



## **Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program** *Evaluation Report*

**January 2014**

## Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program Evaluation Report

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## Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program Evaluation Report

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### I. INTRODUCTION

##### A. Program Background

The Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program involves a partnership among three entities: The 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court, The Jackson County Prosecutor's Office and the Missouri Department of Corrections. The ultimate goal of the program is to reduce violent crimes and re-offenses among parolees of the Missouri Department of Corrections by linking participants with existing services and eliminating possible reasons for re-incarceration (e.g., unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness).

##### B. Methodology

Cypress Research Associates, LLC conducted a process and outcome evaluation of the Parole Reentry Pilot Program. Methods consisted of:

- Interviews with program staff
- Interviews with program participants
- Participant tracking data (Program attendance, education, substance use, arrests)

#### II. RESULTS

##### A. PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SELECTION PROCESS

The first participants were selected into the program in November 2012. A total of 27 participants (24 males, 3 females) have been enrolled in the program since its inception.

##### **What could be improved about the participant selection process?**

###### **Staff Interview Results:**

- ✓ Need to consider additional selection criteria:
  - Mental health scores while incarcerated: MH1 or MH2
  - Low number of offenses while incarcerated
  - Age of parolee: Need people younger than age 65, because age 65 and older are not as employable (which is one of the primary goals of the program)
  - Offenders must reside in Jackson county following parole.
- ✓ Need to meet with participants in the institution 6-12 months (vs. 4-6 months) prior to release to:
  - Establish an ongoing relationship before parole
  - Arrange for basic identification/document needs such as ID, birth certificate, resume
  - Determine housing accommodations
  - Discuss goals and challenges after release

## B. PROGRAM PROCESSES

### Tracking Data Results: Services Received

Results from the tracking data reveal that all participants attended the Anger Management Class. For the one year period from November 2012 to October 2013.

- 92% attended the Job Readiness Classes through Connections to Success.
- 36% received housing assistance
- 24% received substance abuse assistance
- 16% received mental health services

## C. PROGRAM STRENGTHS

**Overall, what are the primary strengths of the Jackson County Parole Reentry program?**

### *Staff Interview Results:*

- ✓ Dedicated program staff
- ✓ Partnership among stakeholder organizations (MO Probation & Parole, Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, Judicial Circuit Court)
- ✓ Connections to Success – Job readiness training
- ✓ Pre-existing relationships with community support entities (e.g., Mental health facilities, housing) through COMBAT

**What have you found most valuable about the Parole Reentry Program? What has helped you the most?**

### *Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Job-Related Supports:
  - Job skills development; readiness classes; interviewing, application & resume assistance
  - Potential employers, temporary employers
  - School
- ✓ Connections to Success:
  - Mentors; general support
  - Adapt to life outside prison
  - People skills
- ✓ Housing

## D. BARRIERS TO PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

**What barriers, if any, exist to successfully carrying out the Jackson County Parole Reentry program?**

### *Staff Interview Results:*

- ✓ Difficult to find jobs for convicted felons, particularly in this economy and for older people
- ✓ Mental issues
- ✓ Front-line staff change issues
- ✓ Needed established partnership with Connections to Success (job readiness/training) from day one of program
- ✓ Lack of judge's authority to impose sanctions with parolees
- ✓ Difficulties with parolees reintegrating into their families after prolonged absence

## E. BARRIERS TO PARTICIPANT SUCCESS

### What factors contribute most to participants' failure in the program?

#### Staff Interview Results:

- ✓ Criminal thinking/resistance to change
- ✓ Poor community environment
- ✓ Lack of access to individual counseling
- ✓ Substance abuse
- ✓ Mental illness
- ✓ Poor physical health

### What has been most difficult for you in getting re-established into the community after your incarceration?

#### Participant Interview Results:

- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Skills training
- ✓ Lack of transportation; Adapting to life; Working with people

## F. SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

### How could the Jackson County Parole Reentry Program be improved?

#### Staff Interview Results:

- ✓ Provide access to long-term counseling: Individual, couples, family counseling
- ✓ Add a mentorship component
- ✓ Establish relationship with participants before release on parole
- ✓ Continually evaluate program successes/failures
- ✓ Need additional employment skills supports
- ✓ Leverage Department of Labor resources/programs currently underway within Department of Corrections
- ✓ Establish COMBAT-supported transitional housing to address housing barrier

### What could be improved about the Parole Reentry Program to make it more helpful for you or others?

#### Participant Interview Results:

- ✓ Provide access to a group of potential employers (pre-screened for serious felons)
- ✓ Continue support after participants graduate
- ✓ Provide access to another job readiness partner organization like *Connections to Success*
- ✓ First 6 Weeks – Mandatory individual meetings with Andre
- ✓ Develop a 'support group' of participants
- ✓ Additional transportation assistance
- ✓ Continue paying first 6 weeks wages at new job until established

## G. PROGRAM IMPACT

### What impact is the program having on participants?

#### Staff Interview Results:

- ✓ Support system of resources helps foster job and housing stability, and therefore life success
- ✓ Dedicated program staff to support parolees; encouragement from the judge
- ✓ The program fosters self-esteem, empowerment, autonomy
- ✓ Family support of the parolee is key

### What impact is the Parole Reentry Program having on you?

#### Participant Interview Results:

- ✓ General support
  - ✓ Personal support
- ✓ Employment assistance

## H. OUTCOMES DATA

Following are **key findings** of outcomes data collected by program staff:

- ✓ 20% have graduated the Parole Reentry Program since its inception.
- ✓ Only 28% have been terminated from program; only 20% re-offended (compared to US recidivism rate of 43% within 3 years).
- ✓ 56% (n=14) have participated in some type of education program (e.g., GED, Trade College, Community College).
- ✓ On average, 60% of participants have been employed each month for the past year.
- ✓ 21 of the 25 participants participated in drug testing; 5 participants had at least 1 failed result (24%).
- ✓ Marijuana was the most frequently used drug, followed by PCP.

## III. CONCLUSIONS

The Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program appears to have been successful in reducing recidivism rates and increasing positive outcomes for program participants. Only 20% of participants have re-offended during the first 1 ½ years of the program (compared to US recidivism rate of 43% within 3 years). The longer-term recidivism rate remains to be seen. Only 25% of participants failed least 1 drug test; participants with substance abuse issues were linked with substance abuse treatment resources, which may have prevented further drug use.

Aside from recidivism, participants of this type of program may be more likely to become functioning members of society than without such supports. A full 92% received job readiness support through Connections to Success. More than half of participants enrolled in some type of education program (e.g., GED, Trade College, Community College). On average, 60% of participants were employed each month during the tracking year. Just over one-third (36%) received housing assistance and 16% received mental health services.

Interview results revealed that the primary role of the Jackson County Parole Reentry program is to offer participants **emotional support** and **access to resources**. The **primary strengths** of the program are:

- ✓ Partnership among stakeholder organizations (MO Probation & Parole, Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, Judicial Circuit Court) allows for an alternative approach to parole reentry.
- ✓ Dedicated **program staff** are available to support parolees, determine their needs, and link them to necessary supports; the judge offers additional support and encouragement.
- ✓ A **support system of community resources** (including job readiness training, mental health & substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, education & training) helps foster job and housing stability, and therefore life success.
- ✓ At the level of the participant, the program helps **foster self-esteem, empowerment and autonomy**.

Following are **suggestions** for improving the Jackson County Parole Reentry program:

- ✓ **Offer additional employment support**
  - Provide access to another employment-focused partner organization like *Connections to Success*
  - Leverage Department of Labor resources/programs currently underway within Department of Corrections
  - Provide access to a group of potential employers (pre-screened for serious felons)
  - Continue paying first 6 weeks wages at new job until established
  - Offer additional transportation assistance (e.g., support in obtaining a vehicle) to allow for better access to employment
- ✓ **Offer additional resources in the following areas:**
  - Provide access to long-term counseling: Individual, couples, family counseling
  - Because issues with family re-integration can be a barrier to success, and because family support of the parolee is a key to success, continue to encourage family support
  - Add a mentorship component, whereby former felons and other community members mentor program participants
  - Offer group meetings of participants to serve as a 'support group'
  - Continue to support after participants they graduate
- ✓ **Engage in continuous assessment of program strengths/weaknesses**

Finally, following is a summary of **recommendations for selection of future participants** of the Jackson County Parole Reentry program:

- ✓ **Need to consider additional selection criteria:**
  - Mental health scores while incarcerated: MH1 or MH2
  - Low number of offenses while incarcerated
  - Age of parolee: Need people younger than age 65, because age 65 and older are not as employable (which is one of the primary goals of the program)
  - Offenders must reside in Jackson county following parole.
- ✓ **Need to meet with participants in the institution 6-12 months (vs. 4-6 months) prior to release to:**
  - Establish an ongoing relationship before parole
  - Arrange for basic identification/document needs such as ID, birth certificate, resume
  - Determine housing accommodations
  - Discuss goals and challenges after release

## **Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program Evaluation Report**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

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#### **A. PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

Cypress Research Associates conducted an evaluation of the Jackson County Parole Reentry Program. The Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program involves a partnership among three entities: The 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court, The Jackson County Prosecutor's Office and the Missouri Department of Corrections. The ultimate goal of the program is to reduce violent crimes and re-offenses among parolees of the Missouri Department of Corrections by linking participants with existing services and eliminating possible reasons for re-incarceration (e.g., unemployment, substance abuse, homelessness).

The Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program consists of 4 phases:

- Pre-Release: Offenders will be identified by the Department, reviewed and selected by the Jackson County Prosecutor's office. The Parole Reentry team will review offender information and created a preliminary action plan on each participating offender.
- Release: Each participating offender will have a special condition issued by the Parole Board to participate in the program.
- Reentry Project: During an 18 month period, the participant is expected to complete all components of their action plan. During this component, parolees will be linked with existing community services to prevent them from re-offending (e.g., substance abuse, housing, mental health).
- Discharge

The first participants were selected into the program in November 2012. A total of 27 participants (24 males, 3 females) have been enrolled in the program since its inception.



## B. METHODOLOGY

Cypress Research Associates, LLC conducted an evaluation to measure progress toward short-term, intermediate and long-term goals of the Parole Reentry Pilot Program. Following is a brief description of outcome evaluation methods and examples of variables that were assessed with each method:

Measurement area	Method	Examples of Variables Assessed
<b>1. Program process</b>	A. Interviews with program staff B. Interviews with participants <i>[both conducted by Cypress Research]</i>	Program process, strengths, outcomes, areas for improvement
<b>2. Program attendance/ participation tracking</b>	A. Participant tracking sheet * <i>[collected/maintained by program staff on a monthly basis]</i>	Number of parolees in program; date of enrollment, etc.  Attendance at anger management program  Participation in community services/supports (e.g., substance abuse assistance, mental health services, housing assistance)
<b>3. Education goals/employment</b>	A. Participant tracking sheet * <i>[collected/maintained by program staff on a monthly basis]</i>	Number of parolees enrolled in education program (GED, trade college, etc).  Number of parolees employed
<b>4. Substance use</b>	A. Drug testing records compiled by Jackson County Prosecutor's Office <i>[collected/maintained by program staff]</i>	Use of illegal drugs
<b>5. Arrests/convictions</b>	A. Court/police records <i>[collected/maintained by program staff]</i>	Arrests/convictions during program and up to 12 months after program

\*Tracking Data compiled by Parole Reentry Client Advocate for 1 year (November 2012-October 2013).

## II. RESULTS

### A. PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SELECTION PROCESS

A total of 27 participants (24 males, 3 females) have been enrolled in the Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program since its inception. Most participants (n=23) have been involved in the program since November 2012, while 4 males began the program in March 2013.

Description of participants	Current Outcomes (total participants=27)
Gender of participants	24 male*, 3 female

\*4 of these males began program in March 2013

Selection of parolees for inclusion in the Jackson County Parole Reentry program was conducted by:

- Missouri Probation & Parole
- Jackson County Prosecutor 's Office

Missouri Probation and Parole provided a pre-screened list to the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office. Parolees were selected to participate in the pilot program who met the following criteria:

- Offenders must have a minimum of 18 months remaining under supervision with the Department.
- Offenders must be under supervision for a Class A/B felony.
- Offenders shall not be convicted of any sex offense.
- Offenders must have substance abuse issues or a history of assaultive/aggressive behaviors.

Offenders were further screened/approved for inclusion in the program by the Jackson County Prosecutor prior to release. The Prosecutor's Office selected participants based on the types of crimes committed and based on results from an interview by the Parole Reentry advocate & parole officer to gauge their interest in the program and their motivational level.

One staff person noted the following about the **selection interview process**:

"In the interview, we were looking for a motivated individual. People who are motivated to do something different than where they are. Where do they see themselves 1 year from now, 5 years from now? What plans do they have when they get on parole? There's a set criteria for the guys to get put on a list, but we try to add extra component of the interview to gauge their interest and motivational level."

#### What could be improved about the participant selection process?

##### Staff Interview Results:

- ✓ Need to consider additional selection criteria:
  - Mental health scores while incarcerated: MH1 or MH2
  - Low number of offenses while incarcerated
  - Age of parolee: Need people younger than age 65, because age 65 and older are not as employable (which is one of the primary goals of the program)
  - Offenders must reside in Jackson county following parole.
- ✓ Need to meet with participants in the institution 6-12 months (vs. 4-6 months) prior to release to:
  - Establish an ongoing relationship before parole
  - Arrange for basic identification/document needs such as ID, birth certificate, resume
  - Determine housing accommodations
  - Discuss goals and challenges after release

Following are specific comments regarding **selection criteria** learnings.

"We got a client that shouldn't have been in the program because he had too many mental health issues, so he had difficulty with basic functioning. We learned this early on and made changes. We also look at poor behavior while incarcerated."

"I've learned that the older someone is - if made it to senior citizen - not likely to be a good fit, even though they meet other criteria. One of the weaknesses - should be a cut off age, because it's less likely they'll be successful if they're not able to get employment. After a certain age, they don't work. That's one of our primary goals - to get employment - to put them on a path of being responsible. That's one of the criteria of being on parole."

"Our lists came from our research dept. We work together fine, but there was a process they had to go through, too. There are thousands of people on supervision in Missouri even more incarcerated. They had a lot of people to go through to see where they were moving. Their data had to be accurate."

"We found that it would be best if we contacted individuals 6-12 months ahead of release to establish an ongoing relationship before they got on parole. It would help give us ability to get information we need from them regarding getting them ID, birth certificate, resume - things they can accomplish BEFORE they get out."

"If we can get a much longer window to work with these people prior to their release, that would be helpful. We need to be inside institutions a year before release. That would give us more time to talk about goals, challenges on the streets. We only had 4-6 months."

## B. PROGRAM PROCESSES

### B1. Program Activities

Results from the staff interviews revealed the following program processes and activities of the Jackson County Parole Reentry Program:

#### Before Parole:

Parole officer and Client Advocate meet with participant at least once while incarcerated in order to:

- Establish an ongoing relationship before parole
- Arrange for basic identification/document needs such as ID, birth certificate, resume
- Determine housing accommodations
- Discuss goals and challenges after release

#### After Parole:

- Required visit parole officer and/or client advocate within 24-48 hours of release.
- Meet with client advocate: Weekly
- Meet with Judge: Every other month

#### Program Supports After Parole:

- Anger Management Class (Mandatory 6-week class that starts immediately upon release)
- Housing Assistance
- Substance Abuse Assistance
- Mental Health Services
- Job Readiness (Connections to Success): Meet with job developer, develop resume, attend job readiness training
- Gas Vouchers as incentives to attend Job Readiness class
- Second Chance housing grant (assists with deposit, first month's rent)

Following are specific comments about some of the above program activities:

#### ✓ **Meeting with Parole Officer/Client Advocate**

"They start meeting with advocate while in prison. The client advocate does a home visit to wherever person would be placed."

"Once they've been selected, the parole officer and client advocate will visit them in person and explain the process. Once released, they have 24 or 48 hours to visit the parole officer and client advocate. From there, the parole officer has contact with them. The parole officer does brief assessment with them, has them fill out paperwork with them, and sets up short-term and long-term goals."

"When they first come out of prison, we meet with them once a week for at least a month or until they find employment. Then, it usually goes to twice a month, then once a month."

"They see the client advocate and the parole officer together. If they're employed, they don't need to meet with us as often. We see them at least once a month, but some need to be seen more."

✓ **Bi-monthly Meeting with Judge**

"Besides anger management training, the other mandatory thing is going to court every other month. At the beginning, they met with the judge once a month, but we found that when client got employed, they having to meet with the parole officer AND judge was too much. They have to take time off work, they go to Connections to Success. Those components were more important than meeting monthly with judge."

"The parolees meet with the judge once every other month. This program models other programs like drug court. The idea is to attempt to have a person of authority as a positive factor for the individuals, because these guys are coming out of the penitentiary, so their experience with judges is negative because a judge sent them there. You use the authority of a judge in a different way vs. to punish the individual. You use it as a means by which you can turn that individual in a positive way vs. a negative way. I usually get all the reports of what has happened in their lives, treatment, and employment and go over them the day before. I have a briefing with staff that deals with their treatment, their support systems, employment, etc. Then, I'm familiar with everything that's happened in their life since the last time I saw them. If they got a job, I know that, if they lost a job, I know that, if they got housing, I know that. I try to encourage and to compliment them, so they have a different feeling about the judge and themselves. If they don't have a job, I try to tell them how great it would be to get a job and work 8 hours a day."

✓ **Housing**

"They have to have a place to live. The support systems for housing are very good through the program. They are very well connected with entities in the community where participants might be able to find an apartment."

✓ **Job Readiness (Connections to Success)**

"Participants get gas vouchers as incentives to attend job readiness trainings - e.g., resumes, dress for interview. They also get guidance about how to get the proper ID – getting their birth certificate before they get their driver's license. We're starting from scratch. These guys have totally lost touch with the outside."

## **B2. Tracking Data Results: Services Received**

Results from the tracking data reveal that all participants attended the Anger Management Class. For the one year period from November 2012-October 2013, the large majority of participants (92%) attended the Job Readiness Classes through Connections to Success. Just over one-third (36%) received housing assistance, and one-fourth (24%) received substance abuse assistance. Only 4 of the 25 participants (16%) received mental health services.

<b>Services Received:*</b>	<b>Out of n=25</b>
<b># of respondents who have participated in:</b>	
Anger Management Classes	25 (100%)
Job Readiness Classes	23** (92%)
Housing Assistance	9 (36%)
Substance Abuse Assistance	6 (24%)
Mental Health Services	4 (16%)

\*Summary of Tracking Data completed by Parole Reentry Advocate for 1 year (November 2012-October 2013).

\*\*2 individuals who acquired jobs immediately after release did not attend job readiness class

**B3. Participant Interview Results: Services Received****What have you found most valuable about the Parole Reentry Program? What has helped you the most?***Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ **Job-Related Supports:** (4 comments)
  - Job skills development; readiness classes; interviewing, application & resume assistance
  - Potential employers, temporary employers
  - School
- ✓ **Connections to Success:** (3 comments)
  - Mentors; general support
  - Adapt to life outside prison
  - People skills
- ✓ **Housing** (1 comment)

Following are specific comments:

"The best is helping me get back into society; job skills; getting a job; going to school. It's all very helpful."

"Connections to Success. They've helped preparing me for job interviews, filling out applications, assisting me with thing I need. They're always supportive reminding me to never give up. They helped me find temporary jobs."

"Assistance coming out of prison like putting me in touch with job readiness classes, organizations like Connections to Success to help guys like myself with resumes, applications, potential employers, and directing us to proper people to get us set up with housing."

"Connections to Success gave me a mentor to help get me prepared and ready. They helped me adapt to life, give me employment and people skills."

**Has it been helpful to meet with the judge? Why or why not?***Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ **Helpful** (2 comments)
- ✓ **Not helpful** (1 comment)
- ✓ **Scheduling challenges** (1 comment)

Following are specific comments:

"It has all been positive for me because he seems to take a genuine interest in each individual case and offers good advice."

"Meeting with the judge was helpful because he gave us a lot of information we needed to hear. He'd say 'keep up the good work.' If we were slacking he'd tell us where we needed to pick up on it. He made us feel good when we heard him say we're doing a good job. Someone like that telling us we're doing a good job – I don't see how it could be improved."

"I don't get anything out of meeting with the judge. I guess I've had bad experiences with judges. So, I don't get anything out of going in front of the judge. He's not benefiting me in any way. I participate, but don't get anything from it."

"This is the worst part of the whole program. The judge seems very open-minded and wants everyone to do better. But we are all just getting back into the workforce. I shouldn't have to take off work to go down there so often to meet with the judge. Considering everything we're trying to accomplish, just a letter or note of encouragement without coming down to meet him so often would be much better."

**Has it been helpful to meet with the Parole Reentry Advocate (Andre) and the parole officer (Debbie)? Why or why not?**

*Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Helpful (3 comments)
- ✓ Initially helpful / Later in program, Job scheduling challenges (1 comment)

Following are specific comments:

"I meet regularly with both. Andre provided me with resources with job opportunities, housing and any personal matters. He was there to discuss it all. Debbie is there for all of it, too. They both make sure things are going well in our lives."

"I find this very helpful. They're both understanding, helpful. The only thing they want is for you to be open and let them know what's going on with you. If you don't tell them, they don't know and can't help. I can't ask for better people to work with under these circumstances."

"I meet with Debbie once a month and during my meeting I meet with Andre at the same time. It's helpful because you may not always get hear what you want to hear, but it enlightens me and the honest communication is really good. With Debbie and Andre it's like meeting with your parents – They are straightforward, they don't cut corners, and they tell you what's going on and where you need to work on something. I'm very pleased with my transition back into society with Debbie and Andre. They work around my work schedule, too. I just can't think of any improvements."

"I've been in the program so long that continuing to meet with Andre and Debbie is kind of discouraging now. I don't want to go down and meet with them every week now. More than twice a month is too much now that I have a job. It's too hard. It would be better if I could call them. The first week of my new job I had to take off for 2 to 3 hours to wait on a bus to get me to the meeting and back. Last week I had to call my job because I couldn't get back to work in time after getting downtown for these meetings."

**Do you feel the anger management class helped you? Why or why not? If so, in what ways?***Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Helpful (3 comments)
  - Identify areas of concern if not addressed
  - If open-minded, is beneficial
  - Better deal with confrontations, anger and frustrations
- ✓ Somewhat helpful (1 comment)

Following are specific comments:

"Yes, the class was helpful. It helped me identify some areas which could've been of concern if I hadn't addressed them."

"For me, the class was necessary. Sometimes I can find myself getting angry or upset with a person. I find myself going back and looking at my notes before I act on my anger or frustration. The class was good and smooth with a good instructor."

"The class was helpful. But the impact it makes is up to the individual. If you want to do something to improve and not be in denial that everyone has anger management issues, then you can take the class and improve. I had a lot of classes like this while incarcerated. They help me deal with things and confrontations with people out here. I now understand that I can learn from everything and everybody."

"The class was somewhat helpful. I took it when I first got out. It helps you open up and see things that you possible couldn't see before."



**How has *Connections to Success* helped you? Any improvements needed?***Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Helpful (4 comments)
  - ✓ Job readiness: Job skills development; readiness classes; interviewing, application & resume assistance; work clothes;
  - ✓ Life skills development; coping with family
  - ✓ Job developer/counselor: Job leads; tracking
  - ✓ Pays potential employers first 6 weeks' salary to encourage hire
  - ✓ Mentors; general support
- ✓ Recommend *Connections to Success* to others outside program (2 comments)
- ✓ No improvements (4 comments)

Following are specific comments for Helpful:

"*Connections to Success* put me in Job Readiness classes. They helped prepare me for interviews, how to dress on the interview and provided us with clothes. That was helpful. A job developer or counselor I meet with regularly gives me leads and monitors how I'm doing and helps work kinks I might run into. *Connections to Success* now pays potential employers the first 6 weeks' salary to make sure they should take a chance on us. It wasn't started until later in the program. I would've gotten a job sooner if that had been in place from the beginning."

"They help us with a lot of things - showing you how to do a resume, how to prepare for a job interview, life skills, how to cope with family. They do a lot of things for us."

"They've helped me preparing me for job interviews, filling out applications, assisting me with things I need, always being supportive, to never give up. The staff is very supportive. All you got to do is participate and reach out to you and they'll help you."

"I've used *Connections to Success*, am still using it and will probably use it after I finish with Reentry."

Following are specific comments for Recommend *Connections to Success* to others outside program:

"I also recommend a lot of guys and women to *Connections to Success* outside of the program."

"Sometimes people don't believe in themselves enough, get through the mental thing. I will tell other people to go through *Connections to Success*. I've been through enough, I'm not getting younger. *Connections* is an outlet I'll never let go of. There are people on the street that may never have been to prison but have ideas that can get them in trouble and can benefit from *Connections*. I want to keep all these positive contacts for me in the future and to help other people."

**Have you received support through Parole Reentry Program to help you with Education/Certification?***Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Yes (2 comments)
  - ✓ Forklift Certification
  - ✓ Hazardous Materials Certification
- ✓ No (2 comments)
  - ✓ Forklift Certification through Catholic Charities

**Have you received support through Parole Reentry Program to help you with Housing/Rent? Was it helpful? Why or why not?***Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Yes (4 comments)
  - ✓ List of budget-friendly housing options
  - ✓ Pay first month's rent & utilities through program *Second Chances* and *Connections to Success*

Following are specific comments:

"Recently they gave me a letter in the mail with a list of housing and places for rent that meet my budget. I looked into some of them and will go look at more, too. With *Connections* they help with getting housing. They also help us actually find different places that meet my income criteria with a location close to work."

"Andre put me in touch with a program called *Second Chances*. They paid my first month's rent which was really helpful. They helped locate an apartment complex that accepts someone with a felony. After the first month, if you want to keep your housing and you have a job, you got to be willing to take it over yourself. I can't think of anything to improve their support."

"I have been told that *Connections* will help me find a place to live and that they will pay the first month's rent and utilities provided that I'm working. I'm not sure if they will help me find the place; that would be great."

"The program helped me pay my rent one time through *Connections*."

## C. PROGRAM STRENGTHS

### C1. Staff Interview Results: Program Strengths

**Overall, what are the primary strengths of the Jackson County Parole Reentry program?**

**Staff Interview Results:**

- ✓ Dedicated program staff
- ✓ Partnership among stakeholder organizations (MO Probation & Parole, Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, Judicial Circuit Court)
- ✓ Connections to Success – Job readiness training
- ✓ Pre-existing relationships with community support entities (e.g., Mental health facilities, housing) through COMBAT

Following are examples of specific comments:

✓ **Dedicated program staff**

"I think the strengths are the support systems in place and the people that are in place to run those support systems. They have some very good people that go beyond the call of duty to help these people. One young person had just come out of penitentiary and was really depressed. I heard a staff member say, 'You can call me anytime.' They are dedicated to helping these people."

"The relationship between Missouri probation and parole, the prosecutor's office and Connections to Success is key. The parole officer and client advocate work very well together. The partnership has worked amazingly and has given clients the stability and trust they need to know they'll get the help they deserve. The client has option of working with either one of them. They are required to meet with parole officer, but Andre and Debbie worked it out that as long as client is communicating with one or the other, that's ok."

"We have the right staff. There's a great team going out to constantly visit them in their homes. Hiring a former felon as the client advocate was the best thing we ever did. He understands these guys better than we do."

✓ **Partnership among stakeholder organizations**

"From my perspective, working in the bureaucracy for 20+ years, the thing that stands out the most for me is the fact that we have a prosecutor and a judge and probation/parole chairman that said, 'We are going to come together and do this.' That is so outside the box. That represented a wave of change to me that I had not seen in all my years. It couldn't have happened 15 years ago though. Some would say, 'Why would the prosecutor's office get involved with reentry program?' It takes courage to put something in place like this."

"The team effort with the Parole officer, the client advocate, prosecutor's office, the judge and Connections to Success - everyone working together."

✓ **Connections to Success**

"Connections to Success is a great asset to us – they do whole employment piece."

"One of the other components we send our guys through (90%) is *Connections to Success*. If you come out with a job, we don't make it mandatory. Their primary function is to get the guys job-ready. Their main objective is to get men and women job-ready skills, interviewing, get work habits up to where they should be, resume-building, how to dress, etc. Was 1 week, now 2 1/2 weeks. That's a big strength. We work with them hand-in-hand. We try to meet with them every other week or once a week to get on same page. They do case management on our guys. Once they graduate from the week long program, they get to sit down in front of actual employers and do mock interview training and can even get a job with them."

✓ **Pre-existing relationships with community support entities (e.g., Mental health facilities, housing) through COMBAT**

"Building on existing infrastructure of our combat unit. All the years we have been doing this come into play. We already have a client advocacy center. We already have a myriad of partnerships with mental health facilities, etc. already in place because of COMBAT."

"Connections with job, training to find jobs, voucher system; connections for housing."

## D. BARRIERS TO PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### D1. Staff Interview Results: Barriers to Implementation

**What barriers, if any, exist to successfully carrying out the Jackson County Parole Reentry program?**

**Staff Interview Results:**

- ✓ Difficult to find jobs for convicted felons, particularly in this economy and for older people
- ✓ Mental issues
- ✓ Front-line staff change issues
- ✓ Needed established partnership with *Connections to Success* (job readiness/training) from day one of program
- ✓ Lack of judge's authority to impose sanctions with parolees
- ✓ Difficulties with parolees reintegrating into their families after prolonged absence

Following are examples of comments regarding these themes:

✓ **Difficult to find jobs for convicted felons, particularly in this economy and for older people**

"The selection of jobs they have available to them is very minimal. Being able to connect them to the jobs that are available is key. No one is going to hire these guys. It's helpful that there is some entity there that has identified employers that WILL hire them. Even if it's not something they enjoy at first. I tell them, it's ok, because at least you're employed and functioning in society - you can keep looking."

"An obvious barrier is it's a hard time for anyone to find a job. Then, we're asking people who have 0 work history and a felony on their record to find a job. The state of the economy right now is a huge barrier, and how long it will actually take someone who has been locked up for 30+ years to find a job and get back on their feet."

"It can be harder to find jobs for older people."

✓ **Mental issues**

"Another barrier is trying to help people with dual mental disorders. We had one guy with schizophrenia. We had places to try to send him, but it took a lot of hours to try to arrange that. That was one of the things we put in place - MH3 diagnosis through DOC. We try to look for MH1."

"Many of them have been institutionalized in terms of their brains. They were told what to do every day. We have to understand it's going to be very difficult for these people."

✓ **Staff change issues**

"I think it's really important to have the team on the front lines to be stable. We've had some changes with staff. We had an officer change on our side that was huge."

"Starting out, it was to get the direct service staff on the same page. For example, not being willing to do a home visit at night, or if not at home, they wouldn't go back. They had to break with the existing parole officer structure in dealing with this difficult population. They had to change the staff person to someone who was willing to do things differently."

✓ **Needed established partnership with *Connections to Success* (job readiness) from day one of program**

"I wish we had *Connections* in place from Day 1. We were so focused on getting partnership together. We needed to have that resource on board. We still need to tighten that. They need to be part of the MOU. We needed to have a person signed on that's not a Substance Abuse treatment provider - just a general provider. They could provide things like glasses, steel-toe boots, and transportation. These are not normally things we do. This is a catch-all network - how to carry yourself on the job."

✓ **Lack of judge's authority to impose sanctions with parolees**

"One barrier is that the judge really doesn't have any authority over these people. I have no jurisdiction over parolees. I do on probation, but not on parole. It's just a handshake between us and the prosecutor's office to try to help. In the drug courts, there is good evidence that some type of a small sanction does help, but we can't do that. A shock to their system helps. It's been proven in drug court. 24-hour shock time for them to realize, 'I do not want go back here.'"

Lastly, one staff member simply noted the difficulties that exist with **parolees reintegrating into their families after prolonged absence.**

## E. BARRIERS TO PARTICIPANT SUCCESS

### E1. Staff Interview Results: Barriers to Success

**What factors contribute most to participants' failure in the program?**

**Staff Interview Results:**

- ✓ Criminal thinking//resistance to change
- ✓ Poor community environment
- ✓ Lack of access to individual counseling
- ✓ Substance abuse
- ✓ Mental illness
- ✓ Poor physical health

✓ **Criminal thinking/resistance to change**

"Criminal thinking."

"Some people never wanted to be in the program to begin with. They're not ready for change."

"Their lack of trust - it's very understandable. If a guy has been institutionalized for 15 years, it's hard for them to comprehend that we're here to help."

"For some people in their 60's - prison is all they knew, so they went back again. We have some guys who came out in their 20's who were hard headed and didn't want to change. Finding that middle age, 30's and 40's, seemed to be a little more successful."

"It can be about mindset - you get stuck in a certain way of life. Not wanting to change or being fearful of changing. It's difficult to measure. Some people simply have a genuine distrust for the system. Even if you're presented with a hand-up, there's still that distrust there and it's not taken."

✓ **Poor community environment**

"Environment. They get right back to the crime because that's what goes on in their neighborhood."

"One of the guys was shot and killed. That's reflective of the community."

"Some things you can measure - people end up regressing because they get involved in people they got in trouble with the first time."

✓ **Lack of access to individual counseling**

"One guy got arrested. He had a job, and the people at the job liked him. They liked the way he worked and talked about promoting him. Out of the blue, he commits a crime. For him to do that - he needed to talk to somebody about something that was going on with him. We didn't catch it. There's an adjustment conversation that needs to have them."

Other people simply mentioned the following as factors related to unsuccessful program completion:

- Substance abuse
- Mental illness
- Poor physical health

## **E2. Participant Interview Results: Barriers to Success**

**What has been most difficult for you in getting re-established into the community after your incarceration?**

*Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Employment (4 comments)
- ✓ Skills training (1 comment)
- ✓ Lack of transportation; Adapting to life; Working with people (1 comment)

Following are specific comments:

"Finding a job would have been a problem if not for the program. But right now, nothing. With my family it was easy to come back in, get to know them, spend time with them. Like I said, finding a job wasn't that hard with Parole Reentry. Things just came natural to me because of Parole Reentry."

"Just employment, I guess. You apply for jobs and you know how to do them with the skills you have. But they bring up one question – have you been convicted of a crime – and you don't get the job. I got this job through a temporary service and hope it will become permanent."

"Getting an employer to take a chance on me is the biggest obstacle. I've been employed now for 12-13 months at the same place."

"Jobs. My job is only minimum wage at 10-15 hours a day. I want more. I want to keep this job until I can get a better one. Lack of transportation is a real problem for me though. For this job I have someone that takes me to work and if they can't take me I take 2 buses to get to work. There are better, higher paying jobs that I am qualified for. But I don't have a vehicle so I can't take them right now. Skilled training, and adapting and working for people are also challenging at first."



## F. SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

### F1. Staff Interview Results: Suggestions for Improvement

#### How could the Jackson County Parole Reentry Program be improved?

##### Staff Interview Results:

- ✓ Provide access to long-term counseling: Individual, couples, family counseling
- ✓ Add a mentorship component
- ✓ Establish relationship with participants before release on parole
- ✓ Continually evaluate program successes/failures
- ✓ Need additional employment skills supports
- ✓ Leverage Department of Labor resources/programs currently underway within Department of Corrections
- ✓ Establish COMBAT-supported transitional housing to address housing barrier

#### ✓ Provide access to long-term counseling: Individual, couples, family

"There definitely needs to be a long-term counseling component which would involve more of a cognitive/behavioral component. Anger management doesn't teach ways to change thinking and using therapeutic community in groups to get feedback and hold them accountable. I would like to see what's done in sex offender program with these guys. They look at cognitive distortion, etc., work on assignments and share them in group. They learn core negative beliefs that you learned growing up and how those affect you now. They write an empathy letter where they write a letter as if they were the victim. That is a core component that is missing. The guys need a lot of that support. They know each other from prison. If they had a group weekly and do assignments and learn to change the way they're thinking. When you're aware of the cognitive distortion, you're able to change it. Many of them aren't aware of it. Part of the problem - need to identify own triggers. Being made to identify cognitive distortions and then they can work toward change."

"We would like to have a staff available for counseling, whether it's family therapy, couples counseling, individual counseling for stressful moments - those moments happen and they don't know how to deal with it. Someone who we have identified as THE counselor for our guys."

"One thing we're still working on is family counseling. Finding someone who can help these guys transition. Mom, kids, telling kids what to do. Haven't found an agency that can help these people. Not enough existing resources in the community for family counseling for reentry."

#### ✓ Add a mentorship component

"Get our guys mentors. Once they get out, we would like to see guys who have been successful already in the program be mentors to guys that come out later. But, we wouldn't limit it to them - we would look at other people to be mentors, as well"

"We may need a mentor piece. They need to want to be mentors, though - they can't be afraid."

"I would also like to see guys that graduate become mentors to the other participants. Until they learn about changing behavior and work through trauma and have insights into own life, I don't think they'll be as successful."

✓ **Establish relationship with participants before release on parole**

"Again, we need to get to the guys and establish the relationship before they're out. Being active, calling up on phone, making visits, establish relationship, do goal setting."

"What needs to happen is to get a hold of these people a year out – get to know them, their families. We need several contacts with the family prior to release. We need to be identifying those people NOW who will be paroled in 2015 to include them in the program."

✓ **Continually evaluate program successes/failures**

"Always reevaluating what's working as far as their support systems and what is not. What jobs are working? Are we doing enough to find them housing in the right environment so they don't fail? That's one of the best ways to do it is through sheer experience."

"One of the lessons learned is tightening up the identification of what is needed - the barriers tied to criminogenic needs. What things are present for those who commit crimes soon after release? We try to use evidence-based practices. We are not over/under supervising people. We try to determine 2-3 clinical areas to focus on. For example, we try to determine housing plans: Where will they live? Who will they live with? With children? We then know what direction we need to steer them in. What we're doing is following up on what we learned while they were in the institution. If there's not in home plan, put in temporary housing, CRC, halfway house."

✓ **Need additional employment skills supports**

"We have 1 solution to help people find a job: Connections to Success. But simply getting people into a job is not the end-all-be-all. One guy, for example, can't work a computer. He's failed at multiple jobs. For him, it's him figuring out what to do with the rest of his life without knowing computers. We also have a guy who got on disability because of an injury, so he's not allowed to work. We haven't found things to do to occupy his day. Everyone thinks he's selling drugs again. We need different alternatives besides the one of going to Connections."

✓ **Leverage Department of Labor resources/programs currently underway within Department of Corrections**

"We need to recruit the guys that were participating in transitional housing units while incarcerated. Why? I believe in leveraging resources. Those transitional housing units were designed to help people transition out within the institution. We have 32 or 39 Department of Labor certified programs within the MO Department of Corrections. One might train for DOL mechanic jobs, woodworking or plumbing. Some of the guys who were transitioning out might already have been certified. We need to look at what's going on inside and see if we can mirror or connect with work currently being done in institutions and continue it."

✓ **Establish COMBAT-supported transitional housing to address housing barrier**

"If we had all the money in the world and could have a shelter of our own/ housing of our own, that would be great. Ran our own transitional housing, could staff 24/7, could take that barrier away. A lot of the shelters do take felons in. But, low-income housing won't take felons. So, they live with family members. Isn't always the healthiest place, because family taught them to be where they are. With family, they're going back to the same neighborhood that got them into the problems in the first place."

**F2. Participant Interview Results: Suggestions for Improvement****What could be improved about the Parole Reentry Program to make it more helpful for you or others?***Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ Provide access to a group of potential employers (pre-screened for serious felons) (2 comments)
- ✓ Continue support after participants graduate (2 comments)
- ✓ Provide access to another job readiness partner organization like *Connections to Success* (1 comments)
- ✓ First 6 Weeks – Mandatory individual meetings with Andre (1 comment)
- ✓ Develop a 'support group' of participants
- ✓ Additional transportation assistance (1 comment)
- ✓ Continue paying first 6 weeks wages at new job until established

Following are specific comments for **Group of Potential Employers**:

"Guys who have serious felonies like murder or robbery, some system is needed where they can actually have some employers who will give them a chance rather than tell us there are possible opportunities – go and try it. We go and they're scared off right away. If employers can be told ahead of time to consider the serious felons that would help."

"More job leads for felons. More opportunities and options for someone who has my history. A lot of times when you fill out an application they ask if you've been convicted of a felony in the last 7 years and I can't get that job."

Following are specific comments for **Continued Post-Program Support**:

"Will I have the same parole officer when I finish the Parole Reentry Program? She extended me 6 months. Will I leave and Debbie still be my parole officer? I would prefer that. I'm acquainted on a personal level and she helps me with advice. Another officer my only care that I follow their rules and not care about me as a person. I'll make it no matter what, but that may cause problems for someone in the future."

"It would help if they keep involved in support past the end of the program. Andre and Debbie have said I'm welcome to come in and see them any time."

## Following are specific comments for the remaining themes:

"It would help if we had another partner like *Connections to Success* that might want to come in and aid and assist to give more support. A lot of guys are returning home and a lot of us don't have someone to give them guidance and help in the journey to make them successful."

"It should be mandatory for the first 6 weeks of the program that each person meets with Andre. He can individually tag team with them to find out what they're doing, what a person needs, questions they have and provide that broader life perspective. If they don't interact early and often enough at the beginning with Andre, they might hit some difficulties and fail. All the supports need to be given with close tracking and interaction with Andre. Andre should also have group meetings to talk about what each person is going through. This way, you'll hear it and know you're not alone."

"More assistance with transportation. I have employment opportunities in Kansas but I may get off work too late to take a bus back into Missouri. There may only be 2 buses and if I miss them I can't get home at night. For one construction job I had to carry my tools and catch 4 buses. That wasn't working out."

## G. PROGRAM IMPACT

### G1. Staff Interview Results: Program Impact

#### What impact is the program having on participants?

##### Staff Interview Results:

- ✓ Support system of resources helps foster job and housing stability, and therefore life success
- ✓ Dedicated program staff to support parolees; encouragement from the judge
- ✓ The program fosters self-esteem, empowerment, autonomy
- ✓ Family support of the parolee is key

#### ✓ Support system of resources helps foster job and housing stability, and therefore life success

"The support systems are key. Is it easy for someone to succeed without a job or a home? If we can get someone on the right track with the right footing - job, home. We've had 3 different participants buy a car. It was huge for them. Those are the foundations for them to get back on track. You have to have the essentials of life, then you can begin to work on other things - substance abuse, family relations, etc."

"It's not just about getting them a job, but giving them a support system that they wouldn't have on their own. Even once they graduate, they can always call anyone of us and we'll be there to help them in any way that we can."

"Utilizing available resources and support systems to help them become functioning members of society."

"The biggest initial need for these folks is housing, and we help them with that."

#### ✓ Dedicated program staff to support parolees; encouragement from the judge

"I think it is having the right people doing the right thing at the right time. That's really impactful. We are very lucky to have both the advocate and the PO. Getting the right people is key. The other piece is going in front of the judge. Just the fact that this person cares enough is important - it causes the clients to look at us a different way. They learn to trust us. If you have an officer that's fair but firm; point out issues and hold you accountable."

"I think it's bridging the gap with a person or people to assist them as they return from an institution to the community. Whether they just go to Connections to Success or see the client advocate a regular basis - it gives them a person they can count on no matter what. Helps them with resources they wouldn't get otherwise. Hopefully, but them continuously coming down into courthouse and before judge - helping them reshape attitudes toward criminal justice. They don't have to come, but they do. Law enforcement being available to help them."

#### ✓ Program fosters self-esteem, empowerment, autonomy

"I think our participants are coming away with greater self-esteem. An idea that they can actually be successful while on parole. That life isn't mitigated by their past. That if they build up a resume so to speak from here on out, people will look at that than simply their past. Them hiring me was one of the reasons to give them that motivation, being that I'm an ex-offender. Helps them see they are not stuck where they are."

"I think one of the contributing factors is them creating goals and being able to follow through with them and seeing them happen. Creating and completion of goals. A lot of the guys didn't believe they could do certain things. Opens their eyes to being successful in other ways."

"They wanted change. Those that did succeed wanted to make change - want job, want family. Hopefully our program helped motivate and support them to do that. A lot of people feel it's so complicated for them, seems impossible to have a normal life."

"Their attitude is key and being able to maintain employment."

✓ **Family support of the parolee is key**

"If they have a family support system, that helps. Some have negative 'significant other' relationships that cause a lot of problems. A huge factor is if they're even ready to even want this new lifestyle. Some of them are career criminals - that is their career. If that's what they want to do, there's nothing we're going to do to change their mind."

"One of the other things we try to encourage is family support. We try to get family members involved in the process and create support system. That's been a contributing factor to their success."

## **G2. Participant Interview Results: Program Impact**

### **What impact is the Parole Reentry Program having on you?**

#### *Participant Interview Results:*

- ✓ General support (4 comments)
  - ✓ Personal support
- ✓ Employment assistance (2 comments)

Following are specific comments about **General Support**:

"The program is having a positive effect on me because I never thought I'd get out [of prison] and be successful – be at this point getting back on my feet, having two jobs and my own vehicle."

"It's helped me realize by being sponsored by the prosecutor's office that there are some who care about offenders and helping us make a smooth transition instead of providing no help with resources and just kicking us out and expecting us to do the right thing. They're giving us the help we need. We're serious about keeping our lives on track and their help is what we need."

"They are helping support us. But we got to do the footwork ourselves. They are opening doors but will shut them on you if you don't do the work. The program has helped immensely."

"Everybody needs somebody. I was down for a long time. I needed to know someone is there if I run into hardship. Now I have an outlet of people who know what I'm going through. That's a plus. Usually parole officers only give feedback they need to give and answer questions you ask them. These people open the door to more personal things to help me. I have a team of people who care and support me."

Following are specific comments about **Employment Assistance**:

"If it weren't for Parole Reentry, I wouldn't be working with my prior conviction. I would be unemployed."

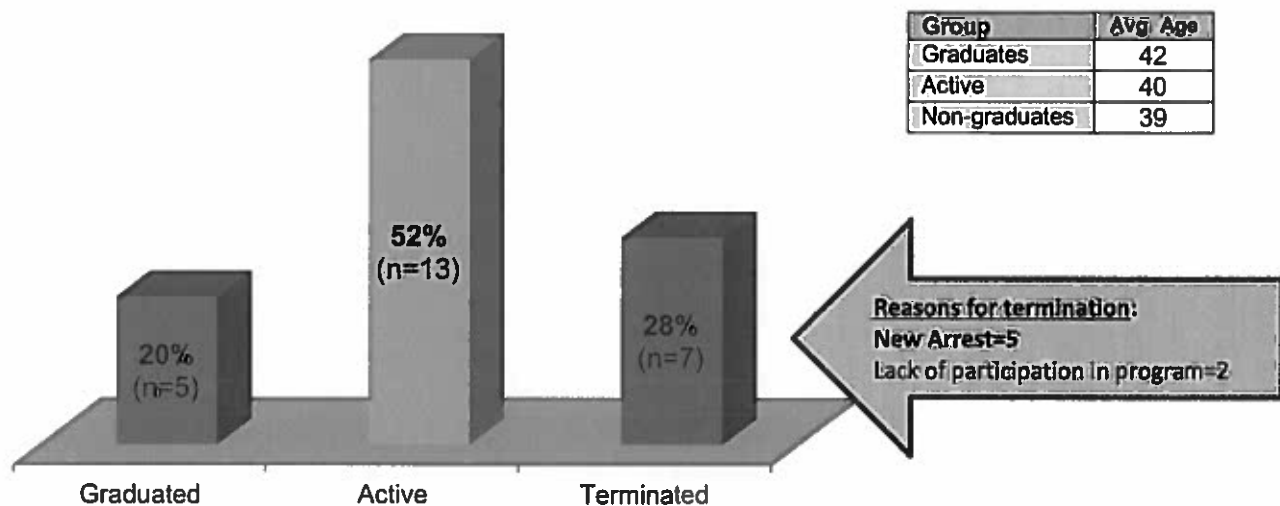
"An important aspect is helping me get a job."

## H. OUTCOMES DATA

Following are **key findings** of outcomes data collected by program staff:

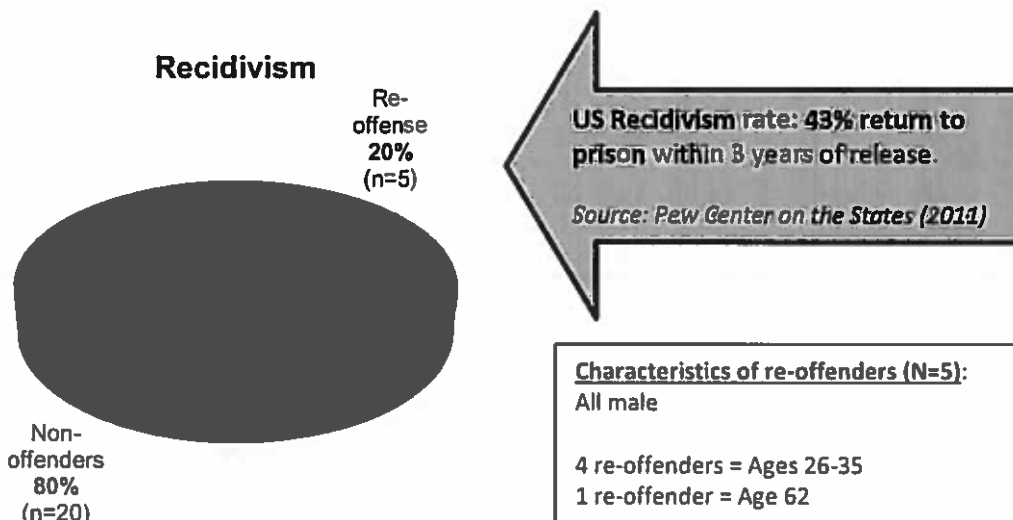
- ✓ 20% have graduated the Parole Reentry Program since its inception.
- ✓ Only 28% have been terminated from program; only 20% re-offended (compared to US recidivism rate of 43% within 3 years).
- ✓ 56% (n=14) have participated in some type of education program ( e.g., GED, Trade College, Community College).
- ✓ On average, 60% of participants have been employed each month for the past year.
- ✓ 21 of the 25 participants participated in drug testing; 5 participants had at least 1 failed result (24%).
- ✓ Marijuana was the most frequently used drug, followed by PCP.

### Program Results\*

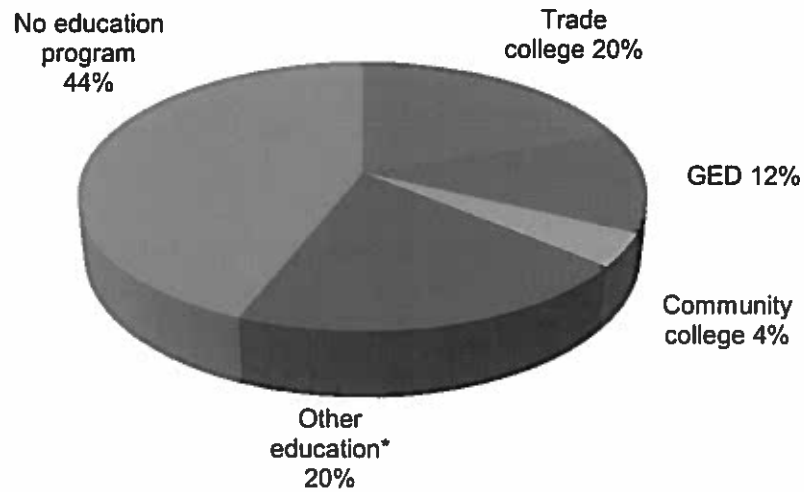


\*As of October 2013

Note: # of participants reduced by 2 (from 27) because 1 individual is deceased and 1 individual had a stroke



### Enrollment in Education Program (Nov. 2012-Oct. 2013)



Enrollment in Education	Frequencies (out of N=25)
Trade college	5
GED	3
Community college	1
Other Education*	5
No education program	11

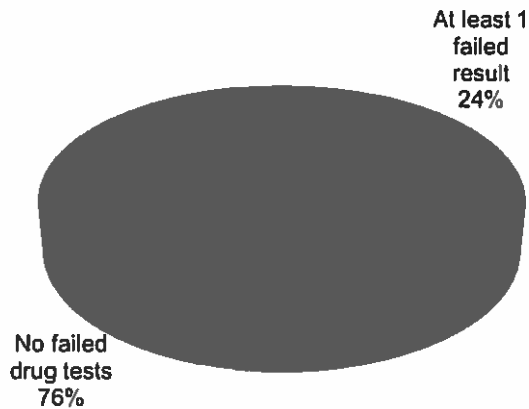
\*Includes Job Readiness Classes, Forklift Certification Class, Milwork Certification, Environmental Safety Training; CDL License

Employment	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct**
Full-time	8	10	10	9	17	17	13	11	10	11	10	10
Part-time	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-
Not employed	11	11	9	9	6	4	8	10	10	6	7	3
% employed	42%	48%	55%	55%	74%	81%	62%	52%	52%	66%	61%	77%

\*Note: Within a given month, numbers do not add up to 23 due to fluctuations in # of people active/terminated during that period.

\*\*5 participants graduated in September 2013, so they are not included in October employment totals



**Substance Use\***

Substance Use	Frequencies (out of N=25)
At least 1 failed result	5
No failed drug tests	16
Not tested	4

\*21 out of 25 people tested throughout program

Marijuana was the most frequently used drug throughout testing, followed by PCP.

Drug Categories:	# of people with positive results
Marijuana	3
Benzodiazepines	1
Cocaine	1
PCP	2
Alcohol	1
Methamphetamine	0
Sedatives	0
Amphetamines	0
Opiates	0

### III. CONCLUSIONS

The Jackson County Parole Reentry Pilot Program appears to have been successful in reducing recidivism rates and increasing positive outcomes for program participants. Only 20% of participants have re-offended during the first 1 ½ years of the program (compared to US recidivism rate of 43% within 3 years). The longer-term recidivism rate remains to be seen. Only 25% of participants failed at least 1 drug test; participants with substance abuse issues were linked with substance abuse treatment resources, which may have prevented further drug use.

Aside from recidivism, participants of this type of program may be more likely to become functioning members of society than without such supports. A full 92% received job readiness support through Connections to Success. More than half of participants enrolled in some type of education program (e.g., GED, Trade College, Community College). On average, 60% of participants were employed each month during the tracking year. Just over one-third (36%) received housing assistance and 16% received mental health services.

Interview results revealed that the primary role of the Jackson County Parole Reentry program is to offer participants **emotional support** and **access to resources**. The **primary strengths** of the program are:

- ✓ Partnership among stakeholder organizations (MO Probation & Parole, Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, Judicial Circuit Court) allows for an alternative approach to parole reentry.
- ✓ Dedicated **program staff** are available to support parolees, determine their needs, and link them to necessary supports; the judge offers additional support and encouragement.
- ✓ A **support system of community resources** (including job readiness training, mental health & substance abuse treatment, housing assistance, education & training) helps foster job and housing stability, and therefore life success.
- ✓ At the level of the participant, the program helps **foster self-esteem, empowerment and autonomy**.

Following are **suggestions** for improving the Jackson County Parole Reentry program:

- ✓ **Offer additional employment support**
  - Provide access to another employment-focused partner organization like *Connections to Success*
  - Leverage Department of Labor resources/programs currently underway within Department of Corrections
  - Provide access to a group of potential employers (pre-screened for serious felons)
  - Continue paying first 6 weeks wages at new job until established
  - Offer additional transportation assistance (e.g., support in obtaining a vehicle) to allow for better access to employment
- ✓ **Offer additional resources in the following areas:**
  - Provide access to long-term counseling: Individual, couples, family counseling
  - Because issues with family re-integration can be a barrier to success, and because family support of the parolee is a key to success, continue to encourage family support
  - Add a mentorship component, whereby former felons and other community members mentor program participants
  - Offer group meetings of participants to serve as a 'support group'
  - Continue to support after participants they graduate
- ✓ **Engage in continuous assessment of program strengths/weaknesses**

Finally, following is a summary of recommendations for selection of future participants of the Jackson County Parole Reentry program:

- ✓ Need to consider additional selection criteria:
  - Mental health scores while incarcerated: MH1 or MH2
  - Low number of offenses while incarcerated
  - Age of parolee: Need people younger than age 65, because age 65 and older are not as employable (which is one of the primary goals of the program)
  - Offenders must reside in Jackson county following parole.
- ✓ Need to meet with participants in the institution 6-12 months (vs. 4-6 months) prior to release to:
  - Establish an ongoing relationship before parole
  - Arrange for basic identification/document needs such as ID, birth certificate, resume
  - Determine housing accommodations
  - Discuss goals and challenges after release