

Alternative to Incarceration &
Reentry Services for the
LGBTGNCNBQI+Community in NYC:
Research Findings, Best Practices,
and Recommendations for the Field
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Executive Summary

Introduction

In order to assess the cultural competency of ATI and reentry services specific to the LGBTGNBQI+ population in New York City, a participatory action research project was conducted in the fall of 2020. This project was conceived of by the Legal Action Center and the New York ATI/Reentry Coalition. TakeRoot Justice provided substantive professional support in partnership with a leadership team of formerly incarcerated LGBTGNBQI+ individuals. The methodology, key findings, and resulting recommendations have been summarized below and more fully explicated in the full report [“Alternatives to Incarceration & Reentry Services for the LGBTGNBQI+ Community in NYC: Research Findings, Best Practices and Recommendations for the Field.”](#)

New York City and State are nationally known for their highly effective network of ATI and reentry programs, which have been critical to the State’s success in simultaneously reducing crime and the prison population and saving taxpayers millions of dollars. However, while New York has substantially reduced the number of people behind bars, it continues to incarcerate many thousands of individuals who could benefit from alternative to incarceration programs which, when targeted appropriately, are more effective than prison in reducing recidivism and are ultimately less costly than incarceration.

Our research shows that, despite the robust range of reentry services available, existing ATI and reentry programs are limited both in their LGBTGNBQI+ cultural competency and ability to meet the specific service needs of LGBTGNBQI+ people, resulting in this broad and diverse community being significantly underserved by current programs. In addition to results from the survey, profiles of various members of the formerly incarcerated LGBTGNBQI+ community in New York City are also included in the report. With this information, we were able to find out more about what service providers in New York City are currently doing and where they need more support - and to also begin to identify and direct them to resources that can help.

LGBTGNBQI+ people leaving incarceration and returning home to any of the five boroughs need the supports of ATI and reentry service programs that understand and can address their specific needs. This report aims to help providers identify and address areas of deficiency, as well as success, within their organizations, as they strive to offer comprehensive, welcoming, culturally competent, high-standard, accessible services to LGBTGNBQI+ participants.

The Survey and Key Findings

Surveys were disseminated to and completed electronically by 40 ATI and reentry service provider organizations in New York City. The topics covered in the survey included: outreach materials and efforts; intake materials and process; service provision, partnership, and referrals; physical office; and internal organizational practices.

Below are select research findings that highlight areas in which organizations have been successful in engaging and supporting the LGBTGNBQI+ community, as well as areas where there is room for improvement.

In presenting these findings, we seek to amplify the efforts that organizations are already making to competently and sensitively serve the LGBTGNBQI+ community, and to identify opportunities for growth among our organizational community.

Positive Measures to Amplify

- The large majority of organizations said that their staff were trained to use language inclusive of multiple genders when conducting outreach in sex-segregated facilities (86%).
- Nearly two-thirds of organizations said that their program materials specify that the program is open to transgender and gender nonconforming people (64%).
- Nine out of ten organizations' intake forms provide some way for people to self-identify as LGBTGNCNBQI+ (92%). The large majority of organizations also provide a space for people to list a name that is different from that on their identifying documents (85%).
- The large majority of organizations have group agreements which include respect for gender identity and sexual orientation (84%).
- Most organizations provide an all-gender restroom (92%), usually a single stall restroom (75%), and more than half of organizations have some visible marker of LGBTGNCNBQI+ visibility in their offices (59%).
- Three-quarters of organizations provided LGBTGNCNBQI+ competency training to at least some staff (76%).

Opportunities for Growth

- Organizations reported that they commonly refer LGBTGNCNBQI+ people out for numerous services, and of those which use referral lists, the majority had referral lists specifically for LGBTGNCNBQI+ needs (68%), however a quarter of organizations did not yet have such a referral list (24%).
- Of organizations in buildings in which photo ID is required, only a little more than one third reported that they knew of a protocol in place for people who have IDs that do not match their name or gender identity (38%).
- One third of organizations do not yet include language indicating they serve the LGBTGNCNBQI+ community in their mission, vision, or values statements (33%).
- Fewer than half of organizations reported that their board actively recruits LGBTGNCNBQI+ members or has done so in the past (41%). Many organizations reported that they did not know the answer to this question (41%), which indicated a need for more board transparency and active communication about this issue.
- More than a quarter of organizations said they do not provide staff training about employment rights at the city, state, and federal level as they apply to LGBTGNCNBQI+ people (28%).

Select Recommendations for the Field

Informed by the survey findings and input from a leadership group of formerly incarcerated LGBTGNCNBQI+ people the report contains recommendations designed to help providers take their efforts to the next level, and ultimately to help the LGBTGNCNBQI+ individuals they serve.

The recommendations cover the following areas: organizational values, planning and learning; training; client interaction, programming and service provision; referrals; physical office; board and staff composition and recruitment; and additional internal workplace policies and practices.

There are also recommendations specifically for funders of the ATI and reentry service infrastructure included in the report.

Below are select recommendations for providers. We encourage providers to view our full report for comprehensive recommendations and resources.

- Affirm and implement a core organizational value of broad inclusivity. Recognize the LGBTGNCNBQI+ community as part of the community served. Plan for inclusion proactively and holistically.
- Solicit feedback from clients/program participants at various stages of engagement with the organization, and have mechanisms in place to digest that feedback and incorporate it into planning.
- Initiate and celebrate deep organizational learning and culture shifts, to move organizations towards embracing LGBTGNCNBQI+ people at all levels.
- Facilitate cross-organizational learning, resource-sharing and cultivating cultural humility in areas ranging from service provision, to referrals, to internal staff support.
- Provide high-quality training to all staff in the organization, tailored to job roles, and facilitated or vetted by experts. Training is critically important for the successful implementation of many of the recommendations.
- Take advantage of the intake process as a key opportunity to communicate LGBTGNCNBQI+ competence and affirmation.
- Develop a dynamic referral system inclusive of LGBTGNCNBQI+ needs, drawing on existing community resources, and with dedicated staff to vet accuracy and cultural competency of referral organizations.
- Develop leadership pathways, such as trainings or credentialing programs that enable LGBTGNCNBQI+ community members to become staff and board members at your organization or others.

To read the full report, which includes all data findings and recommendations, please click [HERE](#).