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The Indianapolis Foundation, a CICF affiliate, funds IU Public Policy Institute Evaluation of Indiana Prison Writers Workshop (IPWW)

Researches provide a foundational assessment of IPWW's program and its delivery

Indianapolis, Ind. 8/10/20 — In a time of decarceration and diversion, criminal justice stakeholders have advocated for creative writing and arts-based programs like IPWW as an avenue for rehabilitating individuals sentenced to prison.

The purpose of the study was to examine IPWW operations and identify ways in which the program could be changed to enhance program delivery and data collection to measure participant outcomes. Researchers from the Center for Health and Justice Research (CHJR) at Indiana University Public Policy Institute (PPI) partnered with IPWW and the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) to conduct a process evaluation of IPWW's program.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Researchers developed new survey tools** capable of tracking long-term outcomes deemed important by IPWW stakeholders, including participant healing, self-confidence, and well-being.
- Site visits to IPWW classes within IDOC facilities and interviews with IPWW facilitators suggest that the program **is being delivered with fidelity** as documented by IPWW stakeholders.
- IPWW participation is associated with a reduction in conduct violations. Evidence suggests a **38% reduction in violations**. When interpreting these results, it is important to keep in mind that participation in IPWW programming is one factor amongst other variables that may influence conduct violations and may not be solely responsible for observed decreases in rates.
- Interviews with former participants suggest that participants receive both **short- and long-term benefits from IPWW**, including enhanced communication and coping skills and improved sense of empathy.

CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT:

- **Expanding the objectives of the program** and will augment this with data collected during all stages of the program. Transparency will be key.
- Emphasis on **external publishing and guest lecturers** (including writers, employers, and IDOC staff) for the **weekly** classes.
- Standardization of the program by creating a **manual**.

“We will use these findings to continue to meet the needs of our stakeholders, jails, and offenders. With an increase in requests for programming, we’re pleased to soon partner with a jail in Arizona,” says Debra Des

Vignes, founder, Indiana Prison Writers Workshop.”

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Indiana Prison Writers Workshop

To improve the lives of Indiana offenders through creative writing and expression. Our creative writing workshop offers an outlet for justice-involved individuals to write and express.