

NEWSLETTER



Q&A with Justin Volpe, Senior Peer Support Coordinator at the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

Justin Volpe is the senior peer support coordinator at the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD). Uniquely qualified for this position, he is deeply committed to helping individuals with mental health conditions and substance use disorders succeed in the community, particularly those who have been involved with the criminal justice system.

Before you came to NASMHPD, you served as a certified recovery peer specialist for Miami-Dade County's Eleventh Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project Jail Diversion Program. How did you become a peer specialist, and what were your responsibilities?

My path to that position really started back in high school, when I turned to drugs and alcohol to cope with the death of my best friend. This escalated mental health problems

that run in my family. I graduated, but over the next few years, I struggled, dropping out of college and frequently changing housing and jobs. After an unsuccessful attempt at rehab, I became very paranoid and delusional due to what was eventually diagnosed (many years later) as schizoaffective disorder. The medication I received helped control these symptoms, but when I started feeling better, I stopped taking it.

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**California's
Occupational Mentor
Certification Program:
A Peer Specialist Pipeline
Out of Incarceration**

Affie Tamuno-Koko

Anthony J. Maiden

California's Occupational Mentor Certification Program: A Peer Specialist Pipeline Out of Incarceration

The Occupational Mentor Certification Program (OMCP), offered by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), was established in response to the dual challenge of a preponderance of substance use disorders (SUD) among individuals in correctional facilities and a significant shortage of alcohol and other drug (AOD) counselors statewide. In 2009, CDCR's Division of Rehabilitative Programs (DRP) collaborated with the Orange County Department of Education, Options Recovery Services, U.S. Navy-trained instructors, and others to pilot OMCP at the California State Prison Solano.

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Acquired Brain Injury:

Challenges and Solutions in Correctional Settings



Judy Dettmer



Russha Knauer



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Acquired Brain Injury: Challenges and Solutions in Correctional Settings

Acquired brain injury (ABI) is often associated with concussions among athletes and exposure to explosives among military personnel, but within the criminal justice system, up to 85 percent of adults and as many as 95 percent of women screen positive for a history of ABI, compared to less than 10 percent of the general population. "ABI" refers to traumatic or nontraumatic brain injury that occurs after birth.

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Partner Event Announcement

[Save the Date: 2024 State of the States in Brain Injury Conference](#)

Hosted by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA). This event will take place from September 16-19, 2024, in Eugene, Oregon, at the Graduate Hotel.

The State of the States in Brain Injury (SOS) Conference brings together professionals, policymakers, and advocates from across the country to share knowledge, discuss innovative practices, and collaborate on improving services and support for individuals with brain injuries. This year's event features a specialized track on the intersection of the criminal justice system and brain injury.

For more information, visit the [event's webpage](#).



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