “sense of community” and provided opportunities for networking and organizing among women with similar experiences: “I have also been making connections with students past and present [who] have the same or similar goals as myself and that alone is uplifting.”
- **Program participants highlighted financial support in the form of stipends as a valuable resource that helped alleviate stress and assisted their continued enrollment in postsecondary education.** Additionally, respondents described resources such as “the laptop program” as making returning to school online much more attainable.
- **When participants reported having trouble meeting program obligations, they pointed to external pressures such as family responsibilities and job demands as the most challenging aspects of participating in the program.** Sixty percent of survey respondents that provided a response reported family obligations and job demands as the biggest obstacle to participation, explaining that “mentor meeting days regularly fall on days with work or school.”
- **Overall, UM participants were very satisfied with the programming they received and agreed that they would recommend UM to others.** Nearly all survey respondents that provided responses indicated high levels of satisfaction, and participants Vera spoke to agreed that they were very satisfied with the mentoring programming they had received. Additionally, nearly all survey and interview respondents reported that they would recommend UM to others.

## Conclusion

### Recommendations

- 1. Reconsider co-enrollment prerequisites for programs.** Co-enrollment in ASP was a prerequisite for enrollment in CAP services. Staff pointed out that this created a barrier to access for participants interested in CAP services but unable to enroll in a college program at the time. Removing this barrier would increase the number of eligible participants and may increase CAP enrollment.
- 2. Allow for more flexibility in the timing of required programming components, such as workshops and peer mentor meetings.** Less rigid time-restricted components would expand access for participants and alleviate the stress of conflicting obligations, particularly for working student-caregivers.
- 3. Expand career advancement information and strategies for student-caregivers specifically.** Many participants discussed the difficulty of managing the demands of work and

school at the same time. They highlighted how participation in this type of targeted programming helped them balance those demands and mitigate stress.

**4. Increase retention efforts in the Peer Mentoring Program (PMP/UM).** Retaining participants in the program longer may increase the available pool of peer mentors, as mentees can transition to a mentor role.

**5. Reduce staff turnover and strengthen continuity of communication when new staff are hired.** Although participants praised staff commitment and support, participants cited staff turnover as one of the greatest challenges in participating in programming as it resulted in the loss of built-up trust and familiarity, resulting in breakdowns in communication and threatening continuity of programming. When possible, CCF should consider providing additional communication mechanisms, such as texting, for participants to reach staff and prioritizing uninterrupted staff-participant advising.

**6. Expand resource referrals to include extracurricular academic activities for children living with participants, such as tutoring services, in order to provide more support to parent/caregiver participants and their families.** CCF should solicit regular feedback from parent/caregiver participants regarding what types of other extracurricular activities for children would be valuable and consider partnering with external organizations for referrals.

The recommendations in this report are specific to CCF but may be relevant to similar programming. For example, other reentry organizations offering programming may want to consider whether co-enrollment requirements are useful, since they may be a barrier to enrollment. Reentry programs serving primary caregivers, most likely to be women, may want to prioritize flexible timing for offering programming and services to accommodate conflicting obligations and overloaded schedules. Additionally, these organizations may want to offer resources aimed at children, such as extracurricular activities and tutoring, to better support primary caregiver clients. Lastly, similar reentry organizations may benefit from efforts to reduce staff turnover and improve communication between staff and clients. Implementing these broad recommendations may improve engagement and retention of clients and make services more accessible.

## Next Steps

One of CCF's greatest strengths is its resilience and ability to evolve in response to the many significant challenges the COVID-19 pandemic imposed. CCF staff provided individualized support to program participants and adapted to the ever-changing needs that arose. At the time of writing, CCF was planning additional programmatic changes, including the termination of CAP and the expansion of an internal internship program. As previously stated, however, this continuous evolution challenges Vera's ability to evaluate the program—student outcomes from recent cohorts may not reflect the performance of current or future students.

Vera's analysis shows that CCF's BOSS programming has supported participants in achieving their academic and career goals, key components to their successful reentry after incarceration. It was difficult to discern through this evaluation, however, which factors contributed to program completion versus program participation.

CCF programming participants overwhelmingly praised CCF staff and the resources they received through participation. CCF staff provided individualized, multi-layered support to participants, instructing them on navigating complicated bureaucracies and encouraging the development of interpersonal and professional skills. The impact of programming such as CCF's BOSS programming may not be easily quantified in a short evaluation like this. The staff and program participants whom Vera surveyed and interviewed for this evaluation described how valuable being a member of the community was to them and how much they appreciated a network of women who shared and understood their experiences. The impact of this kind of programming goes beyond individuals and

extends to their families and communities. BOSS programming participants described how they were able to provide stability for their families, remain sober from substance abuse, and achieve goals they previously had thought impossible. Based on participants' and staff's experiences, CCF's BOSS programming is likely to have a significant positive impact beyond participants' completion rates.



# Appendix A: Detailed Description of Programming

## Academic Support Program

Each woman enrolled in the Academic Support Program (ASP) receives multi-year engagement to support them progressively through academic degrees. The process begins with a college-readiness consultation assessment. From there, participants receive individualized academic counseling; as-needed referrals to supportive services (health care, housing, legal advice, and others); personal financial counseling; referral to the Career Advancement Program (CAP) for workforce development programming; and personal and social supports (including supports to improve family functioning), such as community-building gifts, holiday family events, and emergency funds, to help them achieve their and ASP's main goal of a college degree. ASP participants receive multi-year services as they complete their degrees. A minimum of one meeting with an academic counselor is required per semester, and participants must attend two College and Community Fellowship (CCF) activities per semester that can include a community meeting attendance, event volunteering, advocacy participation, or other activities. ASP formalized its offerings to include multigenerational services (MultiGen) that are designed to strengthen families and communities, such as conducting caregiver-child study sessions, holding an annual retreat for children of reentering caregivers, and working with financial institutions to establish savings accounts for children.

ASP includes the following phases:

- College Readiness Phase (Community Sisters): Students who are preparing to become college ready.
- College Access Phase (Future Fellows): Students who are ready to enter college in the following two semesters or are in pursuit of earning up to 12 college credits.
- College Success Phase (Fellows, Undergraduate): Students pursuing undergraduate degrees who have earned 12 college credits as Future Fellows are eligible for additional final supports in this phase.
- College Beyond Phase (Fellows, Graduate): Students pursuing graduate degrees who have earned 12 college credits as Future Fellows are eligible for additional final supports in this phase.
- Completed: Graduation.
- Exited: Case converted to inactive.

A participant successfully completes ASP when she earns a college degree.

## Career Advancement Program

Each woman enrolled in CAP receives multi-year engagement to support her transition from career readiness to job placement and retention. The process begins with a career-readiness assessment focusing on digital literacy, soft skills, resume, and cover letter. Participants, called CAP Fellows, receive career curriculum modules based on assessment needs combined with career coaching; as-needed referrals to supportive services (health care, housing, legal advice, and others); personal financial counseling; referral to ASP for higher education guidance and supports (for those not already enrolled in ASP); and personal and social supports (including supports to improve family functioning) to help them achieve their and CAP's main goal of gainful career-based employment.

CAP includes the following phases:

- Career Awareness: Participants preparing for career-building. This phase includes participation in College and Career Awareness workshops (recruitment).
- Career Access: Participants ready to engage with career-building programming. This phase includes participation in a phone screening and intake process.



- Career Readiness: Participants develop a career readiness plan. This phase includes career readiness assessment, career readiness plan, and participation in monthly community meetings.
- Career Prep: Participants complete four modules of curriculum focused on career-building skills. Participants also receive financial support, such as MetroCards, technology assistance, and resource referrals, and they participate in monthly community meetings.
  - Module 1: Participants engage with curriculum focused on technology and digital literacy.
  - Module 2: Participants engage with curriculum focused on building soft skills and participate in one-on-one career coaching sessions.
  - Module 3: Participants engage with curriculum focused on interviewing with employers, negotiating effectively, and building a resume. Additionally, participants complete a professional portfolio and participate in a mock interview.
  - Module 4: If applicable, participants receive job search and placement coaching, on-the-job coaching, and job-retention bonuses.
- Career Success Phase (Fellows): Participants who have completed Career Prep and are ready for job placement, have received job placement, or are still engaging with CAP curriculum and support services with no job placement.

A participant successfully completes CAP when she finishes all components of the curriculum; a professional portfolio, consisting of a resume, sample cover letter, and sample thank-you letter; and a mock interview. Job or internship placement is supported, but not required, in order to successfully complete CAP. As such, CAP completion can include completion and job placement, completion and internship placement, or completion and exited/no placement.

### **Peer Mentoring Program/Uplift Mentoring**

The Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) originally included a 12-week curriculum for incarcerated women pre-release, focusing on college and career education and pairing them with a mentor outside of prison. The mentor was a woman who had earned at least one college degree and had criminal legal system involvement. Because of COVID-19, CCF never offered PMP to incarcerated women pre-release, and CCF adapted the programming and renamed it Uplift Mentoring (UM). In UM, CCF matched formerly incarcerated women with a mentor upon release, who was a woman with at least one college degree and criminal legal system involvement. In addition to mentor/mentee match support from the associate director of mentor services, UM mentees receive as-needed referrals to supportive services (health care, housing, legal advice, and others); personal financial counseling; referral to ASP for higher education guidance and supports and to CAP for employment needs; and personal and social support (including support to improve family functioning). UM's main goal is to assist women through a successful reentry, including transition to college. UM participants receive services once per week for the 12-week curriculum while incarcerated, but frequency may be modified based on the facility's needs and capacity to accommodate UM programming. Post-release, UM participants have at least two engagements with an assigned mentor, with an option of having one of those engagements be virtual. In addition, mentors and mentees attend two activities (such as a community meeting, summer outing, or holiday celebration) at CCF each semester.

A participant successfully completes UM when she has participated in one year of mentoring services post-release.

## Appendix B: Demographic Tables: CCF Program Participants from December 2020–December 2022

These demographic tables are based on administrative data College and Community Fellowship (CCF) provided to Vera. CCF collected the information about program participants and reported it to Vera in aggregated quarters. Tables include “unknown,” meaning CCF was not able to collect information about participants.

**Table 2. Race/ethnicity of total individuals who participated in CCF programming**

(December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022)

|                        | <b>Total participated</b> |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| White/Caucasian        | 26 (14.9%)                |
| Black/African American | 91 (52%)                  |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 1 (0.6%)                  |
| Hispanic/Latino/a      | 30 (17.1%)                |
| Multiracial            | 11 (6.3%)                 |
| Other race             | 6 (3.4%)                  |
| Unknown                | 10 (5.7%)                 |
| Total                  | 175 (100%)                |

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

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**Table 3. Age distribution of total individuals who participated in CCF programming**

(December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022)

|                | <b>Total participated</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>18–20</b>   | 2 (1.1%)                  |
| <b>21–24</b>   | 11 (6.3%)                 |
| <b>25–29</b>   | 15 (8.6%)                 |
| <b>30–39</b>   | 55 (31.4%)                |
| <b>40–49</b>   | 44 (25.1%)                |
| <b>50–59</b>   | 39 (22.3%)                |
| <b>60–69</b>   | 6 (3.4%)                  |
| <b>70+</b>     | 0                         |
| <b>Unknown</b> | 3 (1.7%)                  |
| <b>Total</b>   | 175 (100%)                |

Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

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**Table 4. Current residence of total individuals who participated in CCF programming**

(December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022)

|                                  | <b>Total participated</b> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Lower East Side</b>           | 0%                        |
| <b>West &amp; Central Harlem</b> | 7 (4%)                    |
| <b>East Harlem</b>               | 5 (2.9%)                  |
| <b>Washington Heights</b>        | 2 (1.1%)                  |
| <b>Other: Manhattan</b>          | 33 (18.9%)                |
| <b>Brooklyn</b>                  | 29 (16.6%)                |
| <b>Bronx</b>                     | 33 (18.9%)                |
| <b>Queens</b>                    | 34 (19.4%)                |
| <b>Staten Island</b>             | 5 (2.9%)                  |
| <b>Other: Outside NYC</b>        | 24 (13.7%)                |
| <b>Unknown</b>                   | 3 (1.7%)                  |
| <b>Total</b>                     | 175 (100%)                |

Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

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### Table 5. Parent/caregiver status of total individuals who participated in CCF programming

(December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022)

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|  | Total participated |
|--|--------------------|
| Parent/caregiver to school-aged child(ren)       | 72 (41.1%)         |
| Not a parent/caregiver to school-aged child(ren) | 103 (58.9%)        |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>175 (100%)</b>  |

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

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### Table 6. Employment status of total individuals who participated in CCF programming

(December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022)

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|                    | Total participated |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Employed full-time | 44 (25.1%)         |
| Employed part-time | 19 (10.9%)         |
| Unemployed         | 110 (62.9%)        |
| Unknown            | 2 (1.1%)           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>175 (100%)</b>  |

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

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**Table 7. Highest educational attainment at time of consultation or enrollment of total individuals who participated in CCF programming**

(This is only reported for participants who were newly enrolled from December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022, and was not reported for existing participants.)

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|  | <b>Total participated</b> |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Less than high school</b>             | 0%                        |
| <b>Some high school</b>                  | 7 (8%)                    |
| <b>High school diploma/GED</b>           | 29 (33.3%)                |
| <b>Some college or vocational school</b> | 31 (35.6%)                |
| <b>Vocational degree/certificate</b>     | 2 (2.3%)                  |
| <b>College degree</b>                    | 14 (16.1%)                |
| <b>Unknown</b>                           | 4 (4.6%)                  |
| <b>Total</b>                             | 87 (100%)                 |

Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

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**Table 8. Prior enrollment in college program at NYS correctional facility at time of consultation or enrollment of total individuals who participated in CCF programming**

(This is only reported for participants who were newly enrolled from December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022, and was not reported for existing participants.)

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|  | <b>Total participated</b> |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Previously enrolled in college program in NYS correctional facility</b>     | 24 (27.6%)                |
| <b>Not previously enrolled in college program at NYS correctional facility</b> | 60 (69%)                  |
| <b>Unknown</b>   | 3 (3.4%)                  |
| <b>Total</b>   | 87 (100%)                 |

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.



**Table 9. Time since release from incarceration as part of a sentence at time of consultation or enrollment of total individuals who participated in CCF programming**

(December 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022)

|   | <b>Total participated</b> |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Released from jail/prison within the past 0–3 months</b>       | 3 (1.7%)                  |
| <b>Released from jail/prison within the past 4–6 months</b>       | 10 (5.7%)                 |
| <b>Released from jail/prison within the past 7–12 months</b>      | 24 (13.7%)                |
| <b>Released from jail/prison more than 12 months ago</b>          | 136 (77.7%)               |
| <b>Spent time in jail/prison, but did not disclose time frame</b> | 2 (1.1%)                  |
| <b>Currently spending time in jail/prison</b>                     | 0%                        |
| <b>Did not spend time in jail/prison, but was arrested</b>        | 0%                        |
| <b>Never spent time in jail/prison</b>                            | 0%                        |
| <b>Total</b>  | 175 (100%)                |

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: CCF administrative data.

## Appendix C: Additional Survey Findings

These tables and figures are based on the survey data collected from 29 CCF participants from January 2022 to October 2022, with a response rate of 28.5 percent. Due to confidentiality restrictions, full survey results are not disclosed. Findings regarding satisfaction with CCF programming overall across all survey participants are included. Disaggregated findings are presented only for respondents enrolled in ASP at the time of the survey, due to confidentiality restrictions, as the survey respondent totals for CAP and UM were ten or less. Tables include “unknown,” meaning survey respondents did not answer the question.

**Table 10. How satisfied are you with the CCF programming overall (thinking about all of the program(s) you may be enrolled in)?**

(N=29, all survey respondents)

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Extremely satisfied</b>    | 14 (48.3%) |
| <b>Somewhat satisfied</b>     | 4 (13.8%)  |
| <b>Neutral (no opinion)</b>   | 1 (3.4%)   |
| <b>Somewhat dissatisfied</b>  | 1 (3.4%)   |
| <b>Extremely dissatisfied</b> | 2 (6.9%)   |
| <b>Unknown</b>                | 7 (24.1%)  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 29 (100%)  |

Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022

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**Table 11. How likely is it that you would you recommend CCF programming to a friend?**

(N=29, all survey respondents)

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Would definitely recommend CCF programming</b> | 16 (55.2%) |
| <b>Likely to recommend CCF programming</b>        | 4 (13.8%)  |
| <b>Neutral (no opinion)</b>                       | 1 (3.4%)   |
| <b>Likely to not recommend CCF programming</b>    | 0 (0%)     |
| <b>Would not recommend CCF programming</b>        | 2 (6.9%)   |
| <b>Unknown</b>                                    | 6 (20.7%)  |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | 29 (100%)  |

Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022

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**Table 12. How satisfied are you with the Academic Support Program?**

(N=18, only ASP respondents)

|                               |             |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Extremely satisfied</b>    | 9 (50.0%)   |
| <b>Somewhat satisfied</b>     | 1 (5.6%)    |
| <b>Neutral (no opinion)</b>   | 1 (5.6%)    |
| <b>Somewhat dissatisfied</b>  | 2 (11.1%)   |
| <b>Extremely dissatisfied</b> | 1 (5.6%)    |
| <b>Unknown</b>                | 4 (22.2%)   |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 18 (100.0%) |

Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022

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**Table 13. How likely is it that you would recommend the Academic Support Program to a friend?**

(N=18, only ASP respondents)

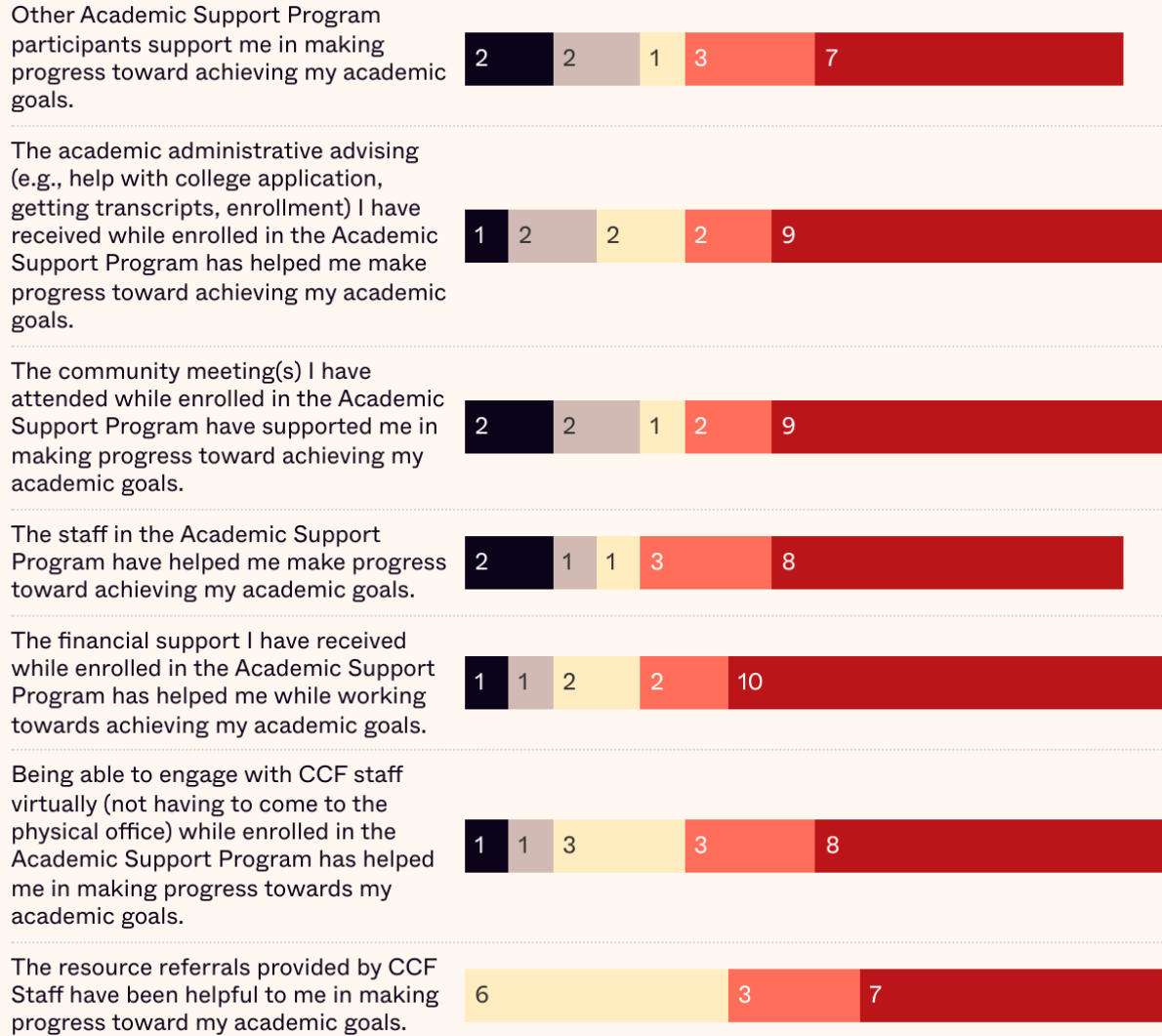
|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Would definitely recommend the Academic Support Program</b> | 11 (61.1%) |
| <b>Likely to recommend the Academic Support Program</b>        | 1 (5.6%)   |
| <b>Neutral (no opinion)</b>                                    | 0 (0%)     |
| <b>Likely to not recommend the Academic Support Program</b>    | 0 (0%)     |
| <b>Would not recommend the Academic Support Program</b>        | 2 (11.1%)  |
| <b>Unknown</b>   | 4 (22.2%)  |
| <b>Total</b>   | 18 (100%)  |

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022

## Value of the Academic Support Program

Figure 1. How much do you agree with the following statements about the value of the Academic Support Program in helping you to achieve your academic goals?

Strongly Disagree
  Disagree
  Neither Agree or Disagree (Neutral)
  Agree
  Strongly Agree



(N=18, only ASP survey respondents; blank responses omitted)

Chart: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022

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**Table 14. Which aspect of the Academic Support Program has been the most important, or helpful, to you in making progress towards your academic goals?**

(N=18, only ASP respondents)

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Financial support</b>                        | 7 (38.9%) |
| <b>Academic Support Program staff</b>           | 3 (16.7%) |
| <b>Other program participants</b>               | 2 (11.1%) |
| <b>Resource referrals provided by CCF staff</b> | 2 (11.1%) |
| <b>Academic counseling or guidance</b>          | 1 (5.6%)  |
| <b>Unknown</b>                                  | 3 (16.7%) |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | 18 (100%) |

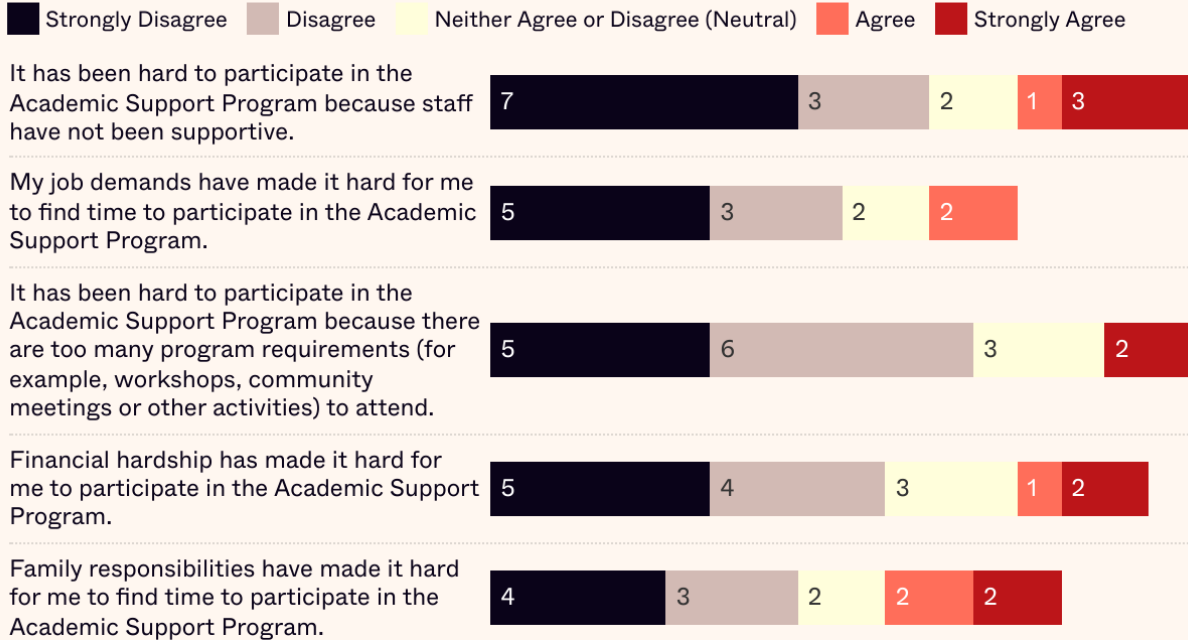
Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022



## Challenges to Participating in the Academic Support Program

Figure 2. How much do you agree the following statements about some possible obstacles or challenges you may have experienced while trying to meet the demands of the Academic Support Program?



(N=18, only ASP survey respondents; blank responses omitted)

Chart: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022

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**Table 15. Which obstacle, or challenge, has been the most difficult for you while participating in the Academic Support Program?**

(N=18, only ASP respondents)

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Staff turnover/not feeling supported by staff</b> | 4 (22.2%) |
| <b>Financial hardship</b>                            | 3 (16.7%) |
| <b>Family responsibilities</b>                       | 3 (16.7%) |
| <b>Job demands</b>                                   | 2 (11.1%) |
| <b>Legal requirements</b>                            | 2 (11.1%) |
| <b>Conflicting schedules</b>                         | 1 (5.6%)  |
| <b>Unknown</b>                                       | 3 (16.7%) |
| <b>Total</b>   | 18 (100%) |

Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table: Vera Institute of Justice • Source: Survey data collected by Vera from January 2022 to October 2022

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## About citations

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Uplift Mentoring (UM) was known as the Peer Mentoring Program until February 2021.
- <sup>2</sup> For national reentry estimates, see E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2021—Statistical Tables* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2022), 19, <https://perma.cc/CS6R-YS37>. For national community supervision estimates, see Danielle Kaeble, *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2020* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021), 1, <https://perma.cc/F97X-J4DK>.
- <sup>3</sup> New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), *Releases and Discharges from Incarceration, Calendar Year 2020* (Albany, NY: DOCCS, 2022), 2, <https://perma.cc/83DF-K9VG>.
- <sup>4</sup> DOCCS, *2018 Releases from Custody, Three Year Post-Release Follow-Up* (Albany, NY: DOCCS, 2023), 2, 7, <https://perma.cc/K8XG-XWW8>.
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- <sup>9</sup> Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner, “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2023,” Prison Policy Initiative, March 14, 2023, <https://perma.cc/3SST-AM3G>.
- <sup>10</sup> E. Ann Carson, *Prisoner Statistics Program—Number of Releases of Sentenced Female Inmates from State or Federal Prisons, 1978–2019* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020) (file downloads automatically), [https://csat.bjs.ojp.gov/assets/documents/QT\\_total%20releases\\_female.xlsx](https://csat.bjs.ojp.gov/assets/documents/QT_total%20releases_female.xlsx).
- <sup>11</sup> Alana Van Gundy and Amy Baumann-Grau, *Women, Incarceration, and Human Rights Violations: Feminist Criminology and Corrections* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
- <sup>12</sup> DOCCS, *2018 Releases from Custody, Three Years Post-Release Follow-Up, 2023*, 9.
- <sup>13</sup> Sawyer and Wagner, “Women’s Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2023,” 2023.
- <sup>14</sup> For information on prevalence of trauma among incarcerated women, see Christy K. Scott, Arthur J. Lurigio, Michael L. Dennis, and Rod R. Funk, “Trauma and Morbidities Among Female Detainees in a Large Urban Jail,” *Prison Journal* 96, no. 1 (2016), 102–125, 103–104, <https://perma.cc/C2R4-74V9>. For national estimates of prevalence of incarcerated parents, see Laura M. Maruschak, Jennifer Bronson, and Mariel Alper, *Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021), 1, <https://perma.cc/UW5J-94YT>.
- <sup>15</sup> Holly Ventura Miller, “Female Re-Entry and Gender-Responsive Programming: Recommendations for Policy and Practice,” *Corrections Today* (May/June 2021), 12–18, 12, <https://perma.cc/BD6C-BNNG>.
- <sup>16</sup> Uplift Mentoring was known as the Peer Mentoring Program until February 2021.
- <sup>17</sup> College & Community Fellowship, “About Us: Mission,” <https://www.collegeandcommunity.org/about-ccf-copy-ly>.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> World Health Organization, “Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic,” <https://perma.cc/G24T-83VZ>.
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- <sup>21</sup> Corinne N. Thompson, Jennifer Baumgartner, Carolina Pichardo, et al., “COVID-19 Outbreak—New York City, February 29–June 1, 2020,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69, no. 46 (2020), 1725–1729, 1725, <https://perma.cc/32BS-4YA4>; and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Response Team, “Geographic Differences in COVID-19 Cases, Deaths, and Incidence—United States, February 12–April 7, 2020,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69, no. 15 (2020), 465–471, 465, <https://perma.cc/KC2A-RD59>.

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<sup>22</sup> Thompson, Baumgartner, Pichardo, et al., “COVID-19 Outbreak—New York City, February 29–June 1, 2020,” 2020, 1725.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Office of the Mayor of New York City, “New York City to Close All School Buildings and Transition to Remote Learning,” press release (New York: Office of the Mayor of New York City, March 15, 2020), <https://perma.cc/4VA3-HSXF>.

<sup>24</sup> Maury Gittleman, “The ‘Great Resignation’ in Perspective,” *Monthly Labor Review*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 2022, <https://perma.cc/F9BJ-6DEF>.

<sup>25</sup> Like similar demographic information, highest level of education was that attained at the time of initial enrollment. Because most CCF participants enrolled in ASP first and then enrolled in postsecondary education, this metric changed for participants over time. Therefore, this data was only reported to Vera for new participants over the study period (n=87).