

## FORENSIC PEER TRAINING PROGRAM

### By the numbers

**51,000**

Population of Ohio's prisons in 2008.

**\$70.4 million**

Amount Ohio spent in 2008 on mental health services for its 51,000 prisoners in state facilities.

**6,519**

Number of Franklin County ADAMH mental health services consumers in 2008 who were involved in the criminal justice system.

**\$13.9 million**

Cost to provide behavioral health care services to these Franklin County consumers in 2008.

# COVA

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### Project scope

At the request of the ADAMH Board of Franklin County, COVA directed a feasibility study and a planning effort to develop a Forensic Peer Specialist Training program. The goal is to create a skill-building program and employment opportunities to support men and women with mental illness who are leaving prison and are at an increased risk for recidivism.

A model program, Howie T. Harp, has been identified in New York City.

The key components:

- 6 months in-class training
- 3 to 6 months supervised internship
- Job placement
- Ongoing job retention support
- Career development, advancement

### Peer training program development timeline

**February 2007** — COVA and ADAMH representatives travel to New York to see Howie T. Harp program in action. Ohio Department of Mental Health sponsors the site visit.

**August 2007** — Columbus Foundation funds COVA to investigate starting a Forensic Peer Program in central Ohio.

**July 2008** — COVA convenes a community advisory forum to conclude the feasibility study and define the scope of a Forensic Peer Training Program for central Ohio, with a January 2010 goal for program startup.

**October 2008** — A stakeholder group is formed and initial funding requests are developed for United Way and other entities.

### Parallel program – Prisoner Re-entry Initiative

**November 2006** — COVA is invited by Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and Franklin County ADAMH to join a grant application for federal Bureau of Justice Administration funds to facilitate community reintegration for offenders with mental illness, using a coordinated team approach.

**Fall 2007** — U.S. Department of Labor matches BJA in funding COVA and Columbus Area, Inc. to begin the comprehensive pre-release program addressing vocational, life skills and health care issues and planning for post-release job development. COVA hires its first Forensic Peer Counselor.

**April 2008** — The 90-day pre-release career planning and vocational program begins in six Ohio prisons.