

Vivie Satorsky: Hello, my name is Vivie Satorsky, and I'm a coach with the Corrections and Community Engagement Technical Assistance Center at the American Institutes for Research, funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. And I wanted to welcome you to this prerecorded youth interview during Second Chance Month of 2023. The participant today has chosen a pseudonym for his own privacy, but has been a participant in Second Chance grant funded programming.

On behalf of the American Institutes for Research in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, we appreciate their participation and discussion because we believe in the importance of youth's voice. Moderating today's event will be Joshua Calarino from Youth MOVE National. Joshua Calarino is an enthusiastic youth advocate working for change in the mental health system in Florida and nationally. His previous professional experiences include serving as a lead peer, peer evaluator and certified recovery peer specialist, as well as an executive team member with Youth MOVE Miami and serving as the board president for Youth MOVE National. He's very passionate about youth voice and systems change. He has been a leader in his community and nationally. He hopes to help those with passion for positive change to be leaders in those changes. I'm going to turn the conversation over to Joshua and our youth participant.

Joshua Calarino: Thank you very much for that warm welcome, Vivie. And I wanted to just introduce Peter Parker, our anonymous youth, and thank them for being here today. With that, I did want to set the stage just a bit. In this conversation, we're going to be working and speaking with the youth who has been through the system of care and some of the things they will say will be positive, some of them might also be negative, but all of them will be constructive and potentially critical to the system in hopes of creating that positive change.

So with that, I did want to start just with some introductory questions for us to get to know Peter Parker a little bit more. So with that Peter, I'm going to go ahead and start. What is one thing you would like us to know about you?

Peter Parker: Well, I've always liked, from being young, I've liked to read a lot and I think reading's something that would help more imagination and vocabulary and things like that. It's always just been a hobby of mine.

Joshua Calarino: Yeah, that's a great hobby. I also love to read myself so I'm glad that that's something that we picked. To move on and touch here, what is something that you are doing, or have done recently, that you're proud of?

Peter Parker: I had recently just gotten my GED, so I'll be starting college soon. So that's always something to be proud of, I believe.

Joshua Calarino: Yeah, absolutely. Congratulations on that. Let's get a little more abstract. If you could change any rule, what would it be?

Peter Parker: I think one of the ones that I've always kind of had, it's those, not going to school

because it's actually required by law, but there's a lot of reasons people don't go to school. Me on a more personal one was, I was going through a tough time and I had to face charges because of that, but it wasn't something that I didn't want to, but it's just something that's punishable. So I think there's something that could be maybe worked with.

Joshua Calarino: Yeah, so that idea of essentially being required to go to school could potentially be shifted in some way or another, is what you're saying?

Peter Parker: Yes.

Joshua Calarino: Got it. Yeah. What about if you could promise any service or support to youth who might be returning home, what would it be?

Peter Parker: I think maybe trips away from home, because most of the time the reason youths have entered the system was because of the home environment. So maybe trips where they would go to parks and stuff like that, or just more out-of-home time.

Joshua Calarino: So being able to take trips would not necessarily go home exactly, but something more extracurricular, so to speak.

Peter Parker: Yes.

Joshua Calarino: Alrighty. Okay. So I do have some follow up questions for you and I'm going to set the stage once again for that. Today what we're talking about is re-entry. And we're defining re-entry here as young people returning to their communities following confinement and under community supervision. It includes support that you have received both in facility and outside of the facility. Okay?

Peter Parker: Go ahead.

Joshua Calarino: With that being said, what has been the most helpful while you were in placement?

Peter Parker: Well, I actually did get my GED there, so it was a lot of things that helped. It was that program among others, they were providing school and the education there was a lot better because it was like a one-on-one and that always been something that I had struggled with. So I would say the education and the programs that they were offering.

Joshua Calarino: Right. That's really good. What is something that you feel you know now, versus when you were in out-of-home placement?

Peter Parker: I wish I had known that I can't just laze around, because that had been something, a problem of mine. I learned that I should really give it my all if I'm going to do something.

Joshua Calarino: Good. And I'm curious to know, so you said that you used to laze around and then now you have that ability to make what you want to do actionable. And could

maybe, if you can, take me to the moment or maybe the time period where that happened and explain what kind of changed that and swapped that for you.

Peter Parker: Yes. So about nine months ago before I'd entered, I was weighing maybe about 315 and I was really not in a good place. I wasn't going to school or doing much. But leaving, I had lost more than a hundred pounds or... yeah, more than a hundred pounds. I had my GED, among other certificates, maybe hopefully going to college soon and getting a job. So if I can put my mind in stuff, I think... I just wish I'd known that there's things I could have done if I just worked harder.

Joshua Calarino: What helped you maybe maintain contact with your family and other important people in your life?

Peter Parker: They would do a weekly visitation phone call, and an extra phone call if you were doing well. And that was good, but I'd always been hoping that there was more. You could also send out letters on certain days.

Joshua Calarino: I heard you say just for a quick second there, I was hoping that there was more. Could you tell me more about that?

Peter Parker: Yeah, so they would only give us five minute phone calls. I just wish that maybe it had been longer, there'd been more days that we could have called because I feel like I didn't have very much contact. Because sometimes they wouldn't answer, and if they didn't answer, that was kind of it. That was your day and you'd have to wait a whole nother week.

Joshua Calarino: I see. And would you say that potentially having more phone calls or visitation or whatever that might look like, would helped you through this process a lot more?

Peter Parker: Yes, for sure it would. So there'd be times where I'd not really be motivated to do stuff, I just wouldn't want to listen and knowing that I could speak to family would definitely help me.

Joshua Calarino: Understood. And if you could take what you just said, right, you've got one phone call a week, and then they didn't answer, all of that. If you could maybe make your own custom system, if you had all the power and you had all the money in the world to do this, what would that look like exactly? Would it be a call a day, multiple call? What would you design?

Peter Parker: I would think maybe a system where the parent could put in money to a kid's account and they could make a phone call from a certain time at the end of the day. So I think about every day, if not some days out of the week.

Joshua Calarino: Okay. Yeah, that's a great suggestion. Thank you for sharing that. For the next question here, what would've helped you... Well actually [inaudible 00:08:53] after that, real quick. What relationships would you say have been most important to supporting you in this process?

Peter Parker: So there is only one person we were allowed to contact and that was immediate family, and it couldn't be any siblings, so my mother was definitely one of the people that was helping me get through this. She was always constantly calling me whenever we had chance. She would never skip out, even though she would have work or something, she would take the time to talk to me. And she'd just always tell me, "You can do it. Don't get upset". And it'd always be just really good motivation for me.

Joshua Calarino: I'm very glad that you were able to have that contact with your mom. And you would say that having that... Would you say rather, I don't want to put words in your mouth, would you say that having that family contact was instrumental in your success?

Peter Parker: For sure. I wouldn't have been able to make it through I think, or I would've been in there longer if I hadn't talked to my mom.

Joshua Calarino: Got it. And I think what you're saying now ties back to that idea of maybe having more of that family contact really being a vital portion, right? The more that you get, maybe the even better you might have done.

Peter Parker: Yes.

Joshua Calarino: All right. You mentioned earlier that you had been involved in some education, so it seems like you've been involved in education. Were you involved in things like vocational training? Was it just career education, certificate programs? What all education did you get?

Peter Parker: There was some certificate programs, and among them were... I got my OSHA 10-hour general industry card course. I got a certificate for that, among others like time management, communication skills, there's one for cybersecurity. So there was multiple there.

Joshua Calarino: Really good. And would you say you really enjoyed that, you appreciated that and want to put those certificates to use?

Peter Parker: Yes, it definitely helped me in knowing how to... There is also interview skills, so even applying this here it was very helpful.

Joshua Calarino: All right, I'm glad to hear that. Would there be anything that you would add or change to that education component at all?

Peter Parker: I would've been hoping because... maybe like financial skills, I'd always wanted to learn about money and how to spend it and maybe learn how to take out a credit card and how to actually work with credit and stuff like that.

Joshua Calarino: Yeah, very important information there. Thank you for dropping that in. With that education and the certificates, or maybe even outside of that, what job or professional areas are you most interested in?

Peter Parker: I had been wanting to go into real estate. That's something I had always been looking at. I think that would be a good job for me and I would like to do it.

Joshua Calarino: Got it. And did you get any lessons on that potentially while you were...

Peter Parker: No I hadn't. I actually hadn't. That's something actually, I think that may be something I want to learn about financial skills, because of that job.

Joshua Calarino: Understood. Oh, got it. Okay. So given your input about the career you were interested in, what sort of training do you wish was available?

Peter Parker: I think maybe more social skills, because I think that's a job that requires you to talk to people, and I think that's not always the easiest thing to do. And just knowing how to conduct yourself, among things like that.

Joshua Calarino: Okay. So it sounds maybe you'd want something to talk about maybe interpersonal skills?

Peter Parker: Yes.

Joshua Calarino: Public speaking and facilitation?

Peter Parker: Yes.

Joshua Calarino: Okay, got it. Thank you. So to move on, what has been the most helpful support or program that has been available to you as you were participating to leave confinement?

Peter Parker: There was family counseling right before I had left, about two months, and that was very helpful, just being able to... It was a 40-minute call with your family and the counselor. So I think it was great because I could understand maybe what's things they would wanted me to do, how things would change and they would know what I felt in seeing them. And so it was just very good, before being actually going back, just to know all this.

Joshua Calarino: Yeah, that's great. And what do you wish was available to you that has not been available to you as you've been preparing to leave or have left confinement?

Peter Parker: I think it would be probably a furlough or something where you could go home for maybe an hour or maybe a day or something, and then come back so you could be more integrated with the community before going in there all at once and experiencing all these things at once.

Joshua Calarino: So it sounds like you're saying maybe something to get you... the fancy word for it would be like reacclimated, being out of the system would be spend one hour, then three hours, then a whole day as you kind of get used to being back.

Peter Parker: Yes.

Joshua Calarino: Okay. All right, that sounds like a good idea. Thanks for sharing. What hopes, or rather what are your hopes that you have for the future? And to make this a little easier, what hopes do you have for the future? And we're going to break that into just in life, just in general, and then also in your career, more professionally.

Peter Parker: Well, I've always been poor. My mom, she's had three kids and we've always never really been in a stable spot, so I've always wanted to be a homeowner. And we never really had a car, so I definitely want that. I want to be stable, maybe have a family and be able to support my... if I had kids, maybe be able to support them. Just give them what I never had.

Joshua Calarino: Yeah, no, absolutely. Thank you for jumping and sharing. So you have those life goals and those life goals tie into your career goals, potentially through, you mentioned earlier real estate. Got it. All right. And what would you want to tell another young person at the start of their journey in out-of-home placement? What advice would you give?

Peter Parker: I think listen. Listening to the rules and complying with the program is something you want to and just being taking all it has to offer. Because it does have stuff to offer, but you just need to get through it. And it's going to be hard for a few months or however long, but as long as you work through it, you'll get out eventually and you'll do well.

Joshua Calarino: You've given really a lot to us in this conversation, which I really appreciate. So we're going to maybe do a bonus question or two here. So if there were anything you could say right now, whether it be to the staff, on team, to youth, what are something that you really just want to share with the world, maybe about what you've been through?

Peter Parker: It's not a good place to be. Just trying to avoid it completely in general is probably the best. Following laws, just not getting into trouble at all. As good as a place they try to make it be, accommodating you with phone calls and stuff, no one wants to be away from home or no one wants to just be away. I was away when I had a niece that was born and I didn't see her until she was already seven months old. So it's just not a place where you want to be at.

Joshua Calarino: All righty Peter, thank you for sharing. Thank you for being here with us and giving us some really critical pieces of information that absolutely need to be reached. You mentioned getting more family time. You mentioned the changing of certain parts of the system. So for them to be able to put money into your account for more phone calls, things like that. You mentioned being able to reacclimate back into being out of confinement and having some time to get through that adjustment period. Thank you so much for being here, for sharing with us and being honest and critical. I really appreciate it.

Peter Parker: Thank you. Thank you for having me. It was good talking.