

Comments from Lived Experience Engagement on Forms, Translation Services and Post-release Issues

Forms

- Make the spaces on the forms bigger so they are easier to fill out
- The language on the forms are hard to understand
- Make forms in plain language
- Service providers could make legal forms easier by: making forms in plain language, provide translation services for newcomers, actually sit with people and answer questions.
- Make advocates (preferably peer advocates from lower and middle incomes) available to help sit with people for form-filling.
- Help those that have literate and cognitive issues
- Different translators and accessibility options (ex. brail)
- The forms are hard to find
- On-line option for printing off the forms
- Manage people's expectation; the form will get you to justice services, not justice
- It costs money for forms like child-custody papers. The cost made it harder for me to protect my child
- Forms for self-representation are impossible to fill out for people with mental disabilities
- I had problems filling out "status" forms. It was not clear on what was required

Translation services

- provide translation services for newcomers for filling out forms
- Different translators and accessibility options (ex. brail)

Post-Release

- One participant described how his employer's attitude about him changed once the employer learned that he had to go to court; he was treated poorly from that time on. Before incarceration, he was employed, had a vehicle, tools for work, etc and then lost it all once he was incarcerated. When released, he had trouble finding work because he didn't have any of his previous assets and found the stigma attached to serving time influenced employers' decision to hire him. It would be helpful to help someone store assets like the ones mentioned above so that when you are released, you can use them to find employment and get back on track. People are motivated and have things they want to do in their lives!
- Can jails coordinate with shelters so that when people are released, they have somewhere they can immediately go?
- How about offering peer to peer transitional support to help people through the first steps of release? This is important as people often don't know what to do next.
- Mentors to guide them into healthy living skills and routines and community supports so they aren't alone.
- Mental Health supports that wrap around whatever the individual is working on after release
- Housing!