



**Aging Outside the Walls: Care for Older Adult Exonerated Survivors of Death Row
March 2022 Report**

What problem were you addressing? What solution did you propose to address it?

Witness to Innocence (WTI) set out to provide targeted services for the approximately 23 death row exonerees in our program who are over the age of 60, as an extension of our DREAMS program. Death row survivors suffer lasting economic, physical, emotional, and social effects of incarceration on death row, such as poor health and mental health challenges including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. They are especially vulnerable to the usual impacts of aging, and this was compounded during the COVID-19 crisis. The DREAMS program mitigates these effects by helping them navigate resources and to maintain employment, stable housing and proper healthcare. At the time of our application, we expected lingering issues from the pandemic to necessitate our prioritizing assistance with the immediate impacts and the most urgent needs of our members, such as financial emergencies and access to the vaccine. We also set out to address the growing issue of dementia for our population, for exonerees who are at higher risk and often hesitant to ask for help, and for those in caregiving roles (exonerees and loved ones)

WTI proposed to continue to employ one of our three Peer Specialists full-time to focus on older adult exonerees. This provides a trusted peer to help address the long-term needs of our growing population of older members. Because of the upheaval resulting from COVID, we had arrived at the decision to utilize existing staff instead of adding another social worker as originally envisioned. This proved to be successful, as peer support provides validation and practical understanding of the issues faced by death row exonerees, and we continued this model over the past year.

2. What actions did you take? What worked and didn't work toward your objectives? Please share any unanticipated benefits or barriers encountered.

We maintained Randal Padgett as the full time Older Adult Peer Specialist, under the supervision of the Director of Social Work, Cara Kovalovich, a licensed Social Worker. This provided a great deal more interaction and support for the older adult members. It also freed Cara to devote significantly more time to complex cases and to cultivate resources. A full time partner to share in the work with older adults was incredibly helpful. Randal is able to transcend many of the trust issues that are common for exonerees, because he is also a death row survivor and an older adult.

During most of the grant period we restricted travel for staff and members. An ongoing challenge is maintaining communication with people over time, when medical or mental health makes it hard to achieve continuity. This was compounded by the separation caused by the virus – we did not have in-person contact. We alleviated this challenge by increasing the time for all Peer Specialists. Providing devices such as phones and tablets, and reliable internet access also helped to increase the level of contact with those in our care.

Navigating our work in the midst of a pandemic was more of an anticipated challenge than unanticipated, as we had experience from the previous year. While we didn't foresee how long COVID's impact would persist, we

were better at navigating other ways of being together and supporting the exonerees. Even our oldest and most technology-averse members now have the equipment and skills to join in group video and phone conferences, thanks to the flexibility of funders who allowed us to shift funds budgeted for travel. The exonerees encouraged



one another to be vaccinated, and we will soon be together in person again for our Annual Gathering, an important time for connection between members and our social work team.

We have not yet completed our goal to receive further training in caring for and supporting people with dementia and their caregivers. Both Randal and Cara will be attending sessions on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at the Innocence Network Conference in April. We will organize training for dementia resources once we have hired the Family Peer Specialist, a new position that is funded by the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT). The UNVFVT is a long-time supporter of the DREAMS program.

3. How did you measure success--both quantitative and qualitative? Please include numbers and demographics of people touched by the work.

Success is largely measured by exonerees' self-reporting one-on-one with the Older Adult Peer Specialist, Director of Social Work and sometimes other staff. Peer Specialists keep clinical notes and check in with the Director of Social Work weekly or more. Participation in Witness to Innocence programs is another measure of success. This year, most exonerees who are attending the Annual Gathering are our older adult members. We attribute this at least in part to the added attention and focus made possible by this program.

Below is a breakdown of all WTI members by age and sex who received services this past year. Of our members 45% are Black, 9% are Latino, 5% are Indigenous, and 41% are white. Sadly, one of our older members died this year, bringing our total population of older adults to 22.

Sub - totals by age and sex							
Sex	Age group						
	0-15	16-25	26-35	36-45	45-60	+60	Sub-totals by sex
Male	0	0	2	0	19	20	41
Female	0	0	1	0	2	2	5
Sub-totals by age	0	0	3	0	21	22	46
Total Number of Victims by Age and Sex:							46

4. How did partnerships/collaborations enhance or challenge the project?

Many of our partners in care are local to exonerees. This helps to bridge gaps in our services, especially when we cannot travel. A challenge, however, is that often those partners haven't built up the relationships and long-term trust we have with our members.

Sometimes, competing interests are a challenge. For example, our partners in the abolition movement have as their primary priority (understandably) ending the death penalty and other criminal legal reforms. WTI balances the importance of long-term change with the immediate well-being of our members, who may be re-traumatized by participating in certain events. An example is a partner organization pushing for an exoneree to move back to the state in which they were exonerated, because they would be more available to share their story there during a



very promising push toward abolition. While we understand that exoneree presence would be very helpful for the movement, we also know that this exoneree does not have a stability plan for relocation at this time. Another example is exonerees' participation in vigils for those being executed. For some of our members, this is a meaningful way to participate in changing the system that did them so much harm. For others, it brings up too many horrific memories that reawaken their trauma.

5. Include a budget and actual for the project during the reporting period.

Please see attached

6. What conversations have you had on how to sustain the project after the grant, and do you have plans to share your results with other organizations?

We are currently in the midst of program stability planning with our full staff, with many changes coming in our grants. Our three-year grant with the European Commission ends in December 2022, and we have been told to expect some gap between that and the next round of funding. We have spoken with them about moving into a collaborative, international model. We know that WTI exonerees bring an important human rights perspective to the movement for abolition and criminal legal reform and we are excited for the opportunity to share and learn with other organizations globally. Most abolition organizations do not have the model of care that we do for impacted people, and we look forward to sharing how we support our members as they carry out the hard work of advocacy for abolition and criminal legal reform. Our relationship with organizations in Europe is deepening. We are participating in the 8th World Congress in the fall, as well as getting more involved in the World Coalition. Our Director of Social Work, Cara Kovalovich, is a candidate for a board position with the Innocence Network which will allow her to bring her social work perspective and to build more relationships with projects looking to expand clinical support services

7. Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. How have we helped? Made it harder? What else can we do to facilitate your work?

The opportunity to share with other grantees was tremendously enlightening and enriching. We very much appreciate the streamlined reporting and application, which helps us spend more time delivering services. We also appreciate the openness and accessibility to Susan, and openness to conversation which can be hard with other grants,

8. Additional comments:

Thank you for your ongoing support and faith in our work!



Budget Report: Care for Older Adult Exonerated Survivors of Death Row- 2021 Grant FFA						
	Grant Request -Friends Foundation for the Aging	Other Revenue Sources Projected	Project Total Projected	Actuals FFA Grant (Projected to June 30, 2022)	Actuals- Other Revenue Sources- (Projected to June 30, 2022)	Notes
Full Time Older Adult Peer Specialist Salary and Benefits	\$30,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$46,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$25,643.00	Estimated through FY 22. Added medicare supplemental insurance - underestimated taxes. EC increased funding for their portion of all Peer Specialists, allowing for more hours
Peer Specialist Hours (Increase)		\$12,450.00	\$12,450.00		\$12,450.00	Pro-rated for this project. European Commission covers about \$40,000/year/total for Peer Specialists (varies according to exchange rate). SC Ministry covered 3750 toward increase in total Peer Specialists hours during the grant period.
Family Peer Specialist January 1-June 30 2022, 25% time to older adult families		\$2,250.00	\$2,250.00		\$2,250.00	Estimated Funding confirmed but not yet received- working on hiring, we estimate that at least 25% of their time will be for older adult family caregivers.
Director of Social Work - Training/Supervision Social Work Staff		\$16,250.00	\$16,250.00		\$16,250.00	Pro-rated amount of salary and benefits to this project, covered by UNVFVT through 2021, application pending for 2022. Note - we increased our estimate for time devoted to this project due to training and development needs and also the increasing needs of older adult members.
Travel- Older Adult Exonerees to Care	\$600.00		\$600.00	\$0.00		None projected through June 30
Office Space/Administrative Overhead Cost		\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00		\$3,000.00	250/month Covered under EC grant. It looks like our rent costs may be going down as we are decreasing office space.
Social Work Team Travel	\$2,000.00		\$2,000.00	\$2,330.00		Subject to safety, will request shift to direct exoneree support if travel remains impossible.
Exoneree Direct Emergency Expenses		\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$18,600.00	15178 to date. Estimate at least 20000 for older adult population by June 30. To date we have not received the projected amount in targeted donations to the Emergency Fund but hope to be able to do so through targeted fundraising.
Equipment/WiFi/Etc & Training		\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00		\$1,896.00	Access to technology, etc for Older Adult Peer Specialist and older adults
Training for Dementia, PTSD for approximately 6 staff	\$3,000.00		\$3,000.00	\$1,250.00		PTSD Sessions at The Innocence Network t Conference, Director of Social Work and Older Adult Peer Specialis Costs for Director of Social Work pro-rated for this project
Carry over from previous grant	-\$590.00		-\$590.00	-\$590.00		Estimated balance of \$590 from previous grant.
	Total Request Friends Foundation	Total Other Sources	Project Total Projected	Project Total Actual FFA	Project Total Actual - Other Sources	This is a significant increase from last year's project budget. This is partly due to our increasing the percentage of time allocated from the Director of Social Work (from our observations over the past year. We also significantly increased our estimate for emergency exoneree support.
	\$35,010.00	\$71,950.00	\$106,960.00	\$34,990.00	\$80,089.00	
					Project Total Actual: \$ 115,079	

Notes on other sources of income: The UNVFVT has committed funding that covers the Director of Social Work salary, Family Peer Specialist and some social work travel until the end of 2022 and we have applied for 2023. WTI has a long-term relationship with the UN and we are optimistic that they will continue to fund this work. WTI as a whole has stable funding. The European Commission (EC) has approved funding for WTI of approximately \$500,000/year for the period December 15, 2019 to December 14, 2022 (the amount is subject to the currency exchange rate). The EC grant primarily covers advocacy work including most staff salaries, exoneree travel for speaking, honoraria, communications as well as rent and most administrative costs. Recognizing that the work of exonerees in their advocacy against the death penalty is intertwined with their well-being, the EC grant also covers some DREAMS program expenses, specifically the Annual Gathering and Peer Specialist salaries. WTI received a grant from SC Ministry Foundation for the calendar year 2021, which covered part of this grant period. Private donors and unrestricted funds will be used to cover exoneree emergency expenses. **We have not received the level of support for this that we had in recent years, and would appreciate if we could shift unspent or underspent budgeted funds to this category if possible.**