SPR SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

2012 Second Chance Act Conference

Grantee Session on the Impact Evaluation of the SCA Program

May 23, 2012

Washington, DC

Welcome Remarks

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Evaluation Study Team

The U.S. Department of Justice contracted with a research team comprised of three organizations

Thank You For…

Participating in the study

Doing a great job implementing the study process

Attending this session

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Session Agenda

- **Introductions**

- **Revisit the Purpose and Study Design**

- **Update on Study Progress**

- **Review of Data Collection Activities**

Throughout the session we will take time to address potential challenges and concerns

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Introductions

- **Please mention your:**
  - **Name**
  - **Title/role**
  - **Program/Organization name**
  - **Location**

- **Then answer the following:**
  - **Question(s) you hope to get answered today**
  - **Biggest success of your program**

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Study Purpose and Design

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Goal of the Evaluation

To examine the impact of the Second Chance Act (adult) program on participants' criminal recidivism, employment and earnings, health and other outcomes by comparing participant outcomes to the outcomes of randomly-assigned individuals who are eligible for, but do not receive, SCA services.

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Why Study SCA?

- **Understanding offender and ex-offender outcomes is an important national policy challenge.**

- **A rigorous study of SCA programs can help improve policies and practices designed to help ex-offenders.**

- **Previous ex-offender studies very useful, but not designed to measure program impacts.**

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What Questions Will Be Answered?

- **What are the effects or impacts of Second Chance Act participation?**

- **How are SCA services delivered in different settings and what are the characteristics of the ex-offenders who participate?**

- **What is the cost effectiveness of SCA programs?**

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What Will We Learn About Program Effects?

- **How do the outcomes for ex-offenders enrolled in SCA programs compare to similar ex-offenders?**

  – On recidivism, employment, earnings, and other social service measure such as housing and clean living?

  – Do the effects change over time?

  – Do some ex-offenders benefit more? (e.g. men vs. women, older vs. younger)

*Data sources: administrative data, baseline forms, and survey at 12 months after enrollment*

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Why Use Random Assignment?

- **It is the "Gold Standard" of evaluation designs.**

- **Widely used in social service settings.**

- **Endorsed by DOJ,OMB, DOL and other federal and private agencies.**

- **Fair and equitable way to determine who receives program services.**

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Why Use Random Assignment?

- **Individuals possess a variety of "visible" characteristics that can affect outcomes**
  - ethnicity
  - education level
  - age

- **Individuals are complex and not every characteristic can be easily measured**
  - motivation
  - interest.

- **Random Assignment controls for all unmeasurable characteristics.**

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Why Use Random Assignment?

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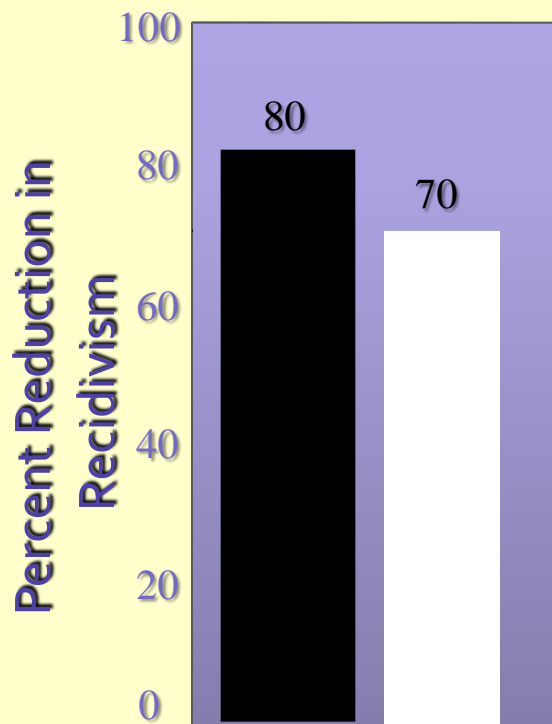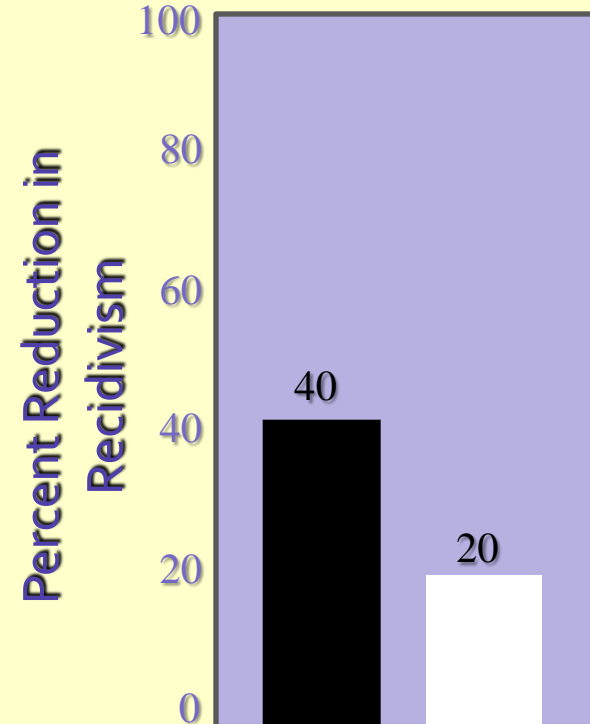
Is Random Assignment Ethical?

Yes, if…

- There are compelling policy questions.

- No one is denied services available elsewhere in the community.

- There are too many potential participants for existing services.

- Procedures are reviewed by Institutional Review Board ensures human subjects protection.

- Applicants are clearly informed at the outset and give their consent to participate.

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Update on Study Progress

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Study Intake Progress

- **All seven sites have started random assignment!**

- **As of May 21, 2012:**
  - **255 individuals randomly assigned!**
    - ♦ **175 program group participants**
    - ♦ **79 control group participants**
    - ♦ **1 wildcard participant**
- **Goal is approximately 861- 1,031 enrolled.**

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Remaining Study Intake Activities

- **Sites need to continue to enroll study participants.**

- **Liaisons will continue to provide support to their sites.**

- **Study team will:**
  - **Conduct implementation visits**
  - **Collect administrative data**
  - **Conduct survey of participants**

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Timeline for Study Intake

- **Sites will continue to randomly assign participants through the fall 2012.**

- **If BJA awards grant extension the enrollment period for random assignments will be extended**

- **Liaisons will follow up after BJA's announcement.**

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Discussion: Enrollment and Other Challenges

- **Enrollment Challenges Discussion:**
  1. Why have enrollment numbers been lower than expected?
  2. Biggest barrier to increasing enrollment?
  3. How has the study impacted enrollment?
  4. How do you "sell" your SCA program to potential participants?
  5. Do you have trouble getting individuals to agree to participate?
  6. Strategies and best practices to increase enrollment?

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Discussion: Enrollment and Other Challenges Continued

- **General Challenges Discussion:**
  1. What other challenges have you faced?
  2. Have you had problems informing participants of their group assignment?
  3. Challenges using the random assignment system?
  4. Have you had any problems with partners organizations?
  5. Problems collecting update contact information for both program and control group members?

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Data Collection Activities

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Summary of Data Collection Activities

- **Background information on study participants from their registration forms.**

- **Information on how your programs operate and the services you provide.**

- **Survey data collected of all study participants.**

- **Information on the costs of operating your program and services.**

- **Criminal justice, wage and social services data from county and state sources.**

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Background Data on Participants

- **All study participants (program and control group members) complete two forms.**
  - **Baseline form: collects identifying, demographic and socioeconomic data and criminal justice background info.**
  - **Contact information form: collects locating information to help achieve a high response rate for the survey.**

- **To process these forms:**
  - **grantees enter data into the random assignment system;**
  - **grantees send the forms to SPR;**
  - **study team members key in additional data; and**
  - **study team members review forms for quality and completion and provide feedback to grantees.**

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Break

Take 15 minutes to stand, stretch and use the restroom

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Implementation Study Objectives

- **To understand how programs operate, the services they provide and to identify key program partners.**

- **To understand the community context programs operate within, including other reentry services.**

- **To learn about challenges and promising practices.**

- **To help interpret impact study findings – why impacts might be greater for some areas/populations.**

- **To assist in monitoring study procedures and to begin collecting cost study data.**

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Implementation Study Process

- **Data collected during a 2 ½ day visit, through:**
  - interviews with grant administrators and line staff;
  - interviews with program partners;
  - participant focus groups and case file reviews;
  - observations of program activities; and
  - interviews with other reentry service providers in the community.

- **Visits will take place in June through early August.**

- **Site liaisons are contacting sites as of last week with more visit details and to being scheduling.**

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Discussion: Program Design and Success

- **Take five minutes to describe your program.**

- **Key features to include in description:**
  - **Name and type of lead grantee organization**
  - **Primary subcontracted partners and their role**
  - **Target population (risk-level, gender, geography)**
  - **Type/employer of staff providing case management**
  - **"Core" services provided, in addition to case management**

- **What do you think makes your program successful?**

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Participant Survey

- **Grantees are not responsible for the survey.** It is administered by the study team (NORC).

- **Survey will target all study participants, 12-18 months after random assignment.**

- **Hardest task is to locate participants.**
  - NORC has experience working with hard to serve populations, including ex-offenders.
  - Staff locate participants using databases, building from contact information provided by participants.
  - If necessary, local individuals identify participants.

- **Survey participants are compensated for their time.**
- **Can you help?**

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Cost Data

- **Cost-effectiveness study:**
  - designed to determine the costs of program services related to program outcomes.

- **Study team will collect budgets and expense reports, and review:**
  - costs of direct service delivery;
  - indirect and other costs; and
  - funding sources, including SCA and other sources.

- **Cost study data collection will begin during the implementation study.**

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Types of Administrative Data Collected

- **Criminal justice data (ideally) includes:**
  - **Recidivism data:**
    - **Arrests: event data and offense.**
    - **Convictions: disposition data, charge, level (e.g., felony/misdemeanor), and sentencing.**
    - **Incarceration: admission/release data and reasons (e.g. parole violation vs. new crime).**
  - **From before and after random assignment.**
  - **Data would come from federal (NCIC), state and local level systems.**

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Types of Administrative Data Collected

- **Employment data**
  - **UI wage records from state agencies.**

- **Social Services Data:**
  - **Performance Management Tool**
  - **Individual Grantee SCA databases**
  - **Other State or County-level data systems on services, e.g. Public Health Department or County Benefits Records**

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Admin Data Collection Process

- **Admin data will cover 12-month period (or longer) following random assignment.**

- **Working now with NIJ regarding access to national level systems like NCIC and PMT.**

- **Will start coordinating with you and other grantee staff to determine various state and local level MIS staff to contact.**

- **Administrative data collection to begin this summer with initial (test) extracts.**

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Discussion: Admin Data Collection

1. Please review the administrative data contact form being passed out now.

2. Please indicate, to the best of your ability, staff who might help us get access to the indicated local and state MIS.

3. Someone from the study team will follow up at a later date.

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Timeline of Data Collection

- **Study Intake/Baseline Data Collection**
  - **Through fall 2012 (or longer with extension)**
- **Implementation Study**
  - **Data collection during summer 2012**
  - **Report completed by the end of 2012**
- **Impact and cost study**
  - **Cost study data collection in 2012**
  - **Survey: 12-18 months post RA**
  - **Administrative data collection 2012-2014**
  - **Final report in 2014**

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Study Contact Information

- **Your Site Liaison, or**

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