



April 6, 2023

Road Map Bulletin: Q&A with Jesus Robles – Examining Transitional Care for Formerly Incarcerated New Yorkers

Happy Thursday, Mount Sinai Community –

Every year, around [600,000 people](#) leave prison in the U.S. and another 10 million are released from county jails. Many of them suffer from chronic [physical, mental, and substance use](#) conditions—and research shows they are also at an extremely high risk of [hospitalization](#) and [death](#). [One shocking study](#) from Washington State found that recently incarcerated people were 12 times more likely to die than the general population during their first two weeks after release from prison. From arrest to sentencing, racial and ethnic disparities are a defining characteristic of incarceration in the United States. Recent [reports](#) show the explosive growth in incarceration disproportionately impacts Black Americans, who are 13 percent of the U.S. population but makeup 38 percent of the people in jails and prisons. Latino and Indigenous individuals also suffer from exorbitant rates of over-incarceration.

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Many states try to connect people to Medicaid or other health care services upon their release, but these systems can be bureaucratic nightmares. A division of Mount Sinai's [Institute for Advanced Medicine](#) (IAM), the Coming Home Program, is working to improve the physical and mental health and emotional and social well-being of men and women during their transition out of prison or jail. To share more about the importance of assisting formerly incarcerated individuals and explain how Mount Sinai is working to provide them sufficient care and support, we spoke with **Jesus Robles, LCSW, Director of Care and Treatment Services at Mount Sinai**.



From left to right:

Jennifer Guzman, Addictions Specialist, **Cory Butler**, Outreach Coordinator, **Serina Yancey**, Peer Education Specialist, **Jesus Robles**, Director of Care and Treatment Programs

Q: What can you tell us about Mount Sinai's work with formerly incarcerated people? When was this program established and what was the catalyst for its development?

A: The Coming Home Program was founded in 2006 at Mount Sinai Morningside by formerly incarcerated women and staffed by employees who share a lived experience with the population they serve. Importantly, the program is located in Harlem, which is one of the top three neighborhoods in New York City where people return after leaving jails or prisons. In addition to the comprehensive range of health care services provided at the IAM Morningside Clinic, the Coming Home Program includes a range of re-entry services to help individuals successfully transition from incarceration back to their communities. These services include case management, housing, and employment search, job readiness training, mental health and substance use treatment, and peer support.

Q: Studies show that incarcerated individuals have worse health outcomes than the general population before, during, and after incarceration and are more likely than the general population to have chronic and infectious diseases—especially those who are Black. How do you prepare individuals for maintaining their health as they regain their sense of independence?

A: We follow a multi-faceted approach that addresses physical and mental health needs, as well as providing access to resources and support systems. One concrete strategy is offering transitional support services such as counseling, job training, housing assistance, and social support networks—these resources can help incarcerated individuals re-establish a stable and supportive environment after their release.

Q: How does the fact that Black and Brown people are policed and incarcerated at disproportionately high rates influence the program? How does it fit into the Road Map work at Mount Sinai?

A: The disproportionate policing and incarceration of Black and Brown people is a complex and deeply entrenched issue that requires a comprehensive approach. At Mount Sinai, we recognize the urgent need to address this systemic problem and incorporate equity and anti-racism principles into all aspects of our work—and the Coming Home Program is no different. We make sure to actively involve directly impacted New Yorkers and community organizations in designing our program to ensure their voices are reflected in our work. We also require our staff to take part in ongoing education and training on issues of race, equity, and social justice and use that knowledge to develop culturally-responsive programming—and then we track our impact on different populations to ensure the program is addressing disparities. Finally, we advocate for policy changes at the local, state, and national levels to address the disproportionate policing and incarceration of Black and Brown Americans.

This program is immensely impactful—and we look forward to following up with Jesus and his team in the future to dive deeper into his work. You can also read a recent [Story of Excellence](#) about how Iris Bowen, LMSW, a member of the Coming Home Program team, helped a patient move forward after prison.

Before we wrap up this week's Bulletin, we wanted to give a shout-out to Pamela Abner, MPA, CPXP, Vice President and Chief Diversity Operations Officer, who joined a panel this week on [Diversity, Elevated Roles and Innovative Thinking](#) at the 2023 Becker's Annual Meeting emphasizing the need for leaders to engage in learning together to gain a better understanding of marginalized populations and the care they need. We're proud to have Pam as a strategy lead and partner on our [Road Map journey](#).

All the best,

Angela and Shawn

Join Us for Upcoming Events

Chats for Change: Systemic Racism and Maternal Mortality — Chats for Change is a production of the Icahn School of Medicine's Racism and Bias Initiative. Join facilitators Alia Barnes, MPH, and Jenn Meyer, LMSW, MPH on **Tuesday, April 11 from noon-1 pm**. Black Maternal Health Week is recognized each year from April 11-17 to bring attention and action in improving Black maternal health. Each year, nearly 700 women die during childbirth or shortly thereafter. Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than White women, regardless of income or education. Contributing factors include variation in health care, underlying conditions, systemic racism, and implicit bias. Join us to discuss the implications of racism and bias and how we can support this vulnerable population. Register [here](#).

Autism Awareness Panel — In recognition of National Autism Awareness Month, join the Heritage of Latinx Alliance (HOLA) ERG and the All Differing Abilities Partnering Together (ADAPT) ERG for the Autism Awareness Panel. This virtual panel will take place on **Tuesday, April 25, 2023, at 1 pm** and will feature an engaging and informative dialogue centered around Autism Spectrum Disorder. [Click here](#) to register to attend the panel and receive a calendar notice with the Zoom link.

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