BLACK SHEEP
MINISTRIES

Where the System Ends We **Begin.**

A faith-rooted, trauma-informed nonprofit providing structured stabilization support to individuals and families navigating addiction, foster care, incarceration, and community crisis in Western Pennsylvania.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW & COMMUNITY GUIDE

01 **Grace Circles**
Youth & Family Stabilization Initiative

02 **Family Restoration & Foster Support**
Non-Custodial Family Stabilization Program

03 **Black Sheep Care Team**
Crisis Hospitality & Street-Level Ministry

LOCATION
413 East 4th Avenue, Tarentum, PA

SERVING
Westmoreland · Armstrong · Allegheny Counties

CONTACT
(724) 334-8851

MISSION & IDENTITY

We Exist to Provide Continuity.

> *"Black Sheep Ministries exists to restore stability, dignity, and long-term relational support to individuals and families who have fallen through the cracks of traditional systems. We walk with people through crisis, stabilization, and long-term growth — remaining present when formal services end."*
>
> **— FOUNDING STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Black Sheep Ministries was established to address a measurable structural gap: when formal oversight ends, instability often returns. Families exiting the foster system, individuals completing court-ordered programs, and people leaving addiction treatment frequently lack the relational continuity necessary to sustain progress. We are here to bridge that gap — as a durable, accountable partner that remains available when systems close.

Our work is grounded in the biblical conviction that every person bears the image of God (Genesis 1:27), that Christ came not to condemn but to restore (John 3:17), and that the Church is called to seek the one who has wandered (Luke 15:4-7). These convictions shape our culture — not our conditions. No one is required to affirm a faith statement to receive our services.

OUR ROLE — CLEARLY DEFINED

Black Sheep Ministries IS	Black Sheep Ministries IS NOT
✓ A structured stabilization and support partner	✗ A licensed clinical treatment provider
✓ A voluntary continuity resource after case closure	✗ A probation or compliance monitoring authority
✓ A collaborative referral partner for courts & agencies	✗ A substitute for court-ordered services
✓ A trauma-informed mentorship and navigation platform	✗ A custodial, placement, or adjudicatory authority
✓ A faith-rooted org with voluntary spiritual engagement	✗ A church congregation or faith-compliance program

CORE COMMITMENTS

DIGNITY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY
Every person possesses inherent worth. Grace does not eliminate responsibility — compassion and structure coexist in every program we operate.

NON-COERCIVE SPIRITUAL ENGAGEMENT
Faith-based dialogue is always invitational. Participation in spiritual activities is entirely voluntary and never a condition of service.

LONG-TERM STABILITY OVER SHORT-TERM RELIEF
We measure success by reduced relapse cycles, strengthened families, and sustained engagement — not attendance figures or metrics alone.

PRESENCE OVER PERFORMANCE
We prioritize relational consistency over visibility, remaining available well beyond the closure of court cases and formally funded services.

Grace Circles is a structured youth and family stabilization initiative designed to interrupt generational cycles of addiction, instability, and system entrenchment. The program strengthens protective factors in at-risk youth and families before chronic involvement in the juvenile justice, child welfare, or substance dependency systems becomes entrenched.

WHO THIS PROGRAM SERVES

At-risk youth in high substance-exposure communities	Youth from homes impacted by addiction or trauma	Court-referred and foster/kinship youth
Young adults transitioning out of placements (18-21)	Families seeking stabilization support	Individuals navigating post-system reintegration

FOUR PROGRAM COMPONENTS

After-School Tutoring & Academic Stabilization
Open-access, free tutoring with no enrollment required. Structured academic support, homework assistance, supervised study space, and monthly workshops on financial literacy, conflict resolution, and civic responsibility.

Youth Resilience Circles
Structured weekly peer cohorts by age: 10-12, 13-17, and 18-21 transitional. Guided discussions on emotional regulation, decision-making, identity formation, healthy relationships, and accountability. Formal intake required.

Family Stabilization Circles
Periodic support sessions for families impacted by addiction. Includes addiction literacy, trauma-informed communication, and home stabilization support. Offered in partnership with Al-Anon and Nar-Anon family groups.

Court & Foster Referral Track
Structured enrollment for court-referred and foster youth. Each participant receives formal intake, Enhanced Stabilization Plan, weekly attendance tracking, and progress summaries upon request. Signed release required.

Scope Note: *Grace Circles does not conduct drug testing, provide clinical therapy, certify compliance with court orders, or serve as probation supervision. It operates as a structured stabilization partner — not a supervisory authority.*

Black Sheep Family Restoration & Foster Support is a Christian-rooted, trauma-informed, non-custodial support program designed to strengthen families and safeguard children affected by addiction and child welfare system involvement. The program operates in partnership with courts, DHS, Children and Youth Services, and licensed foster care agencies — reinforcing, not replacing, their authority.

A defining feature of this program is its post-case continuity model. When formal supervision concludes, many families destabilize precisely because consistent support disappears. This program remains available voluntarily after case closure to reduce system re-entry and reinforce long-term stability.

CORE SERVICE COMPONENTS

Family Stabilization & Reunification Support
Translation of court orders into actionable steps. Scheduling and compliance follow-through support. Barrier identification and resource coordination. Accountability-oriented engagement without duplicating supervision.

Addiction Recovery Integration
Referrals to licensed treatment providers. Structured peer recovery mentorship. Partnerships with faith-based recovery groups. Ongoing recovery support following formal treatment or case closure. Spiritual participation always voluntary.

Foster & Kinship Caregiver Support
Supplemental peer-based encouragement and burnout prevention for licensed caregivers. Trauma-informed education and resource coordination. Voluntary faith-rooted community connection. Supplements — never replaces — agency oversight.

Post-Case Continuity
Voluntary ongoing engagement after case closure. Recovery environments, peer mentorship, and resource coordination remain available indefinitely. Participants are never discharged at case closure — relational availability is the model.

WHO THIS PROGRAM SERVES

Biological parents working toward reunification	Kinship and licensed foster caregivers	Foster youth experiencing placement instability
Families exiting supervision without ongoing support	Young adults aging out of foster care	Families at elevated risk of system re-entry

Scope Note: *This program does not assume custodial authority, make placement recommendations, provide legal advice, supervise visitation, or override court orders. All inter-agency communication requires signed releases of information.*

Black Sheep Care Team is a structured crisis hospitality and street-level outreach program providing relational engagement and stabilization support to individuals experiencing addiction impact, incarceration, housing disruption, or disconnection from traditional support systems. Teams are deployed in environments where formal services are absent — meeting people where they are, without condition or coercion.

The program operates from a core conviction: compassion precedes correction, and belonging precedes transformation. Spiritual participation is always voluntary and never a condition of assistance.

THREE OPERATIONAL DIVISIONS

Bar & Nightlife Outreach
Structured two-person team deployments in nightlife environments. Relational, non-confrontational engagement. Voluntary spiritual conversation when invited. Crisis identification and referral coordination. No coercive proselytization of any kind.

Prison Engagement & Reentry Continuity
Faith-rooted engagement within correctional settings where permitted. Structured spiritual mentorship and pre-release relational connection. Post-release follow-up and community integration support. The relationship does not end at the gate.

Crisis Hospitality & Stabilization
Structured relational response to acute instability: relapse events, post-arrest situations, housing displacement, and hospitalization. Focus on relational presence, resource navigation, and dignified stabilization — not clinical intervention.

Resource & Referral Coordination
Connection to licensed treatment providers, housing services, employment resources, recovery groups, and counseling professionals. Internal referrals to Grace Circles and Family Restoration programming where appropriate.

DEPLOYMENT & SAFETY STANDARDS

All outreach operates under structured deployment standards. A minimum two-person rule applies in nightlife and high-risk environments. No volunteer operates independently without leadership authorization. Structured debrief protocols follow all outreach activities for boundary maintenance, risk identification, and volunteer emotional processing.

Scope Note: *The Care Team does not provide clinical addiction treatment, psychiatric services, legal representation, or custodial supervision. Where clinical, legal, or custodial authority is required, individuals are referred to appropriate licensed or statutory providers.*

THE PARTICIPANT JOURNEY

An Integrated System, Not Isolated Programs.

Black Sheep Ministries operates as a coordinated system rather than a collection of independent programs. Participants may enter through any of our three programs, and once engaged they are supported within a unified framework. Referrals flow both from external partners and internally between programs as needs evolve.

01 INITIAL CONTACT

Street engagement, self-referral, or court/agency referral. Care Team provides rapid stabilization during acute crisis before structured enrollment begins.

02 INTAKE & ASSESSMENT

Structured intake by a trained Guidance Counselor. Risk factors, protective factors, and stabilization priorities identified. Individual Development Profile completed.

03 STRUCTURED ENGAGEMENT

Placement in appropriate program(s). Attendance tracking, mentorship, peer circles, family support, and agency-aligned planning. Cross-program referrals as needs change.

04 LONG-TERM CONTINUITY

Participants are never discharged at case closure. Voluntary ongoing engagement — recovery support, peer mentorship, community connection — remains available indefinitely.

WHY CONTINUITY MATTERS

Research consistently demonstrates that abrupt service withdrawal — at case closure, program completion, or release from supervision — significantly increases relapse and recidivism risk across addiction recovery and family dependency systems.

Black Sheep Ministries was designed specifically to address this structural gap. Our model is built around the premise that sustained relational presence is not a luxury — it is a primary driver of long-term stability.

We do not measure success by program completion rates or compliance milestones. We measure it by whether families remain stable and individuals remain connected six months, one year, and five years after formal services end.

"Unlike traditional service models that conclude at compliance milestones, Black Sheep Ministries maintains relational availability. Participants may continue voluntary engagement to reinforce stability after case closure."

— BSM PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS
· Relapse reduction among engaged participants
· Sustained family reunification rates
· Reduced re-entry into dependency systems
· Post-case continuity participation rates

FAITH FOUNDATION

Black Sheep Ministries affirms belief in the one true living God and in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Our name reflects the population we intentionally serve — those who have experienced rejection, stigma, or marginalization by social and religious systems. Our faith shapes our culture of dignity, accountability, and unconditional relational presence. It does not shape our conditions of service.

WORKING WITH COURTS, AGENCIES & PROVIDERS

A Collaborative, Non-Adversarial Partner.

Black Sheep Ministries serves as a resource to judges, CYS caseworkers, DHS personnel, foster care agencies, probation officers, and licensed providers — not as a competing authority, but as a coordinated support mechanism that strengthens outcomes by improving family engagement, follow-through, and post-service continuity. We do not challenge, litigate against, or seek to circumvent court orders or agency directives.

WHAT REFERRAL PARTNERS CAN EXPECT

DOCUMENTATION
Formal intake process, signed releases before any communication, attendance logging, and structured progress summaries at 30/60/90-day intervals when requested by the referring authority.

CLEAR BOUNDARIES
Defined program charters with explicit scope limitations. We operate within our lane and refer anything outside it to appropriate licensed or statutory authorities without exception.

ACCOUNTABILITY
Board-level governance, Pennsylvania background clearances for all personnel, mandatory reporter training, and documented operational procedures across all three programs.

GOVERNANCE & COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK

— Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization operating in Pennsylvania

— Each program operates under a separately adopted, board-approved program charter

— All personnel with direct participant contact carry Pennsylvania background clearances per Act 153

— All staff and volunteers are trained mandated reporters under Pennsylvania CPSL (23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63)

— HIPAA-aligned release of information protocols govern all inter-agency communication

— Faith participation is voluntary and documented as such in all participant intake agreements

GEOGRAPHIC SERVICE AREA

WESTMORELAND COUNTY
Primary service county. Initial program operations and institutional partnerships are concentrated here, including the Tarentum-Brackenridge corridor.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY
Active service county. Partnership development with agencies, and community providers underway.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY (PART)
Engagement in bordering Allegheny County communities occurs as operational benchmarks are met. Expansion is deliberate and conditioned upon readiness.

BLACK SHEEP

MINISTRIES

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?"

LUKE 15:4 — ESV

Black Sheep Ministries was not formed out of ambition or theory. It was born out of proximity to addiction, sustained nonprofit service, lived experience inside the foster system, and a conviction that refuses to look away from brokenness. We are here because someone has to be — structured, accountable, and present for the long term.

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SERVICE AREA
Westmoreland · Armstrong
Allegheny Counties, PA

501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

BLACK SHEEP

MINISTRIES

A Pennsylvania Nonprofit Corporation

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM GUIDE

& Partnership Reference Document

Prepared for Potential Program Partners, Courts, and Community Agencies

Armstrong County • Westmoreland County • Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

"Structured support for the road no one should walk alone.

GRACE CIRCLES	**CARE TEAM**	**FAMILY RESTORATION**
Youth & Family Stabilization	*Crisis Hospitality & Outreach*	*Foster & Reunification Support*

PART ONE

WHO WE ARE

Black Sheep Ministries is a Christian-rooted, trauma-informed nonprofit organization established to serve individuals and families who have been marginalized by religious culture, destabilized by addiction, fractured by generational trauma, or entangled in social systems. We are a faith-based stabilization partner operating alongside courts, agencies, caregivers, and community institutions to reinforce long-term personal and family resilience.

We are not a church congregation. We are not a licensed clinical provider. We are not a statutory authority.

We are a structured, accountable ministry that fills the space where formal systems end. When court supervision concludes, when agency cases close, when clinical treatment discharge happens — Black Sheep Ministries remains. We exist to provide continuity where discontinuity has historically occurred, and in doing so, to reduce the cycles that send individuals and families back into crisis.

> *"The mission of Black Sheep Ministries is to advance charitable, religious, and educational purposes by providing trauma-informed, community-based support, care coordination, mentorship, and restoration-oriented services to individuals and families who are underserved, marginalized, or adversely impacted by addiction, family instability, foster care involvement, poverty, social isolation, or related life disruptions."* — *Black Sheep Master Charter, Section 2.1*

The Name: Why Black Sheep

The name is drawn from Luke 15:4 — the account of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to pursue the one lost sheep. This is not metaphor to us. It is instruction. Christ pursued the outcast, the addict, the prisoner, the ashamed, and the forgotten. We believe every child and every struggling parent bears the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that no person is beyond redemption.

The name also reflects the population we most intentionally serve: those who have been cast out or made to feel unwelcome by religious institutions, social systems, or their own families. Those who have felt like the "black sheep." We are named for them.

The Problem We Address

Across sectors — child welfare, addiction recovery, criminal justice, and reentry — a persistent structural gap exists. Systems are designed to respond to crisis. They are rarely designed to remain long enough to rebuild what crisis destroyed.

Detox exists. Court hearings exist. Removal exists. But long-term, integrated support across legal advocacy, trauma therapy, stable housing, parental rehabilitation, and spiritual restoration is fragmented, temporary, or nonexistent. When acute supervision ends, instability typically returns — not because families lack desire for change, but because they lack the relational infrastructure to sustain it.

Black Sheep Ministries exists to build that infrastructure: structured, faith-grounded, long-term, and accountable.

The Data Behind the Need

The problems Black Sheep Ministries addresses are not anecdotal. They are well-documented patterns with national and regional data:

~30-40%	of foster youth in Pennsylvania re-enter the child welfare system within 12 months of case closure without ongoing support	*PA DHS Data*
~68%	of individuals released from incarceration relapse within the first year without structured community support	*SAMHSA, 2023*
~62%	of Pennsylvania children in foster care are there due to parental substance abuse or addiction	*PA Children & Youth*
25-35%	reduction in recidivism when youth participate in structured mentorship and prosocial programming	*OJJDP Research*
Over 50%	of individuals in crisis report no faith community or consistent relational support at time of crisis	*Pew Research / NAMI*

The New Kensington, Tarentum, Brackenridge corridor, the initial service area for Grace Circles, has been disproportionately impacted by opioid addiction, drug trafficking, and intergenerational instability. Armstrong County and Westmoreland County, the primary service areas for Care Team and Family Restoration, rank among Pennsylvania's counties with the highest rates of substance-related child removal and addiction-related mortality.

What Makes Us Different

Long-Term Orientation	We remain available after case closure. We do not exit when formal systems do. Continuity is a design feature, not an afterthought.
Governance-First Model	Every program operates under a Board-approved charter, documented procedures, background clearances, and defined scope. We are faith-driven but not unaccountable.

Non-Coercive by Design	Faith participation is always voluntary. No participant is required to affirm religious belief or attend worship as a condition of program access.
Reinforcement, Not Replacement	We do not seek to replace courts, agencies, or clinical providers. We serve as a complementary relational layer that strengthens the effectiveness of those systems.

Governance and Structure

Black Sheep Ministries is organized as a Pennsylvania nonprofit corporation and is structured to qualify under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors with fiduciary responsibility, subject to the Master Charter, Bylaws, and Board-adopted policies. Three coordinated program divisions operate beneath the parent organization, each under its own Board-approved charter.

The governance framework includes mandatory background clearances, a formal Conflict of Interest Policy, Whistleblower Protection, dual-signature financial controls, a three-month operating reserve requirement, Directors and Officers liability insurance, and abuse and molestation coverage. Every director is required to affirm the Statement of Faith. Every program is required to maintain documented procedures, structured intake, and outcome tracking.

This is not informal ministry. It is structured, accountable charitable work.

Our Core Commitments

DIGNITY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY. Every individual possesses inherent worth. Grace does not eliminate responsibility, and compassion does not negate structure.

NON-COERCIVE SPIRITUAL ENGAGEMENT. Faith-based dialogue is invitational, never conditional upon receiving assistance.

PRESENCE OVER PERFORMANCE. We prioritize relational consistency over public image — reflecting the example of Christ who walked with the marginalized rather than distancing Himself from them (Mark 2:15–17).

LONG-TERM STABILITY OVER SHORT-TERM RELIEF. We measure success not by attendance or visibility, but by increased resilience, reduced relapse cycles, strengthened family units, and sustained community engagement.

GRACE CIRCLES

Youth & Family Stabilization Initiative — Program Division One

GRACE CIRCLES: OVERVIEW

Grace Circles is a faith-rooted, trauma-informed youth and family stabilization initiative operating under Black Sheep Ministries in the Tarentum and Brackenridge corridor along the Allegheny and Westmoreland County border. It is designed to interrupt generational cycles of addiction, instability, and system entrenchment within communities heavily impacted by substance exposure.

Grace Circles operates as a structured prevention and stabilization platform — not a recreational program, not a short-term intervention, and not a social club. It is designed to become a structural backbone within a substance-impacted community, strengthening protective factors in at-risk youth and families before long-term involvement in the juvenile justice system, child welfare system, or substance dependency systems becomes entrenched.

Participation is open to all eligible youth regardless of religious belief. While leadership philosophy is grounded in biblical principles of dignity, accountability, and restoration, no participant is required to affirm any specific faith commitment.

The Community This Program Serves

The Tarentum and Brackenridge corridor represents a region disproportionately impacted by drug activity and intergenerational instability. Youth within this environment face elevated exposure to substance use, inconsistent home structures, and early justice system contact. The community sits at the intersection of opioid epidemic impact, generational poverty, and limited youth infrastructure.

Research consistently demonstrates that protective factors — academic engagement, structured peer environments, adult mentorship, and caregiver stabilization — significantly reduce substance initiation risk and recidivism. Grace Circles is designed to systematically strengthen those protective factors through structured programming rather than reactive intervention.

The Data That Drives Grace Circles

~90%	of adolescent substance users begin using between ages 12 and 17 — the exact age range served by Grace Circles	SAMHSA

~75%	of youth in the juvenile justice system have been exposed to trauma or adverse childhood experiences	OJJDP Research

3-4x	**increase in likelihood of adult incarceration for youth who first contact the juvenile justice system before age 14 without structured intervention**	*National Research*
55%	**of youth with adult mentors are more likely to attend college and less likely to use drugs**	*MENTOR Research*
~40%	**of court-involved youth who participate in structured community programming show reduced recidivism within 12 months**	*OJJDP Data*

The communities served by Grace Circles — Tarentum, Brackenridge, and surrounding areas — are part of Pennsylvania's opioid-impacted regions. Children in these communities grow up in environments where witnessing substance use, parental incarceration, and family disruption are normalized experiences. Without structured interruption, the generational pattern repeats.

Program Structure: Four Coordinated Components

1. After-School Tutoring and Academic Stabilization

An open-access tutoring program providing structured academic support, homework assistance, and supervised study space. Monthly workshops integrate financial literacy, conflict resolution, and civic responsibility. Academic disengagement is one of the strongest predictors of juvenile justice involvement — this component directly addresses that risk factor.

Tutoring services are provided at no cost to participants and operate independently from other program enrollment tracks, ensuring the broadest possible access. Youth do not need to be enrolled in any other Grace Circles component to receive tutoring support.

2. Youth Resilience Circles

Structured weekly cohorts divided by developmental age groups: ages 10 to 12, ages 13 to 17, and ages 18 to 21 (transitional). Each cohort engages in guided peer discussions focused on emotional regulation, decision making, identity formation, healthy relationships, and personal accountability.

Enrollment includes a formal intake process and an Individual Development Profile that tracks progress and stabilization goals over time. The age-differentiated structure ensures developmentally appropriate content and allows for meaningful peer cohort relationships to develop. This is not a drop-in program — it is a structured, relational commitment.

3. Family Stabilization Circles

Periodic support sessions for families impacted by addiction and instability, including partnerships with recovery-aligned organizations such as Al-Anon Family Groups and Nar-Anon. These sessions provide addiction literacy, trauma-informed communication strategies, and home stabilization support.

Research consistently demonstrates that youth outcomes are inseparable from family stability. This component recognizes that serving the youth in isolation, without addressing the family system they

return to each evening, produces limited and temporary results. Family Stabilization Circles are designed to strengthen the entire household unit.

4. Structured Court and Foster Referral Track

Grace Circles accepts court-referred and foster youth. This is a formal, documented, accountable track — not an informal arrangement. Each referred participant receives a formal intake, an Enhanced Stabilization Plan, attendance tracking, and progress summaries when requested by authorized parties.

The program does not conduct drug testing or serve as probation supervision. It operates as a structured stabilization partner supporting compliance and constructive development. Judges, probation officers, and child welfare workers can refer youth with confidence that documentation standards, mandatory reporting protocols, and clear scope boundaries are in place.

Intake and Accountability Standards

All enrolled youth undergo a structured intake facilitated by trained Guidance Counselors. The intake process identifies risk factors, protective factors, academic status, and stabilization priorities. Each participant receives an Individual Development Profile outlining attendance expectations and developmental goals.

Attendance is required at least once per week for enrolled youth, or through scheduled check-in sessions. Behavioral standards are enforced through a tiered response model prioritizing safety and dignity. Zero tolerance policies apply to weapons, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, and active intoxication. All leadership personnel are trained in mandated reporting and child protection compliance.

Leadership and Governance

Grace Circles operates under the governance of Black Sheep Ministries and is led by a designated Program Director with expertise in youth development and trauma-informed engagement. The founding leadership includes advanced education in developmental psychology and business administration, along with extensive experience directing at-risk youth programs, collaborating with judges and probation officers, providing court testimony, and operating within school districts and nonprofit environments.

Within five years, the program intends to obtain licensure for the Program Director or hire a Licensed Program Director credentialed in Social Work or Psychology with a focus on trauma-informed practice.

Measurable Outcomes

Grace Circles maintains structured documentation and publishes an Annual Public Transparency Report. Tracked metrics include total youth served, enrollment figures, attendance retention rates, court referral volume, aggregate outcome indicators, financial summary, and narrative impact overview. Participant confidentiality is strictly maintained. If components are found ineffective or misaligned, they may be revised or suspended in the interest of responsible stewardship.

Partnership Opportunities for Grace Circles

Grace Circles actively seeks formal referral relationships with juvenile courts, probation departments, school districts, Children and Youth Services, and licensed treatment providers. We operate within formal partnership agreements that define referral pathways, communication expectations, and scope boundaries. Judges and probation officers may refer youth with confidence in our documentation protocols and governance standards.

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BLACK SHEEP CARE TEAM

Crisis Hospitality & Street-Level Ministry — Program Division Two

BLACK SHEEP CARE TEAM: OVERVIEW

Black Sheep Care Team is a Christian-rooted, structured crisis hospitality and street-level outreach program designed to engage individuals experiencing instability, addiction impact, incarceration, housing disruption, or disconnection from traditional support systems. It operates as a relational bridge — a structured, trained presence that meets people in the environments where crisis actually occurs, rather than waiting for them to find their way to a service office.

The program was developed to address a recurring structural gap: individuals frequently encounter crisis moments without sustained relational support to help them navigate recovery, reentry, or stabilization pathways. Once acute supervision ends or services fragment, many individuals experience relapse, isolation, or system re-entry. Care Team exists to reduce that gap.

The program operates under the governance and 501(c)(3) status of Black Sheep Ministries and is overseen by its Board of Directors. It does not function as a church, licensed treatment provider, legal advocacy organization, or custodial authority. It serves as a structured relational bridge with defined boundaries, documented protocols, and board-level oversight.

The Problem Care Team Addresses

The environments where Care Team operates — nightlife venues, correctional settings, post-arrest situations, hospitals, and housing displacement scenarios — are precisely the environments where relational support is most absent and most needed. Traditional social services rarely operate in bars at 11 p.m. Traditional churches rarely visit county jails on weekday afternoons. Traditional nonprofits rarely show up at a hospital when someone comes down from a crisis high. Care Team does.

The Data Behind Care Team's Purpose

~90%	**of people with substance use disorders do not receive treatment — with lack of social support being among the top cited barriers**	*SAMHSA 2023*

~67%	**of individuals released from prison reoffend within 3 years without structured reentry support**	*Bureau of Justice Statistics*

Over 60%	**of individuals in crisis at the point of relapse report feeling completely alone with no one to call**	*NAMI Research*
~50%	**of incarcerated individuals report having no one visiting or maintaining contact with them**	*Prison Policy Initiative*
~20-30%	**reduction in recidivism rates for incarcerated individuals who maintain consistent faith-based community contact**	*DOJ / Prison Fellowship*

In Armstrong and Westmoreland Counties — the primary service areas — opioid overdose mortality rates have consistently ranked among Pennsylvania's highest in recent years. Emergency responders encounter the same individuals repeatedly. The criminal justice system processes the same individuals through cycles of arrest, release, and re-arrest. The pattern is not a mystery: acute response without relational continuity produces temporary stabilization and predictable recurrence.

Care Team is designed to interrupt that cycle — not through coercion or judgment, but through consistent, dignified, relational presence.

Core Service Components

1. Bar and Nightlife Outreach

Two-person deployment outreach teams engage individuals within nightlife environments through relational, non-confrontational engagement. The program does not conduct confrontational evangelism, public religious disruption, or coercive proselytization. Spiritual conversation is offered only when invited. Crisis identification and referral coordination are provided when the situation calls for it.

This component reflects a fundamental theological conviction: if the people who need help are not coming to us, we go to them. Nightlife environments are among the highest-concentration points for individuals cycling through addiction, isolation, and crisis decision-making. A trained, relational presence in those environments — without an agenda beyond genuine care — can and does interrupt the trajectory of a bad night.

Each deployment is followed by a structured post-engagement debrief and documentation. Two-person deployment is a non-negotiable safety standard.

2. Prison Engagement and Reentry Continuity

The program provides faith-rooted engagement within correctional settings where permitted and supports continuity following release through structured spiritual mentorship, pre-release relational connection, post-release follow-up engagement, and referral coordination for recovery, housing, and employment services.

The continuity piece is critical. Many reentry programs provide a list of resources at the gate and consider their job done. Care Team volunteers establish relationships before release and follow up after. The goal is to ensure that the moment of release — statistically one of the highest-risk periods for recidivism and relapse — is met with a familiar face rather than an empty silence.

The program does not provide legal representation, custodial supervision, or compliance monitoring. It operates within its defined relational and spiritual scope.

3. Crisis Hospitality and Stabilization Support

Care Team responds to acute instability across multiple settings: relapse events, post-arrest situations, housing displacement, hospitalization, and relational disruption. Engagement focuses on relational presence, resource navigation, and stabilization support. The program does not provide licensed therapy, medical care, or psychiatric services, and makes no claim to do so.

What Care Team provides is something that licensed systems rarely can: sustained, relational presence that does not require a diagnosis, an insurance card, or an open case. The presence of a trained, caring, non-judgmental person during moments of acute instability has measurable impact on outcomes — not because it replaces clinical care, but because it keeps people connected until clinical care becomes accessible.

Volunteer Standards and Governance

Care Team operates under structured volunteer screening and training standards. All volunteers are required to complete background clearances, trauma-informed training, mandatory reporting education, de-escalation training, and defined deployment protocols before any field engagement.

Benevolence governance operates under tiered approval authority. Volunteers may identify needs but may not promise or distribute funds without authorization. Financial assistance is documented and subject to leadership review. Transportation policies, incident reporting procedures, and insurance coverage alignment are formally defined.

Two-person outreach standards are enforced without exception. No volunteer deploys alone. This protects both participants and volunteers, and ensures that all field engagement is accountable and documentable.

Geographic Scope

Initial operations focus within Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, and Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. Expansion into additional counties or states shall occur only upon demonstrated operational readiness and formal Board approval.

Partnership Opportunities for Care Team

Care Team seeks collaborative, non-adversarial partnerships with judicial systems, probation departments, correctional institutions, community recovery organizations, local churches, and social service agencies. We operate within formal communication protocols and maintain clear scope boundaries in all partnership arrangements.

For correctional institutions and reentry programs specifically, we are prepared to discuss formal agreements governing in-facility engagement standards, communication protocols with case managers, and post-release coordination frameworks. For judicial systems and treatment courts, we can serve as a voluntary community support resource for participants — providing documented engagement while leaving oversight authority where it belongs: with the court.

FAMILY RESTORATION & FOSTER SUPPORT

Foster & Reunification Support — Program Division Three

FAMILY RESTORATION & FOSTER SUPPORT: OVERVIEW

Black Sheep Family Restoration & Foster Support is a Christian-rooted, trauma-informed, non-custodial support program designed to strengthen families and safeguard children affected by addiction and child welfare system involvement. It operates in partnership with courts, Departments of Human Services, Children and Youth Services, licensed foster care agencies, and community-based providers.

The program does not seek placement authority, custodial supervision, or clinical treatment functions. Rather, it serves as a structured support mechanism that enhances family engagement, recovery continuity, and long-term stability — functioning as a reinforcing layer within the existing child welfare ecosystem rather than as a parallel system competing with it.

The program was developed to address a persistent structural gap within the child welfare ecosystem: families often lack coordinated, relational, and practical support necessary to engage effectively with court-ordered and agency-directed services over time. When cases close and formal services conclude, many families experience destabilization and relapse due to the sudden absence of structured support. Black Sheep Family Restoration exists to reduce that gap.

The Problem This Program Addresses

The child welfare system in Pennsylvania is, by the account of its own administrators, understaffed, under-resourced, and underfunded. Caseworkers carry large caseloads. Court hearings are brief. Visitation schedules are structured but not always relational. When a family's case closes — whether through reunification, adoption, or aging out — the formal support structure largely disappears.

Most families navigating this system do not have private legal resources, financial flexibility, professional relationships, or layered support networks advocating simultaneously at the legal, emotional, and spiritual levels for both children and parents. Restoration should not depend on proximity to influence. This program exists to extend that kind of layered, coordinated support to families who would not otherwise have access to it.

The Data Behind This Program

~62%	of children in PA foster care are there due to parental substance abuse — making addiction-informed support central, not optional	PA DHS 2023

~30%	of families reunified through CYS re-enter the child welfare system within 24 months without post-case support structures	*Child Welfare Outcomes*
~40%	of foster youth who age out of care without ongoing support will experience homelessness within 18 months	*Casey Family Programs*
~30-50%	of foster parents leave within the first year — with isolation and lack of support cited as primary reasons	*National Survey of Children's Health*
~25%	reduction in reunification failures when families receive structured post-case relational support beyond standard agency oversight	*Child Welfare Research*

The founder of Black Sheep Ministries has direct, lived experience inside the foster care system as a licensed foster parent, and has navigated multi-state child welfare cases across Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and West Virginia. The Westmoreland County Children and Youth Services Director has personally noted how rare it is to encounter families who provide the sustained, multi-level advocacy that Black Sheep Ministries models. This program is designed to extend that model to families who could not otherwise access it.

Core Service Components

1. Family Stabilization and Reunification Support

The program assists families in understanding and navigating system expectations by translating court orders and case plans into clear, actionable steps, providing organizational support for appointments and required services, and offering accountability-oriented engagement that promotes follow-through. Coordination with existing service providers is standard practice.

The program does not certify compliance, assume case management authority, or override agency determinations. It serves as a practical navigation and accountability partner that helps families bridge the gap between what the system requires and what the family has the capacity to execute.

2. Addiction Recovery Integration

Recognizing addiction as a primary destabilizing factor in the majority of child welfare cases, the program integrates recovery-oriented supports by coordinating referrals to licensed treatment providers, partnering with faith-based recovery groups aligned with trauma-informed standards, providing structured peer recovery mentorship, and encouraging sustained recovery engagement beyond formal treatment discharge.

Spiritual participation is voluntary and never a substitute for required clinical treatment. This component is designed to complement, not replace, the clinical and legal requirements established by the court and agency.

3. Foster and Kinship Caregiver Support

The program offers supplemental support to licensed caregivers — including peer-based encouragement and burnout prevention, trauma-informed education, practical resource coordination, and voluntary faith-rooted community connection. The program does not replace agency supervision or training requirements.

Foster and kinship caregivers are among the most under-supported individuals in the child welfare ecosystem. They absorb traumatized children into their homes, navigate complex agency relationships, and often do so without adequate emotional support or community reinforcement. The 30-50% annual attrition rate among foster parents is not a mystery — it is a predictable consequence of under-support. This component is designed to improve caregiver retention by providing the relational infrastructure that keeps them engaged.

4. Youth and Young Adult Engagement

Youth affected by addiction and system involvement may receive structured mentorship from screened and trained adults, voluntary participation in youth or young adult groups, coordination of referrals to educational, vocational, and counseling resources, and support during transitions out of formal system involvement. The program does not provide clinical therapy or custodial supervision.

Particular attention is given to transition-age youth — those aging out of foster care or completing court-ordered services. This is statistically one of the highest-vulnerability periods for young people with system involvement, and one of the least-served transition points in the child welfare system.

5. Post-Case Continuity

A defining and intentional feature of this program is its long-term orientation. When court supervision or agency involvement concludes, participants may voluntarily remain engaged in recovery support environments, peer mentorship relationships, faith-rooted community connections, and resource coordination.

This is the most structurally significant component of the program. The evidence base is clear: families that remain connected to structured relational support after case closure have dramatically better outcomes than those who do not. The problem is that almost no formal system is designed or funded to provide that continuity. Black Sheep Family Restoration is specifically designed to fill that vacuum.

Governance and Safeguards

The program operates under the governance of Black Sheep Ministries and is overseen by its Board of Directors. Safeguards include mandatory background clearances for all staff and volunteers, training in trauma-informed care and mandatory reporting, structured documentation practices, confidentiality protocols aligned with applicable privacy law, appropriate insurance coverage, and advisory consultation in legal, clinical, and risk management domains.

The program does not accept partnerships or funding arrangements that compromise autonomy or ethical integrity. All formal partnerships are governed by written agreements that define scope, communication expectations, and confidentiality boundaries.

Geographic Scope

Initial operations are focused within Armstrong County, Westmoreland County, and parts of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Expansion will occur only upon demonstrated operational readiness and Board approval.

Partnership Opportunities for Family Restoration

Family Restoration & Foster Support actively seeks referral relationships with Children and Youth Services, Domestic Relations courts, dependency courts, licensed foster care and adoption agencies, licensed clinical treatment providers, and housing and vocational support organizations.

For child welfare agencies specifically, we are prepared to discuss formal referral protocols that define how we communicate with caseworkers, what information is shared and under what consent frameworks, and how our work reinforces rather than duplicates existing case planning. We welcome the opportunity to demonstrate our governance documentation, staff clearance records, and program policies to agency administrators conducting due diligence.

PART FIVE

HOW WE WORK WITH PARTNERS

Black Sheep Ministries is designed from its governance structure outward to be a reliable, accountable, and non-disruptive partner for courts, agencies, treatment providers, and community organizations. We understand that the agencies and systems we partner with have statutory obligations, professional standards, and operational protocols that cannot be compromised. We do not ask them to compromise those standards. We build our work around them.

What We Are

WHAT WE PROVIDE	WHAT WE REQUIRE
Structured relational continuity, resource navigation, peer support, documented programming, and voluntary faith-based community for individuals and families who are in or emerging from system involvement.	Background clearances for all personnel, signed program agreements defining scope and communication, consent from participants for any inter-agency communication, and adherence to all applicable reporting obligations.

What We Are Not

We are not a replacement for courts, licensed clinical providers, attorneys, case managers, or statutory child welfare oversight. We do not conduct drug testing, provide legal representation, offer clinical diagnosis, or exercise placement authority. We do not override court orders, contradict case plans, or intervene in custodial determinations. We serve the relational and stabilization layer that formal systems are not structured to provide.

Our Referral Process

Any court, agency, or provider may refer an individual or family to Black Sheep Ministries programming by contacting the appropriate program division. All referrals are followed by a structured intake process, scope review, and determination of appropriate program fit. For court-referred youth or adults, we provide attendance documentation and progress summaries upon written request from authorized parties.

We welcome the opportunity to enter into formal Memoranda of Understanding or Partnership Agreements with referring agencies. These documents define communication protocols, confidentiality boundaries, documentation standards, and scope limitations in a format acceptable to agency legal teams and administrators.

Our Accountability to Partners

Black Sheep Ministries maintains the following for review by any prospective or current partner:

- Master Charter and all program-specific charters
- Board composition and director background clearance records
- Staff and volunteer clearance documentation
- Program intake templates and Individual Development Profile formats
- Annual Public Transparency Report (once operational)
- Insurance certificate including abuse and molestation coverage
- Conflict of Interest and Whistleblower Protection policies
- Incident reporting protocols

We operate under the belief that accountability is not a burden — it is the foundation of trust. We welcome due diligence.

How to Begin a Partnership Conversation

To initiate a partnership inquiry, referral relationship, or formal MOU discussion with Black Sheep Ministries, contact us directly. We are prepared to present our governance documentation, walk through program scope and protocols, answer questions from legal or compliance staff, and discuss how our work can best reinforce the objectives of your agency or institution.

We are available to meet in person with judges, magistrates, agency directors, clinical administrators, or any other institutional partner who would benefit from a direct conversation about our work, our governance, and our commitment to operating within appropriate boundaries.

PART SIX

A WORD FROM THE FOUNDER

> *"Black Sheep Ministries was not formed out of ambition or theory. It was born out of proximity to addiction, sustained involvement in nonprofit service, lived experience inside the foster system, and a faith conviction that refuses to look away from brokenness." — Joseph Hesketh, Founder*

The founder of Black Sheep Ministries grew up next to addiction. He has watched it take childhood friends to prison, strip parents of their children, and end lives too early. His closest childhood friend lost custody of his daughter, battled addiction throughout his incarceration, and eventually took his own life. These were not case studies. They were his people. And they are the reason everything that follows exists.

He pursued a Master's degree in Psychology and a Master of Business Administration — not as parallel career tracks, but as two halves of the same conviction. He needed the clinical framework to understand what trauma and addiction actually do to people, and he needed the organizational tools to build something structured enough to last. Alongside his graduate work he served as a trauma counselor with a faith-based nonprofit and provided counseling services through the local church, working specifically with youth, adolescents, and court-involved individuals for five to seven years across those combined roles.

That clinical and relational foundation was put directly to work in the community. From 2011 through 2016 he worked alongside probation officers, sitting judges, county representatives, and local churches to build blended programming for at-risk and court-supervised youth, co-administering a model where juveniles received structured program hours credited against court-ordered community service requirements. Over 150 youth were served. He has provided direct court testimony on behalf of youth and families, advocated successfully for rehabilitation over incarceration, navigated multi-state child welfare cases, and served on eleven nonprofit boards over fifteen years spanning youth development, residential support, and community revitalization. Having built and operated multiple successful businesses, he has consistently directed his own resources toward ensuring that the people who need these programs most are never turned away because of funding limitations. Black Sheep Ministries was built the same way — with the same conviction that the work comes first.

Across every one of those sectors, one pattern consistently appeared: systems respond to crisis. They rarely remain long enough to rebuild what crisis destroyed. Black Sheep Ministries exists to remain.

Black Sheep Ministries exists to remain.

> *"This is not charity. It is obedience. When you have witnessed generational addiction, stood beside body bags, watched children withdraw from fentanyl, walked teenagers through trauma recovery, navigated custody battles, and lived inside the foster system — inaction becomes disobedience." — Joseph Hesketh*

BLACK SHEEP MINISTRIES

Statistical Needs Brief: Evidence for Community-Based Programming

Armstrong County | Westmoreland County | Allegheny County, Pennsylvania | 2025

PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEF

This document compiles statistical evidence demonstrating the need for the three programs operated by Black Sheep Ministries in Armstrong, Westmoreland, and Allegheny Counties, Pennsylvania: the Family Restoration & Foster Support Program, Grace Circles Discipleship & Recovery Community, and the Care Team Crisis Hospitality & Street-Level Ministry. Each data point is sourced from peer-reviewed research, federal agencies, state health departments, or local county data. Together, these statistics establish that the populations Black Sheep Ministries serves face measurable, documented crises that demand relational, long-term, community-rooted intervention.

SECTION 1: REGIONAL CONTEXT — THE COUNTIES WE SERVE

Who Lives Here: A Snapshot of Need

Black Sheep Ministries operates in a tri-county corridor that is predominantly rural and working-class, with income levels and poverty rates that signal concentrated vulnerability. These are not abstract demographics, they are the people in our neighborhoods.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY	WESTMORELAND COUNTY	ALLEGHENY COUNTY
Population: ~65,100 Median HH Income: $64,295 Poverty Rate: ~11% Median Age: 47.2 years **Kittanning Borough poverty: 23.5%**	Population: ~350,935 Median HH Income: $72,468 Family Poverty Rate: 6.3% **Foster care need: 'Overwhelming'**	665 overdose deaths (2023) 432 overdose deaths (2024) **1,028 children in out-of-home care (Jan 2025)** 26% of all county deaths are overdoses

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2023 5-year; Allegheny County Medical Examiner 2024 Annual Report; Pennsylvania-demographics.com; Pittsburgh Union Progress, Nov. 2025

SECTION 2: FAMILYRESTORATION & FOSTER SUPPORT — THE DATA

The Foster Care Crisis in Pennsylvania

Black Sheep Ministries' Family Restoration & Foster Support Program addresses one of the most acute gaps in Pennsylvania's child welfare system: the shortage of stable, mentored support for biological parents working toward reunification, kinship caregivers, and foster children who lack long-term relational continuity.

~15,000	1,028	47%
Children in PA foster care at any given time	Children in out-of-home care in Allegheny County alone (Jan. 2025)	PA older youth NOT exiting foster care to permanency

Source: PA Dept. of Human Services; Pittsburgh Union Progress, Nov. 2025; Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, Fostering Youth Transitions 2023

The Parental Substance Use Connection

The overlap between the opioid epidemic and foster care placements in this region is not coincidental — research confirms it is causal. This is the exact population Black Sheep Ministries targets.

- Nationally, 31% of children removed from their homes in 2024 were removed due to parental drug abuse — more than double the rate in 2000 (15%). (CAFO Foster Care Statistics 2025)
- A 10% increase in overdose death rates in a county corresponds to a 4.4% increase in foster care entry rates — a direct statistical link. (HHS/ASPE Research, 2018; CWLA)
- When children are removed due to parental drug abuse, their time away from home is typically longer, and reunification is less likely than for other removal reasons. (UC Berkeley Institute for Research on Labor and Employment)
- 1 in 8 children in the U.S. lives in a household with a parent with a substance use disorder. (SAMHSA/ASPE 2015–2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health)
- Between 2010 and 2015, the number of children under age 4 in foster care grew 42%, with infants showing the largest increase — directly tied to opioid epidemic severity. (IRLE/Berkeley Research Review)

Source: Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) 2025; HHS ASPE Mixed Methods Study; CWLA Policy Brief; Berkeley IRLE Student Publication 2023; SAMHSA/ASPE Brief on Children at Risk of SUD

The Southwest Pennsylvania Foster Parent Shortage

The infrastructure to care for children in our specific region is collapsing. Black Sheep's support for kinship caregivers and foster families fills a gap that local governments have openly acknowledged as critical.

- In 2010, over 1,000 Allegheny County families became newly certified foster parents. By 2024, that number collapsed to 429 — a nearly 57% decline in 14 years. (Pittsburgh Union Progress, Nov. 2025)
- There are only 1,077 approved foster care families across all of southwestern Pennsylvania — including Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland counties combined. (PA Dept. of Human Services via Pittsburgh Union Progress, 2025)
- The Westmoreland County Children's Bureau has publicly stated an 'overwhelming need' for foster parents on its own county website. (Westmoreland County Children's Bureau, wccb.pa.gov)
- Parental stress — driven by poverty, housing instability, and food insecurity — is a documented predictor of child maltreatment. Administrators in Allegheny County have warned of increased referrals as SNAP benefits have been threatened. (Julia Reuben, Allegheny County DHS, Nov. 2025)

Source: Pittsburgh Union Progress, Nov. 2025; Westmoreland County Children's Bureau official website; Allegheny County DHS Administrator statement, 2025

What Happens to Children Without Long-Term Support

Black Sheep's insistence on relational continuity after case closure is not philosophical — it is evidence-based. The data on what happens to youth who age out without support is devastating.
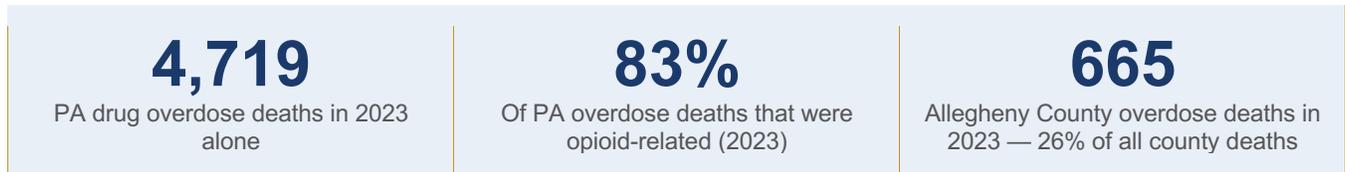
- Only 47% of older youth in Pennsylvania are exiting foster care to permanency — meaning more than half leave without a stable family connection. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Fostering Youth Transitions 2023)
- Only 51% of eligible older youth in Pennsylvania received independent living services such as vocational training, tuition aid, and housing vouchers. (PA Partnerships for Children, 2023)
- Between 50% and 80% of children in foster care meet the clinical criteria for a mental health disorder. (CAFO Foster Care Statistics 2025)
- Between 65% and 85% of children in foster care have a sibling also in care. Of those, 53% to 80% are separated from at least one sibling. (CAFO 2025)

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, Fostering Youth Transitions 2023; PA Partnerships for Children 2023; Christian Alliance for Orphans 2025

SECTION 3: GRACE CIRCLES — DISCIPLESHIP & RECOVERY COMMUNITY

The Addiction Crisis in Our Region

Grace Circles exists to provide the kind of relational, long-term community that clinical systems discharge people into — and that most recovering individuals never actually find. The data on addiction in Pennsylvania, and specifically in our tri-county service area, makes the need for this program undeniable.

4,719	**83%**	**665**
PA drug overdose deaths in 2023 alone	Of PA overdose deaths that were opioid-related (2023)	Allegheny County overdose deaths in 2023 — 26% of all county deaths

Source: PA Department of Health, 2023 Fatal Overdose Surveillance; Allegheny County Medical Examiner Annual Report 2024

Pennsylvania's Overdose Epidemic: Statewide Context

- Every 2 hours in 2023, a Pennsylvanian died from a drug overdose. (PA Department of Health)
- Pennsylvania's drug overdose death rate of 43.2 per 100,000 consistently exceeds the national average of 32.4 per 100,000. (NAMA Recovery / Methadone.org citing PA DHS data)
- Pennsylvania's opioid overdose death rate of 32.8 per 100,000 exceeds the national opioid rate of 24.7 per 100,000. (NAMA Recovery)
- In 2017, Pennsylvania saw 5,456 overdose deaths — the third highest in the nation — with fentanyl driving deaths in nearly every county. Allegheny County alone recorded over 800 overdose deaths that year. (Axios Pittsburgh, May 2025)
- 32.8% of Pennsylvania adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depression in February 2023 — above the national average. (KFF State Mental Health Fact Sheet 2023)

Source: PA Department of Health; NAMA Recovery / Methadone.org; Axios Pittsburgh, May 2025; KFF Mental Health & Substance Use State Fact Sheets 2023

Allegheny County: Specific Local Data

- Allegheny County recorded 665 accidental overdose deaths in 2023, representing 26% of all deaths under the county medical examiner's jurisdiction that year. (Allegheny County Medical Examiner Annual Report 2024)
- 85% of 2023 overdose deaths in Allegheny County involved multiple substances, with fentanyl and cocaine being the most common. (WPXI / Allegheny County Medical Examiner, July 2024)
- While total overdose deaths declined to 432 in 2024 and further to a preliminary 344 in 2025, the drop is largely due to reduced fentanyl supply — not reduced addiction. New tranquilizers such as medetomidine are now filling the void, creating severe withdrawal challenges. (CBS Pittsburgh, Feb. 2025)
- Prevention Point Pittsburgh found fentanyl present in 85% of street drugs three years ago. By 2025, only 40% of expected fentanyl samples contained the drug — but the unregulated nature of supply creates unpredictable, life-threatening risk. (Alice Bell, Prevention Point Pittsburgh via CBS Pittsburgh)

Source: Allegheny County Medical Examiner 2024 Annual Report; WPXI, July 2024; CBS Pittsburgh, Feb. 2025

Why Peer Recovery Communities Like Grace Circles Work

The structure of Grace Circles — relational, peer-driven, community-based, long-term — is precisely what research identifies as most effective for sustained recovery. Grace Circles is not a substitute for clinical treatment; it is the community that surrounds treatment and extends far beyond it.

- SAMHSA identifies peer support as an evidence-based practice for addiction recovery. A SAMHSA study found that individuals participating in peer support programs have a 45% higher chance of maintaining sobriety. (SAMHSA; cited by Olympic Behavioral Health, 2024)
- A meta-analysis of 14 studies found that individuals involved in 12-step mutual aid programs had a 35% lower risk of relapse compared to those receiving other forms of treatment alone. (Mobilize Recovery citing peer-reviewed meta-analysis)
- A systematic review of 48 studies found that peer support interventions are associated with improved substance use outcomes, reduced healthcare utilization, and increased engagement in treatment. (Mobilize Recovery, citing systematic review)
- The national relapse rate for substance use disorders is 40%–60%, comparable to chronic conditions like hypertension and asthma. However, after 5 years of continuous recovery, relapse risk drops to approximately 15%. Long-term community support is the mechanism that drives that decline. (NIDA; Addiction Help Statistics, 2025)
- A 2025 systematic review of 28 multi-group studies (N=12,601) found consistent evidence that peer recovery support services improve SUD treatment engagement and retention. (Springer Nature, Current Addiction Reports, April 2025)
- Peer mentorship programs specifically designed for addiction recovery (such as MAP — Mentorship for Addiction Problems) produced significantly fewer days of substance use and lower addiction severity scores compared to standard treatment alone. (PMC / Journal of Psychiatry, 2021)

Source: SAMHSA Peer Support Document 2017; Olympic Behavioral Health 2024; Mobilize Recovery; NIDA; Addiction Help Statistics 2025; Current Addiction Reports, Springer Nature, April 2025; PMC/NIH 2021

SECTION 4: BLACK SHEEP CARE TEAM — CRISIS HOSPITALITY & STREET-LEVEL MINISTRY

The Crisis Landscape Our Care Team Enters

The Care Team operates in environments — hospitals, transitional housing, reentry settings, and acute mental health crises — that represent the most acute points of vulnerability in the human services system. The data on mental health crises, reentry, and crisis service gaps in Pennsylvania reflects exactly what our Care Team witnesses daily.

22.8%	1 in 5	41%
Of PA adults experienced a mental illness in 2022 (~1.83 million people)	U.S. adults experience a mental health condition each year	Fewer mental health resources in rural PA counties than urban areas (2023)

Mental Health Crisis Statistics — Pennsylvania & Region

- 22.8% of Pennsylvania adults — approximately 1.83 million people — experienced a mental illness in 2022. (SAMHSA, cited in Pennsylvania Mental Health Statistics 2025)
- In 2023, 18.5% of Pennsylvania adults experienced generalized anxiety disorder and 19.3% reported depression — a 4% rise from 2022. (America's Health Rankings Annual Report 2023; PA Dept. of Health)
- Over 2.3 million Pennsylvania adults reported poor mental health in 2022, citing stress, trauma, and life disruption as primary causes. (PA Dept. of Health, 2022)
- 10.1% of Pennsylvanians reported frequent mental distress in 2022 — defined as 14 or more mentally unhealthy days in the past month. (CDC, 2022)
- Rural counties in Pennsylvania had 41% fewer mental health resources than urban areas in 2023, including providers and clinics — directly impacting Armstrong County residents. (PA Office of Rural Health 2023, cited in Penn State research)
- Suicide rates in the U.S. have increased by 37% since 2000. Adolescent mental health issues are described as being at an all-time high. (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps)

Reentry & Transitional Vulnerability

The Care Team specifically serves individuals in reentry environments — people leaving incarceration or institutional settings who face acute isolation and spiritual crisis. The research on this population illustrates exactly why presence-based ministry at the point of release is critical.

- Isolation and lack of social support are among the most powerful predictors of reincarceration and relapse after release. Presence-based relational support during this transition period is documented as one of the highest-leverage intervention points. (Multiple criminology and public health studies cited by OJJDP and NIJ)
- The National Institute of Justice rates mentoring as 'effective' for reducing delinquency outcomes, and advocacy-based mentoring programs have shown reduced re-arrests, re-convictions, and misconduct among justice-involved populations. (NIJ CrimeSolutions.gov; County Health Rankings & Roadmaps)
- Youth mentees in Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs — a community-based model — reported reductions in substance use and arrest rates 18 months after participation. (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps citing published peer-reviewed study)

SECTION 5: WHY THE BLACK SHEEP MODEL ADDRESSES THE GAP

What the Data Shows — and What Systems Miss

Each statistical data point above reflects something that government systems, clinical providers, and institutional services are not designed to deliver: long-term, relational, presence-based support that begins before crisis and continues after formal case closure. Black Sheep Ministries occupies the gap between system discharge and genuine stability.

Consider what the numbers reveal collectively:

- Families in our tri-county region lose children to foster care at rates directly correlated with the opioid epidemic — and then struggle to reunify because of inadequate support infrastructure.
- There are only 1,077 approved foster families across all of southwestern Pennsylvania, in counties serving hundreds of thousands of residents and over 1,000 children in out-of-home care in Allegheny County alone.
- Recovering individuals face a 40%–60% relapse rate in the short term — but peer community participation can reduce that by 35%–45%. Grace Circles is built on exactly this model.
- Rural mental health resources in Pennsylvania are 41% less available than in urban areas. The Care Team provides street-level presence in exactly these underserved corridors.
- Pennsylvania's overdose death rate is 33% higher than the national average. Armstrong, Westmoreland, and Allegheny counties sit in the heart of one of the hardest-hit regions in the nation.

WHAT THE SYSTEM PROVIDES	WHAT BLACK SHEEP PROVIDES
Time-limited case management Clinical compliance monitoring Discharge at case closure Resource referrals (when available) Crisis response (reactive)	**Ongoing relational presence — no discharge** **Peer community and accountability** **Trauma-informed mentorship** **Crisis hospitality and street-level presence** **Prevention before crisis escalation**

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