

Follow-up Evaluation of Ohio's Community Based Correctional Facility and Halfway House Programs— Outcome Study

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Executive Summary

The University of Cincinnati, Division of Criminal Justice was contracted in 2006 by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) to conduct a follow-up evaluation of the state's halfway houses (HWHs) and Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs). This study was designed as a follow-up to an original study conducted in 2002, which examined the effectiveness of Ohio HWHs and CBCFs at reducing recidivism. The original study was pivotal in determining elements of effective programming for Ohio offenders. A key finding from the original study was support for the risk principle, which suggests that intensive programming be reserved for higher risk offenders.

The current study was designed with the following research questions in mind:

- *What type of offenders benefit most from programming?*
- *Which programs are most effective at reducing recidivism?*
- *What models or program characteristics are most important in reducing recidivism?*

The current report focuses on answering the first two research questions; a supplemental report will address the third question by examining in-depth program characteristics to determine which are most important in reducing recidivism. To determine the type of offenders that benefit most from programming, the current report examined individual level characteristics of participants of HWH and CBCF programs. Adjusted probabilities were calculated to identify predictors of both successful completion and recidivism. Like the 2002 study, outcome data examining how HWH and CBCF program participants compared to non-participants using multiple measures of recidivism were also presented. Data were examined by program termination status, as well as referral type.

The 2010 study offers several improvements over the original 2002 study: 1) the current study uses a prospective rather than retrospective design; 2) detailed program-level data were collected which will allow for an in-depth analysis of program characteristics in a supplemental report; 3) rather than sampling a group of offenders from each treatment program, all offenders participating in each program within a one year time frame around the date of the site visit were included in the initial pool of experimental cases; 4) an additional comparison group was used in the current study; 5) treatment cases were matched one for one with comparison cases; the assurance that treatment and comparison cases are the same on the matched variables limits the need to statistically control of differences between the treatment and comparison groups; and 6) the outcome data related to conviction of a new crime were collected via the Ohio Law Enforcement Gateway (OHLEG), which is considered more reliable than data sources available for the 2002 study.

The research employed a quasi-experimental design wherein two treatment groups and two comparison groups were examined. Treatment groups consisted of participants of an Ohio CBCF or HWH facility between February 2006 and June 2007. The comparison samples consisted of 1) parolee/PRC offenders released from a state institution during the same time frame, but not exposed to either HWH or CBCF intervention; and 2) offenders placed on Intensive Supervision Probation (ISP), which was used as a comparison group for probationers in both treatment samples. Comparison cases were matched on the following factors: *gender* (male/female), *race* (White/non-White), *sex offender status* (sex offender/non-sex offender), *county* (large, medium and small) and *risk* (low, moderate, and high). Offender data were provided by ODR, whereas program level data and conviction outcome data were collected by University of Cincinnati researchers. Outcome measures included felony conviction, any conviction (misdemeanor or felony), and new incarceration. A two-year follow-up timeframe was used. Results were examined separately for successful program completers and all participants, as well as by risk level.

The CBCF offenders participated in one of 20 Ohio CBCF programs in operation in 2006. Two separate comparison samples were used for the CBCF experimental cases: 1) the CBCF/parole sample, which included 3,764 matched pairs; and 2) the CBCF/ISP sample, which consisted of 3,564 matched pairs. The HWH offenders participated in one of 44 Ohio HWH programs in operation in 2006. Unlike the CBCF samples, one HWH experimental group was examined with HWH parolees matched to parole/PRC comparison offenders, and HWH probationers matched to ISP offenders. This sample consisted of 6,090 matched pairs. All in all, three groups of offenders were analyzed: 1) CBCF/ISP comparison; 2) CBCF/Parole comparison; and 3) HWH/parole and ISP comparison. Excluding duplicate CBCF and comparison cases, there were just over 20,000 independent offenders included in the study. A brief summary of the findings of the study follows.

Predictors of unsuccessful termination and recidivism:

- Findings suggested that younger, higher risk, Non-White, property offenders with prior convictions and current employment problems were more likely to be unsuccessfully terminated from a CBCF. Predictors of recidivism for CBCF participants included similar factors, in addition to being male with prior incarcerations and a substance abuse problem.
- For HWH participants, being a younger, higher risk, male property offender with a prior record, lower level offense and employment problems leads to a higher likelihood of unsuccessful termination. Predictors of recidivism for HWH participants were also similar to those factors predicting unsuccessful termination, except for the addition of being Non-White and having a substance abuse problem.

Outcome results for the CBCF/ISP group:

- When all participants are examined, despite how recidivism is measured, program participants had a higher rate of recidivism (slight increases when measured via a new conviction and modest increased relative to new incarcerations). However, when broken down by risk, high risk offenders produced a slight positive treatment effect.
- When only successful treatment completers are examined, programs produced a very slight decrease in the rate of new convictions, but still increased the rate of new

incarcerations relative to ISP offenders. The effect sizes for high risk offenders became more substantial and the majority of programs produced positive effects for high risk offenders.

Outcome results for the CBCF/Parole group:

- Like with the CBCF/ISP group, when all participants are examined, programs on average produced negative effects. While an increased number of programs produced treatment effects with high risk offenders, programs still, on average, tended to increased recidivism, despite risk level.
- When only successful treatment completers are examined, treatment effects again improve. Yet even though treatment effects were apparent related to new convictions, when incarceration was used as the outcome measure, programs on average failed to produce positive results, irrespective of risk.

Outcome results for the HWH Sample:

- When all participants are examined, HWHs produced very slight decreases in rates of new conviction across programs, but showed a modest increase in the rate of new incarcerations. As with the CBCFs, aside from new incarcerations, effect sizes increased with higher risk offenders.
- When only successful completers were considered, like with the CBCFs, treatment effects increased substantially. Despite how recidivism was measured, programs on average showed about a five percent reduction in recidivism. This rate increased substantially for high risk offenders, while programs on average increased recidivism rates for low risk individuals.
- Rates of recidivism were also examined by referral type for the HWH sample (condition of probation, condition of parole, violation of probation, violation of parole, transitional control and other). While the magnitude of the treatment effect varied with referral type, most types of referrals benefited from HWH intervention, so long as the offenders referred were moderate to high risk.

Overall, CBCFs performed better against the ISP sample than the parolee sample. Likewise, HWHs appeared to outperform CBCFs with respect average rates of recidivism across programs, as well as the percentage of programs producing positive effects. Finally, programs as a whole produced less favorable results when new incarceration was used as the recidivism measure.

Overall, there were several findings consistent with the 2002 study. First and foremost, remarkable consistency was found regarding support for the risk principle. Programs clearly produced more favorable results with high risk offenders, and tended to increase recidivism for low risk individuals. Likewise, both superior and poor program performers could be identified, despite the use of different outcome measures. Many programs that performed well in the 2002 study continued to perform well in the current study. Likewise, some of the programs that performed poorly in 2002 continued to do so in the current study.

In the current study, attention was paid to successful completion rates for programs. More care was taken in interpreting results for programs with low successful completion rates; as such rates

are likely elevated. On average, CBCFs had much higher rates of successful completion than HWHs, due in part to these programs being secure facilities.

Limitations of the study include small sample sizes in some categories. Although the overall sample size was large, examining offenders by risk category, program and termination type lead to some small sample sizes, particularly for smaller programs and for low risk offenders. Another limitation is the likelihood that multiple factors influence the recidivism rates of offenders participating in programs aside from program quality. For example, the quality of offenders' post release supervision and community treatment, as well as the philosophy of the counties being served are likely to influence outcomes. The examination of such factors was out of the scope of the current study.

In terms of recommendations, program should continue to pay attention to risk, reserving more intensive interventions (such as residential placement) for higher risk offenders. Use of the newly developed Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) will aid in this as this tool brings consistency to the assessment of offender risk across the state. Another recommendation is that programs as well as ODRC address post-release supervision and aftercare programming, as these interventions are also likely to affect offender outcomes. Finally, programs that failed to produce favorable outcomes should examine their treatment practices, including whether they are using an evidence-based model and curricula, or are targeting appropriate risk factors. For those programs that meet these objectives, but still produced unfavorable results, a closer look at how programming is implemented becomes important. Research has shown that evidence based interventions can produce negative effects if not delivered with high fidelity. The program characteristics supplemental report will provide further insight as to what program factors are important in reducing the likelihood of recidivism among participants. Results of this report can also be used to assist facilities in improving programming for Ohio offenders.