



IMPROVING REENTRY SUCCESS: Programming in Prison

June 2009

DATA SPOTLIGHT

There is increasing concern over the alarming rate at which inmates are unable to successfully re-enter and participate in the community. The reality is that 95% of all state inmates will be released at some point into the community. A Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) published study found 68% offenders released into the community were re-arrested within three years. Effective programs demonstrate a 25 to 40% reduction in inmates returning to prison. The most meaningful, long-range measure of prison effectiveness is - and ought to be - success in reducing the number of offenders that return to the system once they are released.

Recidivism is a cost our communities should be able to avoid.

- More than 2/3 of released inmates will be re-arrested within three years of release
- The rate of growth for ex-offenders far outpaces the rate for new offenders
- There are more than 7.3 million people in the US who are confined in a place of incarceration or are under some form of correctional supervision at a cost in excess of \$68 billion annually

The linkage between education and staying out of prison is strong.

- In a three State study, some 57% of non-participants in education programs were re-arrested compared to 48% of participants; 35% of non-participants were re-convicted compared to 27% of participants, and 31% of non-participants were re-incarcerated compared to 21% of participants
- Education level, skill and work experience of inmates are well below the public with 59% of inmates classified as illiterate or functionally illiterate
- Only half of all federal and state inmates have a high school diploma compared with about three quarters of the US population as a whole

Inmates re-enter communities as productive members actively participating in the labor market.

- Growing U.S. demand for skilled and educated workers
- Employment opportunities are increasing dramatically for those with post high school training
- 85% of new jobs by 2014 will require post secondary education
- By 2020 US Department of Labor projects a need for 21 million new 'skilled' workers

Effective programming and re-entry support are the most effective means to reduce recidivism.

- Education is the most effective form of crime prevention reducing recidivism as much as 47%
- Each year of additional education yields a 5-15% increase in wages
- Hard-Core drug treatment is a cost effective plan that produces a 50% reduction in recidivism and saves \$7 for every \$1 spent
- Prison education programs help inmates stay out of prison by improving their knowledge and skills that increase their opportunities to succeed in the community

In summary, the public is growing increasingly aware that modest targeted investments in firmly structured education and drug treatment programs in prisons will have positive personal impacts on offenders, significantly reduce crime in our communities, and save millions of dollars in taxes, policing, and re-incarceration costs.