

My name is Lalisa Ward, and I am Program Manager and Care Coordinator at Southwest Multi-County Corrections Center (SWMCCC) Community Treatment Program in Dickinson, ND. I would like to share my perspective of the impact Free Through Recovery (FTR) and Community Connect (CC) programs have made. At SWMCCC Community Treatment Program, our mission is to support individuals who are transitioning from incarceration, struggling with addiction and suffering with mental health issues create a stable life for themselves in the Dickinson community and we would not be able to provide these services without the resources provided by the FTR and CC programs.

Through FTR and CC, we are able to help clients secure treatment and recovery services, stable employment, and housing. For many of our clients, these programs help give them a true second chance—an opportunity to break the cycle of addiction and become productive and healthy members of society.

A crucial piece to these programs is the role of peer support specialists. It is not my place to share their stories, but our peer supports, Jesus Cantu and Dakota Gant, have overcome immense obstacles in their lives and now dedicate their time to helping others that find themselves in similar situations. Peer support fosters a sense of belonging and understanding that is often crucial for individuals who may feel disconnected or stigmatized after their release. When our clients realize that they are not alone on this journey the possibilities are endless.

In North Dakota, like many other states, individuals involved in the criminal justice system often face significant barriers upon reentry. They may struggle with addiction, lack of support, limited access to treatment, and difficulty finding stable housing or employment. Without proper support, many individuals are at risk of reoffending. FTR and CC programs provide this support and for many helps them find their path to stability.

To end my testimony, I would like to share a statement provided by Peer Support Specialist Jesus Cantu:

“I, Jesus Cantu III, would like to share how (FTR) Free Through Recovery has been a blessing to me, I am from Texas and I came to North Dakota in November of 2023 to work, but due to the fact that I had a problem with alcohol I started to get in trouble and ended up in jail. While in jail I was informed about this program named All of Us in Recovery that is associated with Free Through Recovery, and I was able to get help through the program. The person that helped me got me into a Sober living house and helped me find a job. She was of great help, and that inspired me not only to want to change but to be part of the change. While I was a client at SWMCCC Community Treatment Program I obtained My Peer Support Training which now allows me to be part of the solution instead of being part of the problem. I am 1 year 10 months 22 days sober today and it’s all because of the Free Through Recovery Program.”

In conclusion, Free Through Recovery and Community Connect are invaluable programs that offer hope, healing, and the chance for a fresh start to individuals in North Dakota. These programs are essential in transforming lives, reducing recidivism, and creating safer, more resilient communities. As a Care Coordinator at SWMCCC Community Treatment Program, I

can personally attest to the tremendous impact these programs have, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to their success.

Thank you for your time and consideration in recognizing the importance of these programs.

Sincerely,

Lalisa Ward

Program Manager and Care Coordinator

Southwest Multi County Corrections Center Community Treatment Program