

RESEARCH IN BRIEF

Prisoner Reentry in Nevada: Final Report on the Hope for Prisoners Program

By Emily Troshynski, Ph.D., M. Alexis Kennedy, Ph.D., William H. Sousa, Ph.D., Tamara D. Madensen, Ph.D. and Carolyn Willis, M.A.

INTRODUCTION

To date, the State of Nevada has not conducted extensive research (comparative or evaluative) on the success of community based prisoner reentry¹ programs. With the high costs associated with reoffending and re-incarceration, state agencies can benefit from information on the impact of re-entry initiatives on (1) employment outcomes for ex-offenders, (2) engagement in community programs, and (3) recidivism. This *Research in Brief* describes an evaluation of prisoner reentry in Nevada. The evaluation focuses on the Hope for Prisoners program – a reentry initiative based in Clark County that serves approximately 300 ex-offenders a year. In the sections that follow, we discuss the Hope for Prisoners reentry program, the data that were gathered for the analyses, and the results of the evaluation.

BACKGROUND

The State and Federal prison population has more than quadrupled in size over the last several decades. The number of individuals incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails increased from fewer than 500,000 in 1980, to nearly 2 million in 2003, to 2.3 million in 2010. The number of individuals on probation and parole has also grown substantially over that time. From 1980 to 1997, the U.S. probation population grew 191% while parole increased 213%. The total number of individuals under the supervision of the U.S. criminal justice system is the highest in the world.

These figures have real consequences. Recent research documents 1 out of every 31 adults as being either incarcerated in jail or prison or on probation or parole. This collective figure roughly equates to approximately 7.3 million individuals at a cost that exceeds \$68 billion annually (Pew Foundation, 2008).

HIGHLIGHTS

- This document examines Hope for Prisoners – a prisoner reentry program in Nevada. Specifically, the research focuses on the impact of the program on participant employment and recidivism outcomes.
- The research procedures involved both quantitative and qualitative methods; data were gathered from case files and interviews with program participants and program mentors.
- The sample consisted of 1,186 individuals who completed intake interviews at Hope during an 18-month period (January 2014 – June 2015). The sample was ethnically diverse (approximately 30% White) with an average age of 37. 78% were male and 84% were single. For those who self-reported their most recent offense, 43% indicated violence, 28% reported property crime, 20% reported drug offenses, and 9% indicated a sex crime.
- Of the 522 individuals who completed the job readiness training course, 64% found stable employment. Of those employed, 25% found employment within 17 days of the training course. Only 6% of these 522 individuals were reincarcerated during the 18-month study period.
- For participants, Hope for Prisoner’s mentor program appears to be a key component of the reentry initiative. Analyses demonstrate that participants with mentors were more likely to find employment. Interview data confirm the importance of mentors in terms of finding employment and also suggest the value of mentors in terms of preventing recidivism.

As the U.S. incarceration rate has grown, so has the rate of individuals released from prison or jail, as well as a concern over the important issue of prisoner reentry. Much of this concern is driven by reports of relatively low success rates of released prisoners reentering society. One of the most cited reentry research reports to date found that almost two-thirds of a sample of 272,000 parolees from 15 states was rearrested for new offenses within three years post-release (Langan & Levin, 2002). Additionally, recent research indicates that a high percentage of released prisoners are likely to return to prison for technical violations or for breaking the conditions of their parole (Freeman, 2008; Petersilia, 2003, p. 149-151). Many have explained this cycle of individuals circulating in and out of prison and community supervision as “churning” – a process that is both counterproductive and costly (Rosenthal, Weissman, & Wolf, 2006; Travis & Visser, 2005).

The high rates of re-offense and re-incarceration for released prisoners have been connected to several factors. Research indicates that prisoners reentering the community are often undereducated, have little or no prior work history (let alone full-time employment history), lack vocational skills, have histories of substance abuse, are more likely to suffer from mental illness, and are disproportionately more likely to be persons of color (Petersilia, 2003). Furthermore, the experience of being an “ex-con” with a criminal record presents a myriad of barriers unique to individuals post-release. These include difficulties in finding and securing employment as well as suitable housing (Pager, 2003).

Although employment has been a traditional measure of success after exiting prison, it is only one aspect of successful transformational change. Reestablishing social relationships, providing child support, finding stable housing, and accessing other programs (e.g., educational programming, substance abuse, counseling, etc.) are also important components of successful reentry. Prior research has found that employment in vocational programs can lower the risk of reoffending (Rossman & Roman, 2003) and that, particularly for offenders aged 25 and older, stable employment is effective at reducing reoffense rates overall (Uggen, 2000). Researchers have also documented that higher rates of recidivism occur when ex-offenders return home to neighborhoods that are more disadvantaged (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Mears, Wang, Hay, & Bales, 2008). Therefore, individuals returning home to communities without a

range of services or employment opportunities are at an even greater risk of re-offending.

While research has recognized the importance of providing support services / programming and employment to ex-offenders reentering the community, there are relatively few programs actually offering these services. Furthermore, the programming that is available has not been studied in depth. As State and Federal agencies dedicate resources to community-based reentry programs, they greatly benefit from the collection, analysis, and publication of data on innovative reentry programs.

NEVADA REENTRY CHALLENGES

Nevada’s inmate population is approximately 20,000 men and women (12,900 in prison / 7,100 in jail), with around 5,600 leaving custody each year. Nevada’s incarceration rate is 712 per 100,000 (slightly higher than the US national rate of 698 per 100,000). Ethnic / racial disparities associated with these incarceration rates show that, for every 1 White individual incarcerated, there are 4.7 Black and 1 Hispanic (Sentencing Project, 2016). Two-thirds of all incarcerated individuals returning home are released into Clark County (Nevada Department of Corrections, Annual Statistical Report). Based on these figures, estimates suggest that roughly 3,700 individuals return to Clark County each year.

Clark County is the most populous of Nevada’s 17 counties; it is the nation’s 12th largest county and provides services to more than 2 million citizens and 42 million visitors a year (www.clarkcountynv.gov). Due to these figures, reentry services are concentrated in Clark County.

HOPE FOR PRISONERS REENTRY PROGRAM

For this evaluation of reentry programming, we examined a local non-profit organization based in Clark County called Hope for Prisoners (“Hope”). This site was selected for three reasons. First, this program now serves over 250 ex-offenders a year from different State and Federal referring agencies and collects detailed case information about challenges and needs of their clients (“participants” and / or “ex-offenders” throughout). Second, this program has a unique mentoring alliance with local criminal justice agencies, thus providing the opportunity to poll first line responders about their observations on the many challenges for reentry success. Finally, this program has received national

attention for its unique partnerships with local corrections, police, and court systems.

Hope has been in operation for 5 years and is the only program of its kind in Nevada. At the start of this evaluation, Hope had 6 full-time employees and had served just over 1000 clients. Complementing the professional case management staff are over 200 trained volunteer mentors from the Las Vegas community, recruited from faith-based groups, local service agencies, businesses, and criminal justice organizations. These mentors stay engaged in clients' lives for 18 months or longer, supporting them as they find work, transition into stable employment, and reconnect with their families.

Hope is a community-based, voluntary program – not a court-ordered program. Each participating ex-offender in Hope receives a week-long training and goal setting course (30 hours of instruction), case management, job referrals, access to a drop-in computer center, and 18 months of mentoring. Participants are partnered with a Mentor Coach and a “team” of mentors to help them apply their new job readiness skills to locate and obtain a job. Mentors stay involved to help clients navigate any challenges they have during the reintegration process and to support them in learning to be successful employees. Participants receive intensive case management at the start of the process to assess needs for internal or external referrals (e.g., mental health needs, addiction counseling needs, housing challenges, child support requirements, etc.). Case managers reduce their role as those referrals or programming needs are met but call participants occasionally to check on their status.

Job Readiness Workshop

Clients start with an intensive pre-vocational training taught by motivational instructors who are leaders in their respective fields of expertise. This training involves 30 hours of instruction, much of which is evidence-based, skill building work. Training occurs in the following areas: Life Skills Training (e.g., money management, housing, parenting / family relationships, and conflict resolution); Work Readiness Skills Training (assessing strengths and weaknesses and identifying interests and aptitudes); Becoming Employable (skills such as interviewing; resume building; expected workplace conduct; understanding the different personality types seen in the workplace); and Job Development Opportunities

(assisting participants in finding appropriate placements).

Mentors are trained on the same content so that they can reinforce what is taught in the classroom. One of the mentor roles is to support clients as they learn to be successful employees. For example, Hope clients are taught that being on time means being 15 minutes early. The mentors often introduce themselves to employers and let them know that if they have any questions or concerns about the client, they can ask the mentor for assistance. Employers know that if employees arrive late, they can reach out to the mentor to help address that issue. Employers know up front that they are hiring an employee surrounded by a team of mentors and that everyone wants the employee to succeed.

Mentors

All volunteer mentors complete a thorough screening and interview process and receive on-going training throughout their time with the program. To ensure best practices, all Hope mentors complete a 14-hour training seminar which covers topics such as: effective communication and listening skills; building self-esteem and confidence; commitment to and reporting of mentoring activities; healthy relationships; foundations of mentoring; different types of personalities; healthy boundaries; working with Probation and Parole; and an overview of the Nevada Department of Corrections. Professional trainers (specific to specialized topics), police officers, faith-based instructors, and graduates from previous Hope cohorts are among those who teach classes to mentors.

Once mentors are trained, they attend group meetings with clients called “Huddles.” These huddles are important in providing new mentors access to senior mentors as well as providing clients a space to collectively talk about their experiences, challenges, and successes. Mentors report their activities through an online portal that adds their notes directly to the client's online file that is further monitored by the client's assigned case manager. The case manager also monitors whether mentors are following program policies and procedures designed to protect client interactions. Safety, support for emotional healing, and successful reentry are the priorities.

Program Evaluation

A mixed methods design was used for this evaluation. The two primary methods included 1) a quantitative analysis of demographic, job placement, and recidivism outcomes for Hope clients and 2) qualitative interviews with Hope clients, mentors, and programming staff designed to provide additional context and to help interpret quantitative analyses.

Quantitative Methods

The sample for the quantitative component of the project includes 1,186 ex-offenders released from correctional facilities, who returned to Clark County and contacted Hope on their own initiative or through a referral.² After disguising client names to protect their identities, Hope provided case files to researchers for evaluation purposes. The total cases included the 1,186 individuals who completed intake interviews at Hope during an 18-month period (January 2014 – June 2015). Among those 1,186 intakes, 522 individuals completed the job readiness-training course and became eligible for mentor assignment. For those who self-reported their most recent offense, 43% indicated violence, 28% reported property crime, 20% reported drug offenses, and 9% indicated a sex crime.

Variables retrieved from case files included basic demographic information (i.e. age, gender, race), number of prior arrests, most recent arrest, as well as any new crimes committed. Additionally, employment information was also collected and coded (i.e. full time, part time), including how many jobs the clients obtained and the type of occupation (i.e. service, manual labor). Other variables retrieved from intake forms and case files included family structure, substance abuse history, history of homelessness, and other descriptors.

Qualitative Methods

Participants for the qualitative portion of the project included 10 clients of Hope, 10 mentors, and 3 staff (case managers and supervisors), each interviewed one time over a three-month period. All participants were made aware of the research evaluation before the start of the qualitative phase of the project. Additionally, participants for the qualitative component were recruited through the use of informational fliers (with contact information of PIs) posted two-weeks prior to the start of the interviews. All participants were reminded of their volunteer status as well as their confidentiality.

The average length of each interview was thirty

minutes. All interviews were semi-structured and included open-ended questions related to the reentry process broadly. An interview script was utilized and researchers asked the same open-ended questions in a standard order. Clients were asked about their experiences with reentry and with Hope, their thoughts on the services and resources provided, their opinions of the training program and the mentoring component, and their experiences with finding housing and employment. Mentors were asked about the mentoring component of Hope, as well as their thoughts on training, successful outcomes, and how they understood the reentry process. Interviews with staff helped the research team glean insight into their perspectives on the important components of reentry, the benefits and limitations of Hope, and their views on the challenges clients face post-release. Overall, the main purpose of all interviews was to understand the reentry / transition process and the role of Hope in preparing clients for successful reentry.

Analysis of interview transcripts included data organization, data management, and data interpretation. First, the research team read through the transcripts and marked areas where participants discussed their perceptions of the Hope program including the many strengths articulated as well as some thoughts for the future of the program. Additionally, thematic analysis included examples of how clients, mentors, and staff define / describe and understand successful reentry, their perceptions of reentry training programs, the mentoring component associated with Hope, and any general limitations and / or concerns. These final categories were created through inductive analysis of all transcripts. Then, researchers re-analyzed original transcripts to confirm codes / categories, and interpretations were made that compared / contrasted clients, mentors, and staff perceptions of reentry (broadly) and of Hope (specifically).

RESULTS

Hope Clients – Participants and Intakes-Only
Although Hope performed 1,186 intake interviews during the study period, 664 individuals did not return after the initial intake to fully participate in the program. Outcome analyses therefore focus on the 522 individuals who remained. Information from the intake interview files, however, do allow for some comparisons between those who participated and those who were intakes only (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Ethnicity, participants vs. intakes only

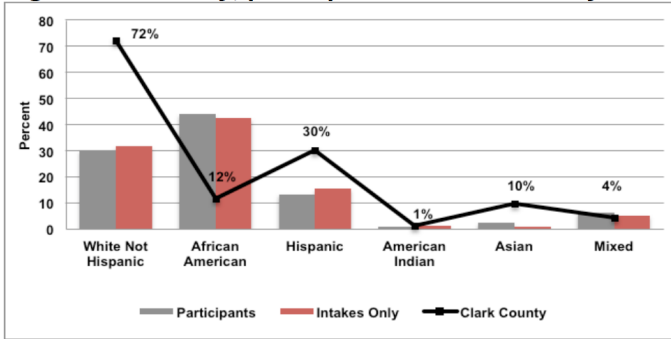
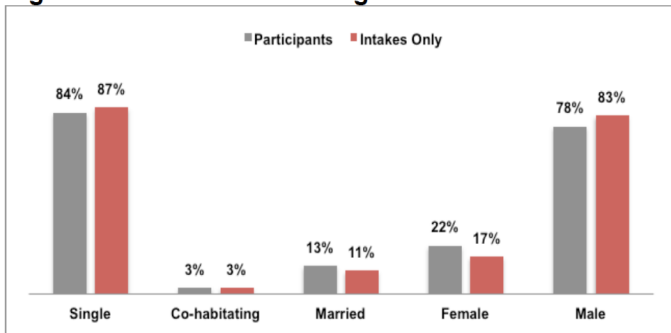


Figure 2. Marital status and gender



The two groups did not vary significantly by age, self-reported ethnicity, or marital status. The groups did vary by gender ($p < .01$) as the intake only group had a slightly higher percentage of men (82.8%) compared to the class participants (77.7%). The average age for program participants was 36.8 years old, not significantly lower than the average age of 37.3 for the intake only group. The Clark County expected ethnicities are also presented in bold in Figure 1.

Hope Participants – Employment Outcomes

Of the 522 individuals who continued their participation in the program during the study period, 334 found employment for an overall employment rate of 64.0%. Rates of employment were similar for men (65.0%) and women (60.3%). (Figure 3 displays raw employment numbers). Employment rates were also compared across the 6 quarters (3 month periods) and are presented in Figure 4. In all quarters, more full time employment (at least 40 hours per week) was secured than part-time employment.³ Table 1 presents the most common types of employment for both full and part-time employees.

The research team also considered time to employment by comparing job start dates to class completion dates for program participants. The average number of days to employment (including

weekend days) was 59, although the range was large. Of those employed within the study period, 25% had found employment within 17 days of their class completion, 50% had found employment within 32 days, and 75% were employed within 71 days.

Hope considers a partnership with a mentor (or mentors) to be an important factor in gaining meaningful employment. While partnering with a mentor is encouraged, it is an option for program participants, not a requirement. Given the anticipated benefits of mentors in terms of offering support and gaining employment, Figure 5 examines the involvement of mentors compared to employment success for participants. As the percentages indicate, program participants with mentors have higher rates of employment than those without mentors.

Figure 3. Employment status during program

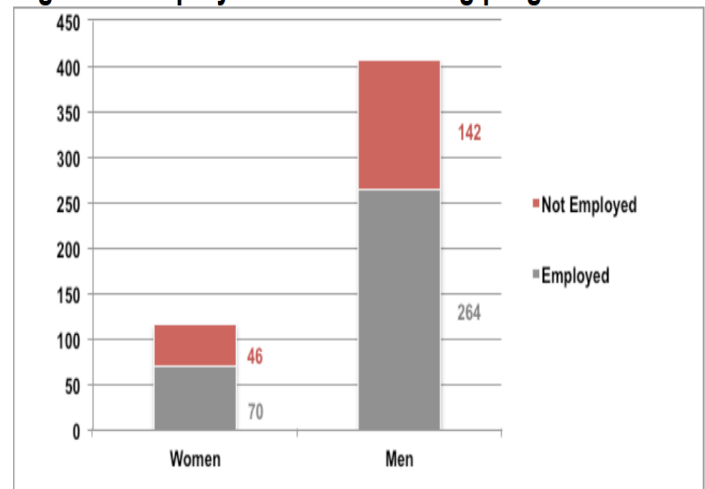


Figure 4. Rates of employment by quarter

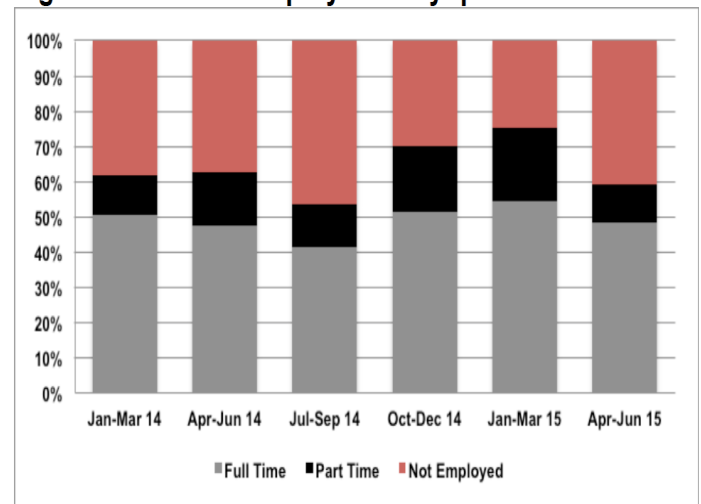
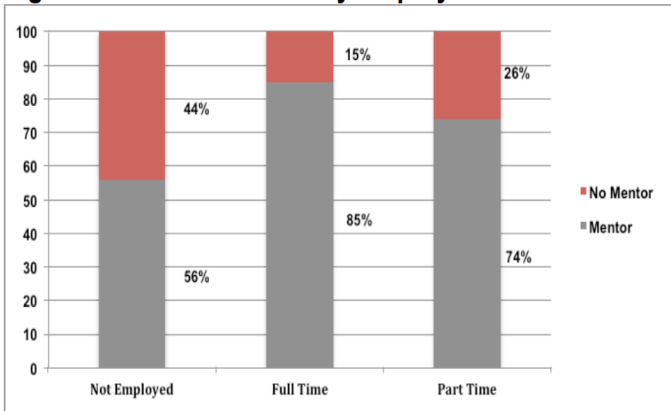


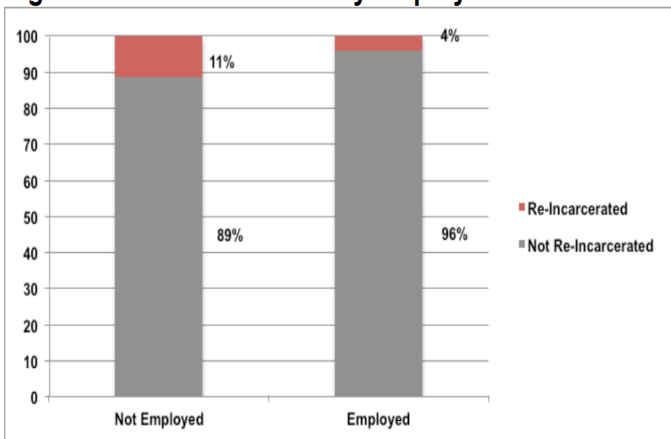
Figure 5. Use of mentors by employment status



Hope Participants – Re-incarceration Outcomes

Another important outcome measure for reentry programs concerns recidivism among clients. The rate of re-incarceration among Hope participants was low during the study period with only 6.3% of the 522 participants reoffending. Of those who were re-incarcerated, 21 had not found employment, 10 were employed full-time prior to incarceration, and 3 were employed part-time. Figure 6 presents the percentages re-incarcerated for those who were employed and not employed. Unemployed participants were more likely to be re-incarcerated for a parole or probation violation (15 individuals) rather than for a new offense (6 individuals). Among employed graduates, parole violations were less common (4 individuals) than new offenses (9 individuals).

Figure 6. Re-incarceration by employment status



Regression Analysis

To further explore the factors that influence employment, we include a regression model with measures of client demographics (e.g., ethnicity), criminal histories (e.g., prior incarceration, types of crimes), and programming (e.g., mentors).⁴ As Table

Table 2. Predictors of employment

| Predictor | B | S.E. | β | Sig |
|---------------------|--------|-------|---------|---------|
| African American | 0.127 | 0.356 | 0.070 | 0.721 |
| Hispanic | 0.574 | 0.375 | 0.230 | 0.127 |
| White | 0.574 | 0.361 | 0.218 | 0.233 |
| Crime of violence | -0.131 | 0.111 | -0.072 | 0.240 |
| Sex crime | 0.132 | 0.352 | 0.022 | 0.709 |
| Prior incarceration | 0.244 | 0.119 | 0.126 | 0.041* |
| Mentored | 0.517 | 0.124 | 0.253 | 0.001** |

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

** Significant at the 0.01 level.

2 demonstrates, mentorship is the strongest predictor of employment, confirming the information suggested in Figures 5 and 6.

Qualitative Analysis – Interviews with Hope Clients

When clients were asked about their experiences with Hope for Prisoners, everyone shared very positive remarks. Many talked about the care and support they received from Hope including feelings of success and accomplishment. For example, when asked to describe Hope, one participant, an older Black man who has been a client for the past six months, said, “It’s a wonderful program for me. It’s indescribable. I didn’t realize what it was, at first. They care – no kidding – they really care.” Similarly, another participant, an older White man who has been a part of the program for eleven months stated,

“They’ve helped me. Now I have a job. A good job. [starts crying]. With this. I wanted something more. And they knew that. They could tell. There’s so much love here. So much feelings of success now. I mean, I couldn’t get a job. I went three months without shoes. [crying and then starts laughing]. And I’m not kidding. I had the job skills but no one would hire me. No one would give me an interview...”

He continued, “Then, one of the applications that I put out, they wanted to interview me. They said my mentor recommended me [crying again]. And I got the job! If it wasn’t for this [pointing to the ground], this [pointing to the ceiling], I would not be here. And I mean that.” In speaking about Hope, another client, a Black woman in her late twenties, said, “To me, Hope for Prisoners is a great support system. It’s a group that helps with employment, emotional support, guidance, relationships, all of that. It gives me the skills to stay on track.”

Additionally, when asked to describe what it is that Hope does, for clients specifically, all participants described changes in their attitudes including an overwhelming sense of support and motivation. One participant explained, “It helps us out. All of us. It keeps me out. For me, it’s helped change my way of thinking. My lifestyle. It helps us be a productive member of society” while another mentioned, “It gives people like me, guys like me, the opportunity to eliminate bad thoughts, bad processes, bad routines. It helps me stay out of prison. So I can go about my daily life. So I don’t let things bother me. They have resources and services here to help with that.”

The unique 18-month program was also something that many participants described when speaking about Hope. For example, one young woman explained, “It helps bring us back to the community.” In referencing the initial one-week training program, another young woman expressed, “They stick to what they say they’re going to do in the beginning. It’s this entire process. Where they check up on you, check in with you afterwards. They’re accountable to the people they serve.”

In sum, clients of Hope discuss the services and resources that they receive as being invaluable. They feel a sense of community – a caring community that not only trains them for success in the job market but are also accountable to them, as their reentry service provider. A staff member best describes this relationship between the client and the program: “It’s a reentry program that works with men and women coming out of the system. But we’re more than that. We’re a family of people coming together to help each other and help others. Yeah. It really is. It’s a family.”

Qualitative Analysis – Interviews with Hope Mentors

With numerous clients being served at Hope, the program also incorporates an average of 225 mentors. Based on conversations with mentors, they each mentor 1 to 3 clients with the average being 1.

Some mentors have been volunteering their time to the non-profit for upwards of three years while others have only been mentoring for a few months. Overall, when asked how often they meet with their clients, the average was once a week with some meeting every three days and others meeting every other week. There was also an array of meeting styles: Some mentors utilized the weekly “huddles” for face-to-face contact with their mentee, while others talked

on the phone.

Out of the 10 mentors that were interviewed, each had different reasons for deciding to become a mentor at Hope. Overall, these ranged from: having friends and/or family that were previously incarcerated (3); continuing their relationship with Hope as a graduated mentee/client and now mentor (2); working within the criminal justice system and wanting to give back to a cause that helped individuals “stay out” of prison (3); and members from the general public responding to local promotional items and / or doing their own research on the topic of reentry and choosing to volunteer as a mentor (2). Regardless of the reasons why these mentors choose to volunteer for Hope, they all strongly believed that being a mentor is a great opportunity to help individuals reenter society.

When asked how these participants would define a mentor, many included qualities such as listening, providing support, giving advice, and (again) being a good listener. For example, one participant noted,

“Good mentors need the ability to listen. They need to not do but rather to encourage. They should assist them [mentees/clients] in drawing conclusions, give advice but also let them come to conclusion on their own. They need good communication skills, compassion, and just a determination to hang in with someone who is struggling.”

Simply, one participant defined a mentor as, “Someone that is positive, that has a sense of humor, and loving because everyone needs love. Someone that is very sure about themselves, self-confident,” while another said, “Someone who can offer support, guide you, be tough on you but in a loving way, make you work but in your own best interest, hold you accountable.”

Interestingly enough, many mentors articulated this theme of “accountability” and “tough love.” For example, when asked what makes a “good” mentor, one participant explained, “To be an outstanding mentor you have to be tough on mentees. They often do not want to hear what the mentor wants to say but it’s in their own best interest. Mentees might walk away but sometimes they need that honesty and tough love.” In talking about how he viewed his primary role as mentor, another participant further explained, my role is “to keep in touch. If she [mentee] had an interview or important event, and I know about it, I have to keep in touch. That way they

they are important. It also keeps them accountable. So we don't let them slack."

Even though mentors discussed the importance of listening skills and tough love, they also discussed the importance of compassion. Indeed, many used compassion as a primary qualifier when describing their role of mentor. For example, one participant, a male who works within the criminal justice system, defined a mentor as,

"Someone who shows compassion and is a great listener. That doesn't necessarily mean you have to be hands on. A mentor is someone you can look up to that guides you gives you understanding and love that you need at the time in your life when you need it. We all have mentors, no matter how old you are."

Additionally, another two participants said, "A mentor is someone who has life experience, a positive outlook, spare time and energy and compassion. They're willing to contribute and make a difference," and that a mentor should have "experience and be caring and compassionate. They should want to help, in general."

Furthermore, when asked to describe what it is that they do as mentors, many discussed the practical aspects associated with helping mentees/clients find housing and employment. For example, when asked what it is that a mentor at Hope does, one stated, "The program is an opportunity to get the resources, the knowledge and the know how to stay out of trouble and get a job... I talk to my mentees about that," while another noted, "A mentor is someone who comes along side them [the clients] through their journey as they re-acclimate back into society." The goal of helping clients reenter via accessible resources and services was well articulated by another mentor who explained how Hope provides important "training to facilitate ex-felons... to be contributing members of society, giving them skills and training" needed for success.

These very real challenges associated with reentry were also the same concerns mentors acknowledged. For instance, when asked, "What are some of the primary challenges clients face while they are reentering," one mentor answered, "Getting jobs, staying employed, making it through background checks. Employees may start and then they get let go when the background check catches up. So, we try to guide hopefuls [mentees/clients] away from negative attitudes."

Correspondingly, another stated, "Fear of the unknown is the biggest challenge. It's man's number 1 fear and what keeps most people from doing what they need to do in life. What if I fail? For every success there are 20 failures in there." Even though the realities of reentry are laden with struggle and fear, this mentor provided an optimistic turn. He continued,

"Mentees don't know what to expect when they get out [of incarceration]. They ask, 'How will I succeed? I don't know anyone?' Then, once they get here [Hope for Prisoners], they have hope. They see the light at the end of the tunnel. They have a purpose and drive now. People that care about them. Here, they have love."

Overall, mentors volunteering for Hope are well aware of the barriers their clients/mentees face while they reenter. They view themselves as someone the clients/mentees can turn to for advice and guidance. They prioritize the act of simply being there and listening; and, if their mentee has questions or concerns, they are quick to provide the accurate resources. Even though it did not seem like the norm, some mentors also hold their mentees accountable and check up on them multiple times a week. All mentors, however, were keen to acknowledge that the Hope program is successful because of a genuine collective feeling of compassion.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

These analyses demonstrate that, overall, participants in the Hope for Prisoners program have reasonably good success at finding employment (over 60% employment rate) and few recidivated (6% of those who participated in the initial training course were re-incarcerated). While it is difficult to disentangle the impact of the various components of the training course on these outcomes, both quantitative and qualitative analyses suggest the importance of Hope's mentor program. Participants with mentors were more likely than those without to find employment. Interview data confirm the importance of mentors in terms of finding employment and also suggest the value of mentors in terms of preventing recidivism.

What should be noted for potential replication in other reentry programs is the sophisticated use of mentors by the Hope program. A large number of mentors are available at Hope who received at least 14 hours of training. These mentors are matched with the clients,

not randomly assigned. The mentors also have the opportunity to attend weekly group events (“huddles”) on premises, so there is continued support within a larger mentoring community.

Prior research has shown that simply being employed lowers re-offense rates. This program supports that trend with high rates of employment paired with low rates of reincarceration. Case files and interview data suggest that program participants at Hope experienced traditional community-level risk factors for recidivism (e.g., “poverty, inequality, socioeconomic disadvantage, and limited neighborhood institutional resources.” Hall, Wooten & Lundgren, 2015, p.5). Mentors may therefore help compensate for other reentry challenges, such as returning to disadvantaged neighborhoods with limited services or resources.

There is greater use of mentoring with offenders in other countries (e.g., UK), but the recent increase in mentoring grants in the United States may see a movement toward new solutions for creating social support for those exiting the penal system. This research provides one step in demonstrating the value of using trained mentors with adults reentering the community.

LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of this research relates to the sampling design. Because of the nature of the referral system, an adequate control group could not be identified. Although demographic characteristics of program participants did resemble those who were referred to Hope but who did not complete the initial training course, it is unclear whether the 522 program participants were qualitatively different from their counterparts who did not complete the course. Furthermore, although the 522 program participants self-reported a range of prior offenses, it is unclear whether the 522 program participants are representative of all individuals who are released from prison in Nevada. As a result of these limitations, we advise some caution when interpreting the above results.

END NOTES

- i. Also referred to as “offender reentry,” “ex-offender reentry,” or “prisoner reintegration.”
- ii. Hope for Prisoners has served clients referred from: Clark County Detention Center; Clark County District Attorney, Family Support Divisional Clark County Public Defender’s Office; Eighth Judicial District; Las Vegas Community Corrections; Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department; Nevada Department of Corrections; Nevada JobConnect; State of Nevada, Department of Public Safety, Probation and Parole; State of Nevada, Juvenile Parole; United States Federal Parole & Probation, District of Nevada; various transitional sober living houses; and, community organizations.
- iii. File reviews also indicated that 12.6% of the employed graduates had multiple employment verifications in their files (13.3% of full time employees reported multiple hires, 9.6% of part time employees had multiple hires), although file notes did not specify if multiple jobs were worked concurrently.
- iv. Correlation analyses were performed on other potential variables of interest, such as other demographic factors (e.g., being in a relationship, being a parent) and other crime types (e.g., drug crimes). These variables are not included in the regression model because they were determined to be unreliable measures. Results of these correlation analyses are available upon request.

REFERENCES

- Freeman, R. (2008). Incarceration, criminal background checks, and employment in a low(er) crime society. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 7, 3, 405-412.
- Hall, T. L., Wooten, N. R., & Lundgren, L. M. (2015). Postincarceration policies and prisoner reentry: Implications for policies and programs aimed at reducing recidivism and poverty. *Journal of Poverty*, DOI: 10.1080/10875549.2015.1094761
- Kubrin, C. & Stewart, E. (2006). Predicting who reoffends: The neglected role of neighborhood context in recidivism studies. *Criminology*, 44, 165-197.
- Langan, P.A., & Levin, D.J. (2002). *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).
- Mears, D.P., Wang, X., Hay, C., & Bales, W.D. (2008). Social ecology and recidivism: Implications for prisoner reentry. *Criminology*, 46, 301-340.
- Nevada Department of Corrections (2013). *Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Statistical Report*. Carson City: Nevada Department of Corrections.
- Pager, D. (2003). The mark of a criminal record. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 937-975.
- Petersilia, J. (2003). *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry*. New York, NJ: Oxford University Press.
- Pew Foundation (2008). *One in 100: Behind Bars in America*. The Pew Charitable Trust. Report available online at http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/sentencing_and_corrections/one_in_100.pdf
- Rosenthal, A., Weissman, M., & Wolf, E. (2006). A new sentencing model to meet the challenge of reentry and public safety. *Justice Strategies Working Paper*, June 2006. Available on-line at <http://www.communityalternatives.org/pdf/NYS%20New%20Sentencing%20Model.pdf>
- Rossmann, S.B., & Roman, C.G. (2003). Case-managed reentry and employment: Lessons from the Opportunity to Succeed Program. *Justice Research and Policy*, 5, 75-100.
- Sentencing Project (2016). Available on-line at: <http://www.sentencingproject.org>
- Travis, J. & Visher, C. (2005). *Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Uggen, C. (2000). Work as a turning point in the life course of criminals: A duration model of age, employment, and recidivism. *American Sociological Review*, 65, 529-546.

CENTER FOR CRIME AND JUSTICE POLICY
STATE DATA BRIEF SERIES

This report is part of the “Research in Brief” series produced by the Center for Crime and Justice Policy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The Center is housed in the Department of Criminal Justice, which is located in the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs. Research in Briefs are modeled after the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ Special Reports and Bulletins.

The Briefs provide summaries of various criminal justice system practices in Nevada over time, and highlight differences between Nevada and other states. These reports cover all aspects of the criminal justice system, including trends in crime and arrests, police practices, prosecution, pretrial activities, adjudication, sentencing, and corrections. Although Research in Briefs typically focus on criminal justice issues within Nevada, these reports may focus on national issues as well.

Research in Briefs are designed to provide members of the general public, local officials, community organizations, and media outlets a concise and objective profile of current crime and criminal trends in Nevada and elsewhere. These briefs may serve as a foundation for informed discussions of future crime control policies and practices.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions or comments about the information contained in this report, data used to generate this report, or about other resources available related to this topic should be addressed to:

Terance D. Miethe, Ph.D.
Research in Brief Project Coordinator
Center for Analysis of Crime Statistics
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway - Box 5009
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5009

Phone: 702-895-0236

Fax: 702-895-0252

Email: miethe@unlv.nevada.edu

Previous Research in Briefs

A Comparison of Different On-Line Sampling Approaches for Generating National Samples

Aerial Drones, Domestic Surveillance, and Public Opinion of Adults in the United States

Arrest-Related Deaths in Nevada, 2009-2011

Arson Trends in Nevada, 1997-2006

Auto Theft in Nevada, 1994-2008

Burglary Trends in Nevada, 1990-2007

Capital Punishment in Nevada, 1977-2008

Clearance Rates in Nevada, 1998-2009

Communication Intercepts Authorized in Nevada, 1997-2008

Comparison of Different On-Line sampling Approaches for Generating National Samples

Criminal Victimization in Nevada, 2008 Criminal Victimization in Nevada, 2011

Deaths in Custody in Nevada, 2001-2006

Impact of Foreclosures on Neighborhood Crime in Nevada, 2006-2009

Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program in Nevada, 2005-2010

Nevada vs. U.S. Residents Attitudes Towards Surveillance Using Aerial Drones

Patterns in School Violence in Nevada

Public Attitudes about Aerial Drone Activities: Results of a National Survey

Rape and other Sex Offenses in Nevada, 1990-2007

Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics

Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 S. Maryland Pkwy - Box 5009
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5009

POSTAGE REQUIRED