

OCTOBER, 2022



CAL STATE SAN BERNARDINO

# REENTRY INITIATIVE

## Quarterly Report



## PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

Imagine living life without use of a computer with internet connectivity. Consider how you would make an appointment at the California Department of Motor Vehicles or find a doctor. How difficult would it be to find an apartment, get a job, enroll in a trade school, or get medical insurance without knowing how to use technology or navigate the various systems required?

For individuals returning from incarceration, the challenges in navigating the requirements of everyday life can be difficult, if not insurmountable. The Cal State San Bernardino Reentry Initiative (CSRI) was developed with those challenges in mind. Through direct services, contracted community agencies, and partners providing resources in-kind, CSRI is able to meet nearly all the needs of those returning to our communities from incarceration on parole.

You may have noticed a new format and frequency of publication of our report. The new quarterly report allows for a more in-depth look at important topics to CSRI and the community. The topic of the first CSRI Quarterly Report is resources.

With the support of strong partners and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), CSRI has been able to provide comprehensive services to meet the needs of well over 10,000 parolees returning to the Inland Empire. We are thankful for the support of our partners and look forward to continuing to build relationships to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

QUARTER 1 FY '22-'23

## Newsletter Highlights

**A Message of Hope from the Principal Investigator-Dr. Jay Fiene**

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**From Unhoused to Housed**

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**Innovation in Education**

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**Removing Tattoos for a New Life**

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**Partnering with the CSRI**





## MESSAGE OF HOPE FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

**Jay Fiene, PhD**  
California State University  
San Bernardino

Many of you will remember the celebration of our contract renewal and expansion in the numbers CSRI will serve. You may remember my frequent use of the word, “relationships”. I would like to expand on CSRI’s relationships in this message. For over eleven years, CSRI has been able to do what we do primarily because of the trust of and sources that are provided through our contract CDCR. However, we would not be able to fulfill the contract and exceed contractual expectations without the willingness of our students to change, the commitment of our staff to help them do so, and the relationships we have with our subcontractors, community partners, and providers. I would like to do a shout out to some of those folks who help us in countless ways.

In Indio, we count Palm Desert Recovery as a key partner in supporting our students and staff. Palm Desert Recovery not only provides high-quality sober-living housing to our students, but also jobs as house managers for some of CSRI’s alumni. Similarly, in San Bernardino, we have called Hope Homes as partners since day one--they have always been there to help. DAP Health has been providing testing, treatment, medical care, and helpful information to many of our students. Similarly, Riverside University Health System has assisted with behavioral health, medication management, help with obtaining Social Security Insurance (SSI) and even financial assistance to our students to obtain housing. In addition, what we love most is to see our students complete programming and become employed. MC Builders has been a strong partner, willing to give our students a chance.

At the CSRI Moreno Valley center, there are several providers who have helped our students complete programs. CSRI’s employment success has continued with our students becoming re-certified or certified for their Class A (commercial truck driving) California Driver Licenses because of folks like Ms. Brandi Harris of the Goodwill Southern California Prison to Employment (P2E) Program. Understanding the challenges our students face and the additional regional employment issues, CSRI Victorville is fortunate to call United Furniture Industries, Inc. in Victorville a great partner.

The newest center does not have a physical site—it’s the Virtual CSRI (vCSRI). Many of vCSRI students have found a unique partnership between Cal Poly Pomona and Pitzer College to be beneficial. The Reintegration Academy (RA), a joint effort, assists our students with identifying a college major or career. The staff of the RA helps students with college enrollment and Pell grant applications increasing their chances for long-term success. Students graduate from the academy and are provided a laptop to have the right tools to start school.

For many students, tattoos are challenges which are difficult to overcome. The Loma Linda University Health Tattoo Removal Program, under Dr. Sigrid Burruss, has helped CSRI students to being the long road of removing facial, neck, head, and hand tattoos. For some, removal of their tattoos brings them a fresh start to their lives.

A long-term partner in the High Desert region of the Inland Empire is Victor Valley College (VVC). Since CSRI opened our Victorville Facility, VVC was there to provide adult basic education programming, career and technical education classes, and health education. VVC’s aspiring nurses need practice on taking vital statistics, learn about blood pressure and heart rate. Throughout the years, Moses House Ministries in Victorville provided CSRI with evidence-based parenting classes and family counseling.

While this is certainly not exhaustive, it begins to highlight the sheer volume of and diversity of partners upon which CSRI has been built. Just as our successful students have built positive support structures, CSRI depends on relationships and partnering with our communities and our providers to ensure success and sustainability. We thank them all and look forward to our continued work together to help our students and to create safer communities for us all.



### CSRI's Housing Program: From Homeless to Housed

The number of people experiencing homelessness continues to rise in the Inland Empire. The number of persons counted as sheltered and unsheltered homeless in San Bernardino County in 2016 was 1,887 and 3,333 in 2022. This represents an increase of 1,446 persons or 77 percent. The Riverside County Homeless Point-in-Time Count identified a total of 3,316 sheltered and unsheltered homeless adults and children throughout the county in 2022, which is 15 percent higher than the count in 2020, which was 2,884.

It is well known that California does not have enough affordable housing to meet the need, and landlords can be reluctant to rent to people with criminal records. Parolees often don't have the option to leave the state to find more affordable housing. For the duration of their parole, most people aren't allowed to leave the state where they served time.

All of these factors, contribute to those returning from incarceration being about 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public (Prison Policy Initiative). Nearly one-fourth of people experiencing homeless in San Bernardino (22 percent) of adults stated "yes" when asked if they were released from prison or jail during the 12 months preceding the 2022 count, which has been the case during the past two homeless point-in-time counts.



Understanding the importance of housing in the rehabilitation of individuals returning to our communities from incarceration, CSRI contracts with 14 sober living programs resulting in approximately 40 homes throughout the region to provide safe, stable, and sober-living housing for CSRI's participants. To ensure the safety, security, and positive environment for participants, CSRI utilizes a competitive procurement process to contract with sober living facilities.

CSRI's Reentry and Recovery Housing (RRH) programming was especially important to parolees and the community during COVID-19 pandemic. CSRI's strong relationships with contracted housing providers enabled us to house individuals leaving prison with housing needs, the ability to quarantine.

in facilities providing them with clean, safe, and pro-social environments. CSRI works closely with CDCR, Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) to meet the needs of DAPO and the parolee. CSRI evaluates each prospective housing provider's location to ensure compliance with any restrictions as well as access to transportation and potential employment. CSRI ensures that participants experiencing homelessness and desirous of becoming successful are housed in safe, stable, clean, and sober housing.

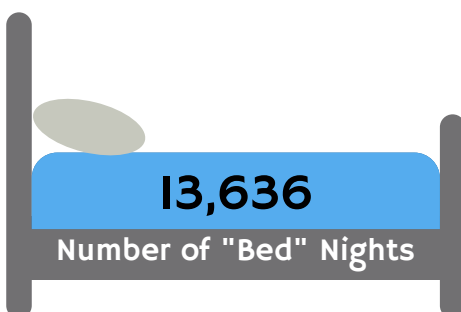
### Contracting with CSRI

Do you know any sober living housing providers who might be interested in working with CSRI? CSRI frequently solicits housing providers through a request for proposal (RFP) process. If you, or someone you know, is interested in providing sober living



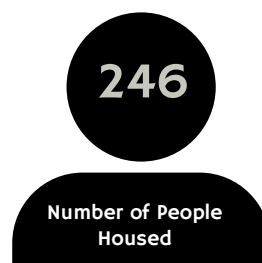
programming to individuals returning from incarceration who are on parole, please email Eric Goddard, CSRI's Director of Administration, at [egoddard@csricenters.org](mailto:egoddard@csricenters.org). Request to be placed on the CSRI Housing Provider RFP list.

### CAL STATE SAN BERNARDINO REENTRY INITIATIVE



### RRH Program

By the Numbers (from 10/1/21 to 9/30/22)



# Spotlight on CSRI Housing Partners



Since opening our doors in February of 2011, CSRI has been proud to call Hope Homes our partner. Hope Homes is a long-established RRH based in San Bernardino, CA. With a goal of giving every client the essential tools needed to successfully transition from incarceration to independent living, Hope Homes provides well-appointed facilities to CSRI participants. Hope Homes has over forty beds available and offers complimentary laundry facilities, cable television in each room, lockers to secure personal items, as well as computers with wireless internet for those permitted to utilize.

Founded by an unlikely owner of a sober living program—a former CDCR employee—Hope Homes does more than just provide a roof over a CSRI participant's head. Sierra Voss, Hope Homes Director sees the value in partnering with CSRI. According to Voss, "CSRI is a true partner with Hope Homes. Anytime we have any concerns, CSRI is there to help. We work well together to best serve individuals who want to become contributing members of our community." CSRI is thankful for our long-term relationship with Hope Homes. Elaine Zucco, CSRI's Director of Operations, states, "Hope Homes treats our participants with respect and provides them with safe, stable, and high-quality housing. We are thankful for the partnership."

In 2018, CSRI was asked to open a center in the Coachella Valley. After some research, CSRI determined that Indio was the best location. With a hot housing market, CSRI was concerned about finding housing facilities. Fortunately, Nicky Spadafino of Palm Desert Sober Living (PDSL) responded to an RFP to provide housing to CSRI participants. Spadafino has dedicated nearly 30 years to helping addicts and alcoholics find recovery. Spadafino's no-nonsense approach is extremely effective for participants who are motivated for recovery.



According to Spadafino, "If you are willing to go to any lengths for drugs and alcohol, you need to go to any lengths for your recovery; your recovery MUST come first." Spadafino knows recovery takes work, and some are not ready to do that work. For those that are, PDSL will go the distance in supporting them in their care, working through their fears, pushing through their blocks, reframing sabotaging beliefs, and building the life they were meant to live. According to Center Manager, Patricia Lopez, "PDSL is good for students who are willing to be in a structured environment and who really want to change their lives. Many CSRI participants have successfully completed the program at PDSL. Some have stayed and have become staff for PDSL. It's awesome to have such a great program to collaborate with to help our population."



## Victor Valley College, Adult Basic Education and Workforce Development

Approximately one year after CSRI began providing service in San Bernardino City, we were asked by CDCR to open a facility in the High Desert region of San Bernardino County. CSRI understood the challenges in the High Desert for individuals returning from incarceration. In 2014, the High Desert had more individuals unemployed, fewer individuals graduating from high school, a lower average income, more families living at or below the federal poverty level, more individuals on public assistance, and a higher crime rate than the rest of San Bernardino County (Husing, 2014). Understanding these challenges, CSRI reached out to a longstanding pillar of the region--Victor Valley College (VVC).



When CSRI-Victorville opened our doors, VVC committed to provide General Education Development (GED) programming, working with the participants of CSRI to improve their reading, vocabulary, writing, and math skills. VVC's instructors understood and continue to understand the unique needs of CSRI's adult learner population. Mike Baca, Center Manager of CSRI Victorville states, "VVC's instructors have always worked well with our participants. Almost all of our participants were not successful in the K-12 system resulting in them feeling apprehensive or reluctant to learn. VVC's instructors treat our participants with respect, courtesy, humor--making our students feel comfortable and willing to learn."



After starting GED programming at CSRI, VVC instructors saw a need in the CSRI participants that VVC student could fill. The VVC nursing program needed to learn how to do vitals (blood pressure, pulse, respiration, etc.). In the past, the aspiring nurses would have to go to sit in front of stores with a large volume of customers (Walmart, Target, or supermarkets). Many VVC students express a feeling of being unsafe and vulnerable. VVC was appreciate of the opportunity for the student nurses to practice in a safe, monitored environment, but it also gave the students the opportunity to provide health education on subject-specific topics to encourage participants to address any long-term health issues and healthcare in general.

In an effort to increase the number of firefighters in the region, VVC hosted a CSRI cohort at VVC's Public Safety Academy. Thanks to a partnership with Goodwill Southern California, a cohort of ten CSRI participants learned basic wild land firefighting skills through a series of classes that provided entry-level students the basic skills and abilities to pass the required employment examinations for a firefighter position with any of the local agencies. CSRI participants who completed a grueling full-time, two-week summer course received certificates in Hazardous Materials-First Responder Operations, Confined Space Rescue Awareness, I-200 Basic ICS, I-100, S-110, S-130, S-190, L-180 (wild land firefighting classes).



## Victor Valley College and CSRI, Working Together to Meet the Needs of the Logistics Sector

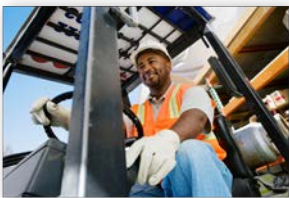


With the logistics industry continuing to expand its footprint in San Bernardino County, VVC welcomed CSRI participants on the VVC campus as well as onsite at CSRI Victorville. The automotive repair industry has traditionally been considered "felon friendly" with many CSRI participants obtaining employment. Many CSRI participants completed numerous courses at VVC Automotive Technology program including those in alternative fuel vehicles. Participants receive industry-recognized certifications to better prepare them for employment in the in-demand field of logistics.

While some CSRI participants received in-prison vocational education programming, most did not. Mike Baca, CSRI Victorville Center Manager, came to CSRI with extensive knowledge of strong programming for individuals returning from incarceration. Baca retired from the Federal Bureau of Prisons with his last position being responsible for programming within the Federal Prison at Victorville. Knowing that participants may be with CSRI for a short amount of time with a maximum of approximately one-year, Baca, once again reached out to VVC.



Daniel Walden PhD, Superintendent/President of the Victor Valley College District saw the value in partnering with CSRI. According to Dr. Walden, "At VVC, we do our best to maintain a spirit of place that nurtures the growth and knowledge of all who seek higher learning in our community. CSRI's participants are part of our community, and we are happy to assist any who are seeking higher learning." VVC understood that many of CSRI's participants may be reluctant to attend classes on the VVC Campus, Frank Castanos, Director, Community/Contract Education at VVC proposed bringing programming to CSRI. According to Castanos, "If we can get CSRI's participants to see success in VVC programming while at the CSRI Victorville site, they will be more likely to begin to attend classes at the VVC Campus." CSRI participants completed training and certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), first aid, and automated external defibrillator (AED). These certifications provide CSRI participants with not only a "step up" on many other candidates applying for entry level positions but it also give parolees a bit more confidence in applying for employment.



VVC provided training programs at CSRI-Victorville resulting in industry-recognized certifications. Through the partnership with VVC, CSRI participants have received certifications in OSHA 10, OSHA's Hazardous Waste and Emergency Response, standalone pallet lift, 5K forklift, 10K forklift, 15K forklift, and others. These short classes provided CSRI participants with stackable certificates helping many participants obtaining employment in the logistics field.

## GED Programming for the Future: Victor Valley College and CSRI Meeting the Needs of All Participants

While the COVID-19 pandemic proved challenging for CSRI programming, one positive outcome resulted from going virtual. CSRI realized that virtual programming can be effective. CSRI surveyed participants on their technology resources and found that over 94% of participants had access to virtual programming. CSRI believes that the best method of instruction is via in-person programming; however, a class such as adult basic education/GED works very well through a virtual platform. With VVC having strong existing virtual programming, CSRI and VVC developed a hybrid model of providing adult basic education/GED. VVC will begin providing online GED/Adult Basic Education Programming for all interested participants. This is an innovative approach, tailoring programming to meet the individual needs of CSRI participants with Aztec's Adult Basic Education (ABE) self-paced curriculum combined with individualized support through office hours with an instructor. According to Castanos, "The partnership with CSRI has allowed us to tailor our ABE/GED services to meet the needs of those most in need throughout the Inland Empire."



## San Bernardino Community College District, Caltrans Work Crews Program



As a project of the College of Education, University Enterprises Corporation at California State University San Bernardino, CSRI values partnerships with other education entities. After opening our doors in February 2012, CSRI was approached by Caltrans to provide two parolee roadside litter abatement crews to serve San Bernardino County. CSRI decided to call on the San Bernardino Community College District (SBCCD) as they had a robust vocational education department.

Since early 2013, the SBCCD's Caltrans Work Crew Program has been providing CSRI participants with the opportunity to earn wages, learn work skills, and gain a valuable work history. The Caltrans Work Crew Program helps individuals recently released from prison with transitional paid-work cleaning roads and highways. The program provides hands-on job training and social services to promote successful reintegration into the community and positive work habits. Should a participant successfully complete the program, they are eligible to apply for long-term Caltrans employment. Several participants have gone onto work with Caltrans--a job with the state of California.



Once such individual is former CSRI participant, Paul Soto. After returning to the community, Soto began the CSRI Program. He took advantage of the SBCCD Caltrans Work Crew Program. He took this commitment seriously, and was hired by the Urban Conservation Corps--the contractor that runs the work crews. After applying to the State of California for Caltrans, he was rewarded for his hard work and commitment and was hired for a full-time by Caltrans. He now has full-benefits and a job with tremendous growth opportunities.

A former job developer at CSRI, Eddie Rubio is the Manager of Workforce Development at San Bernardino Community College District. Rubio says there is a lot of credit to spread around. Community resources like Goodwill and 2-1-1, an organization that provides referrals for resources, especially for the reentry population, have been willing to be partners. "The program is the safety net," Rubio explains. If they get a job they go off to that job. But if that job ends suddenly, they can come back and continue the program. We are trying to get them placed before their 90 day mark." But some people need more time than that. Over his five years with the program, Rubio says he has seen a few people fail. He tries not to take it personally. "I'm a little greedy," he said. "I want to help everyone I come across."

### Did you know...

- approximately 60% of individuals released from prison found no employment four years post-release?
- formerly incarcerated people in the sample had an average of 3.4 jobs throughout a four-year period?
- formerly incarcerated people were earning just 53% of the median US worker's wage?
- after four years of seeking and obtaining irregular employment, the study population was making less than 84 cents for every dollar of the US median wage?
- according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics report, the major industries employing formerly incarcerated people include waste management services, construction, and food service?

# Removing Tattoos for a New Life



LOMA LINDA  
UNIVERSITY  
HEALTH



## Tattoo Removal

Since inception, CSRI has attempted to find a partner to provide tattoo removal services. Unfortunately, several promising partnerships crumbled and after ten years, CSRI considered giving up on finding an organization that could provide this valuable service. Enter the Loma Linda University Health (LLUH) Trauma Department. While an unlikely department to address tattoo removal, the LLUH Trauma Department was well aware of the impact of gang violence in the region.

Sigrid Burruss, MD, a trauma surgeon at LLUH and Juan Carlos Belliard, PhD, Assistant VP for Community Partnerships, founded the tattoo removal program in an effort to remove patients' stigmatizing tattoos, helping them de-identify as gang members and avoid remaining the targets of repeated assault.

With the region known for gang violence, Dr. Burruss has seen her share of the results of that violence. Dr. Burruss states, "Tattoos are more than ink on our skin; they have the power to signify identity, ideology, and affiliation. Removing gang-related or anti-social tattoos which are visible on the face, head, neck, or hands can help people protect themselves and embody the self-image they wish to project to the world." The LLUH Tattoo Removal Program aims to serve those with a history of involvement with gangs, living in poverty, and minority or underrepresented individuals looking to remove tattooed markers of their past to move on, reintegrate back into society, and find employment.



In August 2022, CSRI entered into a contract with LLUH to provide tattoo removal to CSRI participants with visible tattoos. While tattoos are becoming more prevalent in the workplace, the tattoos that many CSRI participants have reflect a much different lifestyle than most mainstream tattoos. CSRI participants frequently state that they believe their tattoos negatively impact their ability to obtain employment.

While still early in the project, several CSRI participants have begun the journey to remove their tattoos.

Participants who have shown commitment to their programming and express an interest in getting their tattoos removed must complete at least 10 hours of community service through organizations of their choice: homeless shelters, community gardens, or churches. Burruss says the requirement is a way for the program to engage individuals to connect with their community in a meaningful manner.



# Partnering with CSRI



**Contracting with CSRI:** CSRI frequently solicits organizations to provide programming in substance use disorder, anger management, life skills, food provision, and sober living housing. If you would like to receive our Request for Proposals, please email Eric Goddard, Director of Administration at [egoddard@csricenters.org](mailto:egoddard@csricenters.org). Please specify the type of service your organization provides.



**Employment with CSRI:** CSRI is looking for qualified individuals with a mission of helping those returning from incarceration and improving the safety of the community. If you are interested in working for CSRI, check out the positions that are currently open at [csricenters.org/jobs](http://csricenters.org/jobs)



**Donating to CSRI:** CSRI students are always in need of items such as professional attire, hygiene items, bicycles, and warm clothing. Should your organization provide services such as dry cleaning or laundry services, CSRI is a non-profit and thus, can provide a letter documenting donations.



**For More Information on CSRI:** Contact Andrea Mitchel, Director of Research and Development at [amitchel@csricenters.org](mailto:amitchel@csricenters.org) or Elaine Zucco at [ezucco@csricenters.org](mailto:ezucco@csricenters.org)

CSRI provides service at four physical sites (Indio, Moreno Valley, San Bernardino, and Victorville) and one virtual site through vCSRI.



## Contracting with CSRI

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## Working for CSRI

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## Donating to CSRI

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## Contacting CSRI

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*“The mission of CSRI is to increase public safety, reduce recidivism, and break the cycle of generational incarceration through comprehensive programming in a constructive environment”.*

