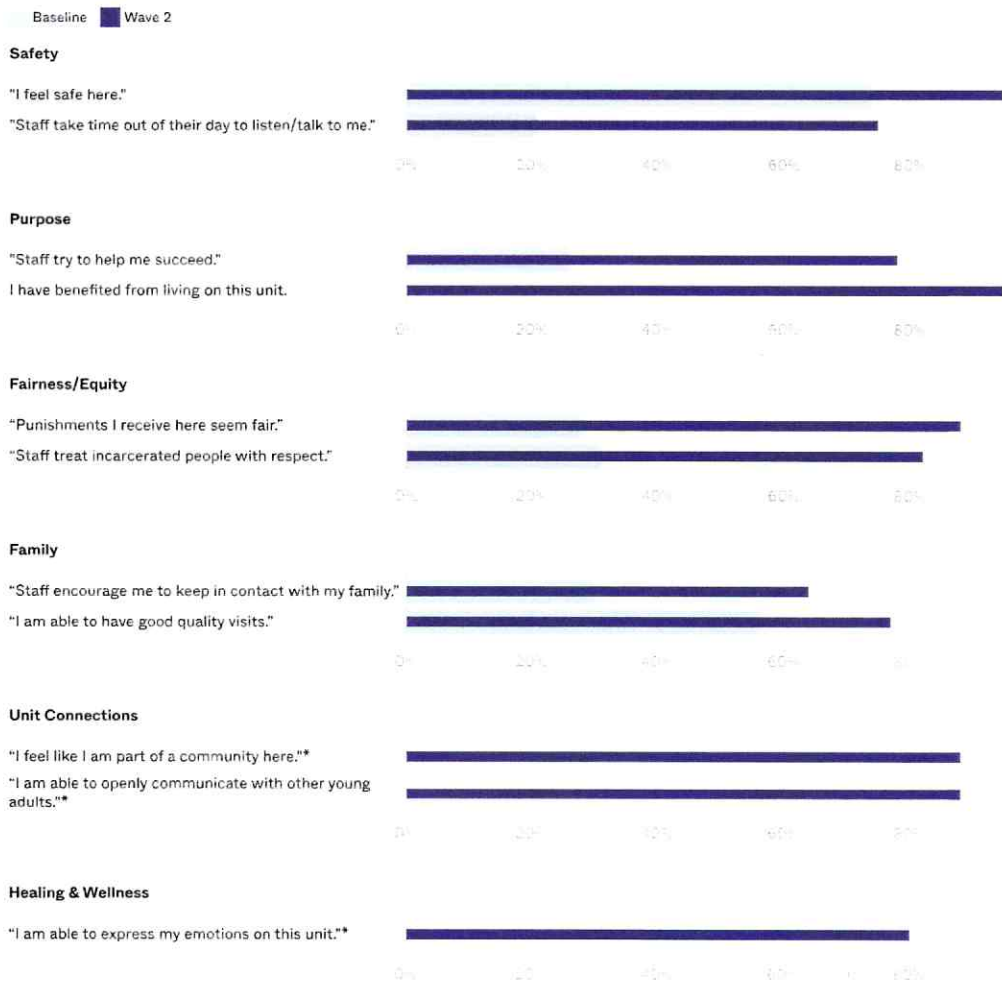


U.N.I.T.Y. Village: Early Signs of Success at NDSP

U.N.I.T.Y. Village, a young adult housing unit opened in March 2022 at North Dakota State Penitentiary (NDSP), is showing early signs of success. Housing 48 young adults and 15 mentors, this unit is the result of a partnership between the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) and Restoring Promise, an initiative creating housing units grounded in dignity for young adults (ages 18 to 25) in prison. Young adults in Restoring Promise units have a community of support from mentors (incarcerated people over the age of 25) and specially trained staff.

Since U.N.I.T.Y. Village's opening, Restoring Promise has routinely monitored its progress through survey evaluation. Survey results suggest that young adults at U.N.I.T.Y. Village have improved relationships with staff, family, and their fellow young adults, as well as a better outlook on their present situation and future. Baseline data includes findings from a survey administered to young adults in NDSP prior to unit opening, while Wave 2 includes later findings from those housed in the unit after its opening.

Restoring Promise, U.N.I.T.Y. Village, Baseline and Wave 2 Highlights for Young Adults



* Question not applicable on baseline survey.

These early results matter: data collected from Restoring Promise units in five other facilities in three states shows that **facilitating positive interactions between staff and incarcerated people prioritizes everyone's** dignity, reduces stress, and leads to increased safety and better outcomes.¹ Evidence from other countries indicates that replicating life outside of prison as much as possible helps incarcerated people smoothly transition home to their communities.²

Young adults incarcerated at NDSP apply to participate in the housing unit. Corrections professionals volunteer to serve on the unit and receive additional training to further develop their leadership and conflict resolution skills. DOCR and Restoring Promise staff select the mentors through an application and interview process. This community helps young adults succeed in and out of prison by creating a space where they can participate in meaningful daily activities, experience healing, cultivate an ideology of self-determination, and strengthen relationships with family and community. Fifty-two people applied for the 15 mentorship positions at U.N.I.T.Y. Village.

These early, promising results from U.N.I.T.Y. Village indicate that the work of Restoring Promise should continue and grow in North Dakota.

About

Restoring Promise, an initiative of the Vera Institute of Justice and MILPA, is creating housing units grounded in dignity for young adults in prison. We help transform correctional culture through training, presentations, workshops, and healing circles—setting a new tone for the entire system. For more information, visit restoringpromise.vera.org.

Notes

¹ *Untitled Report on Restoring Promise Results* (New York, NY and Salinas, CA: Vera Institute of Justice and MILPA, forthcoming 2023).

² For example, Norway, which prioritizes normalization in its prison system, has considerably lower recidivism rates than the United States. See Meagan Denny, "Norway's Prison System: Investigating Recidivism and Reintegration," *Bridges: A Journal of Student Research* 10, no. 10 (2016), perma.cc/QAR9-PUWX.