



# Expanding Opportunities to Help Vulnerable Communities

By: Neha Mehta

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## What is VERA?

Independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit center for justice policy and practice

Founded in 1961 by Louis Schweitzer & Herb Sturz

Mission Statement : Making justice systems fairer and more effective through research and innovation

Departments: 12

Locations: New York, DC, New Orleans, Los Angeles

# VERA & AFE

## Why did I choose VERA as my AFE?

- ✧ My interest in SUMH policy & high rate of SUMH in prisons/jails
- ✧ Interest in understanding the demographics and needs of the prison/ jail population
- ✧ More effective ways to address SUMH in prisons/jails

## 1<sup>st</sup> Year MPP Coursework

- ✧ Methods, Survey Research, Social Policy, Addictions Policy

## Concentration:

- ✧ Social Policy

# My Role at VERA

## Research

- ✧ Diversion programs, Medicaid health homes, FQHC, AIDS Centers, Homeless Shelters & Hospitals

## Meetings

- ✧ DOHMH, Mayoral Task Force on Behavioral Health & Criminal Justice
- ✧ Webinars

## Memos

- ✧ Medicaid Inpatient or Residential Psychiatric Treatment
- ✧ Medicaid Substance Use Treatment
- ✧ Opioid Treatment in Jails & Prisons

## Surveys

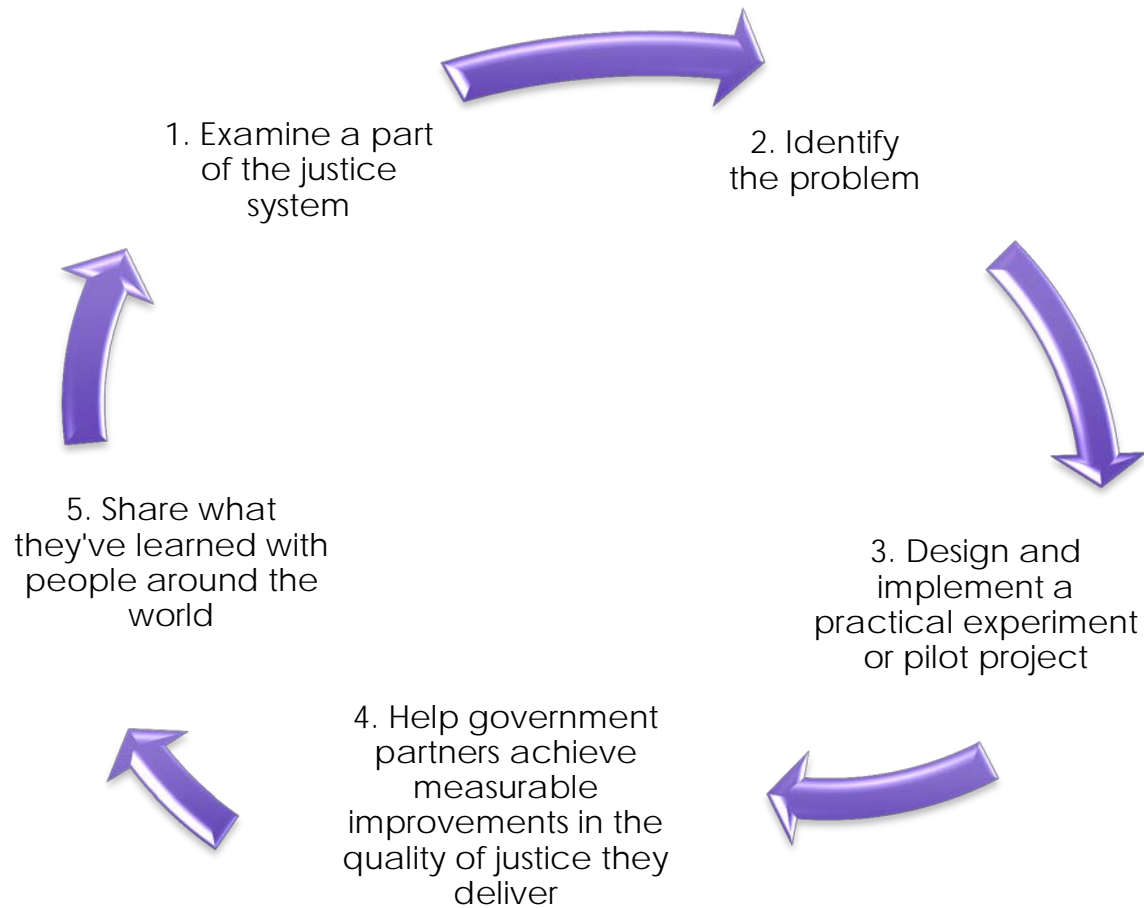
- ✧ Administered surveys to NYPD
- ✧ Metrics



# SUMH Populations

- ✧ Background
- ✧ Scope of the Problem
- ✧ PASU Pilot Project
- ✧ Challenges

# Process



# Background

- ✧ Higher rates of infectious disease and chronic physical and behavioral health conditions than the general population
- ✧ Rate of serious mental illness (SMI) is 2 – 6 times higher among incarcerated populations
- ✧ Over 70% with SMI also have a co-occurring substance-use disorder
- ✧ Mental health treatment in correctional settings is generally inadequate



# Scope of the Problem

- ✧ EMTs who are responsible for screening everyone who is arrested
- ✧ Timely access to medical services in the time between arrest, arraignment, and admission to jail is important
- ✧ However, effectiveness of PASUs is hampered by:
  - ✧ Outdated, paper-based medical screening methods
  - ✧ lack of access to important clinical information held in electronic health records (EHRs)

# Enhanced Pre-Arrestment Screening Units (PASUs) Pilot

## Goals

1. Improve ability to identify health needs by hiring credentialed medical staff to conduct screens in PASU
1. Capitalize on use of EHR to improve coordination between health providers
1. Build infrastructure for diversion and health service connections

## My Role

- ✧ Research & write memos
- ✧ Attend meetings



# Challenges

- ✧ 'A to A' times
- ✧ Local Stakeholders
- ✧ Location for Pilot Project

# NYPD Homeless Diversion Project

## Problem

- ✧ Homeless population not receiving effective services

## Goal

- ✧ To maximize the city's investment in policing and services for homeless adults

## My role

- ✧ Administer Surveys to NYPD
- ✧ Metrics

## Survey Objective

- ✧ Better understand the needs of homeless people that come into contact with NYPD officers in the New York City subway system.

# Changing Role of Health Care

ACA: Provides opportunities to help vulnerable communities

Medicaid will support more community-based organizations partnering with diversion programs

ACA increases the health insurance coverage among jail populations

Partnerships between justice and health systems → reduce correctional health care costs incurred by localities

# Personal Reflections



2<sup>nd</sup> Year  
Courses



Soft Skills



Career Goal

# Special Thanks

- ✧ SUMH staff
- ✧ David Cloud, JD, Site Supervisor, Senior Program Associate, VERA
- ✧ Jim Parsons, Vice President, VERA
- ✧ Andrea Hetling, Ph.D, University Professor
- ✧ Stuart Shapiro, Ph.D, Director, Public Policy