

# Basic Needs Fundraising for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals in Collaboration with Connecticut Community Partners in Action

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## Introduction:

- The Urban Service Track Public Health Interest Group (PHIG) is an interdisciplinary student-led cohort focused on addressing public health challenges affecting the greater Hartford community.
- We addressed health disparities faced by individuals within the justice system.
- Connecticut Community Partners in Action (CPA) offers essential services to formerly incarcerated individuals.
  - The program is dedicated to supporting the reintegration of individuals impacted by the criminal justice system.
- Our interest group facilitated the assembly of reentry backpacks to support this population.

## Objectives:

1. Understanding the challenges and structure of the U.S. justice system
2. Collaborate with CPA through community engagement and service-learning activities
3. Identify the challenges faced by individuals upon release from the CT prison system
4. Design and implement a fundraising drive to support CPA's Reentry Backpack Program
5. Discuss the broader topic of housing insecurity as it relates to those formerly incarcerated

## Background:

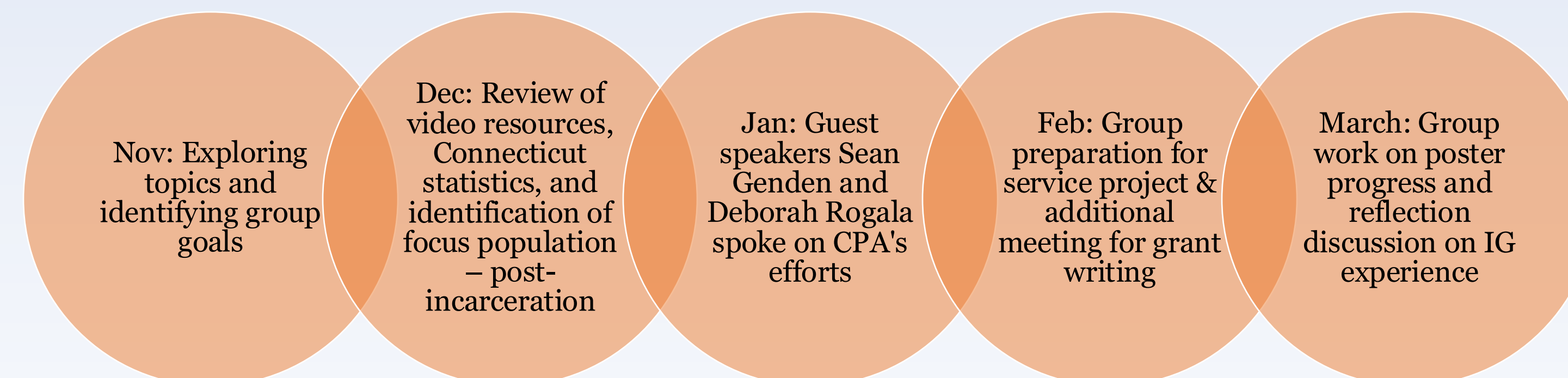
- Formerly incarcerated individuals experience disproportionate rates of unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness, and housing insecurity.
  - Among those released from the CT prison system, 14% report immediate homelessness and 16% report housing instability. (Lansing et al., 2024)
- Reentry centers serve an important role in providing essential resources to:
  - Establish housing
  - Reduce recidivism
  - Promote safe reintegration into society.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our collaborators at CPA including Deborah Rogala, LCSW, and Sean Genden for their guidance and support of our group's developmental goals. We also thank our UST mentors Chinenye Anyanwu, PharmD, MPH; Shanthi Rao, MSW; Rubby Koomson, APRN; and Emma Bergstrom, D4.

## Methods:

- The PHIG met monthly to explore issues affecting formerly incarcerated individuals in CT (*see graphic below*).
  - Identification of community needs among formerly incarcerated individuals
  - Review of the US justice system and health disparities of incarcerated populations
    - Discussions about the Connecticut justice system
    - Video narratives and personal accounts of incarceration followed by small group discussions
  - Guest lecture with CPA leaders who shared insight into their work supporting reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals
- As a group, we decided to partner with CPA for a backpack drive to gather essential items for Hartford's Reentry Welcome Center.
  - Timeline and target audience: ten-week period collection drive among community members from UConn Storrs, UConn Health Farmington and Quinnipiac University
  - Established a grant writing team focused on researching recidivism rates within Connecticut
  - Items prioritized for donation included cell phones and essential goods such as toiletries
  - Physical donation boxes and fundraising materials placed across university campuses
  - Web-based fundraising page for monetary donations

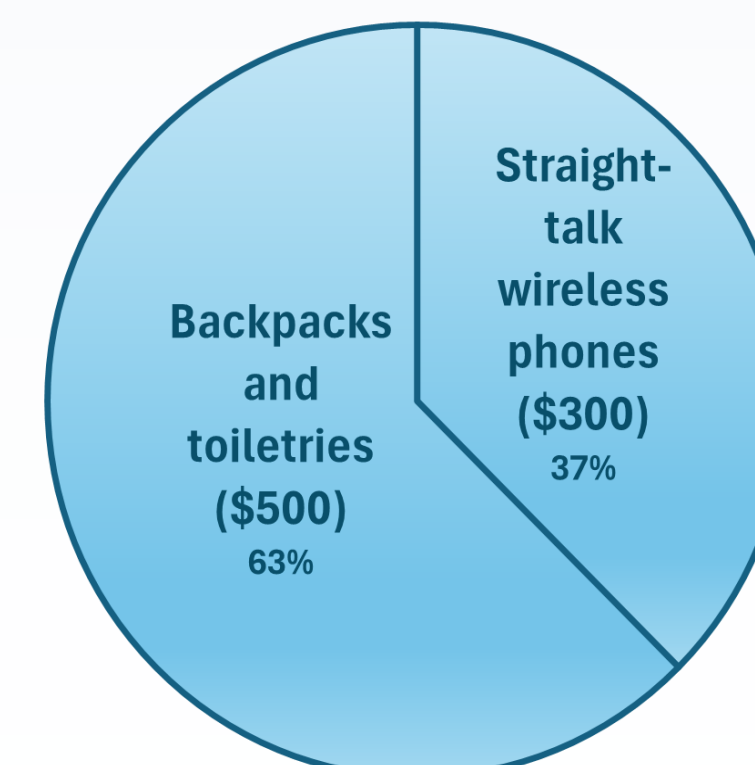


## Results:

- At the conclusion of our fundraising drive, we met with CPA to assemble backpacks as a team.
- Fundraising efforts supported us in assembling over 20 backpacks.
- A portion of monetary donations were used to purchase smartphones and pre-paid phone cards for those in need of communication.



Allocation of donated funds for our deliverable with CPA's re-entry backpack program



## Conclusion and Future Directions:

- Interprofessional Collaboration:
  - Complex social issues require collaborative efforts from a multidisciplinary health professions team.
  - We engaged in teamwork and effective communication throughout group meeting activities and backpack drive.
- Community Engagement:
  - Designing and implementing a drive for the reentry program was a hands-on experience in community outreach and project management.
  - We learned how to mobilize resources and engage our university communities to support a meaningful cause.
- Understanding Reentry Challenges:
  - Identifying challenges faced by individuals upon release from CT prisons and jails highlighted barriers to successful reintegration.
  - We gained insight into the complexities of and social barriers to health care for these individuals.
- Addressing Housing Insecurity:
  - Discussing housing insecurity in relation to the formerly incarcerated population strengthened our understanding of current social justice issues.
- Leadership Takeaway
  - Group discussion during last meeting to provide feedback regarding overall experience in the PHIG offered insight and reflections for future leaders of the group.
- Limitations & Challenges
  - Virtual meetings in lieu of in-person activities resulted in limited engagement and participation.
  - Time constraints inhibited ability to raise funds and collect donations.

## References

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