How IJRD is responding to COVID-19: Generating knowledge, expanding practices, and improving outcomes

I. ADAPTATION

We have added quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) questions to all of our active studies to explore the impact of the spread of COVID-19 on study participants (those who are currently incarcerated and those who are living in the community) and their family members.

These data will be integral to understanding how the spread of the virus has affected the health, community stability, and overall well-being of individuals, families, and communities impacted by criminal justice system involvement.

They will also provide the means for us to understand the impact of the virus on the outcomes our studies aim to improve, which range from employment and housing stability to psychological distress and well-being.

II. IMPLEMENTATION

We are actively pursuing methods to increase connection and engagement among study participants by helping them access and master technology.

- Our team members are calling, texting, messaging, and video chatting with participants and family members to conduct research interviews and deliver services.
- We are hoping to give smartphones with data plans to study participants to facilitate their ability to connect with us via streaming video services.

III. INNOVATION

In addition to contacting and connecting with study participants and their family members, our team members have launched more than a dozen “dream projects” – each designed to generate new knowledge and amplify the reach and impact of our data-driven solutions to criminal justice reform.

Some examples include:

- DEVELOPING interactive training tools and decision trees to improve service delivery
- SHIFTING paper-based facilitator guides to an online, interactive format to facilitate scaling of our innovations
- EXPLORING team members’ experiences of working at the intersection of helping professions and criminal justice in blogs/vlogs to increase public awareness of the work and remove stigma-related barriers to success for those who have experienced incarceration
- FINALIZE our profession and continuum education curriculum to disseminate our data-driven best practices to support the reform efforts of influencers and decision makers
- DOCUMENTING success stories from participants engaged with our work to reduce community stigma toward justice-involved individuals and inform future criminal justice reform solutions