

Reentry and Recidivism: What We Know About What Works

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Recidivism in America

- 95% of inmates will be released from jail and prison (Hughes and Wilson, 2018)
- Recidivism has implications for public safety and community stability
- 2018 Bureau of Justice Statistics report (Alper et al., 2018)
 - 412,731 state prisoners across 30 states
 - 83% rearrested within 9 years of release (5 out of every 6 released)

Federal Interagency Council on Crime Prevention and Improving Reentry

- Established by Executive Order 13826
- 12 federal agencies
- Recommendations for evidence-based reforms:
 - Prevent crime
 - Facilitate reentry
 - Reduce recidivism

The need for rigorous research design

- The importance of evidence over anecdote
- Randomized controlled trials are the gold standard of evaluation
- Methods matter: not all research methods are equal
- Consider the rigor of research and evaluation methods when interpreting study results

Defining Reentry Programs

- For the purposes of this review of the scientific literature, prisoner reentry programs are defined as programs that provide services to recently released inmates.
- By this definition, corrections programs that provide services only to currently incarcerated individuals are excluded from this review.
- However, programs that provided services inside prison and outside correctional institutions are included as prisoner reentry programs.

Evidence-based programs

- Programs with effectiveness demonstrated by causal evidence obtained through high-quality outcome evaluations and that have been replicated and evaluated in at least three sites
 - Replication is crucial
- High-quality outcome evaluations are those using rigorous, randomized controlled trials on programs implemented with fidelity

Do Reentry Programs Work?

- No reentry programs meet the “evidence-based” definition
 - Primarily because of the lack of replications
- Based on RCTs, the evidence is mixed, at best for reducing recidivism.
- In particular, employment-focused reentry programs have had little success in reducing recidivism
- This means that prisoner reentry efforts that rely mainly on job training and subsidized jobs are not likely to succeed.

Second Chance Act RCT	Sample Size/ Sites	Recidivism Results	
Evaluation of Seven Second Chance Act Adult Demonstration Programs (D'Amico and Kim, 2018)	N=966 7 Sites	18-Month Follow-Up	30-Month Follow-Up
		Arrests – No Effect	Arrests – No Effect
		Convictions – No Effect	Convictions – No Effect
		Incarcerations – No Effect	Incarcerations – No Effect

RCTs of Employment-Focused Reentry Programs	Sample Size/Sites	Recidivism Results	
Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program (Wiegand et al., 2015)	N=4,655 24 Sites	2-Year Follow-Up	
		Arrests – No Effect	
		Incarceration – No Effect	
Center for Employment Opportunity Prison Reentry Program (Redcross et al., 2009; 2012)	N=997 New York City	2-Year Follow-Up	3-Year Follow-Up
		Arrests – No Effect	Arrests – No Effect
		Convictions – Beneficial Effect	Convictions – No Effect
		Incarceration – Beneficial Effect	Incarceration – No Effect

RCTs of Employment-Focused Reentry Programs	Sample Size/Sites	Recidivism Results
Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration (Jacobs, 2012)	N=1,813 Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Paul	2-Year Follow-Up
		Arrests – No Effect
		Convictions – No Effect
		Prison admissions – No Effect
		Technical violations – No Effect
Southern California Employment-Focused Reentry Program (Farabee et al., 2014)	N= 217 Southern California city	1-Year Follow-Up
		Arrests – No Effect

RCTs of Employment-Focused Reentry Programs	Sample Size/Sites	Recidivism Results
Milwaukee Safe Streets Prisoner Release Initiative (Cook et al., 2015)	N=236 Milwaukee	1-Year Follow-Up
		Arrests – Beneficial Effect
		Incarceration – No Effect
Washington State Work Release (Turner and Petersilia, 1996)	N=218 Seattle	1-Year Follow-Up
		Arrests – No Effect
		Incarceration – No Effect

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Practices

Name	Practice Rating (by State)	Summary
Adult Basic Center	Crime & Delinquency: No Effect/No Effect on Recidivism	Continental Adult Center (CAC) offers an intensive case management program for men with substance abuse and mental health issues. The program has been shown to have a statistically significant effect on reducing measures of youths' delinquency, arrests, and problem behaviors and improving measures of parenting skills. There was no effect, however, on parents' use of appropriate discipline.
Adult Drug Court	Crime & Delinquency: No Effect/No Effect on Recidivism	Drug courts are specialized courts that combine drug treatment with the regular court system. The goal is to reduce the rate of drug use and drug-related crime.
Drug Court Program	Crime & Delinquency: No Effect/No Effect on Recidivism	Drug courts are specialized courts that combine drug treatment with the regular court system. The goal is to reduce the rate of drug use and drug-related crime.
Family Reentry Program (Florida)	Crime & Delinquency: No Effect/No Effect on Recidivism	Continental Adult Center (CAC) offers an intensive case management program for men with substance abuse and mental health issues. The program has been shown to have a statistically significant effect on reducing measures of youths' delinquency, arrests, and problem behaviors and improving measures of parenting skills. There was no effect, however, on parents' use of appropriate discipline.
Justice Court Program	Crime & Delinquency: No Effect/No Effect on Recidivism	Justice courts are specialized courts that combine drug treatment with the regular court system. The goal is to reduce the rate of drug use and drug-related crime.

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Program Summary: This is a parent-training program for parents who have gone through a recent marital separation and for their families. The program is rated Promising. The program was found to have a statistically significant effect on reducing measures of youths' delinquency, arrests, and problem behaviors and improving measures of parenting skills. There was no effect, however, on parents' use of appropriate discipline.

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Program Summary: This is a group, motivational interviewing program for adolescents with a first-time alcohol or drug offense. The goal of the program is to prevent negative consequences of alcohol and other drug use. This program is rated No Effects. There were no statistically significant differences between the intervention and comparison groups on past month frequency of alcohol, heavy drinking, or marijuana use; alcohol or marijuana consequences; recidivism; delinquency; and alcohol and other drug use.



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CrimeSolutions.gov Ratings of Corrections & Reentry Programs (Reentry and Release)

	RCT	Quasi-Experiment	Natural Experiment	Total
Effective	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	4
Promising	11 (19.6%)	45 (80.4%)	0 (0%)	56
No Effects	21 (56.8%)	15 (40.5%)	1 (2.7%)	37

Promising Alternatives to Employment-Focused Reentry Programs

- Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan (Duwe, 2012)
- High-Risk Revocation Reduction Program (Clark, 2015; McNeely, 2018)
- Amity In-Prison Therapeutic Community (Wexler et al., 1999; Prendergast et al., 2004)

RCTs of Promising Reentry Programs	Sample Size/Sites	Recidivism Results
Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan (Duwe, 2012)	N=269 5 Minnesota Counties	16-Month Follow-Up
		Arrests – Beneficial Effect
		Convictions – Beneficial Effect
		Incarceration – Beneficial Effect
		Technical violations – No Effect

RCTs of Promising Reentry Programs	Sample Size/Sites	Recidivism Results				
Minnesota High-Risk Revocation Reduction Program (Clark, 2015; McNeely, 2018)	Phase 1: N=239 Phase 2: N=282 2 MN prisons	1-2 Year Follow-Up (Phase 1)	46-Month (Average) Follow-Up			
			Phase 1	Phase 2	Combined	
		Arrests	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	Beneficial Effect
		Convictions	Beneficial Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
		Incarceration	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Revocations	Beneficial Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect		

RCTs of Promising In-Custody Program	Sample Size/Sites	Recidivism Results	
Amity In-Prison Therapeutic Community (Wexler et al., 1999; Prendergast et al., 2004)	N=478 San Diego	3-Year Follow-Up	5-Year Follow-Up
		Arrests – Not Measured	Arrests – Not Measured
		Convictions – Not Measured	Convictions – Not Measured
		Incarceration – Beneficial Effect	Incarceration – Beneficial Effect
		Technical Violations – Not Measured	Technical Violations – Not Measured

Looking forward

- Additional rigorous research will help us determine what works
- We need to use the term “evidence-based” properly
- Employment programs are not a panacea
- Pressing need for additional research to better understand what works

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