



July 2024

## How Peer Support Transformed a Crisis at the Oregon State Penitentiary

Earlier this month, staff at the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP) took a different approach to an adult in custody (AIC) in a mental health crisis. Staff called upon an AIC peer support mentor to deescalate a situation that could have ended in someone being injured. This incident is a reminder that sometimes, the most effective solutions, to keep staff and AICs safe, is leaning into the experience and knowledge of AICs.

Recently, an AIC was escorted to the Special Management Housing (SMH) intake at OSP. The transition to SMH was not smooth. The AIC was in a reactive state, and his frustration had boiled over. His anger was intense, and he was threatening to assault staff. He punched a metal cell door repeatedly and shouted about the devil entering his body. As the situation rapidly escalated, traditional methods of de-escalation were not working.



Lieutenant Trimble, the Officer in Charge, wanted to try a different approach. He recalled a presentation on the successful use of AIC peer support to defuse tense situations and he called upon AIC Deangelo Turner, a respected peer within the institution.

After meeting with SMH staff, AIC Turner approached the AIC in distress with a calm demeanor. As soon as he entered the room, the atmosphere shifted. The AIC, who had been in a near-manic state, suddenly quieted. The tension in his body seemed to dissipate as he saw Turner. He confided in Turner, revealing that he felt possessed by the devil, causing him to act out. Turner listened attentively, offering to pray with the AIC. The act of prayer brought about a remarkable change. His aggression melted away, replaced by a sense of calm and clarity. He told Turner he needed time to vent his frustrations and requested to be left alone to decompress. Turner communicated this to the staff, who gave the AIC time to collect himself. A short time later, the AIC was ready to cooperate with staff directives.

With Turner by his side as the primary communicator, the AIC began working with uniformed staff. Thanks to AIC Turner's intervention, the situation was peacefully resolved. The success of this peer support intervention ensured the safety of the staff and the AIC. It also highlighted the power of empathy and compassion in transforming conflicts within our facilities.

### Below is a Summary of AIC Deangelo Turner's Perspective on the Incident:

I was recently requested by Lt. Trimble, Special Housing (SMH) to speak to an AIC in crisis. On the day in question, I was paged to report to BHU Special Housing Unit and to report to Lt. Trimble concerning an AIC in crisis.

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Upon entering SMH, I was approached by Lt. Trimble and other SMH staff concerned about the AICs actions and that he had made threatening remarks towards SMH staff. The fear was that he may have to be extracted if he was not able to control his actions. This included loud screaming and threats made towards staff. Lt. Trimble asked me if I would be willing to assist him and his team in calming him down?

Everybody was truly concerned and did not want him to hurt himself or others. Of course, I was more than happy to assist and have known him for some time. After speaking with him it was apparent that the situation needed to be diffused. The AIC believed that the devil was trying to harm him and eventually destroy him and take his life. He voiced these beliefs aggressively and loudly to staff. As a graduate of the Urban Ministry Institution, 3 decades of incarceration and having had to work with many AICs suffering from mental illness and emotional distress. I have recently created a program called the Mental Health Miracle Club. As I entered the special housing unit, I yelled out to him, "Hey Q", "God heard you" And right away he stopped yelling, and he completely calmed down. I was able to have this effect on him based on years of knowing him and on mutual respect.

In conclusion, I then asked him, 'Can I pray with him?' and he replied, 'Yes.' He then told myself and Lt. Trimble to also include his staff how he was sorry for how he was acting. I told him that God loved him, and so do all of us here in this building.

He thanked all of us, and Lt. Trimble and his team thanked me for my services, and asked me would I be willing to work with him and his team again I thanked SMH staffing, and was informed that Oregon way spokesman Capt. Tooley would like to work on something's in the future? Again, I am here to aide and those who need a friend to help see them throw the hard times in life.

Sincerely,  
Deangelo Leroy Turner

## Two States, One Mission - Contact Team Training



Powder River Correctional Facility hosted a contact officer training event that welcomed guests from the Washington Department of Corrections. This two-day event featured a variety of discussions, including testimonies from the leadership team, executive management, contact officers, and AICs.

Check out the story on the [DOC Blog](#)

## Welcoming New Officers



Two Rivers Correctional Institution hosted the BCC graduation, welcoming 11 new officers to join the EOCI and TRCI ranks. Congratulations to all!

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

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