

# Success for Life<sup>SM</sup>

Evidence-Based Programming to  
Reduce Recidivism





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**Success for Life<sup>SM</sup>:** Evidence-Based Programming to Reduce Recidivism  
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Management & Training Corporation (MTC) is an international organization dedicated to helping people realize their learning potential. MTC creates nurturing environments in which education is encouraged and recognized. MTC manages and operates 23 Job Corps Centers in 19 states for the U.S. Department of Labor, preparing disadvantaged youth for meaningful careers. MTC also operates privatized correctional facilities around the world with approximately 8,000 beds under contract. The MTC Institute is the research division of MTC, which is dedicated to promoting innovations, exemplary practices, and projecting trends that are relevant to job training and corrections. The work of the Institute is geared towards a broad audience including policy makers, educators, researchers, practitioners, state and federal officials, workforce development entities, correctional agencies and Job Corps centers.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over two million individuals are currently incarcerated in the United States, and over half a million prisoners are released each year. Yet more ex-offenders return to prison than ever before. With more than two thirds of offenders returning to a correctional facility within three years of being released, the burgeoning offender population continues to be a major challenge facing correctional administrators across the nation. Resources are limited, many states have federal, state, and local facilities operating well over capacity, and many have been placed under court order to remedy the conditions (Austin & Irwin, 2001).

Criminal justice policies are inconsistent with public expectations. Get-tough-on-crime policies and sentencing reform enforce the punishment philosophy, but little effort is put into rehabilitation of offenders to move them toward the expectation of a successful community life. The American public is growing impatient with the correctional system's unwillingness to adequately prepare offenders for transition into communities and effectively reduce the alarming rate at which ex-offenders return prison.

have demonstrated as much as a 40% reduction in recidivism (Brown, 2000). While many programs are important, the research is unequivocal in noting that coordinated correctional programs that address the multiple areas of inmate need are critical in reducing the rate of recidivism. This is not surprising considering the fact that many offenders face multiple challenges to a successful reentry. With 42% of all state and federal inmates lacking a high school diploma or GED and 71% of incarcerated offenders in 15 of the largest urban counties serving time on a felony drug conviction, education and substance abuse programs are two notable areas of need (Harlow, 2003).

Contrary to the general perception, at least 95% of all offenders in State facilities are released (Hughes & Wilson, 2003). Offenders spend an average of 29.3 months in prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2004), reentering communities where there is a growing demand for skilled and educated workers. One of the most ignored facts in thinking through the long-term impact of criminal justice policies, prison education, and drug treatment programs for prisoners is that the American economy creates jobs-new kinds of jobs-faster than they can be filled. More skills and higher educational attainment translate into better

## **Investments in programs that address education, training, and drug treatment needs within correctional facilities have a significant impact on reducing the number of offenders that return.**

Despite evidence that investment in correctional programming increases the likelihood of offender success in life outside of the prison environment, correctional programming budgets are often first on the proverbial chopping block when fiscal resources are limited. Many offenders released into their communities are ill prepared to engage in constructive employment and socially positive behaviors. Though crime rates in general are down, incarceration rates continue to rise, with too large a proportion of the prison population being return offenders.

Investments in programs that address education, training, and drug treatment needs within correctional facilities have a significant impact on reducing the number of offenders that return. Effective programs

wages and jobs for ex-prisoners and trained workers for employers. Stable economic life then stabilizes social life, thus lowering the probability that these employed people will turn to a life of crime (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

The U.S. suffers from a shortage of skilled and qualified workers. Thus, from a purely selfish economic standpoint, America needs to have its ex-offenders

**Stable economic life then stabilizes social life, thus lowering the probability that these employed people will turn to a life of crime (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).**

stay out of prison. In the last 10 years, the American economy has created more than 16 million new jobs (Employment Policy Foundation, 2002), with employ-

**Offenders who are prepared to transition into the community are those who have the required skills to gain legal employment, those who can find housing, and those who have an established family or community network that can help them attain needed services.**

ment opportunity increases being most dramatic for those with training beyond high school. Job training combined with prison programs targeting employer expectations, social rules, values, and norms within the culture of work can build the human capital needed in the offender population so offenders can secure stable employment after release.

Researchers spend considerable time developing theories to explain the existence of crime, offender behavior, and imprisonment. Sampson and Laub's (2003) expansion of the famous Glueck<sup>1</sup> longitudinal data provides an opportunity to examine patterns of offending over offenders' life course, age 7 to 70. Their findings indicate that the rate of offending declines with age, and that while the peak ages of offending may vary by type of offense, in general all types of offending decline in the middle adult years.

While incarcerating offenders until they age out of criminal activity is not practical, constructive use of the time they are incarcerated is too often a missed opportunity for both the offender and the community. Selke & Anderson (2003) found that prison costs have a direct effect on the rate of imprisonment. States with higher costs per inmate due to program services provide a higher level of service to inmates and, as a result, those inmates are less likely to recidivate. Correctional professionals must change the institutional environment to make it possible for offenders to construct significant life changes. To reduce recidivism and enhance the long-term safety and security of the community, they must rethink how they do business. Offenders need prison programming that facilitates cognitive and behavioral

changes fundamental to their moving away from criminal involvement and toward a successful life in the community. One approach that institutes evidenced-based principles is Success for Life<sup>SM</sup>, developed by the Management & Training Corporation (MTC).

## MTC CORRECTIONS

More than 30 states and the federal government partner with private sector companies to operate secure facilities. Successful outcomes have resulted in more and more government leaders raising expectations for corrections and using new approaches. MTC has emerged as a leader in the management and operation of private correctional facilities. Proven performance and high integrity enable delivery of quality services to customers through innovation, adaptability and cost effectiveness. MTC is unique in the business in bringing new solutions to address inmates' needs through education and program experiences.

Studies have shown that accountability is a standard expectation required for private operators. MTC is a leader in applying corrections standards to facility operations to assure that acceptable levels of custody, programming, human rights, nutrition, and health care are met. MTC is a leader in seeking accreditation from the American Correctional Association, Correctional Education Association, and other accrediting organizations.

Outstanding corrections management drives MTC's success. MTC's correctional facilities are safe and secure for inmates, staff and community. Secure operational systems promote stability and increase inmate participation in program opportunities. MTC's depth of experience results in safer, more secure facilities. Corporate leaders and facility management bring vast experience in corrections and rehabilitation. Staff training, operational policies and systems of accountability emphasize not only safe and secure operations, but rehabilitation and the protection of human rights. Over the years, MTC has built a reputation as the expert in rehabilitation programs, training, and education. A career preparation focus provides the spark for individuals to turn their lives around.

<sup>1</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck ([1950]. *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*. New York: Commonwealth Fund) designed a longitudinal study to track 500 youth over a 32-year period to look at crime and delinquency. The study targeted serious, persistent delinquents and provided the foundation for current juvenile delinquency policy.

MTC partners with government agencies to deliver innovative strategies with better value and cost savings. Close working relationships with Federal, State and local officials keep them informed of facility operations and fosters an environment of success.

## SUCCESS FOR LIFE<sup>SM</sup>

Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> is a holistic approach to correctional programming that incorporates evidence-based principles into an integrated model of service delivery to prepare offenders for successful transition into the community. Recognizing the need for efficient and effective programming, Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> encompasses every functional aspect of the facility to provide a cross-discipline service approach for offenders. The strategy targets core areas of the offender's life, infusing positive values and habits, enhancing skills, and addressing identified treatment needs in a coordinated manner. Offenders are taught to understand the connections between their past actions and present situation to encourage change in their perceptions and the direction of their future. Their active participation in the planning for their future is critical to their achieving success once released. Meeting the challenge of reducing recidivism begins with offenders developing the skills that can keep them out of the correctional system.

More than two thirds of ex-offenders return to the criminal justice system. Too many facilities are operating over capacity and state budgets stretch thinner each year. Correctional administrators increasingly find they must become more efficient to maintain their operational level. Because public safety is a priority, program dollars take a back seat. The challenges facing today's corrections professionals require a change in perspective, tools, and knowledge if they are to meet the public expectations. MTC's Success for Life program meets these challenges by rethinking correctional organizations and roles and changing the traditional way of doing business. Within MTC Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> facilities, all organizational units are unified under a mission supporting change and success for the offender. The proper assessment of offender risk, need, and progress ensures offenders receive the appropriate coordination of treatment and program services. Adequate monitoring of performance in key areas allows progress to be measured.

Offenders who are prepared to transition into the community are those who have the required skills to

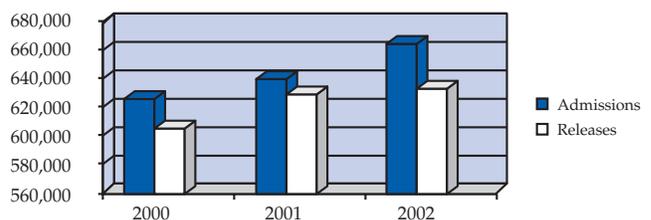
gain legal employment, those who can find housing, and those who have an established family or community network that can help them attain needed services. In corrections, the safety and security of the public is a priority. Correctional programs, such as Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> that help offenders gain the skills necessary to successfully transition into the community are sound investments of both dollars and staff time.

## MORE COMING IN THAN LEAVING

Despite falling crime rates, particularly for violent and property crimes, the U.S. prison population has continued to grow. From 1925 through the early 1980s, the incarceration rate in the United States has consistently ranged between 80 and 140 prisoners per 100,000 residents. The number of people in state or federal prison increased from 202 to 470 per 100,000 residents between 1985 and 2001 (Pastore & Maguire, 2001, Table 6.23). By 2001, Harrison and Karberg (2004) report, the total number of persons held in custody had reached 1.96 million. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, at midyear 2003, this number had increased to 2,078,570, more incarcerated than at any time in our nation's history. The increase was a 2.9% rise in prison population from midyear 2002, representing the largest annual growth since 1998-99. Over the last decade, the incarceration rate of state and federal offenders has risen steadily. States' overall incarceration rate increased 14%, while the federal rate jumped by 60% since 1995 (Harrison & Karberg, 2004).

Over a three-year period, 2000-2002, U.S. correctional facilities admitted more offenders than they released (see Chart 1). Imprisonment is becoming more prevalent. If this trend continues, an estimated 6.6% of all U.S.-born persons in 2001 will spend time behind bars at some

**Chart 1. Sentenced Offenders in U.S. Facilities**



Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2004). Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2003. Washington, DC:USGPO.

point in their life (Bonzcar, 2003). The risk of incarceration varies with age, education, and race and ethnicity. An estimated 12% of black males, 3.7% of Hispanic males, and 1.6% of white males in their twenties were in jail or prison at midyear 2003 (Harrison & Karberg, 2004). If this rate continues to increase at its current pace, about one in three black males, one in six Hispanic

much as 145%, with prison costs increasing 150% during that same time period (See Graph 1). Escalating costs are not surprising given the increasing number of offenders that return to the system and the increasing likelihood of incarceration because of factors like sentencing reform.

## Building more facilities is not the solution. Facilities must be funded at appropriate levels to allow for effective services and consistency to promote offenders' successful reentry into society.

males, and one in 17 white males born in 2001 will spend some time in prison during their lifetime. Bonzcar (2003) reports that at every age men have higher chances of going to prison than women, and blacks and Hispanics have higher chances than whites.

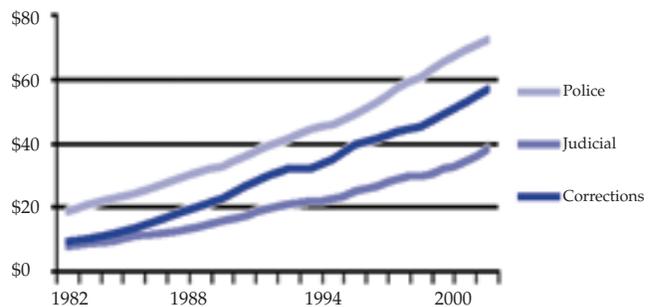
Incarceration rates have reached astonishing levels, and offenders are increasingly more likely to be sentenced to incarceration. This alarming growth is fueled by several factors, among them tougher sentencing policies, a more punitive attitude toward offenders, and the criminal behavior itself. Nearly two thirds of the 3.8 million increase in the number of adults ever incarcerated between 1974 and 2001 is a result of the increasing rate of first offense incarceration.

### COSTS

More than two out of three criminals released from prison return within three years, and both the human and financial costs of recidivism continue to climb. Neighborhoods and communities must pay for these new crimes, and operating prisons is not cheap either. U.S. correctional authorities spent just under \$57 billion in 2001 to maintain the Nation's correctional system. (See Graph 1) The cost of incarcerating the offender and the operation of the prison facility itself consumes the lion's share of state correctional budgets, an estimated 77%.

Figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics show that between 1986 and 2001, the expense of administering major state-level criminal justice functions such as policing, judicial, and corrections increased by as

**Graph 1. U.S. Criminal Justice Expenditures, 1982-2001**



Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts 2001. Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 190641.

What is even more alarming is that more offenders are coming into correctional facilities than are leaving. The average annual cost to the state taxpayers alone is just over \$21,650 per inmate. Many state and federal facilities are overcrowded and operating under court order to find a solution. States must either release offenders early or face increasing capital costs to expand bed capacity at a time when funding is stretched to extreme limits. Faced with limited resources, a majority of states in 2001 spent 4% or less of prison expenditures on capital projects, a 25% decrease in spending from the 1996 expenditures yet costs more than doubled between 1986 and 2001 (Stephen, 2004). (See Table 1, pg. 5)

Building more facilities is not the solution. Facilities must be funded at appropriate levels to allow for effective services and consistency to promote offenders' successful reentry into society.

**Table 1.**  
**State Prison Costs, 1986-2001.**

Year	Total in (Billions)	Yearly per U.S. resident
2001	\$29.5	\$104
1996	24.0	91
1991	19.2	76
1986	11.7	49

Stephen, J. (2004).

**RECIDIVISM**

With the increasing numbers of offenders returning to prison, conventional systems must broaden their mission, protecting the public not only through a safe and secure prison system, but also through appropriate programming. Many offenders lack the necessary life and work skills to return to society as responsible, educationally proficient, skilled, contributors to society. Without these abilities, offenders face tremendous difficulties upon release, as the societal expectation is for the offender to transition to a law-abiding, taxpaying citizen.

More than two out of three prisoners (67.5%) released in 1994 were rearrested within three years for a felony or serious misdemeanor, up from 62.5% in 1983 (Langan & Levin, 2002). In 1983, 41.4% of those rearrested went back to prison; in 1994, that number rose to over half (51.8%). The number of parole violators has jumped over 600% since the 1980s. The number of parole violators returned to prison grew by 54%, compared to a 7% growth in the number arrested for new crimes between 1990 and 1998. Since 1998, the rate of parole violators returning to prison has risen only 1%, while new court commitments has risen 13% (Harrison & Karberg, 2004). Yet with two thirds of offenders returning to the system, growth due to returning offenders far outpaces growth due to new offenders.

Recidivists are also committing more crimes. A study of 272,111 state prisoners released in 1994 found that 183,675 ex-offenders were charged with an average of four new crimes each (Langan & Levin, 2002). In addition, this same study found that two thirds of released drug offenders were rearrested for a new offense within three years, 41.2% of whom were rearrested for the same offense that had put them in prison in the

first place. An estimated 92.4% of all released prisoners who were rearrested for a new crime were rearrested in the state that released them.

**SHIFTING TOWARD A SUCCESS-ORIENTED PARADIGM: REHABILITATION**

One of the overriding goals of a “correctional” system is the “correcting” of the offenders housed in the system. While some might think that simply placing an offender in prison will act to correct merely through the principle of specific deterrence, others argue that prison administrators can take a more proactive stance in providing correction. A variety of programs are available to inmates, as made clear in a report published by the U.S. Department of Justice (Beck et al., 1993). In this national survey of offenders in state prisons, two thirds had a working assignment, just less than one half reported participation in education programs, and about one third reported attending some sort of vocational training. In addition to these activities, about one third reported being involved in religious programs, one fifth were in self-improvement programs, and a little less than one fifth had been in therapeutic counseling.

Prisons have historically introduced programs into prison life that are meant to rehabilitate prisoners. The ultimate goal would be to make the prisoner less likely to reoffend upon release and thus be less likely to return to prison. In addition to the benefits achieved by restoring prisoners to society, the savings generated through lower recidivism would offset the costs associated with prison programs (Palanker, 2004).

But despite this logic, cost remains one of the two main obstacles that stand in the way of implementing prison programs. Most prison programs come at a significant cost in terms of personnel or equipment, and taxpayers are often reluctant to support the use of their tax dollars for costly programs that they see as luxuries (Aos, Phipps, Barnoski, & Lieb, 1999). This is problematic for prison administrators because taxpayers also support correctional policies that are rehabilitative in nature. A second and more important obstacle, however, is the perception that “nothing works.” The philosophy of prison programming took a major hit from a report by Robert Martinson (1974) that declared that most research studies had shown

that rehabilitative efforts have no appreciable effect on recidivism. The question for prison administrators then becomes, “Why invest time and money into programs when research shows that nothing works?”

Closer examination of Martinson’s evaluation by the National Academy of Sciences (Sechrest, White & Brown, 1979) however, revealed that many of the “failures” reported in his study reflected (1) psychotherapy approaches that are not very successful in the non-prison population as well or (2) programs that were never correctly implemented. Subsequent reviews suggest that some forms of correctional treatment were indeed effective in reducing recidivism (e.g., Gendreau, 1981; Cullen & Gilbert, 1982; Greenwood & Zimring, 1985; Van Voorhis, 1987). In the years since Martinson’s report, hundreds of evaluation studies have examined the extent to which prison programming affects recidivism. In fact Gendreau and Ross (1987) concluded that successful

approach utilizes the entire facility and staff to deliver programs in a coordinated effort. Each area of the facility works as a team to improve opportunities for inmate success in multiple areas of programming.

Achieving the ultimate goal of security and public safety requires that facilities do more to reduce the number of offenders who return to prison by providing coordinated programs that address multiple areas of the offender’s life.

MTC’s Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> approach to correctional programming (see Chart 2, pg. 7) infuses prosocial features and creates a positive atmosphere within the facility environment, increasing the possibility for significant life change in the offender. Individuals in the Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> program must take an active role in constructing a different way of life and begin planning for that life when released.

### **Achieving the ultimate goal of security and public safety requires that facilities do more to reduce the number of offenders who return to prison by providing coordinated programs that address multiple areas of the offender’s life.**

rehabilitation of offenders had been accomplished and in some cases successfully reduced recidivism by as much as 80%. “In short, many things work... (Sarre, 1999, p.4)” to rehabilitate offenders and reduce recidivism.

The research indicates that an integrated multi-modal coordinated approach to correctional programming is the most effective means to reduce recidivism. Though review of the research indicates that, for many offenders, the programs in operation are effective, many offenders have multiple service needs and the system lacks service coordination.

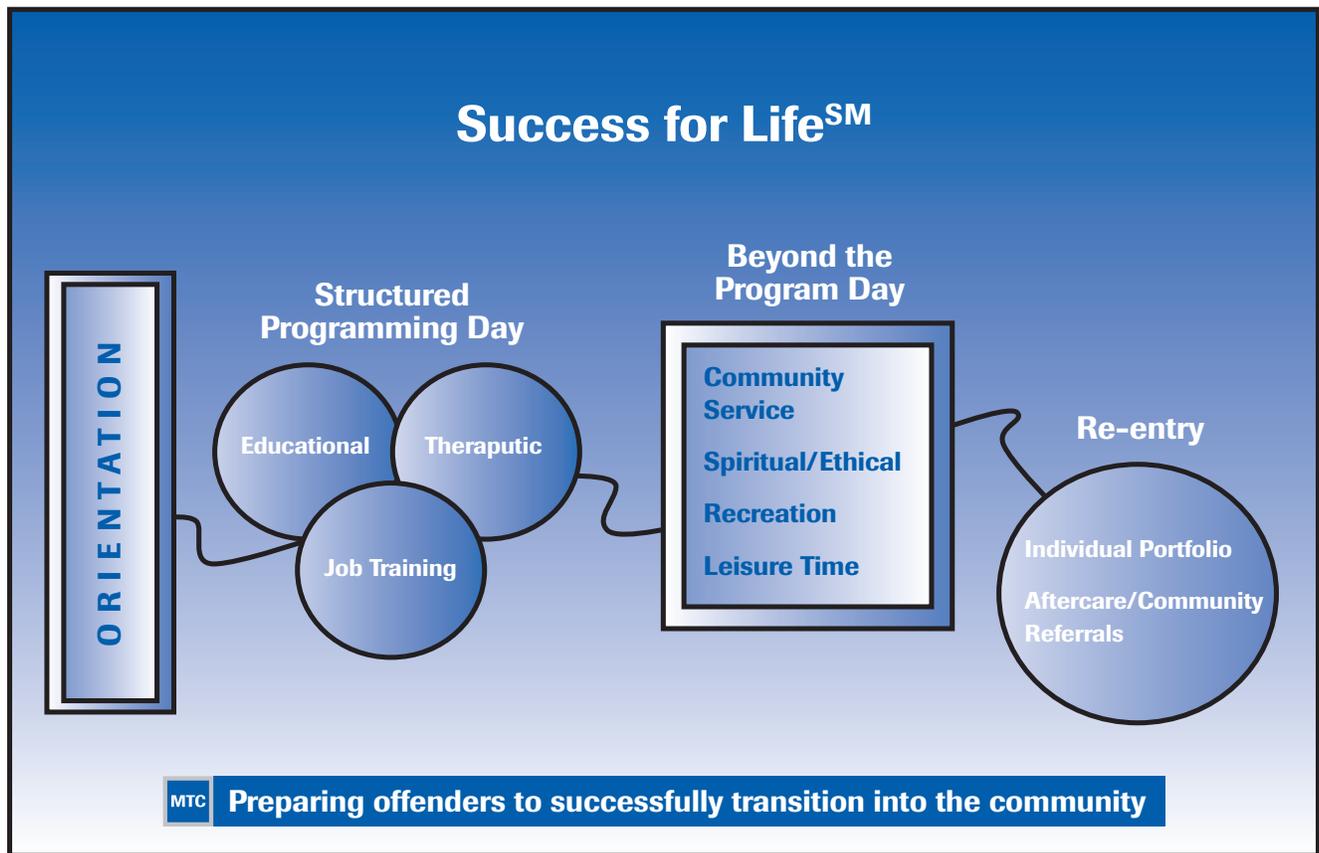
#### **The MTC Approach**

MTC’s innovative Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> model for correctional programming incorporates the research from the multiple correctional program areas shown to reduce recidivism and increases the opportunities for positive outcomes for offenders. Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> employs a coordinated service model. MTC’s unique

The planning begins the day the offender enters the facility. Offenders first participate in an orientation. This is an essential component in this early stage of the offender’s change process. Establishing a positive atmosphere is critical. Clear offender expectations, service and program offerings, staff introductions, communication guidelines, and other administrative procedures set the tone for transition into the facility.

Once orientation is completed, offenders then attend education, job training, and therapeutic services during a structured day, and have the opportunity to participate in community, religious, wellness, and recreation programs beyond the scheduled program day. Program areas incorporated into the Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> approach are those that show the most promise in reducing recidivism. Offender performance and progress are tracked to ensure that programs are efficient and effective. MTC’s multifaceted approach addresses a wide range of offender needs in an organized process. Offenders move along multiple avenues as they pursue change and prepare to reenter the community

Chart 2. Correctional Programming Model



as productive members. Each offender transitions to the community with a portfolio containing his or her work history, certificates of completion, credentials earned while incarcerated, as well as other documentation like social security cards and transcripts, contacts for established community networks, and referrals and information about aftercare and other services that are helpful in finding employment and increasing the likelihood of a successful transition.

While the research emphasis of this report is on recidivism, it is also important to examine the extent to which programs affect the quality of prison life for both staff and inmates. Recidivism is measured in many different ways ranging from quite broad to very limited (e.g., any reoffending, reoffending for the same offense, rearrest for any offense, rearrest for the same offense, reincarceration for any offense, reincarceration for the same offense)<sup>2</sup>. Efforts to identify

correctional programs that are successful in reducing offender recidivism vary. Research ranges from evaluations of therapeutic programs (anger management, drug treatment, etc.) to evaluations that examined the effect of job training and spiritual/ministry programs on recidivism. While few evaluations examine the effect of recreation/leisure wellness and community service programs on recidivism, programs of this nature add to the security and wellness in that they make prison life more amenable for the offender, and thus for the staff.

**EDUCATION AND RECIDIVISM**

According to the U.S. Department of Education, correctional education seeks to change an offender’s behavior by enhancing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (Office of Vocation and Adult Ed, 1999). Though many correctional teachers around the

<sup>2</sup> Recidivism is defined in accordance with the specific research discussed.

country are performing their jobs very well, the correctional system is not designed to maximize rehabilitation of the offender through education efforts. Inmates overall vary from the general U.S. population in learning style, educational attainment, literacy, and employment experience. Correctional populations have a lower educational attainment: an estimated 41% of inmates do not have a high school diploma or a GED compared with 18% of the general population (Harlow, 2003). An estimated 30% to 50% of inmates have a learning disability compared with 5% to 15% of the general adult population (Corely, 1996). Basic literacy is also lower within prisons, yet only an estimated 35% of inmates participate in education programs (MacDonald, 2003).

A study of Texas inmates who became either readers, functionally literate, or earned a GED while in the Texas prison system were less likely to recidivate within two years compared to a similar group of Texas prisoners who did not become readers, functionally literate, or earn a GED. Thus, the educational program was associated with an 11% lower rate of recidivism. Obtaining a vocational certificate did not have a significant impact on recidivism. Only 21% of trained inmates obtained employment in their field of training (Fabelo, 2000). The same study showed, however, that a significantly lower percentage of employed ex-offenders recidivated.

Similarly, the Ohio state prison system conducted a study examining the impact of education and job training on recidivism over a two-year period (Wilkinson & Stickrath, 1995). Their findings suggest that about 28% of offenders who completed (“achieved”) some form of educational program recidivated within the two-year window. Among inmates who did not receive any educational program, 30.4% returned to prison within two years. The difference was most marked for those receiving the GED, where the researchers observed an 8% difference in recidivism between the GED holders compared to the non-GED holders in the comparison group. They also found that receiving the GED closer to the release date was significantly related to increased success upon release (lower recidivism). Inmates who received a college education returned to prison at a lower rate than the comparison group as well (3% lower). Thus, educational achievement had a modest negative effect on recidivism in Ohio. According to the study find-

ings, vocational training was not consistently associated with low recidivism except for younger offenders, drug offenders, offenders from rural counties, female offenders, and those in prison because of nonviolent offenses.

The Correctional Education Association three-state study provides the most comprehensive analysis of the relationship between education and recidivism. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the study examined data on over 3,000 inmates who were released from the Minnesota, Maryland, and Ohio prison systems in late 1997 and early 1998 (Steurer, Smith, & Tracy, 2001). The findings show that inmates who participated in prison-based educational programming have lower recidivism (including rearrest, reconviction and reincarceration) than those who did not. In addition, the study shows that inmates who participated in the education program received higher wages compared to inmates who did not participate.

### **JOB TRAINING—WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND RECIDIVISM**

Vocational (job training) programs attempt to affect recidivism by treating a changeable condition. Vocational training is probably the oldest category of prison programming, and is second only to religion in its use as a rehabilitation tool. The rationale behind prison-based vocational training is to provide a legitimate way for ex-inmates to succeed after being released from prison. Many prisoners were underemployed in the time just prior to their offense and subsequent arrest. For example, more than one third of jail inmates in one national study reported that they were unemployed at arrest (Harlow, 1998). Among probationers who had a disciplinary hearing, twice as many were unemployed than were employed.

The growing movement to increase employment opportunities for inmates in prison is fueled by multiple interests: reducing recidivism, increasing inmate skill and work experience, and generating inmate income and compensation where applicable. Consider the estimated 2.2 million children and the one million low-income female heads of households left behind because of the two million incarcerated inmates. An estimated five million people are directly impacted by the loss of employment opportunity and potential due to incarceration (Wray, 2000).

Clearly, then, prison officials and other stakeholders should be sufficiently motivated to provide job training for prison inmates so that they can more easily be reintegrated into society upon release. There are three major challenges to vocational training in prison. First, some vocational training can be expensive, requiring large capital investments in personnel and equipment. Second, training can create security concerns. Some types of job training puts additional strain on prison staff to maintain a safe environment. For example, allowing inmates to work with tools and materials that could later become weapons can add a burden to the prison administration.

A third major challenge is that structural impediments can restrict inmate access to gainful employment in work that they are trained for because they have a criminal record. Many jobs require licensing, which sometimes requires that applicants not have a criminal record. As a result, it can be difficult for former inmates to apply the job skills they learned in prison because they are not eligible for employment due to their background. Even if inmates are eligible and qualified for a position, there is a possibility that employers might not hire them because of their criminal record.

Albright and Denq (1996), for example, surveyed 83 employers in Houston and Dallas to determine employer attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders. The researchers were also interested to know how these attitudes were affected by (1) the level of training the ex-offender had received while in prison, (2) the type of offense committed, (3) any government incentives to hire, and (4) the relationship of the crime to the job. Employers were initially hesitant to hire ex-offenders, but training, government incentives, and the relationship of the crime to the job could increase the willingness of the employer to consider hiring an ex-offender. Ex-offenders who had served time for violent/sexual crimes or crimes against children were not likely to be hired by the employers, regardless of the incentives or training.

Finally, it can be very difficult for a prison system to keep up with the changing technology of industry. As a result, prisoners may be trained using obsolete equipment or techniques that are no longer useful when they are released. Thus, it is best if job training provides skills that are applicable in a variety of settings. These skills include job-seeking techniques, and

social and work skills—for example, how to interact with coworkers and those in authority. Vocational training should also include some general education. Over 40% of U.S. inmates in prisons and jails had not completed high school. This compares with 18% of the general population age 18 or older who had not completed the 12th grade (Harlow, 2003). In 1997, about 90% of U.S. prisons provided some sort of educational program for inmates and about 50% of the inmates in these prisons reported participation in some prison-based educational program (Harlow, 2003). The percentage of prisons that offered educational programs increased from 1995 (88% of public prisons and 72% of private prisons) to 2000 (91% of public prisons and 88% of private prisons). The most common prison-based education programs focused on preparing for the GED (about 80% of the prisons), while the percentage with college classes was around 30%. Just over half of the public prisons (56%) offered vocational training (compared with 44% of private prisons) (Harlow, 2003).

A few studies have examined the impact of vocational training on recidivism. One large study, for example, reviewed the official records of more than 14,000 Texas prisoners to examine recidivism of those released in 1991 and 1992 (Adams et al., 1994). The researchers compared inmates who participated in prison education programs with those who did not. The findings showed that these type of education programs are most effective when programs focus intensive efforts on the most educationally disadvantaged prisoners.

Craig and Rogers (1983) explored the extent to which prisons prepare inmates for productive roles in society by helping them develop marketable job skills, specifically, the benefits that accrued from their participation in a barber-training program in a medium security state prison. Unfortunately, staff and inmate assessments of the program were not encouraging. For the most part, both staff and inmates felt that the program did not prepare inmates for work in the real world, and the effects of the program were minimal.

When prison systems are stressed (either financially or by population constraints), educational programs can be popular targets for administrators who are aiming to cut budgets. In 2003, for example, over 300 prison teachers in California were notified that they were going to be laid off. Over 500 teaching positions

had already been eliminated over the previous few years (CSEA, 2001). One study examined the effects of prison capacity constraints on a prisoner education program in the severely overpopulated Texas prison system during the early 1990s (Marquart et al., 1994). The study showed that the early release of inmates affected the ability of the Texas Windham School System to deliver effective prison vocational education programs. The irony of the early release of the inmates is that about 85% of the inmates were required to leave prison before they completed their vocational training courses. Since the best inmates are also more likely to be in some sort of vocational or educational training, they are more likely to be released early (before the training is completed). Thus, early release might have the unintended consequence of increasing recidivism.

### THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS AND RECIDIVISM

Therapeutic programs are the most common type of programming in the American prison system. The rationale behind these programs is that offenders are in prison because they lack some capacity to exist within “legitimate” society. The therapeutic program attempts to provide the missing capacity through the application of some kind of therapy. Normally prisoners are identified as having some kind of correctable problem and then are assigned to a therapeutic program. The intention is that when prisoners are released, the new abilities gained through therapy provide them with the tools necessary for staying out of prison. The modality of treatments ranges from simple group counseling sessions to the development of therapeutic communities.

Most therapeutic programs are concerned with changing the behavior of the offender. The key is in discovering the dynamic “cause” associated with the offender’s criminal behavior (i.e., discovering the criminogenic factor that can be changed). Not all criminogenic “causes” can be changed. Conditions such as age, gender, and prior record, for example, obviously cannot be changed through therapy. Other conditions (e.g., attitudes, interpersonal skills, and peer associations) can be changed. For those “causes” that are changeable, effective program implementation can bring positive change. Changeable criminogenic conditions that are thought to influence both drug use and criminal behavior include procriminal

attitudes, procriminal peers, low self-control, weak verbal intelligence, weak educational, vocational, and employment skills, weak problem-solving skills, poor parental practices, and a tendency toward risk-taking (Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk, & Stewart, 1999).

Proper assessment of criminogenic conditions is key to optimizing service delivery. Since so many prisoners who enter prison have a history of substance abuse, for example, a very common type of therapeutic prison program is substance abuse treatment. However, a different treatment modality may be indicated for the occasional substance user.

### Substance Abuse Programs

The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse indicated that in 1996 less than 5% of state prison budgets were used for drug treatment, including education, counseling, and transitional services (CASA, 1998). This seems problematic since the same study suggested that prison officials estimated that more than 70% of state prison inmates needed drug treatment. A national survey of correctional facilities indicates that an estimated 40% of Federal, State and local adult and juvenile correctional facilities offer drug and alcohol counseling services though participation is less than optimal. State corrections administrators estimate between 70 - 85% of inmates are in need of some level of treatment, yet less than 11% of inmates in 7600 facilities surveyed were in treatment (ONDPC, 2001).

Several evaluations of drug treatment programs in prisons reported that treatment decreases drug use after release, decreases self-reported reoffending, and decreases recidivism (Field, 1992; Inciardi, Martin, Butzin, Hooper, & Harrison, 1997; Knight, Simpson, Chatham, & Camacho, 1997; Knight, Simpson, & Hiller, 1999; Martin, Butzin, Saum, & Inciardi, 1999; Wexler, DeLeon, Thomas, Kressel, & Peters, 1999; Wexler, Falkin, Lipton, & Rosenblum, 1992; Wexler, Melnick, Lowe, & Peters, 1999). One review of literature on prison drug treatment programs revealed that many drug treatment programs resulted in post-treatment recidivism rates of about 10% below those of the general prison population (Rouse, 1991). Findings such as these suggest that drug treatment programs are effective.

Some evaluations, however, do not report totally positive effects for drug treatment prison programs. Hartmann, Wolk, Johnston, and Colyer, (1997), for example, observed decreased recidivism among participants in a prison drug treatment program but failed to see any effect of the program on drug use.

In evaluation studies, determining which groups to compare can have a major impact on the program outcomes. For example, comparing offenders who complete a program to offenders who were not in the program is more likely to result in positive findings. On the other hand, including offenders who did not complete the program in the “participants” pool can

alcohol treatment programs. They found that subjects who would have been eligible to enter and complete in-prison residential treatment were less likely to be arrested and use drugs three years after their release than a comparison group of subjects who would not have been eligible for the program. A separate analysis for men and women showed that the results were statistically significant for men but not for women. Thus, when evaluating the effectiveness of a program, it is crucial to determine the extent of self-selection bias that might exist.

The federal prison system has also implemented drug treatment strategies and regularly evaluates their

**The most common finding regarding the effectiveness of prison-based treatment models to reduce recidivism (both drug use and other crimes) is that integrated treatment programs that deal with more than one problem are most effective (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000).**

result in less positive effects. This can be classified as an example of program “implementation” failure (not having all offenders complete a program) as opposed to program “theory” failure (the program does not work). Eisenberg and Reed (1999), for example, only found significant treatment effects for a drug treatment program after separating those who completed treatment from those who did not.

A second comparison problem with many studies is comparing those selected into a program with those who did not qualify for inclusion in the program. Program evaluators refer to this problem as selection bias or “creaming,” where the best offenders who qualify for a program are compared to the worst offenders who did not qualify (Fortney, Booth, Zhang, Humphrey, & Wisemen, 1998). If selection into a treatment program is not random, as is usually the case, then the ability of the researcher to make comparisons is weakened since there is no true control group of similar nontreatment offenders (Johnson & Gerstein, 1999). That is, an argument might be made that those who completed the program and did not recidivate might not have recidivated without the program. There is some evidence that this might be the case. Pelissier, Camp, Gaes, Rhodes, and Saylor (2000), for example, examined the selection bias sometimes associated with the evaluation of prison-based residential drug and

effectiveness. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) evaluated its residential drug abuse treatment program based on inmates who had been released from custody for six months (Pelissier et al., 1998). Offenders who had completed the BOP drug abuse treatment program were less likely to be rearrested (3%) or to test positive for drugs (21%) than a comparison group of similar inmates who did not participate in the treatment program (12% for arrest and 37% for drug use). These findings suggest a 73% decrease in rearrest and a 44% decrease in drug use within the first six months of release as a result of the drug treatment program.

**Integrated Treatment Programs**

The most common finding regarding the effectiveness of prison-based treatment models to reduce recidivism (both drug use and other crimes) is that integrated treatment programs that deal with more than one problem are most effective (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). The common approach, however, is to provide one treatment only (or only one at a time), with little coordination between groups offering treatments. Since most offenders have more than one dynamic problem, it seems logical that a variety of treatment programs would be used (Mears, Winterfield, Hunsaker, Moore, & White, 2003). As is often the case with treatment

Rehabilitation programs must use multiple treatment components and focus on developing specific skills (e.g., social, academic, and employment skills). The emphasis of more promising programs is on making behavioral changes (compared to programs that focus on psychological changes such as self-esteem or insight). MacKenzie (1997)

modalities, combining several programs has a greater effect than just providing one.

In the past two decades, several systematic reviews using meta-analytic techniques have assessed the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral programs for reducing the reoffense recidivism of criminal offenders. One of the most recent reports examined 14 research studies that evaluated cognitive-behavioral programs (Lipsey, Chapman, & Landenberger, 2001). The results suggest that cognitive-behavioral programs are effective, and that the best of them are capable of producing sizable reductions in recidivism. Many of the studies involved were research-oriented demonstration programs and the reported effects might not be as robust for routine practical programs.

A large systematic review of prison programs took place in 1996 when the U.S. Congress (via the National Institute of Justice) commissioned a group of researchers to assess what works in preventing crime. One chapter of the resulting report dealt with programs within the criminal justice system (MacKenzie, 1997). In this comprehensive “study of studies,” the author established the following findings about “what works.”

First, MacKenzie (1997) listed rehabilitation programs that focused on dealing with particular characteristics. Second, she listed prison-based therapeutic community treatment programs that focused on drug-involved offenders. According to the report, for rehabilitation programs to be effective, they must use multiple treatment components and focus on developing specific skills (e.g., social, academic, and employment skills). The emphasis of more promising programs is on making behavioral changes (compared to programs that focus on psychological changes such as self-esteem or insight). Several successful prison treatment programs reduced recidivism by approximately 20%.

## SPIRITUAL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND RECIDIVISM

### Spiritual/Ministry Programs

The use of religion as a tool for rehabilitation is as old as corrections itself. The term “penitentiary” is related to the word “penitent,” referring to the expression of sorrow for wrongdoing and the intention to avoid repeating the act. The first penitentiaries were formed in the United States in the late 18th century. Formed with the assistance of the American Quakers, the basic philosophy deemed that silent contemplation and a penitent spirit were the key to avoiding sin (i.e., crime). Eventually, the “silent and separate” style of corrections emerged within the Pennsylvania system, the first American prison system with the goal of inmates leaving prison with a better understanding of God’s “perfect” plan for the inmates’ life—making them thereby less likely to reoffend. Development of the Auburn system followed shortly after in New York also emphasizing the importance of the Christian spiritual experience for rehabilitation. In the Auburn system, inmates were expected to study the Bible and attend services conducted by prison chaplains.

Though remnants of the original Pennsylvania system lasted into the 20th century, religion eventually came to take on a less important official role. No longer is the official task of the prison to create a penitent spirit. Religious programs in prison have changed over time and many currently operate with help from community volunteers and religious groups called to minister to the prisoners. Concern about the separation of church and state drives part of the reluctance of prison officials to “push” religious programs. In 2001, for example, the “God Pod” unit in the Tarrant County Jail was eliminated due to a ruling by the Texas Supreme Court that the unit suggested a religious endorsement by the institution (Butcher, 2001). In 2003, two federal discrimination lawsuits were filed against a federally funded Prison Fellowship ministry in Iowa accusing the program of hiring based on religious beliefs (Morahan, 2003).

Still, the guarantee of freedom of religious expression found in the First Amendment has been interpreted by the courts to mean that prison administrators are required to allow all prisoners (regardless of faith) to

practice their religious beliefs. The related court rulings resulted in prisons being required to allow for observance of religious dietary rules, access to religious leaders, religious literature, and the right to assemble for religious services. As a result, officials have traditionally welcomed outside ministry groups to enter the facility and hold services. One underlying assumption, perhaps, has been that the services relieve the tension associated with prison life.

O'Connor and Perreyclear's (2002) examination of the effect of religious programs in a South Carolina prison provides interesting insight into how religious programs in prison operate. The researchers were specifically testing theories about the effect of religious conversion, social attachment, and social learning on the rehabilitation of adult male prisoners. The study found that the religious involvement of inmates is extremely varied. Over the course of a year, about one half of the prisoners attended at least one religious service or program. There were almost 1,000 religious services or meetings in that time period, providing access to many different denominations and religious groups. The religious programs were very inexpensive since the staffing was composed of only two prison chaplains and four inmate clerks. The bulk of the work was done by over 200 volunteers who donated over 20,000 hours of work to the prison (roughly 11 full-time employees). Thus, the authors estimated that the yearly cost of the religious programs was no more than \$250 per inmate served. This compares to other therapeutic programs that can cost more than \$10,000 per person every year.

The important feature, however, is the extent to which the program is effective. According to the authors, the more intensely the inmates were involved in religious programs, the less likely they were to have engaged in prison infractions (controlling for demographic and criminal history risk factors). The implication is that these findings can be extended outside of the prison system, suggesting that religious programs can be an important factor in reducing recidivism.

The link between religious programs and recidivism has always been presumed,—“Religion deters individual level criminal behavior through the threat of supernatural sanctions and promotes normative behavior through the promise of supernatural reward” (Baier & Wright, 2001, p.4)—but relatively few studies have

### The InnerChange Freedom Initiative Program

In 1997, Prison Fellowship Ministries began operation in Texas prisons with the full support of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The program was eventually called the InnerChange Freedom Initiative, and by 2003 it had expanded into Iowa, Kansas, and Minnesota. In Texas, the program was operated by Prison Fellowship Ministries through a contract with the state. The InnerChange Freedom Initiative is a mostly volunteer program that offers work and life skills programs as well as values training in a prison setting.

Prison Fellowship Ministries covers the costs of salary and benefits for InnerChange staff and instructional materials, while the Texas Department of Criminal Justice pays the security and inmate support costs (e.g., food and clothing). The InnerChange Freedom Initiative has three phases. The first phase (12 months) focuses on the inmate's spiritual, moral, educational, and survival needs. The majority of this phase is spent on biblical training and GED instruction, along with substance abuse prevention and life skills training. The inmates participate in regular job assignments like other inmates and in support groups that are designed to increase personal faith and relationships with family members. Inmates also have access to peer group activities (such as bible studies). The goal of the first phase of the program is to change the inmate's cognitive processes and to develop a new starting point. After 6 months of Phase I, InnerChange participants are matched with a Christian mentor from the community. The goal is for mentors and participants to meet for a couple of hours each week.

The second phase of the InnerChange program lasts from 6 to 12 months. It follows much of the same routine as the first phase, except that participants are allowed to engage in community service work in the community (e.g., Habitat for Humanity). The training in the Phase II portion of the program adds a leadership emphasis, where InnerChange participants begin to become leaders in the program.

investigated the extent to which the relationship is significant. One recent study examined the sociological component of the urban community-based professional

education programs at New York Theological Seminary (NYTS), focusing on the auxiliary Master of Professional Studies (MPS) program offered at Sing Sing Prison (Erickson, 2002). The NYTS serves urban poor and socially marginal populations and is the only seminary in the country to require social theory and social research methods course work. The study examined the simultaneous use of social theory and sacred texts as teaching tools and intervention strategies in the educational and personal transformation processes of men incarcerated for violent crimes. A survey of NYTS Sing Sing alumni suggested that the MPS program results in significantly lower recidivism rates compared with inmates who did not enter the program.

An earlier study found that participation in prison-based religious programs has a positive relationship to prison adjustment (Clear, Stout, Dammer, Kelly, Hardyman, & Shapiro, 1992). The researchers interviewed 1,000 inmates, prison officials, and religious program providers in 20 prisons across 12 states and found that prisoners seek religious experiences for intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. Intrinsic reasons have to do with individual desires on the part of the inmates to express religious sincerity. Inmates who are intrinsically motivated find religious programs valuable because they help them develop meaning for their life. Extrinsically motivated inmates attend religious programs because of the utilitarian benefits—security, comfort, and companionship.

The study suggested that prison-based religious programs help inmates deal with the discomfort of imprisonment and the psychological angst associated with imprisonment (guilt, embarrassment, and loss). For some inmates, access to religious programs helped them understand why they ended up in prison in the first place. Concepts such as “free will” and “the power of the devil to deceive” helped some inmates cope with their new circumstances, while other inmates accepted responsibility for their imprisonment. Religious programs in prison also provided a chance for inmates to “start over.” Having been redeemed with past sins forgiven, the inmates can make a new start in life. Inmates involved with religious programs also felt empowered because they felt God was participating in their lives.

These findings are similar to those in a study conducted by Koenig (1995), who examined the effects

### Prison Ministries and Fellowship

In the past two decades, perhaps the most widely noted prison-based religion program is the Prison Fellowship ministry. A recent research project examined the effect of Prison Fellowship Ministries on prison adjustment and recidivism (Johnson, Larson, & Pitts, 1997). The researchers examined the Prison Fellowship Ministry in the four New York prisons with the most valid data. The data contained information on over 200 male inmates who had participated in at least one of the Prison Fellowship activities (life plan seminars, in-prison seminars, or bible studies). The study examined official data on criminal history, prison adjustment, and one-year recidivism data for the 40,000 prisoners that were released from the state prison system between January 1, 1992, and April 30, 1993. A matched sample of non-Prison Fellowship inmates was selected to create the comparison group using a 1:1 ratio.

The analyses show that there was no significant difference in recidivism between the Prison Fellowship inmates (37%) and the non-Prison Fellowship inmates (36%). Prison Fellowship inmates with high participation scores, however, were less likely to be arrested (14%) than non-Prison Fellowship inmates (44%) during the follow-up period.

As the researchers note, however, the study has a number of methodological problems. Most notable are small sample size, a short follow-up period, selection bias, and the cross-sectional nature of the data. Still, the findings suggest some support for the Prison Fellowship program’s having a positive added value.

of religion on prisoners over the age of 50 at a federal prison in North Carolina. Religious programs served as a major coping mechanism for about one third of the prisoners studied, resulting in lower depression scores for regular attendees compared to inmates who attended only sporadically. Also, inmates who reported daily prayer or bible study were more likely to be a low security risk than those who did not.

Clear and colleagues (1992) also examined extrinsic motivations for participation in religious programs. Religious services and meetings provide a place that is relatively safe, which is particularly important for

sex offenders who are at great risk from violence by other inmates. Since religious groups encourage forgiveness, all inmates felt accepted by those attending religious services.

In an examination of a faith-based, prerelease program supported by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, researchers tracked program participants for two years following their release to measure recidivism rates (Johnson & Larson, 2003). The study examined 177 InnerChange Freedom Initiative participants and compared them to a matched sample of over 1,700 nonparticipants who were released at the same time. Not all InnerChange Freedom completed all of the steps; only 75 inmates were defined as program “graduates” having completed the 16-month in-prison phases of the program along with a 6-month aftercare phase.

About 17% of the InnerChange graduates were arrested in the two-year postrelease period, while 35% of the nonparticipants were arrested. About 8% of InnerChange graduates were incarcerated in the two years following release compared with 20% of the matched nonparticipants. When the researchers examined all participants (including those participants who failed to complete the program), there were no differences between the two groups, completers and noncompleters, for incarceration or arrest. The study suggested that the key variable in predicting success in the program is a contact between the inmate and a mentor.

Participation in religious programs also provided relief from the deprivations associated with being in prison. Attending religious programs provided access to a prosocial network of support that allows for interaction among peers both within and outside prison. For some inmates, the religious service was the only way to see a fellow inmate housed in another part of the prison. For some, the service was just an excuse to get out of their cell and “mingle.” Finally, religious programs provided access to individuals from the free world. This type of contact allowed inmates to feel like they were still part of normal society.

## Community Service Programs

Allowing prison inmates to periodically reenter their community to perform service activities (such as roadside clean-up or participating in Habitat for Humanity

projects) helps them develop an interest in the community and helps the community change attitudes toward the offender community. Unfortunately there has been very little research conducted on the impact of community service on recidivism.

The theory behind community service programs is restorative justice; hold the criminal accountable to the victim and community that were affected by the crime (Galaway & Hudson, 1990). In order to be “restored,” the offender must take responsibility to remedy the situation. There is also some responsibility for the community as well, since it is expected to provide opportunities for offenders to reintegrate into society.

Interesting research about community service and recidivism involves the Ohio State Prison System. In 1991, Ohio began to place prisoners into community service work jobs. Throughout the 1990s, the prisoners provided over 4,200,000 hours of community service work (Wilkinson, 2000). Inmates who participated in community service programs were less likely to be reincarcerated compared to those who had not participated. Nonparticipating inmates recidivated at a rate of 36%, while those who participated in community service programs recidivated at a rate of 28%. Inmates with more than 100 hours of community service had a recidivism rate of 26.1%.

## Recreation/Wellness Programs

A great deal of controversy surrounds the use of recreation and leisure programs in prison. The largest concern is the taxpayer perception that inmates are being given more than other, disadvantaged citizens who are not being “punished.” This argument is often made concerning all prison programs. Inmates used to be eligible for Pell education grants, for example, but that privilege was eventually eliminated. Access to exercise and recreation activities, however, is probably even more problematic. The term “Club Fed,” for example, has been used to describe the easy time that some prisoners face in the federal prison system, and the news media periodically report on the “comforts” of prison life. Unfounded stories about the prison golf course or tennis court can anger taxpayers who themselves cannot afford to engage in those activities. The goal of punishment and the goal of changing the inmate for the better have been at odds for more

than a hundred years (Byers, 1884; Coddington, 1911; Decker, 1969, Johnson, 1889). A strong case for prison recreation, however, is that these activities provide an opportunity for inmates to learn about cooperative activity, teamwork, self-control, fairness, and competition (Heynes, 1957).

A recent story in the media highlights this controversy (Associated Press, 2002). In 1994, the Florida state legislature ceased purchasing recreational equipment, including weights and televisions, because inmates were supposed to be doing “hard” time. A 2002 bill

Even more than the notion of prisoners being given too many comforts, though, is the real fear that lay people have of prisons becoming a place where inmates can get into better shape, becoming stronger and faster criminals upon release. Both of these perceptions result in relatively low approval ratings among the general public for recreation programs in the prison system.

Among prison administrators, on the other hand, recreation programs are actually fairly popular. There appears to be little appreciation of the rehabilitative

### **Philosophy and policy must come together for correctional administrators and managers to address the long-term planning needed to meet the public expectation of reduced recidivism. Without a change, the cost of incarceration will continue to rise.**

reversed the 1994 policy by allowing prisons to buy “wellness equipment” (interpreted as sporting goods) for inmates. The new policy continued, however, to ban the purchase of weightlifting equipment. The bill was passed at the request of prison officials who claimed that inmates need the equipment to keep them busy. The prison administration considered exercise an important aspect of prison security since inmates without structure can be dangerous.

Upon hearing what the “wellness equipment” funds were to be spent on, the legislator who chaired the Senate Criminal Justice Committee said that the committee had been told specifically that the money would not be spent on sports equipment. The Florida Education Commissioner said, “We are talking about people who murdered, raped and robbed the citizens of Florida. Prison is not a place for fun and games.” In response, the president of the National Correctional Recreation Association welcomed the change. According to the article, Florida inmates are only allowed to use the equipment if they have no disciplinary problems and have completed all of their assignments. As is usually the case, the Florida recreation equipment purchases are made through the Inmate Welfare Fund, which receives income from inmate services and sales. Prisons have also relied on donations from church groups and private individuals.

effects of recreation programs, but administrators understand the problem of “idle hands” in a prison setting. Thus, many prisons develop at least a minimal amount of recreation/exercise/leisure programs as a way of making prison life more productive. The impact that recreation activities could potentially have on rehabilitation should also not be discounted. It seems reasonable to expect that a prison-based recreation program could complement a drug treatment program, for example, by providing a way to “blow off steam.” In addition, inmates could use the recreation program to help develop different coping skills that might mitigate against recidivism.

Classic theories of crime can be adapted to explain how recreation might serve as a release of tension and thereby decrease criminal behavior. Unfortunately, little research exists that examines the extent to which recreation leads to rehabilitation. It is difficult for researchers to distinguish between those who participated in recreation versus those who did not. One research study examined prisoner sports programs and suggested that the benefits of introducing sports in prisons are occupational and recreational (Gras, 2003). The study suggests that access to educational activities is a relatively selective process that limits the amount of participation by many inmates. Recreation programs, on the other

hand, can be much more inclusive, and therefore have a greater capacity to reach more inmates. As inmates participate in prison sports programs, they may discover a previously underdeveloped interest and motivation regarding a legitimate social activity. In addition, prisoners who are involved with sports programs can gain deeper levels of physical and mental commitment toward their chosen sport activity, and develop different perspectives toward themselves and their institutional environment.

A survey of over 1,700 Nevada inmates (along with some secondary data analysis of official data) was used to investigate the extent to which inmates participated in various leisure and sport activities while in prison (Frey & Delaney, 1996). The types of leisure participation were grouped into active and passive categories and then correlated with background factors and with problems the respondent experienced in daily prison life, e.g., boredom, fighting, sexual assaults, temper flare-ups, and difficulties with correctional personnel. The place of leisure activity in tension management was also examined. The findings suggest that leisure activities helped relieve tension among inmates, provided a more peaceful experience for inmates, and reinforced a positive jail climate.

## CONCLUSION

Correctional institutions cannot prevent initial crime from occurring, but continued public safety requires that they take a proactive role in addressing the challenge of reducing recidivism by better preparing offenders to reenter the community. Philosophy and policy must come together for correctional administrators and managers to address the long-term planning needed to meet the public expectation of reduced recidivism. Without a change, the cost of incarceration will continue to rise.

MTC's Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> is for correctional agencies and administrators who are interested in cost-effective programming to address multiple needs of the offender and improve facility performance. Innovative in its approach, Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> enables staff to make a difference in the lives of the offenders by uniting them under a common institutional mission—to improve

the safety of the public by helping inmates stay out of prison once they leave.

This holistic program provides a positive and controlled environment for offenders. All institutional staff, including the mail clerks, security officers, maintenance workers, educators, and wardens contribute to the successful reentry of the offender. Corrections professionals recognize the potential impact within an institution when a mix of support, security and program staff come together to achieve a unified outcome.

MTC's Success for Life<sup>SM</sup> approach to correctional programming is an evidence-based program model that includes orientation, training, curriculum, and assessment. It develops cohesive unit teams that help inmates return to society prepared to meet the challenges facing them.

Given the burgeoning prison and jail population, criminal justice policy must support rehabilitation if facilities and administrators are to meet that expectation. Providing offenders with needed skills and treatment eases their integration back into society and increases the odds of their becoming successful and productive members of their community.

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