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GOING HOME: THE WASHINGTON STATE REENTRY PROJECT *Interim Report: 18-Month Recidivism Rates for Program Participants*

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) was contracted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Department of Corrections' (DOC) "Going Home Project."¹ The program was designed to transition younger, high-risk, violent offenders into the community. To date, not enough time has passed to conduct an outcome evaluation with a comparison group. This interim report outlines our research design and provides 18-month recidivism rates for program participants.

I. The Going Home Project

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, developed a "Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative" designed for juvenile and adult offenders.² The federal initiative provided funding for states to develop, implement, and evaluate reentry strategies used to increase public safety and decrease serious, violent crime.

In 2001, the Department of Corrections (DOC) obtained \$2 million of this federal funding to develop "Going Home: The Washington State Reentry Project." The Going Home Project helped to transition high-risk offenders from incarceration to the community through various community partnerships. The Going Home Project began in July 2003. The last offenders to go through the program released to the community by June 2007, and the program has since ended.

Summary

The Department of Corrections' Going Home Project was designed to transition younger, high-risk, violent offenders into the community. Not enough time has passed to conduct a full outcome evaluation with 36-months follow-up; however, we provide interim recidivism outcomes for program participants.

After 18-months since participants of the Going Home Project released from prison, findings indicate the following percentage of offenders have been reconvicted to date:

- 15 percent for a violent felony,
- 43 percent for a felony, and
- 62 percent for a felony or misdemeanor.

The final outcome evaluation with 36-months follow-up will be available in July 2011.

The goals of the Going Home Project included the following:

- Transitioning offenders into the community by referring them to resources;
- Preparing communities for the return of offenders; and
- Increasing communication among DOC staff in order to prepare offenders for life in the community.

¹ This evaluation was approved by the Institute's Board of Directors on May 15, 2002.

² Retrieved on July 18, 2006 from <http://www.reentry.gov/sar/wa.html>

Program Eligibility

The Going Home Project was a pilot program designed for serious, violent offenders aged 18 to 35 at the time of release.³ Those eligible for the program were identified by DOC's assessment tool as Risk Management Intensive Transition (RMIT) offenders. RMIT offenders include any one of the following:

- Dangerously Mentally Ill Offenders (DMIO);⁴
- Offenders with a Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) score of 41 or higher, plus a conviction for a violent offense;
- Level III sex offenders (highest risk);
- Imminent risk offenders;
- High needs Risk Management Level B (RMB) offenders;⁵ or
- Offenders who committed a predatory act of violence directed toward a stranger were also eligible for the program, although this was not an RMIT criterion.

The program was piloted in King, Pierce, and Spokane Counties. Offenders eligible for the program must have released to one of these counties. In addition, offenders must have resided in one of the following DOC facilities: Washington State Penitentiary, Monroe Correctional Complex, Clallam Bay Corrections Center, or the Washington Corrections Center for Women.

Program Operation

Enrollment in the Going Home Project began at least 18 months prior to the offender's release. Offenders participated in a transition curriculum as well as other programs and treatment indicated by DOC's assessment tool.

³ Youth aged 14 to 21 incarcerated at the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration for at least six months were also eligible for the program; however, this evaluation only focuses on adult offenders.

⁴ DMIO designees are participants in the Community Integration Assistance Program (CIAP).

⁵ From 1999 to 2008, DOC used the Risk Management Identification system. Risk levels, in order of highest to lowest risk, include: RMA, RMB, RMC, and RMD. DOC now uses the Risk Level Classification system. For more information, see: R. Barnoski & E. K. Drake. (2007). *Washington's Offender Accountability Act: Department of Corrections' static risk instrument*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 07-03-1201.

DOC contracted with community advisors from various organizations to serve at each pilot site. The responsibilities of community advisors included preparing neighborhoods for the return of offenders through community education. They also developed lists of resources for offenders.

Community advisors recruited and trained volunteers to serve on Neighborhood Readiness Teams. Teams were developed three or four months prior to the offender's release. Video-conferencing systems were used to link offenders from the participating institutions with representatives from the pilot county.

II. Outcome Evaluation

To fully understand the program's effectiveness, we must compare the outcomes of offenders who participated in the Going Home Project with similar offenders who did not participate. In an ideal research setting, offenders would be randomly assigned to the Going Home Project or a comparison group. We did not have that option for this evaluation; thus, we construct a comparison group of similar offenders who did not participate in the program for the outcome evaluation.

Study Groups

DOC provided the Institute with a list of offenders who participated in the Going Home Project. From the program's inception to its completion, 146 offenders participated in the program. However, some offenders did not meet the program eligibility criteria and were eliminated from the study group.⁶ Additionally, four offenders did not have sufficient time for the 18-month recidivism analysis and were not included. A total of 131 offenders were available for the analysis.

⁶ Eleven people were eliminated from the Going Home Group in order to reduce bias when selecting an appropriate comparison group: four offenders did not meet the RMIT or stranger violence criteria for that incarceration period, according to DOC's risk assessment tool; three offenders were over 40 years old; and four offenders were released to other custody (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U. S. Marshals Service, or Western State Hospital) and were not available for a follow-up recidivism evaluation.

Recidivism Follow-up Period and Schedule

The Institute maintains a criminal history database, which is used to conduct recidivism research. This database is updated quarterly and consists of a synthesis of criminal charge information using data from the Administrative Office of the Courts and DOC.⁷

A minimum of 36-months follow-up is necessary to fully account for adult recidivism events.⁸ The 36-month recidivism follow-up period allows sufficient time to produce an outcome evaluation for the study groups. This final report will be available July 2011.

Since not enough time has passed at this point to conduct a full outcome evaluation with 36-months follow-up, we limit our recidivism outcomes to only program participants (not the comparison group) so that preliminary findings do not contribute to premature conclusions about program effectiveness.

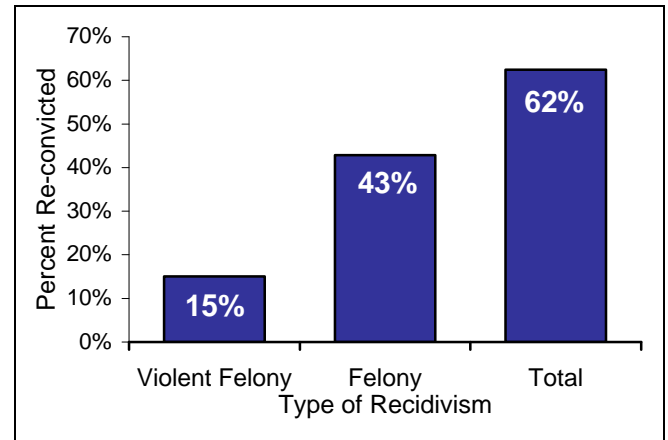
Recidivism Findings After 18-Months

Recidivism is defined as any offense committed after release to the community that results in a Washington State conviction.⁹ This definition includes convictions in juvenile and adult court. Three types of recidivism are reported:

- Violent felony convictions;
- Felony convictions, including violent felonies;
- Total recidivism, including felonies and violent felonies, as well as misdemeanor convictions.

Exhibit 1 displays 18-month recidivism rates for all measures—felony, violent felony, and total recidivism. After 18-months of release from prison, 15 percent of Going Home participants have been reconvicted for a violent felony; 43 percent have been reconvicted for a felony, and 62 percent have been reconvicted for a felony or misdemeanor.

Exhibit 1
18-Month Recidivism Rates
for Going Home Participants



Summary

At this point, not enough time has passed to conduct an outcome evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the Going Home Project. The final outcome evaluation with 36-months follow-up will be available July 2011.

⁷ The Institute conducts a matching process quarterly using the court case number and the primary identification number from the data systems to link criminal history records. While every effort is made to accurately identify persons across data sources, 100 percent accuracy is not possible. However, the Institute's criminal history database provides a reasonably accurate source of criminal charge data for aggregate reporting and analysis.

⁸ R. Barnoski (1997). *Standards for improving research effectiveness in adult and juvenile justice*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 97-12-1201. In addition to this follow-up period, time is needed to allow an offense to be processed in the criminal justice system, typically 12 months.

⁹ Ibid.

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