

Evaluation of Ohio's Prison Programs: Executive Summary

University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI)
School of Criminal Justice
PO Box 210389
Cincinnati, Ohio 45221-0389

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Principal Investigator: Edward Latessa, Ph.D.

Authors (listed alphabetically):

Edward Latessa, Ph.D.

Melissa Lugo, M.A.

Amanda Pompoco, M.S.

Carrie Sullivan, M.A.

John Wooldredge, Ph.D.

Executive Summary

Overview

The University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute (UCCI) was contracted in 2010 by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) to conduct an evaluation of the state's "Reentry Approved" programs offered in all correctional institutions. This study was designed to explore the effectiveness of programming on institutional misconduct and recidivism. Additionally, the study took into account program integrity and the institutional context. This study was designed with the following goals as a guiding framework:

- A. To assess selected ODRC institutional programs and to identify strengths and weaknesses, both on the level of the individual program and across program types, and to make recommendations to improve program integrity.
- B. To determine if participation in programs had an effect on institutional behavior and if the type, quality and mix of programs made a difference.
- C. To determine if program participation had an effect on recidivism, and if the type, quality, and mix of programs made a difference.
- D. To measure the organizational climate for programs in each institution and its effect on institutional behavior.

To address the first goal (A), site visits were conducted in 2011 and 2012 at each of the 28 state-run institutions in Ohio. Based on interviews and observations conducted during these site visits, UCCI staff provided a midway report to ODRC in 2013 that identified strengths and areas for improvement related to programming. This report also included specific recommendations for improvement on a larger scale, such as increasing the consistency of program delivery and including more cognitive behavioral program elements.

The current report focuses on the results and recommendations related to the last three goals (B, C, & D). To fully explore these goals, UCCI developed 13 specific research questions, which are outlined in the full report. To achieve these three goals and to answer the research

questions associated with these goals, UCCI staff analyzed ODRC data to explore the effects of program participation on institutional misconduct and recidivism. Additionally, prison staff were surveyed at two points in time with responses spanning from May 2012 to May 2014 in order to measure support for rehabilitation and organizational climate. Data collected during the site visits was also used to help contextualize results as needed. The current report focuses on answering the goals outlined above through a series of specific research questions.

Summary of Methods

In order to examine the research questions related to program effects on misconduct and recidivism, a quasi-experimental design was employed, where several treatment and comparison groups were examined. The treatment groups consisted of inmates who participated in reentry approved programs, and the comparison groups consisted of inmates that did not participate in *any* reentry approved programs. Comparison cases were matched with treatment cases on the following factors: *age at admission*, *race* (African American versus other), *ethnicity* (Latino/other), *marital status at admission* (married or spouse alive versus other), *education at admission* (high school diploma or GED versus other), *number of prior prison sentences*, *security classification level*, *sentence length*, *sex offender* (yes/no), and *whether inmate engaged in any rule violations during first year of incarceration*. All offender data and conviction outcome data were provided by ODRC. Most program level data was provided by ODRC, with the exception of program fidelity data, which was collected by UCCI researchers during site visits using the Correctional Program Checklist (CPC) and the Correctional Program Checklist-Group Assessment (CPC-GA). Outcome measures included institutional misconduct and recidivism, defined as either return to prison for a new crime or return to prison for a parole violation. Results were examined separately for males and females as well as for inmates who

terminated the program before completion (non-completers) versus inmates who completed the programs (completers).

Treatment cases were sampled based on several criteria related to the outcome measure of interest. In regard to the analysis of programming effects on institutional misconduct, treatment cases were comprised of inmates who had been incarcerated for at least two years. To explore program effects on recidivism, treatment cases had to be released from prison by June 30, 2012. Treatment cases are comprised of inmates who participated in one or a combination of the reentry approved programs provided by ODRC. Reentry approved programs were grouped into six categories: general education, vocation/apprenticeship, college classes, mental health programs, unit management programs, and recovery services programs.

Summary of Results

The following briefly summarizes our findings and conclusions for each of the goals:

A. To assess selected ODRC institutional programs and to identify strengths and weaknesses, both on the level of the individual program and across program types, and to make recommendations to improve program integrity.

- Reentry approved programs did not sufficiently target the main dynamic risk factors related to recidivism. These targets include: antisocial attitudes, values, and beliefs; antisocial peer associates and lack of prosocial peers; antisocial personality characteristics such as poor problem solving, insufficient coping skills, and pleasure seeking; family factors such as dysfunctional family communication; lack of educational and vocational achievement; poor use of leisure time; and substance abuse.
- Curricula were not all based on cognitive behavioral underpinnings and often did not include both cognitive restructuring and skill building components. Related, group facilitators often failed to adhere to the curriculum manuals in groups observed by UCCI researchers.
- Relatively few offenders received reentry approved programs, and there was inconsistency in the availability of these programs across institutions.
- Inmates who successfully completed programs had better outcomes compared to inmates who did not successfully complete programs (discussed in more detail below).

- Quality assurance practices were lacking for many programs, which resulted in problems related to data collection and data coding. This limitation hinders the ability of the program staff, institution staff, and central office staff to make data driven decisions.

B. To determine if participation in programs had an effect on institutional behavior, and if type and mix of programs made a difference.

- Four of six types of reentry approved programs were generally effective at lowering the odds of engaging in misconduct among male and female inmates. These were college classes, mental health programs, unit management programs, and recovery services programs.
- Completers of the four programs mentioned above were less likely to engage in misconduct compared to non-completers.
- Participation in certain combinations of programs was more effective than others at lowering misconduct. For males, the combination of any education class and a recovery services or unit management program further lowered misconduct rates. Also, participation in both a unit management program and a recovery services program reduced misconduct. For females, participation in college classes, general education classes, or a recovery services program paired with participation in unit management further lowered misconduct. Participation in both a general education class and a recovery services program further reduced misconduct.

C. To determine if participation in programming has an effect on recidivism, and if the type, quality, and mix of programs makes a difference.

- Four of the six types of reentry approved programs are generally effective at lowering recidivism among male and female inmates. These were vocation/apprenticeship, college classes, unit management programs, and recovery services programs
- Inmates that completed the four programs mentioned above were less likely to recidivate than non-completers.
- Participation in certain combinations of programs was more effective than others at lowering recidivism. These combinations include the completion of a college class and a recovery services program for males. For females, these combinations include the completion of a general education class and a recovery services program, as well as the completion of a general education class and a unit management program.
- For males, as the variety of reentry approved programs completed increased (e.g., mental health programs, recovery services, and general education), the rate of recidivism decreased.

D. To measure the organizational climate for programs in each institution and its effect on institutional behavior.

- Key factors that tap into a positive organizational climate include leadership initiative, job efficacy, vision/future goals, and cohesion involvement.
- The first survey found that having a good organizational climate was associated with a decrease in Harassment misconduct, Rule 17 (defined as unauthorized group activities) and Rule 19 (defined as fighting with or without a weapon) misconducts.
- The second survey found a positive organizational climate was also related to decreases in Harassment misconducts.
- Although general decreases in misconduct were associated with positive organizational climate, a positive organizational climate was also associated with higher rates of Assault (first survey) and with higher rates of Harassment and Rule 19 misconduct (second survey).
- Warden change had a negative impact on organizational climate for both surveys, which may be a result of disruption in procedures. Given the importance of the wardens in the operation of prisons, this finding may help explain why in some instances a positive organizational climate was associated with higher rates of misconduct.

Substantive Findings for Misconduct

Violent Misconduct – Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
College Classes	Completers	-8.7%
Vocation/Apprenticeship <i>and</i> Unit Management Program	Completers	-6.6%
General Education <i>and</i> Mental Health Programs	Completers	-21.9%
General Education <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-7.4%
General Education <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-6.4%
Recovery Services Programs <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-8.0%

Violent Misconduct – Females	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
College Classes	Non-Completers	-5.2%
Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-5.0%

Violent Misconduct – Females	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
College Classes <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Non-Completers	-12.2%
General Education <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-16.7%
Recovery Services Programs <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-7.9%

Drug Misconduct – Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
Vocation/Apprenticeship <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-5.8%
College Classes <i>and</i> Mental Health Programs	Non-Completers	-11.8%
College Classes <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Non-Completers	-5.1%
Mental Health Programs <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-5.6%

Property Misconduct – Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
Vocation/Apprenticeship <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-5.8%

Disturbance Misconduct - Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
College Education <i>and</i> Mental Health Programs	Non-Completers	-5.9%
General Education <i>and</i> Mental Health Programs	Completers	-9.4%

Disturbance Misconduct – Females	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
General Education <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Non-Completers	-6.2%

Other Misconduct – Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
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Other Misconduct – Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
College Classes	Completers	-11.0%
Mental Health Programs	Non-Completers	-6.1%
Mental Health Programs	Completers	-11.3%
College Classes <i>and</i> Mental Health Programs	Non-Completers	-20.6%
College Classes <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-17.5%
General Education <i>and</i> Mental Health Programs	Completers	-21.9%
General Education <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-9.6%
Mental Health Programs <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Non-Completers	-11.9%

Substantive Findings for Recidivism

Return to Prison for New Crime or Parole Violation – Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
College Classes	Completers	-9.0%
Mental Health Programs	Completers	-6.1%
Vocation/Apprenticeship <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-5.8%
College Classes <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-9.3%
College Classes <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-15.6%
General Classes <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-5.6%

Return to Prison for New Crime Only – Males	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
Mental Health Programs	Completers	-5.3%

Return to Prison for New Crime or Parole Violation – Females	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
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Return to Prison for New Crime or Parole Violation – Females	Completion Status	Percent Reduction
College Classes	Non-Completers	-9.0%
Unit Management Programs	Non-Completers	-6.6%
Vocation/Apprenticeship	Completers	-6.5%
Vocation/Apprenticeship <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Non-Completers	-8.1%
Vocation/Apprenticeship <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-6.5%
College Classes <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Non-Completers	-10.4%
College Classes <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-16.2%
General Education <i>and</i> Recovery Services Programs	Completers	-8.3%
General Education <i>and</i> Unit Management Programs	Completers	-9.9%

Overall, these results provide supportive evidence for different types of reentry approved programming in reducing both institutional misconduct and recidivism. Specifically, college classes, unit management programs, and recovery services had a significant effect on lowering the likelihood of inmates engaging in misconduct *and* subsequent recidivism for both males and females in the sample. Completers of these programs consistently achieved lower rates of misconduct and recidivism than non-completers. Additionally, the combinations of certain reentry approved programs proved more effective in reducing misconduct and recidivism than the completion of only one reentry approved program. Similarly, males experienced a reduction in recidivism as the variety of reentry approved programs they participated in increased. Higher program fidelity was not found to reduce misconduct or recidivism except for one instance; for females, higher scores in the program staff and support domain led to lower recidivism. Finally,

an organizational context conducive to leadership, cohesion, and job efficacy had an impact on misconduct, both in positive and negative ways.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study that should be noted:

1. The prison site visits were time specific and only provided a snapshot of the institution at the time the assessment was conducted. Specifically, the interviews and observations occurred during a limited number of days. Additionally, timeframe during which the site visits occurred coincided with significant changes within the Ohio prison system, such as a shift to a three-tiered unit management system (e.g., control prisons, general population prisons, reintegration centers).
2. The response rates for the two surveys were inconsistent, as were the response rates across institutions. For example, the first administration of the survey initially received a response rate of 18%. Given the low response rate and feedback from institutions, the first survey was distributed again. The overall response rate for the first survey increased to 49%, with a range of 0% and 95% across institutions. The second administration of the survey was only distributed once, and had a much lower response rate (33%) with a range of 0% to 92%.
3. It should be noted that the recidivism outcome measure was limited to returning to an Ohio prison in three years. There was no measure of re-arrest or re-conviction and no out of state or federal incarceration was tracked.
4. No uniform measure of risk was available; therefore, inmates were matched on proxy measures of risk. While the proxy measures tapped into key covariates associated with the risk of reoffending (e.g., number of prior prison sentences, age at admission to prison), the findings of this study are not contextualized by risk level (e.g., low, moderate, high risk).
5. The measure of program fidelity, as outlined by the CPC and CPC-GA, has not previously been validated with a prison population. Additionally, the fidelity measure did not take into account all of the system issues that can affect the integrity of the program.
6. The final limitation is related to potential inaccuracies in data collection using the DOTS portal. Some programming information may have been inaccurately labeled as *reentry approved* or *not reentry approved* due to the inconsistent data collection procedures at the institution level.

Recommendations

Based on these findings several recommendations can be made. These recommendations relate to all four research goals described above.

1. ODRC should work to increase completion rates for reentry approved programs. Strategies can include: providing more incentives for program completers; training staff on motivational enhancement strategies and requiring their use; providing pre-treatment groups to better prepare inmates for programming; and identifying and addressing barriers to treatment completion (e.g., transfers, program removals, waitlists).
2. Different types of reentry approved programs should be combined to address a multitude of criminogenic needs. The marrying of programs, such as college classes with unit management programs, may further reduce misconduct and recidivism. The needs addressed should be individualized and driven by the ORAS assessment results.
3. Given the mostly positive results for the reentry approved programs in reducing misconduct and recidivism, more inmates need to receive these programs. Specifically, reentry approved programs run by unit management, mental health, and recovery services need to be offered more frequently and more consistently over time to increase the availability of programming for inmates.
4. Research continues to affirm that effective programming not only targets criminogenic needs, but also aims to change offender behavior through cognitive and social learning approaches. Current reentry approved program criteria are inadequate in the use of cognitive behavioral interventions. These criteria should be strengthened to include cognitive behavioral strategies such as practice and the demonstration of pro-social skills. In addition, prior to release, inmates should develop plans for handling risky situations.
5. In groups observed by the researchers, program facilitators often failed to adhere to the curriculum manuals. Management staff (e.g., unit managers and unit management administrators) should be trained to provide monitoring of groups to increase fidelity and to provide coaching to help staff improve their direct service delivery. Management staff should also be provided sufficient time in their schedule to complete these job tasks.
6. Quality improvement initiatives should be adopted to promote consistency in data collection and data entry procedures into the DOTS portal. Improving data management practices will improve the quality of the data at the agency level, which can lead to more accurate tracking of reentry approved programs and meaningful activities. Additionally, improvements in data entry parameters will ensure that data driven decision-making can occur.
7. To limit the disruption in management practices and procedures that affect organizational climate, fewer warden changes should be considered.

Conclusions

The overall results of this study indicate that reentry approved programming generally produced positive outcomes in reducing misconducts and re-incarceration. In particular, completing reentry approved programs and completing combinations of reentry approved programs produced fewer misconducts and re-incarcerations. Expanding the availability of programs, increasing completion rates, and prioritizing certain combinations of programs should benefit inmates. Further, gender differences should be considered when planning for program effectiveness. Other considerations for improving effectiveness include modifying policies and procedures and using data to drive future decisions.