



# Department of Justice

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STATEMENT

OF

REGINA B. SCHOFIELD  
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING

REINTEGRATION OF OFFENDERS INTO THEIR COMMUNITIES

PRESENTED ON

NOVEMBER 3, 2005

**TESTIMONY OF  
REGINA B. SCHOFIELD  
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS**

**NOVEMBER 3, 2005**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Scott, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Regina B. Schofield, Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs. I am pleased to be here this afternoon on behalf of the Attorney General, the U.S. Department of Justice (“DOJ”), and especially the Office of Justice Programs (“OJP”), to discuss efforts to reintegrate offenders successfully back into their communities.

As you are aware, most offenders will eventually return to their home communities. A 2002 study from OJP’s Bureau of Justice Statistics found that more than two-thirds of all released offenders were rearrested within three years. So, of the 600,000 people who will be released from State prison in 2005, over 400,000 are likely to be rearrested.

This cycle of crime and imprisonment takes a heavy toll on our communities. It is a threat to public safety and a drain on resources. Incarceration costs an average of \$22,650 a year per person, with some States spending over \$37,000. Since ex-offenders often return to the communities in which they committed their crimes, they can pose a danger to the very people they hurt before. The crime victims then bear the costs of property losses, physical injuries and lost earnings. Even these costs pale in comparison to the pain and suffering of victims, lost opportunities associated with activities not performed due to fear of crime, increased consumer costs resulting from increased

business costs, and overall costs to society because of crime and violence.

The issue of the safe and successful reentry of these offenders into their communities has been of great concern to this Administration since early in President Bush's first term. In 2002, the Department of Justice, in a then-unprecedented partnership with the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Labor, and Veterans Affairs and the Social Security Administration, launched Going Home: The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative ("SVORI"). As the name implies, this initiative has focused on those offenders considered the greatest potential risk to their communities.

Then, in his 2004 State of the Union address the President proposed a broad new reentry initiative, saying, "We know from long experience that if they [ex-offenders] can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to prison."

The President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative is a federal partnership through which the Departments of Labor, Justice, Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development will support projects in 30 communities that will serve 6,250 non-violent ex-offenders in its first year. The Initiative is intended to help ex-offenders find and keep employment, obtain transitional housing and receive mentoring. It will also harness the resources and experience of faith-based and community organizations in helping returning inmates contribute to society.

On April 1, 2005, the Department of Labor issued a solicitation for the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative, with a July 13, 2005 deadline. According to the Department of

Labor, the initial response was very encouraging with 549 applications received. The Department of Labor expects to announce these awards to 30 communities this week, and at the time of this testimony may have already done so. As DOJ's part of the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative, we will then provide grants to selected States to provide pre-release services to prisoners who will be served in the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative communities.

Like SVORI, the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative will help communities provide services to returning offenders including mentoring and job training. But the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative has some key differences so that it complements, and does not duplicate SVORI. While SVORI, as the name indicates, targets serious and violent offenders, the President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative focuses on nonviolent offenders. The President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative will provide funds directly to faith-based and other community organizations that work with offenders in urban communities while SVORI funds have gone primarily to government agencies in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands.

Both of these initiatives reflect a change in overall thinking about the reintegration of offenders into society. For too long the common practice was to release ex-offenders into their communities with little more than \$50 and a bus ticket. Even today, many of these ex-offenders also face a bitter combination of "not in my backyard" attitudes and government restrictions that limit their ability to find and keep a job or find a place to live. Probation and parole officers are often overwhelmed with caseloads and cannot properly monitor ex-offenders. The ex-offenders often don't know about treatment, job training

and other services that can help them. Those who provide these services frequently do not coordinate with each other. With few resources, few skills, and inadequate monitoring, ex-offenders often fall through the cracks. It's no wonder that these individuals soon turn back to what they know best – a life of crime.

It has become clear that “reentry” must be a process that begins while an offender is behind bars and continues until that offender is reestablished in the community as a contributing citizen. Programs based on pre-release assessments and individual offender needs can reduce recidivism and potentially save money. Many communities that have undertaken reentry efforts have reported savings in the costs related to investigating and prosecuting new crimes. Reentry efforts can also mean savings from the money that would otherwise be used to incarcerate those who re-offend.

Under SVORI, we have awarded more than \$120 million to 69 grantees, covering all 50 States, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands, to develop and implement their own reentry strategies. SVORI grantees have established 89 reentry programs. Forty-three of these programs target adults, 37 target juveniles, seven programs target both adults and juveniles, and two cover juveniles tried as adults. The programs also vary in how long they work with offenders before and after they leave prison. A few programs specifically target the mentally ill or those with substance abuse problems.

Each reentry strategy was designed by States and the local communities to meet their own specific needs. However, all strategies share a three-pronged approach that covers every stage of the reentry process. These three elements are critical to successful reentry strategies. All of them must be present and integrated with each other, because a

single element in isolation is not sufficient. These elements are:

- **Protect and Prepare:** While participating offenders are still incarcerated, their needs, their skills, and their risk to public safety are assessed and, based on this assessment, formal reentry plans are developed. Examples of assessment tools include drug testing, interviews, mental health evaluations, and aptitude and skills testing. These offenders are provided access to services such as life skills training, education, parenting instruction, drug or alcohol treatment, mental health treatment, or vocational training that best meet their needs.
- **Control and Restore:** As soon as the participating offenders are released, they are closely supervised and follow their reentry plans, which often include requirements that they report to a judge or corrections officer and participate in specific treatment and training activities. These ex-offenders also receive transitional housing, employment assistance, mentoring, treatment, and other aftercare services. Close supervision is essential to supporting the offender and ensuring public safety during this critical time.
- **Sustain and Support:** Long-term support is provided through a network of public and private agencies. Participating ex-offenders are encouraged to maintain contact with support services even after they complete their probation or parole.

The SVORI reentry plans also include planning and participation by the faith community, neighborhood residents, and local police, who work closely with State and local government, corrections staff, probation/parole officers, treatment providers, and other relevant parties to make sure that all reentry efforts are not only comprehensive but are coordinated. Everyone works together so no ex-offender falls through the cracks.

The Department's role, in addition to providing funding, is to help State and local agencies navigate the complex field of State formula and block grants and to assist them in accessing, redeploying, and leveraging those resources to support all the components of this comprehensive reentry program. We also work with our federal partners to provide training and technical assistance. In addition, six U.S. Attorneys will hire Prisoner Reentry Coordinators for their districts. These coordinators will bring together agencies from all levels of law enforcement, government, support services, and community organizations to strengthen reentry efforts.

One new cooperative federal strategy to support reentry efforts is already well under way. DOJ recently signed an interagency agreement with the Corporation for National and Community Service to support assignment of AmeriCorps\*VISTA volunteers to prisoner reentry projects in Weed and Seed and SVORI neighborhoods. The VISTA volunteers will work with faith-based and community organizations at Weed and Seed sites in 12 cities to build the capacity of these organizations to provide services such as mentoring, housing, and skills-building.

The Department's reentry efforts also include offenders convicted of federal crimes. Through the Bureau of Prisons Life Connections Pilot Program, offenders in five facilities volunteer to study for 18 months what their faith says about basic life skills, and receive mentoring and substance abuse treatment. Participants also complete victim impact programs and perform 500 hours of community service. One example of this community service occurs in the Life Connections dorm in Petersburg, Virginia, where participating inmates sew blankets for HIV-positive babies. The Bureau of Prisons is

conducting an ongoing evaluation of the Life Connections Pilot Program. It hopes to expand the program into five more sites in Fiscal Year 2007.

In September 2004, DOJ and our federal partners convened the first National Conference on Reentry in Cleveland, Ohio, so that our grantees could learn from each other and from other experts in the field. The more than 1,000 participants at the conference also included representatives from private organizations, community groups, and others who provide services to ex-offenders. The conference demonstrated to all those involved that community residents must be included in the reentry process and should be involved in decision-making related to program goals and priorities.

Critical in our reentry efforts is determining what works and what doesn't. Through funding, training and technical assistance, we provided all our grantees with tools to evaluate their own programs. OJP's National Institute of Justice is also conducting, through grants to the Research Triangle Institute and the Urban Institute, a comprehensive evaluation of SVORI to determine whether the programs funded have met their goals, are cost-effective, and most important, have reduced recidivism.

This evaluation has two phases. First is an implementation assessment, a measurement of how the programs have been established, how they are working, and who is being served. We have collected information from all 69 grantees and used this information to create the initial edition of *A National Portrait of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative*, a summary of which I'm including for the written record. This summer we published two briefs. One, *Characteristics of Prisoner Reentry Programs*, examines the types of efforts that the different SVORI grantees emphasize.

The other, *Faith-Based Involvement: Findings from the SVORI Multi-site Evaluation*, examines the kinds of faith-based services provided to offenders before and after release. I am also including these briefs for the written record.

The second phase is a four-year impact evaluation from 2004 to 2008, which will examine whether SVORI has resulted in reduced recidivism, whether it is cost-effective, and whether it has helped provide ex-offenders what they need to become productive members of their communities. This phase will focus on 19 SVORI sites in 15 States, including Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia. These evaluation States are geographically distributed so that every region of the country is included in the study. We will not wait until all results are in to issue reports, but we are determined to share findings from the evaluation as they become available. Information is already available through the SVORI evaluation Website at [www.svori-evaluation.org](http://www.svori-evaluation.org).

The feedback from the first phase of the evaluation has been very encouraging. Many SVORI-funded programs have been used to bridge the gaps in existing State and local efforts. They are providing much needed transition services, counseling, mentoring and job training. There has been close coordination of the services provided while offenders are still in prison with those provided once they are released.

Some SVORI programs have enlisted former offenders as mentors to newly released offenders. The mentoring relationship provides the offenders in the later stages of the reentry process with another way to be productive members of their community. It also offers the newly released offenders invaluable guidance, admonition, and support from those who have already walked the same path.

What's just as positive is that SVORI programs have developed their own innovative strategies. For example, the Fort Wayne/Allen County, Indiana program features a reentry court, which assesses the released offenders and develops personalized plans. Participants must adhere to their plans and appear before the court every two to five weeks to report on their progress. If they don't, they return to prison. The reentry court has a strong relationship with the faith community – local clergy attend court hearings and mentor the ex-offenders. The faith community also plays a critical role in a Michigan reentry program. A faith-based organization, Wings of Faith, provides case managers who guide offenders through every step of the reentry process. Wings of Faith also encourages community support for the program.

There are more examples of innovative strategies. Iowa provides computer training to offenders. Maine uses videoconferencing so that, while still in prison, offenders can interact with the community organizations that will work with them when they are released. Before participating offenders are released, Maine also offers mentoring services for their children. States such as Mississippi have family members talk to offenders while they are still in prison to help ease their transition to family life.

We have also received good news directly from the grantees. Through outreach to prospective employers, Illinois' North Lawndale Employment Network has placed ex-offenders in jobs, such as manufacturing and restaurant work, which might otherwise be unavailable to them. Through Ohio's Community-Oriented Reentry ("CORE") Program, ex-offenders who have been through the reentry process provide guidance and support to other ex-offenders. Kansas and Massachusetts have local law enforcement personnel meet

with offenders before their release to offer support and to let the offenders know what is expected from them when they are released.

What's also striking is the difference these programs make in people's lives. "Miller" (for the sake of these examples, these are pseudonyms) in Utah was completing his second prison term. A year before his parole he became part of the HOPE Therapeutic Community in Gunnison State prison. Since his parole he has completed six months of substance abuse treatment and has consistently tested negative for drug use. He now has a steady job and has been reunited with his 8-year old daughter.

There are more stories. "Bart," a juvenile offender in Montana, was placed in foster care after completing treatment at a correctional facility. After "Bart" completed his parole he graduated from high school on the honor roll. He has a job and will start college in the fall. "Charles," a young former gang member in Kansas, completed counseling for anger management and treatment for his substance abuse. A local company trained him and will give him a job. "Charles" also plans on getting his gang tattoo removed. "Tony," a young ex-offender in West Virginia, completed a reentry treatment program and now has a good job. As a volunteer, he currently tutors high school students and mentors other youth in his former reentry program.

"Miller, Bart, Charles, and Tony" are more than heartwarming stories. These are all people who very easily could have returned to lives of crime, but instead took advantage of the services provided through the SVORI partnership and are now leading productive lives. Stories like these give us all hope and strengthen our belief in the value of our reentry programs.

We believe that SVORI has made, and will continue to make, a difference in ex-offenders lives and in public safety. DOJ and our federal partners will continue to provide support to the SVORI grantees through funding, training, and other resources until these initial grants expire next year.

SVORI was a critical first step in helping communities reintegrate ex-offenders back into society. The President's Prisoner Reentry Initiative is the next step. Yet there is much work still to be done. We realize that even with our efforts there are still major service gaps, and that the vast majority of returning ex-offenders do not yet receive these services. The Department is committed to taking what we have already learned from SVORI, and what we will learn from our evaluations, and sharing it with law enforcement, corrections officials, policymakers, faith-based and other community organizations. Through this, we want to encourage more reentry efforts throughout the country that are based on sound planning and a thorough knowledge of what works.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that successfully reintegrating offenders back into their communities is one of the most pressing issues facing our Nation. As President Bush has said, "America is the land of second chances, and when the gates of prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life." We must do right not only by the ex-offenders, but by their families, their victims, their victims' families, and their communities.

State and local governments have demonstrated that thoughtful policies and programs can be developed to address this issue. The federal partners, including the Department of Justice, are committed to doing all we can to support practitioners through our grant programs and technical assistance to continue this good work.

We very much appreciate the interest you and your colleagues have shown in this critical public safety issue. I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you.

In 2002, more than 630,000 prisoners—about 1,700 per day—were released from State and Federal prisons (Harrison and Karberg, 2004). If past trends continue, just over half of them will be reincarcerated within 3 years (Langan and Levin, 2002). This pattern, indicative of poor reintegration of prisoners into the community, has wide-ranging social costs, including decreased public safety and weakened family and community ties. The goal of the Federal Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) is to reduce the likelihood of reincarceration by providing tailored supervision and services to improve the odds for a successful transition to the community.

This *National Portrait of SVORI* is the first in a series of publications documenting the work of the Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI. The *Portrait* is the final product of a preliminary assessment of all 69 sites funded under SVORI and is based on reviews of grantee proposals and workplans, telephone interviews with program directors, and visits to selected sites. Because this document is based primarily on what grantees and programs are reporting, the descriptions reflect individual variations; material included in the *Portrait* reflects a mixture of planned and implemented activities. The results of a full implementation assessment (currently underway) will provide analysis and richer detail on how grantees structure and operate their reentry programs. Primarily, the *Portrait* is intended to engage and inform local SVORI programs, practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and the Federal partners.

This first section of the report provides the background and context behind the impetus for improving reentry outcomes. Section 2 provides an overview of the SVORI Multi-site Evaluation, including data collection plans and forthcoming topical reports. Section 3 provides an overview of how sites are structuring the reentry programs funded under the Initiative and describes the patterns and commonalities across sites. Section 4 concludes the report with detailed information, by grantee, on the SVORI reentry efforts in jurisdictions across the United States.

### Reentry Defined

In this report, *reentry* is defined as the process of preparing and supporting offenders incarcerated in adult prisons and juvenile correctional facilities as they complete their terms and return to society. Reentry affects all who are released, regardless of their method of release or form of community supervision, if any.

If the reentry process is successful, both the public and the released prisoner benefit. Public safety gains are typically measured in terms of reduced recidivism. Other reintegration benefits include increased participation in social institutions such as the labor force, families, neighborhoods, schools, and faith communities. There are financial and social benefits associated with all forms of improvement.

SVORI programs are geared toward serious and violent offenders, particularly adults released from prison and juveniles released from correctional facilities. Although reentry is also an issue for offenders released from jails, pre-trial detention, or Federal prisons, these facilities are not the focus of the SVORI programs or of this report (although in a few SVORI programs, prisoners are transferred to county jails for intensive programming prior to release).



## SVORI Overview

SVORI is a collaborative Federal effort to improve outcomes for adults and juveniles returning to communities from correctional facilities. The Initiative addresses reentry outcomes along criminal justice, employment, education, health, and housing dimensions. Funded by the U.S. Departments of Justice (DOJ), Labor (DOL), Education (Ed), Housing and Urban Development (DHUD), and Health and Human Services (DHHS), this unprecedented national response is intended to help States better utilize their correctional resources to reduce recidivism.

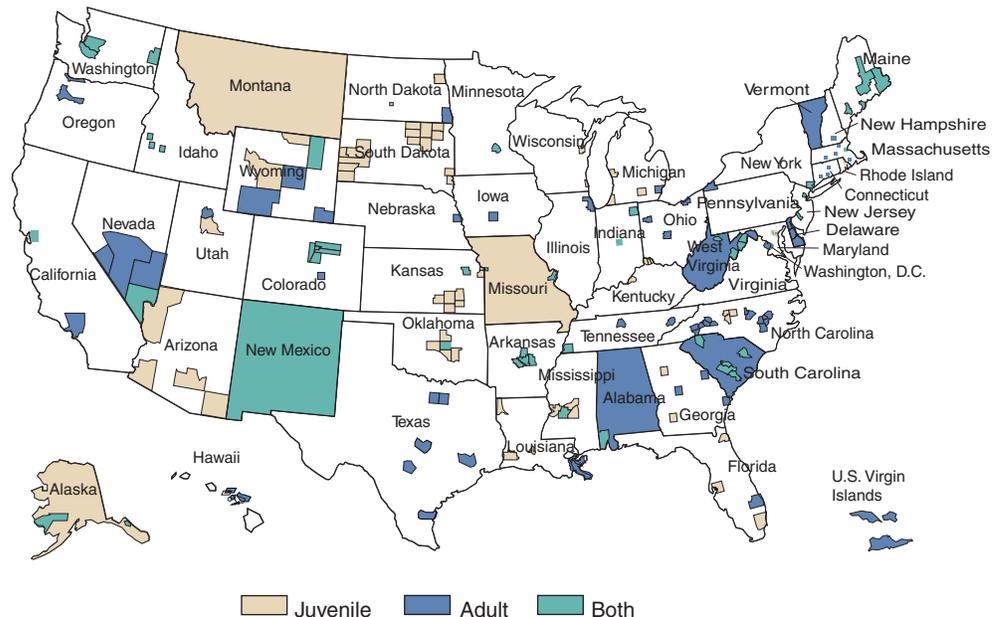
### SVORI Goals

- To improve quality of life and self-sufficiency through employment, housing, family, and community involvement
- To improve health by addressing substance use (sobriety and relapse prevention) and physical and mental health
- To reduce criminality through supervision and by monitoring noncompliance, reoffending, rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration
- To achieve systems change through multi-agency collaboration and case management strategies

Sixty-nine grantees at both State and local levels received a total of approximately \$110 million to develop new or expand existing programs offering integrated supervision and reentry services to adults or juveniles leaving correctional facilities. Reentry efforts were funded through SVORI in all 50 States, plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. (See Exhibit 1-1, which shows the post-release geographical areas targeted by SVORI grantees. A list of SVORI grantees by State is shown in Appendix A.) Individually, grantees received between \$500,000 and \$2 million in single, 3-year awards. These funds were intended to enable jurisdictions to leverage other funds.

Although the program announcement closed in mid-2002, and all the grantees were allowed to spend travel funds from their full grant award to attend the initial cluster conference in August of 2002, there were certain requirements specific to each award that the grantees had to meet before being given approval to use their entire award. Varying amounts of time were needed to meet these requirements, which resulted in grantees receiving access to full funding at different times. By the last quarter of 2002, most grantees were allowed to spend up to 10% of their award for planning purposes while they completed site-specific requirements necessary to receive their full awards. Most grantees received full spending approval during 2003; about 10 grantees did not receive approval until early 2004.

Exhibit 1-1. Post-release Geographical Areas Targeted by SVORI Grantees



All grantees are required to establish and support a partnership between institutional and community agencies. For grantees targeting adult populations, these partnerships include the State Department of Corrections and at least one local community agency. For grantees targeting juvenile populations, the partnerships include the State agency responsible for juvenile correctional placements and a community agency involved in providing services to and/or supervising juveniles.

SVORI funding supports the creation of a three-phase continuum of services that begins in prison, moves to a structured reentry phase before and during the early months of release, and continues for several years as released prisoners take on increasingly productive roles in the community. Although conceptually straightforward, this model is far from “business as usual”—it requires State and local agencies to collaborate in ways that have been rare in the past.

Among the Initiative’s priorities is providing services to those adults and juveniles who are most likely to pose a risk to the community upon release and to those who face multiple challenges upon returning to the community. Sites have an opportunity to create innovative reentry strategies that will contribute to the development of national models of best practices in reentry. In order to receive funding, the sites were required to identify and address service gaps and needs, while enhancing existing efforts with increased training and technical assistance. In doing this, sites were asked to ensure that programs promote productive social roles so that prisoners are able to move successfully from living under correctional control to becoming law-abiding and productive members of society.

## Reentry Context

To better understand SVORI, it is important to consider the context surrounding reentry. State-level sentencing and release policies affect the reentry landscape and simultaneously reflect and shape public opinion regarding crime and criminals. Prison incarceration and release trends highlight the increasing importance of effective release planning and reentry programming. It is also essential to understand the significant needs of returning prisoners and to identify reentry strategies that are effective in addressing these needs.

## Sentencing Policies

### Adult Sentencing

The sentencing environment has undergone significant shifts over the past 30 years. For most of the 20th century, the U.S. judicial system was dominated by *indeterminate sentencing*, under which a prisoner’s sentence consisted of a range of years (typically a minimum and a maximum), and a release authority (typically a parole board) determined when in that period to end the incarceration, resulting in a *discretionary release*. Within this framework, the parole boards played a critical role in determining the length of time a prisoner spent in prison, when post-release supervision would begin, and how to set sanctions and rewards for post-release behavior. Fundamental to this approach was a belief in rehabilitation—that with proper assistance, prisoners could become productive members of society (Petersilia, 2003).

### Definitions

*Indeterminate Sentencing*—A prison sentence with a maximum term established at the time of sentencing, but not a fixed term. Parole boards determine when to release individuals from prison.

*Determinate Sentencing*—A prison sentence with a fixed term of imprisonment that is determined by a judge, a statute, or sentencing guidelines and that can be reduced by good-time or earned-time credits.

*Discretionary Release*—The release of an inmate from prison where the release date is decided by a board or some other authority.

*Mandatory Release*—The release of an inmate from prison where the release date is the result of a determinate sentence and is not decided by a panel or board.

*Conditional Release*—The release of an inmate from prison to community supervision (which includes probation or parole) with a set of conditions for remaining in the community. If the conditions are violated, the individual can be returned to prison or face another sanction in the community.

*Unconditional Release*—The release of an inmate from prison where he or she is not under community supervision and is not required to abide by special conditions (and therefore cannot be returned to prison without being convicted of a new offense).

Adapted from Travis and Lawrence (2002)

Beginning in the 1970s, however, public confidence in rehabilitation waned and support for incarceration increased as a result of a combination of factors, including the rising crime rate, increased problems with drug abuse, and research evaluations suggesting that rehabilitation had no effect on decreasing recidivism. A 1974 essay by Robert Martinson suggesting that “nothing works” (in reference to the effect of rehabilitation on recidivism rates) had a significant impact on policy (Martinson, 1974). In the next decade, the “war on drugs” resulted in tough anti-crime measures, increased spending on incarceration, and a crackdown on drug abusers.

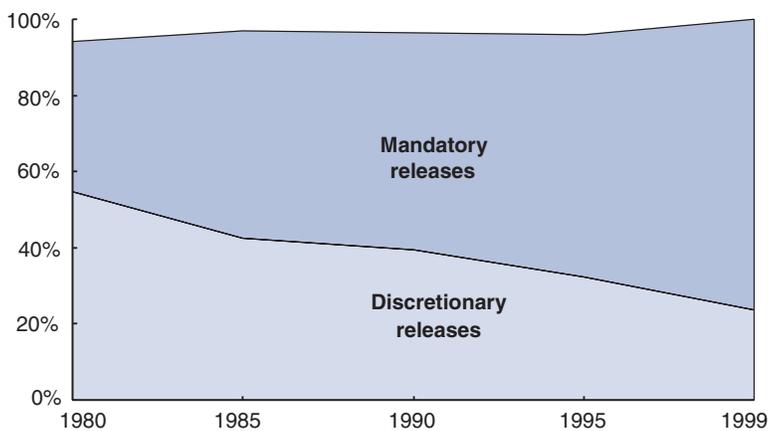
This policy shift led toward a system of *determinate sentencing*, under which prisoners receive a fixed-term sentence set by statute or sentencing guidelines that, in some cases, can be reduced by earned-time or good-time credits. The resulting release from a determinate sentence (called a *mandatory release*) is based solely on the statutory sentence length (plus or minus credits for behavior) and is not determined by a

parole board. Under mandatory release policies, release occurs regardless of behavior, removing the incentive for good behavior. Between 1980 and 1999, the percentage of releases that were mandatory increased from 39% to 77% (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck, 2001). (See Exhibit 1-2.) The national trend over the past 25 years has been an increase in the use of imprisonment—incorporating certainty in sentence length—as a way to deter future crime and increase public safety (Petersilia, 2003).

Following release, some former prisoners continue to be supervised in the community, a practice generally termed *parole supervision*, though some States have replaced parole with other types of post-release supervision. The proportion of these supervised, or *conditional*, releases increased sharply between 1960 and 1980 (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck, 2001). (See Exhibit 1-3.) This trend leveled off during the 1980s, when 80% of prison releases were conditional. Since 1990, the proportion of prisoners released without parole supervision (*unconditional release*) has been increasing, totaling more than 100,000 (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck, 2001). The number of unconditional releases is still relatively small, however, compared with those released under conditional supervision or parole.

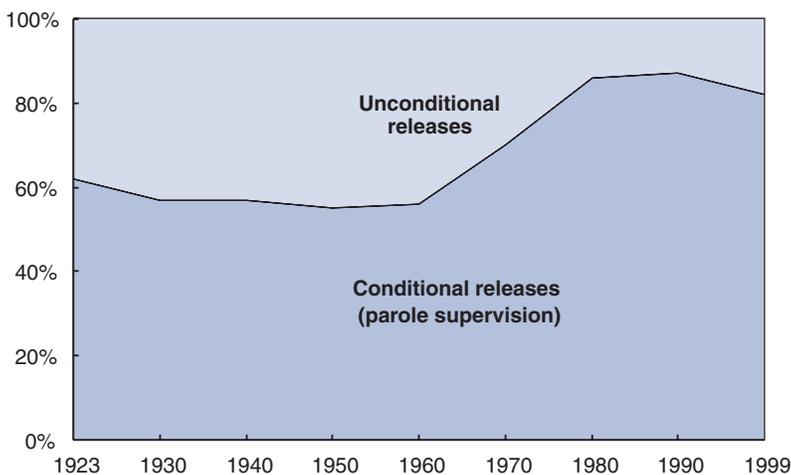
In addition to changes in determinate sentencing and methods of release, States have implemented a variety of sentencing reforms, including mandatory minimum sentences for designated crimes, truth-in-sentencing practices that reduce earned-time or good-time credits for violent offenders, and “three-strikes” laws that increase

Exhibit 1-2. Mandatory Prison Releases Compared with Discretionary Prison Releases, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 1999



Source: Hughes, Wilson, and Beck (2001)

Exhibit 1-3. Unconditional Prison Releases Compared with Conditional Prison Releases, 1923–1999



Source: National Prisoner Statistics (NPS-1) Series, Bureau of Justice Statistics

the chance that persistent repeat offenders will be imprisoned for long periods of time or life. There has also been an increase in the use of specialized courts (e.g., drug courts), which attempt to balance punishment, treatment, and programming (Butts and Mears, 2001). Moreover, States have differentially adopted such policies, some choosing to implement them, others maintaining traditional models (Tonry, 1999). Despite the lack of uniformity, the overall philosophy on sentencing policy has changed, and this change has had an impact on the ways in which prisoners are prepared for their release and on their incentive for engaging in programming during incarceration.

### Juvenile Sentencing

For juvenile offenders, sentencing policies have also changed. Many States have altered their laws to expand sentencing options for criminal and juvenile courts. As with adults, an increasing number of jurisdictions use specialized courts, such as teen courts, that provide a balance of punishment and rehabilitation (Butts and Mears, 2001). Blended sentencing practices allow for sentences to begin in the juvenile system and continue into the adult system (Mears, 2000). Although some juveniles spend their entire period of incarceration within the juvenile system, others begin in the juvenile system but complete their sentence in the adult system; still others begin and complete their sentence within the adult system. Revised transfer provision laws make it easier to transfer juveniles into the adult criminal justice system, and traditional confidentiality provisions have been loosened (Howell, 2003). The use of blended sentencing and relaxed transfer provisions means that it is now much more common to find juveniles in the adult system. These alternative juvenile incarceration options make the measurement and understanding of youth reentry especially complex (Mears and Travis, 2003).

## Incarceration and Release Trends

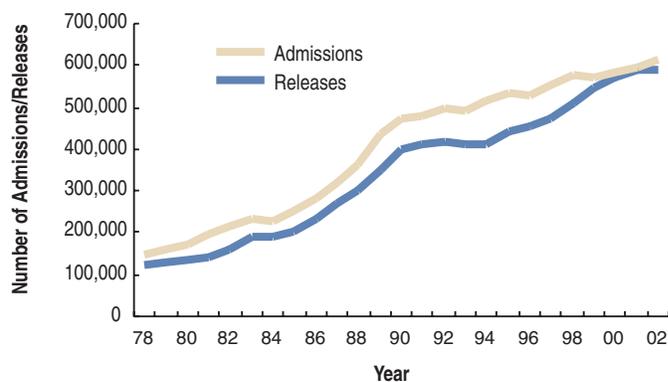
The relationship between sentencing policies and trends in incarceration is a complex one, as changes in sentencing policies can be prompted by patterns in admissions and releases and at the same time result in new trends. Current trends, indicating an increasing number of prisoners returning to the community, highlight the importance of reentry planning and preparation.

### Adult Trends

The U.S. prison population nearly doubled in size between 1990 and the end of 2002, from 708,393 to 1,277,127 (BJS, 2003). This increase in prisoners was followed by an increase in the number of State and Federal prison releases from 405,400 to 630,000 between 1990 and 2002. Releases from State prisons increased 46% between 1990 and 2002, from 405,400 to 589,844 (Hughes and Wilson, 2003). (See Exhibit 1-4 for admission and release trends from 1977 through 2002; also see Appendix B for a detailed listing of admission and release numbers by State.)

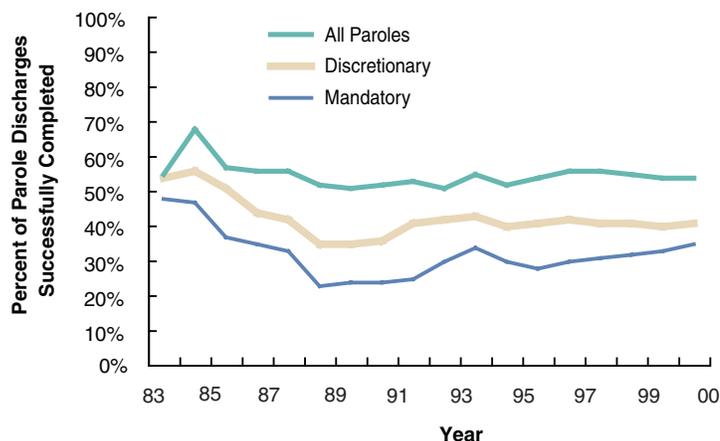
As stated earlier, the majority of prisoners are released to parole or some other form of conditional supervision. The type of parole appears to make a difference in the success of the parolee in avoiding a parole revocation that results in a return to prison. State prisoners released by a parole board (discretionary parolees) have consistently had higher success rates than those released through mandatory parole. (See Exhibit 1-5.) In 2000, 54% of discretionary

Exhibit 1-4. State Prison Admissions and Releases in the U.S., 1978-2002



Source: Correctional Populations in the U.S. (BJS, 2002) and Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2002 and 2003 (Harrison and Karberg, 2004)

Exhibit 1-5. Percentage of State Parole Discharges Successfully Completing Supervision, 1983–2000



Source: Hughes and Wilson, 2003

### State Budgets and Criminal Justice Expenditures

Recent pressure on State budgets has caused some States to begin reevaluating their criminal justice expenditures, which on average accounted for 13% of States' general funds and were estimated to total \$68 billion in 2002 (National Governors' Association, 2004). The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation recently released a bulletin noting that, for the first time in several decades, Massachusetts is spending more on prisons than it is on public higher education, appropriating \$830 million for corrections facilities and only \$816 million for public higher education in 2003 (Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2003). The average annual cost of incarcerating an adult is roughly \$25,000, which is more than the cost of many treatment programs or intermediate sanctions such as halfway houses or parole supervision.

As a result of increased expenditures in a time of resource scarcity, some States have begun to make changes in terms of policy and spending. According to findings from a survey by the Vera Institute of Justice, reductions in corrections expenditures in fiscal years 2003 and 2004 were evident in roughly one-quarter of States (Wool and Stemen, 2004). The study also noted that States have begun considering new policy options in an effort to reduce the number of prison admissions as well as the length of prison sentences. Some examples include treatment alternatives and reductions in the use of mandatory minimums. Responding to these budgetary concerns, shifting priorities, and the desire to increase public safety in the long term, SVORI has positioned States to take advantage of the available knowledge base regarding "what works" to reduce the recidivism rate.

parolees were successful, compared with 35% of mandatory parolees. The difference in success rates of those released on discretionary and mandatory parole may be attributable to differences in incentives or supervision practices or to differences in the characteristics of those released under the two release mechanisms. In other words, in States with both discretionary and mandatory parole, those chosen for discretionary release are likely to be those judged prior to release to have the highest likelihood of success following release.

Regardless of the type of parole being used by States, parole violators now make up a substantially larger percentage of total prison admissions. As a percentage of all admissions to State prison, parole violators more than doubled from 17% in 1980 to 35% in 1999. Between 1990 and 1999, the number of parole violators admitted to State prisons rose approximately 50%, while new court commitments rose only 7% (Hughes, Wilson, and Beck, 2001).

### Juvenile Trends

Juveniles, though more likely to serve shorter sentences than adults (typically less than a year), are likely to have repeated placements; many of them will have been incarcerated for approximately one-third of their adolescence (Snyder, 2004). Additionally, the size of the population of incarcerated youth is more difficult to quantify because they are found in both the adult and juvenile systems. In spite of these complications, researchers estimate that roughly one-third of the more than 600,000 returning prisoners each year consists of those younger than 24 years of age (Mears and Travis, 2003). Of those individuals, it is estimated that roughly two-thirds will be rearrested within 12 months of release (Krisberg and Howell, 1998).

As a result of recidivism and stricter sentencing, the need for bed space in juvenile facilities is on the rise. Between 1989 and 1998, the number of juveniles adjudicated to residential placement facilities increased 37% (Sickmund, 2003). Increasing incarceration rates have also been attributed to higher numbers of drug-related and violent offenses, as well as to an increase in the sentencing of females to correctional facilities (up 50% between 1990 and 1999) (Harris, 2003).

## Needs of Returning Prisoners

Released prisoners face enormous challenges, from finding jobs and housing to staying sober, while avoiding high-risk persons and places. One key to successful reentry is identifying these challenges and tailoring reentry plans and services to address them.

Finding employment is one of the most pressing needs facing returning prisoners. Although many prisoners were working prior to incarceration (Beck et al., 1993), their education level, work experience, and skills are well below national averages for the general population (Andrews and Bonta, 1994). Further, the stigma associated with incarceration often makes it difficult for returning prisoners to secure jobs (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll, 2002); when they do, they tend to earn less than individuals with similar backgrounds who have not been incarcerated (Bushway and Reuter, 2001). Despite evidence that vocational and educational programs are effective (Bushway and Reuter, 2001), access to them is often limited in prisons, and availability has declined over the past decade (Lynch and Sabol, 2001).

Many prisoners have substance abuse problems. According to a 1997 national survey of State prisoners, 80% reported a history of drug use or alcohol abuse (Mumola, 1999). Although studies indicate that treatment can reduce drug use and criminal activity (Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk, and Stewart, 1999), only 10% of State prisoners reported receiving formal substance abuse treatment in 1997, down from 25% in 1991 (BJS, 2000).

Prisoners are also much more likely than the general population to have chronic and infectious diseases, and they account for a significant portion of the total population infected with HIV or AIDS, hepatitis B and C, and tuberculosis (Hammett, Roberts, and Kennedy, 2001). Rates of mental illness among prisoners are two to four times those of the general population (Lurigio, 2001). Individuals with dual and triple diagnoses (e.g., for substance abuse, mental illness, and HIV infection) face acute difficulties, and the associated service needs present substantial challenges.

Many former prisoners lack the financial resources or personal references necessary to compete for and secure housing in the private housing market. Moreover, Federal laws may bar convicted felons from public housing and Federally assisted housing programs, and living with family or friends is not always an option. Returning prisoners who are unable to secure housing may go to shelters or become homeless.

### Reentry Success Story—Hawaii BEST Reentry Program

“BEST held a career expo for 29 inmates including SVORI participants and other offenders. We bused all participants from the local facility to Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc.; 10 businesses participated and conducted mock interviews with the participants. BEST presented a short skit, *The Dos and Don'ts of Interviewing*, which was followed by a fashion show and information on affordable clothing for interviews and work fairs. Business leaders also made presentations throughout the workshop, such as *What Employers Look For*, *Attitude*, and *First Impressions*. During a break, BEST provided employers with information about incentives for hiring ex-offenders. We intend to make this an annual event. Evaluations completed by participants indicated that they felt they had benefited from the event.”

—Verdine Kong, Hawaii BEST Project Director

### Legal Barriers to Reentry Success

The Legal Action Center's recent report (2004) documents the legal barriers that former prisoners face upon their return to free society, including barriers related to employment, housing, benefits, voting, access to criminal records, parenting, and driving. Among its findings, the report indicates that over the past 20 years, Congress and State legislators have imposed new restrictions on eligibility for public benefits, student loans, and driver's licenses. Specifically, most States permit employer discrimination against individuals with criminal histories, restrict a former prisoner's right to vote, and limit a former prisoner's eligibility for public assistance and food stamps. The report's legislative recommendations include eliminating arrest records as a deciding factor in eligibility determinations for public benefits, reducing the public accessibility of conviction information on the Internet, and restoring former prisoners' right to vote.

### Needs Related to Children and Families of Prisoners

In 1997, 55% of State prisoners reported having one or more children, and nearly 46% of these parents lived with their minor children at the time they were admitted to prison (Mumola, 2000). While the percentage of prisoners who are parents has remained about the same over the past decade, the increase in the number of prisoners means that there are many more children who have one or more parents incarcerated. In 1999, about 1.3 million children under the age of 18 had parents in State prisons (Mumola, 2000).

Prisoners are often cut off from their families, and the same is true for contacts between incarcerated parents and their children. Lynch and Sabol (2001), using data from a 1997 BJS prisoner survey, reported that only about 20% of those incarcerated for less than a year had weekly visits with their children. This figure dropped to 10% for those incarcerated for 5 years or more. Similarly, those incarcerated for 5 years or more were less likely to have weekly communication through phone calls and letters than those with shorter sentences.

### *Specialized Needs of Juveniles*

Longer and stricter sentences for young populations can also increase the challenges associated with successful reintegration into society. Increased time away from family members, jobs, and the educational system increases the chances that youth will fall even farther behind than they might have been before incarceration. Youth returning from commitment are likely to have relatives who have been incarcerated, to have not completed eighth grade, and to have begun regular drug and alcohol use at a young age (Snyder, 2004). A review of recent studies notes that 36% of committed juveniles suffer from a learning disability (Rutherford, Bullis, Wheeler Anderson, and Griller-Clark, 2002), and more than 40% of youth in the juvenile justice system have a history of substance abuse (Aarons, Brown, Hough, Garland, and Wood, 2001). Juveniles committed in facilities are more likely to have some type of mental illness than youth in the general population (Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, and Mericla, 2002), resulting in additional risks and barriers upon release (Snyder, 2004).

The juvenile population also has unique developmental needs. Young released prisoners face challenges in both the transition from a correctional facility to the community and the transition from childhood to adulthood. Successful reintegration requires developmentally appropriate services and resources (Altschuler and Brash, 2004).



## What Works

Recent research on rehabilitation-oriented programs is promising. Treatment geared toward reducing drug use and criminal activity among prisoners has been shown to be effective, particularly when the treatment spans the incarceration and post-release periods (Gaes et al., 1999). Job training and work programs have also been shown to have a significant impact on the employment and recidivism rates of older men (Bushway and Reuter, 2001).

A recent meta-review of reentry program evaluations identified several approaches that appear to work. For example, vocational and work-release programs were found to improve skills and reduce recidivism. Pre-release programs and some drug treatment programs had similar effects on participants. Those who stayed in halfway houses committed less severe and less frequent crimes, and educational programs were deemed capable of increasing achievement scores (Seiter and Kadela, 2003).

### Reentry Success Story—Ohio Community-Oriented Reentry (CORE) Program

“As the project director for the grant, I have had the opportunity to observe and participate in the Reentry Management Teams. In all the years of working for the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, this has been one of the most powerful and moving experiences I have been afforded. I have witnessed offenders—who in the past would have been written off—grow, mature, and begin to accept responsibility for their behaviors and attitudes. I wish I could record the interaction between the Reentry Management Team and the offender to illustrate what a wonderful tool this is becoming as the process begins to mature. One of the key differences I see with the reentry process is allowing offenders to have input and decision-making capabilities regarding their own lives. Offenders are beginning to take ownership of their life plan and of their future.”

—Angela Lee, Ohio CORE Project Director



### Reentry Success Story—Miller

Miller\* was on probation before he came to prison for 2 years. Twelve months before being paroled, Miller became a resident in the HOPE Therapeutic Community at the Gunnison prison in Utah. Miller is now successfully living in his community with family members. Since the week he paroled, he has successfully completed 6 months of substance abuse treatment and has consistently tested negative for substance use. Miller has been employed as a laborer with a concrete company, where he makes \$18.00 per hour. He is reunited with his 8-year-old daughter. He has a valid driver's license and an insured automobile. He attends the monthly Reentry Client/Family meetings and brought his daughter to the Christmas Party.

\*Name has been changed.

As a result of these and other positive findings, attitudes about punishment and sentencing have begun to shift back toward recognizing the value of treatment. A 2001 study showed less public support for longer sentences as a means to reduce crime than had previously been found. Two-thirds of respondents supported the use of services such as job training and education as the proper approach to reducing crime. Only 28% believed that long sentences and increased incarceration were the most effective methods of increasing public safety. For the most part, survey respondents favored a more balanced approach to crime reduction, emphasizing services and prevention (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., 2002).

State governments have also begun to modify their approaches to corrections, balancing reductions in correctional budgets (in times of tight State coffers) with treatment-oriented programming. In 2003, 13 States reportedly enacted significant reforms to their corrections policies, some repealing mandatory minimums and others offering more treatment-oriented alternatives (Wool and Stemen, 2004). In an effort to support States in developing meaningful programming for a population that made up a large share of prison admissions—people failing after prison release—the Federal government launched SVORI.

**This section has provided the context and rationale for the funding of SVORI. The trends in both prisoner populations and sentencing policies show the need for improved reentry planning, programming, and services. The following section provides further information about the multi-site evaluation of SVORI and plans for future analysis and reporting. The remainder of the report describes what SVORI grantees are doing across the United States.**



## The Multi-site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

### Characteristics of Prisoner Reentry Programs

By Laura Winterfield, *Urban Institute*, and Christine Lindquist, *RTI International*

July 2005

In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 state agencies to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding is supporting 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute.

In this *Reentry Research in Action* brief, we describe the SVORI programs along various dimensions that characterize their areas of emphasis. Findings are based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors.

The Federal SVORI funding consortium believed that individual states were better positioned than the Federal government to determine the particular elements of a reentry initiative that would most appropriately fit their individual offender needs and organizational resources. Thus, the various state-level activities being operated under SVORI funding are not intended to be viewed as a traditional treatment “program” with specific components dictated by an a priori model. This report describes the SVORI programs along various dimensions that

characterize their areas of emphasis, based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors for all 89 programs<sup>1</sup>. Table 1 summarizes the SVORI programs along key organizational characteristics.

As shown in the table, most (64%) program directors reported that the post-release phase of reentry programming is run primarily by a government agency rather than a private one, although staff from both types of agencies are likely to be involved. Additionally, most program directors reported using program funds to “fill service gaps” or “expand an existing program” rather than to “develop new programming.”

**Table 1. Characteristics of SVORI Programs**

Characteristic	Programs	
	n	%
<b>Main Post-release Agency Type</b>		
Government agency	57	64.0%
Private agency	25	28.1%
<b>Primary Use of SVORI Funds</b>		
Starting a new program	21	23.6%
Expanding an existing program	25	28.1%
Filling service gaps	36	40.4%
<b>Phase Emphasis</b>		
Pre-release	3	3.4%
Post-release	20	22.5%
Both	60	67.4%
<b>Pre-release Geographic Targeting</b>		
All facilities	36	40.4%
Select facilities only	46	51.7%
<b>Post-release Geographic Targeting</b>		
All communities (statewide)	8	9.0%
Select communities only	75	84.3%
<b>Offender Needs Targeting</b>		
General “serious and violent” population	71	79.8%
Subset of offenders with specific service needs	10	11.2%
Other	2	2.2%
<b>Service Targeting</b>		
Attempt to provide all needed services for participants	73	82.0%
Focus on a specific type of service or set of services	10	11.2%

Note: Percentages reported in this table are percentages of all (89) SVORI programs and do not sum to 100 because of missing data.

<sup>1</sup> The 69 SVORI grantees are operating a total of 89 distinct programs. The multi-site evaluation describes characteristics at the program level rather than the grantee level.

Consistent with the intent of SVORI to develop services and programming within the institution and the community to span three phases—institutional, supervised post-release, and post-supervision—most of the program directors reported that their programs did not focus primarily on either the institutional or the community phase but emphasized both.

An important characteristic of the SVORI programs is the extent to which each program chose to target pre-release resources on individuals in a few or all institutions and post-release programming on those returning to a few or all communities statewide. Most grantees reported that their SVORI program is geographically restricted. Slightly more than half have implemented SVORI in selected correctional institutions, and most have targeted specific communities of return.

Regarding the target population for SVORI services, program directors reported that, in general, they serve the serious and violent offender population as a whole as opposed to serving a subset of offenders with specific service needs. Additionally, rather than focusing service provision on a particular set of offender needs, they mostly reported attempting to provide all needed services.

The three service-need areas most often ranked as the number one priority were employment, community integration, and family support/unification (see Table 2). Other services that were frequently ranked in the top three include substance abuse treatment and education/skills building. Given that the literature supports the importance of work, integration into family and community, and decreased substance use as key factors influencing successful reentry, the programmatic foci seem not only appropriate but encouraging.

**Top service-need areas:**

- Employment
- Community integration
- Family support/unification

**Table 2. Primary Focus of SVORI Programs**

Service Type	All Programs				
	Any Rank		Top Rank		Mean
	n	%	n	%	
Employment/vocation	57	64.0%	24	27.0%	2.12
Community integration	44	49.4%	24	27.0%	2.25
Substance abuse	43	48.0%	9	10.0%	1.88
Education/skills building	36	40.4%	6	6.7%	1.78
Mental health	23	25.8%	6	6.7%	1.87
Family support/unification	25	28.0%	10	11.0%	2.12
Other	15	17.0%	2	2.2%	1.67
Physical health	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a

Note: This table shows the results of a question asking program directors to rank the top three areas on which they are focusing their programs and services. Results are based on the 83 returned surveys. “Any Rank” means service was included in programs’ list of top three services. “Top Rank” means service was identified as programs’ top priority. “Mean” is the mean rank score for each service type (with “3” ranked highest)—a higher score indicates a larger number of high rankings.

**Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators**

**Pamela K. Lattimore, Ph.D.**  
 RTI International  
 Center for Crime, Violence, and Justice Research  
 3040 Cornwallis Road  
 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709  
 Phone: 803-754-5965  
 Fax: 919-485-7700

**Christy A. Visher, Ph.D.**  
 Urban Institute  
 Justice Policy Center  
 2100 M Street, NW  
 Washington, DC 20037  
 Phone: 202-261-5593  
 Fax: 202-659-8985



[www.svori-evaluation.org](http://www.svori-evaluation.org)





## The Multi-site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

### Faith-Based Involvement: Findings from the SVORI Multi-site Evaluation

By Christine Lindquist and Susan Brumbaugh, *RTI International*

July 2005

In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 state agencies to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding is supporting 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute.

In this *Reentry Research in Action* brief, we provide information on the involvement of faith-based organizations in SVORI programs. Findings are based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors.

One of the community partnerships suggested by the Federal partners in the funding solicitation for sites was with the faith-based community. In conceptualizing and implementing their reentry programs, many of the 89 SVORI programs<sup>1</sup> have developed strong collaborations with local faith-based agencies, including both individual faith-based organizations and umbrella groups representing numerous faith-based organizations in the community.

The table below reports the number and percentage of SVORI programs that reported the provision of specific services to SVORI participants by faith-based organizations both prior to and after release.

#### Number and Percentage of Programs Reporting the Provision of Services by Faith-Based Organizations Pre- and Post-Release

Service	Programs Offering Pre-Release		Programs Offering Post-Release	
	n	%	n	%
One-on-one mentoring	38	42.20%	48	53.30%
Housing placements or referrals	20	22.20%	38	42.20%
AA/NA	17	18.90%	36	40.00%
Counseling sessions	17	18.90%	32	35.60%
Peer support groups	17	18.90%	30	33.30%
Financial support/emergency assistance	16	17.80%	41	45.60%
Family reunification	16	17.80%	31	34.40%
Employment referrals/job placement	12	13.30%	27	30.00%
Parenting skills development	12	13.30%	34	37.80%
Anger management/violence counseling	12	13.30%	26	28.90%
Comprehensive drug treatment	11	12.20%	20	22.20%
Life skills training	10	11.10%	29	32.20%
Assistance obtaining benefits and completing applications	9	10.00%	16	17.80%
Treatment/release plan	8	8.90%	15	16.70%
Family counseling	8	8.90%	28	31.10%
Resume and interviewing skills development	7	7.80%	22	22.40%
Cognitive skills development/behavioral programming	7	7.80%	20	22.20%
Assistance obtaining identification	7	7.80%	25	27.80%
Domestic violence services	7	7.80%	21	23.30%
Education/GED/tutoring/literacy	6	6.70%	17	18.90%
Mental health services	5	5.60%	13	14.40%
Needs assessment	4	4.40%	10	11.10%
Risk assessment	3	3.30%	5	6.00%
Vocational training	3	3.30%	16	17.80%
Medical services	2	2.20%	13	14.40%
Legal assistance	1	1.10%	5	5.60%
Dental services	0		6	6.70%
Transportation	n/a		28	31.10%

<sup>1</sup> The 69 SVORI grantees are operating a total of 89 distinct programs. The multi-site evaluation describes characteristics at the program level rather than the grantee level.

Faith-based organizations tend to be more involved in service provision to SVORI participants after release than prior to release. The services most frequently delivered by faith-based organizations are one-on-one mentoring (provided to SVORI participants after release by faith-based organizations in over half of the SVORI programs), financial support/emergency assistance, and housing placements or referrals.

**Services most frequently delivered by faith-based organizations:**

- One-on-one mentoring
- Financial support/emergency assistance
- Housing placement/referrals

Other roles for faith-based organizations in SVORI include providing guidance to the program through participation in the program's steering committee, serving as community advocates for SVORI, or being involved in unique program components. For example, of the SVORI programs with Community Accountability Panels, 27% have representatives from faith-based organizations on these panels. Of those that utilize offender-specific reentry teams, 39% include faith-based representatives on the teams. In some programs, faith-based organizations are extensively involved in day-to-day service coordination. Case management is provided by faith-based organizations prior to release in 13 programs (14.6%) and post-release in 16 programs (18.0%).

Through interviews and site visits conducted by multi-site evaluation staff, it is evident that several of the programs have emphasized the value of involving faith-based organizations in their SVORI programs, particularly in the final phase of reentry, during which formal supervision ends and the responsibility for successful reintegration shifts to the community. A detailed example of faith-based involvement in one of the SVORI programs, the Michigan adult program, is provided in the box below (this information was originally published in the *National Portrait of SVORI*, which is available at [www.svori-evaluation.org](http://www.svori-evaluation.org)).

**The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Michigan SVORI Program**

The *Michigan Department of Corrections* reentry program is supported by the strong involvement of a local faith-based organization, Wings of Faith. This organization provides case management for all reentry clients. As program participants enter the pre-release facility in which they receive reentry programming, they are assigned to a Wings of Faith case manager. During the months prior to release, these case managers go into the participating facilities to conduct needs assessments and begin addressing barriers to success. After release, they continue to work closely with the parole officer assigned to participants. Although some agencies require that a service referral come from a parole officer, the Wings of Faith case managers provide the majority of service referrals (as well as needs assessments) for program participants. A notable feature of the program is that Wings of Faith and the parole officer are co-located in a one-stop center (The Samaritan Center) that also houses numerous local nonprofit service providers, facilitating more immediate access to services. Wings of Faith also does much of the public relations work and marketing for the program, which has helped promote community support.

**Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators**

**Pamela K. Lattimore, Ph.D.**

RTI International  
Center for Crime, Violence, and Justice Research  
3040 Cornwallis Road  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709  
Phone: 803-754-5965  
Fax: 919-485-7700

**Christy A. Visher, Ph.D.**

Urban Institute  
Justice Policy Center  
2100 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
Phone: 202-261-5593  
Fax: 202-659-8985



[www.svori-evaluation.org](http://www.svori-evaluation.org)





## The Multi-site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

### Characteristics of Prisoner Reentry Programs for Juveniles

By Laura Winterfield, *Urban Institute*, and Susan Brumbaugh, *RTI International*

October 2005

In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 agencies to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding supports 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute. Thirty-seven of these programs specifically target juveniles (the remaining 52 programs include 7 programs serving both adults and juveniles).

In this *Reentry Research in Action* brief, we describe SVORI programs exclusively serving juveniles along various dimensions that characterize their reentry approaches. Findings are based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors.<sup>1</sup>

The SVORI multi-site evaluation team provides frequent, brief, and practical information on SVORI programs and interim evaluation findings through our RRIA series of topical briefs. This RRIA focuses on SVORI programs that serve juveniles exclusively, and highlights organizational characteristics, approaches to service coordination, and special service components. This information will be of immediate interest to those practitioners interested in designing similar programs.

The SVORI program solicitation provided only broad programmatic guidelines to the applicants, including requirements for three phases (pre-

release, short-term post-release, and long-term community reintegration), needs assessment, and coordinated case management. As a result, the programs funded under the initiative vary widely in terms of programmatic characteristics and services delivered. Table 1 provides a summary of the key organizational characteristics of the juvenile SVORI programs. Although most SVORI funds were awarded to state juvenile justice or social service agencies, nearly one quarter of post-release phases were run by private agencies through contracts. Only a small minority of the juvenile programs reported starting a new program (22%), and most emphasize the pre- and the post-release phases equally.

**Table 1. Characteristics of SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles**

Characteristic	Programs	
	n	%
<b>Main Post-release Agency Type</b>		
Government agency	28	75.7%
Private agency	9	24.3%
<b>Primary Use of SVORI Funds</b>		
Starting a new program	8	21.6%
Expanding an existing program	12	32.4%
Filling service gaps	17	45.9%
<b>Phase Emphasis</b>		
Emphasizes either the pre-release phase or the post-release phase	8	21.6%
Emphasizes both phases equally	29	78.4%
<b>Pre-release Geographic Targeting</b>		
All facilities	20	54.1%
Select facilities only	17	45.9%
<b>Post-release Geographic Targeting</b>		
All communities (statewide)	3	8.1%
Select communities only	34	91.9%
<b>Offender Needs Targeting</b>		
General "serious and violent" population	32	86.5%
Subset of offenders with specific service needs	5	13.5%
<b>Service Targeting</b>		
Attempt to provide all needed services for participants	30	81.1%
Focus on a specific type of service or set of services	7	18.9%

Note: Percentages reported in this table are based on the 37 SVORI programs serving juveniles or juveniles and youthful offenders (juveniles sentenced as adults). This analysis does not include any programs serving adults.

Although most of the juvenile program directors reported providing all needed services to participants, a higher proportion of juvenile programs (19%) appear to be targeting a specific set of services than adult programs (11%). This programmatic concentration is not surprising, in that juvenile programs are more likely than adult programs to provide specialized services.

Although post-release geographic coverage was generally targeted (nearly all programs targeted their post-release activities in selected communities), the programs were overwhelmingly inclusive with regard to their target population (with 87% of programs serving the general serious and violent population rather than a subset of offenders with specific needs) and general in their service focus (81% of programs attempt to provide all needed services rather than focusing on a specific subset).

The program directors were asked to rank, among a set of factors, the services that were their top three priorities (see Table

2). The service-need areas most often ranked as the number one priority were family support/unification, community integration, and employment. Among all of the possible services, education services were ranked most frequently in the top three. The concentration on family support/unification, community integration and skills building (employment, vocational, and educational services) seems entirely appropriate given both the nature of the population being served (juveniles) and the overall purpose of SVORI (effecting a successful community transition).

**Top service-need areas:**

- Family support/unification
- Community integration
- Employment

**Table 2. Primary Focus of SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles**

Service Type	All Programs				
	Top Rank		Any Rank		Mean
	n	%	n	%	
Family support/unification	10	27.0%	20	54.1%	2.30
Community integration	10	27.0%	21	56.8%	2.19
Employment/vocation	9	24.3%	19	51.4%	2.11
Education/skills building	5	13.5%	22	59.5%	1.91
Substance abuse	2	5.4%	14	37.8%	1.71
Mental health	1	2.7%	10	27.0%	1.70
Other	0	n/a	5	13.5%	1.40
Physical health	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a

Note: This table shows the results of a question asking program directors to rank the top three areas on which they are focusing their programs and services. Results are based on the 37 surveys returned by directors of juvenile programs. “Any Rank” indicates service was included in programs’ list of top three services. “Top Rank” indicates the service was identified as programs’ top priority. “Mean” is the mean rank score for each service type (with “3” ranked highest)—a higher score indicates a larger number of high rankings.

The remaining tables present information on the approaches used to coordinate service delivery (Table 3) and the use of unique program components (Table 4). In some cases, program directors report differences in services and components provided to SVORI participants and “non-SVORI”—defined as individuals comparable to SVORI participants in terms of age, needs, and risk criteria but who are not enrolled in the program.

Table 3 shows that SVORI juvenile programs include a high degree of case management—usually provided by the same case manager or supervising agent both pre- and post-release. Less than a quarter of the programs report providing case management for a higher proportion of SVORI participants than they do for comparable, non-SVORI offenders during the pre-release phase, indicating that case management is a general programmatic approach for these juvenile justice systems and not a new service just for SVORI participants.

One of the cornerstones of the Intensive Aftercare Program model popularized by David Altschuler is the linking of institutional and community corrections through structure, policies, programs, and practices. Several juvenile SVORI programs reflect this model, as exemplified by the SC Department of Juvenile Justice. There, the efforts of reintegration coordinators have made institutions more receptive to having community representatives come into the facility. The facility sets aside days for community service providers to work with juveniles while they are still incarcerated. This has enabled the institution to make direct links to the community.

**Table 3. Service Coordination Approaches among SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles**

Service Coordination Approach	Programs	
	n	%
<b>Case Management</b>		
Provide pre-release case management	37	100%
SVORI proportion higher than comparison proportion	8	21.6%
Provide post-release case management	36	97.3%
SVORI proportion higher than comparison proportion	12	32.4%
Use same case manager for pre- and post-release	29	78.4%
Use same supervision officer for pre- and post-release	31	83.8%
<b>Continuity of Care</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>97.3%</b>
<b>Wrap-Around Approach</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>94.6%</b>
<b>Community Accountability Panels/Boards</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>35.1%</b>
Use only with SVORI participants pre-release	9	24.3%
Use only with SVORI participants post-release	8	21.6%
Composition of panel/board same for pre- and post-release	8	21.6%
<b>Offender-Specific Reentry Teams</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>59.5%</b>
Use only with SVORI participants pre-release	14	37.8%
Use only with SVORI participants post-release	16	43.2%
Composition of team same for pre- and post-release	8	21.6%
<b>One-Stop Shop</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>37.8%</b>

Note: Percentages reported in this table are based on the 37 SVORI programs serving juveniles or juveniles and youthful offenders (juveniles sentenced as adults). This analysis does not include any programs serving adults.

The programs also report that virtually all SVORI participants receive post-release case management, with about a third of the programs reporting that more SVORI than non-SVORI offenders receive post-release case management. Notably, a majority of programs reported that the same case manager (78%) and supervising officer

Within the juvenile justice arena, continuity of care is considered to be a “best practice.” For SVORI programs, we found that virtually all programs report providing continuity of care, and that the actors (case managers and supervising officers) providing this care are the same both pre- and post-release (78% and 84% respectively). Having the same staff involved with the juvenile prior to and after release ensures that those managing the case are familiar with key aspects of both institutional and community service provision.

(84%) work with SVORI participants both pre- and post-release. This provision of case management by the same individuals pre- and post-release is likely related to the almost universal reporting (97% of programs) of the provision of “continuity of care” (i.e., a model in which a case manager, supervision officer, or service provider is involved with an individual from the pre-release facility to the community).

Another key aspect related to the coordination of services for juvenile SVORI offenders is the use of a “wrap-around approach” that is defined by a broad set of interested agencies developing and delivering a comprehensive, individualized

treatment plan that includes the offenders’ entire social network. Nearly all (95%) programs reported using such an approach that creates a more holistic intervention for the offender. As this approach is considered a “best practice” within the juvenile justice arena because it creates a more holistic intervention for the youth, it is encouraging to see the frequency with which it is reported being used.

Other approaches that can improve service coordination include the use of community accountability panels (used by one-third of programs, with more than half retaining the same board composition for pre- and post-release) and offender-specific reentry teams (used by more than half of the programs, with one-third of those teams comprising the same members pre- and post-release). More than one-third of programs report using a “one-stop shop” within which a variety of treatment providers are available to provide referrals or services to juveniles in a single location in the community.

Table 4 shows other program components reported by program directors. Among these components, programs most often reported using a curriculum-based classroom program prior to release. These activities are not generally specific to SVORI, with three programs reporting activities used only with SVORI participants (although many programs report prioritizing SVORI participants).

**Table 4. Program Components Used by SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles**

Program Components	Programs	
	n	%
<b>Reentry Courts</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>29.7%</b>
Use only with SVORI participants	6	16.2%
<b>Video-Conferencing</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>37.8%</b>
Use only with SVORI participants	4	10.8%
<b>Pre-release Curriculum-Based Programs</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>97.3%</b>
Use only with SVORI participants	3	8.1%
<b>Restorative Justice</b>		
Restitution	29	78.4%
Victim Mediation	10	27.0%
Victim Awareness/education	25	67.6%
Community service	34	91.9%
Community beautification/landscaping	13	35.1%
<b>Special Programs and Activities</b>		
Animal care/training	4	10.8%
Habitat for Humanity	14	37.8%
Weed & Seed	14	37.8%

Note: Percentages reported in this table are based on the 37 SVORI programs serving juveniles or juveniles and youthful offenders (juveniles sentenced as adults). This analysis does not include any programs serving adults.

A majority of programs also reported using several restorative justice components, including community service, restitution, and victim awareness. About one-third of programs reported using components such as reentry courts, video-conferencing, and various special programs.

This report has shown that, overall, the juvenile SVORI programs are run by government agencies and focus equally on pre- and post-release. They tend to be targeted geographically but inclusive in their population and service focus. Most programs employ a continuity-of-care model that involves staff and community members working with juveniles both before and after release. This approach, combined with the provision of “wrap-around services” reported by most programs, indicates that the SVORI juvenile programs appear to be incorporating “best practices” recommended by the juvenile programmatic field.

Programs overwhelmingly (92%) reported making community service required of juvenile SVORI participants. This service, in concert with the use of community accountability panels, suggests that the juvenile SVORI programs are working to instill a sense of responsibility and reciprocity towards his or her community. This community emphasis is further strengthened by the use of victim awareness and education programs.

**Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators**

**Pamela K. Lattimore, Ph.D.**  
 RTI International  
 Center for Crime, Violence, and Justice Research  
 3040 Cornwallis Road  
 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709  
 Phone: 803-754-5965  
 Fax: 919-485-7700

**Christy A. Visher, Ph.D.**  
 Urban Institute  
 Justice Policy Center  
 2100 M Street, NW  
 Washington, DC 20037  
 Phone: 202-261-5593  
 Fax: 202-659-8985



[www.svori-evaluation.org](http://www.svori-evaluation.org)





## The Multi-site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

### Implementation of SVORI Programs

By Christine Lindquist, RTI International

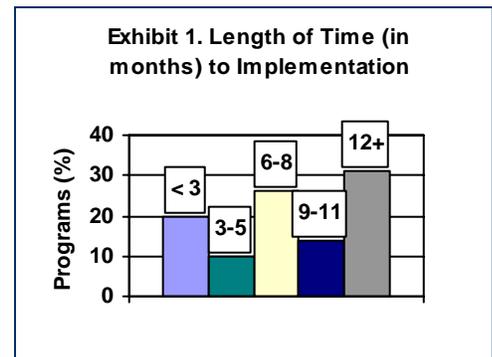
October 2005

In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 grantees to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding supports 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute.

In this *Reentry Research in Action* brief, we describe the implementation of SVORI programs, describing the status of the programs and implementation barriers encountered. Findings are based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors.

Grantees funded under the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) were charged with planning, implementing, and developing a sustainability plan for their programs over a 3-year award period. Most grantees received partial funding in the last quarter of 2002 and full spending approval in 2003, though the specific funding schedule varied across sites and some did not receive full approval until early 2004. This report summarizes the SVORI implementation process as of June 2005, based on a survey of the program directors for all 89 SVORI programs.<sup>1</sup>

As of June 2005, three-quarters (74%) of the program directors classified their programs as fully operational. Most program directors indicated that their programs became fully operational in 2003 (46%) or 2004 (43%). Interestingly, 62% of the fully operational programs enrolled their first participants in 2003, suggesting that several programs enrolled participants before being fully operational. Exhibit 1 shows the reported length of time that programs took to get “up and running” once all Federal funds were released, with about one-third taking 12 or more months for implementation. Directors of programs that were not yet fully operational reported that remaining program areas to be implemented included securing the involvement of community, faith-based, and other partnering agencies; hiring staff; identifying eligible participants; and lining up specific services.



Most SVORI programs are quite small, with 38% having enrolled 50 people or less.<sup>2</sup> The enrollment numbers are likely to increase during the remainder of the grant period, however, as more programs become fully implemented and as operational programs continue expanding their programs.

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Programs Encountering Resistance from Types of Key Stakeholders	Programs (%)
Members of the community to which SVORI offenders return	26%
Supervisors at the facilities	20%
Line staff at the facilities	21%
Line officers at the post-release supervision agency	18%
Supervisors at the post-release supervision agency	17%
Top administrators at the facilities	14%
Top administrators at the post-release supervision agency	14%
Some of the SVORI partner agencies in the community	9%

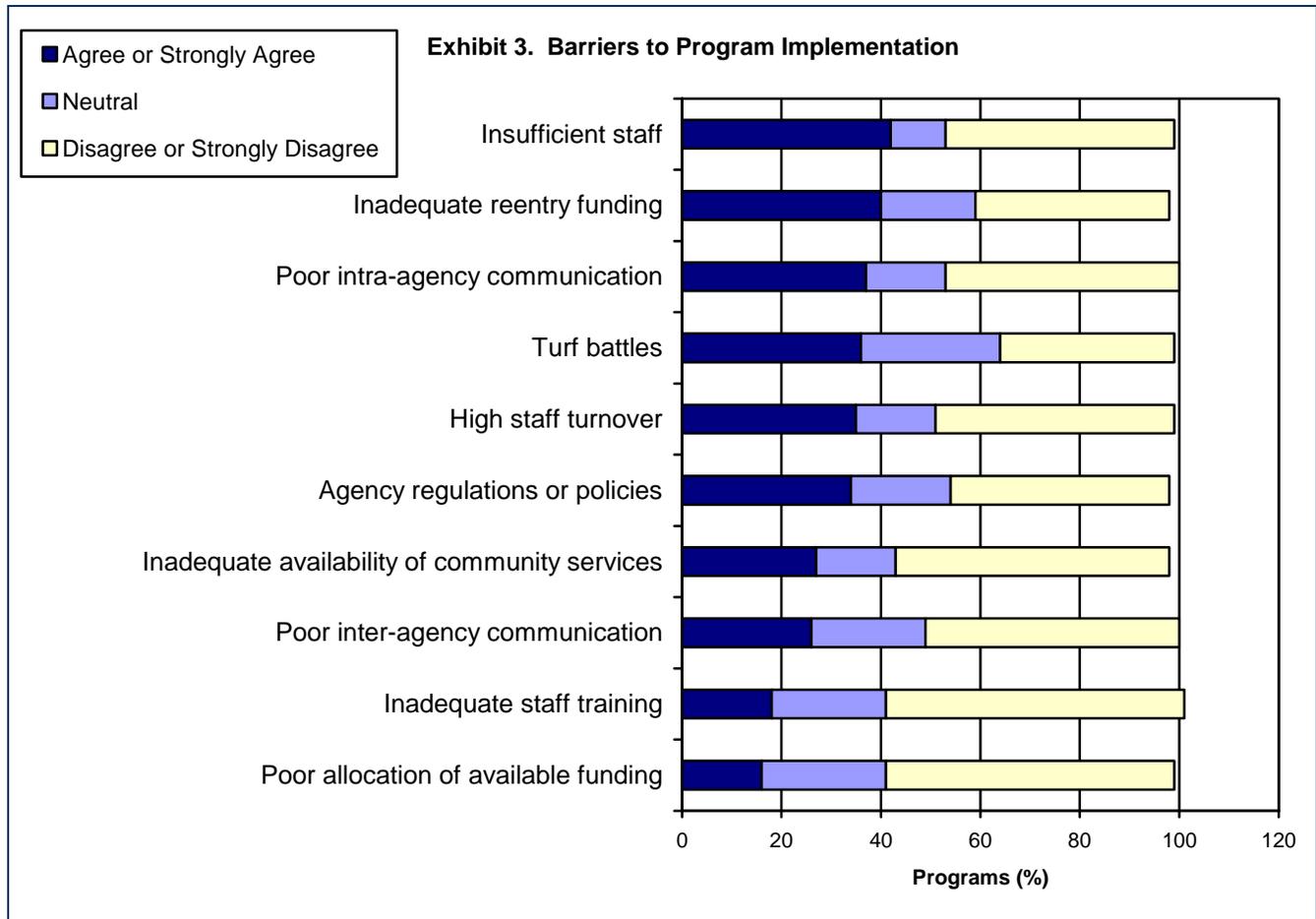
Note: The percentages reflect the proportion of program directors who agreed or strongly agreed they had encountered resistance from key stakeholders.

We asked program directors about a variety of barriers and issues surrounding SVORI program implementation. Exhibit 2 shows that, for the most part, program directors did not report encountering much resistance from key stakeholders. Program directors were more likely to report encountering resistance from community members (26% agreed or strongly agreed) than from facility staff (including line staff, supervisors, and administrators) or staff from the post-release supervision agency. Very few program directors (9%) reported resistance from SVORI partner agencies in the community.

<sup>1</sup> The 69 SVORI grantees are operating a total of 89 distinct programs. The multi-site evaluation describes characteristics at the program level rather than the grantee level.

<sup>2</sup> Enrollment and enrollment barriers are discussed in more detail in a companion RRIA on enrollment (forthcoming).

Exhibit 3 presents other reported implementation issues. The most common barriers, reported by more than one-third of the SVORI program directors, included having insufficient staff available, inadequate funding for reentry, poor communication within agencies, turf battles, high staff turnover, and agency regulations that have made it difficult to implement SVORI. It does not appear that funding allocation, staff training, interagency communication, and service availability have been particularly problematic for SVORI programs.



This report has shown that the majority of SVORI programs are fully operational yet small in scope. The programs do not appear to have encountered much resistance from agencies involved in the initiative, though community support has been somewhat problematic, along with the availability of staff and funding for reentry. Sustaining the programs implemented through SVORI after the funding period ends will be challenging to the grantees. Plans for program continuation and sustainability strategies undertaken by SVORI grantees are addressed in detail in a forthcoming RRIA on sustainability.

**Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators**

**Pamela K. Lattimore, Ph.D.**

RTI International  
 Center for Crime, Violence, and Justice Research  
 3040 Cornwallis Road  
 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709  
 Phone: 803-754-5965  
 Fax: 919-485-7700

**Christy A. Visher, Ph.D.**

Urban Institute  
 Justice Policy Center  
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 Washington, DC 20037  
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