

TRANSITIONAL JOBS FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

**Jennifer Phillips
Consultant to
The Joyce Foundation**

**WHY IS SUCCESSFUL
PRISONER REENTRY A
NATIONAL
IMPERATIVE?**

The number of people incarcerated in the U.S. has more than quadrupled since the 1970s.

The most recent national statistics show that two-thirds of those released from prison are rearrested

And...

**THE FINANCIAL AND
PUBLIC SAFETY COSTS
ARE ENORMOUS AND
UNACCEPTABLE**

**SO WHAT CAN
BE DONE?**

FIND ANSWERS TO TWO QUESTIONS:

- How important is work to preventing recidivism?
- What employment strategies work best?

WHY PROVIDE FORMER PRISONERS WITH TRANSITIONAL JOBS?

- Several studies have tracked employment rates for former prisoners during the year following release, typically finding that fewer than half are employed at any point.

WHAT IS A TRANSITIONAL JOB?

- A promising employment model, both for former prisoners and for other hard-to-employ groups.
- Rapidly places participants into temporary, subsidized jobs, usually in nonprofit or government agencies, provide intensive support, and then helps participants find permanent jobs.

**ARE TRANSITIONAL
JOBS AN EFFECTIVE
REENTRY STRATEGY?**

TWO MAJOR RIGOROUS RESEARCH STUDIES

- Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)
- Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration (TJRD)

About TJRD

- Developed and funded by the Joyce Foundation; also funded by the JEHT Foundation and US DOL.
- Evaluation is led by MDRC, with Urban Institute and University of Michigan.
- Research question: Are transitional jobs an effective strategy for increasing employment and reducing recidivism among men recently released from prison?

Demonstration Design

- Men, 18 years or older, released from state prison within 90 days prior to enrollment in the study
- Random assignment
 - Program group: transitional jobs (TJ) – temporary, subsidized jobs, support services
 - Control group: job search (JS) – help looking for work, no subsidized job
- Recruitment: January 2007 – September 2008
 - Total sample size: 1,835
 - Site totals: 374-507

TJRD Sites

Site	TJ Program	JS Program
Chicago	Safer Foundation (Pivotal Staffing)	Safer Foundation
Detroit	Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit	JVS/Detroit Hispanic Development Corp.
Milwaukee	New Hope Project	Project Return
St. Paul	Goodwill/Easter Seals	Amherst Wilder Foundation

TJ Programs

Similarities

- Provided range of ancillary services and supports
- Offered transitional jobs
 - At least minimum wage jobs
 - 30 to 40 hours of paid work each week
 - TJs averaged 47 days (range: 33 – 60 days)
- Aimed to identify and address behavior or performance issues that emerged at work
- Helped participants look for unsubsidized jobs to follow the TJs

TJ Programs Differences

- TJs in enterprises that earn revenue for sponsoring agency
 - Detroit and St. Paul: participants employed by Goodwill and worked in existing enterprises
 - Detroit: light manufacturing
 - St. Paul: collecting, processing, selling merchandise in retail stores
 - Chicago: most participants worked in garbage recycling plants, employed by staffing company

TJ Programs Differences

- Milwaukee: scattered site model
 - Sponsoring agency is employer of record & pays all wages
 - Participants placed in variety of nonprofit organizations and businesses
 - Worksites do not pay participants, but do provide supervision and stay in close contact with New Hope staff
 - New Hope staff responsible for identifying and addressing workplace problems

TJ Programs Differences

- Milwaukee and St. Paul: incentive bonuses
 - Paid to participants who get and hold unsubsidized jobs after working TJ

TJRD Study Participants: Demographics

Characteristic	
Average Age	35
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
White	10
Black/African American	81
Other	9
Has Children under 19 yrs (%)	52
Has HS diploma or GED (%)	75
Living Arrangements (%)	
Owns/Rents	17
Lives w/friends, family	48
Transitional housing	30
Shelter/other	5

TJRD Study Participants: Demographics

Characteristic	%
Ever in drug or alcohol treatment	55
Public Assistance	
No government assistance	54
Food Stamps	33
Medicaid	12
Family assists with	
Finding a place to live	38
Finding a job	37
Financial support	37

TJRD Study Participants: Employment History

Characteristic	%
Ever worked	86
Ever worked 6 consecutive months for one employer	52
Worked full time in 6 months prior to incarceration	44

TJRD Study Participants: Criminal History

Characteristic	
Most recent release type (%)	
Prison	96
Jail	4
On probation or parole (%)	97
Average total time spent in prison (months)	72
Average time spent in prison in most recent incarceration (months)	44

mls1

Much of the notes in the slide notes are taken from the April 2009 presentation in Chicago but I don't see the data on the baseline tables that Julia produced. Can this information be included in this presentation or is it confidential?

Michelle Scott, 10/20/2009

Early Observations & Lessons

- Programs worked closely with corrections agencies to recruit participants.
 - Recruitment presentations in prison to individuals awaiting release
 - Dedicated parole officers for participants in one site
 - Referrals from departments of correction, parole / probation officers
 - Programs largely reached recruitment & enrollment goals

Early Observations & Lessons

- Programs placed a high percentage of program group (85%) into TJs despite the instability in participant lives and living situations.
 - TJ Placement rates varied: 67 - 96%
 - Worked an average of 47 days in TJ
 - 15% never worked a TJ
 - 6% worked less than a week
 - 29% worked 1 to 6 weeks
 - 22% worked 7 – 12 weeks
 - 28% worked more than 12 weeks

Early Observations & Lessons

- Most TJs were designed to teach general employability skills, not to train participants in specific occupations.
 - Jobs included: light assembly, packaging, maintenance/janitorial, sorting/stocking, auto repair, retail, warehousing
 - St. Paul: offered paid training opportunities for participants demonstrating their seriousness of working

Early Observations & Lessons

- Challenging to place participants into jobs post-TJ, particularly with the weakened economy.
 - All programs had job developers, however the level of “proactiveness” varied
 - Employers are generally reluctant to hire ex-offenders

TJRD Project Status

- Implementation research and cost data collection completed.
- First round of ethnographic interviews completed.
- Introductory research brief will be published in July 2009.
- Employment, criminal justice, and program MIS data being collected and analyzed.
- Final research findings out in summer 2010.