



Ecosystem case study

Spartanburg, South Carolina

Ecosystems of care are composed of interconnected programs and services designed to holistically address community members' complex health and social needs. They result from organizations in a community working collectively and intentionally across sectors to better address the root causes of poor health, poor quality of life, and health inequity among populations with complex health and social needs.

In April 2021, the Camden Coalition's National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs initiative convened representatives from five ecosystems of care from around the country to participate in an 18-month Ecosystems Learning Collaborative. The Ecosystems Learning Collaborative was an action-oriented opportunity for teams to learn from peers and technical experts about how to rapidly expand and sustain cross-sector partnerships to address the needs of individuals with complex health and social needs in their communities.

This is the story of how one ecosystem of care — in Spartanburg, South Carolina — was developed.

About this ecosystem of care

Ecosystem participants:

- ▶ [AccessHealth Spartanburg](#) (lead organization)
- ▶ [Jumpstart Ministry](#)
- ▶ [Spartanburg Area Mental Health Center](#)

Community of focus: People re-entering the community from long-term incarceration and those under probation and parole across South Carolina.

Ecosystem aim: To increase enrollment in care coordination services and long-term community-based supports toward the goal of improved physical and mental health and well-being for recently released, uninsured formerly incarcerated people in the Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union counties of South Carolina. Ecosystem development focused on expanding collaborative efforts between community/fair-based organizations, employers, healthcare providers, social/human services, criminal justice stakeholders, and individuals with lived experience.

How it started: This ecosystem began as individual partnerships developed over many years. The Spartanburg Area Mental Health Center is one of the original founding partners of AccessHealth Spartanburg. Jumpstart began partnering with AccessHealth Spartanburg about 6 years ago to connect their participants with healthcare, mental and behavioral health, and social resources. The partners joined the Ecosystems Learning Collaborative to expand their project, identify gaps in services and supports, and work towards sustainability.

Putting Care at the Center 2022



#CenteringCare22



“Before this learning collaborative, we were only connecting with people who went through Jumpstart. But now, we’re connected to individuals that get out of the correctional facility, even if they don’t go to Jumpstart. Even if they just get dropped off at the local bus station. We’re trying to reach those people and connect with those people so they’re aware of what we’re doing, and they know we’re here to help them.

For example, last week I received information from Manning Correctional Institute that a man was being released. I was trying to get in touch with him and he got to us before I could get to him. He needed medicine, so I automatically called Mental Health and the Department of Corrections, two of our partners, and told them what he needed.

We’re working on knowing who to contact, making those connections, and growing those partnerships so we can help to close those gaps.”

– Brook Henderson, MSW,
AccessHealth Spartanburg

Successes:

- ▶ **The ecosystem grew to support more people with more complex needs.** Through the process of building an ecosystem, the team recognized that there was a wider population exiting incarceration that they were not interacting with. Before the learning collaborative, AccessHealth Spartanburg was supporting everyone who was coming through the Jumpstart program post-incarceration. Now, they have a direct connection to several state correctional facilities and offer support to everyone exiting incarceration, whether they are enrolled in Jumpstart or not.
- ▶ **The ecosystem grew to include new community partners.** Throughout the learning collaborative, the ecosystem expanded to include new community partners at the correctional facility based on patient need. Because they saw the need to connect with people they weren’t yet serving, the team built a relationship with the Manning Correctional Institute so that they can jointly work to support people who are being released. This has provided them with the opportunity to close gaps by offering their services to everyone as they are leaving incarceration.
- ▶ **Their micro work with patients is now informing their macro work.** The team noticed that they were running into the same barriers again and again in their patient-facing work. They took these identified barriers and began reaching out to people in correctional facilities and the legislature to address those barriers in an evidence-based and person-centered way, including advocating for more funding to the Manning Correctional Institute for release care.

Challenges:

- ▶ **There’s so much work to do.** Organizations and individual staff members within the ecosystem of care needed to work to balance their internal patient-facing and programmatic work with their ecosystem-building work. They were able to continue growing their ecosystem through a team approach and by connecting their patient-level and systems-level work.
- ▶ **It’s hard to go outside the comfort zone.** Brook Henderson of AccessHealth Spartanburg says, “Even though I’m a people person, I never envisioned myself approaching one of the head personnel at the Department of Corrections at the State of South Carolina and saying, ‘There is a problem, and we need to fix it.’ But my confidence has grown because it’s not about me. It’s about how I can help that next person and prevent them from going down a difficult path that’s unnecessary.”



One piece of advice for others looking to build an ecosystem:

- ▶ **“Be brave to step out.”** At first, it takes self-reflection to figure out where you are and what you need. Then you just need the courage to go out and network and find out what is going on in the community. Ask yourself, how can you engage to improve your community? And if what you need is not there, how can you build it? People with lived experience of the issue you’re tackling can help inform what you’re building. The stories you’re a witness to will help identify those gaps. Whatever the focus of your ecosystem is, seek out the people who have knowledge in that area.

Next steps for this ecosystem of care:

- ▶ **Continuing to build relationships and spread the message.** This ecosystem is going to continue to build upon the current relationship with Department of Corrections and the local probation and parole offices to improve workflows and services to support people leaving incarceration. The leadership team recently presented their work to a national audience at the annual American Public Health Association conference in Boston, MA.
- ▶ **Centralizing operations.** This ecosystem aims to be a central hub for intake, referral, and coordination across the state for people re-entering their communities after incarceration.
- ▶ **Dreaming big and achieving their goals.** This ecosystem’s goal is that every individual who is getting released in the state of South Carolina is aware of their local AccessHealth, has access to medication, and knows where to go in their community for mental health support. They also want supportive organizations around the state to be aware that the specific person is being released and to have a plan to support them if they accept services.

[Learn more about this ecosystem of care](#) →

About the Camden Coalition

We are a multidisciplinary nonprofit working to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in Camden, NJ, and across the country. The Camden Coalition works to advance the field of **complex care** by implementing person-centered programs and piloting new models that address chronic illness and social barriers to health and well-being. Supported by a robust data infrastructure, cross-sector convening, and shared learning, our community-based programs deliver better care to the most vulnerable individuals in **Camden** and **regionally**.

The **National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs** (National Center), an initiative of the Camden Coalition, connects complex care practitioners with each other and supports the field with tools and resources that move complex care forward.



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