CHAPTER

4

A Second Chance? Challenges in Implementing and Assessing Offender Reentry Initiatives

Dara C. Drawbridge, Carlos E. Monteiro, and Natasha A. Frost

Introduction

The vast majority (more than 95%) of the 2.2 million inmates currently incarcerated across the United States will eventually leave prisons and jails and return to the community (Glaze, 2011). Many of these inmates will return to the very communities from which they came. The term "prisoner reentry" (or offender reentry) has been used to describe the process of returning home after a prison or jail stay. In recent years, more than 700,000 inmates per year have had to make the transition from prison to home and many more make the transition home from shorter stays in jails (Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2011). Those who are thinking about the challenges of offender reentry are concerned with making this transition from custody to the community as successful as possible. Ex-inmates represent potential public safety risks to communities upon their return from correctional facilities, and achieving reductions in risk among this population constitutes one of the more important challenges facing corrections today.

Although scholars and students of penology have long been concerned with the transition from prison to community, perhaps no group is more professionally invested in the process than those charged with administering correctional facilities. From the perspective of correctional administrators, a successful transition from prison to community typically means that the inmates pose a reduced risk of reoffending upon release. With the advent

of federal Second Chance Act (SCA) funding to support comprehensive and collaborative reentry efforts, correctional administrators have frequently been partnering with academic researchers, service providers, and community partners to design and deliver reentry initiatives that adhere to the principles of effective correctional intervention. In this chapter, we describe one such effort that we were recently a part of with an emphasis on some of the challenges that such collaborations can present for both the researchers and for the correctional administrators and staff. Before we introduce our specific project, we set the context for our work by briefly describing the broad challenge of offender reentry.

Offender Reentry

Inmates have been leaving correctional facilities and returning to communities for as long as incarceration has existed. Although offender reentry was not always a core political concern, the massive increase in prison populations beginning in the early-1970s brought American penal practices into the national and international spotlight. By the early 2000s, correctional systems across the United States had known nothing but growth for well over three decades. Over the past couple of years, we have seen some evidence that correctional population growth is slowing[1] and perhaps even reversing course (Frost & Clear, 2012); but the sheer size of the incarcerated population and the reality that most will be released from prison and return to communities remain a matter of public concern.

Not only have prison, and therefore prison release, populations grown, but their character has also changed over time. Demographically, prison populations today look quite different than they did 40 years ago and these changing characteristics directly affect reentry initiatives. At the end of 2010, black and Hispanic inmates accounted for just over 60% of the state and federal inmate population and the black male imprisonment rate was seven times higher than the rate for white males (Guerino et al., 2011). Although corrections remains a male-dominated enterprise (with men predominantly serving as both inmates and correctional officers), women are now accounting for

[1]The latest national prison statistics, published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), document the first decrease in overall prison populations since 1972. In every year between 1972 and 2009, prison populations had increased; but the 2,266,800 incarcerated in state and federal prisons and local jails in 2010 represented a slight decrease from the 2,291,900 incarcerated in 2009 (Glaze, 2011). A second recent BJS report, which focuses more specifically on prison populations, similarly documents the first decrease in both prison admissions (703,798) and releases (708,677) since 1977 (Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2011). Prior to 2010, the number of offenders admitted to custody outpaced the number of offenders released from custody in every year since 1972 and prison populations grew exponentially.

an increasing share of the prison population (Frost, Greene, & Pranis, 2006) and the correctional workforce. The female prison population, for example, grew by over 900% between 1977 and 2010 (Guerino et al., 2011) and the female correctional workforce experienced a 40% growth in female involvement from 1999 to 2007 (Nink, 2008). Correctional facilities today are also managing a much larger caseload of inmates with a history of mental illness, with more than half of all jail, state, and federal inmates reporting a mental health problem (James & Glaze, 2006). Moreover, prisons are only part of the equation. More than 700,000 inmates will transition from *prison* to community over the next year; when one adds to that figure the 13 million *jail* transitions, the numbers are simply staggering (Travis, Crayton, & Mukamal, 2009). Indeed, throughout much of this chapter, we have chosen to use the phrase "offender reentry" over the phrase "prisoner reentry," in part to acknowledge the 13 million that return from jails each year.

Perhaps most important in the current context, a substantial number of these inmates will "fail" in the community through either violating the conditions of their release (technical parole violations) or through committing a new offense. The latest national statistics based on a sample of inmates released in 1994 reported that more than 52% of released prisoners are returned to custody, and 25% of those released were incarcerated on a new conviction, usually for a serious felony offense (Langan & Levin, 2002). Parole returns account for a substantial portion of all admissions to prison and there is some evidence that the number of parole violators returned to prison has been increasing.[2] Regardless of whether their returns to custody are triggered by new offenses or technical violations of the conditions of their release, the parole violators are reentry failures.

Offender Reentry and Recidivism

Society has a general expectation that released prisoners will accept societal norms and move forward as productive members of the community. Yet, we know that a significant portion of released inmates reoffend and many are reincarcerated (Freeman, 2003). The last two national recidivism studies of prisoner releases in 1983 and 1994 report that approximately two-thirds of released inmates were rearrested within 3 years of their release, with rates of recidivism increasing slightly in the latter study to 68% (Beck & Shipley, 1989; Langan & Levin, 2002). Freeman (2003) has added that the rearrest rates climbed to 75 to 80% when looking at a 10-year period after release.

[2]Sabol, Minton, and Harrison (2007), for example, found that the number of parole violators who were reincarcerated increased 14% between 2000 and 2005.

These two national recidivism studies and other research on recidivism suggest that not only are reoffending rates consistently high, but they are also increasing (Beck & Shipley, 1989; Langan & Levin, 2002; Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). One of the more significant findings from the two national recidivism studies was that over 50% of former inmates were actually reincarcerated, whether resentenced on new offenses or returned on violations of the conditions of parole. In other words, regardless of how recidivism is measured or assessed, prisoners reentering society represent potential public safety risks. A reentry-focused correctional agenda involves concentrating on ways to potentially reduce that risk. For those running correctional facilities, that often means trying to effect lasting inmate change through in-prison programming.

In-Prison Programming

Although correctional programming evaluation research has helped to improve the quality of programs for incarcerated inmates, there is still a lot to be learned about which programs work and for whom they work best. A number of researchers have found that correctional programming is effective at producing positive outcomes including lower recidivism rates (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2006; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006; MacKenzie, 2000, 2006; Robison & Smith, 1971), but others have reported far less appreciable effects (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). The type of programming is often a major factor with cognitive behavioral programs demonstrating the most promising effects. But even within a specific programming model, programs can work for some participants and not for others and may even have negative effects on some participants (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2006; Lowenkamp et al., 2006; MacKenzie, 2000; Robison & Smith, 1971).[3] Moreover, it has proven quite difficult to identify the exact component within a program that proved to be most effective (Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, & Travis, 2002).

Programming offered across facilities tends to have very different components, thus making it difficult for researchers to gauge whether it was the quality of the facilitators or instructors, the size of the classroom or the staff to participant ratio, or the availability of materials and other resources that may have affected the outcome. Given the lack of funding, resources, and space needed to implement individualized programming, the "one-size-fits-all"

[3]Though there is extant empirical support for multimodal programs, findings from the Project Greenlight program have presented a challenge to that evidence base (Wilson & Davis, 2006). Project Greenlight was a multimodal reentry program that arguably adhered to many of the principles of effective interventions. Despite its commitment to apply the best of what we currently knew about reentry programming, Project Greenlight failed to demonstrate positive outcomes: indeed, Greenlight participants performed notably worse than others, reoffending at a significantly higher rate than those receiving either no services or less intensive services.

approach to reentry programming (where all inmates participate in the same programs with little attention to personal needs or learning styles) is also still commonplace.

Program Participation

There is general agreement that programs are effective only to the extent that they target and reach the appropriate audience. Unfortunately, despite a host of incentives for participants (i.e., good time credits and other privileges), national program participation levels have been declining significantly over time (Lawrence et al., 2002; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Lawrence et al. (2002), for example, found that correctional programming participation has been on the decline for at least the past two decades, pointing specifically to drops between 1991 and 1997. Useem and Piehl (2008) found fluctuations in program participation between 1974 and 1997 but noted a general decline in most programs thereafter. Phelps (2011) examined prison program participation in the postrehabilitative era (1979–1990) and found that programs were not able to maintain stable participation rates; and Klein, Tolbert, Bugarin, Cataldi, and Tauschek (2004) note that, although all state and federal prisons offer some form of correctional programming, only about half of inmates participate in any programs at all. Petersilia (2008) has estimated that in California, although 40% of prisoners have a need that could be addressed through treatment, only about 10% actually receive the treatment they need (Petersilia, 2008).

Studies of programming and inmate participation in programs must also consider eligibility criteria. Not all inmates qualify for programming as eligibility often depends upon a number of factors such as sentencing, commitment offense, and disciplinary records. Moreover, roughly two-thirds of in-prison programs are voluntary with many having limitations on the number of participants, so it has proven difficult to determine how many inmates actually receive programming (Wilson & Davis, 2006). With a substantial portion of inmates likely not receiving the targeted intervention strategies, there is a notable gap between what researchers know about effective correctional intervention and the broader impact of correctional programming on reentry outcomes.

In many ways, the future of the reentry movement depends on the success of in-prison treatment programs, but architects of reentry programming initiatives are still struggling to find a formula for success. The project we describe in the remainder of this chapter was funded in part as a result of Second Chance Act funding. The Second Chance Act, passed by Congress in 2008, provides a unique opportunity for academics and practitioners to work collaboratively to develop and evaluate comprehensive approaches to reentry. Through its emphasis on innovation, collaboration, and evaluation, the SCA

legislation is funding initiatives with the potential to make substantial impacts in curbing the problem of recidivism and crime prevention.[4]

The purpose of the current project was to develop a comprehensive assessment of reentry services that a local correctional center was providing to inmates in its custody. This assessment was intended to assist the administration in strategic planning for the future as they implemented their own vision of evidence-based offender reentry. In the following sections, we provide an overview of the facility organization and its impact on reentry programs, our study methods, and some key findings, as well as insight into the challenges we faced while working with an organization that was making changes with SCA funding.

Facility Organization and Reentry Programs

The correctional center assessed in this project is a medium-security facility located in Massachusetts. The correctional facility was organized into four main housing units (general population, an intensive treatment unit, a minimum security prerelease facility, and a segregation unit) and each housing unit offered a variety of reentry programs. Although there was some overlap in programs offered across housing units, the focus and implementation of programming varied across units.

General population and segregation inmates primarily received academic, vocational, and limited treatment-oriented programming, such as General Educational Development (GED), 12 Steps, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC). Although general population inmates had access to a wide range of programming, the access of segregation inmates was much more restricted. The program curriculum for general and segregation populations was somewhat relaxed, as it did not require inmates to attend class sessions and often did not have clear guidelines for program graduation or completion. The intensive treatment unit (ITU) was a special housing unit developed with, and supported by, funding from the SCA. The ITU was a designated unit for substance abuse inmates that heavily emphasized the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy and was much more intensive than the curriculum offered to general population and segregation inmates. In the ITU, program attendance was mandatory and graduation depended upon the successful completion of at least 60 days of programming. The minimum-security

[4]The SCA called for the commitment of federal funds to support four key provisions: (1) adult and juvenile offender demonstration projects, (2) a national reentry resource center, (3) mentoring grants, and (4) reentry research (Justice Center, n.d.). The provision funding reentry demonstration projects requires that funding recipients provide essential transitional services including aftercare treatment program assignment, housing assignments, workplace training, and family-based treatment assistance (Listwan, Jonson, Cullen, & Latessa, 2008).

prerelease unit (PRU) was designated for low-risk inmates who were nearing the completion of their sentence. The reentry programs included in this unit focused on transitional issues often faced by returning inmates, such as housing, employment, substance abuse treatment, and health care. As with the ITU, inmates who were housed in the PRU were required to attend programming, and they had structured graduation requirements.

In addition to the programs offered in designated housing units, the correctional center also launched an innovative inmate-mentoring program that was funded by the SCA grant. The program paired inmates with mentors from their community in an effort to connect them to community resources and reduce recidivism. Inmates selected to participate in this program could be housed in any unit and had all expressed an interest in participating. An outside contracted vendor was responsible for mentor recruitment and each mentor made a yearlong commitment. The mentor–mentee pairings occurred while the inmates were incarcerated at the facility, so that a social bond between the inmates and community members could be built prior to release. Once inmates were released, the facility hoped that the relationship would continue and provide a lower incentive for reoffending.

Study Methods and Findings

Developing a comprehensive assessment of the reentry programs being offered to inmates required a multi-method research approach that included program observations, structured group interviews (focus groups and semistructured interviews), staff surveys, and analysis of official record data. The multi-method approach allowed the researchers to become more familiar with the orientations of different types of stakeholders regarding offender reentry and to develop a deeper understanding of how offender reentry programs were being implemented within the facility. This insight afforded researchers an understanding of the barriers to reentry that were specific to the correctional center and influenced the researchers' recommendations for future reentry plans. Others have employed similar mixed-methodology approaches as they can provide valuable insight into organizational practices (Rudes, Lerch, & Taxman, 2011).

Program Observations

The research team began the assessment with observations of the facility's reentry programs offered in all housing units. These nonparticipant observations provided a clearer understanding of the programs that were currently being offered and aided the team in developing survey and focus group questions used later in the study. Reentry program observations generally indicated that programs were conducted in a professional manner regardless of

the housing unit where they took place. Facilitators appeared to be adequately trained and sufficiently prepared for each class. Most classes included the use of teaching materials that guided the session, and many facilitators encouraged inmates to share personal experiences relevant to class topics. Although the focus and goals of the observed programs differed, they all shared a similar theme: behavioral change. Inmates were encouraged to recognize the behaviors that had led to their incarceration in the hope that they would avoid those behaviors in the future.

Although every effort was made by the research team to observe as many scheduled reentry programs as possible, only a fraction of the programs offered were actually observed due to scheduling conflicts within the facility. Frequently, programs were cancelled or did not run as scheduled. The reasons for cancellations varied—at times program facilitators were not available to run the programs and in other instances programs were cancelled because of circumstances within the facility (e.g., inmates have to be brought to the location of the program and this was not always possible). In addition, the facility began an internal evaluation and restructuring of their reentry programs just as this independent assessment was launching. The internal restructuring of programs led to the frequent cancellation of programs or sessions and unfortunately also created a sense of unease throughout the facility. Despite reassurances that the research team was not there to evaluate individual programs, the internal restructuring of programs during our assessment left some program facilitators feeling vulnerable and many appeared nervous about the observations.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with facility stakeholders to gain insight into stakeholders' understanding and contribution to offender reentry initiatives.[5] Through these focus group sessions, the research team sought to assess whether different stakeholder groups (1) shared a common understanding of issues related to offender reentry, (2) shared a common vision for offender reentry initiatives at the correctional center, and (3) shared a common understanding of how the facility ought to achieve that vision.

The research team identified six groups of stakeholders (administrators, outside vendors, program facilitators, caseworkers, correctional officers, and mentors) and recruited participants with the help of the correctional center

[5]Although we had institutional review board permission to record, the focus group sessions were not recorded. Due to the many changes taking place at the facility during the time of our assessment, participants seemed uneasy with audio-recording so several members of the research team attended each session and each independently took notes. Notes were then collected and reviewed to look for emergent themes. Due to the lack of audio-recording, we do not have direct quotes from participants and instead paraphrase what was said during the sessions.

administrators. The first group of stakeholders recruited included the six facility administrators who were most directly involved in decision making around programming and reentry services. Outside vendors responsible for the design and delivery of the SCA-funded programs were included in a second focus group session. Given their familiarity and level of involvement with reentry initiatives, three focus group sessions were held with program facilitators to potentially include all program facilitators. Two additional focus group sessions were conducted: the first with five correctional officers and the second with eight caseworkers. Recruitment of participants proved to be a challenge only for the mentor group and due to scheduling difficulties, the researchers conducted individual semistructured interviews with six mentors instead of holding a focus group. All of the focus groups and semistructured interviews were completed in 60 to 90 minutes. Despite challenges with recruitment and scheduling, common perspectives emerged during the focus groups and interviews producing a considerable body of data that could be used to inform various initiatives and policies related to reentry efforts.

Themes Emerging from Focus Group Sessions

Through the focus groups, we learned that there was, in many ways, a shared understanding across the various groups of stakeholders. An often-cited area of concern was the need to teach inmates basic life skills, such as budgeting, personal financial management skills, social skills, time management skills, and personal hygiene care. During focus group sessions, participants consistently suggested that there was a need to address inmates' ability to become more independent and self-reliant and tended to emphasize the importance of hands-on job training programs (such as a carpentry or HVAC program) for inmates during and after incarceration. Researchers have suggested that employment programs that provide tangible skills may be more effective at reducing recidivism than those that simply teach job-seeking skills (Latessa, 2012), and stakeholders at this facility echoed these beliefs. A third emerging theme focused on education. As a whole, participants seemed to agree that lack of education was a major obstacle for inmates at this facility and nationwide.

Housing was mentioned as a common concern for inmates and was identified as an area that was lacking in the correctional center's current reentry service portfolio. Housing is a basic and essential need, but the ability to secure housing (or return home) has often been jeopardized by an inmate's actions. Another emerging theme throughout the discussions was the importance of using a step-down model in terms of reentry programming and stakeholders (particularly facility administrators) felt that the organization of programs at the correctional center reflected such a step-down process. At the correctional center inmates could potentially transition from various general population

programs, to the ITU where they received intensive structured programming, and then to the PRU where they received transitional programming in preparation for release. The newly formed mentor program provided an additional layer of support to inmates after their incarceration, as they transitioned into the community. Stakeholders believed that inmates who progressed through this trajectory received a structured path toward reentry that maximized the benefits of reentry programming. One of the chief purposes of our assessment involved ascertaining what portion of the population actually experienced this step-down reentry process.

One of the final recurring themes that emerged during conversations was concern about a lack of communication between stakeholder groups and the impact that this had on program implementation. Participants indicated that many employees lacked a clear understanding of their responsibilities and roles at the facility, which they felt could lead to a breakdown in communication. These communication problems seemed to be complicated by the challenges employees faced as a result of constant program changes. According to stakeholders at this facility, the constant changes in their job duties often created conflict in their work environment, which affected program implementation. Researchers have suggested that examining how occupational changes are implemented within correctional facilities can shed light on how resulting conflict hinders reentry initiatives even before they begin (Rudes et al., 2011). In a correctional center such as the one assessed in this study, it was extremely important to understand the impact that newly implemented reentry initiatives had on those individuals who were responsible for their execution and on the workplace culture in general.

Survey of Correctional Officers

Correctional officers (COs) play a vital role in the day-to-day routines of inmates (e.g., Moon & Maxwell, 2004). Therefore, their opinions about reentry efforts can affect the overall atmosphere in which many reentry programs take place, and the observation phase and focus group sessions of our assessment demonstrated this. Specifically, observation and focus group discussions suggested that in many ways COs' attitudes affected the way they performed their program-related job duties (such as transporting inmates to and from programs) and influenced inmates' perceptions about programs and motivation to participate in reentry initiatives. Empirical studies have suggested that COs may be unaware of the impact that their attitudes have on inmate behavior and rehabilitative efforts (Antonio, Young, & Wingeard, 2009). For these reasons, the research team felt it was important to survey COs' attitudes to develop a clearer picture of their opinions about reentry and their understanding of the reentry services that the facility provided. The research team administered a survey to COs during six separate visits to the facility, distributing surveys to

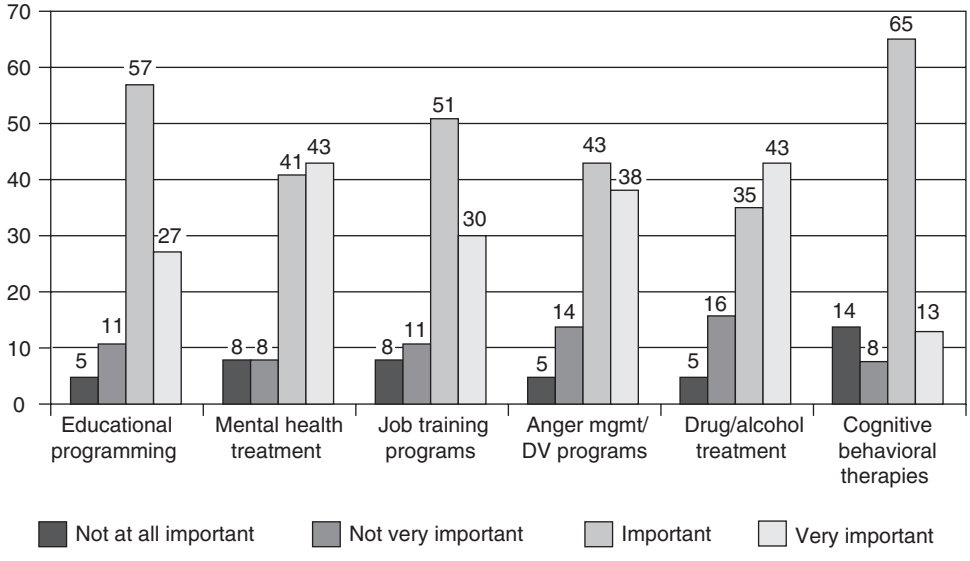

Figure 4-1. Correctional officer survey: The importance of programs and services. This figure presents the percent of correctional officers who responded "Not at all important", "Not Very Important", "Important", or "Very Important" to the question "In your opinion, how important to successful reentry are each of the following services: Educational Programming; Mental Health Treatment; Job Training; Anger Management/Domestic Violence Programs; Drug/Alcohol treatment; Cognitive Behavioral Therapies?" DV = domestic violence

all officers in attendance for various shift roll calls. After 2 days of very low response rates, the research team doubled their efforts, dispersing surveys during all three shift changes. Despite these efforts, of the 125 surveys handed out, only 35 were returned to the research team (for a response rate of only 28%).[6]

The majority of COs found all of the various types of programs and services offered at the center to be important to reentry; however, a smaller subset of COs consistently identified programming as unimportant (see **Figure 4-1**). Researchers have suggested that within correctional settings, opinions about reentry programs varied by job category (Antonio et al., 2009) and this finding may hold true at the correctional center assessed in this study. The emphasis

[6]There are a few possible explanations for the low response rate on correctional officer surveys. First, it is reasonable to consider that the roll call period may not have been the most effective strategy for informing correctional officers of the survey. Another possible explanation for the low response rates may have been a lack of incentives, which are very effective at increasing survey response rates in various fields (Deutskens, Ruyter, Wetzels, & Oosterweld, 2004; Ritter & Sue, 2007; Shalini, Stokols, &Marino, 2012). One last explanation ties directly to correctional officers and their overwhelmingly skeptical perception of programming and treatment benefits for inmates.

that COs placed on cognitive behavioral therapies appeared to be lower than that of other stakeholders at the facility, which is significant because cognitive behavioral programs (when implemented well) are widely recognized to be among the most effective correctional programs, and they dominated the intensive treatment unit at the correctional center.

Correctional officers clearly recognized that inmates faced multiple obstacles during reentry, with many COs indicating that the lack of communication skills, lack of employment-seeking skills and education, health challenges, and the stigma of a criminal record were obstacles to reentry. Similar to previous studies (Moon & Maxwell, 2004), even though the majority of COs supported programming, they tended to believe that *even with* targeted programming most inmates would reoffend once they were released into society. Furthermore, many officers agreed that only self-motivated inmates would succeed postrelease, and the majority of those surveyed felt that inmates lacked the motivation needed to make positive changes in their lives.

Although the low response rate meant the results could not be interpreted as necessarily representative of the opinions of all COs across the facility, the survey results were interesting for what they suggested about perspectives toward offender reentry. Overall the COs seemed to recognize that inmates suffer some substantial deficits in skills and support systems that will make reentry to the community a challenge. However, they seemed generally skeptical about inmates' potential for rehabilitation and prospects for reentry. Moreover, they tended to have fairly pessimistic views of inmates' motivation to change and about their motives for participating in programs.

Data Analysis

The program observations, focus group sessions, and surveys with facility stakeholders shed light on the beliefs and values that stakeholders held regarding offender reentry. To develop a deeper understanding of how reentry initiatives were being implemented within the facility, the research team followed the progression of a cohort of inmates as they moved through housing units and reentry programs. We tracked a 1-day sample of all sentenced offenders in custody at the facility (345 inmates) for 9 months during their incarceration. The majority of inmates in our sample were of European ethnicity (66%) and 35 years of age or younger (62%) at the time of their commitment. Seventy percent of the sample was serving a sentence greater than 180 days. Tracking inmates during their incarceration involved monitoring changes in inmates' housing units as well as their enrollment, attendance, and graduation from general population programs (anger management, domestic relations, sex offender, thinking for a change, substance abuse, and compulsive behavior), educational/vocational programs (GED, HVAC, culinary arts), and the specialized reentry programs within the correctional center.

Reentry Program Enrollment and Housing Tracks

During focus group sessions, several stakeholders spoke about the possible housing trajectories inmates may partake in and the benefits in terms of reentry programming that certain trajectories offered inmates. The purpose of tracking inmates as they progressed through units was to quantify the number of inmates who actually progressed through the optimal housing step-down trajectory identified by stakeholders and to identify some of the most common housing trajectories that inmates took through the facility. In addition, tracking inmates as they progressed through housing units allowed the researchers to determine the impact that housing assignments were having on inmate opportunity to participate in reentry programs.

The results of analyses suggested the majority of inmates received some sort of reentry programming while incarcerated at the correctional center regardless of the housing units they were assigned. In fact, only approximately 15% of our sample did not participate in any programs at all during their incarceration. **Table 4-1** presents the frequency and percentage of inmates in our sample who participated in the various reentry programs offered at the facility.

Nearly all (94.8%) inmates in our sample were housed for some period of time in general population. Surprisingly a substantial proportion of inmates were housed in one of the two specialized units (ITU and the PRU units)

TABLE 4-1. Housing Unit Assignments and Reentry Program Enrollment

Housing Unit Assignments		
Housing Unit	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
General Population	326	95
Intensive Treatment Unit	143	41
Prerelease Unit	135	40
Segregation	18	5
Program Type		
General Population Programs	135	39
Intensive Treatment Unit Programs	116	34
Prerelease Unit Programs	135	39
Educational Vocational Programs	124	36
GED	31	9
HVAC	43	13
Culinary Arts	71	21
Mentor Program	25	7
No Reentry Programs	50	15

during their incarceration, suggesting that many inmates receive the services these units provide. Table 4-1 also reports the percentage of inmates housed in each unit at the facility. Analyses of inmates' progression through various housing units identified five possible housing trajectories or housing tracks. Track one (28%) included those inmates who were housed in some combination of general population, ITU, and PRU (although not necessarily in this order). Within track one, analyses suggested that only a small percentage (6%) of inmates progressed through the optimal reentry step-process identified by facility stakeholders. These inmates progressed directly from general population where they may have participated in either educational or vocational programs, to the intensive treatment unit where they all received specialized programming that addressed substance use issues, to the PRU where they received transitional planning before being released into the community. This finding was somewhat surprising to facility stakeholders who had hoped that a larger number of inmates were progressing through the reentry process in this manner. Track two (20%) included those inmates who progressed from general population to the ITU before being released into the community. In addition to the specialized programs at the ITU, approximately 35% of these inmates participated in general population programs and about 32% participated in educational/vocational programming while assigned to the general population housing unit. Track three (14%) included those inmates who were housed in general population and the PRU. Much like inmates in track two, inmates in track three also participated in general population (33%) and educational/vocational programs (33%) during their stay in general population. A substantial number of inmates followed housing track four and were housed in general population only (33%). These inmates did not partake in any of the specialized reentry programs offered by the correctional center, but the vast majority was enrolled in treatment-oriented, educational, and/or vocational reentry programs during their incarceration. Finally, a much smaller percentage (5%) of inmates were housed in administrative segregation, and despite their housing assignment, these inmates did participate in a limited number of general population and educational/vocational programming. **Figure 4-2** presents the program participation for inmates in housing tracks two, three, and four.

Reentry Program Attendance and Graduation

Ideally, inmates who actively attend and graduate from programs should have higher chances of successful reentry; however, not every inmate who is enrolled in programming actually attends class sessions. The low attendance rate of inmates, particularly within general population programs where attendance is voluntary, was a concern identified by stakeholders during focus group sessions. For this reason, the research team tracked inmate's participation,

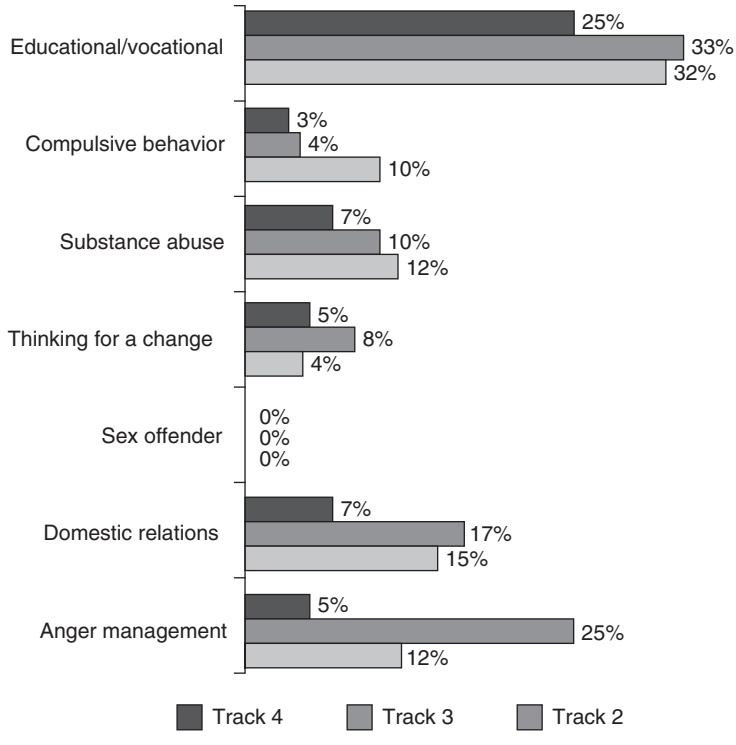

Figure 4-2. General population programs and educational/vocational programs for housing track two (general population and ITU), housing track three (general population and prerelease unit), and housing track four (general population). This figure illustrates the percentage of offenders who participated in general population and educational/vocational programs, in addition to the specialized programs offered at the ITU and the prerelease unit.

attendance, and graduation from general/educational/vocational programming in addition to their graduation from the various specialized reentry programs. Information on inmate's program participation, attendance, and graduation was obtained from various administrators and program directors.

The establishment of clear graduation requirements and the recordkeeping practices of the intensive treatment and prerelease units made it possible to determine the number of inmates who completed these specialized programs. Approximately half of the inmates who were enrolled in the intensive treatment unit completed the 60-day required programming and graduated from the unit. Although fewer inmates participated in the PRU programming, a higher percentage of these inmates graduated from this unit. In terms of educational and vocational programs, only a small percentage of inmates who were enrolled in GED, HVAC, and culinary arts received a certificate of completion in these courses (see **Table 4-2**).

TABLE 4-2. Frequency of ITU and PRU Enrollment and Graduation and Educational/ Vocational Program Enrollment and Certificate Completion

Program	# Enrolled	# Graduated/Attained Certificate
Intensive Treatment Unit	116	58
Prerelease Unit	72	56
GED	31	9
HVAC	43	8
Culinary Arts	71	27

It was much more difficult to determine the number of inmates who graduated from general population programs, due to the recordkeeping practices of this unit. It was not always possible to determine what happened to inmates who suddenly dropped off class rosters, and this made determination of program completion difficult. In addition, changes in the programs offered at the facility affected the researchers as well. **Table 4-3** reports the program enrollment, graduation, and attendance rates for general population programs.

At the start of the assessment, six general population programs were being offered, but by the completion of the study only three of these programs were

TABLE 4-3. General Population Program Enrollment, Graduation, and Attendance

	Anger Management	Domestic Relations	Sex Offender	Thinking for a Change	Substance Abuse	Compulsive Behavior
Months Program Offered	April–Dec.	Apri–Dec.	April–Dec.	April–Nov.	April–June	April–Aug.
Offender Avg Length of Sentence (Days)	413	390	578	420	470	591
# Class Sections Per Week	4	2	1	2	4	2
# Offenders Enrolled	83	41	6	38	35	29
# Offenders Graduated	16	5	0	1	0	0
# Offenders Did Not Graduate/Still Enrolled	67	36	6	37	35	29
# Enrolled Who Attended 0 Days	15	4	0	10	8	10
Average Attendance (Days)	5.1	5.9	24.5	4	2.6	3
Range of Attendance (Days)	0–13	0–16	9–35	0–20	0–9	0–9

still running. Those programs that did not run for the entire length of the assessment graduated almost no inmates, and they also had extremely low rates of attendance. Assessments of general population program attendance revealed extremely low attendance rates across the board. Although general population programs ran once per week for the entire 9 months of assessment, on average inmates attended only five class sessions. Furthermore, the percentage of inmates who were enrolled in programs and attended no class sessions at all ranged from 0 to 35% depending upon the program. The low attendance rates in general population programs were not unexpected and seemed to support concerns that were voiced during focus group sessions and surveys about inmates' motivation to change. Moreover, these findings seem to have important research implications in the areas of reentry programming and recidivism. That is, assessing the effectiveness of programs should consider attendance, which is not always reflected by program enrollment.

A Second Chance?

Although researcher–practitioner partnerships can often prove challenging, collaborative assessment projects such as the one described here represent a critical dimension of the Second Chance Act. Such projects can help service providers, including correctional facility administrators, identify service gaps and overlaps. External assessments can also help streamline efforts so that they are strategically coordinated and targeted toward those most at need. The challenge of inmate reentry can seem daunting and the stakes can be quite high, especially given the current "results-driven" political and economic climate. Service providers must recognize the need for benchmarks and the importance of fidelity to the assessment and evaluative components. Going forward, SCA grant recipients must ensure that they are responsive to the results from such assessments and evaluations, making changes to their programs or eliminating specific components of their model that prove ineffective. Ultimately, SCA funding also means higher standards for grant recipients, with the future of the reentry movement dependent in part on the results of these performance measures.

With its inherent recognition that no individual criminal justice agency can single-handedly address the challenge of offender reentry, the passage of the SCA marked a progressive step forward; but the next few years will likely prove critical to the sustainability of the reentry movement. The Second Chance Act enjoyed bipartisan support, in part because of the potential return on investment that might be realized if reentry programs and services can achieve even relatively modest reductions in recidivism. To the extent that external assessments of reentry initiatives help ensure that reentry programs and services adhere to principles of effective intervention, they too will be critical.

Discussion Questions

1. In this new era of reentry, how likely is it that the criminal justice pendulum will continue to swing away from the largely punitive policies of the crime control era and back toward a more rehabilitative model? Will such a swing require a shift in orientation among correctional facility administrators who have traditionally been concerned with facility security and inmate management?
2. Which in-prison reentry programs and services have been identified as among the most crucial for achieving meaningful reductions in recidivism? And how important are stakeholder perspectives to the success of in-prison programs?
3. SCA funding requires collaboration between practitioners, scholars, and researchers with uniquely different orientations, understandings, and experiences. What steps might be taken to facilitate success in these partnerships?
4. Visit http://www.iccalive.org/icca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=562 or scan this code with the QR app on your SmartPhone or digital device and read the International Community Corrections Association policy position on transition and reentry. How does this policy position relate to ideas discussed in this chapter?

References

Antonio, M. E., Young, J. L., & Wingeard, L. M. (2009). When actions and attitude count most: Assessing perceived level of responsibility and support for inmate treatment and rehabilitation programs among correctional employees. *The Prison Journal*, *89*(4), 363–382.

Beck, A. J., & Shipley, B. E. (1989). *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1983*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Cullen, F. T., & Gendreau, P. (2000). Assessing correctional rehabilitation: Policy, practice, and prospects. *Criminal Justice 2000: Policies, Processes, and Decisions of the Criminal Justice System*, *3*, 109–176.

Deutskens, E., Ruyter, K. D., Wetzels, M., & Oosterweld, P. (2004). Response rate and response quality of Internet-based surveys: An experimental study. *Marketing Letters*, *15*, 21–36.

Freeman, R. (2003). *Can we close the revolving door?: Recidivism vs. employment of ex-offenders in the U.S.* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Frost, N. A., Greene, J., & Pranis, K. (2006). *Hard hit: Growth in the imprisonment of women, 1977-2004*. New York: Women's Prison Association.

Frost, N. A., & Clear, T. (in press). New directions in correctional research. *Justice Quarterly.*

Glaze, L. (2011). *Correctional populations in the United States, 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Guerino, P., Harrison, P. M., & Sabol, W. J. (2011). *Prisoners in 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

James, D. J., & Glaze, L. E. (2006). *Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Justice Center. (n.d.). The Second Chance Act. Retreived from http://www.reentrypolicy.org/documents/0000/1277/2.14.12_Second_Chance_Act_Fact_Sheet_.pdf

Klein, S., Tolbert, M., Bugarin, R., Cataldi, E. F., & Tauschek, G. (2004). *Correctional education: Assessing the status of prison programs and information needs*.

Langan, P. A., & Levin, D. J. (2002). *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Latessa, E. J. (2012). Why work is important and how to improve the effectiveness of correctional reentry programs that target employment. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *11*(1), 87–91.

Latessa, E. J., & Lowenkamp, C. (2006). What works in reducing recidivism. *University of St. Thomas Law Journal*, *3*(3), 521–535.

Lawrence, S., Mears, D. P., Dubin, G., & Travis, J. (2002). *The practice and promise of prison programming*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Listwan, S. J., Jonson, C. L., Cullen, F. T., & Latessa, E. J. (2008). Cracks in the penal harm movement: Evidence from the field. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *7*(3), 423–465.

Lowenkamp, C., Latessa, E. J., & Smith, P. (2006). Does correctional program quality really matter? The impact of adhearing to the principles of effective interventions. *Criminology and Public Policy*, *5*(3), 201–220.

MacKenzie, D. L. (2000). Evidence-based corrections: Identifying what works. *Crime & Delinquency*, *46*(4), 457–471.

MacKenzie, D. L. (2006). *What works in corrections: Reducing the criminal activities of offenders and delinquents*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Marbley, A. F., & Ferguson, R. (2005). Responding to prisoner reentry, recidivism, and incarceration of inmates of color: A call to the communities. *Journal of Black Studies*, *35*(5), 633–649.

Moon, B., & Maxwell, S. R. (2004). Assessing the correctional orientation of correctional officers in South Korea. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *48*(6), 729–743.

Nink, C. (2008). *Women professionals in corrections: A growing asset*. Centerville, UT: Management & Training Corporation Institute.

Petersilia, J. (2008). California's correctional paradox of excess and deprivation. *Crime and Justice*, *37*, 207–278.

Phelps, M. S. (2011). Rehabilitation in the punitive era: The gap between rhetoric and reality in U.S. prison programs *Law & Society Review*, *45*(1), 33–68.

Ritter, L. A., & Sue, V. M. (2007). Conducting the survey. *New Directions for Evaluation*, *115*, 47–50.

Robison, J., & Smith, G. (1971). The effectiveness of correctional programs. *Crime Delinquency*, *17*, 67–80.

Rudes, D. S., Lerch, J., & Taxman, F. S. (2011). Implementing a reentry framework at a correctional facility: Challenges to the culture. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *50*(8), 467–491.

Sabol, W. J., Minton, T. D., & Harrison, P. M. (2007). *Prisoners and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Shalini, M., Stokols, D., & Marino, A. H. (2012). Using norm-based appeals to increase response rates in evaluation research: A field experiment. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *33*, 88.

Travis, J., Crayton, A., & Mukamal, D. (2009). A new era in inmate reentry. *Corrections Today*, *71*(6), 38–41.

Travis, J., Solomon, A. L., & Waul, M. (2001). *From prison to home: The dimensions and consequences of prisoner reentry*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Useem, B., & Piehl, A. M. (2008). *Prison state: The challenge of mass incarceration*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, J. A., & Davis, R. C. (2006). Good intentions meet hard realities: An evaluation of the project greenlight reentry program. *Criminology and Public Policy*, *5*(2), 303–338.