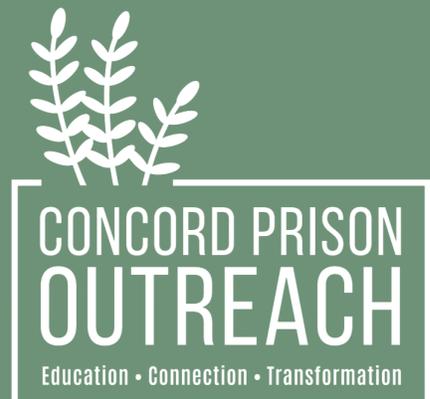


# CONCORD PRISON OUTREACH

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2023 VOLUNTEER  
HANDBOOK



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## WORD FROM OUR VOLUNTEER MANAGER:

Hello, and welcome to our volunteer orientation! We are very excited to get back inside the prisons after over two years of uncertainty and transition.

Volunteers such as yourself are the backbone of our organization and allow us to carry out our mission of bettering the lives of incarcerated people and their families.

The purpose of this handbook is to contextualize your role as a volunteer inside Massachusetts prisons and jails. It provides information on incarceration in Massachusetts, the onboarding process, volunteer expectations, and policies and procedures.

Please note: This orientation handbook is specific to Concord Prison Outreach volunteers and does not replace the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) Volunteer Handbook. CPO volunteers must read and adhere to both this document as well as the DOC Volunteer Handbook.

Going inside of prisons and providing educational services is a unique and rewarding experience, this handbook outlines the guidelines that are critical to ensuring your success.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

With deep gratitude,

Ellie DiMauro

Manager, Volunteer Engagement and Programming

\*Special thanks to Hannah Zack for laying the foundation for this handbook

# CPO STAFF

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## **SAM WILLIAMS**

Executive Director

Sam has been instrumental in various initiatives across the city of Boston including: prison rehabilitation and re-entry, impact of racial profiling, community economic development, urban planning, youth development and public safety. He is currently the chair of the Community Advisory Board for Northeastern University's Institute of Race and Justice. Mr. Williams is a former member of the Board of Directors of (ABCD) Action for Boston Community Development, an appointed member of the Executive Office of Public Safety, Massachusetts Racial Profiling Task Force. He is also a poet, writer, and trainer.

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## **ELLIE DIMAURO**

Manager, Volunteer Engagement and Programming

Ellie graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Massachusetts Lowell with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and history. Before joining CPO, Ellie was an intern for a community based nonprofit called Washington Parks & People in Washington, DC where she served as the Volunteer Manager and operations assistant. She is passionate about social and racial equality and ensuring underserved populations have access to educational services. Ellie also enjoys museum going and horror movies.

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## **JEANNETTE SHEAHAN**

Office Coordinator

Jeannette has worked in the education and human service fields her whole career. She holds a master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Lesley University and has worked as a mathematics teacher, the Youth Employment Coordinator for the City of Cambridge, a Career Counselor at a therapeutic high school, and an administrative assistant at Concord Carlisle High School. Jeannette joins CPO with great enthusiasm to be part of a team and a community that cares about the personal and educational growth of people who are incarcerated. She also is passionate about exercise and speaking French.

# VISION & MISSION

Concord Prison Outreach (CPO) is a 501(c)(3) organization composed of a coalition of individuals and faith communities committed to helping people who are incarcerated build better lives for themselves and their families. CPO works cooperatively with the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC), offering educational programs that focus on skill-building and personal growth, essentials to help support people in prison to achieve success post-incarceration. Since its founding in 1968, when its first volunteers helped support people in a local prison infirmary, CPO has developed into the largest organization of its kind in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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**Mission:** Concord Prison Outreach offers high-quality, transformative programs that focus on education, personal growth, and increased opportunity for incarcerated people and their families.

**Vision:** All people who are incarcerated in Massachusetts have access to meaningful educational and personal growth opportunities.

#### Core Values:

- **Community-** A vow to be a passionate community of volunteers, educators, students, and staff working collaboratively to expand opportunity
- **Integrity-** A pledge to be authentic, trustworthy, and truthful in our work and communications about CPO and those it serves
- **Respect-** A promise to value and honor different points of view and put forth the necessary effort to meet people where they are
- **Social Justice-** A commitment to promote equity, access, and opportunity to historically marginalized individuals and communities
- **Transformation-** A belief that all have the capacity for personal growth and life-altering change

# CPO PROGRAMS

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Concord Prison Outreach offers high-quality, transformative programs that focus on education, personal growth and increased opportunity for incarcerated people and their families. Our programs cover a wide range of subjects that fall into five categories: arts & humanities, education, families & children, socio-emotion, and vocation.

## EDUCATION

- Tutoring:
  - Adult Basic Education (ABE)
  - Pre-HiSET Tutoring
  - HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) Tutoring
  - General Academic Tutoring

## ARTS AND HUMANITIES

- Creative Writing
- Outside Library
- Music Theory and Keyboard
- Book Discussion Group
- Recreational Guitar

## SOCIO-EMOTIONAL

- Restorative Justice
- Cognitive Skills
- Path of Freedom
- BEACON
- Yoga
- Meditation/Healthy Living

## VOCATIONAL

- Entrepreneurship
- Gardening and Horticulture
- Money Smart

## FAMILY AND CHILDREN

- Read to Me, Dad
- Kids' Corner
- Parenting

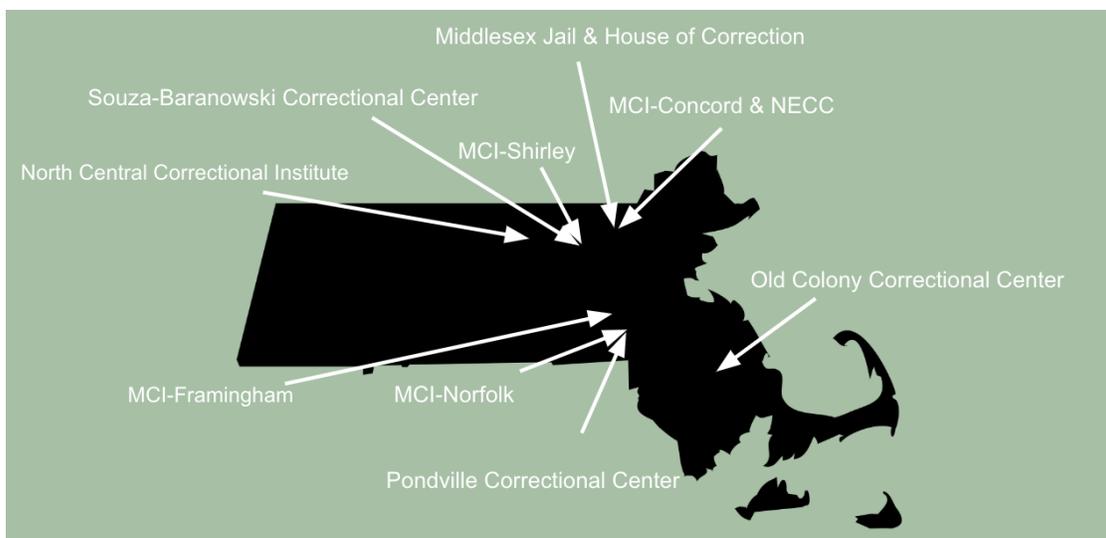
## OUTSIDE THE WALLS

- Holiday Gift Bag Assembly
- WELCOMEBACK Pack Assembly
- Caroling Night

# PROGRAM SITES

Concord Prison Outreach partners with the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) to provide programming across eight sites. The DOC oversees the state prison system and manages incarcerated people in 12 state correctional facilities. Each prison is assigned a security level based on the population's perceived safety risk. There are four levels: maximum, medium, minimum, and pre-release (Prison Security Levels). CPO volunteers facilitate programs at the following DOC sites and at Middlesex Jail & House of Correction (MHOC), a county-jail in Billerica. This site houses men awaiting trial and serving sentences up to 2.5 years.

- MCI-Concord (medium)
- MCI-Framingham (medium/diagnostic center)
- MCI-Norfolk (medium)
- MCI-Shirley (medium/minimum)
- Middlesex Jail & House of Correction (jail)
- North Central Correctional Institute (minimum/medium)
- Northeastern Correctional Center (minimum/pre-release)
- Old Colony Correctional Center (minimum/medium)
- Pondville Correctional Center (minimum/pre-release)
- Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center (maximum)



# WHY PRISON EDUCATION?

## Here is what the data tells us:

In comparison to the general public, incarcerated people have disproportionately low levels of education. Sixty eight percent (68%) of incarcerated people do not have a high school diploma, and 40% have not earned their High School General Equivalency Degree (Harlow). Education is vital to interrupt the cycle of mass incarceration. Studies conducted over the last three decades indicate that educational programs in prison translate into reductions in crime, savings to taxpayers, and long-term contributions to the safety and well being of the communities to which formerly incarcerated people return. A 2013 RAND Corporation report provides a meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults and finds that for every dollar spent on an incarcerated individuals' education, five dollars is saved on not locking them in prison again. Meaningful educational opportunities also reduce overall violence in prison and affirm the rights and dignity of human beings regardless of their criminal record.

## More specifically, prison education:

- **Reduces recidivism:** A 2013 meta-analysis by the RAND Corporation found that incarcerated people who participated in any type of correctional education program, i.e., adult basic education, HiSET prep, vocational training, had a 43% lower odds of recidivating than those who did not partake. This equals a 13 percentage point reduction in the risk of being re-incarcerated (Lois et al.).
- **Saves money:** According to a UCLA study, one million dollars spent on correctional education prevents approximately 600 crimes in comparison to one million spent on incarceration prevents 350 crimes (Bazos and Hausman).
- **Increases employment outcomes:** Without a high school degree, unemployment rates are exceedingly high among formerly incarcerated people, ranging from 25% among white men to 60% among African American women. As the workplace becomes increasingly skilled, it is harder for formerly incarcerated people to find work. However, when one engages in vocational programming while incarcerated, they are 13 percent more likely to find meaningful employment after release (Couloute and Kopf).

# VOLUNTEER PROCESS

## 1. *Complete Online Volunteer Application Form:*

All applicants must complete the online volunteer registration form. This form establishes relevant information for a volunteer's journey with CPO.

## 2. *Interview:*

Prospective volunteers are interviewed by the Volunteer Manager. The VM notifies applicants if their skills match up with a particular program needing volunteers.

## 3. *Attend Orientation:*

CPO holds orientations to provide prospective volunteers with information about the organization, the effects of mass incarceration on communities, how prison education can help incarcerated people, and guidance on volunteering in the prison system. *Please note: participating in an orientation does not guarantee that you will be chosen to be a volunteer.*

## 4. *Matched to a Program:*

Oriented volunteers will be contacted when opportunities arise in the areas they've expressed interest in. Please note that it may be several months before volunteers are placed in a program and some CPO programs require extra training.

## 5. *Attend DOC Site Orientation & Complete Paperwork:*

Once placed in a program, volunteers must provide additional paperwork, including CORI and PREA forms, and attend a mandatory site-specific orientation at the assigned jail or prison the Department of Correction (DOC) or Middlesex House of Correction (MHOC). All volunteers are required to pass a background check to enter the institutions. CPO does not control the background verification process.

## 6. *DOC Processes Your Paperwork:*

Once prospective volunteers submit the DOC packet, it will be processed by the Director of Treatment.

## 7. *You are ready to volunteer:*

Once the paperwork is processed by the Director of Treatment and you've been approved to be a volunteer, the VM will be in touch with more details.

# CONCORD PRISON OUTREACH POLICIES

*Confidentiality:* Concord Prison Outreach (CPO) volunteers may not use any information acquired during their time with CPO, including statements, data, and information gathered from students for any purpose.

*Equal Opportunity:* CPO shall follow the spirit and intent of all federal, state, and local employment law and is committed to equal employment opportunity. CPO is committed to providing equal opportunity for all employees and applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, political affiliation, personal appearance, family responsibilities, matriculation, or any characteristic protected under federal, state or local law. Each person is evaluated based on personal skill and merit.

*Freedom from Harassment:* CPO is committed to providing a work environment for all employees free from sexual harassment and other types of discriminatory harassment. Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally and show respect for their commitment begins with the recognition and acknowledgment that sexual harassment and other types of discriminatory harassment are, of course, unlawful. To reinforce this commitment, CPO has developed a policy against harassment and a reporting procedure for employees who have been subjected to or witnessed harassment.

*Prohibition of Other Types of Discriminatory Harassment:* It is also against CPO's policy to engage in verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of their race, color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, or other protected category (or that of individual's relatives, friends, or associates) that: (1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive working environments (2) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with individual's work performance; or (3) otherwise adversely affects individual's employment opportunities.

# CONCORD PRISON OUTREACH POLICIES

*Prohibition of Sexual Harassment:* CPO's policy against sexual harassment prohibits sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature when: (1) submission to such conduct is made an express or implicit condition of employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is a basis for employment decisions affecting the individual who submits or rejects such conduct; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance, or creating an intimidating environment.

*Service at the Discretion of the Organization:* CPO accepts volunteers' service with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of Concord Prison Outreach. Volunteers agree that the organization may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with Concord Prison Outreach or to make changes like their volunteer assignment.

*Supporting Volunteers:* CPO staff are committed to matching volunteers with programs that suit their interests and expertise. We offer support and encourage anyone who is feeling unsure, uncomfortable, or confused to contact the Volunteer Manager and their program leader at any time. We acknowledge that this work is challenging and will lend support whenever needed.

Our Volunteer Manager is available Monday-Friday to meet with volunteers that need support or additional resources.

Please contact Ellie DiMauro for any questions or concerns:

(o) 978-369-1865

(m) 978-512-0742

(e) [ellie@concordprisonoutreach.org](mailto:ellie@concordprisonoutreach.org)

# VOLUNTEER CLASSIFICATION

Volunteers are the backbone of Concord Prison Outreach. None of our work would be possible without the volunteers who dedicate their time and resources. There are a variety of roles that volunteers play in the organization. Many people facilitate programming, while others organize the Holiday Gift Bag project.

- *Program Leader:* All of our programs are led by Program Leaders (PL) responsible for welcoming and mentoring new volunteers, collecting program data, submitting requests for materials, and updating CPO staff with concerns or volunteer needs. PLs are the volunteer's primary contact for logistics and information sharing and must complete the Program Leader Survey after each session. This survey helps track the number of CPO volunteers and students in each program. It also allows us to track what is happening week to week in a given program and if there is a need for additional supplies or resources. The PL Survey helps us provide information to donors about programming and to determine program budgets.
- *Facilitator:* A facilitator has completed at least two sessions of a given program and is confident and knowledgeable in delivering a program.

# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

Our programs have been running for over 50 years in Massachusetts prisons. Agreement and adherence to volunteer responsibilities allow us to develop a foundation of trust among volunteers, staff members, students, and the Department of Correction. As you sign on to becoming a volunteer, you accept the following responsibilities:

- Be realistic, and accept assignments that fit your interests, skill, and availability.
- Examine the time commitment required for your role and commit to working with Concord Prison Outreach to fulfill that commitment because consistency is crucial. *If your attendance becomes inconsistent, we may terminate the volunteer opportunity.*
- Volunteers must attend the four-hour Concord Prison Outreach orientation and a DOC orientation at the program site.
- Follow all CPO policies, rules, and regulations set forth by the MA Department of Correction. Please note: When volunteering, you are a representative of Concord Prison Outreach. *Negative behavior can affect the standing of all CPO programs.*
- Volunteers must remain flexible; if there is a disruption in the prison, such as a lock-down, you may either not teach that day or have to wait to get in. If a disruption occurs while you are there, you may have to cut your class short. *Always consult with officers and DOC staff and comply with their requests on all security related matters.*
- Track the amount of time you spend volunteering with CPO.

# VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

- Do not correspond with the DOC administrators regarding the class schedule or program concerns. Any changes and concerns should be sent to the VM. \*Note: The only time it is appropriate for volunteers to email the DOC is when they send materials for them to print or are contacted to complete the volunteer re-certification process.

## Volunteer Management:

- All volunteers are responsible for keeping CPO up to date with their email, telephone number, and mailing address.

## Disclosing criminal history:

- Previous encounters or having an incarcerated family member does not automatically disqualify prospective volunteers, but it must be disclosed to CPO and the DOC.

## Extra Program Responsibilities:

- Program Leaders (PL) have extra responsibilities.
- Program Leaders must note the number of students attending each session and complete the PL survey after each session. PLs will be sent a survey by the VM at the start of their program. These numbers are crucial for donors and to measure the effectiveness of our programs.
- Volunteers may purchase **approved** materials and submit for reimbursement. Please check with a staff member about your program's budget before making a purchase. We have some supplies at our office.

# VOLUNTEERING INSIDE THE PRISON

## Becoming a Department of Correction Volunteer:

- Volunteers must be at least 21 years-old.
- If you are on an incarcerated person's visiting list, you cannot volunteer.
- Formerly incarcerated people must wait six months to become a volunteer and receive special approval from the Superintendent.
- All volunteers go through a background check completed by the prison.
- CPO has no control over the result, both the length of time it takes or whether an individual will pass.

## Entrance Procedures:

- Vehicle:
  - Park in the area that is designated as visitor parking.
  - Always leave your phone in the car.
  - Make sure your windows are up and the doors and trunk are securely locked in your car.
  - Do not have any firearms, ammunition, or any other weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, explosives, or a pet.
- Be early:
  - Be at the prisons 30-45 minutes before the start of the scheduled program.
  - Being early ensures that you have time for COVID testing, temperature checks, and/or COVID health forms if that facility requires these for entry.
  - The prison runs on movement, which is the amount of time when incarcerated people are allowed to enter and exit areas in the prison.
  - Movement coincides with work and program schedules. If you're late, you may miss the opening and closing of the trap and will not be able to volunteer that day.

# VOLUNTEERING INSIDE THE PRISON

- Entering the prison:
  - Volunteers enter and present themselves at the control center to sign-in.
  - There is a sign-in sheet that asks for full name, residence, the reason for visit (name of the program), and whether the volunteer has been convicted of a felony.
  - A valid ID (driver's license or passport) is swapped for a visitor's badge.
- Lockers:
  - If going to a medium-security prison, bring two quarters to store your keys.
  - You may bring your non-hooded coat and the locker key with you behind the wall, in addition to the following personal items: a medical bracelet, religious medallion and wedding rings. You cannot bring class materials behind the wall; see below for guidelines.
- COVID-19:
  - Every DOC facility and House of Corrections has COVID protocols in place regarding mask wearing, social distancing, and COVID screening measures.
  - Some facilities may require taking a rapid test onsite before entering, answering health screening questions and/or temperature check.
  - These protocols may vary from facility to facility.
  - It critical to arrive to the facility 30-45 minutes early to allow time for these health screening checks.
  - All CPO volunteers must comply with the COVID protocols in place at the facility they are volunteering at.
  - Any violators of COVID protocols and procedures will not be allowed to continue to volunteer with CPO.

# VOLUNTEERING INSIDE THE PRISON

- The Trap & Being Searched:
  - In medium and maximum-security prisons, all volunteers are subject to being searched.
  - A search includes the use of a metal detector or pat search.
  - Volunteers will be asked to remove their belts, shoes, outerwear (coats, sweaters, jackets).
  - An officer will inspect the collar, sleeve cuffs, waistband, and pants cuff/hemline.
- Attire:
  - Volunteers must follow the DOC Visitor Dress Code guidelines or can be denied entry.
  - Business casual dress is required, no jeans, no revealing or tight clothing (spandex, leggings), no fatigue or camouflage clothing, no clothing that displays a gang affiliation, obscene, racist, or sexual content.
  - Visitor Dress Code Guidelines will be provided at the CPO Orientation.
- Classroom Location:
  - Depending on the prison's security level, volunteers may be escorted by a correctional officer or DOC staff member.
  - Remember that surveillance cameras monitor the prison grounds and listen and see what is going on in the classroom.

# VOLUNTEERING INSIDE THE PRISON

## Bringing in Materials:

- All materials brought into the prison must be pre-approved by the Director of Treatment and included on the program application.
- You cannot bring in anything that is not related to the program.
- Any items not explicitly approved in writing is considered contraband.
- If books are needed for a program, the VM will order them.
- If CPO cannot mail the books directly to the prison, volunteers are responsible for bringing the materials and books to the prison a week before the start of the program to be scanned and searched.
- All handouts must be emailed to the prison's contact at least 48 hours before a given program. We recommend that volunteers send all handouts at the beginning of a term, i.e., before week 1.
- Paper, pens, and folders must be requested in advance.
- Most prisons have boxes for each volunteer program.
- All materials, including print-outs for the program, will be kept in the box and closet while not in use.

## Communication with the DOC :

- The DOC requests that all communication comes from the CPO staff and not directly from volunteers.
- The only time it is appropriate for volunteers to email the DOC staff is when they send materials for them to print or are contacted to complete the volunteer re-certification process.
- Any questions about the program or facility must go through CPO Staff.

Please note: These rules are subject to change and often vary from facility to facility. The DOC site specific orientations will give an overview of that facility's specific rules.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Ellie. Don't assume that something is ok, always double check!

# NAVIGATING THE PRISON CLASSROOM

## Student Interactions:

- We hope that there is a positive bond between Concord Prison Outreach volunteers and students, however, personal boundaries need to be maintained for the program to function, as mandated by the Department of Correction guidelines.
- Concord Prison Outreach volunteers are granted access by the Massachusetts Department of Correction and the Middlesex House of Correction exclusively for the stated program's purpose. Contact beyond the original objective can lead to boundary violations and put all Concord Prison Outreach programs in jeopardy.
- The burden of responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries rests squarely upon the shoulders of CPO volunteers. Breaking prison rules with a student can lead them to be severely punished, including forced isolation, prison transfer, or program revocation.

## Avoiding Boundary Violations

- The DOC recommends practicing the following behaviors: maintain a professional distance; focus behavior on duties & assignments; do not become overly familiar with any student, do not share personal information; do not accept gifts or favors; and be knowledgeable of department policy and procedure, code of conduct, and facility rules and regulations (MA DOC Appropriate Staff/Inmate Relationships, A Guide for Staff, Contractors and Volunteers, n.d).

# NAVIGATING THE PRISON CLASSROOM

## Additional recommendations:

- Physical contact cannot exceed a brief handshake, no hugging.
- Volunteers and students cannot exchange any non-class related materials, including candy, gum, letters (even thank-you notes), possessions, gifts, and drawings.
- Rationale: We know it is difficult to turn down a gift, but accepting one creates a potentially unhealthy power dynamic for you and your students.
- Do not communicate with students through phone calls, mail, or email.
- You cannot communicate with an incarcerated person's family on their behalf.
- Do not agree to do any sort of favor, i.e., passing notes and/or contacting someone outside.
- Remember: the only materials that can be exchanged are class materials that have been pre-approved by the Director of Treatment.
- Do not exchange identifying information.
- Volunteers cannot reveal personal identifying information, i.e., address, cell phone number, full name, etc. Volunteers can use their first name with students, but do not disclose last name.
- Do not ask any student about their criminal sentence or details about their crime.

# LANGUAGE

## Words matter:

They shape perceptions and understanding, both of past and present events and of future possibilities and, therefore, future events. Semantic and public acceptance of terms like "formerly incarcerated" or "returning citizens" (rather than ex-felon, ex-offender, or ex-inmate) are of fundamental importance to the process of public opinion formulation, positive media images, effective social service delivery, and, most importantly, progressive policy change.

As an organization, Concord Prison Outreach follows The Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solution's (CNUS) guidance to use people-centric language. We hope you'll want to, but we do ask that you use people-centric language while representing CPO.

We resolve to use humanizing language for individuals involved in the criminal legal system. Words like inmate, offender, convict, felon, and prisoner can dehumanize and evoke feelings of otherness and fear.

People in prison are people, and certain decisions in our language can help us recall and assert this in the face of the many forces making contrary assertions. We use the terms, people in prison, incarcerated people, people with past involvement in the criminal legal system, formerly incarcerated people, etc. Most often, though, in our context, people in prison are students. We can refer to them as a student, and by their first name.

However, remember that language is a matter of personal choice. People in prison may refer to themselves as a prisoner or use some of the other terms listed above. We should respect the language choices of those around us. There is no need to challenge someone (an incarcerated person) for referring to themselves or their peers as an inmate, etc.

We should refer to correctional officers as such or as CO's, not guards in a similar vein. The latter can simplify and minimize their jobs' complexity and goals and be perceived as disrespectful.

# ETHICAL VOLUNTEERING

## Power & Privilege:

CPO volunteers enter prisons from a place of privilege, and it is vital to recognize and understand our own privilege in relation to our work.

Volunteering in prison can be a fulfilling experience, but we must remember that it (our service) is not about us and what makes us feel good, but rather it is about providing an inclusive learning environment for the students to thrive. We must recognize that we may not know what is best for each student. Power and privilege are not something we can separate ourselves from; volunteers can come and go, a luxury our students do not have.

## Final Thoughts to Keep in Mind.:

- Consistency is important. The students look forward to volunteers coming at the same time each week and prison staff are relying on us.
- Speak to the students as equals and as people with intelligence who are worthy of respect.
- Listen- ask for student feedback on materials, what they find helpful, what they are interested in.
- Respect students' concerns over their unique challenges and contexts; find a balance between being encouraging and recognizing that everyone has a unique situation.
- Avoid moralizing, don't lecture students, guilt them, etc. about past behaviors, opinions.
- Reach out! This work isn't easy and can be emotional. We are here for you!

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