

Vermont Prison Research and Innovation Network

Abby Crocker

Associate Professor of Statistics

Director, Justice Research Center at the University of Vermont

Legislative Joint Justice Oversight Committee

December 15, 2025



University
of Vermont

Justice
Research Center

Overview for Today

- What PRIN is & Why it Exists
- Origins & History of PRIN
- Vermont Prison Surveys
- Impact of PRIN & Lessons Learned
- PRIN Today & Looking Ahead



What is PRIN?

A long-term **research–practice partnership (RPP)** between the Vermont DOC and UVM.

- Independent data and research
- Lived experience as expertise
- Knowledge for action and transformation



Partnership in action in SSCF, the PRIN anchor facility

Why PRIN Exists

Despite their scale and impact, prisons are among the least transparent and most understudied public institutions in the country.



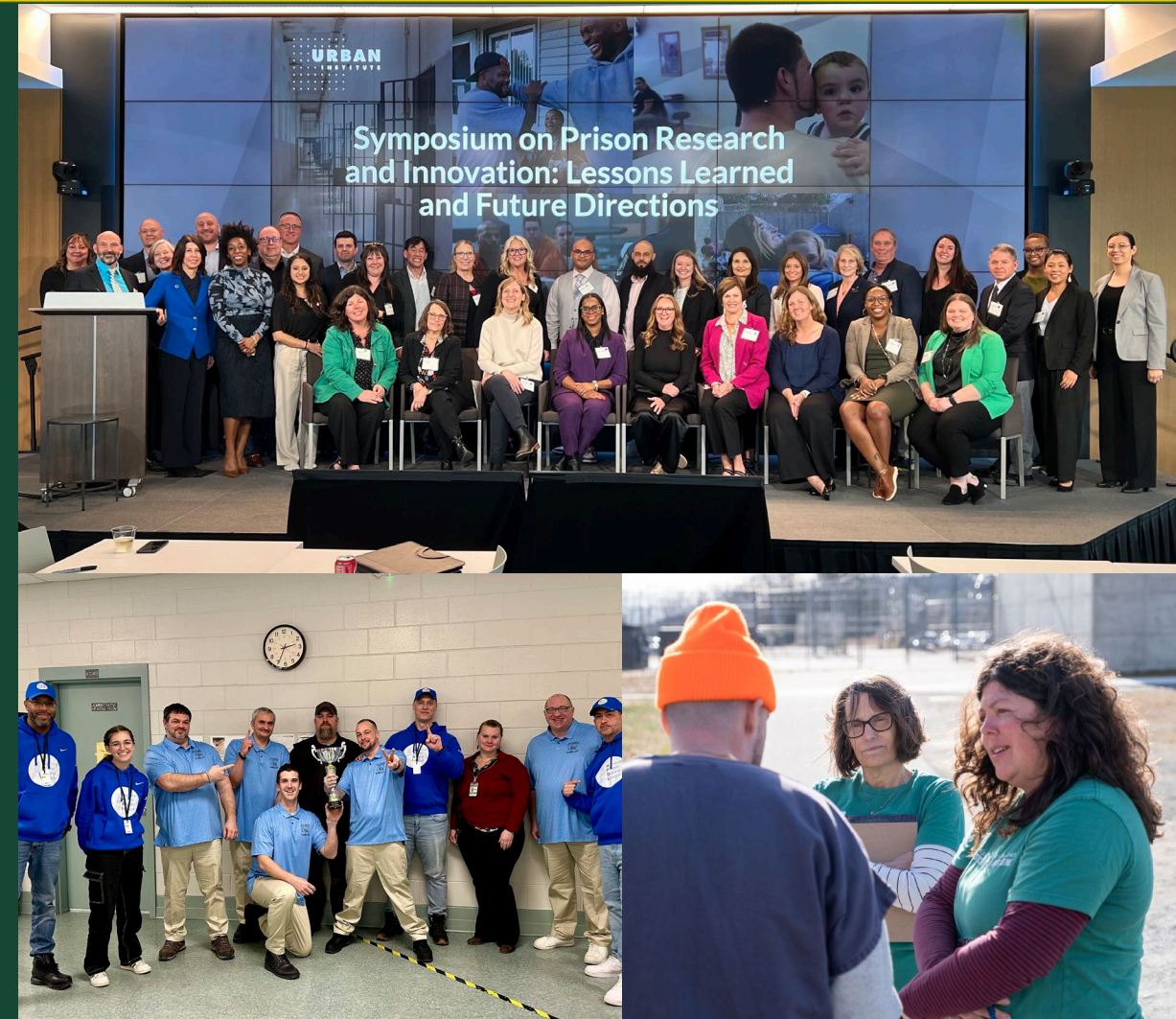
Typical two-person cell at SSCF.

Origins & History of PRIN

2019: Early UVM-DOC collaboration

2020-2024: **Urban Institute Grant**

- 5-state consortium
- Community-engaged research
- Pilot facility
- Steering & Executive committees



Top: PRIN symposium at Urban Institute; Bottom Left: VT PRIN council and NPDL win; Bottom Right: Lived experience survey co-creation

Vermont Prison Surveys

Trusted, independent data

- Co-created with corrections staff and incarcerated individuals
- Anonymous and confidential
- Provides trendlines for facility and statewide insights



Justice
Research Center



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
JUSTICE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

VERMONT PRISON CLIMATE SURVEY

2024

Prison Research
and Innovation
Network (PRIN)

go.uvm.edu/justiceresearch

Insights from Vermont Prison Surveys

Data Walk and Data Dialogue

“The prison doesn’t prepare people for release. The prison doesn’t have enough staff to operate the facility.”

“Other people make decisions about our daily work...they have no understanding how their actions impact people who actually do the work.”

- **94%** of staff do not feel there are enough staff to meet the needs of the prison.
- **83%** of incarcerated individuals do not feel prepared for release.

Data from PRIN baseline surveys, 2021

Impact of PRIN

Insights from surveys guide change:

Operational practices and culture

- Staffing support and recruitment strategies, healthcare services, facility coffee shop, honors unit

Expanded partnerships

- Peer recovery, restorative justice, postsecondary education, parental incarceration

PUBLIC SAFETY

Vermont state prisons open door to community-based addiction recovery services

The Department of Corrections is collaborating with recovery centers statewide to replicate a successful program at the Rutland prison after receiving \$1.5 million from the Legislature this year.

By Tiffany Tan
June 2, 2024, 6:01 am

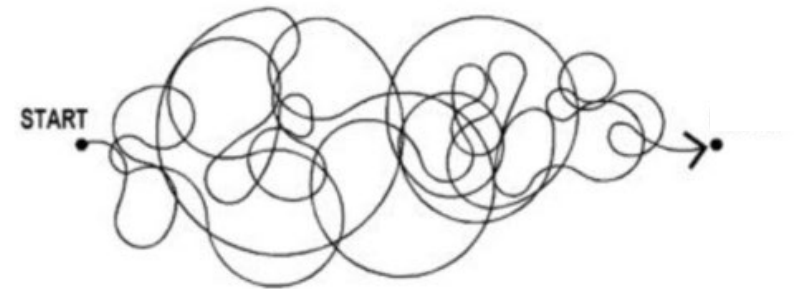


Tracie Hauck is the director of the Turning Point Center of Rutland. Photo by Glenn Russell/VTDigger

PRIN Lessons Learned

- Progress is not linear
- Trust and relationships matter
- Lived experience is expertise
- **Data builds shared understanding and focus**
- Change is complex and interconnected

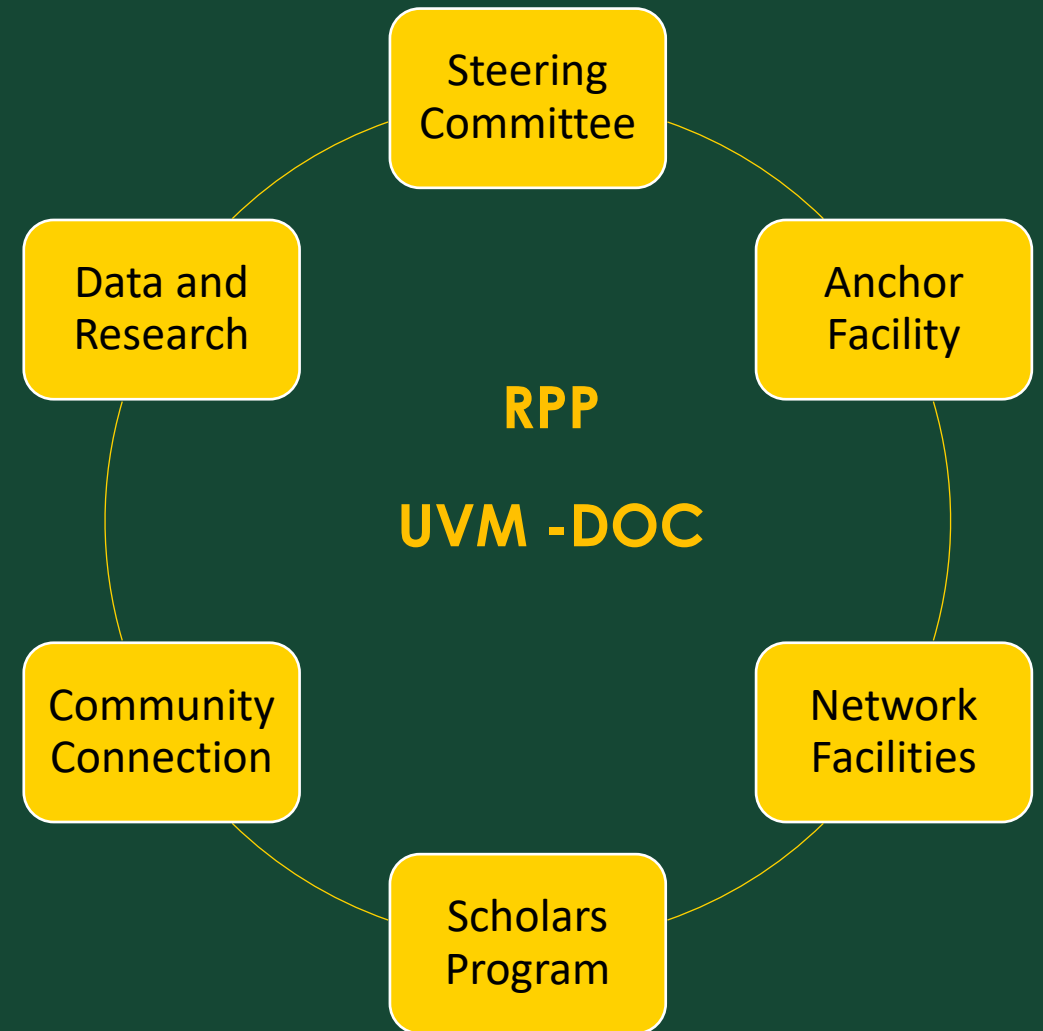
PROGRESS IS NOT LINEAR.



PRIN Today (2025)

Sustainable Infrastructure

- UVM – DOC no cost contract and data MOU
- Anchor facility PRIN council and mentor role
- Institutionalize data capacity with UVM Justice Research Center



PRIN Looking Ahead (2026 and beyond)

Statewide Expansion

- Survey administration across all 6 facilities
- Support for data-informed change in facilities
- Expanded data and analytic capacity
- Alignment of efforts through a collective impact approach



Vermont Health and Justice Collaborative

What we see inside prisons is shaped by the systems around them.



Thank You

In partnership with,

- PRIN Steering Committee
- PRIN Anchor Facility and SSCF Council
- Justice Research Center team
- Community Collaborators

Abigail.Crocker@uvm.edu

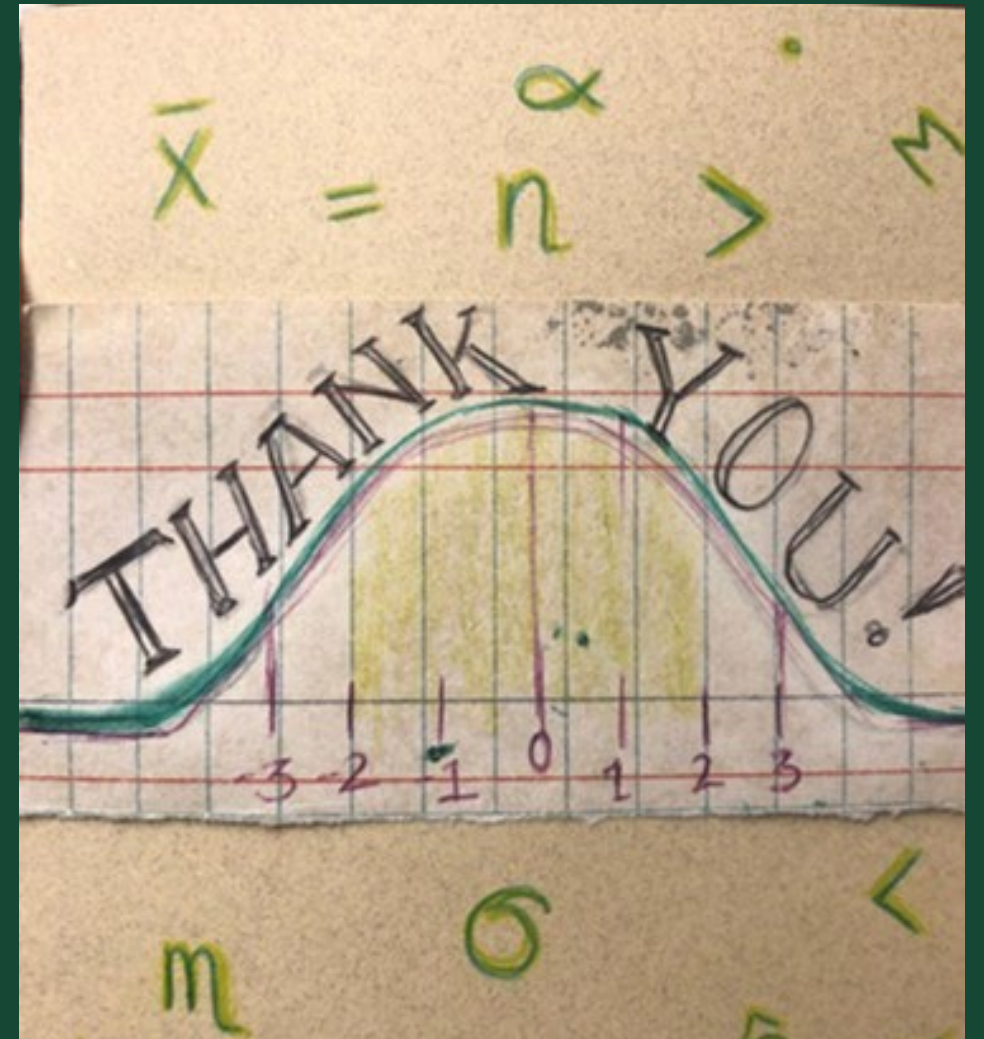


Image credit: Thank you to the women from Statistics 051 spring 2019 in CRCF.