

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Candace Coleman, Community Organizer at Racial Justice and Access Living.

CANDACE COLEMAN:

As funders you have influence. And in my work, I often find that funders don't ask the question if people are serving people with disabilities, let alone asking how they do it. And so I think at the basis of being an influencer and finding out what your recipients or grantees are doing in this area is important. Two, our reentry numbers, you hear all of these numbers about people being released from prison, but for people with disabilities, the numbers have gone up, as to how many people are still in the jails in the prison system. And one of the reasons why that is, is because the transferring out of that system lacks support.

And so if we just talk about housing, reentry housing is not accessible. Getting access to services and supports like Medicaid or Medicare or SSI or any of those things is such a time-lapse. And not to mention if you are a person who's acquired a disability, having a personal care attendant available in this system is also lacking. And so being able to fund programs that fund home and community-based services is extremely important. And that's just on a "basic necessity" need.

We also need to take the stigma away from having a mental health or behavioral health condition or identity? Every time we think about a mental health crisis, we think of the most violent occurrence. And that's just not statistically true. And even when folks get training to provide services or support, they're also automatically thinking about it from their perspective. And so we have to get to a place where we're not looking at a person that has a mental behavioral health diagnosis as other or something that is not attainable or something that we have to fix. And so I feel like that should also be a part of the conversation. And so people are not being open to sharing if they have a mental health or behavioral health condition, because the criminalization just comes along with it, and then they're not able to ask for or request help because of the punitive response as well.

NARRATOR:

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