

# Peer Coach Uses Lived Experience to Support Inmates as they Re-Enter Society, Reduce Recidivism

## CASE STUDY

### Background

After a 40-year battle with substance use disorder (SUD) using alcohol, oxycodone, and heroin, Drake's life spiraled out of control. He was caught selling meth to an undercover agent and despite having no prior convictions was sentenced to serve 3 years in Kingman State Prison in Arizona.

While in prison, Drake found recovery, eventually teaching SMART Recovery classes and learning about peer support training. Once released from prison, Drake became certified in peer support and came to Youturn Health as a peer coach for inmates re-entering society.



### Why Lived Experience Matters

Inmates are faced with several challenges to reintegrate with society after incarceration, much more than just the stigma of being perceived as a criminal:

- Approximately 85% of inmates have some degree of problematic substance use.<sup>1</sup>
- Mental illness in inmates is twice as common as the overall population.<sup>2</sup>
- In the two weeks following incarceration, people are 40 times more likely to die from an opioid overdose than the general public.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of receiving treatment while incarcerated – and only a small percentage do – individuals re-entering society need support for substance use, mental health, and life in general. This is where a peer coach with lived experience can make a profound difference. Drake's personal experience with SUD and incarceration gives him the experience and knowledge to connect inmates to resources, communicate without judgment, and provide support as they re-acclimate to society.

"I'm here to listen. I've been in their shoes," says Drake. "There aren't a lot of people who've been in their shoes who are here to help them."

#### Re-Entry Peer Coaches Help:

- Identify state-sponsored support benefits like food cards.
- Adjust to new technology like phones and online classes required for parole.
- Navigate the court system to resolve problems instead of running from them.
- Find 12-step support groups to help maintain recovery.
- Provide support and motivation.

### Proven Results

Within three years of release, more than 50% of former prisoners typically become incarcerated again<sup>3</sup>, but after one year, **only 1.7% of those who participated in Youturn Health's peer coaching program were re-incarcerated.**

<sup>1</sup><https://bhbusiness.com/2023/02/03/why-providers-are-teaming-up-with-corrections-departments-to-better-treat-sud/> <sup>2</sup><https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Improving-Health/Mental-Health-Treatment-While-Incarcerated> <sup>3</sup><https://harvardpolitics.com/recidivism-american-progress>

**Youturn**  
HEALTH

Find out if Youturn Health is  
right for your organization:

Bridget Kelly | VP, Growth & Strategic Partnerships

CALL: 978-328-8787

EMAIL: [bkelly@youturnhealth.com](mailto:bkelly@youturnhealth.com)