

# PROSPECTS FOR PRISONER REENTRY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prisoner reentry has emerged as an important policy issue on the public agenda over the past several years. State legislative leaders, facing bleak fiscal times, have begun applying the brakes to soaring correctional expenditures and are becoming more open to seeing whether reentry programming can slow the proverbial revolving prison door. Local law enforcement and community activists have raised concerns about the deleterious social effects of large numbers of prisoners released from federal, state, and local correctional institutions who often return to poor, urban neighborhoods unprepared and perhaps unwilling to lead law-abiding lives. In every state, correctional practitioners, policy makers, and other stakeholders are discussing the potential for prisoner reentry programs to provide some solutions to these problems and have been examining various proposed conceptual designs for successful reentry programs. To this end, in 2002 the federal government issued \$100 million in grants to states to fund prisoner reentry initiatives over the next three years.

As with any policy issue, seemingly promising solutions to well-defined problems often fail during implementation. This report grounds a discussion of the implementation challenges to prisoner reentry by telling the story of the design and execution of a promising prisoner reentry program run at a local correctional facility in Boston. The experience of the Offender Reentry Program (ORP) at the Suffolk County House of Correction reveals that, even when programs are well designed, well funded, and well administered, and are delivering measurable and statistically significant program effects, implementation challenges still arise; the internal capacity of the correctional facilities and the external authorizing environment defined by statutes, administrative regulations, policy makers, and other agencies can substantially compromise overall program effectiveness. In the case of the ORP, these constraints have led to persistent underenrollment in this very modest program, despite the fact that large numbers of prisoners who could have benefited from the program are released from this correctional facility each day. This is particularly unfortunate given that early results from the ORP indicate substantially lower recidivism among program participants (13% over eight months for graduates and 26% for nongraduates) relative to a comparison group (40%).

The following four propositions regarding prisoner reentry have been generalized from the lessons learned in implementing the Offender Reentry Program:

**1. Correctional institutions do not have strong incentives to offer reentry programs. Nonetheless, some agencies do initiate reentry efforts.**

While societal benefits for effective prisoner reentry effort are considerable but diffuse, the costs in terms of resources and liability of failure are borne almost exclusively by correctional systems and agencies. This imbalance of costs and benefits has contributed to the significant retrenchment in correctional reentry programs over the past 30 years.

**2. The external environment drives the available options.**

Given the widely disparate organization of state criminal justice and social service systems and differences in sentencing laws, enforcement practices, and restrictions on “step down” transitional correctional programs, reentry looks different in every state. In states with unified correctional systems, coordinated pre- and post-release treatment and supervision will be less problematic than in states where institutional and post-release correctional supervision are conducted by different agencies with different decision-making processes, operating philosophies, and practices.

**3. Institutional operations and policies often get in the way of reentry in correctional settings.**

Correctional institutions have become increasingly difficult environments in which to provide treatment services. Prison crowding, relative decreases in prison programs, and longer prison sentences have resulted in inmates being less prepared for release. Institutional policies combined with external factors can skew the allocation of limited reentry resources to inmates who need them least. The predisposition of correctional staff toward reentry programming can prove self-fulfilling, with those supporting such programs providing able assistance and seeing measurable results, and with those dismissing such programs providing obstacles to their proper implementation and seeing program failures.

**4. While analysts and practitioners agree about the need for support for inmates reentering the community, there is no clear consensus on reentry treatment models or the rank ordering of inmates to participate in such programs in terms of either deservingness, greatest need, or potential highest public safety return on investment.**

Inmates have complex and interrelated needs. No one treatment domain will address the multiplicity of needs. Also, given scarce reentry resources, it is often not clear who should receive these services. Should those with the greatest need receive reentry resources? Or is choosing inmates who have the greatest potential to succeed in the programs a more pragmatic and effective strategy?

The challenges to prisoner reentry cover a broad range of issues:

- *Political*—who bears the risk of failure?
- *Structural*—how can coordinated treatment and supervision reentry services be implemented before and after release in fragmented correctional systems?
- *Organizational*—how should individualized reentry assistance be provided to the huge inflow and outflow of offenders who can move quite unpredictably through and between the different correctional agencies that have evolved largely to “process” but not “treat” offenders?
- *Programmatic*—what programs should be offered, and when?

If not carefully considered, these enormous implementation challenges may squander this unique window of opportunity to reassess the three-decade movement of corrections away from rehabilitative ideals and post-release support and supervision. Unfortunately, failure to address implementation challenges could reaffirm the cynical notion that “nothing works” in offender programming, without giving reentry programming a fair chance to prove its effectiveness.

# I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, political leaders, criminal justice practitioners, and researchers from diverse policy areas have expressed alarm about the effects on communities of record numbers of prisoners being released from the nation's prisons because of the fourfold expansion of the prison population during the past 30 years (Tonry and Petersilia 1999; Travis and National Institute of Justice (U.S.) 2000; Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001). State and federal studies consistently show that almost two-thirds of released prisoners are re-arrested and two-fifths are reincarcerated within three years of release (Beck and Shipley 1989; Langan and Levin 2002; Matthews Hoover and Kohl 2001).

In tandem with the concern for public safety is a concern for quality of life in the poor and disadvantaged neighborhoods where prisoners return in large concentration (Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999; Petersilia 2000). Medically, diseases such as HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis, and mental health disorders among prisoners constitute a sizable percentage of all cases in the U.S. population (Gaes and Kendig 2002; Maruschak and Beck 2001; McDonald 1999; Rossman 2001). Ex-prisoners crowd homeless shelters, and they often have intertwined education, employment, housing, family, and health needs that tax government agencies and private and nonprofit organizations that provide services in these areas (Austin, Irwin, and Hardyman 2001; Hairston 2001; Rose and Clear 2001). Given these concerns, different constituencies have come to understand their vested stake in developing more coherent and robust systems to "reenter" prisoners into communities. They recognize that this is not a policy problem that the correctional field can or should be left to address alone, and have enlarged the goals beyond prisoner rehabilitation to include enhancing and safeguarding communities.<sup>1</sup>

Boston's celebrated success at using community partnerships and coordinated government efforts in the 1990s to reduce gun violence, gang activity, and youth homicide proved helpful in translating prisoner reentry from a national issue to a local public safety concern. As the administrative agent of the local correctional facility that accounts for the vast majority of prisoners released to Boston, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department (SCSD) implemented several reentry initiatives that built upon the infrastructure of social and political partnerships in the city. The Offender Reentry Program (ORP) was one of these initiatives. Introduced in May 2001, the ORP is a six-week program that enrolls inmates when they are near completion of their sentences. The ORP utilizes community agencies to provide a mixture of academic, life skills, employment readiness, and case management services. The ORP's "general contractor" is a community college that offers academic and life skills instruction for the program. The college subcontracts with a local one-stop career center for employment assistance services, a faith-based organization for mentoring services provided by former prisoners, and a nonprofit social justice organization for case management services.

This working paper describes the Offender Reentry Program, its implementation at the Suffolk County House of Correction (SCHOC), and some preliminary outcome data. In some respects, the program has proved very successful. Participants in the first cycles of the ORP have shown lower recidivism rates after release from the SCHOC than a matched control group. On the program level, the services and roles provided by the different agencies have successfully meshed to provide an intensive and quality program experience, as well as effective transitional support that continues well beyond the program cycle. Institutionally, the program has received considerable positive attention and has recently become the core program within the SCSD's latest reentry initiative.

The early results from the program suggest a promising effect on recidivism. Within eight months of release from the custody of the Sheriff's Department, just 13% of the ORP graduates and 26% of

nongraduates were rearraigned. This experience is favorable in light of the 40% recidivism rate in a comparison sample selected to be comparable to program participants. These substantial, statistically significant differences across groups hold up under multivariate analyses and efforts to account for selection bias.

However, in other respects, the program has fallen short in meeting a number of expectations. Foremost, the program has remained significantly underenrolled during most of the program cycles and has not been brought to scale. Even though the institution releases between 250 and 300 inmates monthly, the program has had difficulty enrolling 15 inmates in a class for each of its six-week cycles. Also, the ORP serves offenders who may have the least need of reentry services among those offenders leaving the House of Correction. Inmates in the ORP must qualify for eligibility for a prerelease program, which is determined by a review of an inmate's criminal history and institutional conduct. Violent offenders with substantial criminal records, who may have more significant reentry needs, have a greater chance of being excluded from the ORP.

Some of these shortcomings are a function of program design, while others are a result of limitations imposed by the correctional environment and the reality that programs have finite resources. The decisions and tradeoffs made in designing the Offender Reentry Program had ramifications on program implementation and effectiveness. These decisions ranged from the very practical (such as where in the institution the services should be offered and the duration and number of hours per day of the program) to the more philosophical (such as what "treatment" programs should be offered and by whom). Program design options are often driven by local circumstances and institutional predilections. The SCSD actually collaborated with another Sheriff's department in Massachusetts with extensive experience in reentry programming<sup>2</sup> in the design of the Offender Reentry Program—a design that was compelling enough to attract a \$2.3 million federal grant shared equally between the two agencies—but took a different approach in the final implementation of the program. While the arguments for addressing prisoner reentry issues are common nationwide, the design and implementation of these programs vary considerably by setting and circumstances.

Additional conceptual and practical issues in implementing reentry programming relate to the management of correctional facilities, the legal and political correctional environment, and the difficulty of coordinating release planning with other agencies such as parole boards. Some of these challenges stem from the lack of external incentives for correctional systems to bear any risk to move or "step down" offenders to minimum, prerelease, and community-based facilities as their sentences approach completion. Other challenges involve deciding how the many "get tough" laws and regulations passed in the last two decades can interact in unintended ways to skew priorities in discretionary prerelease and parole decision-making processes, resulting in the allocation of the limited reentry resources to offenders who need them least. The implementation of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's Offender Reentry Program also demonstrated the difficulties of developing coordinated prisoner reentry systems across agencies that operate in a fragmented criminal justice system that has had to contend with dramatically larger offender populations over time.

The final section of this paper presents a series of propositions, synthesized from the experience of implementing the ORP, to guide policy makers and practitioners as they wrestle with the form and function of proposed reentry systems. While the recent interest in prisoner reentry has generated descriptions of the social and economic costs of poorly prepared and poorly supervised ex-prisoners and proposals of conceptual prisoner reentry designs (Taxman et al. 2001; Travis 2000), surprisingly, there is little in this voluminous body of work that addresses the considerable implementation challenges of changing behaviors and practices between and within correctional agencies to support substantially strengthened prisoner reentry efforts (Lin 2000). Indeed, these challenges are exacerbated by the fact that, over the past 30 years, correctional institu-



tions have, for the most part, significantly disinvested in programs that can assist inmates reenter society, and many of these programs currently lack the infrastructure of programs and policies to support meaningful reentry efforts.

The lack of attention to the seemingly mundane issues of implementation gives the impression that the greatest barrier to successful reentry lies in the lack of ideas of what to do and the lack of resources with which to actualize these ideas. Yet, as with the Offender Reentry Program, even when programs are well designed, utilize the latest research findings, and are funded well enough to attract capable staff, program slots can go unfilled, inmates can be released before having the opportunity to take advantage of appropriate programming (even when serving sentences of many months), and institutional actions frequently interfere with program functioning.

## II. THE OFFENDER REENTRY PROGRAM

The Offender Reentry Program provides a six-week, six hours a day,<sup>3</sup> intensive course of study for soon-to-be released male inmates at the Suffolk County House of Correction that includes education, employment assistance, case management, and mentoring services. Following completion of the formal instructional component of the program and the subsequent placement of the inmates in a prerelease setting, the inmates continue to receive significant reintegration support from the ORP for the duration of their sentences. Formal outreach from caseworkers and mentors continues for a minimum of six months following inmates' release from the sheriff's custody. After this, inmates may choose to continue to avail themselves of services offered through the ORP, but they are expected to initiate this contact themselves. The elements of the program are described in greater detail below.

### Program elements

#### *Education*

The lead educational agency, Bunker Hill Community College, located in Boston, provides ORP participants with a rigorous education curriculum that focuses on writing and communication skills. Some of the writing is autobiographical, while other assignments ask students to react to essays or books.<sup>4</sup> The college also offers instruction in computer skills, life skills (managing checkbooks, understanding apartment leases, etc.), and a few components of a program called Action for Personal Change (APC). The APC is one of many cognitive-skill training programs available that seeks to change attitudes and values by changing thinking patterns. In the original design of the ORP, the APC was to serve as the main curriculum component.<sup>5</sup> However, the college argued persuasively that most of the goals of the APC could be taught more successfully and be of greater value through a curriculum resembling a college preparatory program. In the ORP, students are expected to complete a variety of in-class exercises as well as daily homework. The most substantial student output is the creation and public presentation of a portfolio containing the students' work throughout the program. Correctional staff and outside reviewers attend and evaluate these presentations, which are given using Microsoft Powerpoint presentation software.

Integral in the design of the ORP is the connection between work and school. The students in the program learn about the higher education programs offered at the college (which range from certificate-awarding courses to an associate's degree program) and develop long-term work and education strategies. Students also learn about how to apply to college and the resources available to fund their studies. Subsequent to the completion of the ORP's six-week component and placement in a prerelease setting, ORP students are required to continue to pursue educational opportunities until they leave the sheriff's custody. Those inmates without secondary diplomas must enroll in the General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalence programs run by the department or based in the community. Inmates with high school diplomas and GED certificates are required to enroll in a college program, audit a higher education class, participate in a vocational training program, or conduct an intensive higher education or training search (documented visits to colleges and training programs every two weeks).

#### *Job assistance*

Job counselors from a Boston-based one-stop career center called the Workplace provide employment assistance in the ORP. Over the past six years, one-stop career centers have come to play a pivotal role in regional workforce investment strategies. These federally and state-funded programs claim to provide

universal access to all categories of individuals who need employment assistance. Unfortunately, the design of the one-stop system is poorly suited for individuals with criminal histories. The one-stop centers assume that users of their services can conduct self-directed job searches, and the centers are geared toward incumbent and dislocated workers who have much greater understanding and experience in regional labor markets. Correctional systems that have established relationships with one-stops often report that their offenders get lost at the centers.

One of the purposes of the ORP was to fund the intensive support services that offenders need to make their job searches more effective, and thereby demonstrate that these centers, with enhanced support, can serve offenders. The job counselor hired by the Workplace for the ORP taught an employment readiness class for inmates that focused on the traditional skills for programs of this type—resume and cover letter preparation, interviewing techniques, and job search strategies. While the program was conducted at the halfway house, some of these classes took place at the Workplace's downtown office location—the inmates were pre-enrolled as members of the center—which afforded the inmates the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the resources of the center. Also, near the completion of the ORP, the job counselor worked intensively with students to provide job placement assistance, and continued to provide support once students were placed in jobs.

When the program location moved to within the House of Correction, the job counselor taught these classes in the prison, and offered job placement assistance after the inmates were moved to prerelease settings where they could realistically secure employment. While living in the halfway house, the ORP candidates were expected to participate in weekly job-support meetings held at the downtown location of the one-stop for a minimum of 12 weeks until they found employment. At these meetings, inmates would have to show documented proof that they were actively looking for work (completed employment applications, list of visits to employers, list of job opportunities culled from newspapers or computer databases, etc.).

The job component of the ORP aims to help the offenders develop realistic labor market strategies and time horizons that include roles for short-term, entry-level jobs and long-term education, training, and career development activities. Over time, the ORP counselor has developed an expertise as to what fields and individual companies are open to hiring offenders, and which, because of statute, administrative regulation, insurance requirement, or bias, exclude individuals with criminal histories. This experience has proven helpful in steering the offenders to places where real opportunities exist.

### *Case management*

Community Resources for Justice, a nonprofit social service agency that has a 100-year history of working with offenders, provides ORP students with case management services. The case manager offers assistance with issues ranging from obtaining identification and driver's licenses to providing housing advocacy and addressing substance abuse issues. Upon entry into the program, the case manager meets with the students and conducts a structured interview to determine their needs. Also, the manager administers a risk-assessment instrument, called the Level of Services Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), which attempts to apply a numerical score for risk in several domains such as substance abuse, criminal history, and family support. The information collected begins the process of forming a discharge plan that continually evolves during the program cycle and as the offender nears sentence completion.

Resources for programs that serve individuals with criminal histories are generally meager and subject to frequent changes in funding cycles. One of the key roles of the case manager is to maintain an active assessment of which resources really do exist to assist the offenders and which resources have been phased

out or are so marginalized by budget cuts as to be worthless. Through constant vigilance and surveillance of the field, even in tough fiscal times, the case manager for the ORP has been able to refer inmates to places that could provide business clothes, tokens for the mass transit system, and even job tools when necessary.

### *Mentoring Support*

Finally, the Ella J. Baker House, a faith-based organization located in the heart of one of the Boston neighborhoods where many of the inmates return, provides mentors for the ORP participants. These mentors, most of whom are ex-prisoners themselves, act as coaches and encourage the students to stick with the heavy demands of the program. Working closely with the case manager, the mentors attempt to keep the participants in compliance with their uniquely tailored transitional plans. They also serve as role models of individuals who have successfully transitioned to the community.

As will be described later, the ORP was originally located in a halfway house and is now located inside the jail. The role of the mentors shifted somewhat in conjunction with this change. When the program was located at the halfway house, the mentors would accompany the ORP students on visits to cultural and employment meetings in the community as well as to such tasks as showing up at the Registry of Motor Vehicles to help them obtain a license. The mentors would identify community services opportunities for the students, which ranged from addressing groups of at-risk youth to painting playgrounds and the offices of nonprofit organizations. Also, ORP students would attend a Thursday evening fellowship meeting held at the Baker House, a popular forum that provided a networking opportunity for ex-offenders. After the ORP was moved into the prison itself, program participants could not be involved in many of these activities until they completed the program and were subsequently moved to a halfway house. Instead, during the program cycle at the SCHOC, the mentors would visit with the students extensively.

Both the mentoring and case management components of the ORP continue well beyond the six weeks that inmates spend in the classroom. For six months following graduation and release from the sheriff's custody, the case manager and the mentor actively provide outreach to the ORP graduates. Post-release, they call the ex-inmates to check in a minimum of once a week for the first month, twice a month for the second through fourth months, and once a month for the final two months. In between calls, they may meet with the ORP graduates and provide hands-on assistance such as providing and arranging for transportation to interviews for jobs and helping graduates navigate various governmental functions and services, including criminal justice agencies such as parole and probation. More frequently, the ex-prisoners informally meet with the mentors and case managers for meals or coffee to discuss various issues in their lives.

Of course, the Offender Reentry Program does not address all of the reentry challenges that prisoners face during the transition from confinement to community liberty—no reentry program does. A review of the contemporary literature of reentry programs reveals many different designs, each dependent on the organization of the correctional system and unique institutional relationships between government and nonprofit agencies, each serving different targeted groups of offenders in the system, each emphasizing certain treatment domains, and each with strengths and weaknesses. The nonprofit Corporation for Employment of Offenders in New York runs a highly regarded program that provides immediate transitional employment for nonviolent felony parolees, individuals on work release, and probationers in New York (Finn 1998b). The Delancey Street Foundation in San Francisco and the Pioneer Human Services in Seattle offer reentry program designs that emphasize self-help and entrepreneurial strategies for carefully selected offenders.<sup>6</sup> The Chicago-based Safer Foundation in Illinois runs several prerelease programs for the Illinois Department of Corrections, as well as other programs that incorporate support and employment assistance to

offenders. Project RIO in Texas offers job assistance and placement services for parolees in conjunction with the state and local workforce investment boards (Finn 1998a, 1998c). Compared with these programs, the ORP is a very modest intervention. Yet, it is probably more typical of what correctional agencies can introduce in the short term. And because any implementation challenges of the ORP at the Suffolk County House of Correction are likely to be present in more ambitious efforts by correctional agencies as well, the lessons of this program have broad application.

## **Design issues**

The design and implementation of the Offender Reentry Program was shaped by the specific correctional environment as well as by the beliefs of the program designers about the hierarchy of inmate reentry needs. The limited duration of the program was a function of the short five- to six-month average sentences served for the inmate population at the SCHOC and uncertainties with respect to inmates' exact release dates. There are a surprising number of factors that affect sentence length—time earned for good behavior in prison, time earned while awaiting trial, eligibility for parole, changes in sentence structure during incarceration, and legal status of the offender at release—which make it difficult to exactly plan for the day of release. A longer program period for the ORP would have put the program at risk for losing most of its participants by attrition, particularly given that the ORP has a closed enrollment policy—a cohort of inmates start and end a program cycle together. While inmates have the opportunity to participate in a number of education and treatment programs during the course of their incarceration,<sup>7</sup> the ORP was designed to provide critical transitional assistance near the point of reentry.

Also, like so much in corrections, the ORP design was based on the typical characteristics of the dominant male inmate population. Female inmates constitute a small percentage (4% to 7%) of the overall population at the SCHOC and serve much shorter sentences (two-thirds of female inmates at the SCHOC served less than 30 days). Too few of them met the time and eligibility requirements of the ORP to form a program cycle. Although not discussed in this paper at length, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department did choose to take some of the elements of the ORP and provide them separately at a community correctional center that serves female offenders who were on prerelease, probationary, and parole status. In particular, the ORP's cognitive-skill services and job assistance programs are offered at the center.

Additionally, Massachusetts's fragmented correctional system challenged the SCSD to develop a program that could be run without the dependence on traditional post-release reentry institutions such as parole or probation. Until recently, the coordination with these agencies was practically nonexistent, and the Sheriff's Department recognized that it could not develop a wholesale reentry system involving these agencies. Instead, the Sheriff's Department tried to create a modest reentry program where it would retain custody of the inmates while they made their transition from the Department's institutional to community correction programs. However, this required choosing inmates for the Offender Reentry Program who were at the lowest risk of escape or disruptive behaviors.

The Department designed the Offender Reentry Program to involve multiple community organizations. Purposely, it chose to contract with community-based providers that had resources that the inmates could and would want to access after release from the custody of the Sheriff's Department. The Hampden County Sheriff's Department pursued a similar strategy for their Offender Reentry Program, but chose one human service organization to provide the four elements of the ORP—instruction, job assistance, case management, and mentoring—whereas the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department chose different organizations to provide each of these services. Hampden had a preexisting relationship with this well-regarded nonprofit organiza-

tion, which made it natural for the organization to provide services under this grant. Also, since Hampden was actually serving inmates who would return to several midsized and small cities in Western Massachusetts—Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee—it was easier to choose one organization that was less geographically bound to one city. The disadvantage to this strategy was that the service provider also administered categorical programs through state and federal grants, and was not set up to continue to provide services with ORP participants outside of those funded by the program. In Boston, the Sheriff’s Department chose program providers that had walk-in resources available to the ORP participants not specifically tied to the grant, and all providers were located in the Boston area in close proximity to where most inmates are expected to live following release.

The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department designed the ORP as an education and job assistance program with integrated and intensive case management and support services. While acknowledging the need for other treatment services such as substance abuse, anger management, and cognitive skills, the Department ultimately placed more value in the need for education and job assistance programming. The Department proceeded with the premise that the other treatments are important, but should supplement programs that have an economic value in the labor market.

By contrast, Hampden—and many other agencies—chose to base its program on a cognitive-skill curriculum, de-emphasizing education. They pointed to research studies showing the effectiveness of these programs, although few of these studies are rigorous evaluations. Cognitive-skill, “therapeutic community,” and other such short-term and low-cost programs offer prison officials easily achievable outcomes such as program completion or immediate measured attitudinal change. More intensive programs such as education and vocational training programs require skilled staff, less-scripted curriculum, and longer treatment periods to obtain improvements in measured outcomes such as improved literacy and vocational skills. The latter programs are of higher cost and require more accommodations and resources by the correctional institution.

Some of the challenges of implementing the Offender Reentry Program at the SCHOC were not related directly to the correctional setting or classification issues, but common to any new start-up, and are fairly well described in the evaluation literature. It takes time to hire and train staff, set up offices, develop schedules, finalize curriculum, order materials and equipment, and assess and recruit students. This proves more challenging in programs that involve coordinating staff and services among several different agencies. Small and seemingly straightforward changes in program design can have larger ramifications. In the ORP, the program staff decided to integrate computer skills training with the academic component of the program. However, this excellent idea also meant that the number of computers available became a constraint on the number of students who could enroll in the program.

While most of the literature on reentry describes the need to incorporate community-based social service providers, the real costs and challenges of developing and maintaining these partnerships is rarely discussed. Reentry programming involving outside agencies requires a more cooperative and consensual approach that varies from the strict decision-making processes of correctional institutions. Further, “entangling” institutional operations with social services can tax the patience and capacity of these institutions in ways not easily anticipated or resolved.

## Setting

The ORP was part of a larger effort to reorient the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department to focus attention on better preparing inmates for release from the House of Correction. The Suffolk County House of Correction is the largest correctional facility in Massachusetts<sup>8</sup> and is located within a mile of downtown Boston. Unlike



most state and federal prisons, most of the 3,500 inmates released annually from the SCHOC return to communities within three miles of the facility. Mapping studies in Boston find that SCHOC inmates primarily return to one of three Boston neighborhoods—Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. The sheer numbers of offenders coming in and out of the facility and the disproportionate effect on minority populations and communities in Boston all contributed to a willingness by the past and current sheriffs<sup>9</sup> to address the issue of prisoner reentry.

In 2000, the Sheriff's Department created a new community corrections division and introduced a number of new reentry initiatives with law enforcement, social service, and faith-based partners that focused reentry services on specific inmate populations. For the previous 20 years, this local correctional agency's primary "reentry" programs were two modest prerelease programs located in halfway houses near the House of Correction. They were used for very low-risk inmates who were near the completion of their sentences. Few programs were offered at the halfway houses, and assignment to a halfway house essentially provided only a bed, a curfew, and a requirement of work. Many inmates signed up with temporary day-labor agencies to meet their work requirements, and few, if any, secured meaningful jobs that would continue beyond their end of sentence. The receipt of the federal grant to fund the ORP accelerated this movement of the SCSD toward reentry initiatives and provided a vehicle for exploring new interagency collaborations and types of programming.

At its inception, the Offender Reentry Program was located at a halfway house for male inmates. Participants in the program spent the first six weeks attending the ORP. Following completion of the program, they were expected to work—presumably at better jobs than they would have received without the benefit of the program—while remaining at the halfway house until their sentence release date. A year and a half into the program, the location of the ORP was moved to a minimum-security living unit within the Suffolk County House of Correction for reasons unrelated to the ORP.<sup>10</sup> The move significantly affected the ORP by limiting the access of the students to community activities that had become incorporated into the ORP, such as site visits to schools and job centers, because the Sheriff's Department security rules did not allow inmates to leave the facility for reentry programming. However, this move also had the beneficial effect of changing incentives for participation. With the program located in the jail, inmates knew that if they completed the ORP, they stood first in line to be placed to the halfway house. Also, unlike in the original design, once inmates were placed in a halfway house they could work and earn money right away. Under the original program design, some of the participants had expressed their frustration about the opportunity costs of participating in the ORP program rather than immediately working once they were placed in the halfway house. Unfortunately, the space allotted to the ORP within the housing unit is now the greatest constraint to fully enrolling inmates into the program. It is not clear how the program can be scaled up without encroaching on dormitory space at the SCHOC.

The change of location has affected the ORP in several ways that provide insight into reentry programming. The program is now subject to the demands of the institutional schedule (counts, lockdowns, visits, etc.). Inmates in the program can no longer visit the partner agencies during the program cycle (though they can, and do, once placed in a halfway house). This may have the result that inmates are less likely to take advantage of these resources following their final release from the Sheriff's Department's custody. Within the housing units, staff and inmates cannot move around as freely as when the program was located outside the prison. In fact, one ORP mentor initially had difficulty accessing the living unit at all due to institutional policy that bars individuals with recent criminal backgrounds from providing services to inmates. An exception has since been made to allow this to occur.

The experience of providing the same program in a community setting and then inside the walls of the institution reveals the unavoidable tension of corrections: the risks and rewards to providing these services are both greater in a community setting. Implementation in a community setting is also more difficult, with the result that external and internal pressures all operate to hinder correctional authorities from fully developing true transitional programs.

## **Eligibility, selection, and timing**

The ORP's time requirement—six weeks—and other selection criteria<sup>11</sup> challenged the classification department to find inmates who simultaneously met the eligibility criteria for the halfway house and the requirements of the program. The inability to plan around uncertain release dates caused two main difficulties. Occasionally, an inmate was paroled in the middle of a cycle. Once an inmate is paroled, there is no way to keep him involved in the program (though he is free to continue relationships with the community providers, as are all participants following release). In order to compensate for this concern, the institution worked to identify inmates for the program who were just starting their jail terms. The difficulty with this approach is that these inmates may continue to be in custody for some time following completion of the classroom portion of the ORP. When the program was located in the halfway house, this proved problematic. It proved difficult to match bed availability in the halfway house with the timing of the ORP cycles. Also, some inmates stayed at the halfway house for many months after completing the ORP, tying up beds that could have been used for students in later cycles of the ORP. Over time, the halfway house filled up with ORP completers (as well as those placed in the halfway house for other reasons and who did not qualify for the program).

When the ORP was introduced, the SCHOC also opened a community correction center as an intermediate sanction program with a focus on substance abuse issues, which provided some competition with the ORP for inmates placed in the halfway house. At the same time, the parole board, under new leadership, began increasing the rate of favorable decisions given at parole hearings for county inmates. The bottom line was that all of these reentry-related programs were chasing the same inmates; none were focusing on the inmates with the greatest reentry needs.<sup>12</sup> Within the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, a new classification process involving both classification and program staff essentially eliminated disagreements about the placement of inmates in the SCSD's reentry programs. The lack of interagency agreement on priorities, however, continues to pose difficulties.<sup>13</sup>

The Sheriff's Department has recently launched an initiative with the parole board to better coordinate the institutional classification process with the parole decision-making process. If this were to occur, those inmates in the ORP who were also eligible for parole would be required to first successfully complete the ORP as condition of their paroled release. However, this has proved difficult to accomplish because no comprehensive system exists to coordinate release planning with the parole decision-making process. Administrative peculiarities, such as the fact that parole hearing dates are not scheduled in advance, serve as obstacles. More pernicious is the fact that the interests of the institutional parole officers, field parole officers, and parole board members are not always in alignment. On a case-by-case basis, and through the persistent efforts of individual staff, joint release planning does occur. But it is the exception and not the rule, and it has not been possible to institutionalize this effort.

Post-release coordination with probation is much poorer, and there exists no system of information sharing to build upon. However, because many of the ORP graduates will leave the sheriff's custody and then begin a sentence of probation, it could prove helpful to the inmate, the probation officer, and the public to



integrate the ORP community resources with the terms of an offender's conditional release. However, these terms of conditional release are set by a judge at sentencing and cannot be easily modified without judicial review. Also, probation is organized through nine different courts in Suffolk County, making it difficult to coordinate release planning because an ORP student with a term of probation after release may have a probation officer in any one of these district and superior courts. The greater point is that this one small reentry program has not been able to stitch together a coordinated reentry system with other agencies where one does not already exist.

## Participation in the ORP

The Offender Reentry Program has remained significantly underenrolled since its inception. As of April 1, 2003, the Offender Reentry Program had completed 14 cycles with an average enrollment of six to eight inmates per cycle. The original objective in the grant called for running two classes of 15 inmates concurrently per cycle. Of all of the implementation issues regarding the ORP, low enrollment has proved most vexing and represents a significant problem, particularly given the large number of releases from the SCHOC per month. Interestingly, the ORP's sister site, Hampden County, faced similar difficulties in fully enrolling classes despite that agency's 25-year history of running quality reentry programs.<sup>14</sup> To understand how such a promising program comes to be underutilized, there must first be an understanding of how the core business of an institution works. This is the classification process.

Classification is the institutional process that determines where inmates reside within an institution and which programs they receive. Ideally, the process determines institutional placement by balancing the risks and needs of the inmates. Inmates who are suicidal, have "enemies" within the institution, are disruptive, and fall within a number of other categories, are generally placed in specialized living units. Most inmates, though, are placed in general population living units and receive an institutional service plan (ISP) that requires them to participate in a variety of educational programs, treatment services, and work assignments. The ISP is a "wish list" of activities, as the institution does not offer enough programs to fully engage the whole inmate population at any point in time. The classification status of inmates is reviewed periodically and they are rewarded for following the ISP by being placed in living units of lower security with greater privileges (such as more recreation time, greater access to visits, better institutional jobs, and opportunities to earn reduced sentences). In this way, the institution provides incentives for good behavior and steps inmates down from higher- to lower-custody living areas, both of which contribute to better order and flow of the institution.

The role of classification policy and practice on low participation in the ORP is illuminated by the work in Watson (2002), which explored the internal and external factors contributing to the under-utilization of prerelease beds at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. Classification to the pre-release program was initially a prerequisite for placement in the ORP. The study retrospectively analyzed a cohort of male and female inmates released in January 2001 from the SCHOC to determine the number of inmates who qualified for placement in the Department's prerelease program based on criminal history and institutional conduct, as well as the number of inmates who were actually placed in these programs. As presented in **Figure 1**, the first part of Watson's analysis found that 67% percent of male inmates were ineligible for placement to the prerelease setting; 15% may have been eligible subject to an additional risk-assessment review; and only 8% of the cohort was eligible for placement outright. For female inmates, the comparable percentages were 40% ineligible, 49% eligible pending review, and 10% eligible outright. Further, **Table 1** presents a breakdown of the effects of the specific classification criteria on eligibility. It reveals that external

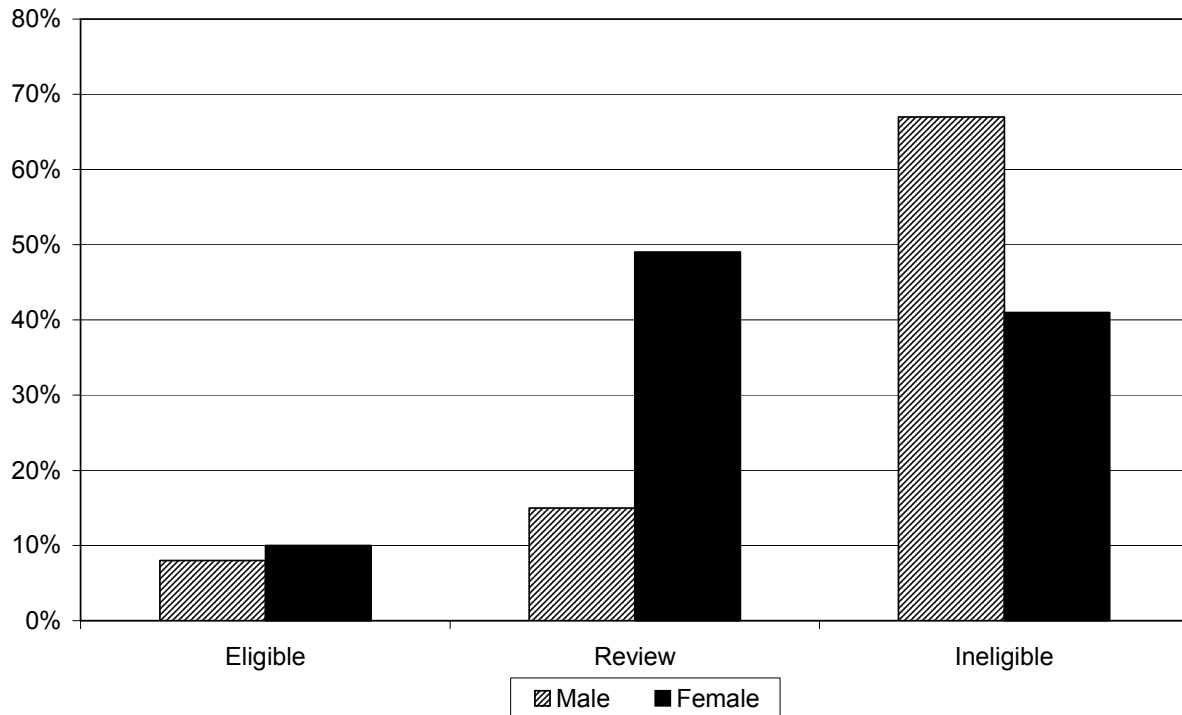
factors such as the fact that many inmates in prison continue to have open and unresolved cases pending in addition to the convicted offense for which they are serving time rules out 56% of men and 40% of women. Criteria concerning institutional conduct—inmates cannot be placed in prerelease programs if they have had a major disciplinary report 90 days prior to the classification review—excluded 27% of men, yet only 4% of women. The second part of the analysis, as presented in **Figure 2**, looked at actual placements in the halfway house in this cohort, and found that only 27% of outright eligible male inmates and 43% of outright eligible female inmates were placed in the halfway house. Only 21% of those male inmates and 34% of female inmates who were eligible pending review were placed in the halfway house (Watson 2002).

Thus, the analysis produced two significant findings: first, most inmates were not eligible for halfway house placement due to classification criteria that reflected internal and external circumstances; and second, the institution—perhaps due to inefficient practices—failed to place a large number of eligible inmates into these programs (Watson 2002). This latter finding is a reminder that correctional institutions have real constraints on their internal capacity as determined by the quality of their staff, the sophistication of information technology, financial resources, and the organizational priorities set by managers and political leaders. In the case of the SCHOC, the institution did not have the capability to accurately identify and place all of those inmates who met the eligibility criteria into the halfway house in January 2001. Subsequent to the study, the halfway house placement rates increased noticeably, which were the result of better procedures to track inmates who were eligible for prerelease from the moment of their admission to the SCHOC. Unfortunately, the Offender Reentry Program continued to suffer from low enrollment numbers for reasons previously cited, such as the relatively low number of prerelease beds even when those beds were better utilized.

Details on ORP participants through the first 11 cycles (completed between June 8, 2001 and October 30, 2002) are reported in **Table 2**, along with details about a representative set of released inmates and a sample constructed to be a useful comparison group for the ORP. The first column contains data on all prisoners released from custody in January 2001 (the January 2001 release cohort),<sup>15</sup> and the second column contains a subset of those offenders chosen to reflect the selection criteria for the Offender Reentry Program (the comparison sample). The comparison sample comprises individuals in the January 2001 release cohort who were 1) eligible for community supervision or subject to review for community supervision, 2) serving a sentence of no less than four months, and 3) male. The third and fourth columns include ORP graduates and nongraduates, respectively. Not surprisingly, the ORP participants have longer sentence lengths and more time served than the full January cohort because the ORP program was not designed to accommodate very short stays. The offense distribution of the ORP participants is also not representative of the larger population. That only around 5% of the ORP participants were serving time on person offenses reflects the constraints of the Sheriff's Department, as described earlier. In all groups, the average number of prior incarcerations was approximately 2.5.

In terms of background characteristics, the various samples are more similar. The average age is close to 30, 50% to 60% are African American, and about 20% are white. Reading and math scores are somewhat higher, on average, for ORP participants, but inference is clouded because this variable is missing for some of the inmates. ORP participants are somewhat less likely to have high school diplomas.

In summary, the profiles reflect the design characteristics of the program. Participants are serving longer sentences, but on charges that do not restrict them from community placement. They have somewhat higher test scores, but somewhat lower educational credentials. The comparison sample is somewhat better matched to ORP participants, but it is by no means close in several dimensions, namely person offending.

**FIGURE 1****Eligibility for placement in prerelease programs**

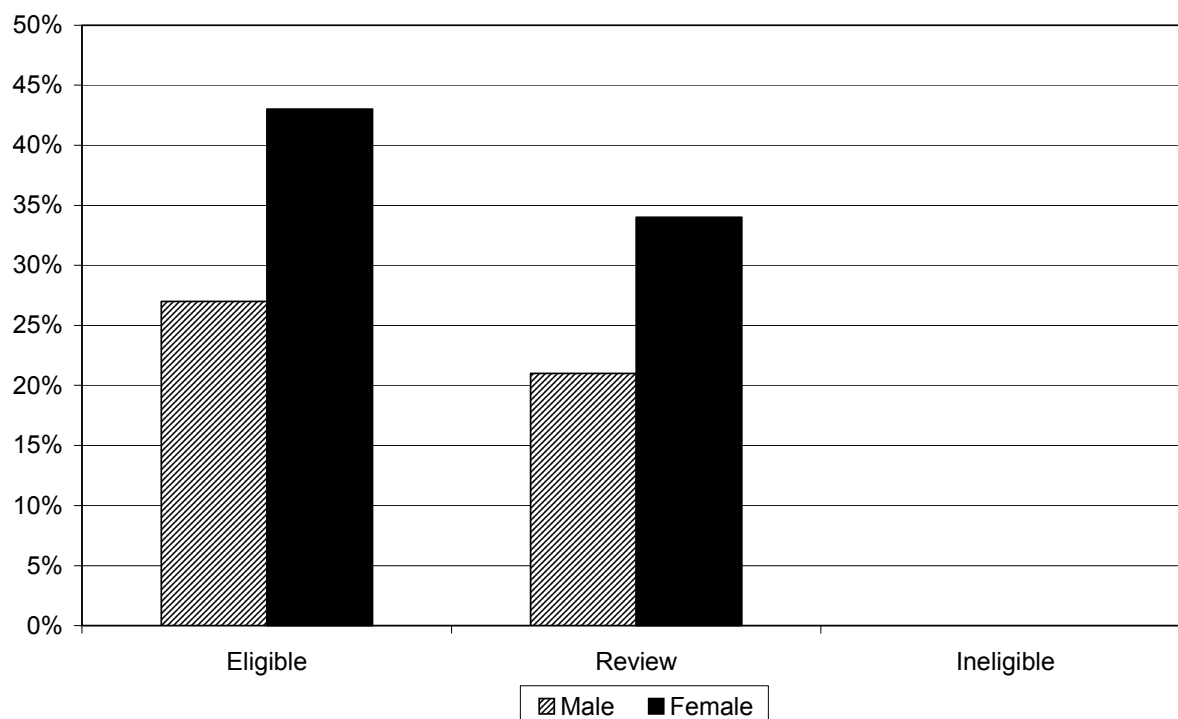
Source: Watson, J. 2002. *Community Corrections Programs at the Suffolk County House of Corrections: Strategies for Optimizing Use While Minimizing Risk*.

**TABLE 1**  
**Factors affecting prerelease eligibility**

Criteria	Eligibility status	Male inmates	Female inmates
Parole or probation violation	Review	67%	61%
Felony warrant/open case	Ineligible	56	40
Sentence less than 30 days	Ineligible	16	16
Misdemeanor warrant/open case	Review	12	16
Assault and battery with deadly	Review	14	9
On and after sentence	Ineligible	10	1
Active restraining order	Ineligible	10	6
Disciplinary reports within 90 days	Ineligible	27	4

Source: Watson, J. 2002. *Community Corrections Programs at the Suffolk County House of Correction: Strategies for Optimizing Use While Minimizing Risk*.

This should be kept in mind in evaluating the recidivism outcomes described on the following pages. It should be noted that prisoners serving time for person offenses generally have lower recidivism rates than other offenders, so this comparison group might be expected to bias against finding a program effect (Langan and Levin 2002).

**FIGURE 2****Prerelease placement by eligibility status**

Source: Watson, J. 2002. *Community Corrections Programs at the Suffolk County House of Corrections: Strategies for Optimizing Use While Minimizing Risk*.

With ORP participants, nongraduates have somewhat shorter sentences, are somewhat younger, are more likely to be white, and have slightly higher test scores than program graduates. There are two main routes to not graduating from the ORP: parole and disciplinary infraction. Therefore, the nongraduate sample has “two-sided” selection relative to graduates: some nongraduates should be expected to do better than the average graduate, and some worse.

## Outcomes

While the Offender Reentry Program is relatively new, a preliminary analysis was conducted comparing the eight-month follow-up rearraignment rates of program graduates, nongraduates, and the comparison sample. Basic results are reported here, with more detailed analyses available in the Appendix.

Within eight months of release from the custody of the Sheriff’s Department, 40% of the comparison sample had been arraigned on new criminal conduct, as seen in **Figure 3**.<sup>16</sup> Over the same length of time, just 13% of ORP graduates and 26% of nongraduates have been rearraigned. These substantial, statistically significant differences across groups hold up under multivariate analyses controlled for the characteristics reported earlier in Table 2. **Figure 4** summarizes the results of the multivariate analyses (details in the Appendix). The first set of bars repeats the results of Figure 3: with no controls, the recidivism rate for ORP graduates is 27 percentage points lower than for the comparison sample; the gap is 14 points for nongraduates. Once criminal justice and demographic controls are added, the gaps become somewhat

**TABLE 2**  
**ORP and January 2001 cohort summary statistics**

	2001 SCHOC cohort	Comparison sample	ORP graduates	ORP nongraduates
<b>Criminal justice characteristics</b>				
Rearraigned within eight months	0.41	0.40	0.13	0.26
Rearraigned	-	-	0.25	0.42
Sentence length (months)	8.38	11.05	18.66	12.97
Time served (months)	7.55	8.94	11.63	9.09
Person offense	0.30	0.38	0.07	0.03
Property offense	0.28	0.21	0.28	0.19
Drug offense	0.22	0.31	0.57	0.61
Other offense	0.19	0.10	0.07	0.16
Prior incarcerations	2.44	2.76	2.64	2.39
<b>Background characteristics</b>				
Age at release	33.19	32.45	31.24	28.77
Black proportion	0.58	0.53	0.57	0.52
White proportion	0.25	0.29	0.18	0.32
Hispanic proportion	0.17	0.18	0.25	0.16
Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) reading score	7.67	7.62	8.02	8.43
TABE math score	4.58	4.77	5.56	5.84
Prior wage estimate	10.37	10.13	9.85	9.21
Has high school diploma	0.25	0.28	0.20	0.18
Has GED	0.27	0.15	0.34	0.23
<b>Maximum N</b>	<b>186.00</b>	<b>87.00</b>	<b>67.00</b>	<b>31.00</b>

Source: Watson, J. 2002. *Community Corrections Programs at the Suffolk County House of Correction: Strategies for Optimizing Use While Minimizing Risk*; author's calculations.

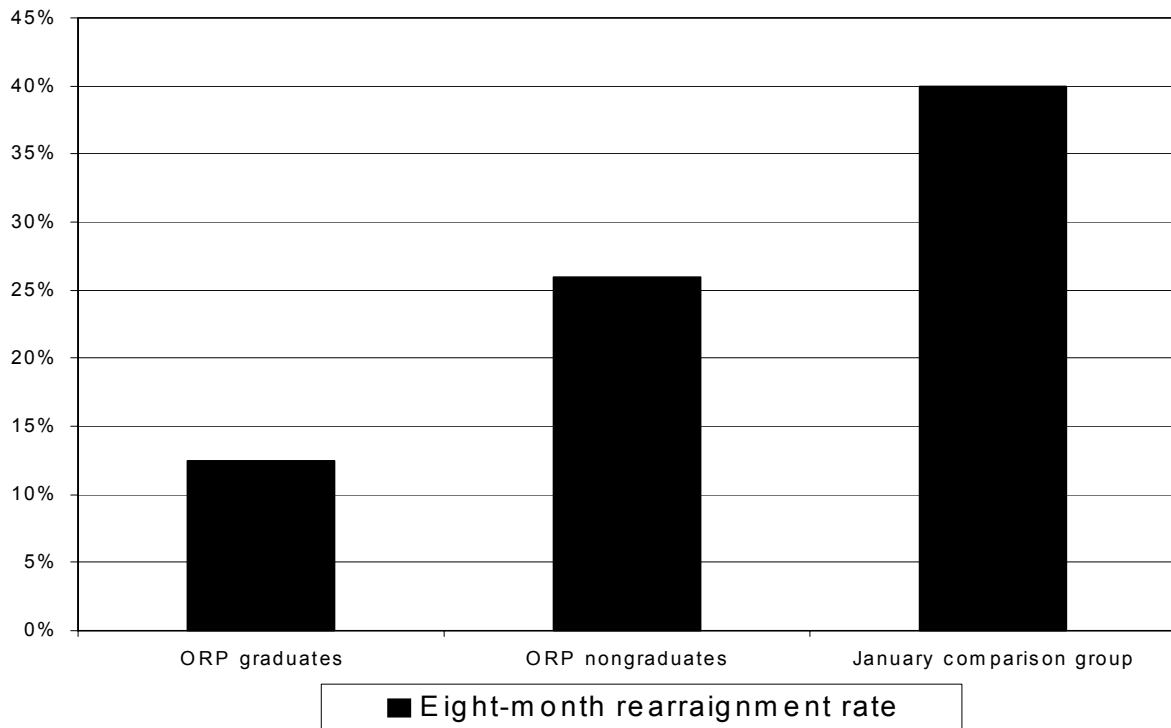
Note: For variables including eight-month rearrangement rates, test scores, prior wages, and whether inmates have a high school diplomas or a GED, the number of observations is less than the maximum reported number.

smaller, on the order of 20 percentage points and 10 percentage points for graduates and nongraduates, respectively. The final set of bars reports an upper bound estimate of the program effect, constructed by redefining the period ORP residents spent in the halfway house as time at risk for recidivating. The recharacterization lowers the eight-month recidivism rate for the ORP participants. The big picture is consistent across the analyses: ORP participants have lower rates than those individuals in the release cohort, and ORP completers have the lowest rates overall.

Of course, this analysis does not capture whether differences in unobservable characteristics exist between these populations. It is reasonable to assume that students selected to the ORP displayed a greater interest in improving their situation than the average inmates at the SCHOC. While the literature on program effectiveness discusses the importance of treating individuals with high needs, the selection process for reentry programs in corrections—both the institutional classification process and the self-selection process by the individual—often results in those least in need receiving the most significant services.

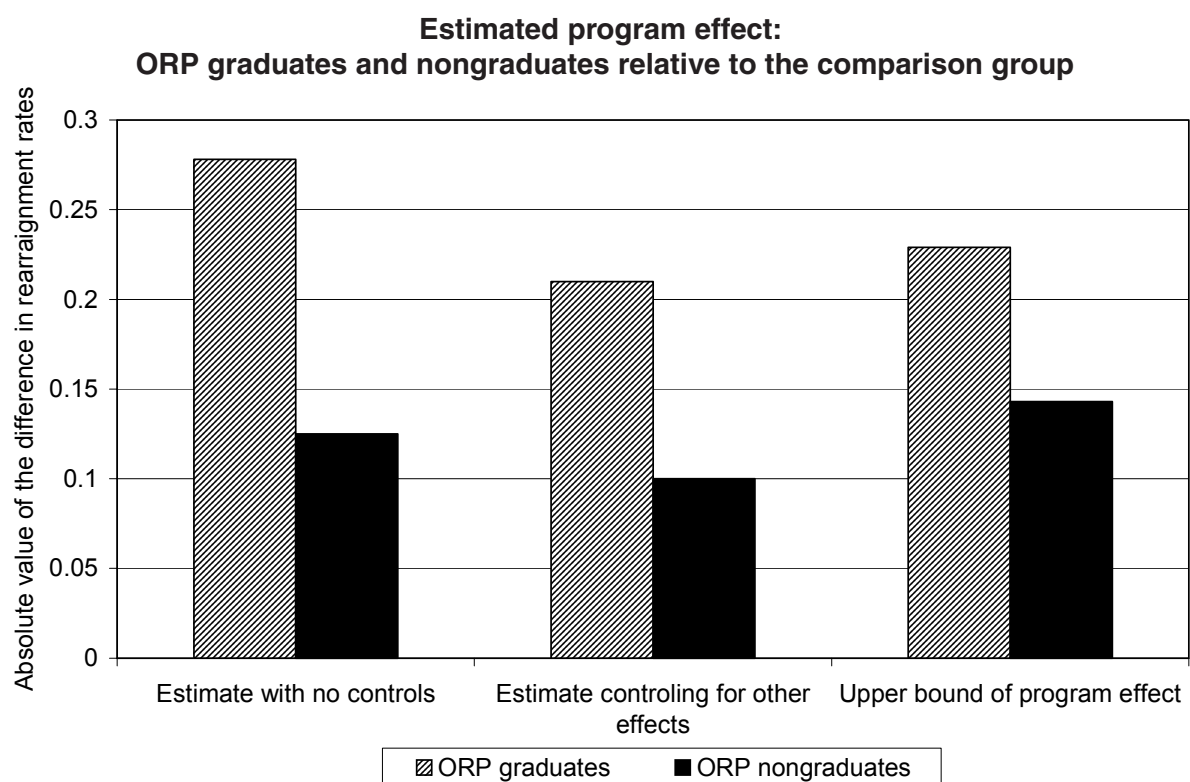
**FIGURE 3**

**Eight-month rearrangement rates**



Source: Author's calculations.

**FIGURE 4**



Source: Author's calculations.

### III. PROSPECTS FOR REENTRY: LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the implementation challenges to developing reentry programs are long-standing features of the nation's correctional systems. For decades, researchers have pointed to the fragmented structure of most state correctional systems, not to mention social service systems, as the principle obstacle in providing a continuum of care, support, and supervision (Carter, Glaser, and Wilkins 1977; Glaser 1964, 1983; Sutherland 1924). This fragmentation can impede coordination of services because operating practices, data systems, and organizational incentives to participate in reentry program can differ significantly between agencies. Another persistent implementation challenge that runs through the correctional literature is the perceived inherent conflict between security and treatment functions within prison walls that can compromise program integrity. Without the support of correctional officers and the commitment to programming by an institution, the day-to-day demands of providing care, custody, and control to large and fluid inmate populations can undermine reintegration efforts (Lin 2000; LoBuglio 2001).

The significant increases in the inmate population, the changed legal and political environment for corrections, and the disinvestments in prison programming that have occurred over the past three decades exacerbate these old challenges and also give rise to new ones. Correctional agencies have changed dramatically in response to the vast increase in the prisoner population and have become more bureaucratic in nature, which in turn affects their ability to implement reentry programs (Gorton 2002). In the past, researchers studied prisons as individual enterprises imbued with the characteristics of their wardens or superintendents (DiIulio Jr. 1987). Now, prisons are managed more as bureaucracies within larger correctional systems. The professional standards movement in corrections, the increased unionization of correctional workers, and the advent of significant judicial administration has helped standardize operations across systems (Riveland 1999). While these changes offer the promise of the more uniform implementation of reentry programming, they have reinforced what contingency organizational theorists would describe as large, bureaucratic operations that thrive in environments of low uncertainty, batch production, and simple and stable environments (Bolman and Deal 1997). Bureaucratic correctional facilities tend to “process” rather than “treat” offenders flowing through their doors, and have difficulty addressing the highly uncertain and individualized tasks of reentry planning.

The increased politicization of corrections over the same period, best exemplified by the use of the Willie Horton case during the 1988 presidential campaign, has diminished correctional agencies' willingness to reintegrate offenders (Riveland 1999). Agencies have few incentives to “step down” offenders to minimum, prerelease, and community-based facilities near the end of their sentences; while these facilities allow inmates to access community resources and begin assuming responsibility for caring for themselves and their families, they also have fewer security measures in place, which may lead to a greater ability to escape.

As of 2000, 16 states had completely abolished discretionary parole,<sup>17</sup> which was originally introduced to serve as the mechanism within the criminal justice system to supervise the reentry of prisoners back to their communities (Hughes et al. 2001). Parole boards, it was thought, would encourage prisoners to participate in programs and to prove themselves “rehabilitated” in prison.<sup>18</sup> Federal legislative efforts to encourage states to adopt truth-in-sentencing laws, combined with the proliferation of mandatory minimum laws, choked the use of discretionary parole, and instead, many states have introduced mandatory post-release supervision. Parole and probation agents have seen their caseloads increase, particularly given that increases in spending for these agencies have not nearly kept up with increases in spending for correctional facilities. Some researchers argue that agents use their considerable revocation powers to send individuals back to



prison as caseload-reduction techniques and to respond to the different incentives in the changed political landscape. The dominance of the surveillance function at the expense of the support function in post-release supervision is driven by technological advancements in drug testing and electronic monitoring that have improved the ability and timeliness of detecting violations and the dearth of community-based support resources (Petersilia 1999).

Although the debate about the effectiveness of rehabilitation programming is long-standing, the new political climate has reinforced attitudes that question whether inmates deserve rehabilitation programs, regardless of the larger benefits to society. New fiscal pressures have placed the brakes on soaring state correctional expenditures and have hit discretionary line items such as program budgets particularly hard (Lynch and Sabol 2001). As fiscal pressures become even more severe, this trend may continue or accelerate.

Into this environment, inmates are released under a variety of legal statuses due to the terms of their sentences, other criminal cases, and other legal statutes (e.g., subject to deportation). As a result, some inmates may be under the authority of other agencies following release, and these agencies may or may not have reentry efforts themselves. Furthermore, these agencies may not have the capacity or willingness to follow through on reentry programming initiated at the correctional facility. In some jurisdictions, many inmates do not fall under any meaningful authority following release, so any programming must be provided during confinement. As most inmates in state and, in particular, local systems serve relatively short sentences, issues such as the efficiency and expediency of the security classification process—affected by both institutional policy and legal restrictions on movement—can impede the delivery of reentry programming.

In such a complicated environment, some institutions may decide to provide reentry programming during confinement. In this case, it makes sense to organize efforts toward the time of release from correctional custody. However, exact release dates for inmates prove surprisingly difficult to determine in many correctional systems due to the need to factor in credits (such as jail time served while awaiting trial and time off for institutional conduct) and unpredictable release decisions made by courts and parole authorities. This suggests that such programming may be easier to provide in jurisdictions with most inmates serving determinate sentences. However, even nonrelease movement between living units within a correctional institution and movement between different facilities within a larger correctional system, both of which are frequent, can make it difficult to schedule programming immediately preceding release and to coordinate post-release supervision.

In the end, the institutional environment and various external factors can conspire against the successful provision of support for managing the important transition from prison to community life. Sometimes problems arise due to the competing goals within or across law enforcement agencies. Sometimes problems occur because of the unsystematic approach to managing correctional populations during confinement, much less at their release. As a result, in some cases it is possible to design a way to prevent similar problems from occurring in the future, while in other cases it appears that the complexity of some inmates' relationships to law enforcement will prohibit the design of systems that avoid negative situations. This is the reality of developing and introducing prisoner reentry programs. If these realities are not addressed, all of the political capital, taxpayer and foundation resources, and hard work of practitioners will be spent at cross-purposes. The irony of the current debate about prisoner reentry is that, although the current crisis was eminently foreseeable, the fact that people did not prepare for it provides the opportunity to rethink current efforts and systems.

By necessity, the details of the Suffolk County case influenced the character of the difficulties of implementing reentry programming in the SCHOC. However, this experience offers insight that could be

useful in many other jurisdictions. While the following insights are true generally, each deserves to be put to its own test in a particular setting.

***Correctional institutions do not have strong incentives to offer reentry programming. Nonetheless, some agencies do initiate reentry efforts.***

It must first be acknowledged that prison systems have little incentive to be concerned about inmates when they leave correctional facilities. The challenges of providing care, custody, and control of inmate populations are considerable, but eminently achievable within the authority of a prison system. By comparison, the success of prisoner reentry programs depends on difficult collaborations with other agencies and also on the highly uncertain and unpredictable actions of ex-prisoners. Why would a prison system expand its mission, raising expectations for performance measurements over which it may exercise very little control? From a jailer's standpoint, institutional rehabilitation programs in areas such as education, vocation, substance abuse, and anger management can serve an important custodial function to improve the orderliness of the institution, but how and whether they reduce recidivism is of secondary concern. Programs that transition offenders gradually from confinement to release pose additional risks of prisoner escape, jeopardizing one of the core functions of prisons. Failed prisoner reentry (i.e., escape or return to custody) is also more likely to receive outside attention than success.<sup>19</sup> These failures can impose substantial costs on correctional authorities.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, certain prison systems have chosen to participate in prison reentry efforts, motivated either by progressive leadership or external pressures stemming from the many recent reports describing the negative social and economic influences of poorly prepared inmates on the communities to which they return. In the case of the ORP, the convergence of several circumstances led to development of the prisoner reentry program. As a local correctional institution led by an elected official, the Sheriff's Department plays a visible role in public safety in the city.

The Suffolk County House of Correction's size and downtown location, in contrast to the more rural location of many correctional facilities, makes it more accessible and visible to community groups and other public agencies. The sheer number of offenders coming in and out of the facility and the disproportionate effect on minority populations and communities in Boston all contributed to a decision by the Sheriff to take on prisoner reentry in a significant way. The ORP was part of a larger effort to reorient the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department to focus attention on better preparing inmates for release from the House of Correction. Three years ago, the Department created a new community corrections division and introduced a number of new reentry initiatives with law enforcement, social service, and faith-based partners that focused reentry services on specific inmate populations. The receipt of the federal grant to fund the ORP accelerated this movement of the SCSD toward reentry and provided a vehicle for exploring new interagency collaborations and types of programming.

That correctional institutions take on prisoner reentry at all testifies to the commitment of practitioners. Many correctional professionals are drawn to the work because they want an opportunity to make a positive difference in society. In this way, reentry programming is not in conflict at all with being a jailer. As much as the external environment has hardened over time in attitudes toward rehabilitation, the opinions and attitudes of practitioners have shifted much less dramatically. Seasoned correctional professionals understand the value of balancing good security measures with rehabilitative programming to ensure the order and safety of a correctional facility. Although there may be good reasons to develop initiatives to solve problems larger than the institution itself, the incentive incompatibilities come into sharp relief when it comes to implementing ideas.

Even when a correctional agency decides to take on reentry, incentives may affect the effort's target population. There will always be tension between what has the best chance of long-term success and the short-term interests of a supervising agency not having visible "failure" on its watch. Agencies must confront such realities in program design. One possibility is for correctional facilities to collaborate with other agencies, sharing the public responsibility. Another possibility, not inconsistent with the first, is to proactively identify potentially problematic inmate populations. The Boston Reentry Initiative, another reentry program of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department in partnership with the Boston Police Department, is an effort to intervene with those offenders judged most likely to cause serious problems following release. If a program is defined as having this tough mission, it is possible that "failures" reinforce the need for the program rather than dooming it.

***The external environment drives the available reentry options.***

For a perhaps large segment of the inmate population, it will be difficult to coordinate efforts across agencies because each agency has a different mission, a different professional culture, and a different operating system. In many jurisdictions, law enforcement agencies have different perspectives on inmate release either because of formal legislation or tradition. For example, parole was once seen as a social service agency, prodding inmates at the same time it provided resources to support their many needs. Over time, parole has become more focused on surveillance and enforcement, and its access to resources has declined. While by no means the general rule, in some jurisdictions, the police and corrections departments have taken the lead in progressive planning for the realities of inmate release.

It is possible that as agencies grow more accustomed to working together, the tensions of different missions and responsibilities will be reduced. This is, in theory, testable. Are policies and practices different when correctional agencies also supervise inmates after release? Is there a rank ordering in how gradual the reentry transition is, from jurisdictions with corrections and post-release supervision in different branches of government, to those with related organizations, to those that are unified? Jurisdictions with similar characteristics but different administrative structures can be compared to see whether administrative linkages facilitate coordination.

One essential element of the external environment is sentencing law. In all jurisdictions, some segment of the inmate population will have restrictions based on sentencing or other legal status that will prohibit activities that may, in some circumstances, increase the chance of successful reentry following release. Whether these are restrictions on placing violent offenders in the community or restrictions on security-level classifications that proscribe inmates from certain types of housing situations, program requirements must be accommodating. Because inmates have complicated legal situations, and because the laws governing correctional practice are generally piecemeal and not coordinated, agencies offering reentry programming will have to develop several program models to be delivered in different circumstances to the eligible inmate population. It is difficult to simply characterize the inmate population, much less design programming in all its necessary forms.

***Institutional operations and policies often get in the way of reentry in correctional settings.***

In agencies that function to "process" inmates rather than "treat" them, it is an ongoing challenge to develop and implement efforts to aid the prospects of ex-prisoners following release from the jurisdiction's immediate responsibility. Policies and procedures tend to be articulated one at a time. While each of them may be well justified, they can interact in unanticipated ways. It turned out to be incredibly illuminating to apply the community corrections classification criteria simultaneously to a set of actual inmates, as in Watson (2002). This exercise serves as a reminder that it is people who are punished, not individual attributes, and people

have multiple attributes simultaneously. Although such a review does not invalidate the good reasons for a particular policy or practice, it will point out the consequences, allowing them to be properly weighed.

While it is understandable and predictable that classification will be central to the success of any program, several other policies at the SCHOC obstructed the reentry program in ways that program staff and designers did not anticipate. In the case of the ORP, the movement of the program four times over the past 20 months with very little notice provides a case in point. The ORP began in the Department's halfway house. Fiscal and contractual issues contributed to its move to a community correction center. Interagency disagreement over program priorities required it to move again, this time into a living unit at the Suffolk County House of Correction. In April 2003, that living unit was reconfigured as a day-reporting program, and the ORP moved to a higher security-level unit, where it serves as the core program for inmates soon to be released. While its current location may perhaps be the most appropriate location for the program, the movement of the ORP demonstrates the continual changes that occur within a correctional institution, and the challenges to program staff to adapt the program quickly to the different circumstances.

With each move deeper into the institution, the ORP students faced greater constraints. They had to follow the institutional schedule and had less out-of-cell time. They could not access community-based resources while they were at the SCHOC. Amenities that disappeared, such as bringing coffee to class and having pizza and soda for graduation, while seemingly small and trivial cutbacks, institutionalized the program and disproportionately affected inmate and staff morale. Fortunately, the ORP was able to change the program curriculum on short notice and maintain the intense and productive working relationships among students and staff. Without the leadership of the program director and the motivation of the staff to make each new setting work, the program would have come to an untimely end, which is the case of many reentry programs.

***While analysts and practitioners agree about the need to support inmates reentering the community, there is no clear consensus on reentry treatment models or the rank ordering of inmates to participate in such programs in terms of either deservingness, highest needs, or potential highest public safety return on investment.***

Prisoners leaving the SCHOC face the same challenges as prisoners across the country (Bound and Freeman 1992; Fagan and Freeman 1999; Freeman 1999). Structural change in the economy over the past 30 years has worked against released prisoners. The human capital requirements for decent jobs have increased markedly in the United States (Murnane and Levy 1996). Traditional blue-collar jobs that offered high wages for relatively low skills have disappeared; a growing percentage of the U.S. labor force is employed in the service sector. Educational assessments and surveys of the nation's prison population consistently show poor literacy skills, high dropout rates, scattered education and work histories, and high rates of self-reported substance abuse problems. At the SCHOC, tests at intake reveal average reading levels at the eighth grade, math levels at the fifth grade, and high school dropout rates of 75% (although one-third of these dropouts have since earned a GED diploma, many of them while in prison). Also, 70% to 80% of inmates self-report having an alcohol or substance abuse problem in the two years prior to their incarceration. These figures are in line with national data.

Compounding these disadvantages, criminal backgrounds increasingly serve as "scarlet letters" that exclude former inmates from opportunities and benefits that could aid their transition. Surveys have revealed that employers in the service sector statistically discriminate against individuals with criminal histories due to both a belief that these individuals do not possess the necessary combination of hard and soft skills needed

for the jobs and because of workplace safety and tort liability concerns (Holzer 1996; Holzer 2000). Ex-prisoners also face a host of legal and administrative restrictions, or so-called “civil disabilities,” including disfranchisement, exclusions from certain employment opportunities, limitations on obtaining vehicle and professional licenses, and even restrictions from government transfer programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), federal student financial aid, and federal housing assistance (Butterfield 2002; Mauer and Chesney-Lind 2002). Some of these restrictions have a basis in public safety (e.g., exclusion of sex offenders from working in day care centers). However, many appear excessive and not thoroughly thought out (e.g., a Massachusetts restriction limiting a health clinic from hiring an ex-offender to serve as an adult substance abuse counselor).

The veil of cynicism that “nothing works” in prisoner rehabilitation programming, which stemmed from several influential research reports and commissions in the 1970s, has gradually dissipated, and there is a growing consensus about which program elements are desirable (Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk, and Stewart 1999; Gaes and Kendig 2002; LoBuglio 2001; Piehl 1994). At the same time, there is a growing recognition of the importance of the quality and effectiveness of program implementation and design. The new research emphasizes linking program design to desired outcomes (internal validity), selecting inmates who can benefit from the intervention, offering sufficient program “dosage,” ensuring the program is taught capably and at a level understood by the students, and offering a multimodal coordinated treatment plan that provides for the possibility of aftercare and support (Gaes et al. 1999).

What is not agreed upon, however, is how these programmatic elements relate to each other in terms of timing and importance. For example, is there a hierarchy of needs? Some argue that it is wasteful to invest in any program before drug and alcohol addictions are resolved. Others worry about basic skills above all else, while others feel that getting into any job is important and promote a “work first” philosophy. Although some feel that providing programs too “early” in a sentence will diminish their potency, others claim that certain interventions—such as substance-abuse recovery therapeutic communities—must be provided just prior to release and linked to an aftercare program in order to yield any benefit. On the other hand, parole and probation officers have expressed post-release concern about burdening ex-prisoners with treatment programming as they struggle to meet their immediate employment, housing, and family needs.

Fiscal pressures have also affected the choice of rehabilitation programs. While spending for corrections has soared in order to build and manage new facilities, paradoxically, non-security-related discretionary line items in correctional budgets have been squeezed. As the relative funds for correctional treatment programs have diminished, a zero-sum game has played out where more expensive, longer-term, and skill-based offender programs such as education and vocational training have lost standing to lower-cost, shorter-term programs.<sup>21</sup> Overall, prisoners today have fewer opportunities to participate in substantive rehabilitative programs. Lynch and Sabol, citing data from surveys of inmates, found that enrollment rates in work, education, training, and treatment programs have decreased, reflecting disinvestments in rehabilitation that occurred concurrently with the record expansion of the prison system (2001).

The prospects for successful reentry *must* be influenced by the form of the relationship to the criminal justice system following release from secure confinement. It must be true that a mix of supervision and support is the right recipe for maximizing the chances of reentry. Although there is a great range of experience across the jurisdictions in the United States, it is difficult to learn a great deal about optimal design of supervision due to this great variation, lack of data, difficulty in defining “successful” outcomes, and impossibility in measuring success independently of the behavior of law enforcement entities. The complex, fluid,



and nonlinear path that offenders take through the criminal justice system involves many components, each of which can exercise discretion independent of the other, complicating assessment of the effectiveness of any of them individually and the system collectively. Police agencies may purposely target ex-offenders in a neighborhood by enforcing nuisance laws in a sudden sweep. How does one assess the effectiveness of treatment and supervision services provided if an ex-prisoner is arrested and returned to custody during such an event? Although there is not evidence that would allow careful targeting of particular treatment and supervision regimes to different types of inmates, best analyses recommend graduated sanctions, mandatory drug testing, halfway-back programs, and gradual transitions from secure confinement to independent living. Intermediate sanction programs that can serve both to divert offenders from prison on the front end of the criminal justice system and that can assist prisoners in making a gradual transition on the back end have common-sense validity. While they are often promoted as cost saving, they may be the appropriate mechanism for prisoner reentry even if they are not less expensive than incarceration.

Conceptually, the design of effective prisoner reentry systems is straightforward and incorporates both rehabilitation and supervision elements at all stages, with coordination across and within correctional and social service systems. As part of her analysis of federally funded reentry programs, researcher Faye Taxman (2001) has advanced a simple and linear three-phase reentry model. The first phase begins at entry into prison and consists of an intensive in-prison education and treatment program guided by thorough risk and needs assessments. The second phase consists of intensive programming and transitional support at the time of release, and the third phase consists of structured post-release services and supervision matched to offenders' needs. This model describes an ideal process where inmates begin preparing for their release on the day of their commitment to an institution; prisons, jails, and post-release agencies such as parole and probation—in partnership with social service providers—offer a continuum of coordinated rehabilitative programming, supervision, and support from prison into the community. The model's drawbacks are that it ignores the fact that correctional and social service systems tend to be very fragmented and poorly coordinated and it ignores that prisoners often follow a nonlinear path from prison to the community, iterating back and forth due to both recidivist behaviors and the complexities of their criminal statuses.<sup>22</sup> In general terms, such reentry models aim to assist individuals' transitions from incarceration to law-abiding lives, as well as to use early detection and swift sanctioning to prevent individuals from recommitting serious offenses. Earlier this year, the federal government awarded \$100 million to 49 states over three years to encourage multidisciplinary strategies to build more effective prisoner reintegration systems based on variations of this model.<sup>23</sup> It will be interesting to see how states use these funds—either to design short-term reentry programs that will disappear after the funding ends, or to invest in system-capacity building efforts.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The absence of thoroughly thought out and implemented prisoner reentry systems is a timeless concern. From Sutherland in the 1920s, to Glaser and Morris in the second half of the twentieth century, criminologists have looked for a better way to manage the release of inmates (Carter et al. 1977; Glaser 1964, 1983; Morris and Hawkins 1970; Morris and Tonry 1990; Sutherland 1924). And yet, the country is again taking up the issue of prisoner reentry after spending 30 years simultaneously disinvesting in the type of support needed and vastly increasing the numbers of individuals scheduled for reentry.

The experience of the ORP in Suffolk County illustrates the difficulties of implementing prisoner reentry services. Until policy analysts, policy makers, and practitioners develop ways to target appropriate, quality programming to those who need it most, the great enthusiasm currently available for improving the prospects of those released from incarceration will be misdirected or underutilized. To make matters worse, inappropriate allocation of resources at this time could even undermine the ideas supporting prisoner reentry efforts without giving these efforts a realistic chance for success.

The emphasis on the *practice* of prisoner reentry is an important complement to the current public discussion. The implementation concerns considered here cover a broad range, from encouraging the corrections community to initiate such an effort, to recruiting capable staff, to predicting an inmate's release date, to allowing mentoring with an ex-felon, and even to arranging a small celebration of accomplishment. Even a modest initiative faces a complex environment. Successful efforts will be responsive to the local internal and external environments and have tenacious supporters. It has already been seen what will happen to efforts without these key qualities.

Even if the implementation challenges can be overcome, the sum of the many individual reentry programs and efforts within a jurisdiction does not add to a whole reentry system. Individual add-on reentry programs are difficult to bring to scale and cannot, by themselves, leverage the changes required to develop reentry systems. The number of offenders under correctional supervision, and as importantly, the huge and rapid flows of offenders in, out, and between legal statuses, challenge agencies to think corporately and systemically about where, when, and to whom reentry services are targeted. An independent reentry effort by an individual agency is more likely to reveal these challenges than to resolve them.

Overall, the ORP in Suffolk County has done reasonably well. In retrospect, the enrollment goals represented in the original ORP grant application may have been too ambitious considering the start-up and programmatic issues and the changes required in institutional processes and interagency relationships. Unfortunately, with respect to grant programs, funding cycles demand too much in too little time. It takes several years to implement and standardize any correctional program, and it is common for grant recipients to feel that they have just succeeded in developing an excellent program at precisely the moment that funding ceases and performance results are required. The history of most correctional reintegration programs is one of interesting and well-intentioned programs that come and go with funding cycles and are never taken to scale.

# APPENDIX:

## EVALUATING THE OFFENDER REENTRY PROGRAM

### Descriptive statistics and regression results

Summary statistics for several groups of incarcerated offenders at the Suffolk County House of Correction are shown below. The first column contains data on all males released from custody in January 2001 (the January 2001 release cohort), the second column contains a subset of those offenders chosen to reflect the selection criteria for the Offender Reentry Program (the comparison sample). The comparison sample comprises individuals in the January 2001 Release Cohort who were 1) eligible for community supervision or subject to review for community supervision, 2) serving a sentence of no less than four months, and 3) male. The third and fourth columns include ORP graduates and nongraduates, respectively. These graduates took part in the first 11 ORP cycles, which were completed between June 2001 and October 2002.

### Discussion of the results

The following tables detail the results of several regressions designed to estimate the “program effect” of the Offender Reentry Program on recidivism rates. The “program effect” is defined as the difference in recidivism rates for participants in the program relative to some comparison group.

In **Table A-1**, the dependent variable is a dichotomous that indicates whether or not an individual has been rearraigned within eight months of release from prison. This analysis includes only those individuals that have been out of prison for at least eight months. Equation 1 has only one independent variable, the coefficient on which shows the difference in the eight-month rearraignment rate between individuals who were enrolled in the ORP program versus those not enrolled. This coefficient indicates that individuals in the ORP program were 23 percentage points less likely to be rearraigned than were individuals in the comparison sample.

Equations 2 and 3 add additional independent variables to control for other potential determinants of rearraignment rates. Controlling for these other variables we find that ORP participants were 17.4 percentage points less likely to be rearraigned than individuals in the comparison sample. Equation 4 is identical to Equation 3, with one notable exception—it takes into account that participants in the ORP were actually at risk to recidivate from an earlier date than their release date due to the fact that they were all situated in a halfway house before the end of their sentence. To credit ORP participants for some of this time spent serving sentences outside the HOC, Equation 4 uses their ORP graduation date as a proxy for release date. In this specification we find that, all else equal, ORP participants were 20.1 percentage points less likely to recidivate. This figure, examined beside Equation 3 should be viewed as a maximum possible program effect of the ORP on rearraignment.<sup>24</sup>

**Table A-2** splits the participant sample by whether or not an inmate graduated from the program. The results show that ORP graduates fared better than nongraduates: graduates were 21 percentage points less likely to be rearraigned within eight months than individuals in the comparison sample (significant at 5%), while the coefficient on nongraduates shows a statistically insignificant difference of only 10 percentage points between nongraduates and the comparison sample. Note that the ORP graduates spend six weeks in the formal program plus a variable amount of time in aftercare at the halfway house. On average, nongraduates in the first 11 cycles spent about 3.5 weeks in the program. It is possible that nongraduates gain something from their abbreviated stay in the program. But the statistical evidence on this point is inconclusive.

For our “upper limit,” shown again in Equation 4, we find that ORP graduates were at most 22.9 percentage points less likely to recidivate, while the coefficient on nongraduates, which shows a 14.3 percentage point difference between nongraduates and the comparison sample, is larger than in Equation 3 but still statistically insignificant. It is important to note that F-tests on the ORP graduate versus ORP nongraduate coefficients in each of these regressions indicate that the coefficients are not statistically significantly different from one another. Yet, this could be the result of the relatively small size of the graduate and nongraduate samples.

**Table A-3** and **Table A-4** use the same specification of Equation 3 in A-1 and Equation 3 in A-2, augmented with variables to control for whether or not inmates have a high school diploma or GED certificate as well as how inmates scored on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Including these additional variables has a substantially negative effect on our sample size, which leads to a reduction in explanatory power. Nevertheless, the coefficients on these new variables are in the direction we might expect, as more education appears to be associated with lower recidivism. While



the coefficient on the ORP dummy becomes insignificant, the sign on the coefficient remains the same. Surprisingly, the coefficient on ORP nongraduates is now less than half its standard error (the point estimate is small and positive).

**Table A-5** is an exploratory analysis of ORP participants only. As a result, the sample size drops considerably, and the results should only be considered to be suggestive. Nevertheless, we do gain insight on some of correlates of recidivism for participants in the ORP. Many of the coefficients are pretty much as we would expect: graduates had a lower rate of rearraignment than non-graduates; inmates who were re-released for their instant offense were more likely to recidivate than those being released for the first time; more prior incarcerations were associated with more recidivism; and inmates who committed person offenses were less likely to recidivate than inmates who committed drug offenses. Interestingly, the negative coefficient on religion indicates that inmates who reported belonging to a religion were somewhat less likely to have been rearraigned than those who did not report belonging to a religion (although this result is statistically insignificant). Finally, this analysis shows that ORP inmates released on parole were more likely to be rearraigned than those not released on parole. While the result is insignificant, it might mean that these offenders were subject to greater surveillance.

**TABLE A-1**  
**ORP versus comparison sample** (rearraigned within eight months)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
In ORP	-0.230** (0.077)	-0.189* (0.079)	-0.174* (0.083)	-0.201* (0.081)
Age (years)		-0.010* (0.004)	-0.011* (0.004)	-0.011* (0.004)
Sentence length		-0.008 (0.005)	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.005)
Prior incarcerations		0.059** (0.016)	0.053** (0.016)	0.049** (0.015)
Person offense			0.046 (0.097)	0.069 (0.095)
Property offense			0.073 (0.096)	0.111 (0.093)
Other offense			0.275* (0.123)	0.307* (0.120)
White			0.192* (0.088)	0.171* (0.085)
Hispanic			-0.004 (0.097)	0.011 (0.094)
Constant	0.402** (0.048)	0.651** (0.143)	0.574** (0.152)	0.562** (0.148)
Observations	145	145	145	145
R-squared	0.06	0.16	0.22	0.24

Note: For each of the regression output tables, the asterisk indicates that the coefficient is significant at 5% and double asterisks indicate that the coefficient is significant at 1%. Standard errors are shown in parentheses.

**TABLE A-2**  
**ORP graduates versus comparison sample** (rearranged within eight months)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ORP graduate	-0.277** (0.086)	-0.227* (0.089)	-0.210* (0.093)	-0.229* (0.091)
ORP nongraduate	-0.125 (0.117)	-0.116 (0.114)	-0.100 (0.117)	-0.143 (0.115)
Age (years)		-0.010* (0.004)	-0.011* (0.004)	-0.010* (0.004)
Sentence length		-0.007 (0.005)	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.007 (0.005)
Prior incarcerations		0.058** (0.016)	0.053** (0.016)	0.049** (0.015)
Person offense			0.049 (0.098)	0.072 (0.095)
Property offense			0.081 (0.096)	0.117 (0.094)
Other offense			0.284* (0.124)	0.314* (0.121)
White			0.185* (0.088)	0.166 (0.086)
Hispanic			0.001 (0.097)	0.015 (0.095)
Constant	0.402** (0.048)	0.638** (0.144)	0.555** (0.154)	0.547** (0.150)
Observations	145	145	145	145

**TABLE A-3**  
**ORP versus comparison sample** (rearraigned within eight months)

	(1)	(2)
In ORP	-0.081 (0.105)	-0.068 (0.113)
Age (years)	-0.008 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.006)
Sentence length	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.007)
Prior incarcerations	0.053* (0.020)	0.054* (0.021)
Person offense	0.053 (0.127)	0.058 (0.132)
Property offense	0.140 (0.119)	0.135 (0.123)
Other offense	0.349 (0.176)	0.357 (0.182)
White	0.159 (0.110)	0.160 (0.120)
Hispanic	0.081 (0.132)	0.071 (0.136)
Reading grade-level equivalency		-0.001 (0.022)
Math grade-level equivalency		-0.004 (0.027)
Has GED		-0.053 (0.129)
Has high school diploma		-0.074 (0.115)
Constant	0.330 (0.203)	0.391 (0.292)
Observations	98	98
R-squared	0.18	0.19

**TABLE A-4**  
**ORP graduates versus comparison sample** (rearranged within eight months)

	(1)	(2)
ORP graduate	-0.141 (0.117)	-0.130 (0.125)
ORP nongraduate	0.044 (0.151)	0.062 (0.159)
Age (years)	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.007 (0.006)
Sentence length	-0.001 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.007)
Prior incarcerations	0.052* (0.020)	0.054* (0.021)
Person offense	0.047 (0.126)	0.054 (0.131)
Property offense	0.141 (0.119)	0.137 (0.123)
Other offense	0.373* (0.177)	0.382* (0.183)
White	0.145 (0.110)	0.143 (0.120)
Hispanic	0.058 (0.133)	0.046 (0.137)
Reading grade-level equivalency		-0.003 (0.022)
Math grade-level equivalency		-0.003 (0.027)
Has GED		-0.049 (0.129)
Has high school diploma		-0.081 (0.115)
Constant	0.321 (0.203)	0.388 (0.291)
Observations	98	98
R-squared	0.20	0.20

**Table A-5**  
**ORP only** (rearraigned within eight months)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ORP graduate	-0.155 (0.146)	-0.172 (0.141)	-0.176 (0.148)	-0.227 (0.164)
Age (years)		-0.007 (0.007)	-0.007 (0.008)	0.002 (0.011)
Sentence length		0.004 (0.009)	0.004 (0.010)	-0.005 (0.013)
Prior incarcerations		0.090* (0.038)	0.077 (0.043)	0.050 (0.048)
Person offense			-0.128 (0.315)	-0.470 (0.358)
Property offense			0.130 (0.150)	0.002 (0.173)
Other offense			0.023 (0.277)	-0.412 (0.357)
Has GED				0.250 (0.187)
Has high school diploma				0.124 (0.200)
Married				0.009 (0.326)
Separated/divorced/widowed				-0.072 (0.370)
Religious affiliation				-0.152 (0.216)
Paroled				0.413 (0.219)
Rereleased				0.161 (0.218)
White				0.493* (0.216)
Hispanic				-0.319 (0.308)
Constant	0.333** (0.122)	0.288 (0.234)	0.260 (0.250)	0.027 (0.296)
Observations	40	40	40	40
R-squared	0.03	0.18	0.21	0.50

## ENDNOTES

1. Some analysts and practitioners use the term “reintegration” rather than “reentry.” Generally, this distinction is meant to broaden the discussion. Discussions of “reentry” are often concerned about reducing crime, with things like family relationships and housing seen as means to those ends. Discussions about “reintegration” often consider ends in addition to reduced crime.
2. Hampden County Sheriff’s Department runs the Hampden County Correction Center, which includes a jail and House of Correction in Ludlow, Massachusetts. The Department established one of the country’s first day-reporting programs in 1986, and has earned a national reputation for prison reintegration.
3. Each ORP cycle provides a total of 180 hours of instruction.
4. The conceptual approach to the ORP’s writing curriculum is based in Nancie Atwell’s book, *In the Middle: A New Understanding about Writing, Reading, and Learning* (Atwell 1998).
5. The APC serves as the exclusive curriculum in Hampden County ORP.
6. For more information, see <http://www.delanceyfoundn.citysearch.com/1.html>; <http://www.pioneerhumanserv.com/>.
7. Even with its substantial treatment and education program offerings, the number and quality of programs at the House of Correction are inadequate to the overall demand and need. This is true in most correctional facilities (Petersilia 2003).
8. The SCHOC housed an inmate population that exceeded 2,000 in 1996. More recently, the inmate census has leveled out at 1,600.
9. The position of Sheriff in Massachusetts is an elective office with a six-year term.
10. The vendor providing the halfway house moved to a location with less programming spaces, and there was a financial savings in relocating the program to the SCHOC.
11. The ORP wanted male, poorly educated inmates with erratic work histories, interest in the program, and the ability to keep up with the program demands, which required a minimum of a fourth-grade reading level.
12. The one significant exception to this is the Boston Reentry Initiative. In this program, the Boston Police Department identifies those in the inmate population of greatest concern to them when they are released. These “impact players” are then targeted for a reentry program at the SCHOC that provides many significant social services including job assistance and faith-based mentors. Several elements of the ORP are similar—some of the same staff were involved in initiating both programs—and at some point in the near future, these programs may interconnect more directly. The “impact players” may be required to go through the ORP prior to release.
13. One common controversy is whether an inmate needs ORP or substance abuse treatment. It is often difficult to reach the consensus that both treatments are necessary.
14. Hampden found it difficult to identify sufficient offenders on prerelease status who had the time and need for the program. To address this problem, Hampden opened the program up to probationers and transported inmates from its minimum facility in Ludlow to the downtown location in Springfield. They also chose to reduce the time requirements of the ORP from six weeks to three weeks. These actions were successful in fully enrolling the ORP classes.
15. The authors of this paper originally undertook this ambitious data collection effort in order to understand the poor utilization of the ORP and the Department’s community correction programs due to classification issues, as discussed just above. It turned out that having a systematic picture of released inmates is useful for a number of unanticipated purposes as well, such as the analysis of selection into the ORP performed here. To construct the profile of inmates released from the SCHOC, data were assembled from electronic and case files kept by various departments within the Sheriff’s Department. Information was assembled from these sources to provide a picture of inmates’ criminal history, institutional placements, behavior, and release status. The data collection was performed by two Harvard University students, and formed the basis for their respective theses. Further details about the construction of the database can be found in (Horowitz 2002; Watson 2002).
16. Some of these arraignments are eventually dropped. Because it can take some time for this to happen, for consistency we count all rearraignments, even if charges are ultimately dropped.
17. An additional four states had abolished parole for certain violent offenders (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck 2001).
18. The other role ascribed to parole boards is to rectify inconsistencies in sentencing practices.
19. Ashbel T. Wall, II, the director of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, illustrates this point in a story he tells contrast-

ing the public reaction between two incidents that occurred shortly after one another. He described the understandable and deserved public flagellation he received when several maximum-security inmates in his system escaped. Fortunately, they were subsequently captured and returned without reoffending. By contrast, he mentioned that no one held him or the correctional system accountable in a highly publicized case when two individuals, recently released from his prison system, killed a store clerk. His point was that his and his system's liability, in the eyes of the public, ends the day prisoners leave his custody.

20. Some jurisdictions have faced large legal judgments following crimes committed by offenders under the authority of a correctional institution but in the community under the auspices of a reentry program. According to a recent e-mail on a correction listserv managed by the National Institute of Corrections, the State of Washington incurred over \$50 million in liability as the result of several successful cases of injuries resulting from the criminal actions of offenders participating in pre-release programs and even from those who were no longer in custody. The e-mail indicates that these lawsuits have made it difficult for the state to insure its correctional program and has had powerful effect on offender eligibility and allowable activities for state's community correction programs.

21. "Cognitive skill," "therapeutic community," and other such programs offer prison officials easily achievable outcomes such as program completion or measured attitudinal change. More intensive programs require skilled staff, less-scripted curriculum, and longer "treatment" periods to obtain improvements in measured outcomes such as improved literacy and vocational skills. The latter programs are higher cost and require more accommodations by the correctional institution.

22. Upon release from a correctional institution, many inmates have additional obligations to the criminal justice system. For example, prisoners are routinely released from prison to a jail pending the outcome of additional charges that may or may not be related to the previously convicted charges.

23. For more information, see <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/sl000578.pdf>.

24. It is likely that several of the comparison sample members would have also spent time before their release in a halfway house. If we were able to control for this, we would expect the estimated ORP program effect to be smaller than this maximum.



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