

# PRE-CHARGE SUPPORT FOCUS GROUP SUMMATION

Prepared by Research in Action

## Table of Contents

<b>Overview and process</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Lived Experience of Incarceration</b>	<b>3</b>
Dehumanization	4
Cost of Bail	6
<b>Resources: Support and Accessibility</b>	<b>7</b>
Basic Needs: Logistical, Informational, Post Release Resources	8
New/Existing Support Networks: Community & Organizational Support, Advocacy	11
<b>Navigator Role</b>	<b>14</b>
Structure	15
Lived and Professional Experience	16

# OVERVIEW AND PROCESS

The Ramsey County Bail Reform Project is working alongside impacted community members – those with lived experience with incarceration – to hold systems stakeholders accountable and bring about change to the pre-trial process. As part of its work with the project, Research in Action (RIA) conducted a series of focus groups in the Ramsey County Correctional Facility (RCCF) in November and December 2022. The second set focused on impacted communities' expertise around support networks for people who are navigating the pre-charge process and the development of a navigator role. The focus group with men on December 6th included 10 participants. The focus group with women on December 8th had five participants. These groups were facilitated by Ari Kopycinski, RIA Junior Research Associate, and supported by Shonni Kregel, RIA Junior Research Associate. The focus groups began after all participants offered their consent and agreed to the participants' rights.

## Focus group discussion questions:

- Before we discuss the “navigators,” or resource experts, we invite you to share about your experience finding support during the booking process.
- Based on the definition of a “navigator” that you read in the information sheet, what immediate assistance could this resource expert provide to help minimize the negative impacts on your life of temporary placement in detention?
- What about after you were booked and awaiting trial? What support, attention, or resources could a “navigator” help with?
- To distinguish this person and their role in providing support to those awaiting trial, what would you prefer that we call this person?
- What personal or professional experiences or skills would you need the resource expert to have in order to minimize the negative impacts on your life awaiting trial?
- Reflect on an organization, community resource, or community group that you have come to trust. What ways did they support you?
- What steps could the county take to make the trusted support you received available to everyone?
- What are some of the best ways that this “navigator” can be getting in contact with people going through the pre-charge process?

## Data analysis:

To make meaning of the participants insight, Research in Action:

- cleaned the interview transcripts to ensure that meaning could be derived from the knowledge and language participants offered
- executed a hybrid coding process that incorporated both pre-determined and emergent codes, informed by the analyzed datasets from the February 2022 Town Halls, and drawn directly from the exact language that focus group participants used
- crafted codes from the focus group transcripts and incorporating those codes into themes and categories
- divided the participants knowledge into three overarching categories:
  - Lived experience of incarceration, addressing the harms that are (re)produced by the carceral system that aims to strip people of their humanity
  - Access to resources to help people navigate the pre-charge process in non-punitive ways that affirm their humanity
  - The necessity of creating a ‘navigator’ role that is able to provide meaningful support to people moving through this aspect of incarceration

# LIVED EXPERIENCE OF INCARCERATION

These lived experiences highlighted by the focus groups must frame how the Ramsey County Bail Reform Working Group (BRWG) approaches bail reform overall, and the development of a community-based pre-charge support role specifically. The focus groups deeply explored the overall lived experience of incarceration in Ramsey County Correctional Facility, highlighting two themes:

**(1) dehumanization caused by incarceration**

**(2) the cost of bail**

Denial of basic rights	Poor jail conditions	Character assassination and lack of empathy from systems workers
<p>Participants highlighted being denied basic rights throughout the process of incarceration. Specifically, they recalled being denied their free phone call upon booking, as well as being denied release if they didn't have an official street address.</p>	<p>Participants identified problems within the system itself that create conditions for dehumanization, including terrible living conditions within the jail itself.</p>	<p>Participants shared the feeling that jail workers believe they are inherently bad people and do not deserve help or resources because they are in jail and have a record. This compounds participants' thinking themselves unworthy of support or basic rights. They also reported a lack of empathy from jail workers and systems workers putting on a facade of care for jail leadership and hiding mistreatment of incarcerated people.</p>
<p><i>"They didn't give me a PIN number to make phone calls. Didn't even show me a process, just basically booked me and put me in a cell. Okay? And I had COVID when they booked me in. I was so super sick."</i></p> <p><i>"When they took my phone, it was all the way in Minneapolis. I don't have a car. I didn't currently have a place I was staying, like a sober house. I didn't have a car, so I couldn't get my phone in time. They did whatever with my backpack, so I had no point to contact them, no place to stay."</i></p> <p><i>"You're lucky in the county jail, downtown Saint Paul, if you can even get your free phone call because of how hectic it is and of the lack of understanding." [Other participants agreed].</i></p> <p><i>"We still got rights even though we're a criminal at this time. We still got rights."</i></p>	<p><i>"I want to sue Ramsey County but if I could, and I did, and I had someone have my back, I would definitely go to court with a lawyer on them mother fuckers cause they - I don't know, it's just... people are sleeping on floors and a bedroom with two cells and not enough space for both y'all to be standing up. They got three people sleeping in them bitches. People sleeping down stairs. People don't even have their own cell in there sometimes."</i></p> <p><i>"Yeah, they don't clean the cells. The cells aren't sanitized."</i></p> <p><i>"You got 30 minutes to take a shower and get your food, that's it."</i></p>	<p><i>"They judge us before we're even like served our papers."</i></p> <p><i>"They hear that we're a criminal and they just automatically think we deserve everything we got coming to us."</i></p> <p><i>"As soon as you go in there, you are less than human. They treat you like a damn misplaced package or something."</i></p> <p><i>"You know, I got pulled over going to court in a car with no license. Got arrested on my way to court. I told the judge 'I'm on my way to court,' and he was like 'yeah, yeah, yeah, right. Sure you were.'"</i></p> <p><i>"We are supposed to get an hour out of our room a day. Like 23 and one. That's when we're locked down...but they wasn't doing that for us. There was days long that they let us out for like 30 minutes and sometimes they wouldn't even let us out for the day. And then when these people came in, I don't know who it was. But I think it was a people to come in to see if everything is going in the way... They would post a guard whatever and then they just start acting all nice."</i></p> <p><i>"You can't even go take a pee without them having to tell on you."</i></p>

# DEHUMANIZATION

Participants felt dehumanized by the Ramsey County Correctional Facility and the people that work within that system.

Bureaucracy	Lack of knowledge of decision-making processes	Negative impacts on life
<p>Bureaucratic barriers that made participants feel dehumanized included disorganization of the jail, mismanagement of important communications, and ignoring information requests from inmates and their families.</p>	<p>Participants were often unaware when systems workers were making decisions on their behalf. At times their lawyers or other systems actors would tell them to say something on the record, but they were unaware of the actual impact of that decision as a client.</p>	<p>Many participants discussed how being incarcerated affected their lives, particularly in their family dynamics, employment, and personal feelings of self worth. Many expressed a desire to break their cycles of incarceration and to seek resources for a new life.</p>
<p><i>"They didn't let me know when my court date was coming up and when I finally figured it out, they ended up rescheduling. They don't let you know ahead of time what's going on, they just do shit... why would you reschedule my court date without letting me know?"</i></p> <p><i>"I got my mom calling, I've sent letters, all types of stuff, to prevent myself from having—to prevent myself from having to go through bail and all that stuff and I have – now I have like three different warrants. and I can't get a hold of the other counties."</i></p> <p><i>"Yeah, sometimes the process is different every time you go. Everything becomes more organized – or unorganized." [Many participants agreed].</i></p>	<p><i>"Like when you have a court date sometimes they just dismiss it like you don't know nothing... And then you just like, and then they don't even give me another date."</i></p> <p><i>"They'll tell you what you want to hear. So when you agree to something, you really don't know what's going on... I just pleaded guilty to a charge and he's going to tell me that you got enough time served, if you plead guilty, you can go home today. Conditional release. I plead guilty, come to find out I got a hold, now I can't go nowhere. Now I just pleaded guilty, got that shit on my record."</i></p> <p><i>"A lot of times I don't even understand what they're trying to tell me in court, like after I get told in court I don't even understand what just happened. Like my lawyer will be like 'yeah yeah OK say this,' and then you say this and you don't even like the outcome of what just happened but you later on find out you could've said whole other stuff. Like I almost got laid into a trap this time—they tried to get me to say I wanted to go back out there and get released on bail again. Somebody should educate you. A lot of us don't even know."</i></p>	<p><i>"Because when your boss sees that you went to jail, I mean, he's not going to be looking for you be going to, you know, community service, like he said or having to attend a group."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm not breaking the law. I'm trying to change my life around. Putting somebody behind bars doesn't help me. All it helps is make you go a little bit crazier. You have all that much time to think of why isn't somebody there to help me? You know, why am I sitting here?"</i></p> <p><i>"You're not trying to talk, you're not trying to listen, you just want to be able to go to jail that's it and that's all you're going to do then all right well you're gonna have to catch me, you know what I mean. That's the mentality of a criminal."</i></p> <p><i>"You know I got to the point where I'm sick of this, can you guys actually help me? Instead of me being like yeah whatever and going through the motions and going through the motions."</i></p>

## COST OF BAIL

Participants outlined the various costs of the bail system, which have impacted their ability to seek and receive support resources. "Cost" does not necessarily just refer to the financial cost of bail, but the impacts of the bail system on many other spheres of life.

High financial cost	Impacts on family	Lost time	Alternatives to incarceration
<p>Participants discussed the high financial cost of bail, which many cannot afford, even if they have external support from a friend or family member.</p>	<p>There are negative impacts to families, especially if the person arrested is a caretaker of a family member. There are also negative impacts on certain familial relationships once someone is arrested.</p>	<p>Participants being held for longer than necessary, causing a chain reaction with impacts that can affect formerly incarcerated individuals for the rest of their lives.</p>	<p>Participants agreed that jail and incarceration is not always the answer. The negative impacts that the systems have shows that it is not operating as intended.</p>
<p><i>"You know it don't make sense to set a bail a person can't afford."</i></p> <p><i>"They see mother fuckers stealing money to try and help themselves and then make their bail \$200,000, \$300,000, \$400,000. What makes you think I even got 100 of those dollars?"</i></p>	<p><i>"My mom almost died cause I went to jail.. We lived in an apartment building, and she's in a wheelchair, and I'm the only one strong enough to lift her up the stairs to get to--she goes to dialysis I'm the only one strong enough to lift up the stairs, and make sure she goes to dialysis. You know what I mean, due to me not being there from being incarcerated, she almost died."</i></p> <p><i>"And I'm a provider for my sister and my mother, who are both disabled. My sister is blind and my mother is paralyzed. For them to come up with \$2,000 when they barely can pay their bills."</i></p> <p><i>"When I was really first going to jail as an adult my parents are like my only support system at the time. My parents stopped talking to me because of things that was out of my control, you know? Like I'm going to jail with what I did but like everything around it, you know, like I couldn't control."</i></p>	<p><i>"What if you had a job and then you went and you realized that while you were sitting there, they cut you off and you can't find work? And then you don't have any income?"</i></p> <p><i>"I've sat down there for 12 hours one time just to get booked and yeah, I was at the table for 12, 13 hours."</i></p>	<p><i>"Incarceration shouldn't just be the only way."</i></p> <p><i>"Instead of like, okay, so you did this wrong, make you attend these groups. There's going to be a second chance, instead of having to put you in jail because you missed--like you could just miss one day at work."</i></p> <p><i>"An alternative. [Others verbally agreed.] Jail ain't always the answer."</i></p>

# RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

Participants shared resources that were, or would have been, helpful as they were navigating the pre-charge process. Two overarching themes included:

## **(1) basic needs**

logistical resources  
informational resources  
post-release resources

## **(2) new/existing support**

community/organizational support  
advocacy for incarcerated people

## Basic Resources: LOGISTICAL

Participants stressed the need for resources that help them to be physically present in the pre-charge process, prioritizing accessibility and work to ensure that everyone is able to navigate the process, regardless of their situation.

Mental health and addiction resources	Communications	Services for families	Coordination among counties
<p>Participants highlighted the importance of creating accessible pathways to healthcare, in particular, emphasizing the importance of mental and harm reduction health care.</p>	<p>Incarcerated people need to remain in communication with many actors, including public defenders, to stay up-to-date on everything relevant to their case. Participants suggested establishing a “free phone program” so they can stay connected to the support they need to work through their case.</p>	<p>Some people who are incarcerated serve as caregivers. Participants noted that a navigator would be valuable in connecting their families and communities to resources provided by the person who was taken from them.</p>	<p>Participants expressed frustration with managing cases and working between counties.</p>
<p><i>“I feel like that would help out a lot of addicts who are addicted, too. I think they should come up with, like, a faster medical route for them.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think we should be able to provide resources like needle exchange or like testing places, so if they do decide to keep using to at least be safe with it. And get Narcan too, cause lowkey if you’re not doing it, you may know someone who is doing it, and if you’re in the same place as them at the same time if they overdose, you can save someone’s life.”</i></p>	<p><i>“They gave me this little number or whatever talked about some call this number—mind you they took my phone during the arrest, then they gonna tell me, to give me this number, and call this number and set up a court date within the next two days or you’re going to have a warrant.”</i></p> <p><i>“Making sure there’s so many free phones, and anyone can have a free phone with a free phone plan out there right now. And to make sure that you can keep up with, you know, making phone calls, calling your PO, or calling the courts, that’s a huge big thing for a lot of people. I know that’s why I’m here.”</i></p>	<p><i>“If you got family that depend[s] on you as far as like, helping with kids or like, you know, you have a second source of somebody watching over other people... They can point them towards the directions where they can like, I don’t know, possibly get enrolled in some free childcare.”</i></p>	<p><i>“A lot of people have court and there are a bunch of different probations in different areas— like I got probation, like I said, in three different counties and sometimes it’s hard for me to like— I’m only like, what 20. I don’t really know how to take care of all that.”</i></p>



Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that everyone who enters the pre-charge process is offered baseline information so that they can recognize where they have knowledge gaps and ask questions so they can work on their case.

Transparency and clarity	Accessible Information
<p>Expressing frustration with difficulty navigating systems, participants noted that the navigator role will need to provide clear and concise information on what's going on during the booking (and more broadly pre-charge) process(es); as well as provide explanations of legal processes, terms, and knowledges in layperson's terms.</p>	<p>Building upon the importance of ensuring clear, concise, and consistent information is provided to those moving through pre-charge processes, participants identified the need to utilize accessible channels of communication—including but not limited to social media and websites—to share this information with folks.</p>
<p><i>"I can't even find out who my public defender is for the case. I have the case number, I have the file number, I call the PO and not one person can tell me, they won't tell me, who I can contact, who my public defender is for this case and I know I have one."</i></p> <p><i>"[If there was transparency] you can also look forward to it to know I am going to know I gonna find out information this day, I'm gonna know more this day, instead of thinking I'm never gonna find out, or I'm not gonna have the opportunity to have someone advocate for me, none of that stuff."</i></p> <p><i>"Explain things in layman terms." [Many verbally agreed]</i></p> <p><i>"I don't know enough laws or resources to get something taken care about it. I don't have enough resources or anything to get it taken care of."</i></p>	<p><i>"First they should have a website, and brochures"</i></p> <p><i>"And I feel like it's gonna be word of mouth too. Like especially if you guys are gonna be doing as good as you do, I know when I like a program, I super preach it, for real. Anything that I feel like helps me grow in any aspect, I'm like, 'look into this.'"</i></p> <p><i>"On Dakota pages... or apps even. Or like YouTube or some shit. Maybe like billboards, too... Facebook page. And like other social media and stuff just to like get the word out there so people know that it's there, and advertise too how it really helped people."</i></p>

## Basic Resources: POST RELEASE

Participants stressed the importance of creating systems support people when they exit detention, including life-affirming practices that prioritize people and their communities, rather than violent, punitive measures.

Transportation	Financial education	Job resources
<p>Participants identified a need for accessible transportation so that those navigating the pre-charge system can make it to wherever they need to be when they are released, and to subsequent court dates.</p>	<p>Identifying a need for education, both inside and outside of jail participants emphasized financial education, in particular.</p>	<p>Participants recommended direct assistance in getting a job after they are released from detention.</p>
<p><i>"When I got out, I didn't have no ride home. I had to walk in the rain, when they gave me a big ass white T-shirt with some sweatpants with some bogus ass Chuck Taylor's with no shoe laces in it. It's cold as hell, it's three in the morning."</i></p> <p><i>"Maybe someone who could like-if like a lot of people on their caseload have court on the same day they can have a van go around and pick people up."</i></p>	<p><i>"I get a paycheck and sometimes I don't even know what to do with all that, you know. So maybe someone who can financially like help you set up something."</i></p> <p><i>"Or just someone you could talk to and be like 'what's my best-I got this much money, I just got my check, what should I do with my check now?'"</i></p> <p><i>"We need a place to go to school."</i></p> <p><i>"We need a program about like my education to change how people mind and to change people thoughts."</i></p>	<p><i>"Get me a job...even if like they put us all in one group and a van to come pick us up in the morning and take us to work or whatever or you know what I'm saying? Have some job resources or whatever."</i></p>

## New/Existing Supports: COMMUNITY & ORGANIZATIONS

Participants identified ways organizations that are intended to support them have failed and abandoned them. They also identified organizations and support systems with which they've had positive experiences and built trusting relationships.

Inconsistent program qualifications	Lack of clarity around criteria	Trusted organizations
<p>Participants noted that it is difficult to know under what conditions one is eligible for aid/support, citing their experiences receiving aid one time then being denied it another, even as their circumstances have not changed drastically.</p>	<p>Participants noted that it is often unclear what criteria they have to meet in order to receive support, stressing the importance of organizations transparently communicating the criteria for the support they offer.</p>	<p>Participants identified organizations that have provided meaningful support as they have navigated incarceration. All of the organizations and relationships were able to build reciprocal relationships, predicated on trust. Participants also mentioned employees of various government offices, by name, who have gone out of their way to help or start one or more programs that have been instrumental in navigating these systems.</p>
<p><i>"I've had JusticePoint twice randomly-but the criteria... How could I get it once and then done well on it, but then the next time I try to go, with the same type of charge or whatever and not get it... there's no consistency, there's no information, there is literally no- we don't get any information."</i></p> <p><i>"But I didn't necessarily meet the criteria-no I didn't have the stuff to get it done."</i></p>	<p><i>"But you gotta meet a certain criteria, I guess it can't be a violent crime or something like that. But I don't know what the criteria is, you know what I mean? I really don't know, no transparency about that criteria."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ujamaa Place: <i>"In Fairview. They help you get jobs, they help you into your own housing, and then-it's like a lot of resources you can use and then if you don't got nothing going on in life, like just to stay out of trouble, go to those groups and go there and learn everything. [Ari: Okay, yeah.] And see if you can find a talent that you got in you, and go explore that talent."</i></li> <li>• Greenway</li> <li>• New Way</li> <li>• Radius Health</li> <li>• Big Brother/Big Sister</li> <li>• Mad Dash</li> <li>• Guild: <i>"They're an organization about helping homeless people like that. You can send your mail there. There's a lot of stuff you can do."</i></li> </ul>

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### **Holistic support for and by communities of shared identity**

Speaking from their experiences and perspective as an Indigenous person, a participant shared, and heavily stressed, the importance of people “stick[ing] up for their traditions” and leaning into networks of support that are crafted by people who share a common identity for those – and only those – who also share the same identity. They identified the following organizations in relation to this: American Indian OIC, American Indian Women’s Resources and Division of Indian Work.

*“I also feel like you should...like me, I depended on my, like, Native Americans like going back to that a little bit more just because my, my reservation does look out for me a lot. Like, if I need housing or like, I don’t know, schooling stuff, you know, like I feel like or like even, you know, like, I don’t know what different traditions are what for other races, but I know a lot of people stick up for their traditions. You know what I mean?”*

*“Ok there’s an American OIC, and it has like a lot of resources like GED for the kids, you know. Then they have college courses in there also and then they have the SOAR program and then they have training, like warehouse training [...], all that stuff, off of this SOAR program also. But I don’t know what else is in there.”*

*“Yeah, American Indian Women’s Resources, it’s for Indigenous women and people that are with addiction, can help with housing, like even Cub Food cards, bus tokens, bus cards. They have a shelter, they put my mom into a treatment... you know, a hotel for 15 months, and then they got her a Section 8 voucher and an apartment. And they even had case managers help her with it, you know, because my mom, she’s kind of needy. You know, she needs somebody to take care of her, she’s old and she’s been through codependency a lot, you know, mental health issues, you know, she’s never really done it on her own, and so it’s like they were there for that. Now she has like my niece. She’s a good grandma. You know, she’s taking care of situations, you know. I don’t know, I really like that program... I should really be a part of it, now that I’m talking about it more.”*

*“It’s the I don’t know, I don’t know what programs they have right now though but I do know that they do like food shelves, they do like if women are pregnant, they have like the women pregnancy classes, and then they’ll even give you like a 500 dollar Target card, for after, if you do good really good attendance and stuff like you got to go to every class, be there. They also have like troubled youth advocates, for like foster children, and then they also give a stipend with that foster child stuff. I did it. I was in that program till I was like 24. And they gave me an allowance every month of like \$700 or something. It helped a lot.”*

## New/Existing Supports: ADVOCACY

Participants expressed, alongside their critiques and commendations of existing systems, a desire for someone to advocate for them as they move throughout the pre-charge process, in order to more fully center their humanity in systems that seek to minimize and/or destroy it.

Advocating for humane conditions and guaranteed rights	Supportive voice in legal proceedings
<p>As participants addressed the dehumanizing and harmful nature of the carceral system, they noted that having someone present throughout the entire pre-charge process to assist them in meeting their basic needs (addressed above) would be invaluable.</p>	<p>Participants explicitly addressed the importance of having an additional voice to stand alongside the person moving through the pre-charge system; a voice that understands how systems themselves operate, but also, crucially, sees and appreciates the full humanity of the person moving through the system.</p>
<p><i>"Also enforce that your rights in jail are being met."</i></p> <p><i>"She's [case worker] the one that went online, that filled out the freedom funds thing, even after I left Dakota County, she stayed with me to the very, even-... Even afterwards she was making phone calls and calling me when I was let out of jail, period, and I went to the treatment center, she was still calling me and checking on me."</i></p>	<p><i>"Like someone who could be like "hey man he's not lying about this this isn't something he's making up and you know we are working on getting him situated and can you give him a little bit more time to situate himself?"</i></p> <p><i>"I feel like if we had an extra voice that's not incarcerated and that's on a legal team, like somebody that can get them in trouble. They'll be more on they, you know, toes about doing right by the inmates."</i></p>

# NAVIGATOR ROLE

Participants envisioned the navigator role and the qualifications this person or persons must hold to be successful and accepted in this role.

Three key themes included:

- (1) structural composition of the role**
- (2) professional experience**
- (3) lived experience**

## NAVIGATOR ROLE: STRUCTURE

Participants expressed, alongside their critiques and commendations of existing systems, a desire for someone to advocate for them as they move throughout the pre-charge process, in order to more fully center their humanity in systems that seek to minimize and/or destroy it.

<p><b>Name</b></p>	<p>Ramsey County and other partners thought it was crucial to ask participants of this focus group to brainstorm what they would want this role to be named. Participants brainstormed the following list:</p> <p><b>Mentor, Sponsor, Coach, Case Worker, Community Guide, Advocate</b></p>
<p><b>Number</b></p>	<p>After reflecting on the long list of areas for support within booking, many of the participants realized that this is an overwhelming amount of knowledge and connections for any one single person to hold. They suggested this program have a team of navigators with expertise in different areas (e.g., housing, employment, legal, etc.) so the responsibility does not fall on one person.</p> <p><i>"...Have a team of specialists that know more about certain areas, like one better at housing, one better at community resources, sobriety, or like one better at like helping with mental health stuff, like a psychiatrist or with doctor's appointments, or another one to help coordinate overall, like an overseer. And then the person that works with the client specifically, and the specialists."</i></p>
<p><b>Location</b></p>	<p>It was very important to participants that this person is easily accessible. Therefore, many thought that it would be helpful to have their office located within the jail. There are a few reasons why they thought it would be important to have them work in the jail, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are accessible if one needs their support while in jail.</li> <li>• Their office is in a consistent location so if the person's living situation changes once released, they know where to find the navigator.</li> <li>• If the navigator is serving as an advocate, they can directly witness the mistreatment of those being detained.</li> <li>• If the navigator is present in the jail, the staff members of the jail may be more inclined to provide human treatment to those being detained.</li> <li>• <i>"Have an in-house place. Somewhere where you can go, leave there and even go talk to them and be like 'hey look' so even if you don't have any contact information, there is no way to hold you back, that's the whole issue."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Intentions</b></p>	<p>It is crucial that this navigator is not given the power to arrest an individual after being released. Many participants expressed frustration because parole officers often see the worst in those that are labeled as a criminal and therefore abuse their power. If the navigator has good intentions and wants one to do well post-release, then they will be more likely to cooperate and work with the navigator.</p> <p><i>"Somebody that ain't going to take me to jail, yeah. Yeah I'll talk to them. Come on in."</i></p>

## NAVIGATOR ROLE: LIVED & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Participants discussed the different professional and lived experiences the navigator must have in order to be successful in this role.

<b>Specialized expertise &amp; connections</b>	<p>Incarceration and the court system are very complex and require a lot of knowledge and expertise around different policies or laws. Participants expressed that the navigator should have extensive knowledge in certain areas, including legal, financial, bail, policy, and any other relevant fields. If the navigator does not have expertise in these fields, at a minimum they should have connections to other professionals that work in the corresponding fields.</p> <p><i>"For different people going through different legal processes or like addictions and stuff you should have people that specialize in different areas."</i></p>
<b>Personal experience with incarceration</b>	<p>Participants agreed that the person in this role have experience with incarceration. Participants shared that if someone has been arrested and detained, they understand what they are going through and can have empathy towards the individuals being held. Additionally, they can serve as a positive role model because they have been through similar life experiences and pulled themselves out of tough situations.</p> <p><i>"And they also been in your shoes, so the empathy part is there, you know what I mean. I feel like a person who has been in jail will work harder for you than a person who don't know how that feels, right?"</i></p>
<b>Shared identity</b>	<p>Participants stressed the importance of the navigator having shared identities with the individuals they are helping. These identities can include racial, gender, ethnic, language, religious, and other important identities. This was stated as important because the navigator is more likely to relate and know of culturally appropriate resources for the individual they are serving.</p> <p><i>"Yeah, just more knowledge and a bigger aspect for these navigators to like be able to relay down because there's a lot of resources for a lot of different cultures"</i></p>

### A Final Note:

Though it was not considered a subtheme, it is important to note that many of the interview participants shared that they would be interested in becoming a navigator. They identified that they are not currently at a place in their life to serve in this role but they want to be that positive role model for others going through incarceration and the court system.