

Vermont Prison Research and Innovation Network

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Senate Committee on Institutions

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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.

- Lived experience as expertise
- Independent data and research
- 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.



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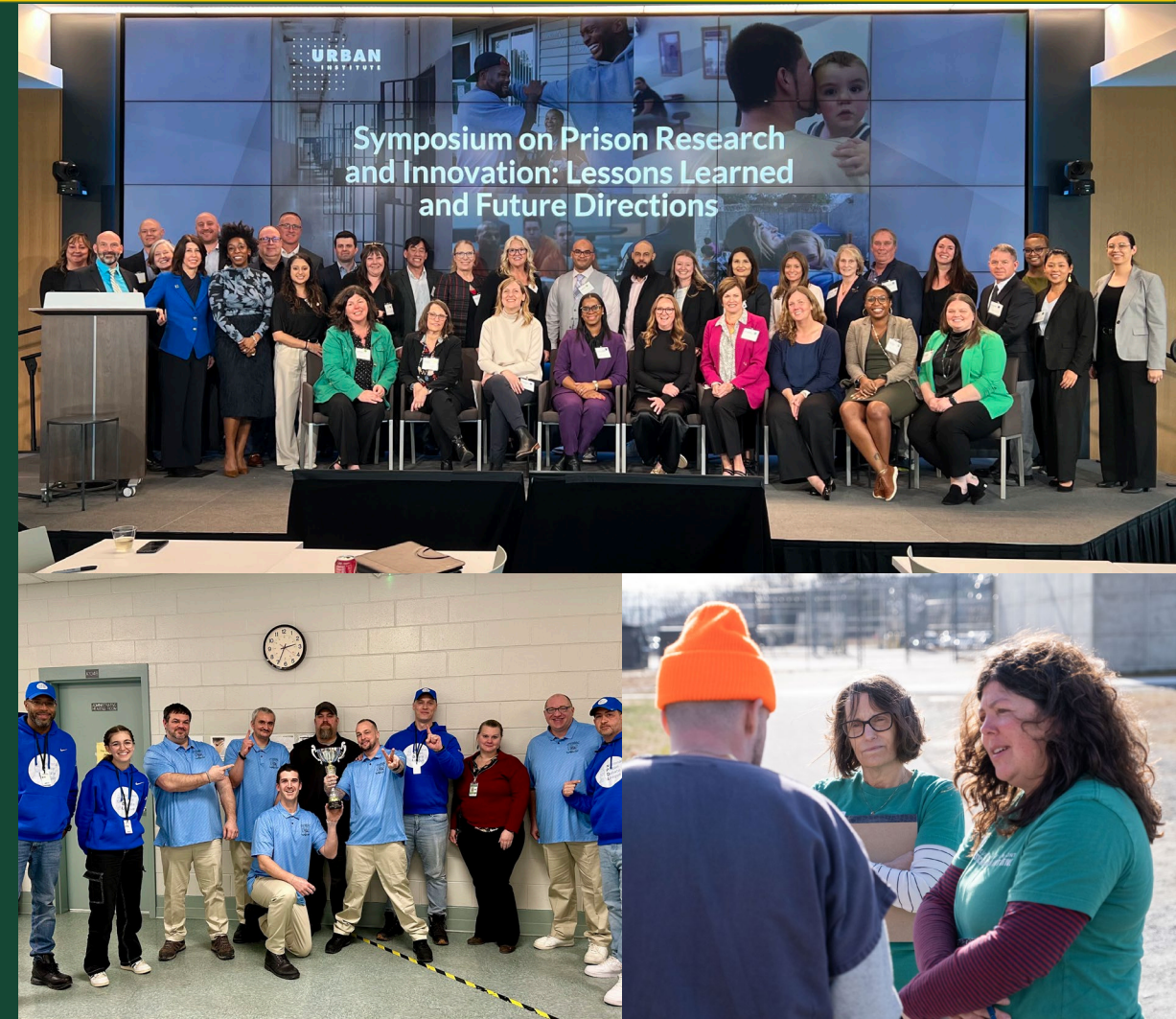
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Origins & History of PRIN

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



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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, and more

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

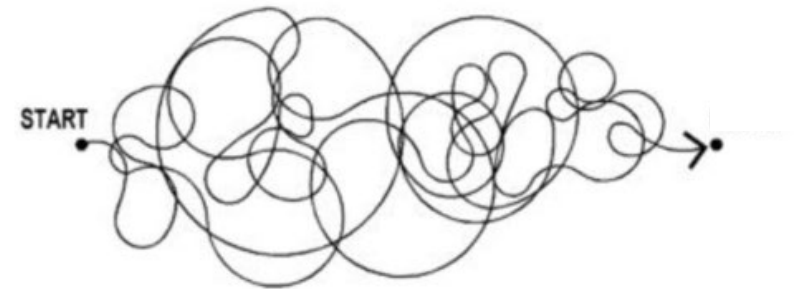


Tracie Hauck is the director of the Turning Point Center of Rutland. Photo by Glenn Russell/VTDigger

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

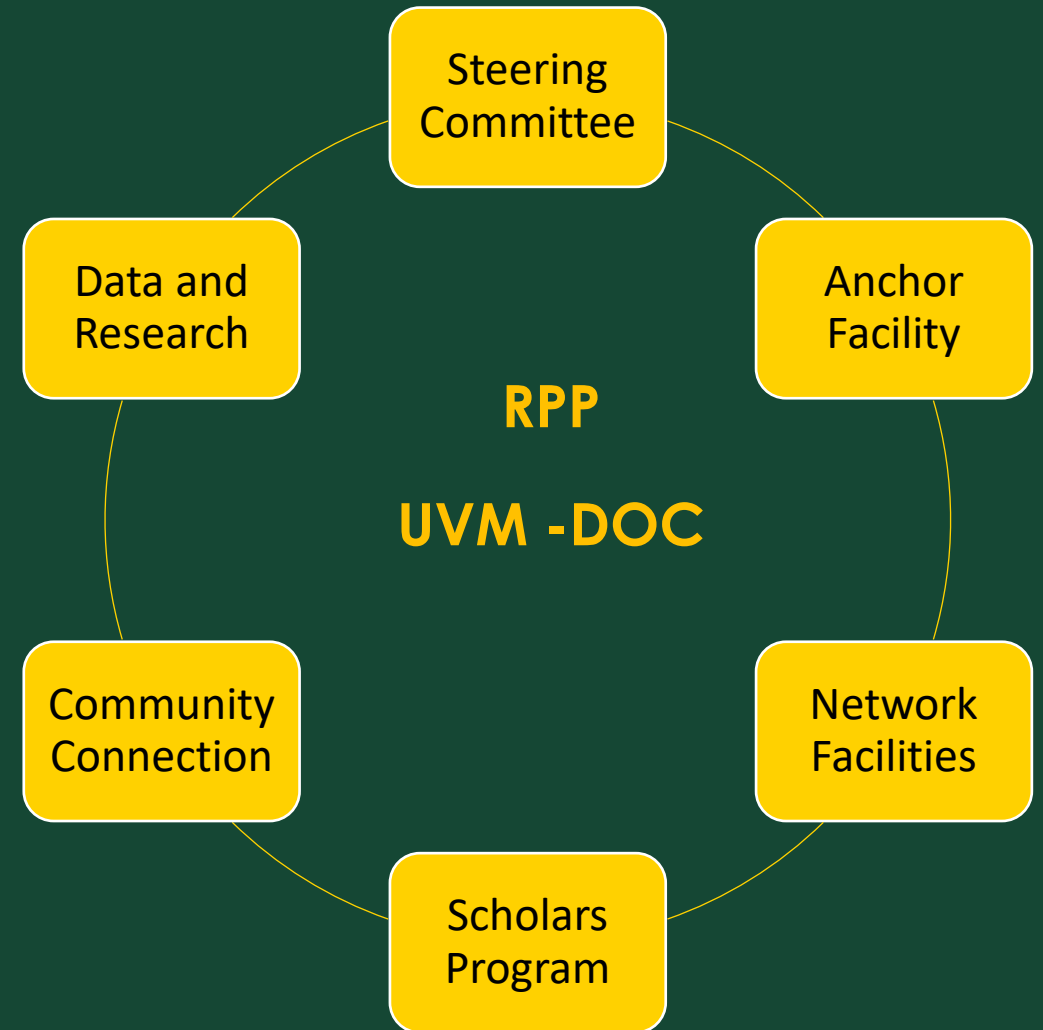
PROGRESS IS NOT LINEAR.



PRIN - 2025

Sustainable Statewide Infrastructure

- UVM – DOC long-term, research-practice partnership (RPP)
- DOC Anchor facility and PRIN council
- UVM Justice Research Center



PRIN - 2025

Activities

- Expanded steering committee
- Launched UVM PRIN scholars program
- Orientation Site Visits at SSCF, PRIN council
- Foundational expansion work with MVRCF
- Community partnerships



Top: Justice Research Center scholars; Bottom Left: SSCF quilt project with Interaction VT; Bottom Right: MVRCF – first PRIN expansion site.

PRIN - 2025

Data Dialogues

Deeper dive into contextual understanding of these data

- Revealed complex, interconnected challenges
- Identified need to better understand conditions that shape these challenges and implementation of efforts to address them.

- **94%** of staff do not feel there are enough staff to meet the needs of the prison (2021).
 - 92% in 2022 and **84% in 2024** ■
- **83%** of incarcerated individuals do not feel prepared for release (2021).
 - 89% in 2022 and **84% in 2024**

PRIN in 2026

Research

- Data briefs – spring 2026
- Survey administration in SSCF and MVRCF – summer 2026
- Composite storytelling and process mapping – summer 2026
- Focus on dissemination and communication

Innovation

- Support and process for data-informed change in facilities



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 Faculty and SSCF Council
- Justice Research Center team
- Community Collaborators

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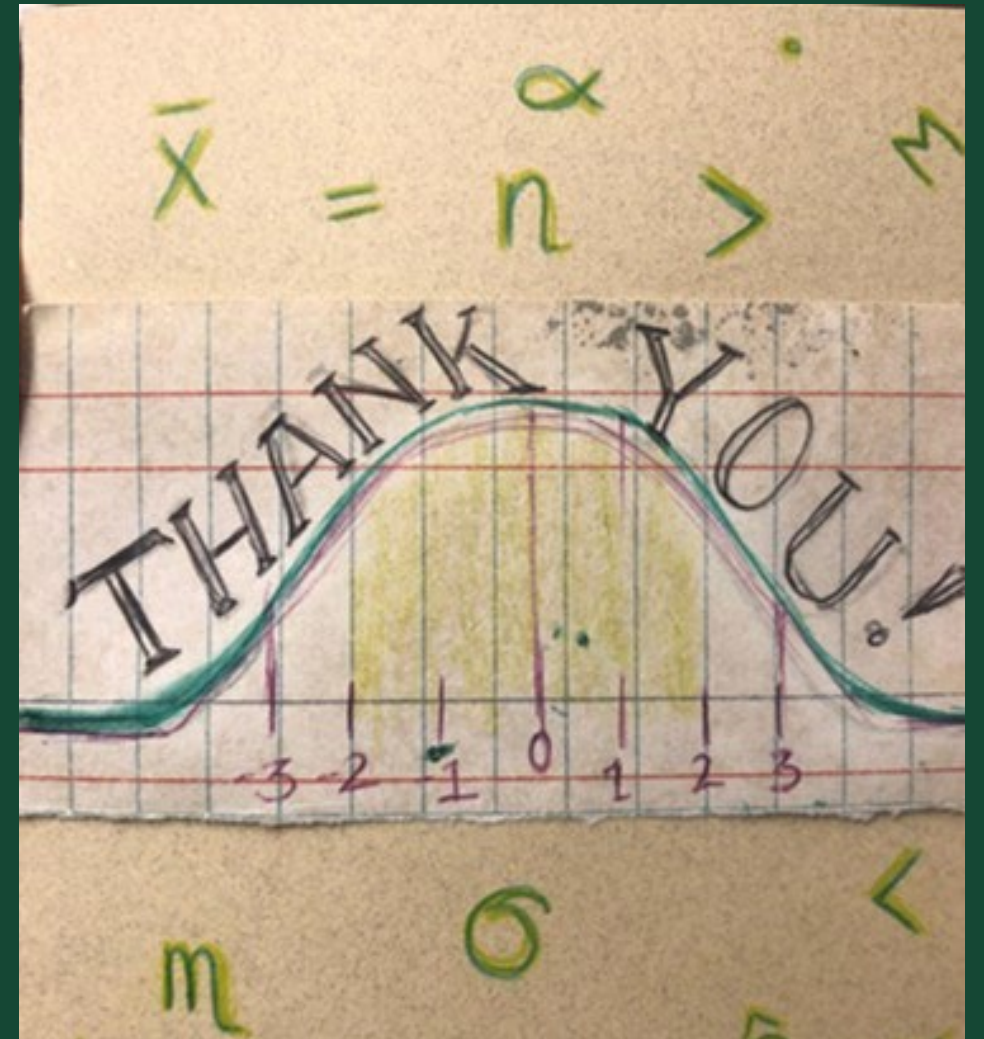


Image credit: Thank you to the women from Statistics 051 spring 2019 in CRCF.