

Reducing Jail Recidivism: Examining Reentry Programming for the Local Jail

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Abstract

This study examined the concept of reentry programming applied at the local jail level and the components necessary to achieve success and reduce jail recidivism. Surveys were conducted of twelve Florida jails and an identified inmate sample population from the Polk County Jail. Offense data was also examined to define the population within the jail that would be most applicable to reentry programming and case management. Correlations are made from sample population data in order to support the concept of individualized needs assessment and case management.

Introduction

Traditional Corrections is centered around the protection of society from violent offenders through incapacitation and deterrence. Current trends focus towards deterrence of crime by means of rehabilitation and support by providing would-be offenders with resources necessary to prevent them from re-offending; a concept that takes community involvement and government partnership. Most recently, reentry initiatives have been designed as a means of breaking a cycle of repeat offenses that overwhelm the criminal justice system as a whole with a pronounced impact on jail and prison overcrowding. It is too taxing on the criminal justice system to simply lock offenders behind bars. Incapacitation through imprisonment is very costly, and has not proven to be a big deterrence over time. From a systems perspective, the question is whether the cost is beneficial in the long run to keep prisoners in the U.S. behind bars. Simply put, there could be a better way to deter crime and stop the repetitive nature of criminals. (Peak, 2007)

More than forty percent of ex-cons commit crimes within three years of their release and wind up back behind bars, according to a study released by the Pew Center. This study concluded the nation's recidivism rate had only marginally improved even as spending on corrections facilities increased by \$22 billion within the last decade, and that alternative strategies to incarceration should be pursued in order to reduce recidivism rates. A key strategy factors in reducing recidivism rates were:

- Defining success as recidivism reduction;
- Measuring and rewarding progress;
- Beginning preparations for release at the time of imprisonment;
- Optimizing the use of supervision resources;
- Imposing swift sanctions, and;
- Creating incentives for offenders to avoid reoffending. (Correctional News, 2011)

What is Reentry?

The concept of reentry involves preparing incarcerated offenders for productive and successful reintegration into the community by providing life skills and educational support, community services referral, employment assistance, and substance/alcohol abuse counseling to those offenders needing support. Successful reentry programming often involves a comprehensive case management system designed to evaluate offenders prior to their release from prison or jail and assist them in acquiring the skills necessary to become a productive part of society; whether the need be employment/housing assistance or intensive drug, alcohol, or mental health counseling. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004)

One step towards enabling successful reentry programs is the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) which is designed to provide funding to state units of government to develop and implement institutional and corrections-based reentry programs. The PRI is geared towards reducing recidivism by assisting returning prisoners to find work and access other needed services in their communities. PRI also endorses prerelease assessment and preparation for a prisoner's transition back into society. Transition plans may include collaboration with other criminal justice agencies as well as non-profit/community-based agencies for supervision or provision of guidance to nonviolent offenders. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004)

The perfect model presented by the PRI is one that begins while the offender is incarcerated and continues throughout the offender's reintegration as a stable part of society. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004) The Office of Justice Programs' (OJP) Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Labor to administer grant funding for PRI program establishment. The Department of Labor awarded 30 grants in 20 states to faith and community-based organizations to provide services to offenders after their release. BJA grants were awarded to 20 state agencies, mostly state departments of corrections, to establish and provide programming to offenders prior to their release and assist those offenders in transitioning to the communities in which the Department of Labor grant-funded organizations were located. Both grant-funded programs cooperate to establish a two-phase system; the first being a pre-release assessment and planning phase taking one to three months, and the second phase being post-release implementation from month four until successful transition (up to three years). (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004)

Is Reentry a Solution for Florida's Criminal Justice System?

The state of Florida is not soft on crime, but because correctional institutions are not usually in the position to effect lasting change in offender behavior, a solution must include correctional programming in the community. If there is one problem that is certain, it is that the majority of offenders will one day be released from prison or jail. "About 95% of all prisoners will be released from prison someday, and most of them will reenter society on either mandatory supervision or discretionary parole release." (Alarid & Del Carmen, 2011, p. 231) According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) 2010 Jail Inmates at Midyear 2009 report, 837,833 offenders were under local jail supervision in the United States in June 2009. Of this total, 767,620 inmates were confined to jail. This means that only 70,213 local level offenders across the United States were supervised outside of a jail facility, excluding probation or parole. (Bureau of Justice

Statistics, 2010) Florida's total jail population average was 60,406 in 2009; 7.8% of the national total. 10,337 inmates out of Florida's 2009 jail population were misdemeanants who were sentenced, pretrial detainees, awaiting sentencing, or in violation of their probation. (Florida Department of Corrections, 2009)

History speaks for itself in that incarceration alone, or even with conditional release sanctions, is not enough to deter one from reoffending. Recent correctional trends across the United States are geared toward proactively lowering recidivism by offenders through reintegration, or reentry programming. (Territo, Halsted, & Bromley, 2004) In 2004, after a consortium of federal agencies launched a multimillion-dollar national effort called "Going Home" to rehabilitate and reintegrate convicts back into their communities, jurisdictions in Wisconsin, Georgia, and Mississippi, among others, created similar versions of the program. (Peak, 2007) Across the United States, including Florida, reentry programming is being applied at the prison level. Because a consequence of Florida's tough-on-crime attitude is prison and jail overcrowding, successful reentry is critical. Added to an increasing prisoner population is the decline in the economy and a pressure to decrease government budgeting. Thus, lowering recidivism is a key to balancing the budget. (Florida Department of Corrections, 2009)

Applying Reentry at the Local Level

As prisons become more overcrowded with career-criminals and violent offenders, reentry programming for non-violent offenders may become a standard responsibility of local jails. As the first stop for offenders in the criminal justice system, it makes sense that a proactive approach to reducing recidivism starts in jail. The challenges associated with reentry from jail are complex and numerous. Issues surrounding this concept include funding, staffing, length of jail sentences, and public support for housing, employment, counseling, and other services. "Each year, U.S. jails process an estimated 12 million admissions and releases. That translates into 34,000 people released from jails each day and 230,000 released each week. In three weeks, jails have contact with as many people as prisons do in an entire year, presenting numerous opportunities for intervention." (Solomon, Osborne, LoBuglio, Mellow, & Mukamal, 2008, p. xv) Most jail inmates, from here on referred to as inmates, lead very unstable lives and cycle in and out of the criminal justice system. The short term an inmate may spend confined to jail as compared to a prison inmate, from here on referred to as prisoner, does not provide a lot of room for stabilizing a lifestyle of substance abuse, employment or housing instability, lack of mental health care, or other chronically occurring health or behavioral problems. Most inmates are incarcerated for less than one month, sometimes only a few days, leaving little time or ability for addressing these complex and often interrelated issues. (Solomon et al., 2008)

Collaboration across disciplines and jurisdictions is the most critical aspect of jail reentry. In recent years, the criminal justice system has seen an increase in "creative and productive partnerships between jails and law enforcement, probation, faith-based organizations, mental health clinics, victim advocate groups, the business community, and a variety of other social service and community providers." (Solomon et al., 2008, p. xvi) At the individual inmate level, shorter lengths of stay in closely located facilities means less time away from the inmate's family, treatment providers, employers, religious ties, and other social services that may already be in place. All in all, efforts to strengthen existing social support and to add assistance where support is lacking, could

translate into safer communities, improved public health, and a lower tax-payer burden by reducing an inmate's use of the criminal justice system. (Solomon et al., 2008, p.xvi)

Basic Components of Jail Reentry

After an arrest, the court makes decisions on whether to release an offender prior to trial, either on their own recognizance or by setting a bail or bond amount, or to detain the offender pending further adjudication. A major factor in the court's decision to release or detain is the risk posed by the offender of failing to appear in court and the potential for danger to the community. Pretrial services programs assist the courts by conducting individual risk assessments recommending release or detainment to the court. If the court orders an individual to be released on pretrial status, pretrial services may oversee the court-imposed conditions of the release, to include reporting requirements, referrals to treatment or community/social services, or regular drug/alcohol abuse testing. A local court system's pretrial services is reasonably the first to identify needs and risks of offenders entering the system, the first to match offenders with services and supervision, and the first to monitor their compliance with court-ordered conditions. Pretrial services also has contact with those on probation or parole if they are rearrested on new charges; another opportunity to intervene with the offender population. (Solomon et al., 2008)

From distributing reentry assistance services information to a more comprehensive assessment, planning, and case management, local jails can utilize different avenues to improve reentry into society for inmates, their families, and the community. At the individual level, there are various points along the "jail-to-community continuum" where interventions can improve reentry success, and ultimately, public safety. Recommended intervention points are: (Solomon et al., 2008)

1. During jail classification to quickly assess an inmate's risk or special needs
2. Reentry planning to identify specific assistance or intervention needs to improve chances for successful reintegration
3. In-jail services such as substance abuse, mental health counseling, vocational/educational assistance, and access to community-based providers or volunteers
4. Pre-release planning to prepare inmates for the days surrounding release from jail, and
5. Continuity of care in the community to connect individuals to resources and supervision, if applicable, after release.

Objective classification of an inmate's risk factors for placement into the appropriate facility housing as well as into a position in which the inmate can best receive reentry services is a vital step in the reentry process. It is during the classifications process that an inmate's criminal history and violence risk assessment indicates potential for reentry candidacy. Screens and assessments also flag the highest-risk inmates and problems, which can inform communities about how to allocate available resources as determined. Assessments can also identify those who are returning to stable arrangements and intact supports and have little need for intervention. (Solomon et al., 2008)

Information obtained through classifications assessments about an inmate's needs, risks, strengths, and available community resources can provide the starting

point for the development of a custom reentry plan that addresses addictions and other treatment needs, employment and education, health needs, housing, and the details of release from jail. Reentry plans guide and manage preparation, the moment of release, and the reentry/reintegration process and goals. (Solomon et al., 2008)

For short-term detainees, assessment and planning may need to occur during the initial intake screening and classification. Under these circumstances, reentry planning will be brief, consisting of a review of needs and referrals to people and agencies in the community who can help meet these needs. For long-term inmates, case management and reentry plans can identify necessary program interventions as well as the details of the release process and follow-up care in the community. Ideally, reentry plans should be developed with input from the inmate and monitored by an assigned case manager to determine progress toward set goals and periodically review and adapt the reentry plan when necessary. (Solomon et al., 2008)

“Transition accountability plans (TAPs), developed as part of the [National Institute of Corrections] NIC’s Transition from Prison to Community project (and therefore originally designed for the prison context), provide a good example of a reentry plan. TAPs span the phases of the transition process, from incarceration to release to community reintegration.” (Solomon et al., 2008, p. 35) The TAP is a written agreement that defines the roles and expectations of all involved individuals and holds each one accountable for their respective responsibilities during each phase of the transition process. Case managers, whether jail employees or community-based providers, serve an important role in planning and supervising service delivery both in the jail and in the community. (Solomon et al., 2008, p. 35)

Case managers are also critical in engaging inmates in their own reentry process. Because reentry is a recent concept, research is limited, but some studies have illustrated the importance of case management in improving reentry success. “An evaluation of a community-based comprehensive aftercare program, Opportunity to Succeed, found that participants who interacted with their case managers were more likely to report full-time employment and maintain employment for a longer time than those receiving no case management.” (Rossman & Roman, 2003) Also, a study of substance-abusing offenders found that those who had on-going case management were more likely to have access to drug treatment programs and less likely to reoffend than released offenders who received only referrals or a single counseling session (Rhodes & Gross, 1997).

It is important to note that a true transitional program for reentry will have a focus on the actual steps in transition from jail into the community. Even a solid in-jail substance abuse program is not a true reentry program if it lacks a partnership with a community-based provider for post-release services. In order for a community provider to be involved in reentry, they must target the jail population and have linkages to a specific jail facility. The partnership duties between jail and community can extend as far into the jail environment or out into the community depending on responsibilities and goals of the individual program. The important aspect is the mentoring, contact, and follow-up that occurs with the offender. (Solomon et al., 2008)

Examples of Reentry Initiatives amongst Florida Jails

Day Reporting and Reentry Division- Broward County Sheriff's Office (Solomon et al., 2008)

Agency Type	Program Focus	Funding Source	Population Served	Number served	Jail Size	Location
Jail, community corrections	Comprehensive	Broward County B.O.C.C.	Sentenced or walk-ins (individuals with no open cases)	1,500/year	5,800 ADP	Urban
<p>Program Overview:</p> <p>The Day Reporting and Reentry Division is a community-based sanction in the Sheriff's Department of Community Control that helps reintegrate Broward County jail inmates into the community after release and ensure public safety through intensive supervision, case management, and transitional services. The Division operates three Reentry Centers at which clients receive a variety of support services and training, and community social service providers are encouraged to meet with clients and offer services.</p> <p>Key Program Elements:</p> <p>Transition Planning: Staff members assess inmates' needs before their release from jail and develop a supervision and reentry plan for each inmate that addresses underlying problems associated with criminal activity, such as substance abuse, joblessness, and mental illness. The reentry plan includes supervision level, programming, daily schedules, community service hours, and any court-ordered conditions. Division case managers oversee the reentry plan in jail and supervision specialists monitor adherence to these plans after release in the community.</p> <p>Community Case Management and Follow-Up: In the community, clients must comply with the daily itineraries outlined in their supervision and reentry plan. To assist in their compliance, the Reentry Centers provide several onsite services and resources such as employability skills training, cognitive behavioral therapy, computer training lab, assistance obtaining necessary documents, and access to substance abuse and mental health treatment, housing, clothing, and Social Security benefits. Job developers in the Division's Employment Development Program identify and encourage employers who will hire people with convictions. Currently, the Division maintains a job bank with more than 400 available jobs at any given time. In addition to skills training classes, the computer training lab is available for clients to conduct online job searches and apply for public benefits and other social services. Case managers work with clients daily to help them incorporate these services into their reentry plan while supervision specialists monitor adherence to these plans.</p> <p>Partnerships and Collaboration Staff from the Day Reporting and Reentry Division serve as the chair and vice chair of the Broward County Reentry Coalition, a group of government agencies, faith-based institutions, social service providers, and citizens who meet monthly to work on improving the reentry outcomes of those in jail or serving time under other local criminal sanctions. The Reentry Coalition has developed and periodically updates a Reentry Resource Guide that lists a directory of services available to clients. The Division maintains several informal partnerships with more than 100 social service providers that accept referrals and use the Reentry Centers to provide services and government agencies such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, Social Security Administration, and the Broward County Health Department. Finally, because all clients are placed on state probation, the Reentry Division has developed a formal agreement with the Florida Department of Corrections to put their clients on inactive status and allow Division case managers and supervision specialists to assume authority for their supervision.</p> <p>Outcomes: In 2006, 64 percent of those under supervision of the Day Reporting and Reentry Division were successfully discharged.</p>						

Figure 1.1

Faith Works! Aftercare Program- Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department (Solomon et al., 2008)

Agency Type	Program Focus	Funding Source	Population Served	Number served	Jail Size	Location
Jail	Comprehensive-Focus on Employment	Local Taxes	Sentenced	100/year	6,800 ADP	Urban
<p>Program Overview:</p> <p>The Faith Works! Aftercare Program is a 12-month, 3-phase program in the Miami-Dade County Department of Corrections (DOC) based on the idea that religious beliefs can effect positive behavior change and empower an inmate to overcome obstacles and barriers that may contribute to criminal behavior. Housed separately from the general population to maintain program integrity, each participating inmate, or client, is assigned a faith mentor and a case manager that act as liaisons to the community and church and who work to leverage existing social and educational services in jail and in the community.</p> <p>Key Program Elements:</p> <p>Reentry Services in Jail: During Phase I of the program, each client is assigned a case manager who is responsible for assigning the faith mentor. The case manager begins to develop an intervention plan, a time-sensitive, detailed description of the activities and responsibilities required of the client to remain in the program. During Phase I, clients focus on the existing educational and social services available in the DOC. Clients are expected to further their education, maintain employment through a work detail, and attend substance abuse education classes, bible study classes, weekly parenting classes, and weekly meetings with their faith mentors.</p> <p>Transitional Planning: Phase II of the program focuses on preparing the inmate for release during the last 4–8 weeks of their sentence. In addition to making sure various survival needs are met (e.g., housing, employment, food, substance abuse treatment), key components of the preparation phase include court-approved “church release,” work release, and family reunification. Church release allows clients to attend their local house of worship each week with their mentor and family. In addition to church release, clients will connect with their families through a weekend retreat at the jail. If they are able to obtain a job, work release allows clients to establish themselves in the workplace prior to release.</p> <p>Community Case Management and Follow-Up: Phase III begins when clients are released and continues for six months as clients work with their mentor to reconnect to the community. Through Phase III, the DOC case manager relies on the mentor to maintain updates on the client and offers informal support and guidance to both the client and mentor.</p> <p>Partnerships and Collaboration: Through its partnership with the South Florida Jail Ministries, the Faith Works! Aftercare Program works with approximately 600 faith volunteers, 120 local houses of worship, the Archdiocese of Miami, and the Aleph Institute, all of which donate a significant amount of time and resources to meet the spiritual needs of those in jail. The DOC’s Chaplaincy Services Bureau employs two chaplains to oversee a volunteer workforce.</p>						

Figure 1.2

Habitual Misdemeanor Offender Program- Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (Solomon et al., 2008)

Agency Type	Program Focus	Funding Source	Population Served	Number served	Jail Size	Location
Jail, Community Corrections	Substance Abuse	City of Jacksonville	Sentenced	108 in 2006	3,600 ADP	Urban
<p>Program Overview:</p> <p>Under the Habitual Misdemeanor Offender (HMO) law in Florida, individuals who have committed four or more misdemeanors within one year of their current offense are classified as a habitual misdemeanor offender and can be sentenced from six months to one year in a jail-based substance abuse treatment (SAT) program. In an effort to reduce recidivism through service provision, treatment, and aftercare, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office actively tracks individuals eligible for HMO status who continue to cycle in and out of the jail and places them in the SAT program. The SAT program operates out of the Sheriff's Office Community Corrections Center by a private substance abuse treatment provider under contract to the City of Jacksonville. The Jacksonville Department of Corrections is currently in the process of expanding the reentry efforts in Jacksonville. A reentry coordinator has been hired to focus on extensive needs assessment, discharge planning, and identification of appropriate services after release.</p>						
<p>Key Program Elements:</p> <p>Reentry Services in Jail: Jacksonville's Corrections Management Information System database produces a daily report of all arrestees who, if convicted, will qualify as habitual misdemeanor offenders. A Jacksonville corrections officer assigned to the Pre-Trial Services Unit of the Jails Division is responsible for identifying these individuals. The officer must also determine if the individuals have mental health issues that would qualify them for the mental health diversion process. If individuals are identified as an HMO by the presiding judge, state attorney, and public defender, they may be sentenced to the in-jail SAT program.</p> <p>Transition Planning: Individuals in the SAT program are able to participate in a discharge planning phase during which they can request assistance in specific areas, such as transportation, clothing for work, housing, mental and physical health services, and literacy.</p> <p>Community Case Management and Follow-Up: Once individuals successfully complete the in-jail treatment program, they receive 12 months of aftercare in the community that provides the support mechanisms necessary to maintain recovery.</p> <p>Partnerships and Collaboration: The City of Jacksonville has a contractual agreement with a local community substance abuse treatment provider to run the SAT program in jail. The SAT program involves collaboration with the courts, district attorney, and public defender.</p> <p>Outcomes: According to a Sheriff's Office HMO report, individuals sentenced as HMOs have a 23-percent lower recidivism rate than individuals meeting the criteria to be sentenced as HMOs but are not. Since August 2004 when the first individual was sentenced as an HMO, these HMO sentenced individuals have recidivated at a rate of 30 percent. Individuals who met the HMO criteria but were not in the program recidivated at a rate of 53 percent.</p>						

Figure 1.3

**Inmate Reentry Program- Orange County (Florida) Corrections Department
(Solomon et al., 2008)**

Agency Type	Program Focus	Funding Source	Population Served	Number served	Jail Size	Location
Jail	Comprehensive /Focus: Substance Abuse and Mental Health	General Revenue	Pretrial and Sentenced	UNK	4,044 in 2006	Urban

Program Overview: Since 2003, Orange County Corrections has been providing reentry services through the Pre-release Program, a substance abuse program run by the community treatment provider Specialized Treatment, Education, and Prevention, Inc. (STEPS). In October 2006, Orange County Corrections significantly expanded prerelease services into what is now known as reentry services by awarding the Inmate Re-entry Program contract to STEPS. The contract consists of 16 case managers and 2 mental health specialists who provide reentry services to the sentenced inmate population. Case managers assess the transitional needs of both inmates and family members and coordinate with community providers to facilitate community-based services.

Key Program Elements:

Reentry Services in Jail: The Inmate Re-entry Program provides services for sentenced inmates with 45–60 days remaining on their sentence. The Inmate Re-entry Program consists of two separate program components: the Basic Needs Program and the Dually Diagnosed Program. The Basic Needs Program serves the general inmate population identified as having a need for reentry services. Inmates participate in a variety of motivational education classes to address those circumstances or behaviors that led them to incarceration. The Dually Diagnosed Program motivates and educates inmates diagnosed with both mental health and substance abuse issues on the concepts and principals of recovery. This motivational environment engages the individual in a process to initiate positive behavioral change. The individual is assisted in transitioning to the community with newly developed skills and community-based referrals. Upon admission to the Inmate Re-entry Program, case mangers perform an in-depth holistic assessment, which includes feedback from the inmate's family. Utilizing the information from the assessment process, an individualized transition plan is developed. The plan is subject to change as the needs of the inmate or family change. Inmates participate in a six-week living program to improve their behaviors, attitudes, motivation, independence, and the ability to succeed in the community while maintaining a crime-free lifestyle.

Transition Planning: The main goal of the Inmate Re-entry Program is to create partnerships with community-based agencies to develop transitional services for inmates. Case managers work with inmates and community providers to develop a comprehensive transitional plan to create a seamless return to the community. Community providers are invited into the jail to interview inmates and expedite the process of securing services for inmates and their family members. The case managers contact the appropriate community providers to coordinate service delivery and transportation upon release.

Community Case Management and Follow-Up: STEPS case managers are responsible for meeting with community providers each month to discuss service delivery and further develop and refine the cooperative relationships. As discussed above, case managers coordinate with community providers to ensure that reentry services are in place upon release. Case managers track program participants' progress for a six-month period after release to monitor their length of treatment, work history, social service needs, and other life issues. Case managers are responsible for reporting this information to the Corrections Department after each six-week program cycle.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Through their formal contract for the Inmate Re-entry Program, Orange County Corrections and STEPS have outlined responsibilities for maintaining open communication between corrections staff and STEPS staff. This communication is maintained through attendance at regular Corrections Department meetings and daily staff interaction. The Corrections Department is expanding partnerships with local community agencies by developing a formal, comprehensive transitional services network for the Orange County inmate population.

Figure 1.4

Responsible Transition Program- Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department (Solomon et al., 2008)

Agency Type	Program Focus	Funding Source	Population Served	Number served	Jail Size	Location
Jail	Comprehensive	Local Taxes	Sentenced	1,200/ year	6,800 ADP	Urban
<p>Program Overview:</p> <p>The Miami-Dade County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department’s Responsible Transition Program (RTP) is a prerelease intensive case management program designed to prepare inmates within six months of release for a successful return to the community. Over the course of 16 weeks, each participant receives a personal assessment and participates in a core curriculum as well as any specialized curricula determined by individual assessments. Each participant works with his or her counselor to develop a prerelease plan that is meant to act as a schedule and guide for activity completion and service coordination.</p> <p>Key Program Elements:</p> <p>Reentry Services in Jail: After attending an orientation session of the RTP, interested inmates are given an informal, general assessment that will help the RTP counselor select those potential participants who are willing to comply with program guidelines. Every program participant takes part in a core curriculum and is also able to develop a secondary curriculum for any additional training needs identified. The core curriculum consists of life skills, employability skills, substance abuse prevention, anger control, and educational or vocational training, such as carpentry, plumbing, and technology.</p> <p>Transition Planning: Each participant receives a prerelease plan that aids the counselor in coordinating the participant’s various activities and services and in evaluating the participant’s progress toward his or her established goals. Just prior to release, each participant meets with his or her counselor to review the prerelease plan and ensure that all transition documentation (e.g., completion certificates, referrals, résumé) is in order.</p> <p>Partnerships and Collaboration: The RTP has developed relationships with several community-based organizations to gain a broad perspective on effective correctional programming prior to release. The Miami-Dade County Department of Corrections also has a contractual agreement with the Miami-Dade School Board to provide educational classes and vocational training to inmates.</p>						

Figure 1.5

Assessing a Jail System for Reentry Programming

The purpose of this examination of reentry programming for the local jail is not only to explain the elements of a true reentry program, but to suggest how a local jurisdiction should determine reentry needs for the surrounding community. It is reasonable to assume that what may work in one region of the State, may not work in another. For example, an urban area with an extensive mass-transit system, may not identify repeat criminal traffic offenses, such as driving on a suspended license, as a major contributor to recidivism. Offenders in this type of urban area may not require the same community services or assistance as those located in a more rural region. Community demographics also play a role in the demographics of the inmate population and the assistance necessary for a specifically targeted problem. With this said, reentry programming is not a “one-size-fits-all” solution and must be customized to what will feasibly work best for the targeted population. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010)

For this study, Florida's Polk County jail, the surrounding Polk County community, and Polk County offender demographics will be examined to determine the classification percentages that make up the jail population that contribute to recidivism, identify the average reentry needs of Polk County inmates, identify community resources to enhance jail to community reentry, and recommend reentry initiatives for the Polk County inmate population.

Methods

The current reentry measures by the Polk County Jail and the community partnerships were examined by reviewing program descriptions and touring partnering program sites. This examination of current reentry measures was done for later comparison to survey data that was retrieved. In order to assess the perceived needs of inmates and current practices towards reentry initiated by surrounding local jail systems, two surveys were conducted. One survey targeted Polk County inmates and the second survey targeted local jail systems surrounding Polk County. Data regarding 2011 Year-to-Date offenses by Polk County inmates was also examined to determine the criminal make-up of the jail population.

A sample population of 350 inmates in the Polk County Jail was surveyed to determine what they perceive their reentry needs are (see appendix A). This sample represented sixteen percent (16%) of the total inmate population (2,151) during the survey time; May 2011. The survey requested responses to questions which inquired on the responding inmate's length of sentence, number of arrests, drug and alcohol use and its relation to the offense, education level, driver's license status, transportation availability, residential status, employment goals/status, and types of services needed upon their release from jail.

Twelve local jail systems surrounding Polk County were surveyed (see appendix B) to inquire on current practices at the jail level within similar geographical areas. The local jails surveyed were selected based on their proximity to the Central Florida area; a factor in resources available to inmates based on residency and offender life-styles based on the geographical area. Questions in this survey related to what type of reentry programming was currently conducted, what types of resources were offered to their inmate population, if case management was utilized, and the size of the inmate population.

Data regarding levels and categories of offenses for which inmates were booked into the Polk County Jail during the survey period was analyzed to determine the percentages of inmates charged with misdemeanor non-violent charges. A comparison between the inmate survey feedback and the crime data was made to examine the portion of the inmate population that might be targeted for reentry measures.

Strengths

One strength of the inmate sample survey was the anonymity in the collection process. Inmates were not required to provide their name or booking number when completing the survey. Inmates were informed of the reason for the survey and that it would not negatively impact services available to them at the present time. Inmates were also allowed to enter additional comments regarding specific services that they felt were necessary to successful reentry into the community. The tone of the survey was

positive in order to present a feeling of support and assistance in lieu of an invasion of privacy.

Weaknesses

As with any survey, weaknesses surrounded the possibility that participants might not accurately answer all questions, or feel pressured to answer in a certain way. Inmates responding to the survey questions may have been reluctant to admit to substance use or could have manipulated their answers to present a better reflection of their lifestyle. Some inmates may also perceive the survey to be a measurement of services that were already available. Therefore, the more services they reported a need for, the more may be freely provided. Some of the inmates may have been reluctant to answer at all.

Results

Existing Polk County Jail Measures for Reducing Recidivism

Prior to examining the inmate population, an assessment of current reentry measures in place in the Polk County Jails was conducted. Currently there are various programs in place centered on substance abuse treatment and life-skills training. These measures are:

- the Jail Alternatives to Substance Abuse (JASA) Program;
- the Faith-Based Program;
- G.E.D. preparation, and;
- Mental Health/Drug Courts

The Jail Alternatives to Substance Abuse (JASA) Program is a structured in-jail substance abuse program that assists inmates who have substance and alcohol abuse histories through access to in-jail counseling, group therapy, and structured twelve-step self-analysis. The program is mostly voluntary, with a small percentage of inmates being court-ordered to complete the program.

The Polk County Department of Detention also provides a faith-based, life-skills and counseling program to inmates on a voluntary basis. This program has successfully held a recidivism rate of only 20 percent for the past couple of years, and has assisted inmates by linking them to lay-persons in the surrounding community, teaching faith-based principles towards living, and providing basic life-skills counseling for those in need of them.

Many inmates entering the jail system do not have a high school education or its equivalency. The GED program allows eligible inmates to prepare for the GED exam, and also allows inmates to take the exam while incarcerated. Volunteer members from the Polk County School System are utilized to assist inmates seeking their high school equivalency diploma.

Inmates afflicted with diagnosed mental health issues or drug abuse problems that directly contribute to their offenses are diverted to Mental Health or Drug Courts. This criminal justice programming attempts to divert applicable inmates into mental health or drug treatment centers in lieu of incarceration.

Existing Community Partnerships

A critical factor for successfully reducing inmate recidivism is providing access to community resources upon release. In order to do so, a partnership between the jail and community providers is necessary. Community partnerships with the Polk County Jail system were examined. At present, the Polk County Jail has partnered with a non-profit community organization to assist released inmates with housing, employment, and job-skills training. The Hope Now Transition Center is a residential treatment facility and transition center located in Bartow, FL that specializes in assisting men, and soon women, coming from incarceration back into an independent living situation. As part of the Hope Now program, residents partake in substance abuse education and relapse prevention, life skills training (financial, parenting, etc.), spiritual study, job skills and training (welding, agriculture, small engine repair, etc.), job placement training (resume' writing, interviewing), computer skills training, and educational training (GED, online college, etc.). The typical program length is twelve months, or more depending on resident needs or court stipulations. Most residents enter the Hope Now program as part of a plea agreement that is approved by the court. Prior to being accepted into the program, an individual must complete an application, verification of funds for tuition needs, and background evaluation. Applicants with a violent criminal history or sexual offenses are usually rejected.

Survey Results of Local Jails

Twelve (12) local jail systems were surveyed (see appendix B) regarding reentry measures, with seven (7) responses; a return rate of fifty-eight percent (58%). Of the respondents, the following results were obtained:

Average Inmate Population	Response Percent	Responses
Over 500 to 1,000	28.5%	2
Over 1,000 to 2,000	43 %	3
Over 2,000 to 3,000	0%	0
Over 3,000	28.5%	2

Respondents with Structured Reentry Programs	57%
Respondents with No Reentry Programs in Place	43%

Provide Comprehensive Inmate Needs Assessments	80%
No Comprehensive Inmate Needs Assessment	20%
Individualized Case Management/Mentoring/Advising	80%
No Use of Individualized Case Management	20%

Support Services Offered by 5 Respondents with Reentry Programs	%
Substance Abuse Support and Counseling	80%
Educational Assistance/GED Program	80%
Parenting Classes	40%
Self-Esteem Building	28%
Employment Assistance/Interviewing Skills	20%
Community Outreach and Resource Referrals	80%
Vocational Training	0%
Other	0%

Out of the responding agencies that provide reentry programming to their inmates, twenty percent (20%) do not perform a comprehensive needs assessment of inmates entering their facilities or utilize individualized case management. As discussed earlier, comprehensive case management is conducive to successful reentry because it follows an inmate's progress and creates a supportive, assistive environment. However, comprehensive case management is time and labor intensive. (Solomon et al., 2008) With a drastic decline in the economy and resulting budget cuts a common thread amongst local jail systems, case management may fall to the wayside as agencies struggle with minimal staffing. As good as case management can be for the inmate population, the resulting decrease in recidivism, and for the community, many local governments may not be able to justify the increase in staffing necessary to decrease the inmate population.

Survey Results of Polk County Jail Inmates

A total of 350 surveys (see appendix A) were distributed to various inmate housing populations. Of the 350 surveys, 266 were returned for a return rate of 76%. Forty-four (44), or 17% of the respondents were adult females and the remaining 83% were adult males. All were non-violent offenders. The following results were received:

Length of Sentence	# Respondents	%
<30 Days	102	38%
30-60 days	32	12%
61-90 Days	16	6%
91-180 Days	42	16%
181-270 Days	24	9%
271-365 Days	16	6%
Over 1 Year	34	13%
Number of Times Arrested	# Respondents	%
First Time in Jail	33	12%
2-3 times	77	29%
4-5 times	50	19%
6-7 times	22	8%
8-9 times	24	9%
Over 10 times	60	23%

Served Jail Sentence Before	# Respondents	%
Yes	80	30%
No	186	70%
Arrest Related to Substance Abuse	# Respondents	%
Yes	135	51%
No	131	49%
Received Substance Abuse Treatment	# Respondents	%
Yes	59	44%
No	76	56%
Highest Level of Education	# Respondents	%
No High School	13	5%
Some High School	95	36%
GED (equivalency)	75	28%
High School Grad.	28	11%
Vocational/Trade Sch.	23	8%
Some College	21	8%
College Graduate	8	3%
Other	3	1%
266		100%
Valid Driver's License?	# Respondents	%
Yes	152	57%
No	114	43%
266		100%
Reasons for No Valid DL	# Respondents	%
Suspended/Revoked	87	76%
Do Not Drive	23	20%
Other	4	4%
114		100%
Availability of Transportation	# Respondents	%
Yes	138	52%
No	128	48%
266		100%
Housing/Place to Live Upon Release	# Respondents	%
Yes	123	46%
No	143	54%
266		100%

Family/Friends to Assist Upon Release	# Respondents	%
Yes	135	51%
No	131	49%

266 100%

Job/Employment Prior to arrest	# Respondents	%
Yes	142	53%
No	124	47%

266 100%

Job Waiting Upon Release	# Respondents	%
Yes	82	31%
No	184	69%

266 100%

Plan to Apply for Employment Upon Release	# Respondents	%
Yes	102	55%
No	82	45%

Inmate Reported Needs For Services	# Respondents	%
Life Skills Training (money, parenting, health)	189	71%
Employment Preparation/Placement	194	73%
Substance Abuse Counseling and Support	154	58%
Family Counseling/Marriage Counseling	169	64%
Mental Health Counseling/Support	87	33%
GED Preparation/Assistance	71	27%
Temporary Housing Assistance (Released)	204	77%
Other	30	11%

Inmate Population Charges/Criminal Make-up

The total inmate population of the Polk County Jail was examined; 2,151 inmates. May 2011 data collected from inmate records was organized according to severity of criminal charges; utilizing the highest rated offense for each inmate. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the jail population was Pre-trial Felony offenders; those who

were awaiting trial for a felony offense. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the inmate population were violation of probation (VOP) offenders. Fourteen percent (14%) of the inmate population were sentenced felons. Seven percent (7%) of the inmate population were Pre-trial Misdemeanants, and nine percent (9%) were sentenced for misdemeanor crimes. The figure 1.6 below illustrates the jail population breakdown by level of offense for May 2011:

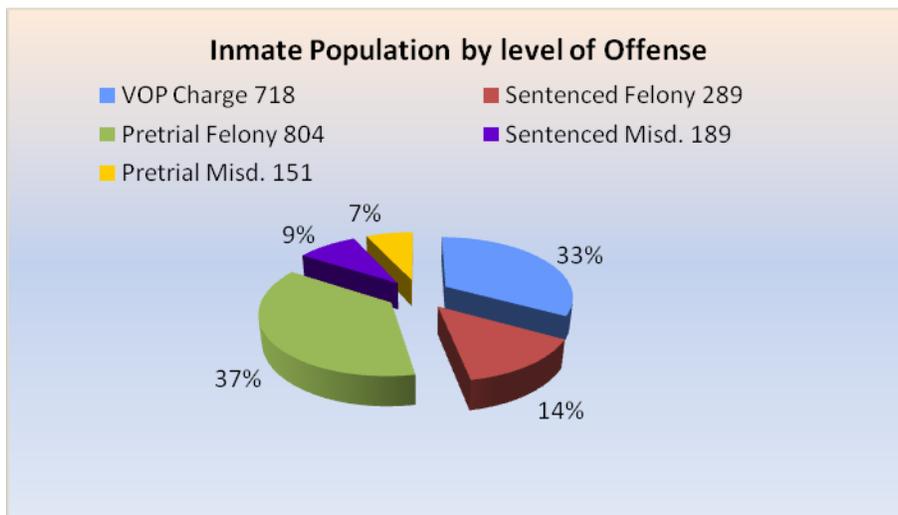


Fig 1.6

Discussion

Existing reentry measures by Polk County focus on substance abuse and mental health counseling/treatment, life-skills awareness and spiritual guidance, GED preparation, and referral to assisting residential programs; the basic components of standard reentry programming. Hope Now, the privately-operated, non-profit residential program has not been in operation long enough to gauge a success rate. Polk County closely compares to surrounding agencies with similar programming in place. However, in contrast to the reentry programming offered by Polk County is the use of individualized case management. As described earlier, a comprehensive, individualized case management system allows for customized reentry assistance by tailoring the services applied to each inmate's needs.

Though a small sample of the inmate population was surveyed, the results can be reasonably assumed to reflect similarly to results from the whole population. There are notable comparisons to be made between the answers provided by jail inmates and habitual offenses; recidivism. Out of 266 inmates, the majority answered that they had been arrested two to three times with the next highest percentage answering that they had been arrested over ten times. This indicates the possible lack of deterrence or rehabilitative affect jail may have on inmates. Seventy percent (70%) of the inmates surveyed answered that they had never served a jail sentence before. This could be explained by the application of probationary sanctions, community service, and the misinterpretation of the question. Some of the inmates may not realize that by the time they are finished with their court process, they have served an amount of time deemed sufficient, and are released with credit for time served. This would equal a jail sentence.

A significant survey response related to jail recidivism is to the questions regarding drug or alcohol use contributing to the inmate's arrest and whether substance abuse treatment was received in the past. Fifty-one percent (51%), over half, of the inmates surveyed, answered that drugs or alcohol use was related to their arrest. Of those affirming their use of drugs or alcohol, fifty-six percent (56%) answered that they had not received substance abuse treatment in the past. It is reasonable to ask whether intensive and monitored substance abuse treatment may have decreased the likelihood of this group of inmates to be arrested or to reoffend.

Another aspect of the inmate survey focused on education level. The majority of the population a total of forty-one percent (41%) of the inmate population did not graduate high school, twenty-eight percent (28%) obtained a GED, only eleven percent (11%) were high school graduates, ten percent (10%) went to vocational/trade school or obtained other certifications, and the remaining twelve percent (12%) attended some college or were college graduates. Out of this population sample, 41% of the inmates may not have met qualifications for most employment.

Forty-three percent (43%) of the inmates surveyed reported that they did not have a valid driver's license. Of those reporting no valid driver's license, seventy-six percent (76%) reported the reason for not having one was due to it being suspended or revoked; a common reason for arrest in Polk County. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the inmates reported the availability of transportation upon their release from jail. Polk County contains largely rural geographical areas which require the availability of personal transportation. Public transportation is mostly confined to the inner-city areas.

The inmate survey revealed that fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents reported that they had no housing or place to live upon their release from jail, but fifty-one percent (51%) reported to have family members or friends to assist them upon their release. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the inmates reported that they were employed prior to their arrest. However, sixty-nine percent (69%) of the inmates reported they would have no job waiting for them upon their release from jail. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the inmates surveyed answered that they planned to apply for a job upon their release from jail.

The inmates surveyed were instructed to select as many items from a list of services that they felt they needed. A true needs assessment may not closely match what the inmates reported simply because most inmates selected them all without reason. Many of the inmates perceived the survey to be a measurement of what services would be offered to them, and selected as many as possible to ensure the most services would be provided. The majority of the inmates selected temporary housing assistance (77%), employment preparation and placement (73%), life skills training (71%), family/marriage counseling (64%), and then substance abuse counseling and support (58%).

A review of the May 2011 inmate population's criminal offense levels shows that the misdemeanor population is a very small portion of the total inmate population (16%). It is not known how many of the inmates charged with felony offenses could be considered non-violent in nature and how many were already on a path towards a lengthy prison sentence. Fourteen percent (14%) of the inmate population were sentenced felons. Inmates sentenced to a firm thirty days or more, the sentenced misdemeanants and felons, would be incarcerated in the local system long enough to enter into and, in some cases, complete a reentry program. This means, of over 2,000 inmates, thirty percent (30%) could be targeted for reentry eligibility. However, without

conducting a needs assessment of this population upon their arrests or case management for those eligible for assistance and programming, it is difficult to determine just how much of the inmate population could be diverted from reoffending.

Conclusion

Reasonable correlations can be drawn from the data reported by the inmate surveys. A comprehensive assessment of inmate needs for the total inmate population could reveal stronger correlations between substance abuse, education levels, driver's license statuses, transportation, housing, employment, and other social, psychological and financial means. Substance abuse is found to be a key contributor to delinquent and criminal behaviors; as seen by a 51% reported factor in the surveyed inmate's arrests. Notable comparisons were made between inmates reporting drugs and alcohol as a factor in their arrest to those reporting not having substance abuse counseling or treatment in the past. Although substance abuse treatment and counseling is available to jail inmates, it is not always mandated as part of their criminal sanctions nor often voluntarily participated in. The same assumptions might be made for all services offered to inmates during and after their incarcerations. Most support programs within the local jail systems are voluntary, such as faith-based programming or GED preparation. The low education levels within the jail population are staggering. Though it is not realistically possible to force an inmate to complete their high school education, it could be more ardently encouraged for better employment opportunities down the road. Comprehensive case-management provides a means of holding inmates accountable for what the inmates, their case managers, the courts, or other entities set as goals. Whether the goal is to maintain sobriety or to obtain a high school education and employment, individualized assessment and then case management follows an inmate from incarceration through their encouraged use of support services to assist them through successful reentry. Comprehensive case management may provide the difference between inmates using the lack of services as an excuse and taking advantage of the services because they know their case manager will follow up with them.

Another notable finding that should be further explored in the total inmate population is the prevalence of invalid driver's licenses due to being suspended or revoked. Those suspensions not related solely to substance abuse and impaired driving may be better dealt with through programming designed to assist inmates in getting their licenses back. Thus, a habitual pattern of "driving while license suspended" could be broken before it becomes too big of an issue to handle. Without a mass-transit system, people living in Polk County without a means of transportation or the ability to operate a vehicle, have great difficulties in getting to work or appointments. Not having a valid driver's license has a heavy impact on maintaining a job and getting to where one needs to go; quality of life.

A noticeable finding in the inmate surveys focused on employment with a majority of inmates reporting they would be unemployed upon their release from jail. It can be assumed that this percentage could increase if the total jail population were surveyed. Vocational training and job placement is no easy task in the current economy. As of July 2011, the National unemployment rate was 9.1 %, Florida's unemployment rate was 10.6%, and the unemployment rate in Polk County was 11.7%. (bls.gov, 2011) These unemployment rates stack considerable odds in the face of services attempting

to find job placement for persons with criminal records. Until the job market, and the economy for that matter, takes a turn for the better, it may prove very difficult to successfully reintegrate inmates into the community and have them maintain sobriety and gainful, and most of all, legal employment.

A solid reentry program for any local jail should begin with individualized inmate assessment to determine what needs exist and what weaknesses, habits, or behaviors are contributing to their habitual patterns of arrest and jail incarcerations. Standard support and educational programs should be available to all inmates, but should target those inmates shown through assessment to be in need of such services. Individualized comprehensive case management should be applied for those inmates shown through assessment to need reentry planning. Follow-up case management, transitional housing, or mentoring should continue after an inmate is released. Managed inmate reentry is costly in a shaky economy rife with budget cuts. However, it is also costly not to apply it.

Lieutenant Kimberley Marcum has worked for the Polk County Sheriff's Office for sixteen years. Hired in 1995 as a detention deputy, she has served varied aspects of assignments as housing detention deputy, special needs unit deputy, accreditation inspector, booking sergeant, jail housing sergeant, inmate programs/transportation lieutenant, and in her current assignment; Inmate Intake Section Lieutenant. Lt. Marcum has an A.S. Degree in Criminal Justice from Polk State University, a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from Western Governors University and a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from Troy University.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Polk County Inmate Survey

Survey: Post-Release Needs of Sentenced Polk County Jail Inmates

This survey is being done in order to gain an understanding of what your reentry needs are as an inmate sentenced to the Polk County Jail. You do not have to write your name on this paper and your identity will not be shared with anyone. The information learned from your answers will be able to tell us what programs or assistance might be a benefit to inmates during their transition from jail back into the community. Thank you for completing this survey, and please answer the following questions with only one answer, unless you are given directions to do so.

Date _____ Age _____ Male Female

1. For how long are you sentenced? (check the highest number of months you are sentenced)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 30 Days | <input type="checkbox"/> 91 – 180 Days (over 3 – 6 mos) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30 - 60 Days (1 – 2 mos) | <input type="checkbox"/> 181 - 270 Days (over 6 – 9 mos) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 61 – 90 Days (over 2 – 3 mos) | <input type="checkbox"/> 271 – 365 Days (over 9 – 12 mos) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Over 1 year (consecutive Sentences) | |

2. How many times have you been arrested (do not count re-arrests for the same charge)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> This is my first time in jail | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 8 times |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 times | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 – 10 times |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Times | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 10 times |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 5 times | |

3. Have you served a jail sentence prior to your current sentence? Yes No

4. Do you use alcohol or drugs? Yes No

5. Have you received substance abuse treatment in the past? Yes No

6. What is your highest level of education? (check the highest level)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I did not go to high school | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> Some College |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school | <input type="checkbox"/> GED (high school equivalency) | <input type="checkbox"/> College Graduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational/Trade School | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

7. Do you have a valid driver's license? Yes No

If "No", why?

- Suspended/Revoked I do not drive Other _____

8. Do you have reliable transportation outside of jail? Yes No

9. Do you have a place to live when you are released from jail? Yes No

10. Do you have family members or friends to assist you when you are released? Yes No

11. Did you have a job when you were arrested? Yes No

12. Do you have a job waiting for you when you are released? Yes No

13. Do you plan to apply for a job when you are released from jail? Yes No

14. Please check the box next to the services you feel you are in need of (*check all that apply*):

- Life Skills Training (money management, parenting, health)
 - Job Placement, Application/Interview Training
 - Substance Abuse Counseling and Support
 - Family Counseling/Marriage Counseling
 - Mental Health Counseling/Support Services
 - GED Preparation/Assistance
 - Temporary Housing Assistance After Release
 - Other
-
-

Appendix B: Reentry Measures by Other Agencies Survey

SurveyMonkey - Survey Results

Page 1 of 2

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Reentry Measures Used by Florida's County Jails Edit

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- [Filter Responses](#)
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Default Report [+ Add Report](#)

Response Summary

Total Started Survey: 7
Total Completed Survey: 7 (100%)

PAGE: REENTRY MEASURES FOR FLORIDA'S COUNTY INMATES

1. Please enter your agency here. [Download](#)

	Response Count
Show Responses	7
answered question	7
skipped question	0

2. What is your total inmate population? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Over 100 to 500	0.0%	0
Over 500 to 1,000	28.6%	2
Over 1,000 to 2,000	42.9%	3
Over 2,000 to 3,000	0.0%	0
Over 3,000	28.6%	2
Other (please specify) Show Responses		1
answered question		7
skipped question		0

3. Does your agency currently have a program which primarily focuses on inmate transition and reentry into the community? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	57.1%	4
No	42.9%	3
Other (please specify)		0
answered question		7
skipped question		0

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/MvSurvey/Responses.aspx?sm=02sx996XTrmvc7mI.n9bA> 8/7/2011

4. If your agency currently has a reentry program, does it involve a comprehensive inmate needs assessment? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	57.1%	4
No	14.3%	1
Non-Applicable	28.6%	2
answered question		7
skipped question		0

5. If your agency currently has a structured reentry program, does it include individualized case management or mentoring/advising by either agency staff or community resources? [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	57.1%	4
No	14.3%	1
Non-Applicable	28.6%	2
answered question		7
skipped question		0

6. If your agency currently has a structured reentry program, what resources or support services does it provide to inmates prior to release from jail? (check all that apply) [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Substance Abuse Support and Counseling	57.1%	4
Educational Assistance/GED Program	57.1%	4
Parenting Classes	28.6%	2
Basic Life Skills Training	28.6%	2
Self-Esteem Building	28.6%	2
Employment Assistance/Interviewing Skills	14.3%	1
Community Outreach and Resource Referrals	57.1%	4
Vocational Training	0.0%	0
Non-Applicable	42.9%	3
Other (please specify)		0
answered question		7
skipped question		0