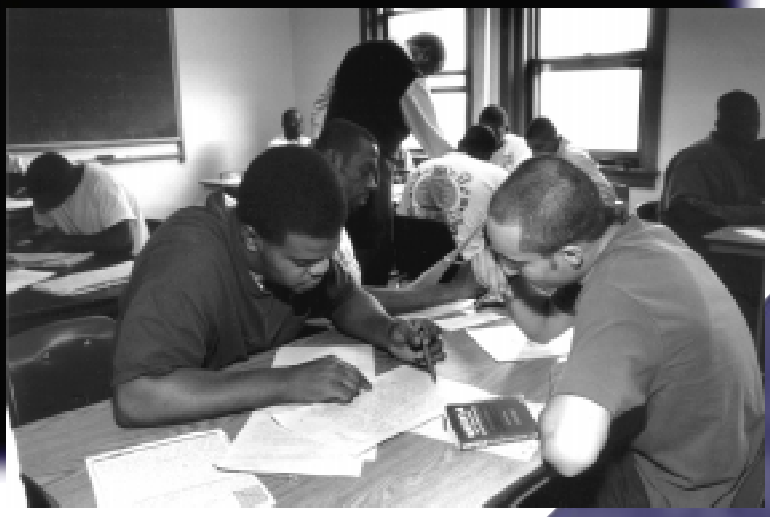
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice

Program Focus

National Institute of Justice
National Institute of Corrections
Office of Correctional Education



Chicago's Safer Foundation: A Road Back for Ex-Offenders

NIJ–NIC–OCE Collaboration on Offender Job Training, Placement, and Retention

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Correctional Education (OCE) have cooperated on a number of projects. These continuing efforts are described below:

This Program Focus, *Chicago's Safer Foundation: A Road Back for Ex-Offenders*, is one in a series of publications sponsored by NIJ, NIC, and OCE that focus on various approaches to offender job training, placement, and retention.[a]

Our agencies partnered nearly 3 years ago to fill an information void in this area. Since then, we have been overwhelmed by the response from corrections professionals, policymakers, and industry representatives. We are excited about activities under way and about the potential of other partnerships we are exploring.

In fiscal year 1997, NIC's Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement offered two 1-week pilot training sessions for offender employment specialists at its Longmont Training Academy in Longmont, Colorado. Applications for these training sessions outnumbered those received for any one course in the academy's history. Because of the overwhelming demand, NIC will offer three additional offender employment specialist training sessions at the academy in fiscal year 1998.

NIC has also recently funded an effort to adapt and modify a software program currently used by the State of Washington's Department of Corrections to meet the community referral needs of released offenders. The goal is to make this software package available to other correctional agencies that wish to provide community resource referral services to soon-to-be-released offenders. Offender employment specialists who have reviewed the package report that, if successfully replicated, it would prove to be an invaluable tool in assisting offenders who are returning to the community.

Last spring OCE conducted a grant competition focusing on life skills training for offenders, including education and workplace readiness. Awards ranging from $300,000 to $450,000 were made in September 1997 to a number of correctional agencies, with program implementation beginning in most sites immediately after the grants were awarded.

Our agencies continue to work with the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Inmate Placement Program Branch in identifying State and local offender job training and placement programs that could be accessed by offenders released from the Federal system. As a result of these collaborative efforts, the Bureau contracted with a firm to test the feasibility of replicating the Project Re-Enterprise mock job fair concept in its facilities. The first mock job fair was held on April 24, 1997, at the Bureau's Bastrop, Texas, facility and proved to be a great success. A second Project Re-Enterprise event is planned for the Federal Prison Camp for Women at Bryan, Texas. The Bureau is also currently exploring the possibility of partnering with the Safer Foundation to operate as a resource and ex-offender job placement service for Federal offenders returning to Chicago, Illinois.

Finally, we are pleased that the National Occupational Information Coordinating Council (NOICC) has joined us in our efforts to explore ways to make its resources available to corrections professionals working in offender job training, placement, and retention. In July 1997 the Federal Bureau of Prisons, NIC, and NOICC gave a presentation at the national conference of State Occupational Coordinating Councils in Tacoma, Washington, which received a very encouraging response.

Clearly, offender job training, placement, and retention are challenging issues that will require our sustained efforts and attention over time. While every effort is being made on the Federal level to collaborate and share resources, we continue to rely on those of you on the front lines to share with us your knowledge, experience with promising practices, and identification of areas that need to be addressed. Our staffs continue to revise short- and long-term joint strategies according to your input.

Jeremy Travis
Director
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National Institute of Corrections

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Notes

a. Moses, Marilyn, *Project Re-Enterprise: A Texas Program*, Program Focus, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, August 1996 (NCJ 161448); and the soon-to-be-published *Successful Job Placement for Ex-Offenders: The Center for Employment Opportunities* (NCJ 168102), *Texas' Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders)* (NCJ 168637), and *The Delaware Department of Correction Life Skills Program* (NCJ 169590).

Chicago's Safer Foundation: A Road Back for Ex-Offenders

by Peter Finn

Deborah had been on welfare all her adult life—when she wasn't in prison for selling drugs. Then she got her first job through an employment specialist at the Safer Foundation, working with a national courier service as a sorter and loader with full benefits. "I never realized I could do something like this," she said.

However, at the end of a year, she returned to report that she needed another job because the company was about to lay off its regular employees in favor of temporary holiday season help. "I can't afford to miss a paycheck," said this long-time welfare recipient who had never earned a paycheck until the previous year. While Deborah had developed sufficient skills to locate a job by herself, she returned to Safer twice to practice her interviewing skills with her employment specialist, to find reassurance that she could do the work, and to receive well-deserved encouragement for seeking honest work to earn a living.

Upon release from prison, many ex-offenders encounter problems in securing permanent, unsubsidized employment because they lack occupational skills, have little or no job hunting experience, and find that many employers refuse to hire individuals with criminal records. Ex-offenders who are unemployed or working in poorly paid or temporary jobs often fall back into a life of crime.[1] A few jurisdictions have developed programs designed to overcome these barriers, such as Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders) and Project Re-Enterprise in Texas and the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) in New York City.[2] (See "Job Development Programs for Ex-Offenders Have a Long History.")

Another group, the Safer Foundation, is now the largest community-based provider of employment services for ex-offenders in the United States, with a professional staff of nearly 200 in 6 locations in 2 States and an annual budget of almost $8.6 million. The main Safer offices are housed 1 mile from Chicago's downtown Loop area in a four-story, 12,000-square-foot brick building.

According to Ron Tonn, Safer's assistant vice president for programming, "Our mission isn't to get ex-offenders a job but to provide avenues for them to let go of the criminal life and buy into the mainstream; getting and keeping a job is a means to that end." To demonstrate its commitment to this goal, Safer has taken the step of considering clients as having been "placed" only after they have remained employed for 30 days[3]—which, Tonn says, suggests they may have truly begun to turn their lives around.

Highlights

Many ex-offenders have never accepted the mainstream philosophy of holding a full-time, well-paying job as the way to earn a living. Others who seek such employment cannot find it or, once they are hired, cannot keep it. Founded in 1972, the Safer Foundation in Chicago is the largest community-based provider of employment services for ex-offenders in the United States, with a professional staff of nearly 200 in 6 locations. Safer helps ex-offenders not only to find good jobs but also to develop a mindset that helps to ensure they will remain employed and succeed in life.

The Safer Foundation takes several unusual steps to achieve these goals:

■ Safer reaches many offenders while they are still incarcerated in order to begin to change their outlook as early as possible. The foundation runs a private school, the PACE (Programmed Activities for Correctional Education) Institute, in the Cook County Jail, and it operates a work release center, the Crossroads Community Correctional Center, that provides extensive educational and employment readiness programming.

■ Safer uses a small-group, peer-based approach in its basic education skills programs, developed especially to overcome the barriers to learning most ex-offenders face.

■ Special case managers, called lifeguards, are available to help clients address transitional problems for 1 year after they have secured employment.

Other special features of the Safer Foundation include using satellite offices to expand its service area and developing creative fundraising approaches to raise money from State governments, private corporations, and foundations.

In 1996, Safer helped 1,102 clients to find jobs; nearly 60 percent of these clients were still employed after 30 days—Safer's definition of placement. Of the 72 participants who completed Safer's basic education course for 16- to 21-year-old ex-offenders (out of 84 who initially participated in the course), more than two-thirds entered school, vocational training, or employment, with 58 percent of those individuals maintaining their placements after 180 days. After 180 days, only one participant who had completed the course had been convicted of a new crime.

Job Development Programs for Ex-Offenders Have a Long History

Concerned about the high percentage of inmates released from prisons and jails who do not reintegrate into society and who eventually fall back into a life of crime, Congress, in the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, ordered the creation of a new office in the U.S. Department of Justice to encourage and support job training and placement programs in State and local governments for released prisoners and probationers—the National Institute of Corrections' Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement. Similarly, in 1996 the Federal Bureau of Prisons created the Inmate Placement Program Branch, dedicated to enhancing Federal inmates' chances of securing employment after release. However, the Federal Government's attention to this problem is not new.

Government programs to bring offenders into the labor market began with the passage of the Manpower Demonstration and Training Act of 1962 (MDTA) and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. As a result of this legislation, hundreds of employment and training programs for offenders and ex-offenders were created. However, shortcomings in the evaluation methods used made it difficult to determine if the efforts improved employment opportunities or reduced recidivism among ex-offenders.

During the 1970s, more controlled experiments of ex-offender employment programs were undertaken, in particular, the supported work demonstrations implemented by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). With one exception—a study of work crews for unemployed ex-offenders and former heroin addicts that created a lasting effect on employment and earnings, but not on recidivism—research results showed that the programs failed to improve participants' employment or earnings or to reduce recidivism. In 1982 when Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) funding ended, programs for ex-offenders largely disappeared. Funding grew for manpower programs for various disadvantaged populations, primarily through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). But a controlled experiment at 16 JTPA sites failed to find evidence of positive effects on subsequent arrests for out-of-school youths, including a subgroup of youths with arrest records.[a]

There have been few recent systematic evaluations of job placement and development programs for ex-offenders.[b] However, a 1992 study of Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders), a statewide program run by the Texas Workforce Commission that provides job placement services to more than 15,000 parolees each year, found that after 1 year, 69 percent of program participants secured employment compared with only 36 percent of a group of nonparticipant parolees. Furthermore, during the year after release, 48 percent of high-risk RIO participants were rearrested compared with 57 percent of nonprogram high-risk parolees; 23 percent of RIO participants were reincarcerated compared with 38 percent of non-RIO parolees. Although parolees in the study were not assigned randomly to control and treatment groups, the two groups of ex-offenders studied had similar demographic characteristics and risks of reoffending.[c]

Why so few successes? Perhaps it is because earlier programs were not intensive enough; because many offenders suffer from substance abuse, mental illness, and lack of affordable housing; and because inadequate attention was devoted to job readiness as opposed to job placement.[d] The Safer Foundation, like Project RIO, tries to address these deficiencies by providing intensive educational and life skills services, social support, and job placement assistance. As a result, the Safer Foundation may have a much better chance than previous efforts of effecting lasting improvement among the ex-offenders it serves.

Notes

a. Bloom, H., L.O. Orr, G. Cave, S.H. Bell, F. Doolittle, and W. Lin, *The National JTPA Study. Overview: Impacts, Benefits and Costs of Title II–A*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Abt Associates Inc., 1994.

b. McDonald, D.C., D.T. Rodda, S.H. Bell, and D.E. Hunt, *Transition Services and Supervision for Released Prisoners: Implications of Research Findings for Program Development*, draft report prepared for the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Abt Associates Inc., 1995.

c. Menon, R., C. Blakely, D. Carmichael, and L. Silver, *An Evaluation of Project RIO Outcomes: An Evaluative Report*, College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University, Public Policy Resources Laboratory, July 1992.

d. McDonald, D.C., and D.T. Rodda, "Offender Employment and Training Programs: A Review of the Research," unpublished paper, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Abt Associates Inc., 1994.

Safer Foundation's Origins

The Safer Foundation was established in 1972 by two former priests. One of them, Raymond "Bernie" Curran, as manpower development and training director of a national trade association in Illinois, received a U.S. Department of Justice grant to provide vocational training to prison inmates and to help them enter unions and private industry after release.

Spying a golden opportunity to further his commitment to social justice, Curran asked the owner of a large manufacturing company, "If I form a not-for-profit organization to help inmates get jobs, would you chair it?" When the startled owner eventually agreed, Curran moved the grant out of the trade association into the newly formed Safer Foundation. (Curran chose the name Safer to suggest the program would reduce crime on the streets and the term foundation because it sounded respectable.)

Curran and the company owner soon realized that ex-offenders needed more than jobs; they needed job readiness skills and support services. As a result, Curran expanded Safer's focus to provide basic education, life skills training, support for solving social problems, and followup services after placement. These features have been the cornerstone of Safer's programs for more than 25 years.

The Program

The Safer Foundation offers a number of traditional ex-offender services—some of which, as discussed below, incorporate unusual features. Exhibit 1 suggests the comprehensiveness of these activities.

Exhibit 1. Safer Foundation Sites and Services

	Postrelease Facilities				Secured Residential Sites	
Site	**Main Office**	**Ida B. Wells**	**Rock Island**	**Davenport**	**Cook County Jail**	**Crossroads Community Correctional Center**
Location	**Chicago**	**Chicago**	**Illinois**	**Iowa**	**Chicago**	**Chicago**
Services	• Intake and assessment • Preemployment training • HIV-prevention education • Job referral and followup • Support services (e.g., substance abuse services) • Youth basic skills classes	• Basic skills classes • Job referral and followup	• Intake and assessment • Job referral and followup	• Intake and assessment • Job referral and followup • Juvenile diversion education program • Court-imposed community service monitoring	PACE Institute • Basic skills classes • Academic counseling • Literacy tutoring • Alcoholics Anonymous/ Narcotics Anonymous meetings • Life skills classes • Creative writing workshops	• Basic skills classes • Alcoholics Anonymous/ Narcotics Anonymous meetings • Job and education counseling • Seminars • Parenting classes
Staff	14 Employment specialists 4 Intake counselors 3 Support service specialists 2 Case managers 2 Course facilitators 2 Lifeguards 1 Prevention specialist	3 Instructors 2 Employment specialists 1 Lifeguard 1 Recruiter	1 Employment specialist 1 Intake counselor	2 Education facilitators 1 Community service coordinator 1 Employment specialist 1 Intake counselor 1 Lifeguard 1 Recruiter	200 Volunteer tutors 9 Instructional facilitators 3 Academic counselors 1 Volunteer coordinator	65 Volunteer seminar facilitators 12 Counselors 1 Lifeguard 1 Volunteer coordinator

Outreach, intake, and assessment

A wide range of ex-offenders and incarcerated persons are eligible to receive Safer's employment, educational, and support services, including juvenile and adult probationers and parolees, community corrections residents, and persons in the county jail.

Recruitment has never been a problem at Safer. Word of mouth is one reason. As one client says, "The word on the street was that Safer worked. So I decided to give it a shot." However, probation and parole officers refer most clients. In addition, residents at the Crossroads Community Correctional Center, the work release program that Safer runs for the Illinois Department of Correction (DOC), are automatically referred to Safer. Inmates are also referred from the PACE (Programmed Activities for Correctional Education) Institute, Safer's private school in the Cook County Jail.

Based on the circumstances, needs, and wishes of each applicant, intake staff develop a plan for how the person can make the best possible use of Safer's services. Applicants with minor problems—for example, no social security card or food money—are referred by staff to government agencies for assistance and then to a Safer employment specialist. Applicants with serious problems such as homelessness are referred directly to Safer's Support Service Unit; if the problem will interfere with success on the job—e.g., substance abuse or mental illness—staff refer the applicants to an appropriate rehabilitation program, reintegrating them back into Safer upon completion.

Educational offerings

"I was surprised when I started basic education classes," one Safer graduate reported, "because they made me feel like I belonged. I started to learn things and enjoyed it. In [public] school, there was all this competition and the teachers didn't care. At Safer, everybody wants you to learn, and both the teachers and the other people help each other . . . . I even got my GED."

Safer's primary educational course is a 6-week basic skills program offered at the organization's Chicago headquarters, at two of its satellite offices, and at its work release facility. (See "Satellite Locations—Boon or Bane?") In addition to basic skills development, employment specialists drill students on how to complete job applications and prepare for interviews. During and after the course, employment specialists help students find employment (or, with younger students, continue their education) while special case managers, called lifeguards, follow them for 1 year to help them maintain success. (Safer's basic skills courses in the Cook County Jail are discussed in the section on the PACE Institute.)

Photo by Powell Photography, Inc.

A Safer Foundation counselor presents options to a client attending a substance abuse prevention program at Safer's main office.

The courses are based on a peer learning model developed by Safer in which students help each other in groups of three to five members supervised by professional facilitators. According to staff, peer learning short-circuits disruptive behavior and hostility toward the traditional classroom. At the same time, it puts this population's susceptibility to peer influence to positive use. Peer teaching may also promote client self-esteem, as students realize they have something of value to offer each other. (See "Safer's Peer Learning Approach.")

The basic education course at the main facility for youths, known as the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), is open to 16- to 21-year-old ex-offenders and is designed primarily to prepare students to continue their education after Safer. Measured by the official General Equivalency Diploma (GED) practice test scores, the 72 students completing the 6-week YEP courses offered during 1995–96 improved their basic skills test scores by an average of 12.5 percent.

Safer's Peer Learning Approach

The excerpts below from the Safer Foundation's *Facilitator Training Manual for the Basic Skills Employability Training Program* summarize the major principles of the peer approach facilitators use.

■ Training activities are peer centered, and participant interaction takes the place of textbooks and worksheets as the medium of instruction. Most class work is done in ad hoc aggregations of three to five members. Within these aggregations the more proficient members instruct those who are less proficient, or members with comparable abilities work jointly to devise solutions to new problem material. Facilitators make frequent but relatively brief contact with each of these groups to assess progress, diagnose difficulties, answer questions, and provide information.

■ Facilitators function as a source of information and performance feedback. They are the impetus for activity, but they strive to avoid becoming the focus of group attention.

■ An inductive approach toward subject matter governs the provision of all training. The direction of training is from the specific case to the general principle. Students are not instructed in generalized, abstract rules or formulas, and sample solutions to problems are seldom demonstrated prior to the assignment of problems for study. Facilitators are more likely to instruct with questions than with declarations.

■ Differences between students and facilitators are assertively addressed as violations of agreements between equals, not as the students' transgression of the facilitators' rules.

■ Most discipline problems are alleviated through the active, participatory role of students. When not confined to a passive, spectator role, they are less subject to the boredom that spawns disruptive behavior.

Job placement

"After I'd served 2 years in prison, I hooked up with Mike [an employment specialist] because my parole officer referred me specifically to him. 'Go talk to him [Mike], he'll help you find a job,' he said. In 2 weeks, Mike got me a job as a machine presser, and I was trained on the job. I couldn't land one on my own—I filled out applications, but no one would hire me. Mike also got me into an 8-month welding course, which will begin in 6 months, that I can do while I'm still working."

It takes about 3 weeks for Safer's employment specialists to place a client. However, the job market for the program's clients is shrinking because a growing number of Chicago-area employers are hiring through temporary agencies whose referrals are either contract workers (who do not receive fringe benefits) or temporary workers (who move from company to company). In addition, manufacturing and industrial companies have been relocating to suburban locations, leaving in the city primarily service and technical jobs that require a level of education and skills most Safer employment candidates do not have.

Despite this hurdle, 41 percent of the 2,688 ex-offenders who participated in Safer's employment programs in 1996 found work with private-sector employers; of these, 59 percent met the foundation's definition of placement by remaining on the job for 30 days. How?

The principal explanation for this achievement is the large pool of satisfied customers Safer has built over the years. (See "A Long-Time Safer Employer Tells His Story.") According to Steve Epting, Safer's director of employment services, "Companies think of Safer as a free human resource service. We screen clients, even picking up their FICA [Federal Insurance Contributions Act] statements to verify their claims about previous employment, and we offer to test candidates for drugs."[4]

A 1996 Safer survey found that a significant majority of Safer employers reported little or no difference between qualified job candidates referred by Safer and candidates referred through traditional means. In fact, 78 percent of responding employers said they strongly preferred Safer clients because of their high motivation. According to Daniel Coughlin, Safer's former executive vice president, this is "because we screen clients carefully before sending them for an interview, and then we support them in their transition to the world of work for up to a year."

Safer's 30-day definition of job placement. Before 1996, Safer satisfied government funders by requesting reimbursement for clients who remained on the job for at least 5 days. However, in 1996 Safer, on its own initiative, switched to a 30-day benchmark and asked the State to include the new tougher performance goal in its contracts. As a result, employment specialists and Safer get no credit—or reimbursement—for a client who quits or is fired before completing 30 days on the job.

Diane Williams, Safer's president, says, "While switching to 30 days was a bold move, we did it because it was

the right thing to do—it represents a better indicator that Safer is achieving its mission of helping clients to change their lives." Williams adds, "The change is also a useful marketing pitch."

To maintain objectivity, Safer assigned responsibility for verifying job placements to staff reporting to the vice president of administration, who has no operational responsibility for Safer's programs and is in charge of billing. Employers must verify each placement to the billing department by a signed fax or letter, which the billing department confirms in a followup call.

The new performance goal has changed the way some employment specialists work with clients. As an incentive bonus, Safer's job development staff members have the opportunity to share in a pool of about $25,000 that is distributed based on the proportion of official placements they make and the starting salaries their placements earn. As a result employment specialists now pay increased attention to preparing and motivating clients to remain on the job, and they take a more active role in following placements with telephone calls and site visits to prevent attrition. Developers also work more closely with intake staff to ensure that clients are ready for employment and that they receive the support services that will enable them to keep the job. In short, job retention, not placement, has become their principal focus. As one employment specialist says, "We have to think more in terms of quality than quantity."

A Long-Time Safer Employer Tells His Story

Frank, the plant manager of a privately owned furniture manufacturing company that employs about 60 workers, remembers the day in 1984 when Mike, a Safer employment specialist, called him unexpectedly to ask if he would be interested in interviewing any Safer clients. Frank said he would. Since then, he has hired more than 50 Safer clients, 12 during a single 6-month stretch in 1996, with most employees staying 1 or 2 years.

"Some are good and some aren't," Frank says, adding, "they're as good as what I could hire off the street. But Mike screens them carefully." Frank says if he places an ad in the paper, "I could get 15 people and none are any good; in the meantime, I've wasted my time filling out all these forms on each one. And employment agencies don't send me good people, either. So Mike saves me time. And he provides people quickly."

On occasion, Frank has called Mike regarding an employee who arrives late. "Mike calls right back and takes care of the problem—he's rougher on these guys than I am. After that, the guy comes on time. And Mike comes here to check on them and calls me to see if I'm having any problems. He came three times in the last 2 weeks."

The plant pays an hourly wage of $8, rising over time to $12, with full benefits. Frank recently promoted one client from forklift operator to press brake operator, while another "excellent guy" in the spray department "could become foreman here soon."

Followup

Employment specialists are responsible for visiting companies and schools to check on the progress of newly hired or enrolled clients. "Once we had four guys who missed five classes at welding school," Mike, an employment specialist, recalls. "I telephoned the sibling of one, the wife of another, the parents of a third, and the counselor at the work release center of the last one to find out what was going on and to round up support to get them back on track."

After clients have been on the job or in school for 30 days, lifeguards—specially trained case managers—track them for 1 year, offering help with emerging problems that range from finding child care to entering substance abuse counseling to resolving conflicts with employers. In Safer's basic skills courses, each participant meets his or her assigned lifeguard during the last week of classes to discuss the ex-offender's immediate plans and to begin to develop a personal relationship. (Safer participants who receive only job placement assistance do not meet their lifeguards until they have found a job.) The lifeguard then either telephones or visits the participant at the workplace, school, or home at least weekly for up to 3 or 4 months, depending on the participant's need for help, and every 2 to 4 weeks thereafter. Participants may also leave voice mail messages with their lifeguards 24 hours a day for a response the following workday. For example, when one participant enrolled in school was cut off from public assistance because she no longer had a

permanent address, she called her lifeguard for help. The lifeguard learned that the woman had fled her boyfriend's house, where she had been living, because he was abusing her. The lifeguard then arranged for the woman to move in with her sister in another State.

PACE Institute

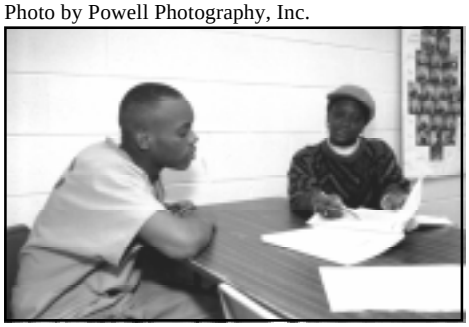
"PACE really motivated me, because when I was transferred from the jail where PACE is located to State prison, I got my GED. The school inspired me because I didn't like reading, writing, and math when I was in regular school, but PACE was intriguing. With only 10 students in the classroom, I got a lot of attention from the facilitator, and I was able to learn things from the other students and still teach them something, too."

Safer's PACE (Programmed Activities for Correctional Education) Institute provides pretrial detainees and sentenced inmates in Chicago's Cook County Jail with daytime basic education and life skills courses, along with evening (and some daytime) one-on-one tutoring. At any given time, PACE serves between 75 and 90 men and about 40 women in the 10,000-bed jail—the average length of stay in the program is 60 days. Each year the school serves more than 600 men and women, and there is a long list of inmates waiting to enroll.

In 1966 a minister running Bible-study groups in the jail was troubled that his students could not read and consequently were finding it difficult to find work after release. As a result, he convinced then-Cook County sheriff (and future Governor), Richard Ogilvie, to support the development of the PACE Institute. Then in 1970, Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's restaurants, helped build a two-story facility to house PACE so that the classrooms would be insulated from the hurly-burly of the jail's cell areas. A Chicago business executive recruited a group of 100 other business executives to each give $1,000 every year for 5 years to support the program. When Ogilvie became Governor, he continued to support PACE by providing the program with a portion of Illinois' share of the U.S. Department of Education's adult basic and secondary education funds.

In 1986, PACE Institute merged with Safer, and Safer deeded the facility to the county for $1. Safer pays for all equipment, from chairs to chalk, but the jail maintains the structure and provides security staff. The Illinois State Board of Education and the Secretary of State's Literacy Office reimburse Safer for PACE's educational services.

Photo by Powell Photography, Inc.



A PACE Institute volunteer in the Cook County Jail helps an inmate with his reading comprehension skills.

PACE's nine full-time facilitators lead classes Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. PACE relies heavily on one-on-one tutoring to support classroom instruction. One student reports, "I use what I learned in prison to help other students learn word processing. They get fired up seeing me typing 55 words a minute without looking at the keyboard or the screen; it inspires them to think they can do it too."

Ben Greer, PACE's director, emphasizes, "The course work is introductory and motivational, designed to get students excited about education so that when they go to prison or are released, they continue their schooling." Because students remain in the program an average of 60 days, they each usually receive about 240 hours of basic skills training. Furthermore, the 1994 triennial evaluation of PACE by the Illinois State Board of Education found that, of 464 students enrolled as of the end of January 1994, the 37 percent who were educationally disadvantaged achieved average reading and math gains of 1.52 grade levels.

Students also work one on one with more than 200 volunteer literacy tutors, typically two evenings each week. According to one student, "I get tutored in the evenings in math in things like compound interest, geometry, and algebra so that I can help the instructor teach other students during the daytime class. I have a brilliant algebra tutor who wasn't a college student, but she sure knows her math."

A PACE program recruiter periodically advertises the program to inmates in the jail's general population. The recruiter requests that the jail administrators transfer appropriate inmates to the medium-security tier set aside for PACE students. A security officer is present in the classroom and tutoring areas of the PACE tier, although no student has ever assaulted another student, faculty member, or tutor.

Recruiting and training PACE's literacy volunteers

"I had a burly gang member I was tutoring who was as arrogant as they come—but he was also nervous, because he couldn't read," said a literacy volunteer at PACE. "Then he improved rapidly. During one session, he started to sniffle. I asked him if he had a cold. 'No,' he said, 'I'm crying because I can read. And now I'll be able to read to my kids.'"

PACE volunteers must commit to at least 6 consecutive weeks of tutoring, but most remain for 1 to 2 years. One volunteer has participated for 17 years, another for 12. About 60 percent of PACE volunteers are college students who receive course credits for the field experience. PACE's paid volunteer coordinator matches volunteer expertise with student needs. Along with college posters, word of mouth has proved to be the best recruiter.

The volunteer coordinator provides each volunteer with a 30-page handbook and a 90-minute orientation. Tips for volunteers include, "Don't always expect thanks. You may not receive any show of gratitude from inmates. They may feel it but may not know how to express it—or feel embarrassed by it." A list of Do's and Don'ts states, "Don't be conned." New volunteers are placed in the same physical area with seasoned volunteers who can observe and advise them. The coordinator also observes volunteers and reviews their daily self-evaluation forms. Many volunteers have followed the coordinator's recommendation to obtain certification as literacy tutors from local literacy training organizations.

According to Greer, the most common problem among new volunteers is that, once they find that their students fail to fit the stereotype of the hostile, unmotivated criminal and instead turn out to be polite and interested, the volunteers think, "This guy is an exception, so I can bend the rules about never giving him my phone number, calling his attorney, or bringing him some gum."

Greer says, "We have to remind volunteers that these students are sincere but that some of them can be manipulative if they get the opportunity."

Crossroads Community Correctional Center

Six-feet one-inch, 210 pounds, and in his early 20s, Doug came to the Crossroads Community Correctional Center, Safer's work release facility, brimming with anger and a jaded "seen it all, done it all" attitude. Before going to prison for assault and battery, Doug had been an incorrigible foster child and an active gang member. Guided by his Crossroads case manager, Doug received a GED in the Safer basic education program in Crossroads and enrolled in a local vocational school to study culinary arts. Crossroads' shift supervisor—another former neighborhood youth who had made good—mentored Doug, helping him keep his hostility in check. After his release, Doug continued his schooling at the vocational school. However, one day the Crossroads director turned on the television to see "tough, hostile" Doug in tears, being interviewed by a reporter. The city was closing down the vocational school, and Doug was lamenting, "I'm in my last year before becoming a certified chef, and now I can't make it. No one understands how far I've come and where I've been." A few days later an anonymous donor paid his $4,000 tuition at another school, where Doug graduated near the top of his class. Doug is now the head chef in an upscale Chicago restaurant.

With more than 200 beds, the Crossroads Community Correctional Center is Illinois' largest work release center. Safer runs the entire facility, including security operations, under a contract with the Illinois Department of Correction.

In 1983, DOC, dissatisfied with the existing not-for-profit operator, asked Safer to take over Crossroads Community Correctional Center. Safer agreed, but not without some soul searching. Safer staff were not sure that, as members of a rehabilitation operation, they wanted to enter the corrections business. Staff were also concerned about whether running the center might lead ex-offenders to lump Safer with "the enemy"—the corrections system—and stop coming.

Eventually, staff concluded that, rather than becoming jailers, Safer would simply be providing the same types of services to securely housed offenders that it was already offering to people on the streets. Furthermore, by providing programming in a correctional facility, Safer could both begin to work with offenders at an earlier stage and provide an easier and more certain transition to postincarceration life.

Photo by Powell Photography, Inc.

The Crossroads Community Correctional Center is housed in a building owned by the Safer Foundation. Rental income from two floors helps Safer defray the costs of mortgage payments on the building.

Crossroads does everything other work release centers do and more. While Crossroads must follow the standard DOC security guidelines and make security its paramount concern, the center's major purposes are programs and service delivery. According to Rochelle Portee-White, Safer's assistant vice president of operations, "Crossroads can help a motivated person to change attitudinally, educationally, and occupationally, something that is less difficult to accomplish than in a typical prison since Safer's primary objective is service delivery, as opposed to the traditional security mindset."[5]

During orientation week, residents complete DOC's Pre-Start Program, which consists of two State-mandated parenting classes and nine 90-minute minicourses on such topics as money management, job interviewing techniques, and stress management. Residents may then seek employment on their own or through a Safer employment specialist at the center.

Crossroads offers a basic skills program that uses the small-group peer learning approach. Courses run for 6 weeks, 6 hours a day, with 3 weeks between courses. Eighty-six of the ninety-four students in the 1995–96 program improved their basic skills test scores by an average of 16 percent; 12 students improved their scores by at least 25 percent. At any one time, about 20 residents are attending the basic skills course; another 20 are enrolled in classes in the community. Residents flock to the facility's dozens of seminars led by a corps of 65 community volunteers. (See "Volunteer-Led Seminar Series.") There is an extra incentive. Safer uses a system that offers residents more privileges, such as 72-hour weekend passes, if they stay active in the program and do nothing to require disciplinary action for stipulated periods of time.

Volunteer-Led Seminar Series

In 1996, Safer developed a series of volunteer-led discussion groups at Crossroads to help prevent idleness and enhance residents' life skills. An initial $15,000 grant was used primarily to pay for a portion of the salary and training for a new volunteer coordinator, LaMetra Curry.

Curry began the program by distributing a survey asking residents to identify topics they would like to have covered and then ranking their responses. Money management was first, followed by spiritual programs, parenting skills, GED education, employment training, and goal setting. Curry then recruited volunteers from the community who could address these topics.

Curry recruits largely from personal contacts at local events. Volunteers commit themselves in writing to provide 3 hours of training a week for no fewer than 6 months; however, volunteers do not deal with issues related to their own occupations. For instance, a museum director Curry recruited at a park function discusses motivation, not art. Curry says, "Volunteers like the opportunity to talk about things that are unrelated to their jobs." One volunteer reported, "The guys are actually attentive, and I want to sign up for another 6 months."

Screened and trained to avoid lecturing, the volunteers facilitate the groups, encouraging participants to share their own knowledge and experiences with each other. Most groups meet weekly. At the end of every session, each volunteer fills out a form describing what happened, while participants write down what they learned, how the information or skills will help them after release, and whether they want another session on the topic.

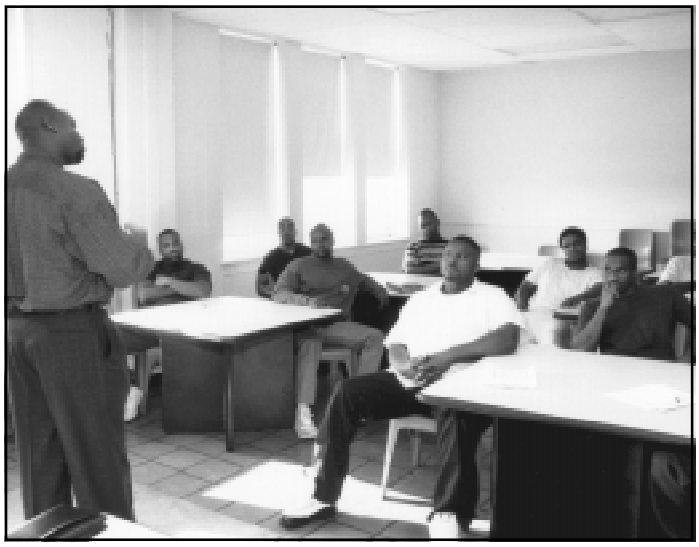


Photo by Powell Photography, Inc.

A volunteer seminar leader at the Crossroads Community Correctional Center, himself a former inmate, facilitates a discussion about the difficulties in transitioning from prison into the outside world and the need for personal accountability.

Program Effectiveness

According to Bernie Curran, Safer's cofounder, "Ninety-two percent of Safer's clients are minorities; 70 percent have a history of untreated substance abuse; 75 percent are functionally illiterate; the majority live in poverty." Despite these barriers, Safer has helped more than 40,000 participants find jobs since 1972, including 1,102 during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1996. Using Safer's placement criterion of 30 days of continuous employment, 59 percent of these 1,102 clients qualified officially as placements.

Excluding the costs of operating the Crossroads Community Correctional Center and the PACE Institute, and other expenses unrelated to job placement services, Safer's cost per participant placed was $1,369; its cost per participant placed who remained employed for at least 30 days was $1,956. In addition to its employment services, for the 1995–96 fiscal year Safer provided information and referral services to 13,586 clients and educational services to 996 clients.

Safer has begun to track clients' work histories for 10 months after they have found a job. Among a partial sample of clients who remained employed 30 days, 81 percent were still employed (with the same or another employer) after 2 months, 75 percent after 3 months, and 57 percent after 9 months.

In 1996, Safer assigned Ray Auclair the task of designing and implementing a comprehensive process and impact evaluation. The foundation believed it would need convincing evidence that it was reducing recidi-

Exhibit 2. Safer Behavioral Objectives and Outcomes

Below are behavioral objectives Safer is measuring for its Youth Empowerment Program (YEP). The program's goal was to enroll 85 participants during the year ending June 30, 1996. These participants would experience three distinct phases of programming: competency-based remedial training in a job-simulated environment, direct placement, and sequential followup through intervention. Outcome data are limited to program fiscal year 1995–96.

Education.	Daily classes conducted in 7-week cycles.
Objective 1:	By June 30, 1996, at least 50 percent of the participants completing the course will increase their GED readiness by posting a 10-percent increase in their practice test scores.
Result:	Participants enrolled ..... 84 (1 less than planned)
	Completed course 72 (86%)
	Achieved a 12.5-percent increase[a] 45 (63%)
Objective 2:	By June 30, 1996, 50 percent of participants achieving a 10-percent increase will have registered for the GED.
Result:	Participants achieving a 12.5-percent increase who registered for the GED 39 (87%)
	Registrants who obtained their GED 16 (41%)
Employment.	Individualized placement activities after classes end.
Objective 1:	By June 30, 1996, 60 percent of participants who complete the 7-week training cycle will enter school, vocational training, or employment.
Result:	Participants completing 72
	Number placed 48 (67%)
Objective 2:	By June 30, 1996, at least 90 percent of those placed will maintain their placements for 30 days; 50 percent for 90 days; and 25 percent for 180 days.
Result:	30 days 48 (100%)
	90 days 29 (60%)
	180 days 28 (58%)
Recidivism.	Conviction on a new charge.
Objective 1:	By June 30, 1996, at least 60 percent of participants completing the program will remain crime free at 30, 90, 180, and 360 days.
Result:	30 days 72 (100%)
	90 days 72 (100%)
	180 days 71 (99%)
	360 days ..... Data still being collected.

Notes

a. The Safer Foundation opted to use the number of participants who achieved a 12.5-percent increase in GED practice test scores as the benchmark to represent the extent to which results exceeded the original objective.

vism to continue to attract private-sector donations. Auclair will collect and compare recidivism rates across time and across Safer sites. For the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), he is comparing results for participants both with ex-offenders who are program clients but not enrolled in YEP and with a group of nonoffenders. Exhibit 2 presents the detailed outcome data Auclair collected as of December 31, 1996. The data show that:

■ More than 60 percent of 72 YEP participants who completed the course achieved at least a 12.5-percent increase in their GED practice test scores.

■ Sixty-seven percent of 72 participants who completed the course entered school, vocational training, or employment, with 58 percent of these individuals maintaining their placements after 180 days.

■ Ninety-nine percent of participants who entered school, vocational training, or employment had not been convicted of a new crime after 180 days.[6]

Fund Raising

Safer has devoted considerable resources to securing and expanding program funding. Nevertheless, because Safer's budget remained the same from 1991 to 1996, its funding level in effect declined when adjusted for inflation. The reasons that it lost ground are not hard to find.

Funding challenges

Safer administrators observe that the Federal Government is providing less public demonstration and seed money than in the past. In addition, some organizations that had formerly refused to work with ex-offenders are starting to compete with Safer for this work.

Further compounding the problem of securing funding in a more competitive environment is a requirement to match public grants with private contributions. This is done primarily for Federal Title XX funds that pay for Safer's basic skills classes and job placement services—a 25-percent local match for every Title XX dollar received. Yet raising funds from private companies and foundations is also becoming more difficult. "It is not just demonstration funds that are shrinking," comments Alyson Cooke, Safer's vice president for development, "ongoing public and private dollars are declining precipitously."

The demands on the private philanthropic community are increasing. Cooke adds, "Private foundations and companies want to know that their dollars are making a difference—not on your bottom line but in the community at large."

Private-sector marketing strategies

Despite these barriers, Safer has consistently raised about 6 percent of its revenues from private-sector sources—including corporations, foundations, individuals, and special events—ranging from a one-time, $5 donation to a 3-year, $1 million grant. The typical foundation or corporate contribution, however, is $5,000 to $10,000.

Exhibit 3. Safer Budget Figures

Safer's Sources of Income in Fiscal Year 1996

Source	Percentage
Public support	88.24%
Private support (contributions and grants)	6.26%
Program service fees*	1.52%
Other income (e.g., investments, rental income)	3.98%

*Inmates in the Crossroads Community Correctional Center are required by the State to contribute 20 percent of their net earnings (up to $50 per week) to their room and board.

Safer's Fiscal Year 1996 Expenses

Function	Amount
Salaries and employee benefits	$6,234,324
Consulting and professional fees	$163,546
Contractual subsistence and allowances	$622,758
Conferences and educational programs	$31,870
Occupancy	$989,607
Office services and equipment	$309,239
Consumables	$24,761
All other	$205,629
Total	**$8,581,734**

Why is Safer effective in obtaining private-sector funding? Staff offer several guidelines for success:

■ *Learn about—and cater to—the needs of the potential donor.* According to Bernie Curran, "You have to understand potential donors in terms of whom they want to give money to and for what causes, and then open your pitch with the aspect of your program that fits best with their interests or mission." For several years, Safer obtained funding from a prominent private foundation in Iowa. However, the private foundation was no longer interested in supporting Safer because the funder wanted its dollars used for new, not existing, programs. As a result, Safer administrators, acting on their longstanding interest in expanding Safer's presence in Davenport, Iowa, capitalized on their existing relationship with the local juvenile court to convince the State of Iowa and the private foundation to jointly fund a $510,000, 3-year pilot program to serve youthful offenders in the community. (See "Satellite Locations—Boon or Bane?")

■ *Conduct public relations activities.* Carolyn Dennis, Safer's communications director, prepares public relations materials, such as news releases and brochures, that help develop a positive image of Safer before staff even walk through a potential funder's door. A Safer board of directors subcommittee is also charged with gaining more public recognition for Safer. In 1995 the subcommittee, under the leadership of a board member with expertise in public relations, orchestrated a billboard campaign to raise public awareness of the foundation and the need to offer jobs to ex-offenders. Board members worked with a friend at a prestigious advertising firm to develop a billboard slogan, "Jobs Keep Ex-Offenders Ex-Offenders: Give 'Em a Job." A billboard company donated billboards all over Chicago. In 1996, in an effort to encourage companies to continue supporting the foundation, Steve Epting, director of employment services, and Diane Williams, Safer's president, hosted Safer's first Employer Recognition Luncheon to acknowledge business contributors, enable them to meet each other, and provide them an opportunity to talk in person with Safer's entire staff, not just the employment specialists.

■ *Be assertive.* "No," Safer's staff members believe, "is just a request for more information." When staff were trying to put together a $150-a-plate dinner for corporate officers, a board member told them in jest to recruit the Chief Justice as a speaker. Taking the board member at his word—and thinking he meant the U.S., not the Illinois, Supreme Court—a staff member called then-U.S. Chief Justice Warren Burger's office and spent 3 hours convincing his administrative assistant that Safer could deliver corporate America if Burger would agree to speak. Three months later, the assistant called back to say that the Chief Justice would speak. In his 1984 speech, Burger told the assembled corporate officials, "There should be a Safer in every State."

■ *Network, network, network.* "It gets down to relationships—you have to spend time cultivating, handholding," says Auclair. In addition to raising almost $13,000, Safer's annual golf tournament provides staff members an opportunity to network with politicians, private-sector business owners, and individual Safer supporters.

Keys to Success

Talented staff

Safer personnel and employers credit the program's achievements primarily to the enthusiasm, dedication, and talent of the foundation's staff. According to Bernie Curran, "Good people can successfully implement a poor program design if they are prepared to change it. 'Good people' are goal oriented but compassionate, and they can help ex-offenders change their mindset about how to behave and think so they can make it in the world of work."

Diane Williams agrees, "Get staff with compassion and a mission, for whom working in the program is not just a job. Staff are more important than the model. But they also have to be able to be tough and tell a client, 'You need to get that comb out of your hair and look at me when we talk.'" These character traits are personified in Williams—an individual with a master's degree in business administration who left a better paying job as marketing director at a major corporation after having spent 9 years as a volunteer on Safer's board and, before that, as a Safer tutor. The longevity of other key Safer staff attests to their commitment: six top managers have been with the program for more than 10 years—three of them for at least 20 years.

Volunteers

Safer makes extensive use of trained, closely supervised volunteers, enabling the program to provide services and secure expertise it could not otherwise afford: 200 volunteers provide one-on-one literacy tutoring in the

Satellite Locations—Boon or Bane?

The Safer Foundation differs from many similar programs in the number of satellite branches it operates. Although not without problems, these outposts are important for bringing the program to the people who most need its services and for serving as feeder locations for the main Chicago facility.

Ida B. Wells

Safer runs a small branch office in the Ida B. Wells Public Housing Development on the south side of Chicago. Ida B., as it is called, offers classes for youths and adults in addition to job placement assistance.

According to program manager Rochelle Toyozumi, "The toughest problem at Ida B. is to get the residents to trust the program, because it is initially viewed as part of the system, and they don't trust the system. Besides, different gangs will not meet at the same location together." As a result, clients are warned, "When you come in here, you're in the Safer family; if you wear gang colors or symbols, flash signs, or talk gang talk, you're out—immediately." Nonetheless, the office has become so popular that some residents with no criminal records claim they are ex-offenders.

Toyozumi feels that being located in a housing project has its negative side. "Clients enrolled in our Chicago office have to get out of their parochial neighborhoods just to get to the Safer office, whether by subway, bus, or walking. But here, they can join Safer but stay put in the project and never see what the real world of work is like. They're afraid to venture out even five blocks for a job. So they also don't know where anything is. To force them out of the neighborhood, we had to resort to requiring them to go get IDs or taking them on field trips to show them where Safer graduates—their friends—go every day to work or school." But the advantage of a satellite office, Toyozumi concludes, "is that we can reach out to clients and get them into the program because it's so close. Then, once we have them hooked, we can wean them out of the neighborhood."

Rock Island and Davenport

In 1978, a satellite office was opened in Rock Island, Illinois, a 3-hour, 170-mile drive from Chicago, to provide support services and employment-related programming. Another satellite office was established in Davenport, Iowa, in 1980. Bob Ray, then Governor of Iowa, invited Safer into Davenport, just across the Mississippi River from Rock Island, after he became aware that Iowa parolees and probationers were crossing the State line seeking Safer's services in Rock Island. Safer accepted the invitation.

Satellite Offices: A Mixed Bag

According to Joy Dawson, vice president for administration, "You need to be careful not to expand programmatically and geographically beyond your ability to manage your activities, or you may self-destruct by trying to do too much." Dawson says, "We have also had management, operational, and funding difficulties in the offsite offices in Davenport and Rock Island. Staff felt isolated because of the 3-hour drive from Chicago, their clients had different needs than our clients in Chicago, and some locals wondered why an outside agency was setting up shop in their community and siphoning off overhead money to subsidize its out-of-town headquarters."

As a result, Daniel Coughlin, Safer's former executive vice president, warns, "You have to be welcomed into the community wherever you set up a satellite office. This means developing a relationship with the neighborhood before you even open your doors. For example, establish a local board of directors with local business representatives and purchase some services locally even though centralizing them at the head office is more cost effective and ensures better quality control." One Safer site buys its letterhead stationery and business cards from a local vendor to show that the satellite's "profits" are not being skimmed off for the Chicago office.

Despite these problems and concerns, Safer staff now feel ready to expand into another Illinois work release center (but only in the Chicago area) and to replicate its public housing model in other housing developments in the State.

Cook County Jail as part of the PACE Institute, while 65 volunteers facilitate seminar groups at the Crossroads Community Correctional Center. Safer also has 4 different policy and advisory boards totaling nearly 50 volunteers, most from the business sector. "The corporate community is a key factor in the short-term, startup, and long-term viability of this initiative," Coughlin stresses. "In starting a new program, the volunteers from the business community provide guidance and technical assistance in business functions, as well as introductions to large private-sector players. These board members also add a great deal of credibility to the entity and its mission—as well as access to key private and governmental decisionmakers." Board members are also active in recruiting other volunteers for Safer.

Collaboration with the Illinois Department of Correction

The Safer Foundation's relationship with the Illinois Department of Correction is an example of a public-private partnership that works. For 25 years State parole officers and county probation officers have relied on Safer for posttrial and postprison services. Safer is viewed as a "one-stop shop" that, in most cases, is able to meet the needs of the officers and, more important, their charges, through services such as intake, assessment, support, and job placement. For 5 years the department stationed two parole officers at Safer's main facility, and they continue to do so at a satellite office. The officers' onsite presence provides them with rapid referral access and almost instantaneous responses to

inquiries, as well as a heightened level of overall trust and communication between the officers and Safer's staff.

According to Coughlin, "The Department of Correction is not just a vendor; it's a true partner." Marjorie Brown, DOC's deputy director of community services, uses almost identical words to describe the relationship: "Ours is truly a partnership."

DOC routinely invites Safer staff to attend its training sessions for correctional personnel, for example, on techniques for addressing the special needs of inmates with infectious diseases. Safer reciprocates with its own unsolicited assistance. For example, Safer decided to station employment specialists and conduct health awareness and prevention seminars at Chicago-area community correctional centers in order to enhance DOC's own programs in the facilities.

As with any partnership, there are still occasional differences between the two organizations. But the bottom line, Brown explains, is "We're working together to achieve the same goal—to prepare Crossroads residents and newly released inmates to go back into society without reoffending."

Other keys to success

"Safer did a lot of things by the seat of its pants [in its early years]," Bernie Curran remembers, because, vice president for administration Joy Dawson adds, "We didn't know any better." Some of the lessons Safer has learned over the years include:

■ *Devise and implement programs based on insightful understanding of the lives of former offenders.* Think of the clients' interests first. Avoid fads and quick-fix solutions to complex problems (e.g., using untested training products and program tools).

■ *Target influential political figures at all levels of local government—city, county, and State.* Find out what will motivate these individuals to fund the program. Politicians must be convinced that supporting the program will enhance their images (as people dealing forcefully with the crime problem) and will not harm their careers. Forget the humanitarian image; marketing directed toward politicians should emphasize cost-containment and safer streets issues, along with the long-term benefits of reducing recidivism.

■ *Balance serving multiple clients—ex-offenders, State agencies, private funders, and employers.* For example, while employers consider support services essential to retaining their ex-offender employees, Safer has had to shape its grant proposals—and therefore services—to accommodate the public sector's primary interest in job placements, while trying to fund support services from other sources. Despite this juggling act, the program must present the commitment that the true customers are the employer and the offender, and that the program's mission is to provide both with equally high quality service.

■ *Start each new program component as a pilot demonstration.* The Youth Empowerment Program began in 1983 as an experiment for children who were not successful in school. When a program component starts small, it is easier to work out problems.

■ *Place responsibility on clients to do their part, because job placement by itself will not solve the reintegration problem.* As a facilitator at the Ida B. Wells satellite office tells new students, "We have a lot to do in a little time, so you have to bring something to the table—share your knowledge with the others."

■ *Focus on continuous improvement.* With increased competition for money and with other groups offering to provide similar services, the organization must always strive to improve and not feel content. Reflecting this attitude, shortly after becoming president, Diane Williams hired a consultant to help Safer develop and implement a formal strategic plan.

Change Through Innovation

Safer's ultimate goal is to change the mindset of inmates and ex-offenders so that they buy into the mainstream philosophy of holding a regular job and preferring the noncriminal life. While job placements, support services, and followup help form the foundation of Safer's efforts to achieve this goal, it is the program's innovative features—use of volunteers, peer group instructional approach, work release center and in-jail school operations, and focused fundraising techniques—that contribute most to Safer's achievements. These components provide a knowledge base for other jurisdictions wanting to replicate a comprehensive education and employment services program.

Sources for More Information

The **Safer Foundation** distributes information about its programs. Contact:

Carolyn Dennis
Marketing Communications Manager
Safer Foundation
571 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60661–5701
Telephone: 312–922–8489
Fax: 312–922–0839

The **National Institute of Justice (NIJ)** is the principal research, evaluation, and development agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. For information about NIJ's efforts in corrections, program development, and corporate partnership development, contact:

Marilyn Moses
Program Manager
National Institute of Justice
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Room 7114
Washington, DC 20531
Telephone: 202–514–6205
Fax: 202–307–6256
E-mail: moses@ojp.usdoj.gov
URL: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij

NIJ established the **National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)** in 1972 to serve as a national and international clearinghouse for the exchange of criminal justice information. For information about topical searches, bibliographies, custom searches, and other available services, contact:

NCJRS
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849–6000
Telephone: 800–851–3420 (8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Eastern time, Monday–Friday)
URL: http://www.ncjrs.org

For specific criminal justice questions or requests via the Internet, send an e-mail message to askncjrs@ncjrs.org.

The **Office of Correctional Education (OCE)** within the U.S. Department of Education was created by Congress in 1991 to provide technical assistance, grant funding, and research data to the corrections and correctional education fields. To speak with a program specialist or to be placed on OCE's mailing list to receive grant announcements, OCE's quarterly newsletter, and other publications, contact:

Richard Smith
Director
Office of Correctional Education
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue S.W.
MES 4529
Washington, DC 20202–7242
Telephone: 202–205–5621
Fax: 202–205–8793
URL: http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/OCE

The National Institute of Corrections' **Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement (OCJTP)** was created in 1995 to:

- Cooperate with and coordinate the efforts of other Federal agencies in the areas of job training and placement.
- Collect and disseminate information on offender job training and placement programs, accomplishments, and employment outcomes.
- Provide training to develop staff competencies in working with offenders and ex-offenders.
- Provide technical assistance to State and local training and employment agencies.

For more information, contact:

John Moore
Coordinator
Office of Correctional Job Training and Placement
National Institute of Corrections
320 First Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20534
Telephone: 800–995–6423, Ext. 147

The **Correctional Education Association (CEA)** is affiliated with the American Correctional Association as an international professional organization serving education program needs within the field of corrections. Membership includes teachers and other community corrections program staff. Members receive quarterly journals and newsletters, an annual directory, and a yearbook. Annual conferences are held in each of CEA's nine regions and many of its State chapters. One of the regions hosts an international conference that features a variety of substantive workshops on successful educational strategies. For more information, call 301–918–1915 or contact:

Alice Tracy
Assistant Director
Correctional Education Association
4380 Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, MD 20706–4322
Telephone: 301–918–1912
Fax: 301–918–1846

The **National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC)** and its 56 counterpart State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICCs) are a primary source of information and training related to individual career exploration, choice, preparation, and institutional selection and design of education and training programs. For information about NOICC and the SOICCs, visit the NOICC home page at http://www.noicc.gov or contact:

Burton L. Carlson
Coordinator
State and Interagency Network
2100 M Street N.W.
Suite 156
Washington, DC 20037
Telephone: 202–653–5665, Ext. 12
Fax: 202–653–2123
E-mail: carlson-burton@dol.gov

Notes

1. Harer, M.D., *Recidivism Among Federal Prison Releasees in 1987: A Preliminary Report*, unpublished paper, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Research and Evaluation, Federal Bureau of Prisons, March 1994. Anderson, D.B., R.E. Schumacker, and S.L. Anderson, "Releasee Characteristics and Parole," *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 17(1/2) (1991): 133–145.

2. Free copies of Program Focus reports on each of these programs may be obtained from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS). To contact NCJRS, see "Sources for More Information" on page 17.

3. Other programs typically consider a client being hired as constituting a successful placement.

4. Safer's employment specialists occasionally work with companies, clients, and local offices of the Illinois State Employment Service to ensure eligibility for various programs. One is the U.S. Department of Labor's Work Opportunities Tax Credit (WOTC), which, as successor to the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC), offers tax credits to employers if their operations and the prospective employee's residence are in a designated Empowerment Zone.

5. There has been no evaluation of the Crossroads Community Correctional Center. The few previous studies of work release have shown some positive results (mostly on employment rather than recidivism). However, these studies did not randomly assign some inmates to work release and others to remain in prison, nor did they otherwise control adequately for preexisting differences between work release inmates and comparison groups of other inmates. As a result, it is not possible to attribute the favorable outcomes for the work release inmates to participation in a community corrections program. Two carefully designed evaluations of Washington State's work release program, sponsored by NIJ and conducted between 1991 and 1994, found that the program did not reduce offender recidivism. However, the program achieved its most important goal—preparing inmates for final release and facilitating their adjustment to the community. Furthermore, the program did not cost the State more than it would have if the releasees had remained in prison. See Turner, C., and J. Petersilia, *Work Release: Recidivism and Corrections Costs in Washington State*, Research in Brief, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, December 1996.

6. A master's degree student at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, compared the recidivism rates for 100 participants who completed the Safer Foundation's preemployment program in 1992 with the recidivism rates of all 9,844 adult felons released by the Illinois Department of Correction (DOC) in 1989. The student found an 8-percent recidivism rate for Safer participants compared with a 46-percent rate for the comparison group. However, the student concluded that while "a comparison of these two figures demonstrated that the Safer program was significantly successful in reducing recidivism . . . , limiting factors suggest that this is a questionable conclusion." The limiting factors were the small sample size; the Safer group's self-selection into the program, which indicated different motivation levels compared with the comparison group; the use of self-reports among Safer participants for several variables; and a significant time interval difference between the 18-month period used for measuring recidivism among the Safer sample compared with a 36-month time period used for the DOC sample. See Kamon, M., "The Safer Foundation: Using Employment to Influence the Recidivism Rate for Ex-Offenders," June 1994.

About This Study

This Program Focus was prepared by Peter Finn, Senior Research Associate, Abt Associates Inc. Finn's forthcoming NIJ publications on offender job training and placement include *Successful Job Placement for Ex-Offenders: The Center for Employment Opportunities*; *The Orange County, Florida, Jail Educational and Vocational Programs*; *The Delaware Department of Correction Life Skills Program*; and *Texas's Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders)*. This project was supported by contract number OJP–94–C–007; Marilyn Moses is the Project Monitor.

Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

On the cover: During a basic skills class at the Crossroads Community Correctional Center, inmates in peer learning groups work together as the facilitator (in the background) circulates among the students, checking on their work and providing assistance. (Photo by Powell Photography, Inc.)

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