

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

An Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program funded by the NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice that provides individual and group counseling, mentoring, education and employment support, and mental health and substance use treatment to individuals with open cases in Criminal and Supreme Courts primarily in Brooklyn.



Tory* enrolled in the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) Community Solutions ATI program on April 6, 2020. Tory was referred to CCA for a charge of robbery in the second degree. When she first enrolled, Tory spoke about having had experiences in programs in the past and how this may impact her current level of motivation to fully engage with CCA.

Tory was paired with a Case Manager and utilized her individual sessions to co-create a service plan aligned with her aspirations. At the heart of Tory's goals was her desire to engage in work readiness and internship opportunities. As part of her CCA schedule, Tory engaged in CCA's virtual soft skills training cohort, which helped her develop her professional soft skills around problem-solving, time-management, and communication. Tory also received individualized support in pursuing her professional and educational milestones and addressing associated barriers. Following her successful graduation from the soft skills cohort, Tory was invited to participate in a fellowship to work directly with CCA's Education and Employment Department. During her fellowship, Tory provided invaluable feedback to the program and supported the launch of the department's new cohort.

Tory subsequently transitioned into a CCA internship that was launched through an innovative partnership with UNICEF. At the start of her internship journey with UNICEF, Tory and her peers were prompted to reflect on the following question: What are you most hopeful/fearful about for yourself, your community and your world? Tory was highly introspective in her contributions, which helped shape the theme of the interns' projects centered around the various facets of an increasingly online world and its adverse effects on the mental health of youth. Tory designed a chart that outlined the benefits of youth refraining from high levels of engagement on social media while simultaneously exploring young people's resistance to disconnecting from social media platforms. Nearing the completion of her internship, Tory was invited to present her project at an event hosted by UNICEF's Public Partnerships Division Advocacy Hub.

When describing her internship experience at UNICEF, Tory reported: "When I learned about how social media can be used to bully and hurt people's feelings, it caused me to be more careful about the things I post." Tory is grateful for the platform to openly share her perspectives as a young person. She feels that this experience helped her grow into a more confident person and stop "hesitating" to share her thoughts and opinions.

Despite her initial self-reported ambivalence to engage in CCA programming, Tory fully immersed herself in the experience and availed herself of CCA's support to successfully pivot into virtual learning and maintain an upward trajectory toward academic and vocational progress. In January 2021, Tory successfully completed CCA's Community Solutions ATI program, and her case was dismissed and sealed. Currently, Tory continues to participate in CCA programming voluntarily and looks forward to engaging in future internship opportunities.

**Name changed to protect participant's privacy*