

Research in Review

Bureau of Management Information Services

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Special Focus on *Community-Based Corrections and Community Reentry*

The fourth issue of Volume 5 of *Research in Review* includes reviews of four recently published studies on the topic of community-based corrections and prisoner reentry into the community. Specifically, these papers examine issues surrounding the effectiveness of community-based programs, trends in the U.S. parole system, and the community role of victims in reentry. The first review, of the Ohio halfway house study, was prepared by James E. Horne, the State-County Data Analyst in PRSG. The review of the article by Travis and Lawrence was prepared by Megan Dunn, a Pennsylvania Management Associate who recently completed a rotation in PRSG. We are grateful to both of them for their contributions to this issue. Finally, this issue also contains an index for Volume 5.

SUMMARY AND MAJOR FINDINGS

Latessa, Edward J. and Lowenkamp, Christopher T. 2002. "Evaluation of Ohio's Community Based Correctional Facilities and Halfway House Programs." Page 3
<http://www.uc.edu/criminaljustice/Project%20Reports/HH%20CBCF%20Report1.pdf>.

This article is an evaluation of two types of community-based programs in Ohio: Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs) and Halfway Houses (HWHs). The most important outcome of this study is the validation of the "risk principle" within a community-based correctional setting. More specifically, the study provides the following conclusions: (1) moderate and high-risk offenders benefit the most from community-based programming, (2) placing low-risk offenders in intensive, community-based programming has a null effect on recidivism rates and may actually increase recidivism rates for this group, and (3) a validated risk-assessment tool should be utilized for making placement decisions into community-based facilities. The lead author, Dr. Edward Latessa, has also conducted four program reviews within the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections over the past several years.

Marion, Nancy. 2002. "Effectiveness of Community-Based Correctional Programs: A Case Study." *The Prison Journal*, 82(4), 478-497. Page 6

This article provides a summary of a case study on the effectiveness of various community-based correctional programs in Ohio. The author challenges the assumptions that community-based alternatives are cheaper than prisons, are more effective than prisons in reducing recidivism, and significantly reduce prison overcrowding. The findings suggest that some community-based options are not more effective in

reducing recidivism, may not be more cost-effective in the long run, and only have a limited capability to reduce prison overcrowding.

Travis, Jeremy and Lawrence, Sarah. 2002. "Beyond the Prison Gates: The State of Parole in America." Page 8
http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310583_Beyond_prison_gates.pdf.

This report examines the significant changes that the American parole system has undergone in the past 20 years. Findings include the following: (1) far fewer prisoners are now released by parole boards, (2) the caseloads of parole officers has increased significantly, (3) the number of parole revocations has increased dramatically, and (4) parole violators now make up a significant proportion of state prison admissions. Yet these trends mask substantial variations at the state level. Data is skewed by the fact that 62 percent of the U.S. parole population is in five states. Some states have abolished parole boards. Others have seen a significant increase in unconditional releases ("max-outs"). The authors conclude by raising several research questions about the role of parole in American sentencing policy that must be further explored.

Herman, Susan and Wasserman, Cressida. 2001. "A Role for Victims in Offender Reentry." *Crime & Delinquency*, 47(3), 429-443. Page 10

This article suggests that victims' relatively new rights to participate in many critical stages of the criminal justice process have a direct impact on the success of prisoner reentry. The authors suggest four ways that victims can become directly involved in prisoner reentry: (1) by submitting a victim impact statement during sentencing, (2) by exercising rights during the parole decision process such as attending parole hearings, requesting notification of parole decisions, and requesting victim restitution as a condition of parole, (3) by providing relevant information to a parole agent about an offender's post-release activity in the community (e.g., if the offender has contacted the victim, has paid restitution on time, has become involved in further criminal activity, or has attended mandated treatment), and (4) by becoming involved in a wide range of victim programs such as victim impact panels, reentry courts, victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, reparative boards, and circle sentencing.

Future volumes of RIR will include pieces on victims' issues, offender assessment and family/religious programming, as well as findings from evaluation projects currently supported by the PA DOC. We at RIR hope that you find these papers to be informative, practical and relevant to your work in corrections.

Latessa, Edward J. and Lowenkamp, Christopher T. 2002. "Evaluation of Ohio's Community
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A strong body of research exists on the effectiveness of prison programming. Unfortunately this research has not, for the most part, been replicated for community-based correctional programming. Recently, an evaluation of community-based correctional programs was conducted in Ohio with the intent of identifying long-term effects on recidivism rates. Two types of community-based programs were studied: Community-Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs) and Halfway Houses (HWHs). The study was contracted out through the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) and was conducted in Fiscal Year 1999 by the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati. The evaluation focused on determining the following: (1) identifying the major program components of each of the CBCFs and HWHs included in the study, (2) developing a profile of offenders in CBCFs and HWHs by matching them to a comparison group on key characteristics, (3) determining program success rates and differences between successful and unsuccessful program completers, and (4) measuring the post-release recidivism rates of offenders in CBCFs and HWH programs versus comparison groups.

Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs)

In Ohio, CBCF programs are designed as alternatives to incarceration and receive offenders sentenced directly from Ohio’s courts of Common Pleas under probation supervision. All CBCF programs in this study reported offering education, employment, and substance abuse programming as part of their core services. In addition, a large proportion of the CBCF programs also reported offering anger management, cognitive based groups, mental health counseling, and financial counseling. Slightly less than half of the CBCF programs reported offering sex offender treatment. After completing a broad range of treatment in a CBCF, an offender can be released to a full time job in a minimum of 135 days and up to a maximum of 180 days.

The study compared treatment and comparison groups for 15 CBCF programs in Ohio. The treatment group was comprised of offenders sentenced directly to a CBCF. The comparison group was comprised of parolees who were released from an Ohio Correctional Institution within the same fiscal year without placement into a halfway house. Treatment group cases were matched with comparison group cases by county of conviction and gender. Cases were further matched by crime type in instances where treatment cases were coded as sex offenders. In addition, an “in-house” risk scale was developed in order to control for level of risk. This risk scale considered a host of weighted factors in determining risk level (e.g., prior arrest history, history of drug/alcohol use, education level, employment status, etc.).

Analysis of the collected data on CBCF participants indicated that the typical offender referred to a CBCF is a white, single male with an average age of 29. Of the CBCF participants, only 21 percent were unsuccessfully terminated from the program. Factors that were significant predictors of unsuccessful discharge were risk level and race. Black offenders were unsuccessfully terminated at a significantly higher rate than white offenders and high-risk offenders were unsuccessfully terminated at a significantly higher rate than low-risk offenders.

For this study, four measures of recidivism were used: (1) any re-arrest, (2) reincarceration for a technical violation, (3) reincarceration for a new offense, and (4) reincarceration for any reason. When comparing the re-arrest rates between CBCF participants and the comparison group, CBCF participants actually had a significantly higher re-arrest rate. When using reincarceration as the measure of recidivism, CBCF participants had a slightly lower reincarceration rate but the difference (a three percent difference) was not statistically significant. When reincarceration rates were broken down by risk category, the high-risk offenders in CBCFs demonstrated statistically significant reductions in reincarceration rates. The reincarceration rate for low-risk offenders in CBCFs was actually higher than the reincarceration rate for low-risk offenders in the comparison group. Hence, the conclusion from this study is that CBCF programs are more effective in reducing recidivism rates for moderate to high-risk offenders.

Halfway House Programs (HWH)

A similar analysis was performed on data from Ohio's HWH programs, again with the intent of identifying major program components and the program's effect on recidivism rates. Ohio's HWHs are comparable to Pennsylvania's Community Corrections Centers (CCCs) and Contract Corrections Facilities (CCFs). Halfway Houses in Ohio hold offenders who are paroled or released on post-release control (PRC) from state institutions, parole/PRC violators placed in a HWH as a sanction, and offenders under transitional control (similar to pre-release cases in Pennsylvania). A total of 37 HWHs were included in the study. Almost all HWH programs reported offering substance abuse and employment programming. In addition, roughly two-thirds offer education and financial management classes and just over half offer cognitive-based groups. Anger management is offered by less than half of the HWHs and mental health services are offered at one-third of the HWHs. Five HWH programs reported offering sex offender treatment. The average stay in a HWH is four months.

Statistics on program termination status indicated that 64 percent of the offenders who were discharged from HWH programs successfully completed the program. In exploring factors related to unsuccessful discharge from an HWH program, only two factors (gender and risk level) resulted in an increase in the likelihood of an unsuccessful discharge. Males were 25 percent more likely than females to be unsuccessfully terminated and high-risk offenders were almost twice as likely as low-risk offenders to be unsuccessfully terminated.

The descriptive statistics for HWH programs compared treatment and comparison groups broken down by geographic setting (i.e., urban, metro, and rural), referral type (i.e., parole/PRC, parole/PRC violator, and transitional control), and risk level. Parolees in HWHs were compared to parolees who were released from an Ohio Correctional Institution within the same fiscal year without placement into a halfway house. Parole violators in HWHs were compared to parolees who were released from an Ohio Correctional Institution following a return to prison due to a parole/PRC violation. Offenders under transitional control were matched with offenders under transitional control but not placed in a HWH program.

Both re-arrest and reincarceration rates were lower for HWH program participants than for those in

the comparison groups. Consistent with the findings from the analysis of CBCFs, the high-risk offenders in HWHs demonstrated the largest reduction in re-arrest and reincarceration rates compared to the high-risk offenders in the comparison group. When controlling for referral type (i.e., parole/PRC, parole violation, and transitional control), the effects of treatment for all three groups was strongest and most consistently seen with the moderate and high-risk offenders. Low-risk offenders who were referred to HWH programs on parole/PRC or under transitional control actually performed significantly worse when compared to respective comparison groups. When controlling for geographic setting, rural HWH program participants demonstrated the greatest treatment effect with an eleven percent difference in reincarceration rates between HWH participants and offenders in the comparison group. Only a one percent decrease in reincarceration rates was found for urban HWH program participants. All of the HWH programs in each of the three geographic settings indicated a significant reduction in recidivism rates for high-risk offenders. Only rural HWH programs indicated a significant reduction in recidivism rates for low-risk offenders and the probability of recidivism actually increased for low risk offenders in urban and metro HWH programs.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study provides validation within a community-based correctional setting of the need to target treatment towards high-risk cases. This is commonly referred to as the “risk principle”. More specifically, the study provides the following conclusions: (1) Moderate and high-risk offenders benefit the most from community-based correctional programming, (2) Placing low-risk offenders in intensive, community-based programming at best leads to a costly null effect and at worst can actually increase the risk of re-offending; (3) A validated risk-assessment tool should be utilized for making effective placement decisions into community-based correctional facilities.

Marion, Nancy. 2002. “Effectiveness of Community-Based Correctional Programs: A Case Study.” *The Prison Journal*, 82(4), 478-497.

It is commonly suggested that community-based alternatives are cheaper than prisons, are more effective than traditional prisons in reducing recidivism, and are useful in reducing overcrowding in prisons and jails. On all three claims, however, the evidence is mixed. Many researchers find that

alternative sanctions are not necessarily more effective than traditional prisons in reducing recidivism rates. Several studies have demonstrated that community-based correctional options are cost-effective but other studies indicate that the intensive treatment programs and tightened control over inmates that is found in alternative placements tend to increase the costs of community corrections when compared to traditional institutional placements. The evidence is mixed on the ability of community-based corrections to reduce overcrowding as well. Many suggest that community-based correctional options simply “widen the net” of those that fall under the control of the criminal justice system. In other words, prison populations would remain stable while community-based corrections programs would become populated with offenders who would not normally receive a sentence of incarceration. The author of this article utilizes a case study approach to examine the empirical evidence of these three claims within the Ohio criminal justice system.

Consistent with the mixed research to date, this study revealed mixed conclusions on the effectiveness of community-based correctional options when compared with traditional prisons. Most of the community-based programs in this study were found to be at least as effective, if not slightly more effective, in reducing recidivism rates. Ohio’s community-based correctional options were broken down into six categories: Community-Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs), Halway Houses (HWHs), work release programs, day reporting programs, home incarceration, and drug courts. A CBCF receives clients who are sentenced directly from the courts. Recidivism rates, as measured by reimprisonment in a state prison, showed that CBCF clients who successfully completed the program return to prison at about the same rate as inmates from a traditional correctional setting.

In Ohio, HWHs operate similar to Pennsylvania’s Community Corrections Centers (CCCs) or Contract Corrections Facilities (CCFs) and receive offenders who are paroled or pre-released from a state prison. The recidivism rate for successful completers of HWH programs is only slightly lower than the recidivism rate of those released from state prisons. However, it was noted that ninety percent of the clients who failed to complete the HWH program were rearrested or convicted, and more than half returned to prison. These rates are much higher than the recidivism rate of those released from Ohio prisons during the same period, indicating that successful completion of the HWH program is crucial. Even for successful completers of the HWH program, however, recidivism rates are not significantly lower.

Recidivism rates for both work release programs and day reporting programs are lower than the recidivism rate for inmates released from traditional prisons but this may be attributable to the fact that clients in these programs have typically committed offenses that are less serious in nature than prison inmates and may therefore be at a lower risk of re-offending. A preliminary analysis of data on home incarceration programs and drug courts indicates that these programs seem to reduce recidivism rates, however this conclusion is tentative because of the lack of available data at the time of the study.

In examining the cost effectiveness of community-based programs, only CBCFs and HWHs were included. The reported cost figures indicate that community corrections programs provide the state of Ohio with some savings initially but simply as a function of the shorter stays in community-based facilities. Considering that the recidivism rates for both CBCFs and HWHs are not significantly lower than the recidivism rate of those released from prison, the author suggests that community-based programs are not necessarily saving money for the state of Ohio but are simply delaying the costs of long-term imprisonment in a correctional facility. Given the extremely high recidivism rates of unsuccessful completers of both CBCFs and HWHs, the state may actually end up paying twice-once for the stay in a community setting and once for a prison term.

The study was unable to quantitatively examine whether community-based programs reduced overcrowding in prisons and jails. Instead, the author relied on client information and detailed program descriptions in order to determine if community-based programs in Ohio are receiving the types of offenders who would normally serve a prison or jail sentence. The conclusion is that many of the clients in the community-based programs would probably not have been sentenced to prison for their offenses but may have been sentenced to local jails. Therefore, community-based programs probably do not reduce prison overcrowding to any large degree but may reduce overcrowding in local jails.

Conclusions from this study must be taken carefully. The data represents only a single case study of Ohio and the findings are not necessarily representative of community-based options in other states.

Results should not be generalized to other states without examining the comparability of program components and clients. Even within the study, the comparability between offenders in prison and offenders in certain community-based correctional options are questionable. In addition, the lack of complete statistics on many of the programs is a serious concern. The most important conclusion of this study is that it should not be taken for granted that community-based correctional options are more effective in reducing recidivism, more cost-effective, or successful at all in reducing prison overcrowding. Exploring the effectiveness of community-based correctional programs is a relatively new endeavor. As is often the case among most new research endeavors, further research is required.

Travis, Jeremy and Lawrence, Sarah. 2002. "Beyond the Prison Gates: The State of Parole in America."

Over the past 20 years, parole has undergone various changes in America. This report examines three dimensions of the change in the American parole system: (1) the extent to which parole boards make decisions to release inmates from prison, (2) trends in the population under parole supervision, and (3) trends in the use of parole revocation (the decision to send a parolee back to prison). The wide variety in the degree of change among various states is coupled with a nationwide increase in

the prison population over the past 25 years. This article examines statistical data relating to the aforementioned changes in order to raise research questions that may lead to a decrease in recidivism.

Under the original design of the parole system, a judge typically offered an indeterminate sentence, specifying a minimum and maximum term to be served. The parole board then evaluated prisoners for parole based on the prisoner's justification for release, including the employment and housing plan he/she designed. Parolees were then supervised while they carried out the remainder of their sentence in the community. Parole officers were at liberty to revoke parole if the parolee had violated a condition of parole (technical offense) or committed a new crime (new crime offense). However, in the past decade, power has shifted from the executive branch (i.e., parole board) to the legislative branch, bringing about an increased use of determinate sentencing and changing the role of the parole board.

In the past decade, the population of offenders under parole supervision in America has increased thirty percent. Aggregate data on the parole population is skewed to a large degree because five states make up 62 percent of the entire United State's parole population (California, Texas, Pennsylvania, New York, and Illinois). While the median parole rate is 156 per 100,000 residents, the rates in these states vary between 300 and 900 per 100,000 residents. Therefore, the heavy weight of these five states on the aggregate parole population must be accounted for in interpreting national data.

The first major shift in parole has been a reduction in the reliance on parole boards to make release decisions. In the mid 1970s, 65 percent of parolees were released by a parole board decision, as compared to 24 percent in 1999. Some states have abolished parole altogether. While a smaller share of release decisions are now made by parole boards, prisons are releasing more offenders than ever as a result of increases in prison populations (144,000 releases in 1976 as compared to 500,000 in 1999). Hence, the percentage of parolees mandatorily released ("max-outs") has increased nationwide. There is a wide degree of variation in the mechanism of release between states, however. For example, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Washington release 95 percent of inmates using a parole board while California, Illinois, and New Hampshire release less than one percent of inmates in this manner. One potential implication of decreasing a parole board's involvement in making release decisions is that a decrease in prisoner responsibility will ensue, as prisoners who are not released by a parole board do not need to prepare a justification for release or housing and employment plans.

The second major shift in parole has been an increase in the number of parolees released back into the community without any supervision. As a result of the reduced reliance on parole boards to make release decisions, more offenders "max out" and go straight from prison to communities, without any transitional supervision or support. However, the share of parolees released unconditionally (without a parole board) is still proportionately small. As with other trends in parole, the proportion of released offenders under some sort of supervision varies between states, with a range of 50 to nearly 100 percent under supervision. The overall decrease in the use of

community supervision is also compared to trends in prison populations. It is noted that expansion in the use of incarceration does not necessarily mean expansion in the use of parole supervision. Pennsylvania currently has a ratio of 0.45 prisoners to 1 parolee while Maine has a 60 to 1 ratio. While supervision provides a transition back to the community, states with higher proportions of prisoners released conditionally (i.e., under parole supervision) have higher recidivism rates. This may be a reflection of the fact that there is no such thing as a technical parole violation for an offender release unconditionally and typically technical parole violations make up a large percentage of the recidivism rate in many states.

The third major shift in parole has been an increase in the population of parole violators. The number of parole violators admitted to state prisons increased sevenfold from 1980 to 2000. In fact, the number of parole violators admitted to state prisons in 2000 is close to the total number of prisoners in 1980. In addition, a growing share of state prisoners are parole violators, from 17 percent in 1980 to 35 percent in 1999. Approximately one-third of parole violators are returned for a new conviction while two-thirds are returned for a technical violation. As with the other facets of parole, all of these rates vary significantly among states. For example, Florida admits less than ten percent of prisoners as parole violators while California admits 67 percent of prisoners as parole violators.

The authors conclude by raising new research aims, including: 1) Better understanding better how parole officers determine a violation of parole conditions, 2) Delineating between new violations and technical violations, 3) Understanding the decision-making process of parole boards in returning a parolee to custody, 4) Determining whether parole supervision is effective in reducing crime and easing reintegration, and, if so, for which kind of offenders, and 5) Deciding whether parole policies that send offenders back to prison are worth the costs. Research in these areas could lead to the design of a more effective model of reentry.

This article provides a well-researched summary of trends in the parole system during the past 20 years and raises important research questions. However, due to the wide degree of variation in each state's parole policy, data from this report can easily be misleading. In order to design policy recommendations based on the statistical findings in this report, future research must further disaggregate data to the state level.

Herman, Susan and Wasserman, Cressida. 2001. "A Role for Victims in Offender Reentry." *Crime & Delinquency*, 47(3), 429-443.

At the same time that *reentry* has become the new buzzword in correctional reform, the relationship between victims of crime and the criminal justice system has undergone some fundamental changes in recent years. The authors of this article suggest that a victim's relatively new rights to attend and participate in many critical stages of the criminal justice process have a direct impact on prisoner reintegration. Victims can provide decision makers with important facts and information, offer unique experiential expertise, and encourage offender accountability. This article defines specific

roles of victims and victim organizations in the reintegration process.

The article begins with some observations on the nature of the relationship between victims and offenders. The common misperception is that most victims have no previous relationship to offenders, are far removed from the world of offenders, and are generally disinterested in the rehabilitation or successful reentry of offenders. On the contrary, evidence suggests that a large percentage of victims knew their perpetrators prior to the offense occurring. This is particularly true for certain offenses such as rape and sexual assault. Therefore, victims often have an immediate vested interest in the successful reentry of inmates into the community.

For victims, the repercussions of offender reentry depends on factors such as the nature and seriousness of the crime, the length of time that has passed since the crime was committed, the economic situation of the victim, the relationship of the victim to the offender, the probability of an encounter after the offender is released, the strength of the family and social network, and the extent of community-based support services and resources. The victim can provide insightful information into all of these factors at various stages in the criminal justice process.

The authors of this article suggest four ways that victims can become directly involved in prisoner reentry. First, every state now grants the right for victims to make some sort of victim impact statement during sentencing. The extent of admissible victim impact statements varies from state to state but often includes a description of the harm (physical, psychological, financial) caused by the offense and a recommendation for sentencing. Second, victims can exercise specific rights during the parole decision process. Again, depending on the state, these rights can include the right to be informed or notified about parole-related events or proceedings, the right to be heard on matters relating to the offender's parole, the right to be present at parole proceedings, and the right to an order of restitution as a condition of parole. Third, victims can often provide relevant information to a parole agent about an offender's post-release activity. A parole agent may not be aware of whether an offender has contacted a victim, an offender has paid restitution on time, an offender has attended mandated treatment, or an offender is involved in further criminal activity. Finally, victims can become involved through a wide range of victim-offender communication programs including victim impact panels, victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, reparative boards, and circle sentencing. Such programs are targeted at generating remorse that will change offender behavior in the future.

The authors also point out the role of victim advocate groups in involving victims in the successful reentry of offenders. Impact of Crime on Victims (IOC) classes aim to educate offenders on various topics such as how to develop non-abusive relationships and how to respect the rights of other people. Many sex offender reentry programs also address victim-specific issues relating to sexual crimes. Victims can aid in designing the curricula for such programs, providing feedback to teachers, and participating themselves.

As a mechanism for holding offenders accountable to victims, the U.S. Department of Justice has proposed the concept of reentry courts. Under this concept, judges will take on responsibility for

overseeing and monitoring offender reentry and restitution. Reentry courts are part of the Justice Department's Reentry Partnerships Initiative. This initiative is designed to facilitate collaborative strategic reentry planning involving judges, state correctional agencies, local law enforcement, victims, victim advocates, and community-based organizations.

This article clearly points out the indispensable role that victims can fulfill in the offender reintegration process. The implication for correctional professionals is that victim participation should be reinforced, welcomed and encouraged. Although further empirical research is needed to support many of the claims of this article, the authors provide a well-informed starting point for conceptualizing the role of correctional professionals in facilitating reentry initiatives involving linkages between victims and offenders.

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