

# Dr. Benjamin C. Burnette, U.S. Army Veteran, BCCC, BCCMMHC

## Forensic Criminologist

Dr. Benjamin C. Burnette is the founder and owner of Forensic Mental Health Services of California and Combat Human Trafficking. Dr. Burnette is a former Clinical Correctional Psychologist, Mental Health Clinician II, Crisis Team Member, Transitional Case Management Program Social Worker V, and Case Manager for the State of California, Employment Development Department (EDD), Intensive Services Program (I.S.P.). ISP was only a California program and product of the Watts Riots in 1965. ISP brought economic development to California. ISP was an elite program, an elite unit, with 160 employees statewide. EDD's top leadership hand-picked case managers and job agents. The governor swore them in. ISP was a state-legislated program, a prominent and highly funded operation. For decades, ISP were critical to the success of California's stability. ISP's sole mission was to place California's most difficult populations, with multiple barriers into employment, training, and or retraining. After leaving the United States Army, Dr. Burnette applied to EDD as an Employment Program Representative I (E.P.R.), EDD's entry-level position.

EDD Manager Fred Escalante quickly recognized Dr. Burnette's potential. Mr. Escalante said, "You were the number one applicant statewide for EPR I," referring to Dr. Burnette. Mr. Escalante's next question was, "Would you like to be in ISP?" Dr. Burnette replied, yes. ISP was an EDD program from 1966 through 1996. Dr. Burnette immediately rose to ISP prominence. Dr. Burnette became known as "Mr. Community." In 1992, Dr. Burnette received the prestigious Sunshine Club Recognition Award. From 1991 through 1992, Dr. Burnette placed many ex-offenders, gang members, severely emotionally disturbed youth and adults, disabled populations, those experiencing homelessness, and Veterans into employment, training, and retraining. Dr. Burnette shared mutual clients with the San Diego County Probation Department and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). In addition to ISP placement services, Dr. Burnette assisted clients with unemployment insurance and other government concerns. He advocated on his client's behalf. Dr. Burnette sat on numerous community boards, commissions, task forces, and panels. Dr. Burnette served as a consultant to many government agencies, schools, colleges, churches, private businesses, and non-profit agencies. Dr. Burnette assisted numerous organizations in program development, grant writing, and overseeing the coordination and implementation phase of specific assignments. The government funded Dr. Burnette's projects. They went from pilot programs to state and national models.

Dr. Burnette was born in Chicago, Illinois. By age seven, Dr. Burnette lived in four states and the Philippines. Dr. Burnette was raised primarily in District # 4 (formerly Southeast San Diego). He attended Valencia Park Elementary, O'Farrell Junior High School, and Wright Brothers Career High School (WBCHS). WBCHS was the nation's first career high school and students were selected countywide to attend. Dr. Burnette's dad retired from the United States Navy. His dad served in the Vietnam War. Dr. Burnette's mom was a Christian, wonderful mother, and military spouse. Dr. Burnette won first place in Valencia Park Elementary School's 6th-grade Spelling Bee. In 1975, Dr. Burnette played on a National Football Team. Dr. Burnette's team was undefeated. As a senior in high school, Dr. Burnette won first place in a ping pong tournament. Dr. Burnette won first place in the United States Army's Annual "Cook of the Quarter Competition" at Fort Liberty, North Carolina (formerly Fort Bragg, North Carolina).

Approximately 250 hospital food service and food service personnel competed for this award. Dr. Burnette and five other National City National Guard personnel won the Phillip A. Connelly Award. Dr. Burnette received two accelerated promotions during his first Army enlistment.

Dr. Burnette was promoted from Captain to Major his first year in the State Defense Force because of his anti-human trafficking efforts. In 2015, Dr. Burnette implemented the State of South Carolina's first human trafficking training for law enforcement personnel, the state defense force, and a few non-profit agencies. Shortly after Dr. Burnette's training, the State of South Carolina launched a Human Trafficking Task Force. Dr. Burnette remains on the State of South Carolina's Human Trafficking Task Force. For three years, Dr. Burnette advocated for Clearing Records for Survivors of Human Trafficking: California Penal Code § 236.14. The law went into effect January 1, 2017. Dr. Burnette was integral to a national anti-human (covert operation) trafficking project. The project provided law enforcement with essential information against Backpage.com (former Backpage.com was the world's largest human trafficking website). Dr. Burnette received the 2017 Angels of Trafficking Award for Volunteer of the Year.

Dr. Burnette received a Bachelor of Arts in Behavioral Science, with a Minor in Personnel Management, from National University (N.U.) on April 5, 1987. On July 19, 1992, Dr. Burnette received a Master of Arts in Human Resource Management, from NU. His GPA was 3.60, and he made the Dean's List. On October 11, 2002, Dr. Burnette received a Doctor of Psychology from Education America Institute for Doctoral Studies. His GPA was 3.73, and he made the Dean's List. Dr. Burnette stopped counting after he received one hundred certifications, awards, letters of recognition, and letters of appreciation. Recently, Dr. Burnette completed four certifications. Two certificates apply to community and correctional mental health. Dr. Burnette is a Board-Certified Christian Counselor and Board-Certified Christian Master Mental Health Coach. Dr. Burnette is in the process of completing four additional certifications and another degree. Dr. Burnette would love to earn an associate degree.

Dr. Burnette has well over one hundred career highlights, has saved numerous lives, enhanced his patients' and client's lives, improved their quality of life, and saved taxpayers a lot of money. What sets Dr. Burnette apart from so many others is that many of his life's accomplishments came when he was a volunteer. People have asked Dr. Burnette to write books about his life. Dr. Burnette's response has been he's "too" busy making things happen. In 2008, Dr. Burnette stumbled upon a website seeking community leaders for healthcare reform. Tom Daschle (former Secretary Designate) was the sender. Dr. Burnette believes God places people at the right place and time. Dr. Burnette served as moderator and facilitator for San Diego County's healthcare reform project. Dr. Burnette and a small group of community volunteers organized and became part of 1.1 million national community leaders who launched, "The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of March 23, 2010. While employed by EDD, Dr. Burnette and a few community leaders founded 211 San Diego, the first Gang Diversion Manual for San Diego County, the City of National City, California, and Santee, California's Graffiti Removal Programs, Committee to Reclaim our Neighborhoods in National City, District # 4 Crime Commission Task Force, AmeriCorps-California, School-To-Career for California, and dozens of other community, state, and national programs.

In March 2001, Dr. Burnette and approximately eleven other employees launched and implemented the Transitional Case Management Program (TCMP). TCMP partnered with CDCR. TCMP provided pre-release services to severely mentally ill inmates, the Enhanced Outpatient Program (E.O.P.), and less severely mentally ill inmates, known as Correctional Clinical Case Management System (CCCMS), 90 days before their parole date. Dr. Burnette inquired of his direct supervisor, "Can I ask the Social Security Administration (S.S.A.) and Department of Veterans Affairs (V.A.) to partner with TCMP?" He replied, yes! As a result of Dr. Burnette's 2001 efforts, SSA and VA partnerships remain intact twenty-two years later. Under the TCMP umbrella, Dr. Burnette managed eight programs at five state prisons. His main program was to provide mental health services to severely incarcerated mentally ill inmates.

On June 27, 2018, California passed California Penal Code 1001.36 (CA PC 1001.36) into law, which resulted from the passage of California Senate Bill 215 (SB 215). CA PC 1001.36 allows certain

defendants with diagnosable mental disorders listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) to enter mental health diversion instead of incarceration. On June 27, 2018, Dr. Burnette launched and implemented CA PC 1001.36 for the State of California. The implementation took place in a correctional facility and community supervision settings. CA PC 1001.36 refers to Pretrial Mental Health Diversion. In addition to Pretrial Mental Health Diversion, Dr. Burnette managed seven correctional, forensic, and behavioral mental health programs. The programs included, but are not limited to jail, prison, parole, probation, male and female inmates, and male registered sex offenders.

Dr. Burnette's childhood experiences, education, faith, and life experiences forged his destiny at an early age. Dr. Burnette accepted his call to mental health ministry at age fifteen. God inspired Dr. Burnette to pursue mental health ministries. As a senior mental health counselor, Dr. Burnette spent twenty years employed in locked acute psychiatric hospitals, residential treatment facilities, and group homes for severely emotionally disturbed children, youth, and adults. Dr. Burnette spent twenty years as a senior mental health counselor before stepping one foot into a correctional mental health system. God directed Dr. Burnette to create mental health programs, coordinate their agenda, and minister to perpetrators and victims of crimes. Dr. Burnette worked alongside a conglomerate of mental health providers from government, faith-based, non-profit, and private businesses. Dr. Burnette gained a unique perspective regarding mental health, mental health services, and delivering those services. For example, Dr. Burnette provided brief therapy to a convicted human trafficker in prison. The next day, Dr. Burnette counseled a victim of human trafficking on probation at his office. One doesn't learn forensic mental health by reading a book; one learns it through decades of education and experience. Dr. Burnette has forty-eight years of education and experience. He's worked in most mental health settings and with most mental health populations. Dr. Burnette is an advocate of evidence-based best practices. Dr. Burnette has forty-eight consecutive years of volunteer experience. He has over forty years of paid work experience in mental health. Dr. Burnette has been instrumental in developing local, state, and federal policies, regulations, procedures, and legislation. The government hired Dr. Burnette because of his volunteer work experience alone.

More than ever, organizations "must" rely upon subject matter experts (S.M.E.) to resolve today's complex mental health challenges. Mental health professionals have found their way into every setting, except where they're needed the most, in church. For decades, clergy and parishioners have ignored the cries of those with mental illness, but not Dr. Burnette. Dr. Burnette said, "Here am I, send me." At age fifteen, Dr. Burnette began his mental health ministry. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (King James Version, Romans 11:29). In 2022, Dr. Burnette heard his first sermon regarding mental health, it was a series. In 2023, Dr. Burnette surveyed Christians nationwide who've attended church for decades; most have never heard a sermon about mental health. Christensen, J. (2023, September 28) The U.S. has a mental health crisis that could undermine our democracy, U.S. surgeons general say. The following are the latest statistics available from the National Institute of Mental Health Disorders, part of the National Institutes of Health: An estimated 26% of Americans ages 18 and older—about 1 in 4 adults—has a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year.

[www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/mental-health-disorder-statistics](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/mental-health-disorder-statistics). 10% to 13% of churches in America claim to have a mental health ministry. Approximately 54% of the United States population doesn't receive mental health treatment, and most mental health conditions are treatable.

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (King James Version, 3 John 1:2). It is not God's will for you, your family, your friends, clergy, or parishioners to suffer in silence from a mental health condition. Ministry Solutions 411 is here to help. Please get in touch with Dr. Benjamin C. Burnette at [www.ministrysolutions411.org](http://www.ministrysolutions411.org). You can contact Dr. Burnette through Ministry Solutions or call (619) 243-4301 (PST).