

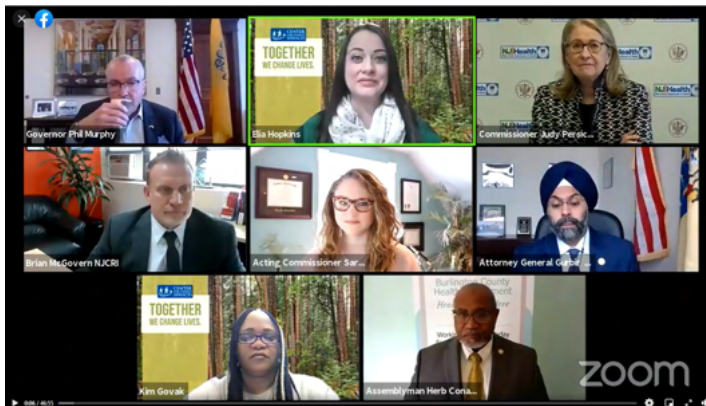
REAL TIME RECOVERY



Living *Proof*
Recovery Centers

Spring
2021

Governor Murphy's Combating The Opioid Epidemic Roundtable Discussion



On March 4th Living Proof Recovery Centers' own Kim Govak and Elia Hopkins were invited to discuss New Jersey's efforts to combat the opioid epidemic. We were honored to be a part of this conversation along with Governor Phil Murphy, Sarah Adelman (Acting Commissioner, Dept of Human Services), Gurbir Grewal (Attorney General, State of New Jersey), Judy Persichilli (Commissioner, Dept. of Health), Brian McGovern (CEO, North Jersey Community Research Initiative), Joe Vitale (State Senator, LD19), and Herb Conaway Jr. (Assemblyman, LD7). We are so grateful for the opportunity to share our stories of recovery and to thank the Governor for providing the funds needed to provide Peer Recovery Support services to those in need.

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Recovery Network for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, & Hearing Loss Program

An Interview with Jesse Wilson

This is an interview with Jesse Wilson, the Program Coordinator and counselor with Center For Family Services' Recovery Network for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Loss.

Please give us some background about yourself and how and why you decided to enter the Substance Use and Recovery Field.

I grew up in Rochester, New York. I lived in San Diego, California for 20 years where I worked and managed an intensive outpatient substance use disorder treatment program for the Deaf and hard of hearing population for 6 years. I have been involved with the recovery community for 20 years, and I celebrated 8 years of sobriety in February. I moved to New Jersey to be closer to my family in New York. I have a deep passion to provide resources and services that are lacking for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

What exactly is Center For Family Services' Recovery Network for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Loss Program?

This program provides services to individuals experiencing substance use disorders who are Deaf, hard of hearing or who have hearing loss. All services are provided by staff that are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and culturally sensitive to the Deaf community.

Why is it important to have accessible services for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Loss community?

Often times Deaf and hard of hearing individuals will seek help only to find out that services are not language accessible. They become frustrated and discouraged causing them to give up and fall through the cracks. This is where Recovery Network for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Loss comes in to fill those cracks and help more Deaf and hard of hearing people recover from addiction.

How would someone go about accessing this program if they need services?

They can either contact me directly at jesse.wilson@centerffs.org or go through Center For Family Services' Access Center at **877.922.2377** to get a referral.

What are some of your long-term goals for this program?

My long term goal is to establish specialized support housing for the Deaf and hard of hearing where they would be in their own environment, culture, language and norms. So they can in turn be able to manage their recovery more easily without the added stress that comes with being alone in a hearing environment. Recovery can be a hard process and providing accessibility will improve their chances significantly.



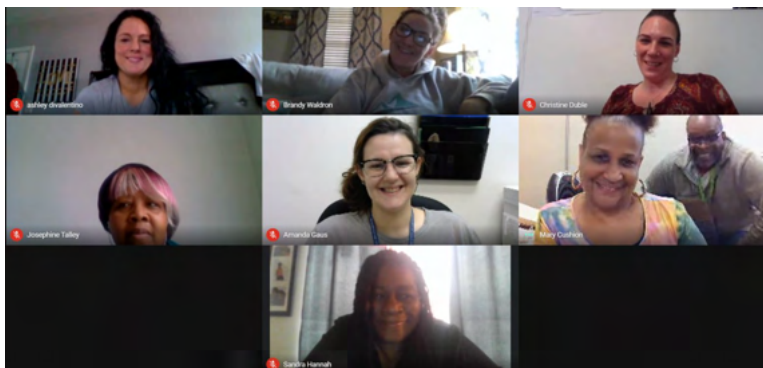
Support Team For Addiction Recovery Program (STAR)

Center for Family Services' STAR program provides support services for individuals struggling with past or present opiate misuse or opiate use disorder. STAR provides non-clinical case management and recovery support services for individuals located in Camden, Cape May, Gloucester, and Salem Counties. Eligibility requirements also include residence in the county in which STAR services are being sought.

Every STAR team includes a case manager and a Peer Recovery Support Specialist. These teams engage with individuals to support them in finding their pathway of recovery and to help them in addressing any potential barriers to recovery. This may include help with linkage to treatment and medication assisted treatment, access to resources including food and other necessities, linkage to sober support resources in the community including available self-help meetings and support groups, help with resume writing and linkage with employment opportunities, assistance in applying for social service benefits, referral to the Community Health Law Project, linkage with all possible housing opportunities, and most importantly empathetic listening and support.

STAR staff members have been creative and diligent in utilizing virtual platforms, social distancing, and PPE to continue to engage with individuals. STAR case managers and Peer Recovery Support Specialists support each other in continuing to serve their communities during this challenging time. An additional asset all of the counties share is the talented leadership of the STAR coordinators. Kim Govak oversees Salem and Cape May Counties, and Mary Cushion handles Camden and Gloucester Counties. These dedicated employees make sure that the case managers and peer recovery specialists have everything they need to successfully help STAR participants.

If you or a loved one needs STAR services, referrals can be made by calling **877.922.2377** or by emailing cynthia.whitcraft@centerffs.org.



**Center For Family Services' Gloucester, Camden, Salem,
and Cape May STAR Teams**



Giving Grace

By: Stephanie Jennings

The recovery journey is unique to every individual, as it holds key elements of our very own personal goals, interests, and timing to meet or begin to attain certain factors of our authentic needs. It will vary for each person individually. These needs can include education, health & wellness, employment, safe and structured housing, reuniting with family members, and new found relationships with people who are supportive and willing to help guide us and point us in a positive direction as they too were once in our shoes.

We find all the dreams we have once pushed aside based on our "unhealthy survival tactics" which stem from a variety of things including substance use disorders, complex PTSD, trauma related issues, and various mental health and wellness diagnoses. Our new lives, hopes, and dreams are on the forefront when facing the life changing decision to confront our substance use disorders and the repercussions, consequences and the stigma attached to such a disheartening deadly disorder such as addiction and alcoholism.

There is a long standing quote in the 12 step community; "Staying clean must come first," by accumulating abstinence, "one day at a time." We as individuals begin to focus on some of the things that were mentioned in the above paragraphs. However, today's focus is on those of us in recovery who have had past dealings with the criminal justice system. This is not about innocence, guilt or judgement! This concerns itself with facts. The fact is most, if not all men and women under the influence of substances would have not committed these criminal acts had they been otherwise abstinent. I know this to be true, because I myself am one of the guilty.

In 2005 I stopped taking medication prescribed to me, I stopped attending 12 step recovery meetings, and reunited with people, places, and things. Everything proceeded downhill extremely fast and soon after, I committed a crime here in the state of New Jersey. I was incarcerated and held in the state correctional facility for women with a mandatory day for day

sentence, which means no time off for good behavior, and a mandatory parole. I found myself being in my late forties after never having been incarcerated before and being released to the rescue mission of the city where I committed the offense because of having no permanent address. I reported to parole first and then I made it to the rescue mission and saw people under the influence, people who I had been incarcerated with months earlier, I felt claustrophobic and I walked outside to smoke a cigarette and only to leave the facility and violate parole immediately.

Within ten days of being engulfed in my substance use disorder I sought help by turning myself in to my parole officer. I was returned eventually to a halfway house about 9 months later, then to a 3/4 house in Camden County, it was the first of its kind to house parolees. I continued living in that 3/4 house for a total of eight years even well after my parole completion. Why you ask? Well, because of my conviction I could not find an apartment. Most people are not willing to lease to ex-convicts especially those who struggle finding employment based on their criminal history. Let's face it, most convenient stores will not hire someone with any type of convictions related to money.

As a single woman with no immediate family or any resources to turn to, I could do much of nothing else except stay put, hold onto my faith, remain clean, and attended 12 step meetings. I volunteered in several places to pass the time and to give back to the community. I took buses, walked, and did whatever I needed to in order to make it through the day while people around me used, died, and suffered. It took over ten years to pay off fines, and to even dare try to get my drivers license back, but I did it.

Continued on next page...

Helpful Links for anyone who would like more information on expungement

<https://www.nj.gov/parole/services/executive-clemency>

<https://www.njcourts.gov/selfhelp/index.html>

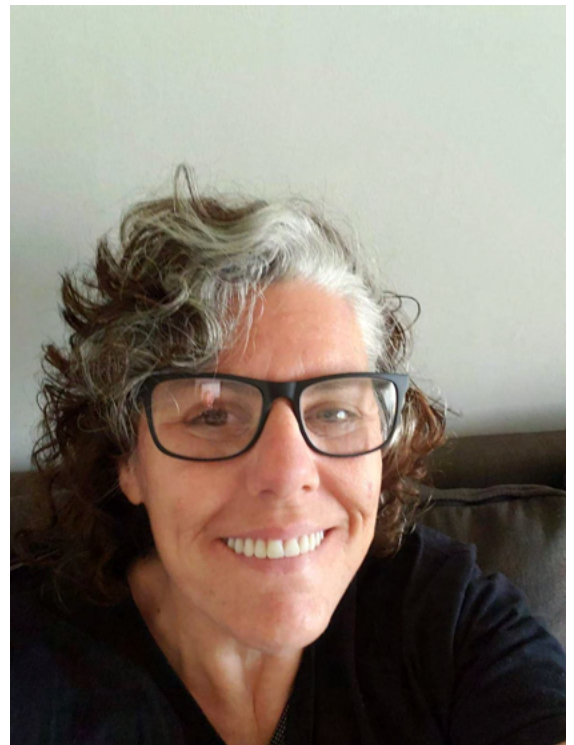
Giving Grace

- Continued -

My crime was one on a list in New Jersey that cannot be expunged. I felt hopeless, but I somehow had faith God would help me and my living situation would improve as long as I stayed clean, and sure enough someone gave me a second chance. I moved and over four years and two apartments later, I decided to take a chance and write directly to his Honor Governor Phil Murphy via email. A few weeks later, I received a pardon application from the New Jersey State Parole board which is a form of clemency, and a step towards the expungement process. Clemency, in general, is the term for reducing the penalties for certain crimes without actually clearing your record.

The State of New Jersey has created a clean slate law which went into effect June of 2020. This allows individuals the opportunity to apply for a criminal expungement. The procedure in New Jersey for obtaining executive clemency starts with submitting a completed application for executive clemency. Then completed applications are filed with the State Parole Board. Upon receipt, the Parole Board assigns an investigator. The investigator then reviews the form, and verifies all information in the form, and makes a recommendation to the governor. The governor then processes the application. Any and all final decisions are made solely by the governor.

There is no guarantee an individual will be granted a pardon, clemency, or expungement by simply applying. I can guarantee without taking the necessary steps, risking vulnerability, and having an ounce of hope we will not be part of the clean slate law and therefore nothing will be granted to us. I'm still in process as are many others. I have no idea of the outcome. It may not be easy but nothing worth fighting for is. Maybe you or someone you know has contemplated this as part of your recovery journey, if so, I hope my experience in recovering in my reality by springing forth to the newest chapter can give you the courage to take that leap of faith.



When asked for a comment regarding the new expungement laws, Rachel Ianerri, a lawyer from the Community Health Law Project had this to say:

"Overall, I would say the new expungement rules will hopefully be beneficial for clients since they have eliminated the filing fee and need for certified mailings, which were expensive. Also, the new system will pull up records from 1995 till now, so it is helpful when people do not remember all of their arrests. Finally, the clean slate provision allows people who might have made some mistakes far in the past to expunge them now." (Rachel Ianerri, CHLP, 2021)

<http://www.chlp.org/>

Lifeline Ed and STAR: Perfect Together

By: Sonya R. Davis, Patient Navigator - LifelineEd

The goal of Center For Family Services' LifelineED program is to assist individuals who are in the hospital after an overdose. Center For Family Services' STAR aims to help individuals living with opioid use disorder maintain their recovery by connecting them to community resources. Both programs accomplish their goals via case management and peer support and offer linkage to services and resources to help the individual maintain their recovery. When LifelineED and STAR work together great things happen.

Mr. Doe's success is an example of what can happen when LifelineED and STAR collaborate. Mr. Doe was linked to detox and residential services by LifelineED. When Mr. Doe was going to be released from his residential program, he reached out to the LifelineED Navigator because he felt like he needed more time. The Navigator was able to advocate for more residential time for Mr. Doe. Upon his release, he was transferred to the STAR program and introduced to his case manager and Peer Recovery Support Specialist.

The STAR team assisted Mr. Doe in obtaining his birth certificate so he could receive a valid identification. Mr. Doe has been able to pay his motor vehicle fines, and his driving privileges have been restored. He has graduated from an intensive outpatient program and currently participates in 12 step programs. The STAR team transported Mr. Doe to numerous medical appointments and linked him to services so that he could obtain unemployment benefits. Mr. Doe is living a life of recovery and hope because of the efforts of both the Lifeline ED and STAR teams.

Sonya, Joyce, Josephine , and John of the LifelineED and STAR programs



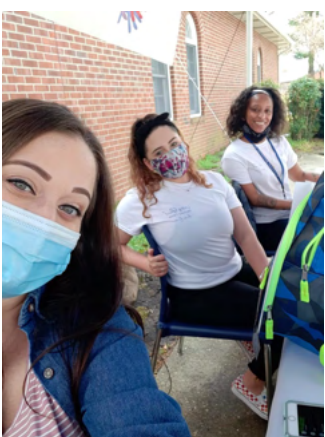
Recovery Reaches Out Event

By: Aries Mayfield

On March 26 staff from the Living Proof Recovery Centers provided families and individuals with critical items such as clothing, shoes, and toiletries at the Voorhees and Sewell locations. During the Recovery Reaches Out event, individuals were provided with resources and information on programs and services provided by Center For Family Services. They also received special harm reduction care packages that were put together with donated items from our community partners the Camden County Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Gloucester County Board of County Commissioners/ Division of Human & Disability Services Addiction Services Unit, and the New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition. These bags included Narcan, Fentanyl Test Strips, Deterra, and Dispose Rx. We appreciate everyone who helped bring these materials to the community.

Organizing a successful event takes a lot of hard work and preparation. Thank you to all who helped bring this event to life. We are grateful to the Reconnections staff and RecoveryCorps members for dedicating their time and labor to make this event happen seamlessly. Special thanks to Josephine Villari for creating and organizing such an amazing event.

Job well done to all of those involved!



Living Proof Recovery Centers Events



Center for Addiction Recovery Education and Success Peer Specialist Training Graduation

On February 27th, Living Proof Recovery Centers graduated another great Center for Addiction Recovery Education and Success (C.A.R.E.S) Certified Peer Recovery Specialist Training group. We were so grateful to be able to give them literature from Bill White to have for their journey forward.



Living Proof Recovery Center

Moments In Time

Reconnections Program

Testimonials

Do you ever feel like you aren't able to cope with your loved ones substance use disorder? Do you feel like once they finally get clean, you won't know how to cope through their new behaviors or that you aren't doing enough for them? Are you concerned for your emotional well being? Center For Family Services' ReConnections program offers peer-to-peer coaching and support services to family, friends, and loved ones of individuals struggling with addiction. Below, read testimonials from individuals recently helped by ReConnections. Please reach out, you are never alone. If you find yourself interested in the program you can email reconnections@centerffs.org or call the Center For Family Services' Access Center at **877.922.2377** and ask to be transferred to the ReConnections. You will then be connected with a family support coordinator within 24 hours. We are always here to help.

For so long I had been worrying about my daughter and her addiction, that it was wearing on me and affecting all areas of my life. I can't remember when I first met my ReConnections coach, because life at that time was a blur, but I remember feeling as though I was taking a step in the right direction to care for myself. My coach gave me homework and information to help me view addiction, and my role in it, differently than I had been, and to think outside of the box. She was always available to answer my calls, no matter day, time or circumstance, and if she didn't have an answer, she knew where to go to get me the guidance I needed. During a time when I, as the parent of an addict, was hitting my rock-bottom, my coach gave me the support I desperately needed. I keep her number and contact information close at hand, because although my daughter is now in recovery, we all know that relapse is always nipping at an addict's heels.

-Susan Smuzinsky



My ReConnections coach has helped me so much with her leadership from the Reconnections family support group. She has taught me many strategies to communicate with my loved one in a loving, non-combative way. I may not always agree or like my loved one's decisions, but we can have a positive relationship now.

-Ruth Feldman

UPCOMING EVENTS

CALL LIVING PROOF RECOVERY CENTERS FOR DETAILED INFORMATION



DID YOU KNOW?

^c Living Proof Recovery Centers offer a variety of on site services, such as:

Emergency Food Assistance

Support Groups

Food Bank

NARCAN Training

Youth Girl's Group

Resume Workshop

Journaling

GED Preparation

Recovery Mentors

Quarterly Outings

12-Step Groups

Job Skills Training



GET INVOLVED!

^c *Now Welcoming...*

⇒ Members

⇒ Volunteers

⇒ Interns

⇒ Advisory Board

CONTACT US



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STAY CONNECTED

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Join our e-mail list to get monthly calendars and new workshop updates emailed directly to you! Just send us an email asking us to add you.



Check us out online! The calendar and special events are always posted to keep you in the loop!



Stop in! We'd love to see you!