

Overview of the Illinois DOC High-Risk Parolee Re-Entry Program and 3-Year Recidivism Outcomes of Program Participants

by James L. Anderson

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) Southside Day Reporting Center Re-Entry Program opened April 1, 1998 in the Englewood Community on the Southside of Chicago. The Re-Entry Center, operated by BI Incorporated, was developed to assist the IDOC in providing a continuum of supervision, monitoring, treatment and educational services for high-risk parolees immediately upon their release from prison. This population was chosen because of their high risk of recidivism due to their entrenched attitudinal, motivational, behavioral, substance abuse, educational and employment problems. Three-year recidivism results indicate a 40.6% reduction in new criminal convictions (or the avoidance of 263 new crimes) as compared to a closely matched parolee comparison group and a cost savings of over \$3.6M for the first years of operation.

The mission, philosophy and goals for the Day Reporting Center, envisioned by the Community Corrections Division of the IDOC, were as follows:

Mission: *“The mission of the day reporting center is to reduce recidivism through a highly structured program where parolees modify their behavior patterns that lead to criminal activities.”*

Philosophy: *“The philosophy of the day reporting center is to change behavior patterns among targeted offenders. This approach means providing the client with basic education, functional skills, and vocational skills in a highly structured environment. The client completing this program will have at least the following: 1) a GED; 2) a job, and a plan outlining future living arrangements, employment, and education.”¹*

Program Goals:

1. *Reduce recidivism through a highly structured program where parolees modify their behavior patterns that lead to criminal activities*
2. *Decrease substance abuse and sex offender relapses*
3. *Increase the parolees ability to find jobs and stay employed*
4. *Structure the activity of assigned parolees within the community, and provide increased documentation to IDOC parole field agents.*

Three distinct high-risk groups of parolees who reside on the Southside of Chicago were targeted:

- Offenders with two or more prior prison incarcerations
- Offenders with a sentence of 10 years or more
- Offenders 25-years old or younger serving time for serious crimes against another person.

The Design of the Re-Entry Program

The Re-entry program at Southside Day Reporting Center is intended to protect the public by providing parolees a combination of maximum supervision, immediate reporting (7 days per week), and intensive treatment, at one location. Each parolee is assigned to an individual case manager who meets with each parolee at least one time per week and documents pertinent information, tracks identified transportation and housing needs and reports offender progress at least monthly. DRC case managers notify the IDOC Supervising Parole Agent of any program violations.

After completing a Level of Service Inventory-Revised² (LSI-R Risk/Needs Instrument) with each assigned parolee, the case manager develops an individualized supervision and treatment plan that focuses on reducing criminogenic risk factors and substance abuse while helping build adaptive life and employment skills. Parolees may be assigned up to three separate rehabilitation activities per week including:

- Substance Abuse Education and Treatment
- Adult basic education
- GED preparation
- Survival Skills Building
- Cognitive Restructuring (Moral Reconciliation Therapy®)
- Parenting and Family Reintegration Group
- Anger Management
- Employment Skills Building
- Career Development Counseling
- Aftercare Group

Progression through the Day Reporting Center is individually paced and based on each parolee's compliance with and success in fulfilling the requirements of each of three supervision phases of varying levels of accountability. For example, no parolee may move to a reduced level of reporting until he or she has maintained abstinence from drug use for 30 days. All parolees are required to complete the MRT (Moral Reconciliation Therapy®) cognitive restructuring program, to break entrenched criminal thinking patterns, prior to entering aftercare.

Three-Year Recidivism Outcomes of Southside Day Reporting Center Participants as Compared to Recidivism Outcomes of a Matched Comparison Group

1503 clients were assigned to the Southside Re-Entry program between April 1, 1998 and April 1, 2001. In order to evaluate program impact, the IDOC Research and Information Systems drew a matched comparison sample of 871 parolees released to Chicago’s West Side during this same period who went into regular parole supervision without day reporting services. Chicago’s West Side is a community similarly impacted as is the South Side by gangs, crime, violence, drug use and dealing, and family and community dissolution. Approximately 300 parolees released to the West Side were drawn for each year that were similar in age, number of incarcerations, longest holding crime type, race, and level of education to parolees assigned to the Southside Re-Entry program.

The Outcomes: Recidivism Data for the Southside and Westside Parole Groups

For the purposes of this research recidivism was defined as reincarceration to prison as a result of a new crime conviction. Recidivism outcomes for the two groups are represented in Table 1.

| Table 1: Comparison of Recidivism Rates Between DRC Participants and a Matched Comparison Group with No DRC Experience | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Period of Time in the community | Recidivism Rate of Re-Entry Center Participants (N=1503 Parolees) | Recidivism Rate of matched control group w/ No DRC Experience (N=871 Parolees) | Difference in Percent of Recidivism Between the Two Groups |
| 3 Years Inmate released from prison (4/98-3/99) | 35.0% | 52.0% | 17.0% |
| 2 Years Inmate released from prison (4/99-3/00) | 26.0% | 45.0% | 19.0% |
| 1 Year Inmate released from prison (4/00-3/01) | 10.0% | 33.0% | 23.0% |
| AVERAGE | 23.7% | 43.3% | 17.6% |

Statistical Analysis

Three chi-square analyses (corrected for contingency) were performed on the observed results on the treated and untreated groups' recidivism at one, two, and three years of release. All three analyses showed that the treated group had significantly lower recidivism ($p > .001$) at the one, two, and three year recidivism collection points as compared to the untreated control groups (Year 1, $X^2 = 76.87$; Year 2, $X^2 = 27.5$; Year 3, $X^2 = 19.45$).

The IDOC Re-Entry Program is Achieving Its Goals.

1. "To reduce recidivism through a highly structured program where parolees modify their behavior patterns that lead to criminal activities:"

- As highlighted in the above table, parolees placed in the highly structured Southside Re-Entry program were reincarcerated for new criminal convictions at a much lower rate than the Westside group. This was true for parolees in each of the 3 cohorts – those released and in the community for 3 years, 2 years and 1 year. Overall, this represents a 40.6% reduction in new criminal convictions over the comparison group (or 263 fewer crimes committed) which translates into an estimated saving of \$3.6 million over 3 years to the Illinois taxpayers³.

2. "To decrease substance abuse and sex offender relapses."

- Fortunately, there were no reconvictions of sex offenders who were placed either in the DRC or in the Westside comparison sample during the study period. All sex offenders in the Re-Entry program were transferred by IDOC to other supervision modalities by mid-2000 based upon policy change. The decrease in sex offender relapses that this implies cannot be attributed to the Southside program intervention.
- The average number of UAs per month in the DRC that were positive for drug use or refused (counted as positive) was 16% for year one and 15.6% for year two. This indicated that approximately 84% of parolees were not using drugs in a given month, a significant figure considering the high percentage of substance abusers and addicts represented in the population. Serious addictions to crack

cocaine or heroin undoubtedly accounted for a number of program failures. Drug of abuse as related to outcome will be tracked in future program data gathering.

3. “Increase parolees’ ability to find jobs and stay employed.”

- The employment program at the Southside DRC was successful in preparing parolees for employment and placing them in suitable jobs. During the program’s first year, 24% of parolees were employed, 49% were employed during the second year, and 47.5% of parolees were employed during the third year. It was not possible to track how long each parolee maintained his/her job because of program movement, but this will be targeted in future data gathering efforts. It is important to note as well that many of the parolees entering Southside Day Reporting Center reported never having worked at a formal job before in their lives.

4. “To structure the activity of assigned parolees within the community and provide increased documentation to field agents.”

- This objective was accomplished through the immediate and continuing structure and accountability that was demanded of each parolee referred to the program beginning 24 hours after institutional release. This created some resentment from parolees who were not psychologically prepared for the transition to the DRC and felt that they had done their time and did not require close supervision. However, it was frequently remarked by parolees at later stages of the program that the structure had been very helpful for them. It has been BI’s experience that the close cooperation with the Department has been a key element of the program’s impact. It was essential that parolees understood that noncompliance would be dealt with promptly and firmly and IDOC field agents provided the essential enforcement element that the program required.

Conclusion

Preliminary results from the Southside Parolee Re-Entry Center described above confirm that the program has been successful in enhancing public safety and facilitating community reintegration for a number of parolees. Based upon three years of operation, the Southside Day Reporting

Center has served the vision to protect public safety, enforce zero tolerance for inmates, and offer services to those who truly want to better their lives.

Intensive Re-Entry programming puts parolee in a high visibility position that rapidly separates those who are serious about making changes from those who try to avoid responsibility. Noncompliant parolees are rapidly identified and sanctioned or returned to prison. The Southside program intends to work closely with the Department to continue with the development of effective responses for technical parole violators. It is urgent to leverage these parolees into positive action if feasible to maintain them in the community, preserving expensive prison beds for dangerous and violent inmates.

Footnotes

¹ Illinois Department of Corrections. *Request for Proposal: Day Reporting Center*. (January, 1997)

² Andrews, D.A., and Bonta, J. *The Level of Service Inventory-Revised Manual*, Multi-Health Systems, Inc. (Niagara Falls, NY, 1995), 14.

³ See full Three-Year Outcome Report for the IDOC for a complete explanation of the calculations.