

Evaluation of Florida's Faith- and Character- Based Institutions

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The experiences of adult correctional inmates during their incarceration cannot be disentangled from the ways in which they face reintegration challenges upon release and their ability to successfully navigate those challenges. Indeed, criminal justice practitioners and policymakers are in close agreement that the better prepared people are for their release from prison, the less likely they will be to return to prison. But what does it mean to prepare prisoners adequately, and how should such preparation be delivered? In addition to traditional solutions such as education and vocational training, corrections officials are increasingly implementing faith-based models, as well as secular programs that emphasize moral development and character building. Florida is one of many states to follow this trend, but set itself apart from other corrections agencies when, on Christmas Eve 2003, it opened the first state-operated correctional institution dedicated exclusively to a faith- and character-based approach to rehabilitation.

The findings and recommendations outlined below—and explored in detail throughout this report—highlight the results of a process and impact evaluation conducted by the Urban Institute of two of Florida’s Faith- and Character-Based Correctional Institutions (FCBIs): Lawtey, a male facility located in Raiford, Florida,¹ and Hillsborough, a female facility in Riverview, Florida.² The evaluation draws on data collected through interviews with facility administrators, correctional officers, program staff, and volunteers; focus groups with inmates housed in the FCBIs; and analyses of FDOC administrative data on FCBI and general population inmates.

¹ Raiford is located approximately 40 miles southwest of Jacksonville.

² Riverview is located approximately 23 miles southeast of Tampa.

FCBI Mission and Purpose

Finding: The mission of the FCBI is to help inmates build moral character, develop spiritual resources, and acquire life skills that will lead to pro-social behavior both behind bars and after release. Thus, the overarching goal of the FCBI model is to promote a safer prison environment, to support inmate rehabilitation, and to reduce the rate of recidivism. The FCBI corrections officials, program volunteers, and inmates interviewed for this evaluation share a similar viewpoint on the FCBI mission. This consistency exists despite the fact that formal documentation of the FCBI mission is limited and what does exist is not widely distributed.

Recommendation: FDOC should consider developing more extensive written documentation on the nature and purpose of the FCBIs, possibly including a formal, well-publicized mission statement. Such documentation would support any expansion of the FCBI model that FDOC is contemplating, and would also be of use to correctional administrators and criminal justice policymakers nationwide.

FCBI Administration

Finding: The FCBI model is carefully administered to avoid many of the conflicts with the principle of church-state separation that have led to challenges of other faith-based prison programs. With the exception of the chaplaincy team (a set of resources available in every prison), the faith-based programming at the FCBIs is entirely funded and provided by volunteer organizations. The primary roles of the FCBI prison staff and administration are, as at any prison, security and day-to-day inmate management. While prison administrators and line staff are in agreement about the level of and reasons for the segregation of program delivery from prison management, some opinions differ with regard to the extent that it is appropriate for prison staff to step beyond their traditional roles, offering support and serving as role models and even mentors to inmates.

Recommendation: FDOC should more clearly delineate the desired role for prison staff and administrators within the FCBI model.

Training of Staff and Community Volunteers

Finding: Volunteer program instructors are well briefed on the types of issues and challenges they may encounter in working with incarcerated populations, including ways to avoid or deflect manipulation and to safeguard themselves. Other than on-the-job experience, however, correctional staff typically do not receive training specific to the FCBI model. Moreover, respondents report that correctional officers who adhere to a strictly traditional approach that focuses solely on security are neither well prepared nor well suited to work in an FCBI environment, given its heavy emphasis on mutual respect between correctional staff and inmates.

Recommendation: FDOC should create and administer formal training for FCBI correctional staff at all levels. This training should be documented in writing to help reinforce the nature and purpose of the FCBI model as well as to outline and reinforce the expectations of correctional officers' behavior within that model. Moreover, FDOC may wish to consider whether some or all of the unique correctional principles demonstrated by FCBI staff, including fostering mutual respect and serving as role models for inmates, might benefit other general population FDOC correctional facilities.

Selection of Programs and Classes for FCBI

Finding: The wardens and chaplains at the FCBI have a significant degree of discretion in determining what types of programs are delivered in their institutions and by whom. While many organizations actively seek out the FCBI to offer their programs there, the chaplains also play a major role by recruiting volunteers in the community and suggesting or searching out specific programs based on their understanding of inmate needs. Program offerings at Lawtey and

Hillsborough bear many similarities, yet differences exist, some of which may be a function of the gender of the respective inmate populations, the difference in facility size, and the availability and interests of faith-affiliated volunteers in the local communities.

Recommendation: The FDOC should clearly articulate a core list of the types of programs that are consistent with the FCBI mission, rather than having program offerings be shaped primarily by the availability and interest level of local volunteers. To the extent possible, these program components should be developed in accordance with formal inmate assessments and tailored to the institution based on inmate gender, facility size, and existing community resources.

FCBI Program Offerings

Finding: Both Lawtey and Hillsborough offer a wide array of programs that fall under the general category of character building, as well as a variety of opportunities for inmates to exercise their religious faiths, from religious services to small group study. The program offerings at Lawtey are much more extensive than those at Hillsborough, with Lawtey providing approximately one-third more programs and classes than its female counterpart. At both institutions, however, respondents note a limited number of life skills classes and a lack of work release, educational, and vocational programs that could complement the character building classes by providing the “hard skills” needed for successful reentry.

Recommendation: FDOC should consider augmenting the core faith- and character-based programs with more classes pertaining specifically to pre-release planning, as well as programs that provide vocational skills, educational assets, and employment skills, including work release. It is important to note, however, that doing so would increase the costs of operating the FCBI.

Overall Value of FCBI Model

Finding: Staff, inmates, and volunteers overwhelmingly find value in the FCBI model and believe that it is achieving its goals of changing inmate behaviors, preparing inmates for successful reentry, and ultimately reducing recidivism. Respondents feel that, in particular, the FCBI experience helps promote family reunification and employment prospects upon release, while also improving the prison environment for inmates, volunteers, and staff. That these successes are achieved in large part through volunteer resources from the private and non-profit sectors is cited as both a cost savings to FDOC and an asset to the model, as some respondents indicate that volunteers can provide more effective, dynamic services than those the state is able to offer. Despite these favorable reviews of the model, respondents reported concerns and areas in need of improvement, specifically with regard to maintaining security and safety within the unique FCBI environment. Many respondents believe that given such high levels of inmate-civilian interaction, volunteers may be more vulnerable to manipulation. In addition, while there is no evidence of security problems, several respondents—particularly correctional staff—are concerned that the more relaxed FCBI environment may undermine correctional officers' efforts to maintain a safe and secure environment.

While respondents question the authenticity of some inmates' motivations for requesting to be housed in an FCBI, they generally believe that even those inmates who sign up for the FCBI strictly to be closer to family or to be in a more peaceful prison environment nevertheless benefit from their time there. This point relates to another common concern regarding the FCBI model: that there is a selection bias in terms of which inmates enter the FCBIs, with those already pre-disposed to successful outcomes more likely to be housed there. The impact analysis component of this evaluation, however, only found evidence of selection bias for one subset of

the male FCBI participants, suggesting that the FCBI model is generalizable to a broader population of inmates.

Recommendation: FDOC should determine whether some of the more promising aspects of the FCBI model can be replicated in its general population facilities, and consider enhancing the FCBI’s family reunification capabilities by offering more visitation opportunities. FDOC may also wish to examine whether the FCBI model poses unique security vulnerabilities and if so, contemplate additional ways in which to safeguard volunteers from inmate manipulation and to ensure security within the more relaxed FCBI environment.

Impact on Recidivism

Finding: At six months after release, male FCBI inmates have lower reincarceration rates than a matched comparison group of inmates housed in general population FDOC facilities. None of the 189 male FCBI inmates included in the outcome analysis were reincarcerated within six months of their release, while four (2.1 percent) of the 189 male inmates in the matched comparison group were reincarcerated during that time. While the difference was statistically significant, the validity of statistical tests with such small sample sizes is questionable. In addition, the differences between the two male groups are not statistically significant at twelve months post-release, nor are the differences between female FCBI participants and their matched comparisons at either six or twelve months after release. The lack of a statistically significant FCBI impact on reincarceration for all but the males at six months post release is potentially a result of the small number of FCBI participants who have exited the system to date. It is also important to note that we identified only minimal evidence of “creaming,” whereby inmates who self select into the FCBI possess certain unmeasured characteristics that make them more likely to succeed both within the FCBI and on the outside.

Recommendation: FDOC should be cautiously optimistic about the impact of FCBIIs on reoffending behaviors, particularly given the potential cost savings associated with the volunteer-led program offerings. Indeed, it is possible that inmates across FDOC facilities could benefit from volunteer-run self-betterment programs that are virtually budget neutral. However, corrections officials may also wish to replicate the impact analysis reported in this document in a year's time, when the sample sizes are more likely to yield results in which they can have increased confidence.

Introduction

The role of adult correctional facilities in promoting public safety continues to be a prominent issue for states and localities throughout the country. In the past several decades, the traditional mission of institutional corrections has focused on housing inmates safely and securely, with an emphasis on incapacitation rather than rehabilitation. This incapacitation approach to corrections focuses on removing criminals from society and preventing them from committing crime during the period of their incarceration. Recently, however, corrections officials have begun to embrace a more expansive philosophy that aims to promote institutional security while also preparing inmates to lead productive and law abiding lives after release. These rehabilitative efforts incorporate both formal programs and the development of an overall correctional environment that contributes to the self betterment of the people housed there. Some models rely upon faith, spirituality and character development as key components of inmate rehabilitation, echoing the growing national popularity of faith-based models for addressing a range of social issues (McDaniel et al. 2005, Johnson et al. 2002). Typically, faith-based correctional programs are directed at a subset of inmates, sometimes in a single housing unit, rather than being implemented facility wide (NICIC 2005, Johnson and Larson 2003).

On December 24, 2003, however, Florida became the first state in the country to dedicate an entire publicly-run correctional facility to a faith-based model when it converted Lawtey, a male facility located near Jacksonville, into a Faith- and Character-Based Institution (FCBI). In April of the following year, the Hillsborough Faith- and Character-Based Institution opened near Tampa, offering female inmates access to the FCBI program.³ The purpose of the FCBIs, as articulated by the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC), is to offer a wide range of faith- and character-based programming to inmates interested in “personal growth and character development.” The ultimate goals are to rehabilitate and reintegrate inmates into the community, reduce recidivism, increase institutional security, and enhance restorative justice programming (FDOC 2004, 2007).

The fact that both Lawtey and Hillsborough have been in operation for over three years provides an opportunity to examine the FCBI model and the results of these unique environments on both the in-prison and post-release behaviors of those who have been housed there. To date, only a handful of studies have explored the effectiveness of faith-based programs serving adult prisoners (O'Connor 2005, Johnson et al. 2002). These studies have produced tentatively positive or inconclusive findings, and most are characterized by a number of methodological limitations (Mears et al. 2006, O'Connor 2005). However, a significant body of literature does exist linking religiosity and participation in religious activities to positive outcomes for health and well-being, such as lower levels of substance abuse and depression and increased self-esteem and optimism (Johnson et al. 2002). Such positive outcomes might reasonably be expected to result in better in-prison behavior and greater success once released from prison, providing a theoretical foundation for the FCBI model.

This research provides the first formal study of Florida's FCBI, and is guided by three research questions: (1) What are the FCBI objectives? (2) How are these objectives achieved? and (3) What are the FCBI outcomes? The report addresses these questions by describing the mission and philosophy behind the FCBI, how they are staffed and operated, the types of inmates who are served, and what programs are offered. The report then explores successes and challenges of the model thus far, followed by a quantitative analysis of how FCBI inmates compare to their counterparts in general population facilities with regard to recidivism outcomes. The report closes with a discussion of implications for program design and practice for Florida's FCBI and other faith-based corrections models.

³ In March of 2006, Florida opened a third FCBI at Wakulla Correctional Institution, a men's prison housing 1,723 inmates (FDOC 2007a). Given the relatively recent transition of Wakulla to an FCBI, however, it is not a part of this evaluation.

Research Design and Evaluation Methods

This study design represents both a qualitative and quantitative exploration of the FCBI model and its associated outcomes at two Florida correctional facilities: Lawtey Correctional Institution (Lawtey) and Hillsborough Correctional Institution (Hillsborough). Lawtey is an all-male facility with a staff of 233 and an inmate population of 810 community, minimum, and medium custody grade⁴ inmates belonging to 31 different faiths (FDOC 2007a, 2007b). Located approximately 40 miles southwest of Jacksonville in Raiford, Florida, Lawtey was the first Florida prison to be converted to an FCBI, on December 24, 2003 (FDOC 2007a, 2007b). Hillsborough, an all-female facility located in Riverview, Florida, 23 miles southeast of Tampa, opened as an FCBI on April 14, 2004 (FDOC 2007a, 2007c). Hillsborough houses 287 female inmates belonging to 21 faiths, with community, minimum, medium, and close custody grades, and has a staff of 144 (FDOC 2007a, 2007c).⁵

To learn more about the two FCBIs, project staff engaged in a three-pronged data collection effort involving: (1) one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with facility administrators, correctional officers, program staff, and volunteers; (2) focus groups with inmates housed in the FCBIs; and (3) analysis of FDOC administrative data on FCBI and general population inmates. (See Appendix A for more details on staff interview and focus group protocols). The project team supplemented this primary data with other materials and data obtained from the FDOC, as well as information from telephone and email communications with FDOC officials. The data collection activities described above form the basis of this evaluation report, which will begin with a discussion of the philosophy and mission that underlie the FCBI model.

⁴ The FDOC custody grades, from least to most serious, are as follows: community, minimum, medium, close, and maximum. “Community” is the lowest inmate security classification, and is comparable to a “pre-release” status used in some states.

⁵ The staff figures for Lawtey and Hillsborough are from January 2007. The inmate population figures and faith breakdowns are from May 31, 2007.

The FCBI Mission

The purpose of the FCBI program, as articulated by the FDOC, is to offer a wide range of religious and character-focused activities to Florida inmates interested in “personal growth and character development” (FDOC 2004). The ultimate goals of the program are inmate rehabilitation, the successful reintegration of inmates into the community, and the reduction of recidivism, as well as the improvement of institutional security and the provision of a wider range of religious accommodations for inmates (FDOC 2004, 2007).⁶ According to FDOC officials, program outcomes are expected to occur both within the prison walls, in the form of improved inmate behavior and a more positive correctional environment, and after release, through greater reentry success and an increase in overall public safety and community well being.

The goals and objectives outlined above do not differ significantly from the overall FDOC mission but do place a greater emphasis on inmate rehabilitation. Indeed, in statements made at Lawtey FCBI’s opening in 2003, Governor Jeb Bush highlighted the centrality of inmate rehabilitation to the FCBI mission, calling the program, “a pathway out of the criminal justice system” (Florida Governor’s Office 2003). This pathway is created primarily through an extensive range of faith- and character-based programming, the hallmark of the FCBI model and the most visible element distinguishing FCBIs from standard Florida correctional facilities. According to the FDOC, an FCBI offers, “a public forum for community volunteers to offer programs in all areas of personal growth and character development” (FDOC 2004). These programs range from explicitly religious activities such as worship services and scriptural study, to personal relationship building through mentoring and small group activities, to character development programs covering topics such as parenting and anger management. The programs are entirely funded and implemented by community volunteers.

The other mechanism by which the FCBI program aims to achieve its objectives is the development of a positive environment more conducive to inmate rehabilitation than traditional correctional environments

(FDOC 2007). The FDOC does not formally articulate how such an environment is to be cultivated, but those involved in the FCBI cite several possible channels, including a critical mass of inmates focused on personal growth and pro-social behavior, greater investment from community volunteers, and a more supportive correctional philosophy on the part of both line staff and management.

The opinions of FCBI management, staff, volunteers and inmates regarding the FCBI mission and model will be reviewed later in this report. We now turn to a detailed exploration of how the FCBI model is implemented to achieve the objectives outlined above, beginning with a discussion of the FCBI staff and volunteers.

⁶ The FDOC also lists, “enhancing restorative justice programming,” as one of the goals of the FCBI program (FDOC 2004). However, this objective was not mentioned by the officials and staff persons interviewed in the course of this evaluation.

The FCBI Model: Staff and Volunteers

Three major groups interact in the delivery of the FCBI model to inmates: community volunteers, the chaplaincy team, and FDOC correctional and program staff. We will discuss each of these groups in turn, exploring their respective roles in the FCBI program as well as the training they receive.

Community Volunteers

The FCBI model leverages private resources, particularly human capital, to make religious and character development opportunities available to inmates on a scale unmatched at other Florida correctional facilities, at little additional cost to the state. All religious and most character-based programs in the FCBIs are designed, funded, and implemented by community volunteers through the facilitation and support of the chaplain's office. Volunteers serve as instructors, mentors, worship leaders, group facilitators, and seminar presenters. Community members volunteer as individuals or, more commonly, as members of a community institution such as a church, other religious institution, or civic group.

Altogether, volunteers from 44 groups serve Lawtey's 810 inmates, while 48 volunteer groups serve the 287 inmates at Hillsborough (FDOC 2007a). According to Lawtey administrators, approximately 400 volunteers enter the facility each month. Volunteers come from the immediate community as well as the surrounding region, with a large number coming from Jacksonville (in the case of Lawtey) and Tampa (Hillsborough). The vast majority of volunteers in both institutions are Christian, even those teaching non-religious programs such as financial management, and most volunteer through their churches. At Lawtey a small but significant number of volunteers are affiliated with non-Christian religious organizations.⁷

Volunteers at all FDOC facilities, including the FCBIs, receive four hours of standardized training on the basics of working in a prison setting. This training includes topics such as:

- The rules and regulations of the prison facility;
- The appropriate role for volunteers;

⁷ Approximately 10% of the volunteer organizations active at Lawtey as of February 2007 (according to a list provided by the Lawtey Chaplain) were non-Christian.

- Ways to communicate with inmates;
- How to cope with negative inmate behavior; and
- Strategies to avoid inappropriate volunteer-inmate relationships and inmate manipulation.

Sponsoring agencies often supplement the FDOC training with their own program-specific training or further general training based on lessons they have learned from working in the institution. People who volunteer at an FCBI facility are trained on the same topics as other FDOC volunteers, and occasionally receive additional information on the FCBI program and religious tolerance. They also undergo on the job training under the supervision of the chaplain, who sits in on their initial classes and provides feedback and instruction. To protect volunteers from inmate manipulation, they are generally prohibited from maintaining individual relationships with inmates after their release, although mentors are excluded from this prohibition, as are formal post-release relationships that are facilitated through a local faith institution or community-based organization. All volunteers must pass a criminal background check before being approved to work inside the prison.

As we discuss in the next section, the FCBI chaplain is the main source of support for volunteers and their sponsoring organizations and serves as the liaison between volunteers and the FCBI management and correctional staff. At Lawtey, additional support is provided by a Volunteer Advisory Committee that meets every other month to facilitate communication among prison management and the volunteers. The committee is composed of the warden, assistant warden, chief of security, chaplain, and representatives from approximately ten of the most active volunteer groups. These meetings provide an opportunity for prison administrators to present information about changes to facility policies and procedures, for volunteers to communicate with the administration about any issues or problems they may have encountered, and for volunteer leaders to converse with one another.

Chaplaincy Team

The chaplain and his or her team play a critical role in the FCBI model, particularly in supporting the facilities' faith- and character-based programming. As in other FDOC facilities, the chaplaincy team consists of paid staff who ensure that inmates' religious needs are met by conducting group religious

services, providing individual religious guidance and counseling, helping inmates obtain appropriate religious accommodations, and facilitating the provision of religious services by outside volunteers (FDOC 2007d). In addition to these standard chaplaincy responsibilities, chaplains at the FCBI also engage in extensive efforts to support volunteers and coordinate volunteer programs, recruiting and training volunteers from the community, working with prison administrators to facilitate their access to the inmates, and supporting volunteers' work within the prison. FCBI chaplains support the development of program offerings, design the program schedule, work to fill program gaps, and undertake other tasks necessary to coordinate the overall program delivery process.

The current chaplains at both Hillsborough and Lawtey began as volunteers and became more involved with their respective facilities over time, eventually assuming the chaplaincy positions when they became vacant. As of this writing, no specific training exists for FCBI chaplains, although both of the current chaplains were mentored by their predecessors. The chaplains indicate that they communicate frequently with each other and with FDOC officials for support and advice.

Correctional and Program Staff

As with the chaplaincy team, the roles and responsibilities of FCBI correctional and program staff are similar to, yet more extensive than, the roles of their counterparts in standard FDOC facilities. The primary tasks of the FCBI correctional and program staff are the same as in other Florida correctional facilities: to secure the prison; to manage the inmates and provide for their food, medical care, and other basic needs; and to support the provision of secular programming such as vocational training, substance abuse treatment, and education. However, these traditional staff functions take on a new dimension in the FCBI, which play host to more volunteers, programs, and inmate movement than other correctional facilities. Approximately 400 volunteers visit the Lawtey facility each month—around one volunteer for every two inmates—and the correctional staff and administrators play a significant role in facilitating the process by conducting background checks, screening volunteers on entry, and monitoring their movements and safety once inside the prison. The task of managing inmate movement is also expanded in

an FCBI, as many more programs are offered and a larger portion of inmates participate in programs than at most other institutions.

Clearly the traditional correctional responsibilities of security and inmate management present unique challenges in the FCBI environment. Furthermore, some FCBI staff perceive their role as involving a set of additional responsibilities (or a distinctive approach to traditional responsibilities) that correspond with the rehabilitative nature of the FCBI program. Respondents offered examples of ways some FCBI staff embody this rehabilitative correctional philosophy, such as: resolving problems with inmates informally through discussion and mediation rather than immediately issuing a disciplinary report; relating to inmates in a friendly and respectful way; and serving as examples of positive behavior for inmates. Disagreement exists among respondents regarding the extent to which these new approaches are being practiced and whether they should be incorporated into the FCBI model, an issue which will be explored in greater detail later in this report.

Despite the potential for expanded staff responsibilities, correctional staff are not identified to work in an FCBI based upon any specific selection criteria. Moreover, FCBI correctional, program, and management staff currently receive no specialized training. FCBI correctional officers, for example, complete the same training as officers in other FDOC facilities: a 532 hour curriculum developed and delivered by the FDOC's Bureau of Staff Development that covers topics including security and defense tactics, basic medical and first aid information, responding to inmate problems and complaints, ethics, and personnel issues. No training currently exists to instruct correctional officers, program staff, or management on working in an FCBI setting, and staff are thus expected to gain FCBI-specific knowledge on the job, from management, colleagues, and first-hand experience. According to respondents, employees new to an FCBI shadow senior and more experienced staff for an unspecified period of time to help adapt their core skills to the FCBI environment.

We now turn from our discussion of those involved in the delivery of the FCBI program to an examination of the intended beneficiaries of the program—the FCBI inmates.

The FCBI Model: Inmates

Since being converted to an FCBI, Lawtey has served 3,165 inmates and Hillsborough has served 1,169 inmates (FDOC 2007a).⁸ Currently, inmates in Lawtey represent thirty-one different religious faiths, while Hillsborough inmates identify as belonging to twenty-one different faiths. Nearly seven out of ten inmates (68 percent) in the three FCBIs (Lawtey, Hillsborough, and Wakulla) identify as Christian non-Roman-Catholic, one in ten (9 percent) identify as Roman Catholic, and an additional one in ten identify as belonging to Muslim (4 percent), Jewish (1 percent), or other religious faiths (5 percent) such as Wiccan and Rastafarian. Thirteen percent of FCBI inmates identify as having no religious orientation or have an unspecified religious affiliation (FDOC 2007a).

Indeed, according to FDOC policy, “an inmate’s religious faith or lack thereof [is] not... considered” in determining program eligibility (FDOC 2004). Other eligibility requirements, however, do exist: only those inmates who have not received a disciplinary report resulting in confinement in the previous ninety days, are in general population housing status, are not on work-release, and fit the inmate profile of the given FCBI facility are eligible to be housed there (FDOC 2004). At Lawtey and Hillsborough, the inmate profile criterion generally excludes inmates who are sex offenders, have more than five years remaining on their sentence, or, in the case of Lawtey, are classified as close (high) security.⁹

FCBI participation for eligible inmates is entirely voluntary. Inmates are informed about the program at intake and at the annual meeting with their classification officer. If an inmate expresses interest in residing in an FCBI, his or her name is added to the FCBI waiting list, which currently holds 6,353 inmates (FDOC 2007a). When a spot in an FCBI becomes available, the inmate at the top of the list is reviewed for eligibility, and, if eligible, he or she is transferred.¹⁰ The average FCBI inmate spent

⁸ A detailed analysis of the demographics and criminal histories of a subset of these inmates is included in the “FCBI Outcomes” section of this report.

⁹ The conversion of Wakulla into an FCBI facility has opened the program to male offenders with more serious offenses and longer sentences.

¹⁰ Conversations with FDOC officials indicate that other factors are sometimes taken into consideration, such as the inmate’s overall disciplinary history and whether the inmate fills a specific institutional need (carpentry skills, for example).

approximately 240 (Hillsborough) to 249 days (Lawtey) on the waitlist before entering an FCBI.¹¹ In order to remain in the FCBI facility, an inmate must maintain a record of good behavior (no disciplinary reports resulting in confinement and a moderate number¹² of overall disciplinary reports) and must participate in one program session per week. According to the FDOC, inmates can choose to be transferred out of the FCBI at any time by submitting a request to their classification officer.

The inmates are of course the primary beneficiaries of the FCBI program, but it is important to note that they also play a significant role in the delivery of the program. They participate in and occasionally lead the faith- and character-based activities and act as facilitators, in many cases, of those components of the FCBI program that may be occurring outside the classroom or worship hall. The following section explores in more detail the programs and activities offered in the FCBI facilities.

¹¹ This figure was provided by the FDOC and includes inmates who entered Lawtey or Hillsborough from the waitlist during the period from each program's inception through December 31, 2006.

¹² The threshold of disciplinary reports that would lead to FCBI expulsion is not documented in official FCBI policies and was not specified by staff during interviews. Interviews with FDOC officials confirm that this decision is made on a case-by-case basis and takes into account both the number and types of disciplinary reports.

The FCBI Model: Programs

The centerpiece of the FCBI model is its collection of faith- and character-based programs, whose range, number, and depth extend far beyond those offered at other Florida correctional facilities. These programs are delivered by community volunteers under the coordination and guidance of the chaplaincy team at each institution. They include religious services, activities, and classes, as well as character development programs, which may or may not incorporate religion to cover topics such as parenting and anger management. The FCBI also offer secular life skills programming similar to that provided at other Florida correctional institutions, including vocational training, educational opportunities, and reentry and transition programs.

To better understand what is unique about program delivery at FCBI facilities, this section begins by describing the programs available in a typical Florida prison and then turns to a discussion of programming in the FCBIs. This is followed by an exploration of data on inmate program participation at Lawtey and Hillsborough.

FDOC Programming

A typical Florida correctional facility offers a range of inmate programs that can be classified into three broad categories: life skills, character development and wellness programs, and religious programming.¹³ Although the dividing line between these categories may not be clear in all cases, some distinctions can be drawn between the different types of programming. Life skills programs aim to provide inmates with tangible knowledge and skills that will improve their prospects for success upon release from prison, especially with regard to employment and job retention (FDOC 2007e). These programs focus on education (e.g., adult basic education, literacy, and GED preparation); vocational training and technical

¹³ These categories were created by the researchers to better convey the range of programs available in FDOC facilities. They do not reflect official FDOC designations, although many people interviewed as part of the study categorized the FCBI programs using a similar typology.

career education; life skills such as resume writing and budgeting; and preparation for the reentry process (FDOC 2007e). While the availability of specific programs varies from facility to facility, some programs, such as adult basic education and the mandatory FDOC reentry transition program, are offered in all Florida prisons. The life skills programs described above are funded by the state and are typically delivered by correctional staff or paid private contractors.

Wellness and character-building programs focus on internal change and personal and relational skills. These programs include substance abuse treatment, mental health programs, parenting and relationship classes, anger management, and arts programming. Wellness and character-building programs may be state or privately-funded and are taught either by paid program staff, private contractors, or volunteers from the community. They are typically secular but may incorporate a religious viewpoint if funded and delivered by volunteers.

Lastly, every Florida correctional institution offers religious programming and services. Each facility has a paid chaplain (and sometimes support staff) who ensures that inmates' religious needs are met. Some religious services and programs are provided by the chaplaincy team, but many are provided by outside volunteers from local faith institutions. Religious programs may include weekly and holiday services, scriptural and small-group study, one-on-one religious counseling, and special services or events, such as retreats or revivals (FDOC 2007d).

The programs described above represent the array of offerings the FDOC aims to make available, on some level, in all Florida correctional institutions. While not all institutions offer the same number and types of programs, effort is made to include a wide sampling of opportunities in each facility. With a few exceptions,¹⁴ participation in these programs is generally voluntary and programs do not necessarily have the capacity to serve all inmates interested in participating.

¹⁴ All inmates are required to complete the FDOC's 100-hour transition class in the months prior to their release. Many inmates with a history of substance abuse are required to participate in Modality, the FDOC's substance abuse treatment program.

FCBI Programming

Like all Florida prisons, the FCBIs offer a selection of educational, vocational, and other life skills programs; what distinguishes the FCBIs is the availability of a much greater and more diverse array of religious and character development programs, entirely funded and delivered by community volunteers. The programs run the spectrum from entirely secular to explicitly religious, with many of the character development programs falling somewhere in between. Respondents indicate that among programs covering ostensibly secular topics—such as financial management or overcoming addiction—some present the material from a primarily secular viewpoint, addressing religion only when it is raised by inmates, while others infuse the material with an explicitly religious tone throughout. It is unknown how clear these distinctions are made to inmates, however, or what portion of programs fall at different points on the spectrum from religious to secular.

The formal qualifications of those leading the programs also vary widely: programs include an anger management class delivered by a licensed psychologist, worship services led by a local pastor and a lay church member, and a religious education class taught by an inmate. Some programs follow a formal curriculum or are based on models used in other facilities or in the community. Other programs are less formally defined and may have been developed specifically for Lawtey or Hillsborough. Many volunteers say they base their programs on their personal experiences and religious beliefs.

The life skills, character development, and religious programs available at Lawtey and Hillsborough are listed in Tables 1 and 2. Of particular note is the mentoring program, through which community members are matched with inmates in an ongoing faith-based mentoring relationship. As of summer 2006, Hillsborough had 85 mentor–mentee pairings. Lawtey had 150 mentors, but because demand for mentors exceeds their availability, some Lawtey mentors work with inmates in small groups rather than one-on-one. Inmates request to participate in the program and the chaplains pair inmates with mentors who they believe provide a good match. Mentors meet with their mentees weekly, and the relationship

Table 1. Programs at Lawtey FCBI ¹⁵

Life Skills	Character Building and Wellness	Religious Programming
<p>Education: Adult Basic Education Program General Education Degree (GED) Program Literacy Program Correspondence Courses</p> <p>Vocational: Carpentry Class Computer Class Drafting Class Prison Industries Garment Program</p> <p>Reentry: FDOC Transition Class (mandatory)</p> <p>Faith-based classes: Financial Peace GED Tutoring Preparing for Employment WorkNet Toastmasters (public speaking)</p> <p>Libraries: Institutional Library Law Library</p>	<p>Substance abuse treatment: Alcoholics Anonymous Modality Program¹⁶ Narcotics Anonymous Overcoming Addictions (faith-based)</p> <p>Wellness programs: Smoking Cessation Wellness Education</p> <p>Arts: Drama Choir</p> <p>Faith-based classes: Anger Management Bridge Builders (overcoming addictions of all types) Laughter From Purity (exiting same-sex relationships) Manhood Series Parenting Class Practical Christian Living Taking Responsibility</p> <p>Other: Seeing-Eye Dog Training Class¹⁷</p>	<p>Christian religious services: Brother Ron Joquin Praise/Worship Church of Jacksonville Praise/Worship Faith Riders Motorcycle Ministry First Baptist Church Crusades Hispanic Christian Services NE Florida Prison Ministries Praise/Worship Rev. Andrew Sims Ministry Rev. Fred Young Praise/Worship Roman Catholic Mass Titus Harvest Dome Praise/Worship</p> <p>Other religious services: Jewish Sabbath Prayer Service Inter-faith Meditation Group Islamic Jumah Prayer Native American Sacred Pipe Service</p> <p>Small group religious study: Beaches Chapel Bible Study Brothers of St. Dismus (Catholic fellowship) Friendly Faith Sharing (Christian) Hebrew-Israelite Bible Study Hispanic Christian Bible study Islamic Taleem Studies Jehovah Witness Bible Study/Prayer Jewish Torah Studies Native American Spirituality Class Roman Catholic Catechism Studies Scientology Studies</p> <p>Libraries: Audio-Visual Library Chapel Library</p> <p>Other: Holy Day Observances (All Faiths) Faith-based Mentoring Program</p>

¹⁵ This table is based on a program list provided by the Lawtey Chaplain on February 1, 2007, as well as information from the FDOC website (FDOC 2007b).

¹⁶ Modality is the official FDOC substance abuse treatment program.

¹⁷ In the Seeing-Eye Dog Training Class, inmates raise dogs for 16 to 18 months and train them as guides for blind people.

Table 2. Programs at Hillsborough FCBI ¹⁸

Life Skills	Character Building and Wellness	Religious Programming
<p>Education: Adult Basic Education Program General Education Degree (GED) Program Literacy Program Florida Corrections Distance Learning Network</p> <p>Vocational: Carpentry Class Cabinetmaking Class Commercial Foods/Culinary Arts</p> <p>Reentry: FDOC Transition Class (mandatory)</p> <p>Faith-based classes: Finances Life Skills</p> <p>Libraries: Institutional Library Law Library</p> <p>Other: Junior Achievement Head Start for Success PROP</p>	<p>Substance abuse treatment: Alcoholics Anonymous Modality Program</p> <p>Wellness programs: ESUBA (program for victims of abuse) Wellness & Health Betterment Women’s Health</p> <p>Arts: Art Choir Creative Writing Voice Training</p> <p>Other: Anger Management Celebrate Recovery Etiquette Grief and Loss Healthy Relationships Parenting Root Issues Second Chances (self transformation) Self Esteem Spiritual Journaling Story Time Moms ¹⁹ Tackling Tough Skills</p>	<p>Christian religious services: Abe Brown Ministries The Center for Manifestation Evangelism Explosion FROG Power Ministry From the Heart Ministry Frontline Film Fest Ministry Full Gospel Business Men G-Force Hispanic Jail Ministry Kairos International The Kirlins Lighthouse Ministry Minister Robertson New Generation Ministries New Life Ministry Passion for Prison Paula White Ministry Praise in Motion Dancers Repairers of the Breach Road to Emmaus Roman Catholic Mass Set Free Ministry Tampa Faith Tabernacle Turning Hearts Ministry West Coast Ministry Wimauma Church of God</p> <p>Other religious services/study: Islamic Jumah Prayer Buddhist Instruction (as needed) Free at Last Bible Study Hispanic Bible Study Islamic Taleem Studies Jehovah Witness Bible Study/Prayer Purpose Driven Life River Hills Bible Study Roman Catholic Bible Study Unique Ladies/Samantha Brown Wiccan Instruction (as needed)</p> <p>Libraries: Audio-Visual Library Chapel Library</p> <p>Other: Faith-based Mentoring Program</p>

¹⁸ This table is based on a program list and calendar provided by the Hillsborough Chaplain on June 22, 2006, as well as information from the FDOC website (FDOC 2007c).

may last as long as the individual is incarcerated. Although many mentor–mentee relationships involve a faith element, the vast majority of mentors we spoke with say their focus is on personal relationship building and individualized support, not religion. Mentoring is envisioned as a major component of the FCBI program, as is evidenced by its explicit mention in the official FDOC policy outlining the FCBI model (FDOC 2004).

As can be imagined from the number of programs listed in the tables above, several programs are offered at Lawtey and Hillsborough each day. Because most inmate work assignments occur during the daytime, the majority of program activities are concentrated in the evenings, although some programs are offered in the early morning and at midday. Programs are typically scheduled for the same time each week. Some programs, particularly life skills and character-development classes, follow a curriculum that lasts for a set number of weeks. Other FCBI activities, such as religious services and mentoring, are ongoing. In addition, there are occasional activities such as holiday celebrations, weekend retreats, and special worship events involving large numbers of outside volunteers.

Program Development

Development of the faith- and character-based programs is a collaborative effort among individual volunteers, community institutions, and the chaplaincy team. Typically, the chaplain recruits volunteers from the community—primarily through local churches—and supports and advises them as they design programming. Alternately, program ideas may be initiated by volunteers who independently approach the chaplain, or the chaplain may seek out specific programs to respond to an unmet inmate need. The chaplain observes program sessions, talks with volunteers and inmates, and draws on his or her expertise to determine what additional programs should be offered, and then works to actualize these programs.

¹⁹ Story Time Moms links women to their children or grandchildren on the outside through reading. Inmates create cassette recordings of themselves reading children’s books or their own letters and these cassettes are then mailed to their children or grandchildren, who are provided with tape players by the program.

Chaplains at both Lawtey and Hillsborough report that they also consider inmate input and feedback when making programming decisions.

Once a program model is developed, the sponsoring organization submits a program synopsis and lesson plan that is subject to review by the chaplain and the warden's office. If the chaplain and warden sign off on the idea, the proposal is passed to the FDOC for final approval. According to FCBI administrators and FDOC officials, while these reviews are neutral regarding the religious content of the programming, any curriculum that disparages another religion is immediately rejected. Offers of new programs may also be turned down if there is no room in the schedule or space within the facility for the programs or if they are not perceived as meeting inmates' needs. Programs are also reviewed with an eye toward ensuring that the security and well-being of the inmates and volunteers is safeguarded.

FCBI Program Participation

Inmates are required to participate in one program session a week in order to remain in the FCBI facility. Weekly religious services, holidays, and special events do not count toward the program requirement, although religious education classes and small group studies do. Character development programs and educational and vocational training satisfy the requirement, unless they are designated as a prison job assignment. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, inmates have a relatively wide range of programs from which to choose that satisfy the participation requirement, and inmates in both facilities are allowed to repeat programs if space is available. Many inmates attend more than the minimum one program a week.

To better understand inmate program participation at the FCBIs, we analyzed program data from October 2006 for Lawtey (n=694 inmates) and from June 2006 for Hillsborough (n=348 inmates).²⁰ The unit of analysis is the program session, which is the equivalent of attendance at one individual class or activity regardless of the length of time the session lasts. Overall, program participation was higher at Lawtey than at Hillsborough. The average Lawtey inmate participated in 8.3 program sessions a month,

while the average Hillsborough inmate participated in 3.7 program sessions a month. Four in ten Lawtey inmates attended fewer than five program sessions in the month, while seven in ten Hillsborough inmates fell into this category. On the other end of the attendance spectrum, 17 percent of Lawtey inmates and 3 percent of Hillsborough inmates had a very high level of program participation, attending 15 or more program sessions a month. The higher program participation rate of Lawtey inmates may be due to different levels of inmate motivation and interest at the two facilities, as well as to the overall environment and culture at Lawtey. However, program participation differences between the male and female institutions may also be explained by the fact that in a typical week Lawtey offers more programs in a wider range of time slots than Hillsborough.²¹

The most popular type of program at Lawtey for the month of October 2006 was religious services.²² Inmates attended an average of 3.5 religious services during the month, with 64 percent of the Lawtey population attending at least one religious service. At Hillsborough, character-building activities were most popular, with inmates attending 1.3 character-building activities on average in the month of June 2006 and 62 percent of all inmates attending at least one such program that month.²³

While this brief analysis of program participation cannot shed light on how FCBI program participation compares to program involvement among inmates in non-FCBI facilities, it does provide an indication of the degree to which FCBI inmates participate in programs and religious activities. The greater opportunities for program participation at Lawtey, as well as the overall higher program attendance of Lawtey inmates compared to their Hillsborough counterparts, may suggest that Lawtey is

²⁰ The dataset includes some inmates who were not in the FCBI facility for the entire month, and thus their program participation data represents a shorter time period. There is no reason to believe, however, that this issue affects a different proportion of Lawtey inmates than Hillsborough inmates.

²¹ This was determined by analyzing the program calendars from Lawtey for June 2006 and from Hillsborough for July 2006.

²² The FCBI administrators track program participation in four major categories of programming: religious services, religious education and studies, character-based self help programs, and “chapel workshops” (mentoring, faith-based literacy and GED classes). The use of such broad categories prevents us from providing any greater detail in this analysis of program participation.

²³ Hillsborough management staff echoed this fact, stating that the character-development programs are generally better attended than the religious services.

having a greater impact on inmates. This issue of disparate program availability, along with other perceived challenges and successes of the FCBI model, is discussed in the next section.

Successes and Challenges of the Model

Thus far, this report has described in detail the major elements of the FCBI model—the faith- and character-based programs that lie at the heart of the model, the inmates who are the intended beneficiaries of these programs, and the community volunteers, chaplaincy staff, and correctional and program staff who implement the FCBI project. The following section delves deeper into a discussion of these elements, drawing on the perspectives of the FCBI administrators, chaplains, correctional officers, program staff, community volunteers, FCBI inmates, and FDOC officials we interviewed, as well as official FDOC documents and our own on-site observations of the program in action. This discussion will highlight some of the successes and challenges of the FCBI model since its inception. The section begins with an exploration of the challenge of developing a shared vision for the program.

Building a Shared Vision

The majority of staff, administrators, volunteers, and inmates we interviewed share a clear understanding of the FCBI mission. Though each respondent describes this mission in a slightly different way, most articulate something similar to that stated by the FDOC—that the purpose of the FCBI is to facilitate opportunities for positive change among inmates. Staff and volunteers believe that the FCBI is designed as a place of personal transformation and growth for inmates who are ready to change their lives. Most do not describe this transformation in explicitly religious terms, but instead use a broader language of rehabilitation and self-development. Similarly, inmates in both facilities portray the FCBI as an opportunity for personal growth and change, describing the program as a chance to “get it right.” Although some inmates believe that, at the end of the day, the FCBI is still “just a prison,” the majority feel that greater potential for rehabilitation exists in the FCBI setting than in other correctional facilities.

A distinct minority of staff, volunteers, and inmates, however, have a different or less favorable view of the FCBI mission. Some feel that the FCBI is no different than other Florida prisons or that the FCBI objectives are not well defined. On the other end of the spectrum, some respondents, particularly

volunteers, view the FCBI mission as an explicitly religious one aimed at developing a specific type of faith (typically Christian) among inmates.

While these differing views of the FCBI mission are generally confined to a small subset of those involved in the program, a more widespread area of disagreement concerns how the FCBI objectives of inmate rehabilitation and personal transformation are to be achieved. These disagreements center primarily around the importance of the overall FCBI environment in achieving the program's objectives, and the related question of the proper role for FDOC correctional and program staff in that process. Some respondents view the FCBI model narrowly, explaining the FCBI's purpose as the facilitation of a wide range of faith- and character-based programming. They believe the role of the FDOC is simply to facilitate programming and this programming is the source of the expected positive outcomes. Other respondents perceive the FCBI's purpose more broadly, as the development of a comprehensive rehabilitative environment of which programming is one component. Under the latter view, inmate rehabilitation is the result of the FCBI programming as well as the overall positive environment in the facility and the nature of inmate interactions with staff and other inmates.

The differences between the two models described above underscore the importance of FDOC leadership promoting a shared vision of how FCBI objectives should be achieved. In the absence of a common understanding across staff on how the FCBI should be managed and the roles staff, volunteers, and inmates should play in the program, the FCBI model will be difficult to sustain effectively over time. Under the narrower model, the FCBI may end up looking like any other correctional facility except for the availability of a wider range of programming. A more comprehensive FCBI model, on the other hand, entails a shift in the character of the facility as a whole. In this model, the FCBI is a space for like-minded inmates to come together and support one another's efforts for positive change. Just as importantly, staff and management should relate to inmates in a manner conducive to rehabilitation.

Several respondents describe this type of rehabilitative correctional philosophy on the part of staff and management as essential to FCBI success. Indeed, volunteers and members of the chaplaincy team believe

that if the environment is harsh and unsupportive—due to the behavior of staff, management, or other inmates—progress that occurs within the classroom or the chapel can be undone by an inmate’s experiences in the rest of the prison. Only some staff and management, however, appear to agree with the need for these environmental and cultural changes, and within each facility a range of views exist on the issue. In general, Lawtey staff and management are more likely to articulate the FCBI environment as one of comprehensive rehabilitation, whereas Hillsborough staff and management place emphasis on program offerings rather than an overall change in the culture of the institution.

One likely reason for the existence of these competing visions is the lack of a clear statement from the FDOC on certain elements of the FCBI model. Official FDOC policy does not discuss the role for staff within an FCBI and makes no mention of the need for a unique correctional philosophy or institutional culture (FDOC 2004). No FCBI-specific training currently exists for line correctional staff, program staff, management, or chaplaincy staff. And at the line level, no specific criteria—such as tenure, interest, or frequency of use of force incidents—are employed in assigning correctional officers to the FCBIs. Nonetheless, interviews with FDOC officials and FCBI management indicate that FDOC leadership appreciates the importance of a positive correctional environment to achieving FCBI goals and believes that FCBI staff do need to approach their jobs differently from staff at general population facilities. How this environment is to be cultivated and how the roles for staff in an FCBI are unique remain undefined in formal policy, however.

The task of articulating a clear, comprehensive FCBI model has not been taken up at the facility level either. The wide range of understandings of the model by individual staff make it clear that specific guidance from management on this issue is lacking. The frequent replacement of wardens at both Lawtey and Hillsborough is likely a contributing factor here, as respondents indicate that each warden envisions a different role for his or her staff within the FCBI and relates in a different manner to the chaplains and volunteers. Without formal training and clear, consistent direction from above, line staff opinions on appropriate correctional philosophy, institutional culture, and staff behavior are ultimately formed at the

individual staff level. A common vision among all staff that is shared by the chaplaincy team and volunteers has not yet been developed at either FCBI facility.

Cultivating a Positive Environment

Despite disagreement over the importance of the overall correctional environment to achieving the FCBI objectives, most staff, management, volunteers, and inmates interviewed believe that both Lawtey and Hillsborough offer a more peaceful, relaxed, and positive environment than many other correctional facilities. Staff, particularly in Hillsborough, feel that FCBI inmates on the whole are better behaved and are more respectful than inmates in other facilities. They note that inmate conflicts are less frequent, inmates keep the facility cleaner, and that incidents of inmate misbehavior are more likely to be isolated occurrences rather than ongoing problems. Many staff also feel that FCBI inmates have more positive attitudes and that relations between staff and inmates are better than at other facilities.

Inmates also have positive impressions of the FCBI environment. There is widespread consensus that, regardless of whether inmates are interested in the programs offered, the FCBI is “an easier place to do time.” A very small number of inmates provided notable exceptions to this viewpoint, having had particularly negative experiences. Overall, though, the inmates we spoke with regard the FCBI environment as gentler and more relaxed and report that there is less “hassle” from correctional staff and inmates than in other facilities where they have been housed.

One exception to this improved environment, however, is the issue of family visitation. Visitation policies are no different at FCBIs than at other Florida prisons housing similar inmate populations. Some respondents feel that increased opportunities for family visitation might complement other components of the FCBI program. However, some correctional officers express concerns that the more relaxed environment of the FCBIs could make the facilities more vulnerable to security threats among inmates and breaches among staff and volunteers.

Staff, volunteers, and inmates identify several elements that contribute to the more positive environment in the FCBIs, the most frequently cited being the inmates themselves. They believe that most

FCBI inmates genuinely want to improve their lives and are tired of typical prison culture, and thus less likely to project negative attitudes or engage in conflicts. Staff and volunteers also note that inmates know they will be transferred out of the institution if they cause problems and this encourages better behavior. Both staff and inmates cite staff behavior as another factor contributing to the positive FCBI environment. Some staff treat inmates more humanely than might be the case in other correctional facilities, thereby reducing tension. Volunteers have particularly positive views of staff, reporting that staff play a large role in making them feel welcome in the facility and making their experiences there positive ones. The causes may be varied, but across the board, the majority of respondents agree that the FCBI facilities contain more positive, peaceful environments than many other correctional institutions.

Developing a Comprehensive Set of Programs

The positive views about the FCBI environments also extend to opinions about the programs available at both Lawtey and Hillsborough. Overall, staff, management, the chaplaincy, volunteers, and inmates praise both the range of programs available to meet inmate needs and the volunteers who are clearly dedicated to the programs they lead. Of course, some programs are more popular than others, and program success is generally attributed to both the program content and the quality of the person or persons leading the program.

According to respondents, the most well-liked programs at Hillsborough include: Story Time Moms, an opportunity for mothers to record cassette tapes for their children on the outside; Second Chances, a self-help program based on positive thinking; art classes; and the GED program. Popular programs at Lawtey include: anger management; Modality, the FDOC's substance abuse treatment program; the Seeing-Eye Dog Training class; and the GED program. Respondents in both facilities also cite the mentoring program as a valuable component of the FCBI model, praising the program for providing inmates with positive personal interaction, a source of support and trust, and direct contact with role models from the outside world.

In terms of program diversity, while inmates, staff, and volunteers believe that both facilities offer programs addressing a notably broad range of topics, perspectives, and approaches, some question whether these programs are diverse enough to meet all inmate needs, especially the needs of religious minorities. The issue of religious diversity in programming is, in some ways, an issue of numbers. For example, while the FCBI's offer Islamic and Jewish services and religious studies, there are simply not enough volunteers or inmates to support Jewish or Islamic financial management or parenting classes, as there are in the case of Christianity. It is unclear whether the lack of comprehensive programming based in religious traditions other than Christianity is an issue of concern to inmates and, if so, whether it can be effectively addressed.

A much more frequently cited problem regarding programming is the lack of educational and vocational programs. Although many FDOC prisons could likely benefit from additional programming in these areas, several respondents feel that the offerings at Lawtey and Hillsborough are more limited than at other, similarly-sized institutions. Some inmates believe that the emphasis on faith- and character-based programming comes at the expense of educational and vocational programs. Staff, volunteers, and inmates agree that the faith- and character-based programs, while valuable, cannot substitute for practical vocational skills and education and that inmates need both sets of skills in order to succeed. Inmates are particularly interested in higher education opportunities, computer training, courses on business etiquette and interviewing skills, and training in a greater range of vocational fields.

Another potential program deficit is in the area of reentry planning and transition services. Some staff feel that the required FDOC transition program does not sufficiently prepare inmates for successful reentry or link them to community reentry service. A few volunteer organizations, particularly at Lawtey, have developed or are developing reentry programs that continue to support FCBI inmates after release. The majority of FCBI programs, however, end at the prison gates. This may be due in part to restrictions on individual volunteers (other than mentors) maintaining relationships with FCBI inmates once they leave the facility. The regulation is designed to protect volunteers from inmate manipulation, yet it is

often misconstrued as applying to all types of post-release relationships. To the contrary, the FDOC reports that it is very open to facilitating bridges between inmates and supportive institutions on the outside and regularly considers and grants requests from local organizations to provide a continuity of care from behind bars into the community. These policies, however, should be made more explicit to more clearly delineate the types of relationships that are encouraged versus those that are designed to support successful reentry.

Lastly, some respondents at Hillsborough recommend enhancing and expanding the prison's mental health services, as many of the inmates have mental health needs that are not being met. Respondents at both facilities also recommend more programs covering psychological and interpersonal issues such as healthy relationships, parenting and family restoration, and coping with grief and loss.

Navigating Faith Issues

Some of the issues discussed in the previous section regarding program diversity point to a larger challenge of the FCBI model, which is the navigation of a faith-based program within the context of a government institution. Florida's FCBI model was carefully designed to accommodate issues of religious diversity and to take into account the needs of religious minorities and non-religious inmates. This commitment to religious diversity sets the FCBIs apart from many other faith-based prison programs, which are often exclusively Christian. According to most respondents, the FCBIs generally succeed in addressing these issues appropriately, although there are still a few areas of concern which we will discuss below.

The FDOC attempts to accommodate religious freedom within the FCBI model primarily by having all religious programming delivered by volunteers using private funds and by making participation in the FCBI program entirely voluntary. By avoiding the use of state resources, funding, or staff for the provision of religious activities,²⁴ the FCBI program has insulated itself from many of the problems faced

²⁴ The exception to this is of course the FDOC-funded chaplain position, but the chaplaincy is a publicly and legally accepted resource that is provided in all correctional facilities in Florida as well as other states.

by other faith-based prison programs. Making the program voluntary ensures the absence of religious coercion or state sponsorship of religion.

The majority of inmates interviewed, including some religious minorities, report that they feel more comfortable practicing their religion in the FCBI than in other correctional facilities. One religious minority claimed to experience religious intolerance at times in the FCBI, but to a lesser degree than in other facilities where the inmate had previously been housed. Most inmates agree that there is little pressure in the FCBIs to follow any specific set of religious beliefs. However, several inmates in Hillsborough feel that there is a great deal of homophobia among the chaplaincy and volunteers, an assertion that was confirmed in interviews with volunteers. Some inmates describe feeling unwelcome in the chapel and in certain programs due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation. The issue of homophobia was not explicitly mentioned during the Lawtey interviews.

Also of concern is the perception among Hillsborough inmates that they are required to participate in certain faith-based programs. Respondents indicate that the chaplain at Hillsborough assigns inmates to the character-development programs based on a preference sheet inmates fill out when they enter the facility. This is done in part because fewer character-based classes exist at Hillsborough than at Lawtey so it is not feasible to allow inmates complete discretion regarding what programs they participate in. Respondents did acknowledge that the chaplain will move an inmate to a different program if requested and that inmates are allowed to repeat programs. However, demand for certain programs often exceeds supply, in which case some inmates may feel they do not have full freedom in selecting what programs they participate in.

Another issue raised by several inmate respondents at both facilities is the possibility that some inmates in the FCBIs may not want to be there, a sharp contrast to the allegedly voluntary nature of FCBI program participation. According to inmate respondents, some inmates do not choose to come to the FCBI and in a few cases are not even aware they are being transferred to an FCBI until they are let off the bus inside the facility. Such cases could result from the nature of the selection process, as an inmate could

sign an FCBI participation request months—and perhaps years—before being transferred. Some inmates may have had a limited understanding of the FCBI program when they elected to participate, some may have forgotten about the program during the lengthy wait list period, while others may no longer wish to reside in an FCBI by the time they become eligible to move there. Other inmates described feeling “tricked” into coming to the FCBI because of perceived benefits that could be gained by coming there, such as access to work release. In discussions with FDOC staff we learned that this confusion is likely a result of inmates not understanding the distinction between faith-based dorms and the FCBIs. The former are short-term facilities and, if inmates do well there for a year, they are entitled to their first choice of transfer facility (including those that have work release programs). FCBIs, on the other hand, are considered permanent housing (barring any requests for transfer out) and there is no benefit associated with residence there in terms of being granted transfer preferences.

Another example of misinformation among FCBI inmates is the belief that some inmates who request to be transferred out of the FCBI are nonetheless forced to remain there, which conflicts with the allegedly voluntary nature of FCBI program participation. Conversations with FDOC officials indicated that in the first few months of the FCBI’s opening there were some delays in transferring inmates who requested to be housed elsewhere. Those delays in transfer, however, were short lived and official policy states that inmates who request to leave an FCBI should be allowed to transfer without penalty. FCBI management and chaplains confirmed this policy, stating that they have no interest in keeping inmates at FCBIs after they have requested to leave. To the contrary, given the long wait list, they believe they have every incentive to grant such requests immediately in order to free up space for those who really want to be there.

Selecting Motivated Inmates

In addition to the possibility that a limited number of inmates may be housed in FCBIs against their wishes, some staff and volunteers express concern that the FDOC is not effectively weeding out inmates who are simply unmotivated or uninterested in the program’s aims. Just as inmates in the FCBIs have a

range of religious backgrounds, they also have a range of reasons for wanting to participate in the program. According to staff, volunteer, and inmate respondents, a majority of inmates genuinely want to improve themselves through the programming and appreciate the more positive prison environment that an FCBI offers. A significant number, however, come to the FCBI for other reasons: to be closer to family, to serve their sentence in a less harsh prison environment, or in the hope of improving their chances of being assigned to work release or receiving other benefits within the criminal justice system in the future.

Inmates also indicate that these motivations can change over time. Some inmates are initially skeptical of the program and come to the FCBI for other reasons, but once there they come to appreciate the program. Other inmates choose to leave the FCBI because the environment is not what they expect or their interest in the program wanes over time. Staff and volunteers describe observing similar motivational changes among inmates.

FCBI volunteers generally have favorable perceptions about inmates' motives for participating in the program. Many find that the inmates they encounter at the FCBI have more of an interest in personal growth and rehabilitation than do inmates they have worked with at other facilities. Staff typically feel that those inmates who are motivated by a true desire for change are most successful in the FCBI, while inmates who are there for the "wrong reasons" are less likely to succeed. Staff and inmates frequently comment that the FCBI experience is what an inmate makes of it.

Some staff and volunteers would like to see stricter requirements for entering and remaining in the program, in order to ensure that the most motivated inmates are the ones who receive the FCBI's enhanced programming. Some respondents believe that with so many inmates on the waiting list, those who are not truly interested in the FCBI program should not be eligible. Two of the stricter participation requirements suggested by respondents are (1) requiring a longer period of good behavior prior to becoming eligible for the program, thus proving an inmate's interest in positive change; and (2) increasing

the minimum program participation requirement to more than a mere one program/week, ensuring that inmates are taking full advantage of available programs.

On the flip side of this issue is the possibility that the inmates who are being served by the FCBI are those who are most motivated and therefore already most likely to succeed. At Lawtey in particular, some respondents point out that the inmates in the program are already the cream of the crop, and are more educated, less violent, and more motivated for personal change. Whether these are the inmates that the program should be targeting is a decision that FDOC should make, preferably with the support of research to inform the most efficient use of scarce resources.

Preparing Correctional Staff

As mentioned previously, the training of FCBI correctional officers—at least on paper—is no different from that of correctional officers working in any other FDOC institution. Any FCBI-specific training that does occur happens on the job and through a process in which a new correctional officer is acculturated by observing the ways in which veteran FCBI officers interact with inmates. For example, respondents report that in the case of a minor inmate infraction, correctional officers often engage in inmate conferencing, talking with the offending inmate and explaining why rules need to be adhered to and enforced. This approach is distinctly different from the traditional one of responding to all infractions, regardless of severity, with a disciplinary report. Inmates and officers feel that the inmate conferencing approach fosters respect between the two parties and may be more effective at changing inmate behavior in the long run.

Correctional officers and staff caution, however, that it is important to maintain a balance between fostering a caring environment and ensuring that the prison is a safe environment for both inmates and staff. The security threats inherent in any prison setting exist even in an FCBI. In fact, some respondents recommend that, before arriving at an FCBI, new correctional officer recruits should be required to work in general FDOC population institutions with different populations and custody levels so that they can apply their training principles in a “real” setting. Learning how to protect oneself physically and mentally

within a prison setting is critical, and many correctional officers believe that such skills are important even after the correctional officer moves to the more relaxed FCBI environment.

Regardless of training requirements or content, respondents reported that some correctional officers and staff are simply not well suited for the FCBI model. Indeed, some officers have requested not to work at an FCBI because they find the environment too relaxed. Officers who do not excel in an FCBI typically do not embrace the FCBI philosophy. These types of correctional officers were more common at Hillsborough and tended to be staff who were at Hillsborough when it was a facility for juvenile male inmates (prior to it becoming a female FCBI), never fully adjusting their attitudes and philosophies to suit the female, faith- and character-based population. Some inmates and volunteers, in fact, reported that such officers engage in inappropriate interactions with female inmates, including verbal assault and sexual advances.

Engaging Dedicated Volunteers

According to those involved in the program, one of the greatest strengths of the FCBI model is the community volunteers. Staff, management, and inmates all have overwhelmingly positive opinions on the FCBI volunteers. Staff and management generally perceive the volunteers to be genuinely interested in helping the inmates, as well as respectful and cooperative with the needs and limitations of the facility. Few problems are reported with volunteers, even with the large volume of them entering and exiting the facility each week. Inmates have similarly positive perceptions of volunteers, describing them as extremely dedicated and caring. Inmates noted the fact that volunteers come to the prison consistently and make personal sacrifices to do so (such as driving long distances) as evidence of their dedication. This dedication is cited as one of the strongest motivating factors driving inmates to continue seeking positive change. In addition, some inmates feel that the support and friendship they receive from volunteers, especially mentors, plays a larger role in their development than the programs themselves.

Despite the positive benefits of inmate-volunteer relationships, a primary concern of staff is ensuring volunteers avoid inmate manipulation. Staff indicate that the increased opportunities for volunteer-inmate

interaction in the FCBIs, while beneficial, also present increased opportunities for inmate abuse or exploitation of volunteer relationships. According to staff, manipulation can take the form of inmates attempting to obtain money or other items from volunteers or getting volunteers to lobby for a better situation for the inmate within the prison, such as a housing transfer. They highlight volunteer training as particularly important for preparing volunteers to work closely with inmates while guarding themselves against manipulation.

The chaplains indicate that it is not at all difficult to recruit FCBI volunteers, particularly from the local Christian community. They find that simply calling a prison “faith- and character-based” attracts a great number of volunteers. However, they report that it is sometimes difficult to recruit secular volunteers and those from certain minority religions. One reason volunteers may be more attracted to the FCBIs than to other correctional facilities is that they generally describe the FCBIs as more welcoming and easier to work in than other correctional environments. Volunteers also report feeling more motivated to work in the FCBIs than other facilities because more of the inmates they encounter have a sincere interest in the programs and a true desire to change.

Overall Opinions of the FCBI Model

The overwhelming majority of people interviewed for this evaluation expressed highly positive opinions regarding the FCBI model and its effectiveness. Despite the challenges associated with launching any new correctional initiative—particularly one involving the cultural and environmental change of an entire institution—the FCBIs are perceived as a success by many. With few exceptions, staff, management, chaplains, volunteers, and inmates believe that the FCBI model can change inmates' lives; create safer, friendlier facilities; and improve the possibilities for reentry success, family reconnection, and community well being. This section discusses the perceived outcomes of the FCBI program as described by the respondents we interviewed.

Inmate Rehabilitation

A primary goal of the FCBI model is to change the mindset of the inmates so that their behavior improves in a lasting way. Correctional staff and volunteers report observing positive changes in inmate behavior among a significant number of inmates. These improvements, both large and small, include: changes in inmates' attitudes, appearances, behaviors, and language; improvements in the way inmates interact with one another and with staff and volunteers; and an increased sense of hope, responsibility, and self-worth among inmates.

According to staff and volunteers, these behavioral changes appear to have generated stronger support from family and friends. The chaplains report receiving positive feedback from family members on inmates' experiences at the FCBI and how those experiences have translated into improved attitudes and behaviors. FCBI classes on parenting, healthy relationships, and family strengthening may also contribute to improved relationships between inmates and their social support networks in the community.

Improved Facility Environment

Most correctional staff believe that the FCBIs provide a safer, more peaceful, and more pleasant working environment than traditional prison facilities. This improved work environment extends to staff

interactions with inmates, with staff reporting fewer disciplinary problems and less tension with inmates. Volunteers also describe the FCBI as offering a welcoming environment and feel that FCBI inmates are easier to work with because they have a genuine interest in and motivation for self improvement. Perhaps not surprisingly, the inmates themselves are the strongest proponents of the FCBI environment, indicating that it is safer, less stressful, and more conducive to positive change than the environment in traditional prison facilities. Overall, respondents believe that the FCBI's unique environments, along with the fact that most inmates are gainfully occupied in classes and programs, have resulted in fewer problems within the institutions.

Success in the Community

The personal transformation and rehabilitation possible at an FCBI was perceived by respondents to lead to many positive outcomes after an inmate's release. Several staff and volunteers view the spiritual and character development central to the FCBI model as a complement to more concrete educational and vocational skills and as a necessary foundation for reentry success. The faith-based programs complement secular life skills programs in that they instill in inmates the desire and the tools to make life choices that prevent them from returning to prison.

The chaplain and other staff members report that they have witnessed the success of the FCBI model in reducing recidivism. While the FCBI does not employ formal methods for tracking inmates once they are released back to their communities (aside from reentry into the FDOC system), the chaplains and some officers keep in contact with former inmates and many believe that inmates exiting FCBI have a smoother transition back into the community than those from other facilities. Indeed, respondents report that at least some share of former inmates keep in contact with the prison, sharing information on how they are doing at home and expressing that what they learned while at the FCBI facility has helped keep them out of prison. Other correctional officers and staff, however, were of the opinion that many of the former inmates who do not recidivate are individuals who were likely to succeed regardless of their FCBI experience.

FCBI Outcomes

We now turn to the analysis of FDOC data on outcomes of FCBI participants in comparison to a matched sample of non-participants selected from inmates housed in general population correctional facilities. We first describe the data employed for the analysis and the process by which FCBI inmates were matched for comparison purposes. This description of methodology is followed by a presentation of recidivism outcome analyses.

Source Data

The data employed for the quantitative analysis component of this study were obtained from Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC) research staff, who provided data on all inmates incarcerated in FDOC facilities on September 30, 2004. These inmates were subdivided into three groups: those who were housed in an FCBI (Lawtey or Hillsborough) on September 30, 2004; those who were on the FCBI waitlist on that date; and all other general population inmates incarcerated on September 30, 2004. The waitlist inmates were further subdivided by whether or not they came off the waitlist and entered an FCBI between September 30, 2004 and May 31, 2006. Information on each of the three samples appears in Table C below.²⁵

Sample Group	Number of Cases		
	Male	Female	Total
FCBI	696	261	957
Waitlist			
Entered FCBI during study	545	150	695
Did not enter FCBI during study	1,478	134	1,612
General Population	74,006	4,802	78,808

²⁵ Approximately 63 cases, primarily from the general population group, were removed from the dataset because important data points were missing.

The FDOC provided data on these inmates at two points in time: the study start date of September 30, 2004, and the study end date of May 31, 2006.²⁶ The study period is defined by the post-hoc methodology employed for this impact analysis, as inmates were classified based on their characteristics on September 30, 2004, and data from May 31, 2006, were used to examine their experiences and outcomes over a 20-month period of time.

The FDOC datasets included a range of variables providing information on each inmate's demographics, criminal history, in-prison behavior, releases and returns to prison, and dates of incarceration in an FCBI. See Table D for more information on the variables in the dataset.²⁷

The literature on prison program evaluations indicates that male and female inmates have different characteristics and distinct prison experiences (Bloom et al. 2003). Additionally, in the case of this study, all males were housed in one facility and all females in another, and the qualitative data indicates that there are legitimate reasons to conceptualize incarceration in Lawtey FCBI and incarceration in Hillsborough FCBI as distinct forms of treatment with potentially differing effects. Thus, the research team analyzed the male and female inmates separately.

²⁶ The study start and end dates here represent the study period for the data analysis only; the qualitative data collection and analysis outlined in the rest of this report took place in the summer of 2006.

²⁷ Unfortunately, some data that may have been useful for this study were not available. For example, the intensity and nature of an inmate's religious involvement (regardless of his or her faith) and the inmate's motivation for personal change likely play a critical role in that inmate's FCBI experience. Yet there were no available data pertaining to religiosity, attitudes, or motivation. In addition, the data on reentry and recidivism were limited to reincarceration and did not include rearrest or other data on reentry outcomes. Future studies of faith- and character-based prisons may wish to employ original data collection methods to obtain information regarding religiosity and other characteristics particularly pertinent to the FCBI model.

Table D: Data Employed in Analysis	Dates
Demographics	Historical data
Sex	
Race	
Age	
Criminal History (current incarceration)	9/30/2004 and
Primary offense code and category	5/31/2006
Violent/non-violent primary offense	
Date of primary offense	
Date admitted to prison	
Date of expected release	
Number of prior FDOC incarcerations	
FCBI Experiences	Prior to 9/30/2004
Date entered FCBI	
Date exited FCBI	
Releases	9/30/2004 to 5/31/2006
Date of release	
Type of release	
Supervision on release	
Returns to prison	9/30/2004 to 5/31/2006
Date of return	
Reason for return (probation violation or new crime)	
Primary offense code and category for return	
In-Prison Behavior	10/1/2002 to 5/31/2006
Disciplinary reports	
Segregations	

Characteristics of FCBI Inmates

To better understand the characteristics of FCBI inmates and how they compare to general population inmates, the researchers compared the two groups on a range of variables using data from September 30, 2004.²⁸ Chi-square tests were used to determine statistical significance for categorical variables, while independent samples t-tests were used for continuous variables. The results are reported in Tables E and F.

As the figures on the next page demonstrate, the FCBI inmates are fairly similar to the general population inmates in terms of age and race, although female FCBI inmates are older and more likely to be white. In terms of offense history, however, distinct differences exist between the FCBI and general population inmates, specifically among men. Sex offenders are not eligible to participate in the FCBI

²⁸ This portion of the analysis excluded inmates on the FCBI waitlist because, as potential future FCBI inmates, they are more representative of the FCBI group than the general FDOC population.

Table E: FCBI and General Population Inmate Characteristics

Variables	Males - Proportions			Females – Proportions		
	FCBI Inmates	General Population	Difference	FCBI Inmates	General Population	Difference
<i>Race</i>						
% White	42.0	44.9	2.9	59.4	51.8	7.6 *
% African American	55.0	52.2	2.8	37.9	42.9	5.0
% Hispanic	2.6	2.5	0.1	2.7	4.8	2.1
<i>Primary Offense Type²⁹</i>						
% Violent	28.6	53.6	25.0 *	37.2	34.5	2.7
% Murder / Manslaughter	4.3	13.7	9.4 *	7.3	12.4	5.1
% Sex Crime	0	12.2	12.2 *	0	1.6	1.6 *
% Drug Crime	32.0	18.7	13.3 *	27.2	29.4	2.2

* Differences are statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$.
All data reflect inmate characteristics as of September 30, 2004.

Table F: FCBI and General Population Inmate Characteristics

Variables	Males – Mean Values			Females – Mean Values		
	FCBI Inmates	General Population	Difference	FCBI Inmates	General Population	Difference
Age (years)	36.5	36.0	0.5	37.6	35.8	1.8 *
Number of prior incarcerations	1.27	1.09	0.18 *	0.72	0.65	0.07
Time in prison (months)	34.1	56.7	22.6 *	25.2	27.0	1.8
Time until expected release (months)	24.4	57.5	33.1 *	22.1	29.6	7.5 *
Sentence (months)	58.5	99.8	41.3 *	47.3	51.1	3.8

* Differences are statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$.
All data reflect inmate characteristics as of September 30, 2004.

program, yet these offenders make up a significant share (over 1 in 10 inmates) of the general male population, and murder/manslaughter offenders are also underrepresented in the male FCBI group. The lower number of these two classes of offenders is balanced primarily by a greater number of drug offenders, who make up 13 percent more of the male FCBI population than the general population of male

²⁹ There are nine primary offense categories: murder/manslaughter, sex crimes, drug crimes, robbery, burglary, property theft/fraud/damage, violent – other, weapons, and other. The four categories included in Table E are those for which the greatest differences between the groups were observed.

inmates. While the female FCBI inmate population also excludes sex offenders, no statistically significant differences exist in the number of murder/manslaughter and drug crime offenders in comparison to the general female population.

Among other elements of criminal history, statistically significant differences exist for the male populations but not the female populations. Perhaps the most notable finding is that male FCBI inmates are significantly less likely than their counterparts in the general population to be incarcerated for a violent offense, at 29 and 54 percent respectively—a difference of 25 percentage points. Female FCBI inmates are actually more likely than females in the general population to be incarcerated for a violent offense, although the difference is not statistically significant. Interestingly, both male and female FCBI inmates have a greater number of prior incarcerations than their counterparts in the general population, although this difference is only statistically significant for men.

On average, both male and female FCBI inmates had shorter sentences, had spent less time in prison during their current incarceration and had less time remaining until release than general population inmates. These differences were much greater – and were more likely to be statistically significant – for males.

As evidenced in the above discussion, the ways in which FCBI inmates differ from the general population vary by gender. These findings suggest that Lawtey and Hillsborough have different inmate compositions, both in absolute terms and in relation to their respective counterparts in the general population. This may be explained in part by the fact that by formal policy Hillsborough admits all custody levels including close (maximum) custody, while Lawtey limits its admissions to community, minimum, and medium security inmates.

The FCBI Experience

Lawtey

The FDOC converted Lawtey Correctional Institution into an FCBI on December 24, 2003, a little over nine months prior to the study start date. Inmates who were housed at Lawtey before the conversion were

given the option of remaining and participating in the FCBI program, which some inmates chose to do. Of the inmates in Lawtey on the study start date, one quarter (27 percent) had been at Lawtey prior to November 24, 2003, one month before the FCBI conversion.

By the study's end (May 31, 2006), the 696 inmates had spent an average of 17 months (511 days) at Lawtey FCBI.³⁰ Ninety-four percent of the inmates spent at least six months at Lawtey FCBI and 71 percent spent at least a year there. Only 1 out of 5 inmates (18 percent) who were in Lawtey on September 30, 2004 were still housed there on May 31, 2006, 20 months later. Half (51 percent) of the inmates were released from prison during the study period; some were released directly from Lawtey, while others were transferred and released from another FDOC facility.

Hillsborough

Almost four months after Lawtey's inception, and five and a half months prior to the study start date, Hillsborough Correctional Institution was converted to an FCBI. Hillsborough's conversion to an FCBI involved a complete shift in the inmate population, as the facility transitioned from housing juvenile males to adult females. Therefore, all Hillsborough FCBI inmates in the study entered the facility after it converted to an FCBI. Of those inmates in Hillsborough on the study start date, three quarters (75 percent) entered Hillsborough within three months of its conversion to an FCBI.

The 261 inmates spent an average of 13 months (395 days) at Hillsborough FCBI by the study's end (May 31, 2006).³¹ Eighty-one percent of the inmates spent at least six months at Hillsborough, and half (50 percent) spent at least a year there, a much smaller proportion than the FCBI males. As at Lawtey, only 16 percent of inmates who were in Hillsborough on September 30, 2004, still resided there on May 31, 2006. Also similar to Lawtey, half (56 percent) of the Hillsborough inmates were released from prison during the study period, whether directly from Hillsborough or after being transferred to another facility.

³⁰ This figure includes both inmates who were still in Lawtey on May 31, 2006 and those who had left. The figures only reflect time spent in Lawtey when it was a faith- and character-based institution (after December 24, 2003).

³¹ This figure includes both inmates who were still in Hillsborough on May 31, 2006 and those who had left.

Recidivism Outcome Analysis

One of the major aims of our data analysis was to explore the recidivism outcomes of FCBI inmates in comparison to similar non-FCBI inmates. To address this research question, we created a subsample of FCBI inmates (n = 189 males, 100 females) who had been released at least six months prior to the study end date of May 31, 2006 and who had spent at least three months in the FCBI. These FCBI inmates were then matched with similar non-FCBI inmates. As with other components of this impact analysis, the male and female FCBI inmates were matched and analyzed separately.

In addition, we had initially hoped to examine the in-prison behavior of FCBI inmates in comparison to general population inmates but received conflicting reports as to whether different criteria are used in the FCBI to determine what kinds of behaviors merit a formal disciplinary report. Some respondents indicated that FCBI inmates are held to higher standards and written up for more minor offenses than at general population facilities, while others reported that officers in the FCBI are more likely to resolve a problem with an inmate through discussion rather than immediately writing a formal report. We therefore determined that comparing disciplinary report rates between FCBI and general population inmates was not desirable for this analysis.

Creating Matched Samples

To control for differences between FCBI and non-FCBI inmates, the FCBI inmates were matched with similar comparison inmates from the waitlist and general population groups using a categorical exact matching method.³² Inmates were matched on the following factors, using data from September 30, 2004 (the study start date): sex, age, race, primary offense type,³³ violent/non-violent offense, number of prior incarcerations, time incarcerated for current offense, time to expected release, and pre-study disciplinary

³² For more on matching methodologies, see Dehejia and Wahba (2002). We first attempted to select comparison inmates using a propensity score matching technique but were unable to produce a comparison group that matched the FCBI group on important control variables. Given the large pool of general population inmates available for matching, we employed an exact categorical matching method and were able to obtain a comparison group that was well-matched to the FCBI group on several key characteristics.

³³ See footnote 29 above for a list of the nine primary offense categories.

report rate.³⁴ Non-FCBI inmates were excluded from the matching process if they did not represent a good match for the FCBI inmate profile because they: (1) were sex offenders; (2) had a sentence of less than 180 days; or (3) had received any segregations during their current incarceration prior to the study start date.³⁵ As with FCBI inmates, only non-FCBI inmates who had been released from prison at least six months prior to the study end date of May 31, 2006 were eligible to be matched and included in the recidivism outcome analysis.

We ultimately produced two matched comparison groups (n = 189 males, 100 females) that mirrored the two groups of FCBI inmates (n = 189 males, 100 females) along most of the major covariates in the dataset. All comparison cases came from the general population; although inmates from the FCBI waitlist were included as candidates for matching, there were few inmates in this group who were released from prison at least six months prior to the study end date and none provided a best match for any FCBI inmate. The FCBI sample and matched comparison group were exactly matched for both males and females on the categorical variables race, primary offense type, and violent/non-violent offense. Using an independent samples t-test comparison of means, the researchers confirmed that the two sets of samples were also similar in terms of age, number of prior incarcerations, time incarcerated for current offense, and pre-study disciplinary report rate.³⁶ The only statistically significant difference between the treatment and comparison groups, for both males and females, was the time to expected release, although the difference in both cases was relatively small.³⁷

Despite the existence of a few differences, the male and female comparison groups were deemed a reliable match for the male and female FCBI inmate samples, respectively. A report by the FDOC on

³⁴ The pre-study disciplinary report rate reflects an inmate's in-prison behavior prior to receiving treatment and is calculated as the number of disciplinary reports received per year during the current incarceration prior to entering the FCBI (for FCBI inmates) or prior to the study start date (for non-FCBI inmates). Inmates who were in prison less than 7 days prior to entering the FCBI (FCBI inmates) or the study start date (non-FCBI inmates) were not assigned a disciplinary report rate, as it was assumed that this period of time was too short to provide a reliable rate.

³⁵ None of the FCBI inmates included in the analysis had any of these characteristics.

³⁶ The statistical significance values ranged from 0.38 to 0.91. The exception was the time incarcerated for current offense variable, where the similarity between the female FCBI and female comparison group samples was less certain (statistical significance of 0.13).

Florida inmate recidivism from 1995 to 2001 provides further support for the strength of our matched samples (FDOC 2003). Several of the factors identified by the FDOC as important for predicting recidivism were included in our model. In particular, the FDOC found that the two most influential factors affecting reincarceration for both males and females were the number of prior incarcerations and the age of the inmate. On both of these variables, our FCBI and comparison groups were extremely well matched.³⁸

As mentioned above, the dataset used in this research was limited in terms of its ability to fully operationalize all factors that might predict or interact with the treatment and therefore influence recidivism. FCBI inmates as a group may differ from the general prison population in ways that were not reflected in the variables available for this analysis, for example, on measures such as religiosity and past program participation.

Analyzing Recidivism Outcomes

The information available on post-release outcomes was limited to the dates of any reincarcerations in FDOC facilities.³⁹ For the male FCBI inmates who were reincarcerated during the study, the average time to reincarceration was 371 days, while the average for the male comparison group was 262 days (see Table G). The difference is large (109 days) but not statistically significant. None of the 189 male FCBI inmates included in the outcome analysis were reincarcerated within 6 months of their release, while 4 (2.1 percent) of the 189 male inmates in the matched comparison group were reincarcerated during that

³⁷ The FCBI mean time to expected release for males was 298 days, the comparison group mean for males was 261 days, for a difference of 37 days; the FCBI mean for females was 244 days, the comparison group mean for females was 191 days, for a difference of 53 days.

³⁸ The statistical significance figures for the independent samples t-test comparison of means on these two variables for males and females exceeded 0.84, except in the case of age for females, where the significance was 0.41.

³⁹ To verify the validity of the reincarceration data in our dataset, we compared the rates for the entire general population group with the findings from the 2003 FDOC recidivism report referenced earlier. The FDOC report provided recidivism data on Florida inmates from 1995 to 2001. The 6-month reincarceration rate in that report (for males and females combined) was 1.3%, while the recidivism rate for the general population group in our dataset was 2.1% (again, grouping males and females together). The 12-month reincarceration rate in the FDOC report was 6.1% and the rate in our dataset was 7.2%. While we cannot statistically compare these two samples to obtain statistical significance figures, the similarity of the rates suggests that the recidivism data in our dataset and our interpretation of that data are valid.

time.⁴⁰ This difference was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, although the validity of statistical tests such as chi-square is limited when the number of cases possessing the tested outcome is so small. We also analyzed a subset of inmates from the matched samples who were released at least one year prior to the study end date. Just 1 (1.8 percent) of the 56 FCBI inmates and 2 (2.4 percent) of the 82 comparison group inmates were reincarcerated within their first year out. This difference was not statistically significant, likely due to the small number of cases.

Table G: Reincarceration Outcomes⁴¹

Variables	Males			Females		
	FCBI Inmates	Comparison Group	Difference	FCBI Inmates	Comparison Group	Difference
Number/percent of inmates reincarcerated within 6 months of release ^b	0 0%	4 2.1%	4 *	0 0%	1 1.0%	1
	<i>n</i> = 189	<i>n</i> = 189		<i>n</i> = 100	<i>n</i> = 100	
Number/percent of inmates reincarcerated within 12 months of release ^c	1 1.8%	2 2.4%	1	1 1.9%	4 6.5%	3
	<i>n</i> = 56	<i>n</i> = 82		<i>n</i> = 54	<i>n</i> = 62	

* Differences are statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$.

Note: Ns vary due to differences in the number of inmates released for the given period of time.

^a Only includes inmates who were reincarcerated during the study period.

^b Only includes inmates who were released for at least 6 months as of May 31, 2006.

^c Only includes inmates who were released for at least 12 months as of May 31, 2006.

As with the male inmates, the average time to reincarceration for the female FCBI inmates who were reincarcerated (385 days) was longer than for the female comparison group (318 days). The difference for the females, 67 days, is less than for the males and was not statistically significant. None of the 100 female FCBI inmates and 1 (1.0 percent) of the 100 female comparison inmates in the outcome analysis were reincarcerated within six months of release. This difference was not statistically significant, due at least in part to the small number of cases. For those inmates released at least one year prior to the study

⁴⁰ As noted above, all FCBI and comparison group inmates included in the recidivism outcome analysis were released at least 6 months prior to the study end date and therefore have at least 6 months of reincarceration data available.

⁴¹ The low levels of reincarceration for all groups are due to the short time periods used in the analysis. Reincarceration rates rise most sharply between 12 and 18 months after release, a period of time outside the scope of this study (FDOC 2003).

end date, 1 (1.9 percent) of 54 female FCBI inmates and 4 (6.5 percent) of 62 female comparison inmates were reincarcerated in the first year, but again, this difference is not statistically significant.

Self-Selection Bias

Any nonexperimental study in which subjects volunteer for treatment is at risk of self-selection bias, a phenomenon wherein those who elect to receive treatment are already more likely than the general population to experience certain outcomes. Respondents to the qualitative portion of our study suggested that this was indeed the case for the FCBIs, frequently characterizing FCBI inmates as “better” inmates who were uniquely motivated to improve their lives. In addition, certain restrictions regarding placement in Lawtey and Hillsborough, such as the exclusion of sex offenders and inmates with long sentences from the facilities, might also contributed to selection bias.

The research team attempted to explore potential selection biases by comparing the recidivism outcomes of the matched comparison group with those of the entire general population. The two groups had highly similar 6- and 12-month reincarceration rates for both males and females.⁴² The only exception to this was the 12-month recidivism rate for males, which was 2.4 percent for those in the matched comparison group and 7.4 percent for the rest of the general population ($p=0.09$). While the findings are somewhat mixed, overall they seem to indicate that differences in reincarceration rates between the FCBI group and the matched comparison sample, especially for females, should be attributed to the FCBI treatment and/or to unmeasured covariates such as religiosity or motivation but are not the result of the types of differences in demographics and criminal history that were used to match the two groups in our analysis.

Findings and Limitations

Because the number of cases is so small and the length of time for which reincarceration data is available is relatively short, the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis with statistical confidence are highly limited. What is clear is that FCBI inmates have no poorer recidivism outcomes than do similar

general population inmates. In addition, although most of the outcome analyses were not statistically significant, the direction of the differences between treatment and control groups favors the FCBI model, with FCBI inmates reincarcerated at lower rates and after longer time periods than their counterparts in the general population. Indeed, the statistically significant difference between the share of FCBI and comparison group males reincarcerated at six months after release suggests cautious optimism regarding the FCBI experience and its relationship to subsequent offending, at least in the short term.

Prior research indicates that only 6.1 percent of inmates are reincarcerated in the Florida state prison system within one year of their release, which explains the low reincarceration rates among both treatment and comparison groups in this analysis (FDOC 2003). Analyzing reincarceration rates over a longer follow-up period might produce more conclusive findings. Given the newness of the FCBI program, a longer follow-up period would also provide a larger sample of FCBI inmates who have been in the community for at least six months. An alternate approach would be to compare arrest outcomes for the two groups. National statistics indicate that 44 percent of state prison inmates are rearrested within one year of their release, while only 10 percent are reincarcerated during that time (Langan and Levin 2002). Rearrest can thus be used to measure recidivism over a shorter time period.⁴³

The biggest limitation for any analysis, however, is the fact that we cannot be certain that any differences in recidivism rates between FCBI and general population inmates are a result of the FCBI experience. Unmeasured explanatory variables, such as inmates' levels of motivation, openness to change, and religiosity, could well contribute to more favorable outcomes for the group of inmates who self-select to reside in an FCBI, regardless of the FCBI experience itself.

⁴² The differences all had values $p = 0.64$ or greater.

⁴³ Regrettably, an analysis of arrest records was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Discussion and Implications

The FCBI model holds great promise and is considered by many of those involved—including correctional staff, facility management, chaplains, community volunteers, and inmates themselves—to already be a success. Perhaps the most impressive and promising component of the model is the wide array of programs available to inmates, most of which are delivered at little cost to the state by volunteers representing faith institutions and nonprofit agencies in the community. While statistical analyses yielded no (in the case of Hillsborough) or extremely small (in the case of Lawtey) statistical differences in recidivism between those inmates exiting FCBI and a matched comparison group, anecdotal evidence among those involved in the management of the FCBI and the delivery of programs generally indicates that the model helps promote the long-term success of inmates in the community. This success is embodied in improvements in inmates' attitudes and behaviors, which translate to their abilities to obtain and retain jobs, reconnect with family, and refrain from illegal drug use and subsequent criminal behavior.

These quantitative and qualitative findings are promising, yet the model is still quite new and therefore could benefit from modifications. The following recommendations are presented as options that could improve the FCBI program for all those associated with it, contribute toward its sustainability, and increase the prospects for expansion to other Florida correctional facilities.

Recommendations for Improvement

Clarify Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

In interviews, FCBI volunteers and chaplains emphasized the importance of developing a shared vision of FCBI objectives and strategies for achieving those objectives among all those working in an FCBI. The development of a shared mission has been found to be critical to the successful implementation of all manner of criminal justice programs, particularly those involving organizational change (Roman et al. 2006, Butterfoss et al. 1996, Harrell et al. 1996). As referenced earlier in this report, the sparse written documentation of the FCBI mission has resulted in differing views of what the FCBI is all about, with

some viewing it simply as a place that offers more faith- and character-based programming, and others viewing it as embodying a more rehabilitative, humanistic correctional philosophy.

The main thrust of this latter view is that staff should treat inmates as people first and foremost, rather than merely as criminals. Many respondents believed this can be achieved while also holding inmates accountable for their behavior and maintaining a safe and secure facility. In fact, some argued that this type of philosophy actually creates a safer environment, as it reduces tensions between staff and inmates and increases the willingness of inmates to respect authority. The FDOC as well as any other corrections agency contemplating adopting an FCBI-type facility could benefit from clarifying the FCBI model with an eye toward including this rehabilitative approach as a key component of the FCBI philosophy. Indeed, this clarification is important for determining how any FCBI successes might be replicated in other facilities (i.e., whether the programs make the model or if the model also requires a more nurturing environment).

Deliver Tailored Training

Developing a shared vision for the FCBI team will likely require improved and expanded staff training. We were unable to identify any written documentation of FCBI-specific training materials with regard to training topics, minimum training requirements, and training modalities. Indeed, despite the important differences in institutional culture and philosophy documented by those working in the FCBIs, it appears that correctional staff undergo the same training as they would for any other correctional institution. Moreover, staff are not selected for assignment to an FCBI based on any past performance that might indicate whether they are well suited to work in such an environment.

Given the lack of both formal FCBI-specific training and FCBI-specific staff recruitment, it is not surprising that some correctional officers are unclear on how the FCBI mission is to be achieved. FCBI-specific correctional training should address the issue of balancing the traditional corrections role of ensuring the safety and security of inmates and staff with a mentorship and leadership role consistent with the operation of a rehabilitative community behind the prison walls. This would include attention to

cultural, religious, and gender-based differences and strategies for communicating with inmates effectively and respectfully. On-the-job training could reinforce these principles, with new officers shadowing more seasoned FCBI veterans in order to adapt to the FCBI culture and environment.

Specialized training topics could include:

- Sensitivity to cultural and religious differences;
- Communication skills and conflict resolution;
- Working with female versus male inmate populations (Hillsborough);
- Treating inmates with respect and dignity; and
- Increasing personal self-awareness and managing anger.

Respondents identified these skills as the ones that are most useful for work within an FCBI setting and recommended that they be topics for mandatory FCBI training sessions. Staff themselves suggested that FCBI training opportunities be offered more frequently and balanced with traditional security training.

In addition to training, leadership from upper management could play an important role in setting the tone for appropriate staff behavior. The FDOC does not provide a clear prescription for staff roles within an FCBI, and in some cases facility management has not effectively taken up the task either. Frequent changes in top-level management at both facilities were confusing for staff as each warden had his or her own vision for the FCBI model. Respondents interviewed in the course of this evaluation underscored the importance of selecting wardens to lead FCBIs who truly embrace the FCBI philosophy and have experience with the population unique to the specific FCBI institution they will be leading (e.g., female inmates). Should Florida decide to increase its number of FCBIs, the selection of wardens for these new institutions should consider experience, interest, and personality. The FDOC may also wish to consider having future FCBI wardens shadow existing wardens for a period of time.

A combination of improved leadership and training could help clarify and model appropriate staff roles and the desired correctional philosophy in order to foster greater cooperation among all those

working and living within an FCBI. In addition, selecting staff at all levels with an eye toward whether they demonstrate a good fit with the FCBI model could improve the program.

Reevaluate Inmate Selection Process

Another area of potential improvement is the way in which inmates are selected for placement in an FCBI. Inmates are asked at intake if they wish to be put on the FCBI waitlist, but most stay on that list for months before becoming eligible to placement—and then only if they have avoided recent disciplinary reports resulting in confinement. Interviews with both FCBI inmates and correctional staff indicate that a lack of communication often exists between inmates and staff about the reason for an inmate’s transfer to an FCBI. In the typical prison environment, inmates are transferred from one facility to another with little advanced warning or explanation for the reason behind the move. While this approach may be suitable for the general prison population, in the FCBI context it is a missed opportunity during which inmates could be introduced to the FCBI concept, informed that their transfer is a reward for good behavior, and advised about how they can best benefit from the FCBI experience. This more deliberate approach could be used to ensure that selected inmates truly wish to be transferred to the FCBI, rather than filling a bed that might otherwise go to someone who is interested in taking advantage of all the FCBI has to offer. And, provided that an inmate does wish to transfer, the discussion could help to set expectations for a positive and productive stay in the FCBI, as well as clarify the consequences for inmate misbehavior.

Enhance Program Offerings

The cornerstone of the FCBI model is without a doubt its comprehensive array of program offerings. Despite these many program opportunities, however, respondents identified several areas that could benefit from expansion. As a complement to the extensive faith- and character-based programming, respondents recommended more opportunities for inmates to learn hard skills, such as expanded higher education opportunities, additional computer training classes, a wider range of vocational training, and work release programs. In addition, the FDOC may wish to explore the possibility of creating a core list of the types of program offerings that should be available at FCBI, as currently program composition is

left to the discretion of individual chaplains and wardens. This list, however, should be presented as a set of guidelines that could be adapted to the gender and characteristics of inmates at each institution, rather than as a cookie-cutter approach to program delivery.

These proposed program enhancements could be complemented with an expanded effort at reentry preparation that includes formalized linkages to community service providers and support systems. FCBI management might also want to partner with community organizations already actively working in the FCBIs, as several volunteers at both facilities expressed interest in becoming more involved in the reentry process and some organizations at Lawtey are already developing reentry programs connected to their work in the facility. Such pre-release planning would also be enhanced by a review of family visitation policies in the interests of increasing family contact as the release date approaches.

Consider FCBI Expansion

This evaluation has yielded some positive initial results, suggesting that the FDOC may wish to contemplate increasing the number of FCBI facilities. When contemplating such an expansion, the FDOC should assess whether prospective FCBI facilities have the capacity to support a diverse array of programming, including whether the facility can provide the classroom space needed to convene inmates for program delivery. Respondents interviewed as part of this evaluation also suggested that a relatively large inmate population is advisable in order to ensure that inmates, particularly religious minorities, will have access to a wide diversity of program offerings. An equally important consideration in developing additional FCBIs is to identify facilities that are located in or near communities with a large pool of potential volunteers.

In addition to expanding the number of FCBIs, some elements of the FCBI model could be applied to many—and perhaps all—of Florida’s prisons. These include volunteer resources to increase the number of program options. With the exception of program coordination and volunteer training costs, volunteers are free and are typically passionate, reliable, and dedicated to the work they do. In addition, Florida’s correctional facilities could benefit from the rehabilitative correctional philosophy shared by many

correctional staff interviewed during the course of this evaluation. That philosophy, which embraces a dual role of support and security, holds promise for creating an environment in which inmates are open to self improvement within the institution as well as back in the community.

Unanswered questions

This evaluation has aimed to gain a better understanding of the FCBI model—both as it was envisioned by its creators and as it operates in practice. While the study includes a preliminary exploration of the outcomes of the FCBI experience, much more could and should be examined in order to learn what impact FCBIs are having on the inmates who are housed there. An analysis of rearrest statistics and the application of a longer post-release time period for the collection of reincarceration data might yield stronger quantitative findings. Given the FCBI's focus on self improvement and moral development, the collection and comparison of data on intermediate outcomes could also shed light on the impact of the program. For example, we would expect those who participate in the FCBI to have better employment outcomes and stronger relationships with their family members. It would also be useful to know whether FCBI graduates have more civic engagement as measured by voting participation and involvement in community organizations. Other areas meriting exploration include the extent to which the faith-based program volunteers provide support to exiting FCBI inmates in the community, the share of those who accept that support, and the extent to which faith-based involvement after release is related to the FCBI experience.

Given the preliminary findings of low recidivism rates for both FCBI participants and their matched comparison groups, another area of future research should examine whether the FCBI model is equally effective across all types of inmates. Indeed, it could be that those who most benefit from an FCBI are those who are least likely to engage in self betterment absent the FCBI program experience. Answering these questions—and adapting the selection of program participants accordingly—could increase the degree to which FCBIs are cost-beneficial. Indeed, if a more rigorous outcome evaluation of the FCBIs is conducted in the future, a thorough cost-benefit analysis would be an important undertaking as well.

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Appendix A: Research Methods

IRB Approval and Researcher Clearance

The UI research staff underwent a three-step process to obtain permission to collect data for this study. First, staff requested and obtained approval from UI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. All research conducted at UI is subject to UI's IRB that ensures that data collection processes and the subsequent use of data do not harm study subjects in any way. Next, UI research staff and the Florida Department of Corrections entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to further clarify researcher and DOC roles and expectations for this work. Specifically, the MOU detailed the purpose and mutual goals for the study, and the parties' roles and responsibilities. Lastly, each UI research staff member underwent background checks, which are a requirement before researchers are permitted to access an institution for research purposes in the state of Florida. Ultimately, the UI research staff was approved to collect data for this study, which entailed DOC data on inmates at the Hillsborough and Lawtey facilities, interviews with staff and volunteers, and focus groups inmates at each facility.

Sampling and Recruitment of Key Informants

To answer the research questions of interest, the UI research staff conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with Lawtey and Hillsborough correctional officers, staff, and program volunteers in order to understand how the prisons are staffed and operated and what types of programming and activities are offered.⁴⁴ Interviews were held with a total of 35 key informants. Table 1 below presents the number of interviews conducted in both FCBI facilities. Key informants who were correctional officers or staff were recruited through the assistance of the warden and/or the assistant warden at each facility, and volunteers were recruited through the assistance of the chaplain's office. The warden and the chaplain at each facility presented UI research staff with lists of correctional officers, staff, and volunteers currently at the facility.

Using these lists as a sampling framework, UI staff randomly selected individuals to interview after stratifying by position type, length of time employed at the facility, and length of time volunteering at the facility. These selection criteria were used to ensure key informants had sufficient experience and knowledge about working in a prison setting and specifically working within the FCBI model.

Table 1 Key Informant Sample Size

Type	Hillsborough	Lawtey	Total
Correctional officers	2	4	6
FCBI staff	5	3	8
Volunteers	14	5	19
Warden/Asst. Warden	1	2	3
Total	22	14	36

Key Informant Interview Process

Interviews were scheduled with key informants at each facility with an expected duration of one hour. At the start of each interview, UI research staff introduced themselves and explained the purpose of the study and provided key informants with an informed consent form that they were asked to read and to sign if they voluntarily agreed to be a part of the study.

Urban staff employed an interview protocol for each interview that was approved by the UI Institutional Review Board. The semi-structured interview questions asked informants about the implementation of the faith-based model, their role, programs and activities offered, differences between an FCBI and general population facilities, as well as their opinions on how this model can be improved.

Most interviews were conducted with one UI staff member asking questions and the other UI staff member taking notes. Interview notes were typed into Microsoft Word Documents and saved in password-protected files on Urban’s internal drive. Hard copy notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the project director’s Urban office. Data were analyzed by cataloging responses into the following themes: informant background/experience, overall department of corrections mission, FCBI mission, role

⁴⁴ Throughout this report, FCBI staff refers to FCBI employees who are not correctional officers or the Warden such as the chaplain, psychologist, transition team member, job supervisor, and the classification officer.

at the FCBI or program they are involved with, missing programs, training, successes, challenges, correctional officers, volunteers, inmates, transitioning to the community, and recommendations for an FCBI. UI staff then looked for similarities and differences across different key informants and facilities.

Sampling and Recruitment of Focus Group Participants

UI staff conducted two inmate focus groups with a total of 13 individuals to discuss the FCBI model in their respective facilities. The purpose of the focus group was to learn from inmates their perspective on the FCBI model and their perceived successes and challenges of this model.

To identify focus group participants, UI staff obtained a list from DOC officials of inmates who were currently housed at the FCBI facility. UI staff then randomly selected inmates from the list.⁴⁵ To ensure that focus group participants had been at the facility for at least six months and that they represented a variety of viewpoints, UI staff continued to randomly select participants until a diverse pool was drawn (e.g., ethnic background, race, religion). Once potential participants were selected, DOC officials contacted inmates requesting their presence at an information session to learn more about the focus group and decide whether they wished to participate.

The focus group was conducted in a private room with a door where the focus group conversation could not be heard by correctional staff, DOC officials, or other inmates per IRB requirements. Inmates were informed about the UI study, the purpose of the focus group, and that their participation was voluntary. UI staff also informed inmates about the confidentiality precautions that were being taken to protect information shared during the focus group. Those inmates who elected to stay were given a project information sheet to provide them with additional background information on the UI study and asked to sign an informed consent form. Once the informed consent forms were collected, inmates were asked to complete a brief one-page inmate survey. Table 2 below presents the size of each focus group and characteristics of focus group participants.

⁴⁵ UI staff initially over-selected a number of potential inmate focus group participants in the event that an inmate elected to leave. The goal was to recruit a minimum of six participants at each focus group.

Table 2. Participant Characteristics by FCBI Facility

FCBI Facility	# of Participants	Race/Ethnicity (%)				Average Age (years)	Religion Identified (Mode)	Education (Modal level)
		B	W	H	O			
Hillsborough	7	43	43	14	0	40	Protestant	HS Graduate or GED
Lawtey	6	33	33	17	17	33	Catholic/Other	HS Graduate or GED
Total	13	39	39	15	7	37		

Focus Group Process

Focus groups were scheduled with inmates at both FCBI facilities. Each session was scheduled for two hours. This allowed time for the focus group discussion plus 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning of each session for UI staff to finalize the study participants, and to develop a rapport with them. As previously mentioned, focus group participants were asked to complete background information forms to capture demographic and other relevant descriptive information. The results from these forms were used to develop demographic profiles of the two types of focus groups.

The focus group discussion began with an introduction from a UI staff member who explained the purpose of the study, described how the focus group would be conducted, and went through informed consent procedures. UI staff assured those present that their participation was voluntary, that their comments were confidential and would only be reported in the aggregate, and that their decision to participate would not affect their DOC status. Focus group participants were provided with consent forms to sign, as well as an inmate survey that was used to provide context to the focus group analyses with regard to the mix of types of individuals in the group and their personal histories and experiences.

Each focus group discussion lasted approximately 90 minutes and was moderated by a UI staff member. The moderator began the discussion by informing focus group participants that the nature of the meeting was to provide a comfortable forum in which to discuss their experiences with the FCBI model openly and frankly. UI staff explained that the overall goal of the focus group was to learn about the successes and challenges of implementing the FCBI model from the inmates' perspective. With this goal

in mind, the moderator asked broad, open-ended questions and made an effort to let the conversations flow to topics that the focus group participants felt were the most important, while still ensuring that a number of predetermined topics were covered at some point during the discussion.

The content of the focus group discussions were captured in transcripts written by a UI staff notetaker at each session. The first step in analyzing the data was to catalog participants' remarks based on various themes or subject areas. Themes included: FCBI mission, FCBI environment compared to other prison environments, religious freedom, advice to incoming inmates, decision making process to come to the FCBI, programming (management, missing programs, and staffing), FCBI correctional officers and staff, and recommendations for the field. Next, within each topic participants' comments were examined with an eye toward similarities and differences of opinion across the two groups.