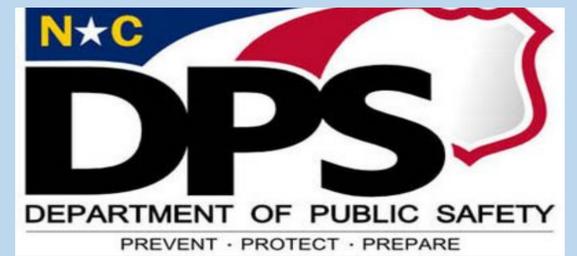


NCDPS: Mental Health, Incarceration, & COVID-19

Katherine Fesperman
Clinical Psychology Intern



Worksite

During Fall 2020, I interned under the supervision of Mr. Charles Mautz with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety as a Clinical Psychology Intern in the Behavioral Health Services Department.

The sector of the NCDPS I interned with primarily works to provide mental health treatment and administration throughout the entire North Carolina prison system. There are many facets to the psychological division, but the Behavioral Health Services sector focuses on people with specific issues in one of four sectors: mental health in restrictive housing, developmentally or intellectually disabled offenders, group homes for the chronically ill but mentally stable, and sexual offenders who are likely to return to society. Although based in Raleigh, NC, I performed all of my work remotely due to the unprecedented circumstances surrounding 2020.

Roles and Responsibilities

- ❖ Data entry
 - ❖ Transferred large data sets on individuals receiving treatment in restrictive housing
- ❖ Individual self-help materials for independent programs
 - ❖ Pamphlets and workbooks
- ❖ Weekly meetings with Mentor
- ❖ Literature review
 - ❖ Impacts of COVID-19 on incarcerated populations, frontline workers; increases in substance abuse in relation to COVID-19; impact of COVID-19 media on mental health; the use of Telehealth
 - ❖ Sexual offender treatment, risk, and assessments



The CBT
Workbook

Projects and Duties

Support Pamphlets

Due to the inability to engage in face-to-face care, inmates and physicians have had to interact with services and treatment materials that people can engage with independently. I have worked on compiling a large self-help workbook to distribute to facilities that can be used as an alternative form of psychological treatment during these uncertain and isolated times.

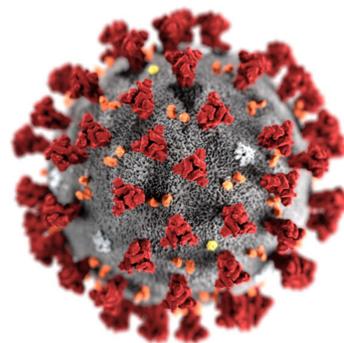
Restrictive Housing Data

The NCDPS receives annual data on inmates receiving various forms of treatment in restrictive housing. I was able to help manage these datasets and transfer the most recent years data. This data helps the psychological administrators determine where to allocate their resources across the state

Sexual Offender Research

A specific area of interest my mentor and I focused on was sexual offender treatment and assessments. The overall goal was to determine ways to screen and rehabilitate sexual offenders. I conducted extensive literature reviews pertaining to sexual offenders in terms of whether high or low risk offenders are more responsive to treatment and static and dynamic assessments such as the Static-99 and VRS-SO.

COVID-19 and Mental Health



In an already isolated environment with the addition of COVID-19 policies, we were interested in the mental health implications on incarcerated individuals and frontline workers. I conducted extensive literature reviews on the subject matter to be presented to the administration of the NCDPS.

Knowledge Gained

Professional Development

- ❖ Better time management
- ❖ Research experience (specifically with literature reviews)
 - ❖ Determining which articles are valid and reliable
 - ❖ Synthesizing keywords to make researching more efficient
- ❖ Improved experience with Excel and massive datasets
- ❖ Increased comfort with branding myself in a professional sense

General Development

- ❖ Increased comfort with interviewing
 - ❖ Mock interviews, speaking during class, interview for internship position
- ❖ Increase comfort level with networking
- ❖ Improved communication skills
 - ❖ Remote working created difficulties for communicating in terms of identifying issues and trouble shooting
 - ❖ Improved ability to ask for guidance when something is unclear or if I am unfamiliar with the concepts

Future Directions

The Gil program has highlighted the importance of working with vulnerable populations, showed me how difficult and meticulous progress can be, and helped me see how much work occurs behind the scenes in large systems, like the NCDPS.



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