



Washington Way

Humanity in Corrections:
An Amend Initiative



Introductions

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Mission

To improve public safety by positively changing lives

Vision

Working together for safer communities

Our Commitment

To operate a safe and humane corrections system and partner with others to transform lives for a better Washington.

Washington Way is a partnership between the
**Washington State Department of Corrections
(DOC)**

&

**Amend at the University of California San
Francisco**

to bring a health-focused approach to
transforming correctional culture within
Washington's prison facilities and reentry
centers.




Amend & the Norwegian Correctional Service



***“People go to court to be punished ...
They go to prison to become better neighbors”***

Reformation in the Norwegian Correctional System has significantly:

- ✓ reduced prison violence,
 - ✓ boosted staff and incarcerated individual health and morale, and
 - ✓ dramatically increased the likelihood of successful reentry.
- 

WHERE DID THE NORWEGIAN SYSTEM GET ITS IDEAS IN THE 90S AND 00S?

- ▶ Dynamic security - England
- ▶ Import model - Sweden
- ▶ Research and development - Canada
- ▶ Professional library - Finland
- ▶ Contact personal officer - UK and Sweden
- ▶ Progression units - Sweden/US
- ▶ Sentence planning - England
- ▶ Community service - England
- ▶ Cognitive programmes - Canada/England
- ▶ Seamless correctional service - England
- ▶ Security in prison - Scotland
- ▶ EM - Denmark/Sweden
- ▶ Drug Court - Ireland/England/US
- ▶ Training of staff/students - Den/Swe/Eng/Can





Norway



Sweden



Scotland



Ireland



Iceland


No single approach is a panacea. Amend is working with a growing community of prison services to adapt international best practices **to reduce harm in US prisons.**

ORIGINS OF THE WASHINGTON WAY

- This program draws heavily on concepts from the Norwegian Correctional Services which holds the belief that:
"People go to court to be punished, they go to prison to become better neighbors"
- DOC is not adopting the "Norway" but rather taking full advantage of the international best practices demonstrated by Norway.
- DOC is adapting these practices to suit the needs of each facility and every staff member in our state; making the practices "our own"!
- Our aim is not to do things the "Norway", rather to do them our own way....the Washington Way!

CONNECTING WASHINGTON STATE TO BEST PRACTICES

Amend works with multiple U.S. prison systems, including Washington, Oregon, California, North Dakota, Missouri, Connecticut, and Maine



Amend Immersion Program



Amend Ambassadors and Norwegian Correctional Staff and continuously work with stakeholders



Now, professionals are traveling to WA for better practices



• By the end of 2026, all Washington State Prisons and Reentry Centers will be onboarded with the Washington Way.



• Culture change does not happen quickly, but the future is looking bright!



WASHINGTON WAY ALIGNS WITH OUR AGENCY VALUES!



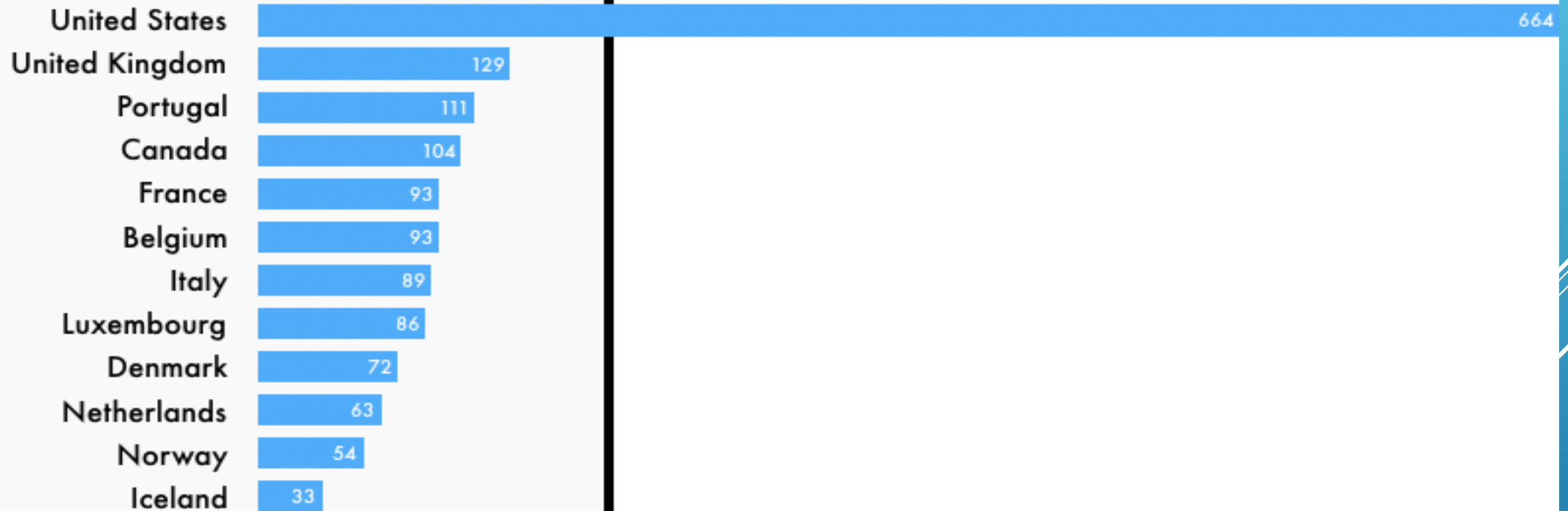
- ❑ Cultivating an Environment of Integrity and Trust
- ❑ Respectful and Inclusive Interactions
- ❑ People's Safety
- ❑ Positivity in Words and Actions
- ❑ Supporting People's Success



NOW THAT WE HAVE
DISCUSSED THE ORIGINS OF
WASHINGTON WAY AND
AMEND, LET'S TALK ABOUT
WHY THIS INITIATIVE IS SO
IMPORTANT.

Mass Incarceration in the United States

INCARCERATION RATES AMONG FOUNDING NATO COUNTRIES

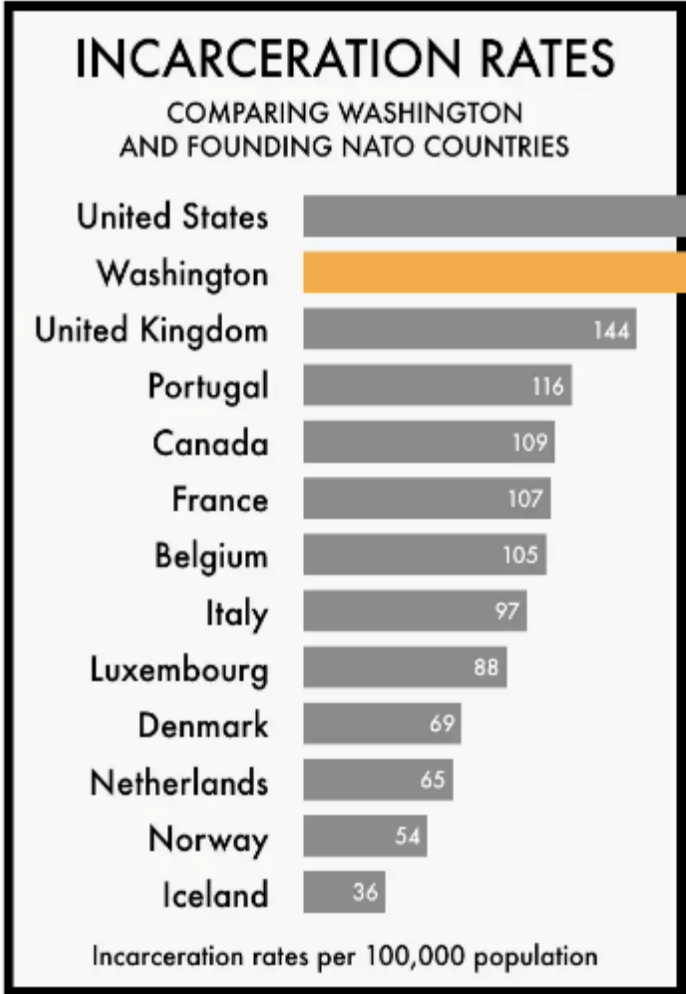


Incarceration rates per 100,000 population

Source: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2021.html>



Washington State Comparatively



Mass incarceration harms incarcerated people

People who are incarcerated in the U.S. experience more illness than non-incarcerated people.

Condition	Population in State/Federal Prisons	Population in Jails	US Population
Hypertension	30.2	26.3	18.1
Heart-Related Problems	9.8	10.4	2.9
Diabetes	9.0	7.2	6.5
Asthma	14.9	20.1	10.2
Stroke	1.8	2.3	0.7
Any Chronic Condition	43.9	44.7	31.0

Values are %. On the basis of data from the National Inmate Survey 2011 to 2013 (NIS-3), a survey of randomly selected people incarcerated in state prisons (N=3,833) and jails (N=5,494). General population estimates are from a community-based survey, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2009 to 2012.

Mass incarceration has also had an alarming negative impact on staff...

- High rates of **chronic health conditions**
- Many report perceptions of a **constant threat of violence**
- **Withdrawal, isolation, conflict at home** are common
- Elevated rates of **severe depression, suicide, domestic violence, substance use**



“The mental health of correctional staff is being negatively impacted by the entire correctional system, causing depression, stress, and suicide – all reaching near epidemic proportions and often manifesting in additional physical ailments.

The stresses are so high that, on average, a correctional officer's mortality is between ages 59 and 62, which is 14 to 21 years shorter than the general public.”



HEALTH AND WELLNESS MUST BECOME A PRIORITY FOR OUR STAFF

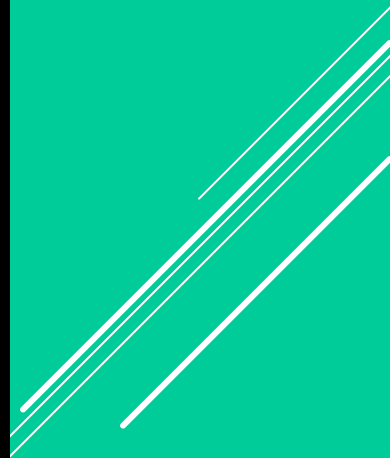
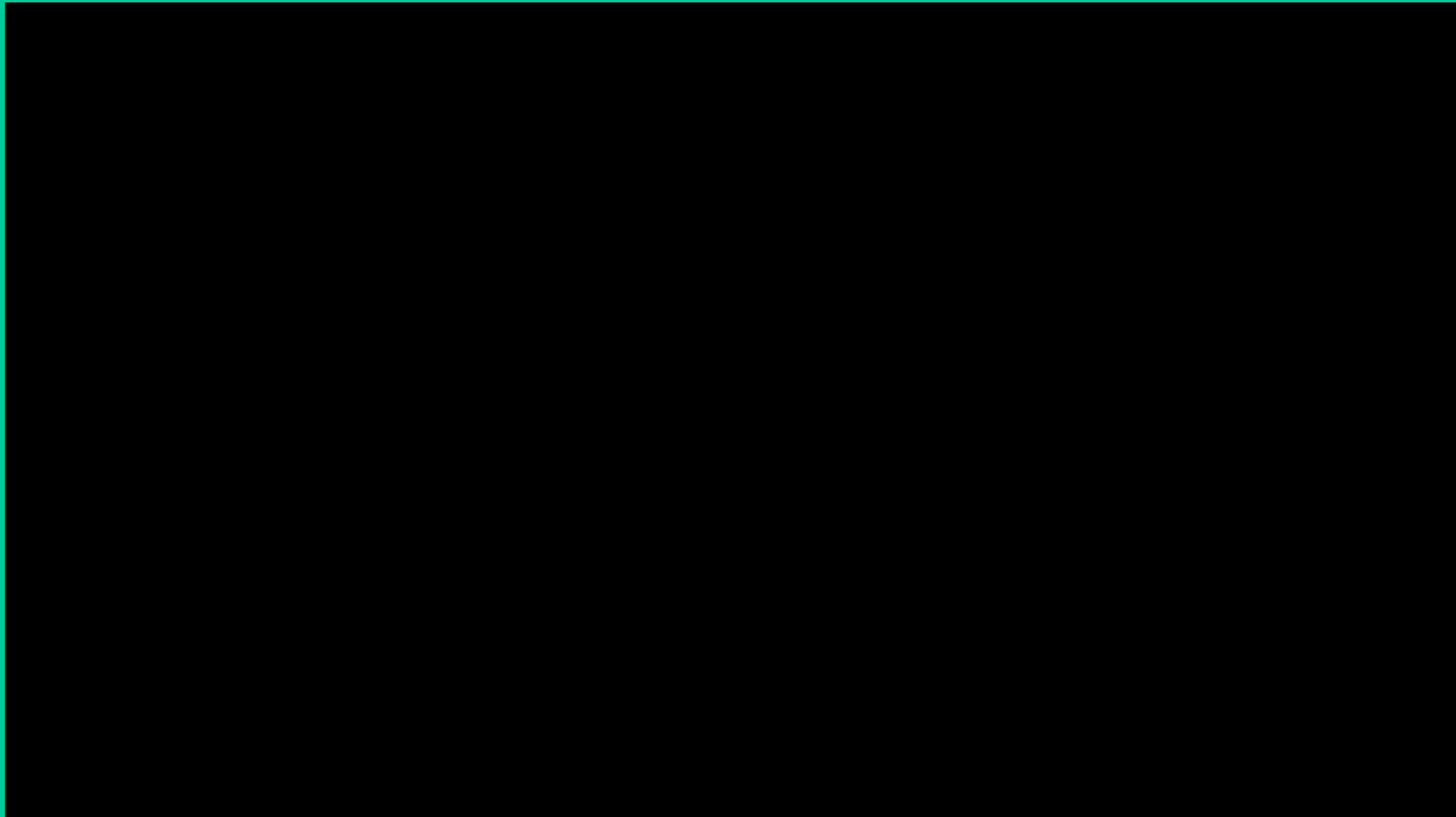
Impacts on Health and Well-being

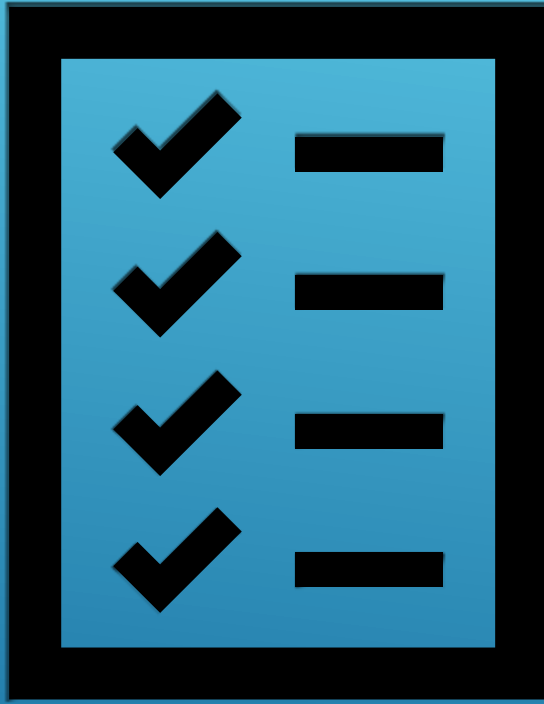
In a survey of custody staff (109 participants) working at one of Amend's partner prisons in the US **(WCCW) in Washington:**

- 69 (63%) said someone in their life expressed concern about their mental or physical health in the last 6 months
- 65 (59%) do not feel physically safe at work
- 85 (78%) said their work makes it hard to spend quality time with family
- 52 (48%) said they do not get personal satisfaction with their job



OUR WHY!





WA DOC'S FUTURE WILL
PRIORITIZE THE HEALTH
AND WELLBEING OF
STAFF AND PEOPLE IN
OUR CARE. NOW LET'S
DISCUSS HOW WE WILL
DO THAT.



The Norwegian approach is not a copy-and-paste

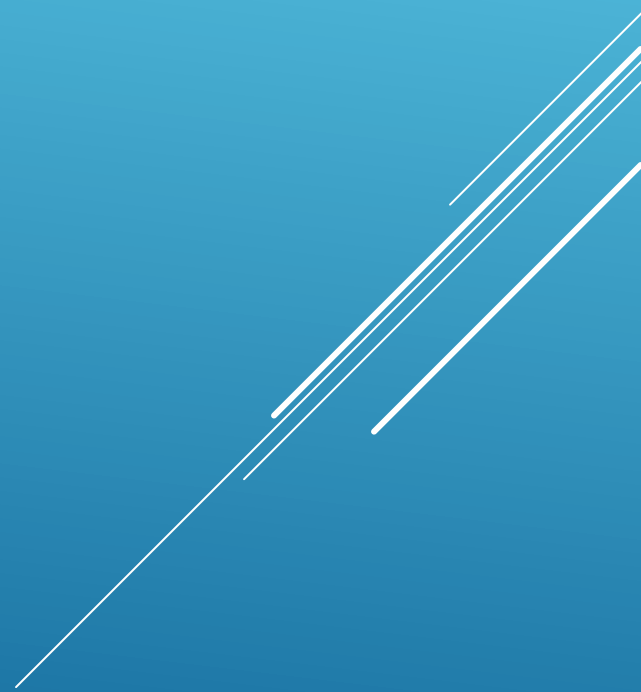
But Norway's core correctional principles can be taught & they can provide a **public health pathway for how to reduce harm in US prisons**

WASHINGTON WAY FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES


Dynamic Security

Normalization

Progression



GOALS OF WASHINGTON WAY PRINCIPLES

- ▶ **Staff and Resident Wellness:** Enhancing work environments through training and facility improvements to reduce trauma and stress for all individuals within the system.
 - ▶ **Public Safety:** Preparing residents to be better neighbors as they reintegrate as engaged family members and neighbors, thereby reducing recidivism and promoting community safety.
 - ▶ **Trauma-Informed Organization:** Reducing incidents of use of force, staff assaults, overdoses, self-harm, and other crises by building a supportive, trauma-informed environment.
- 

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE: DYNAMIC SECURITY

Dynamic security is the frequent, respectful communication between correctional staff and residents.



Organizational security involves routines, shift plans, and daily procedures that ensure consistency and predictability.



Static security consists of the physical aspects of a prison, like walls, doors, uniforms.



SO WHY DYNAMIC SECURITY?

Corrections Professionals experience fight-or-flight syndrome several times throughout the workday.

▶ **Causes:**

- ▶ Negative interactions
- ▶ Violence and/or Aggression
- ▶ Hostile environment
- ▶ Perception of threat
- ▶ Extended periods of heightened awareness



DYNAMIC SECURITY CONCEPTS

Empowerment

Private vs
Personal
Information

Trauma-
Informed
Organization

Window of
Tolerance

Gasoline &
Water
Analogy





BUILDING DYNAMIC SECURITY



- ▶ A way to think about Rapport and Professional Relationships as a “Bank of Trust”
- ▶ Each respectful and humane interaction you have, you are making a deposit into that bank account.
- ▶ The day when an individual is in crisis, you may need to make a withdrawal from that account to de-escalate them out of their crisis.
- ▶ If your “Bank of Trust” account has a healthy balance, meaning a well-developed rapport/relationship, you won’t be overdrawn by a necessary withdrawal!

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE:
NORMALIZATION
LIFE OUTSIDE VS. LIFE INSIDE

Relational

Environmental

Creating Positive, Normal Environments

To normalize prison environments, staff and residents have implemented activities and environmental improvements that mirror the outside world and encourage healthy interactions

Normalization means that:

- Life inside a facility resembles life outside of it as much as possible
- Everyone works to make the facility as healthy and supportive as it can possibly be

Impact:

- Contributes to an environment that is NOT harmful to staff
- Better prepares individuals to reenter the community

Examples:

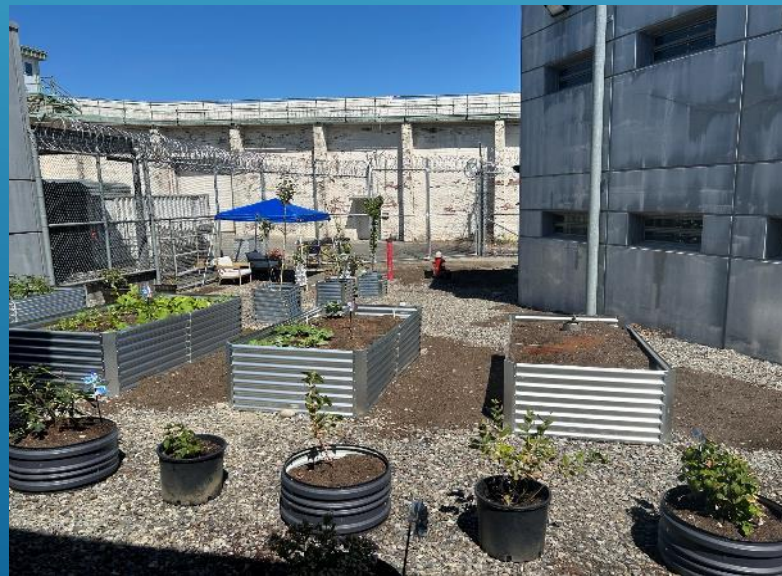
- Improvements to the living and working environment for all
- Innovative engagements where individuals can practice being positive, responsible members of the community

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT.....

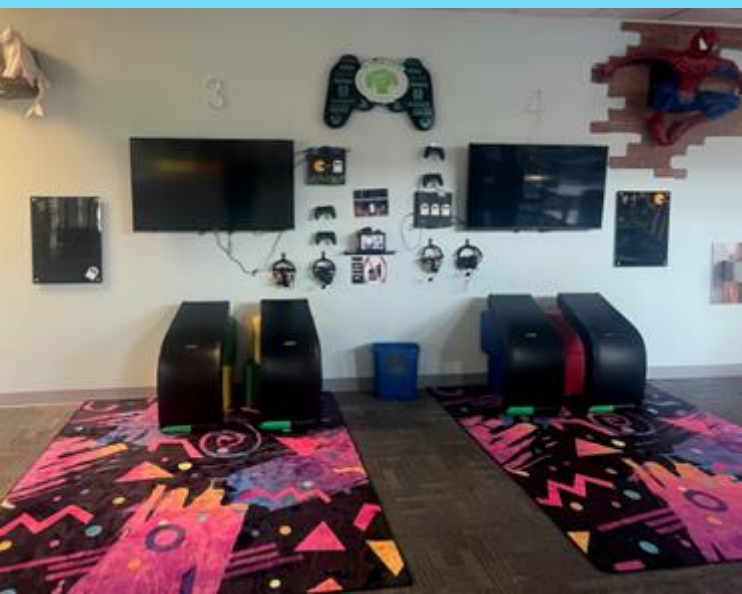
Corrections Professionals can experience levels of institutionalization the same as incarcerated individuals.

- Facility sounds and smells are experienced the same by both staff and individuals....
 - Keys, radio traffic, doors slamming, and loud dayrooms

NORMALIZATION IN ACTION









FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE: **PROGRESSION**

People progress through hard work, accountability, healthy living, and motivation

Progression provides meaningful opportunities to work towards positive change



PROGRESSION

Every individual knows what they need to do to be successful where they are incarcerated.

- By providing the opportunity to earn trust, residents learn the benefits of abiding by rules. The more responsibility residents have while incarcerated, the more successful they are likely to be on the outside.
- Progression is an opportunity to learn. If residents violate trust, responsibilities are taken away.
- Depending on the circumstances, progression offers a way to earn that trust in the future. This is a normal part of life and helps people prepare for release.

Impact:

- Creates opportunities for all staff to work with motivated individuals who want positive change that increases their ability to successfully reenter the community



SUCCESSSES IN PROGRESSION



Continuous case management



Every major institution offers college and vocational programs



Empowering staff through training and proposals



Increased resources and collaboration for individualized release planning

WASHINGTON WAY CORE MODELS

Activity / Resource Teams

Contact Staff

Change Agents

Cell-to-Cell



RESOURCE AND ACTIVITY TEAMS:

- Empower uniformed staff to work safely and effectively with the highest risk, highest needs incarcerated individuals to:
- Dramatically increase their time-out-of-cell with meaningful activities, and,
- Ultimately support them to live safely and successfully without isolation.





“The people who may
deserve it the least, need it
the most.”



THE WASHINGTON WAY



Agency Strategic Planning Objectives and Key Performance Measures (April 2025 - December 2025)

Expand normalization environments, progression, and humanization efforts by June 30, 2027.

of facility modifications = 756

of nature spaces = 250

of normalization activities = 2,204

Involve 15% of staff in coaching or mentorship activities by June 30, 2027.

of staff involved in Change Agent activities = 836

2025 Outcomes from Resource/Activity Teams

73% of decrease in violent infractions

82% reduction in staff assault infractions

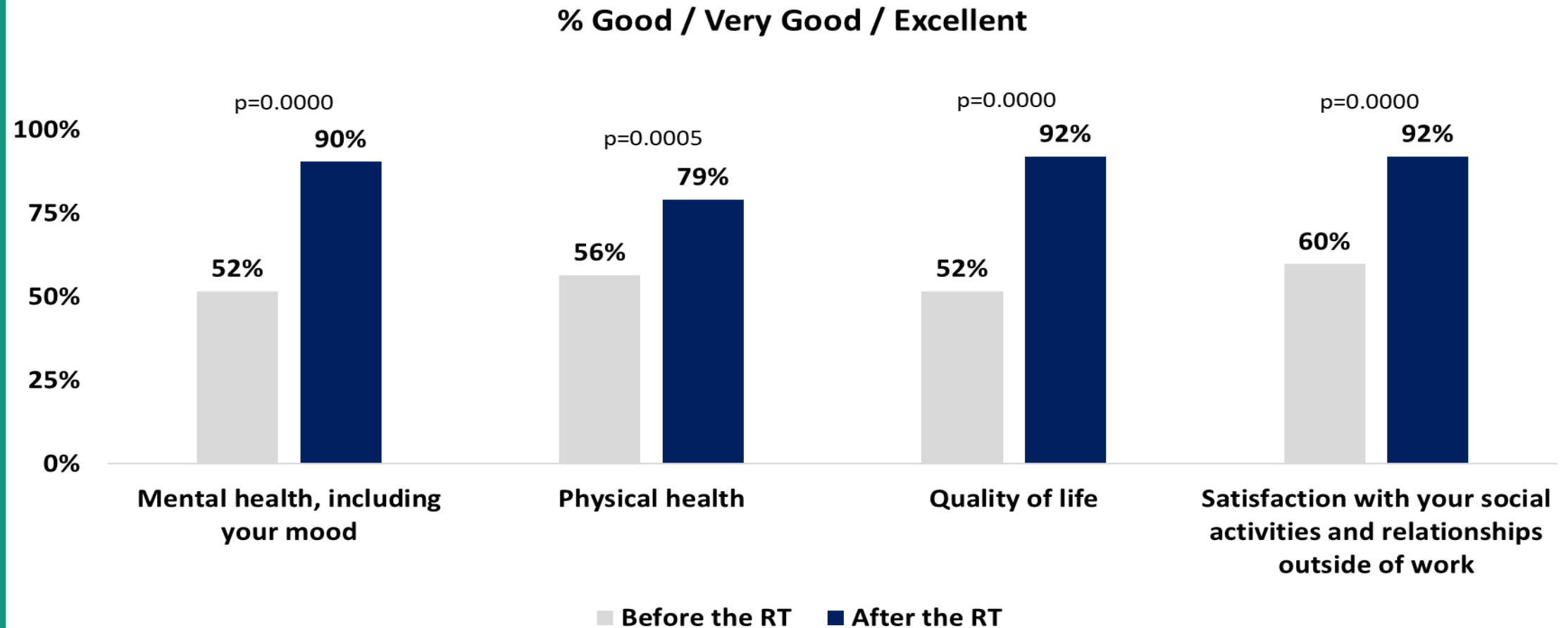
55% reduction in leave usage (Late/No Show/LWOP)

62 transitions to lower levels of custody



Resource Team Staff Report Improved Health and Quality of Life

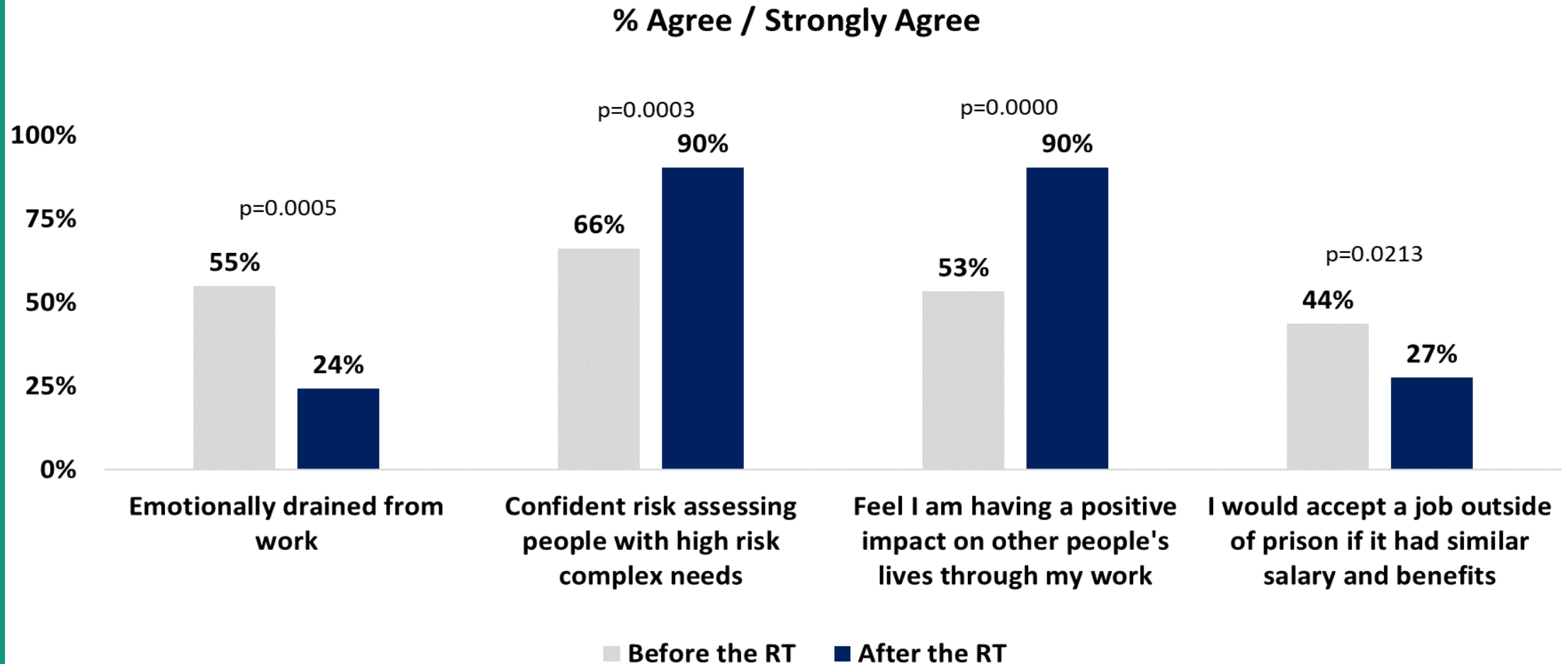
(N = 62/127; n=15 Oregon; n=25 Ca; n=20 WA) (*p<.001 for all results)



Source: Results from Amend Survey of Resource / Activity Team Staff Members - Summer 2024 (CA, OR, WA) (N=62).

Resource Team Staff Report More Job Satisfaction & Meaning

(N = 62/127; n=15 Oregon; n=25 Ca; n=20 WA) (*p<.05 for all results)



Source: Results from Amend Survey of Resource / Activity Team Staff Members - Summer 2024 (CA, OR, WA) (N=62).

CORE MODEL: CONTACT STAFF

- ▶ Staff person assigned to small group of individuals to support their success and prevent problems before they arise
- ▶ Staff are trained and supported to encourage pro-social behaviors, provide options, guidance and direction that support individuals to improve their lives through their continuum of reentry.
- ▶ Are instrumental in helping to change the DOC culture from an “enforcement mentality” to a “coaching & mentoring mentality”.



WHERE PROGRESSION MATTERS
THE MOST

CORE MODEL: CHANGE AGENTS

- ▶ A staff person who is motivated to support culture change efforts
- ▶ An inclusive space for staff to:
 - Share ideas
 - Role model camaraderie in the workplace
 - Create solutions together
- ▶ Focus on training, events, proposals, and communication





CHANGE AGENT IDEA AT SCCC



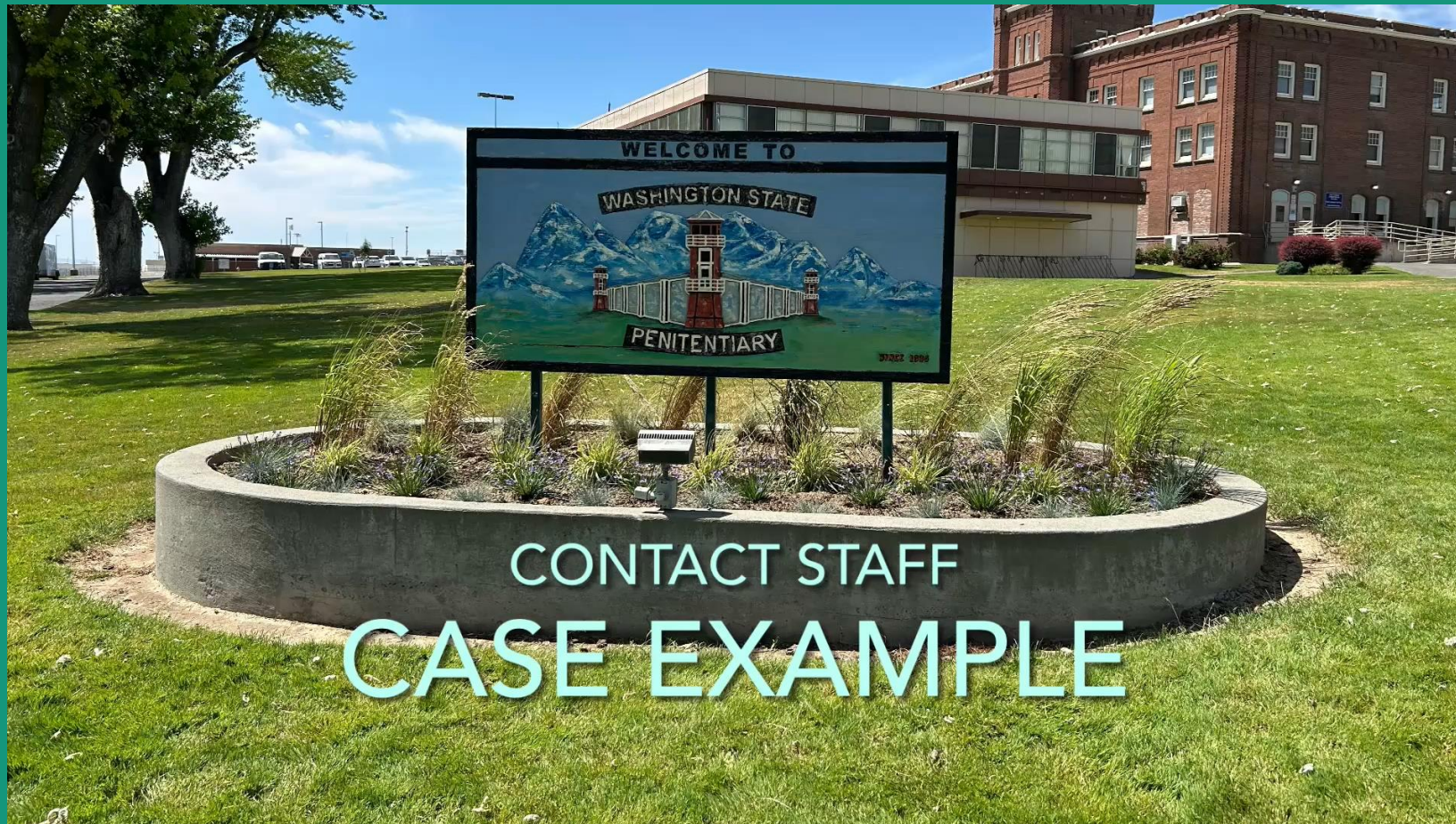
Change Agent Ideas at WSP



CELL TO CELL

- ▶ Cell to Cell was created by staff and residents at Stafford Creek Corrections Center
- ▶ Virtual exchange meetings over MS Teams
- ▶ Bringing staff and residents from Norway and Washington together
- ▶ Currently in 3 facilities in WA DOC
- ▶ Global expansion is planned with other countries:
 - ▶ Norway
 - ▶ Scotland
 - ▶ Northern Ireland
 - ▶ Finland
 - ▶ Iceland
- Exchange groups focus on the betterment of each others facilities
- Dedicated time to create projects for the betterment of all

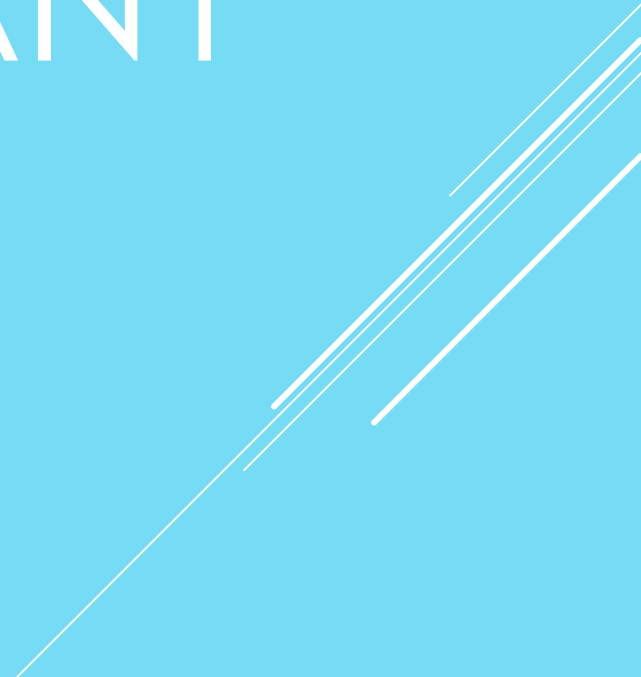
DEDICATED STAFF MEMBERS CREATE CHANGE



CONTACT STAFF
CASE EXAMPLE



ARE THERE ANY
QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!!



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SOURCES