



center for
**Smart
Justice**



Inmate Reentry in Florida

*The Impact of Reentry Programs on
Florida's Recidivism Rate*

DECEMBER 2013

Introduction

The corrections system in the United States is based on the understanding that when an individual is convicted of a crime, they must complete a specific punishment, adjudicated by a competent court, and upon the completion of that punishment, they are released back into the community.

The assumption made by our system of justice is that when an inmate is released from prison, they will successfully reenter society. The statistics, however, refute this assumption.

Among those admitted to prison in Florida in 2010 and 2011, the overwhelming majority (81 percent) of Florida's inmates serve less than five years, and only nine percent faced sentences of 10 years or more, meaning that 91 percent of criminals admitted into prison in 2010 and 2011 have already been released, or will be released within the next seven years.¹ Current statistics show that there is a 27.6 percent chance that a released inmate will return to prison (known as "recidivating" or "recidivism") within three years of release, irrespective of the crime that initially landed them in prison. Additionally, nearly fifty percent of new admissions to prison will have previously served time.

Given the volume of inmates released each year, the state must pay close attention to the transition of those inmates back into society, and this transition has become a major focus of criminal justice reform efforts in the past several years. To address this need, "reentry" programs, which help inmates develop the tools that will be necessary to assimilate back into society, are on the rise across the nation.

In Florida today, there are a variety of reentry programs which provide helpful services such as substance abuse treatment, vocational/educational training, faith- and character-based training, and assistance obtaining documentation necessary for post-release employment.

¹ Florida TaxWatch Review of Criminal Justice Data, December 2011

U.S. DOJ Research

The National Institute of Corrections (NIC)² helps local, state, and national correctional agencies develop effective policies and practices through evidence-based research and data. The NIC develops programs that have the potential to reduce recidivism and potentially save money, specifically supporting reentry programs and enhancing the development of these programs across the nation.

Through its extensive study of inmate reentry, the NIC has developed two models for the expansion of these programs. These models address the transitional process for inmates from containment to the community, and break down the transitional process into key elements that act as a blueprint for other reentry programs.

TPC Initiative

The first model is called the Transition from Prison to Community (TPC) Initiative and consists of seven elements.

1. **Assessment and Classification:** the initial assessment of the inmate after admission to a prison facility, and the classification process wherein terms and conditions of confinement are created. During this stage, certain risk factors are identified so that an effective Transition Accountability Plan (TAP) can be created.
2. **Creation and administration of a TAP:** a collaborative plan that lays out the stages of an inmate's sentence. It will explain to the inmate what steps are required to best prepare the inmate for their release back into the community, the terms and conditions of their release, the supervision they will be under while in the community, services available, and their eventual discharge at the end of the transition process.
3. **Release of offenders back into the community (also known as the Community Phase):** this covers both discretionary and mandatory release, and provides the inmate with incentive to participate in the TAP.
4. **Supervision and Services:** details the specific needs of the offender and the case manager's plan for implementing the TAP community phase, including monitoring, interventions, advocacy, and referrals.
5. **Responses to Adjustment and Achievements:** the creation of consistent and appropriate punishments and rewards, ensuring a clear understanding from both parties in the process.

² The NIC is housed within the Federal Bureau of Prisons, itself a sub-entity of the U.S. Department of Justice



Michigan's parole failures dropped by 23% from 2005-2007

6. Discharge from Supervision: this date represents the end of the supervision phase of the transition process, and is also another incentive for the inmate to participate with the community supervision phase of the TAP. To be eligible for the program at this point, the inmate has completed a substantial portion of their sentence with no violations and has reduced the factors that influence recidivism.
7. Aftercare and community services: this marks the end of the transitional process and means that the former inmate has completed all the stages of the transitional process. If, at the conclusion of this process, the inmate requires additional assistance from a service provider, their TAP includes a guide for the provider to help facilitate retaining that assistance.

In 2002, the TPC model was implemented in eight different states: Oregon, Missouri, Georgia, Michigan, North Dakota, Indiana, New York, and Rhode Island. The four states with the most recorded results were Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, and Oregon.

- Georgia reported an increased percentage of parole completions from 66% in 2005 to 71% in 2007.
- Michigan's overall parole failures were reduced by 23%.
- Missouri reported a reduction of technical and criminal violations for offenders in transitional housing units (6.8% fewer after 6 months, 4.1% after 12 months).
- Oregon reported a reduction of revocation and absconding within the first 180 days of release for 2006 and 2007.

TJC Initiative

The second model is called the Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) Initiative, and was a combined effort of the NIC and the Urban Institute (UI).³ The TJC model is composed of two sets of elements, system-level and interventional-level. Much like the TPC, these elements are in motion from the point that the offender is admitted to the jail to their release from community supervision.

The five system-level elements address the core practices and overall organizational goals of the TJC model.

1. Leadership, vision, and organizational culture: An active decision-making body/individual is needed to develop the program and establish expectations, a vision of success, and organize the staff/stakeholders for the program to be successful.

³ The UI is a national research center that focuses on America's social and economic issues.

2. Collaboration and joint ownership: This refers to the partnership between the jail system and the community. Both are needed to work together to share data, solve programs, and move the program forward as a whole.
3. Data-driven understanding of local reentry: local data is required for decision and policy creation in order to target the needs of a specific population.
4. Targeted intervention strategies: each individual that comes through the transitional process will have critical points that will determine if they will re-offend. These critical points occur during incarceration and when they are under supervision in their respective communities. It is the responsibility of the TJC to identify those points and intervene before they recidivate.
Intervention-level elements are a subset of system-level element number four. They refer to the targeted intervention strategies that allow the TJC program to identify and intervene in those critical moments.
These elements are used for every offender and are designed to meet their specific needs.
 - a. Screening and assessment: The screening process provides the information needed to classify the offender and identify where he/she will be placed within the jail, and what the TJC programs can do to help them. The assessment helps determine if substance abuse or mental health treatment is needed, and is usually repeated throughout the transitional process.
 - b. Transitional Plan: a customized plan created for every inmate, which is similar to the plan made in the TPC.
 - c. Targeted interventions: the specific practices used to intervene during those critical points when an offender might reoffend. This includes pre-release intervention and discharge intervention strategies. These strategies range from formal treatment/“in-reach” to education/life management training.
5. Self-Evaluation and Sustainability: stakeholders and other interested parties need the ability to assess the program’s progress towards their short and long term goals.

Using the TJC model, the NIC and UI created pilot reentry facilities in Colorado, Kansas, Tennessee, Michigan, Wisconsin, and California. Each of these states used the model but developed the program to meet the needs of their inmate populations. The UI did a follow-up study on the effectiveness of these programs and found them to be both viable and flexible, and improvements were recorded in nine of the fifteen change scales. These improvements included: availability of jail services, cooperation and trust, and quality and availability of community services in support of reentry.

Florida Reentry Programs

Each of the national studies broke down successful reentry programs to similar core elements. These elements were then implemented by the participating states as a framework for their own reentry programs. As can be expected, there were differences between each state's finalized re-entry program, as they were created to represent unique populations. Similarly to the states that participated in these studies, Florida has both statewide and local reentry programs that display some of these same core elements.

Statewide Program (Private Sector)

Bridges of America is a private, statewide organization in Florida that has developed its own intensive substance abuse re-entry program called the Substance Abuse Transition Re-Entry Program, administered at three locations in Florida (Bradenton, Broward, and Orlando). Their programs focus on treating the whole person with a mixture of evidence-based and, if desired, faith-based practices. During this program, inmates are assisted in developing occupational and interpersonal skills, they receive education, and in some cases, the program helps address moral and/or spiritual issues.

An inmate becomes eligible to participate in the Substance Abuse Transition Re-Entry Program when they have between 24-36 months left in their sentence. The program has a number of required modules that must be completed while they are a part of the program. These modules include: family development, victim awareness, anger management, transitional classes, criminal thinking/thinking errors, addiction education, budgeting, and employment reentry skills.

The Substance Abuse Transition Re-Entry Program has some of the same elements as the NIC's models, but the areas that make this program stand out from others are its approach to vocation, motivation, and participation. The Bridges program has a culinary element, where they teach inmates kitchen skills ranging from cooking, to table etiquette and table service. Participants are motivated to fix themselves by identifying what things they need to improve and how best to do that, partly through emphasizing that from now on, the inmates start with a clean slate and that what they do from that point on will determine their success.

The recidivism rate reported by Bridges of America for their reentry programs is less than ten percent.

Local Program (Public Sector)

Another example of a successful reentry program in Florida is the Jacksonville Reentry Center (JREC), which serves as one arm of the “portal of entry” for all inmates returning to the general population of Duval County. The JREC is operated by the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office (JSO) and works closely with the JSO’s community partners.

JREC is a voluntary program that lasts three months. Eligibility is defined by four factors: during the point of arrest, the inmate must have been a resident of Duval County; must be returning to Duval County upon release; must have been convicted of a felony; and must have been sentenced to at least six months. The type of crime committed and the age of the inmate have no effect on the eligibility of the inmate.

Eligible inmates that are interested in the JREC program will be assigned a reentry specialist who will administer a pre-and post-release needs assessment to discuss what services the JREC can provide. The reentry specialist will then work with the inmate, the DOC, and their probation officer to develop a release/reentry plan based on the inmate’s needs. The inmate will also have the opportunity to work with the (faith-based) Community Reentry Alliance’s mentoring program.

The JREC provides services for qualified inmate in a number of different areas. These services can best be categorized as basic needs, employment, state documents, and treatment.

Inmates arrive at the JREC with certain basic needs that must be addressed before any additional steps can be taken. These basic needs include housing, clothing, and food. In terms of housing, JREC will refer clients to transitional housing to stay in for 28 days at a cost of \$16.67 per night to JREC. The JREC facility also serves as a location for clients to shower, do laundry, and use a fax machine. Faith and community partners will provide clients clothing and a weeks’ worth of dry/frozen food goods.

Lastly, JREC will help the inmate apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). JSO, FDOC, and the Florida Department of Children and Family Services have created a pilot expedited food stamp application process. This application process allows clients to fill out the SNAP application and go through the necessary telephone interview before they are release from prison. This allows the inmate to potentially be accepted into SNAP before they are released.

JREC refers inmates to a community offender employment specialist, which will aid the inmate in their hunt for employment. However, if a client does not qualify for community partner employment services because of a past crime, then JREC will refer them to an in-house employment services specialist.

Treatment is an important part of the JREC program. JREC provides its clients a place to receive assessment and treatment for both substance abuse and mental health issues. In addition to these treatment services, JREC will provide referrals for sex offender evaluations and treatment, anger management, and batterers' intervention classes. Each client at JREC will receive up to \$200 worth of free treatment from approved community vendors.

State documentation is essential for recently released individuals. Because of this, JREC will provide funds and transportation for clients to assist them in receiving state identification such as birth certificates and driver's licenses. Lastly JREC will guide clients in the application process for health care cards, veteran services, social security, social security disability benefits, eye care, and many other services.

When an inmate volunteers to participate in the JREC program, there are two possible outcomes. The inmate will either complete the program, or they will quit at some point, thus being labeled as "non-completers." Even with the possibility of these inmates becoming non-completers, there is still a benefit to the state in having them start the program, as data shows that even non-completers only recidivate 21 percent of the time.

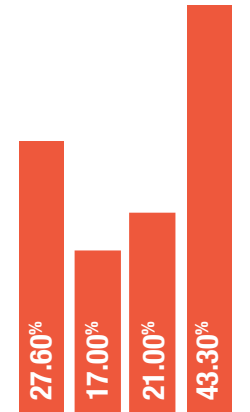
It is important to note that reentry programs are recognized by national organizations like the NIC and UI, and local community leaders. The community leaders of Jacksonville, including the Mayor, Mayor Elect, Sheriff, and others support the JREC and have continued to support the development and expansion of the program. They have even incorporated JREC expansion into the Jacksonville Journey, Take A Step initiative to "achieve peace and prosperity in every home, on every street, for every citizen."

Cost Savings

Reentry programs have been effective at the national, state, and local level, demonstrating that they can reduce recidivism, and if current trends continue, could save the state a considerable amount of money.

Using data for “completers” of the JREC program, we see a recidivism rate of 17 percent, down from the overall Florida DOC rate of 27.6 percent. For FY2014-15, the Criminal Justice Estimating Conference predicts that 33,492 inmates will be released back into their communities.

Therefore, if those inmates were put through reentry programs like those provided by Bridges of American and the JREC, data suggests that approximately ten percent fewer would recidivate, and Florida could expect to save more than \$60 million of taxpayer money.



Recidivism Rates*

(l to r) FL DOC, JREC Completions, JREC Non-Completions & National Average

**Most current data available*

Conclusion

In addition to this potential cost savings due to the reduction in recidivism, significant state funds may not be necessary to expand their use, especially if other reentry programs were funded in the same way as the JREC: by local funds with no additional funding from the state.

Across the nation, reentry programs have been shown to reduce recidivism, maintain public safety, and reduce the financial costs of corrections to the taxpayers. At the local level, highly successful programs like the JREC can be used as the foundation for community-based programs, and statewide, Florida has begun to take steps to increase the number and availability of these programs. The DOC should continue to partner with nonprofit, for-profit, municipal and local governments in order to expand the use of reentry programs across the state of Florida.

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Recidivism rates and cost-saving estimates were calculated using data from the Jacksonville Reentry Center, the Florida Department of Corrections, and the PEW Center on the States. All data accessed May 2013.

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RESEARCH TEAM FOR THIS REPORT

Robert Weissert	Chief Research Officer	
Nathan Waibel	Research Analyst	<i>Lead Researcher</i>
Chris Barry	Director of Publications	<i>Design, Layout, Graphics</i>

All Florida TaxWatch research done under the direction of Dominic M. Calabro, President & CEO, Publisher & Editor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: WWW.FLORIDATAXWATCH.ORG

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106 N. Bronough St., Tallahassee, FL 32301 o: 850.222.5052 f: 850.222.7476
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