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Local Jessica Perusse of Camden Life Center, selected to participate in national initiative to help rural communities find substance use and misuse solutions

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Camden, NY, (2/1/2022) — The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) announced Jessica Perusse, LCSW-R, CSSW of Camden Life Center and Come to the Table Counseling in Camden, NY was chosen to be part of a select group of fellows in a new rural leadership program. It's called *Reaching Rural: Advancing Collaborative Solutions*. Program fellows will learn how to adopt bold solutions to the persistent challenge of substance use in rural communities. They'll work closely with innovators who have established successful programs in other rural communities.

The participants were selected through a competitive process. Jessica Perusse stated, *"The Camden Life Center is excited to be selected for this fellowship and the opportunity to learn from others across the nation who are also working to build bold and innovating programs that address the needs of rural communities."* The year-long program, which kicked off in December, will have a strong focus on creating engagement across rural communities and sectors. Over the course of the next year, participants will benefit from virtual and in-person learning opportunities which include coaching, skill-building workshops, and local and regional asset mapping. The program will demonstrate how diverse systems with different missions can engage with one another to serve justice-involved individuals more effectively with substance use or co-occurring disorders.

About The Reaching Rural Initiative

The Reaching Rural: Advancing Collaborative Solutions initiative is a collaborative project providing training to a class of over 65 fellows working to adopt bold solutions to the persistent challenge of substance use and misuse in 81 rural communities across 15 states. The fellows include elected county leaders, county and tribal judges, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, public defenders, public health and behavioral health practitioners, emergency management professionals, reentry coordinators, and individuals working in community nonprofits.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the State Justice Institute (SJI), with support from the Institute for Intergovernmental Research co-sponsor the project. The National Association of Counties (NACo) is a key partner. To learn more, visit <https://rural.cossapresources.org/reachingrural>.

The Camden Life Center in an impact center -we are a single location with multiple agencies coming together to act in their areas of strength for the maximum impact and overall benefit of our community. The Camden Life Center is a partnership between the Come to the Table Counseling and Center for Family Life and Recovery. The primary goal is to inspire hope, provide help, promote wellness, and transform lives with a focus of being in Camden, of Camden, for Camden.