NATIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

Phase 1 Report

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The Transition from Prison to Employment: An Assessment of Community-Based Assistance Programs

National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
U. S. Department of Justice

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The Transition from Prison to Employment: An Assessment of Community-Based Assistance Programs

by
Mary A. Toborg, Principal Investigator
Lawrence J. Center, Co-Investigator
Raymond H. Milkman, Co-Investigator
Dennis W. Davis, Research Associate

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National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice
Blair G. Ewing, Acting Director
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
James M. H. Gregg, Acting Administrator

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ABSTRACT

This report assesses the present state of knowledge regarding community-based programs which provide employment services to prison releasees. More than 250 such programs exist and offer a wide range of services, including counseling, work orientation, training, job development, job placement and follow-up assistance after placement. These services are provided because the acquisition of employment is often considered essential for a releasee's successful adjustment to a crime-free life in the community.

The Lazar Institute conducted this assessment as part of the National Evaluation Program sponsored by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. Past studies and original data analysis are summarized for project operations, outcomes and external factors affecting them. Major findings include:

- There is great variation across programs in the types of employment services offered and the ways these services are delivered; however, little is known about the types of services which seem most effective or about the best method for providing any given service.

- Many programs have analyzed whether clients obtain jobs, and most have reported that the majority of clients are successfully placed.

- Available analyses usually indicate that program clients experience lower rates of recidivism than do comparison groups, although outcomes are far from consistent from one project to the next, and few programs have been evaluated adequately.

- Most outcome studies use quite limited impact measures, such as placement and rearrest rates, and do not consider such factors as job stability, job quality or the severity or crimes committed.

- Few studies compare the outcomes of program clients with those of similar groups of non-clients; consequently, the extent to which successful client outcomes should be attributed to the programs' interventions or to other causes cannot be determined.

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PREFACE

This report summarizes the existing state of knowledge concerning community-based programs which provide employment services to prison releasees. The study was conducted by The Lazar Institute between March 1976 and April 1977, as part of the National Evaluation Program of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.

The state of knowledge assessment is not intended to be a definitive evaluation of employment services programs; rather, it presents the current state of knowledge regarding these programs and describes the additional evaluation needed to fill important gaps in that knowledge. The assessment incorporates the major findings from four earlier working papers: an issues review, universe identification and sample selection analysis, case study analyses and client flow diagrams of individual projects, and selected program materials acquired at various projects. Two additional working papers address evaluation needs: one paper describes a proposed national evaluation of employment services programs and the other discusses evaluation considerations for an individual project.

During the course of this study a number of persons provided invaluable assistance. The authors would particularly like to thank Dr. Daniel Glaser of the University of Southern California; Dr. Roberta Rovner-Pieczenik, now with the Police Foundation; and Mr. Ross D. Davis of Davis and Simpich for helpful advice and comments throughout the course of the study. Within the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Mr. Lawrence A. Greenfeld, our project monitor, was unfailingly supportive of our efforts to understand this complex set of programs; Ms. Jan Trueworthy provided a number of useful suggestions; Dr. Richard T. Barnes offered much helpful advice; and Mr. George Bohlinger was instrumental in getting the study underway successfully. Mr. Joseph Nay of the Urban Institute also provided a number of important comments.

Staff at individual employment services programs not only furnished us with a wealth of information on their programs but also shared their experiences and opinions with us. Many other persons in various communities also provided us with insights concerning employment services programs. Such persons included corrections officials, parole officers, staff members at other local employment programs or human service agencies, employers and personnel directors. The authors would like to thank all those who tried to help us develop an accurate, useful study. If we succeeded, it is largely due to their efforts. Any remaining errors of fact or judgment are solely our responsibility.

SUMMARY

Introduction

Many programs help individuals make the transition from prison to employment. During this study alone, more than 250 such organizations provided information on their activities. These programs offer many types of assistance, including counseling, job development, job placement, work orientation, training and supportive services.

This study assesses the current state of knowledge regarding employment services programs for prison releasees. To accomplish this project, three major data collection activities were undertaken:

- a review of existing literature and work in progress;
- a mail/telephone survey of more than 250 employment services programs; and
- site visits to fifteen programs.

These activities provided a broad perspective on employment services programs and their impact. The views of program staff, criminal justice system representatives, employers, researchers and other knowledgeable individuals have been reviewed to develop this report. Major findings and recommendations are presented below.

Need for Employment Services Programs

Studies conducted over a period of more than forty years have found that unemployment and recidivism are closely related for prison releasees and other ex-offenders.[16, 19, 21, 50] As a result of these observations, some researchers have proposed that there is a causal relationship between unemployment and criminality.[19] Other analysts have argued that unemployment and recidivism are highly correlated only because each is associated with another factor (e.g., the influence of family members or a decision to "go straight") which influences widespread behavioral changes.[72] Still other authors have suggested that it is income, rather than employment, which is the major variable affecting recidivism.[19, 39, 41] Although explanations vary, the relationship between unemployment and recidivism has been frequently observed.

Despite the apparent importance of employment, it is often difficult for prison releasees to obtain jobs. They face a variety of employment barriers, caused by poor work histories, low skill levels, prejudice on the part of potential employers, statutory restrictions and similar factors. In addition, the time immediately following release from prison may be a critical adjustment period, requiring the releasee to deal successfully with a large number of problems.

Without assistance, releasees may be unable to overcome the many barriers hindering their efforts to find jobs. Consequently, employment services programs have been established to assist prison releasees in obtaining the employment which is often considered essential for reduced recidivism.

Program Operations

Employment services programs provide many different types of assistance. These include:

- assessment of client needs--to analyze the clients' backgrounds, abilities, interests and goals and develop employability plans to assist them in obtaining jobs;
- counseling--to help clients implement their job plans and solve a variety of problems associated with successful community reintegration;
- job readiness training--to orient prison releasees to the world of work and assist them in developing the skills needed to seek and keep jobs;
- skills training--to help releasees qualify for occupations requiring specialized knowledge;
- supported work training--to permit releasees to gain work experience in a "sheltered" environment, before obtaining a regular job;
- educational training--to teach releasees basic skills they often lack (e.g., reading, arithmetic) or otherwise provide them with needed instruction;
- supportive services--to help releasees meet such needs as housing, legal aid, medical attention, family assistance or welfare;
- job development--to identify suitable employment opportunities for releasees;
- job placement--to refer releasees to appropriate job openings; and
- follow-up assistance--to help releasees solve problems which arise after employment has been obtained.

Individual employment services programs provide these services in a variety of combinations. Some programs focus on a few services and refer clients to other organizations for any additional assistance needed, while other programs offer a comprehensive array of employment services. There are also many differences in the way each service is provided. For example, job readiness training may be offered as a two-week seminar or one-day workshop, in conjunction with other services such as skills training or as a separate

activity and as either an initial program service or the last assistance before job placement.

Despite this variation in types of services offered and manner of service delivery, little is known about the types of services which seem most effective or about the best ways to provide any given service. These topics have not been systematically addressed in past analyses.

External Factors

There are a number of external factors which affect program operations and client outcomes. One such factor is the universe of potential clients. Although a program can, to some extent, select from the universe of potential clients those whom it will serve, a program has relatively little influence on the overall size of that universe or the characteristics of persons within it.

In addition, certain "environmental" factors can either help or obstruct program efforts to assist prison releasees. These factors include:

- the nature of local corrections and parole systems, whose cooperation would make such program tasks as client identification and follow-up easier to accomplish;
- the type and quality of other service agencies in the community, since many programs must rely on other agencies to provide selected client services; and
- the nature of the local labor market, because client employment will be easiest to achieve in a prosperous economy, particularly if employers have positive attitudes about hiring prison releasees.

Although programs may have little control over these various external factors, the manner in which they adjust to them will influence the extent of services available to clients and the degree to which clients achieve successful outcomes.

Outcomes

Employment services programs may have a variety of impacts on their clients and the surrounding community. To increase clients' employability and to decrease their recidivism are two of the major goals of most programs and thus two of the major outcomes of interest.

Many programs assess the extent to which clients obtain jobs, and most report that the majority of clients are successfully placed.[1, 9, 14, 54, 69] This finding is of limited value, however, because programs rarely compare the placement outcomes of their clients with those of similar individuals who did not receive program services. Therefore, the extent to which successful job placement should be attributed to the programs' interventions or to other causes cannot be determined.

Moreover, placement rates provide only a limited assessment of employment outcomes. Other important considerations include job stability (i.e., the extent to which employment is maintained) and job quality (i.e., the type of job obtained).

A number of studies have documented that releasees' first jobs may be held only a short time and that ex-offenders placed in jobs through program assistance may leave them soon after.[31, 50, 56, 67] However, programs often do not analyze whether releasees become (and remain) unemployed or whether they obtain better jobs within a short time. Such information is crucial for adequate assessment of job stability outcomes.

A comprehensive analysis of releasees' employment adjustment would consider job quality as well as job placement and stability outcomes. Although the importance of job quality has been widely acknowledged,[30, 45] such quality is often difficult to assess. Consequently, few programs have analyzed this characteristic.

Most programs assume that improving releasees' employment statuses will reduce their recidivism rates. Available analyses usually indicate that program clients experience lower rates of recidivism than are commonly thought to occur for ex-offenders as a whole.[1, 9, 12, 14, 24, 76] There has been much less analysis of the recidivism patterns (i.e., the frequency and severity of crimes committed) of program clients. Moreover, recidivism outcomes of program clients are rarely compared with those of similar groups of non-clients. Thus, little is known about the programs' influence on achieving improvements in client behavior.

Recommendations

Recommendations which emerged from this study are as follows:

- conduct a follow-up analysis of client outcomes, as compared with outcomes of appropriate groups of non-clients;
- prepare a "handbook" providing step-by-step instructions on ways to conduct evaluations at different levels of complexity and distribute this handbook to employment services programs;
- analyze ways to improve linkages between the Department of Labor and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (the two major funding sources of employment services programs for prison releasees) at the Federal, State and local levels;
- disseminate relevant materials developed at individual programs to other programs which could use them;
- assess ways to improve the linkages between staffs of corrections facilities and employment services programs;
- expand the employment services currently available to women releasees; and

- explore ways to establish job creation programs for prison releasees.

These recommended activities would provide essential information concerning program impact, improve the present delivery of services to prison releasees and test the efficacy of new approaches for assisting individuals in making the transition from prison to employment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Upon release from prison a person faces a variety of problems in making a successful readjustment to community life. An immediate concern for many prison releasees is to obtain satisfactory employment and the legitimate income associated with it. To assist releasees in securing jobs, a number of community-based programs have been established and offer such services as:

- job readiness training, to help releasees conduct more effective job searches;
- job placement assistance, to refer releasees to appropriate job openings;
- job development activities, to identify suitable employment opportunities for releasees; and
- a variety of counseling and other supportive services, to help releasees prepare for the work world and to assist them in adjusting to it after they have become employed.

To assess the present state of knowledge regarding employment services programs, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration commissioned a National Evaluation Program Phase I study of them. This summary presents the major findings and conclusions of that study; more detailed information appears in the full-length assessment report.

Programs of primary interest for this study are those serving adults, rather than juveniles, and releasees who were removed from the community for a significant period of time (e.g., more than six months), rather than persons jailed for a short period or placed on probation. In addition, the study focuses on programs which are community-based, rather than those operating within prisons or in highly supervised settings (e.g., work-release centers or halfway houses).

Many operating programs and a number of past analyses are relevant to this study, even though they have a somewhat different focus. For example, it is common for programs to consider "ex-offenders" as one group, without differentiating among prison releasees, persons jailed briefly or probationers. Such programs may provide valuable services to prison releasees, even though other groups are served as well. Additionally, many of the analyses of prison-based projects and of community-based programs for the "disadvantaged" have addressed problems similar to those confronted by community-based programs for releasees. Therefore, findings from related studies have been incorporated into the present report, where appropriate.

The development of the variety of employment services programs considered in this study stemmed from the observation that employment status and

recidivism are often closely associated. This relationship has been assessed in a number of analyses:

- A study published in 1930 found that the "association between post-parole success or failure and success or failure with respect to employment was very high."[21]

- A 1964 analysis concluded that "variations in economic opportunity have a major influence on the rate at which adult males commit crimes."[19]

- A 1968 article observed that "criminal behavior will be a negative function of the individual's success in the labor market."[16]

- A study published in 1969 found that the crime rates of former Federal prisoners varied directly with unemployment rates, for all age groups.[50]

The observed relationship between criminality and unemployment has been explained in different ways. Some researchers have proposed that there is a causal relationship between unemployment and crime,[19] while other analysts have argued that unemployment and recidivism are highly correlated only because each is associated with another factor (e.g., the influence of family members or a decision to "go straight") which induced widespread behavioral change.[72] Whatever the explanation, unemployment and recidivism are often closely related.

Despite the apparent importance of employment for successful readjustment, it is often difficult for releasees to obtain jobs. They face a variety of employment barriers, caused by poor work histories, low skill levels, prejudice on the part of potential employers, statutory restrictions and similar factors.

Consequently, prison releasees often experience high unemployment rates. For example, a 1976 analysis of the unemployment rates of recent parolees in ten States found that these rates often exceeded 20%.[25] Similarly, a 1969 study of the employment problems of released Federal prisoners indicated that 17% of the releasees in the labor force were unemployed. Moreover, even those releasees who had jobs often experienced problems in maintaining steady employment. Twenty percent were working only part-time, and more than half of the releasees studied had had at least one period of unemployment during the post-release year.[50]

This difficulty in acquiring and retaining suitable employment may affect a substantial number of releasees in any given year. For example, during 1974 more than 100,000 persons were released from Federal and State penal institutions.[65] Thus, there are many potential clients for programs which assist individuals in making the transition from prison to employment.

In order to assess existing knowledge concerning employment services programs for prison releasees, three major data collection activities were undertaken during this study:

- a review of existing literature and work in progress;[61]
- a mail/telephone survey of more than 250 employment services programs;[63] and
- site visits to fifteen projects.[60]

These activities are briefly discussed below.

The literature review covered analyses of individual community-based programs serving releasees, related materials on vocational programs for inmates and non-offenders and comparative studies of programs. This report incorporates major findings from these studies, along with judgments about the quality of past work. In addition, the report identifies areas not adequately addressed by existing analyses.

Since it was important to supplement information gained from written materials with knowledge of actual program practices, efforts were made to assess the project universe and identify a reasonable sample for site visit analysis. Through use of mail/telephone survey techniques, data were obtained on approximately 250 community-based programs which provide employment services to prison releasees.

These programs are located in all parts of the country and reflect wide variation in structure, service delivery techniques and relationships with the community. Some programs are associated with parole departments, others are adjuncts of the State Employment Service, and still others are part of a prime sponsor's Comprehensive Employment and Training Program (CETP). Also, some programs provide most employment services themselves, while others refer clients to existing community agencies for many services.

Table 1 summarizes the major characteristics reported by the programs surveyed. As shown:

- Approximately half the programs had been in operation four years or more.
- Forty-four percent of the programs served fewer than 300 clients during the past year.
- Fifty-five percent of the programs reported that the average length of client contact with the program was one to six months, and an additional 26 percent of the programs reported an average length of client contact of seven to twelve months.
- Almost 80% of the programs reported that staff-client contact occurred at least once a week, with 29% of the programs reporting daily client contact.
- The most common way that prison releasees come to the program is through referral by parole officers; the next most common way is through referral by prison officials.

TABLE 1.—Summary of Program Characteristics (N=257)

CHARACTERISTIC	Percentage of Programs	CHARACTERISTIC	Percentage of Programs
Length of Operation:		Budget Size:	
Less than one year	12%	Less than $50,000	22%
One to three years	37	$50,000 to $99,999	14
Four to six years	27	$100,000 to $299,999	24
More than six years	24	$300,000 to $499,999	7
No response	0	More than $500,000	18
		No response	15
Clients Served, Past Year:		Major Funding Source:	
Less than 100	17%		
100 to 299	27	Federal government	51%
300 to 499	13	State government	21
500 to 999	13	Local government	5
More than 999	17	Private	9
No response	14	No response	14
Average Client Contact Length:		Staff Size:	
Less than one month	2%	0 to 10 persons	60%
One to six months	55	11 to 20 persons	19
Seven to twelve months	26	21 to 40 persons	9
More than twelve months	13	More than 40 persons	11
No response	4	No response	1
Frequency of Contact:		Ex-Offenders on Staff:	
Daily	29%	50% or more	12%
Several times a week	26	20 to 49%	18
Once a week	23	1 to 19%	29
Less than once a week	19	None	38
No response	4	No response	3
Major Client Ident. Method:		Prison Releasees Served, Past Year:	
Referred by:			
—Prison officials	18%	Less than 50	21%
—Probation/parole officers	28	50 to 99	12
—Family or friends	2	100 to 199	14
—Other community agencies	4	200 to 299	8
Program outreach efforts	12	300 to 499	8
Other	14	More than 500	16
Multiple responses	13	No response	22
No response	9		

SERVICE	Provided Directly	Provided by Referral	Not Provided
Vocational testing	35%	56%	11%
Vocational counseling	80	31	3
Work orientation/adjustment training	56	41	8
Education	27	67	7
Skills training	25	71	8
On-the-job training	25	70	10
Transitional employment/supported work	30	43	21
Job development	82	28	4
Job placement	89	30	2
Follow-up counseling after employment	82	17	4
Other follow-up after employment	70	17	7
Other	50	20	0

- Thirty-six percent of the programs have annual budgets of less than $100,000, and an additional 24% of the programs have budgets between $100,000 and $300,000.

- The major funding source for most programs (51%) is the Federal government, followed by the State government (21%).

- Sixty percent of the programs have fewer than ten persons on their staff.

- Most programs have some ex-offenders on their staff.

- The most common services provided directly by the programs are job placement, job development and counseling. The most common services provided by referral are skills training, on-the-job training and education. The services least likely to be provided (either directly or by referral) are transitional employment/supported work and vocational testing.

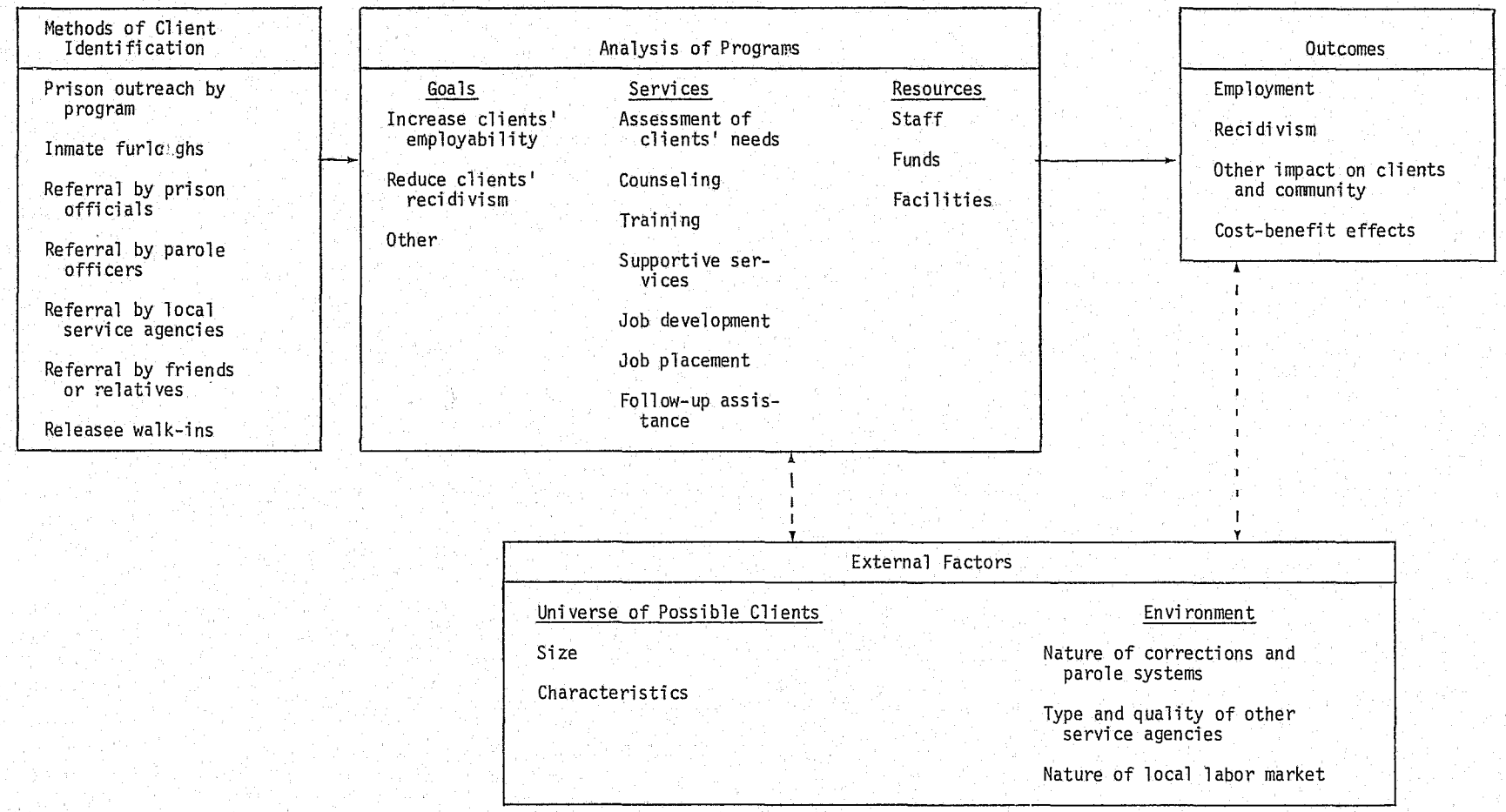
As the survey results indicate, there are a large number of employment services programs which offer many types of vocational assistance to prison releasees. Most programs do not serve prison releasees exclusively, so it is difficult to determine the exact amount of money being spent on employment services for releasees alone. However, budget data provided by the programs (see Table 1) can be used to estimate total funding. This amounts to approximately $50 million, which is predominantly provided by government sources. Thus, a substantial public investment is being made in employment services programs which aid prison releasees.

Since it was important to understand the operations of these programs, a sample of fifteen programs was selected for site visit analysis. These programs represent a wide variation in types of services provided, manner of service delivery, nature of relationships with corrections agencies and community programs, number of clients served, budget levels, funding sources, geographic location and other factors.

During site visits to these programs, the specific ways in which they operate were assessed. This included analysis of the flow of clients through the program; the services provided; and the relationships among the program, corrections officials and staff of other community-based organizations aiding program clients. A wide range of individuals were interviewed, including the program director, selected staff members, criminal justice system representatives, officials of the employment services system with which the program interfaced, and local employers.

As a result of these various activities, an analytical framework was developed for assessing the various aspects of employment services programs for prison releasees. This framework is illustrated in Figure 1. As shown, clients come to employment services programs through a variety of mechanisms, including prison outreach by the programs, referral by parole officers and walk-ins by releasees. Once accepted into the program, releasees may receive a variety of services, designed to help meet the program goals of increasing

FIGURE 1.—Analytical Framework for Assessing Employment Services Programs



clients' employability and reducing their recidivism. Such services include:

- assessment of clients needs;
- counseling;
- training in ways to seek a job or in specific skills;
- supportive services, often provided through referral to other community agencies;
- job development;
- job placement; and
- follow-up assistance after job acquisition.

The type and quality of services available will be determined by a program's resources (e.g., funds, staff and facilities) and the way in which those resources are allocated and managed. A program's impact will also be affected by a number of external factors over which it may have little influence. These factors include the universe of potential clients and such "environmental" considerations as the nature of the corrections and parole systems which have contact with the program, the type and quality of other community services available to assist releasees and the nature of the local economy.

These external factors interact with program activities to produce a set of outcomes affecting both clients and the community. Such outcomes consist primarily of employment and recidivism changes, whose magnitude is an important determinant of the overall cost-benefit effects of employment services programs for prison releasees.

This report assesses the state of knowledge regarding the various items shown in Figure 1. The assessment includes identification of major knowledge gaps as well as consideration of topics which have been conclusively researched. Chapter II addresses program operations; Chapter III, program resources; Chapter IV, external factors; and Chapter V, outcomes. Chapter VI presents several recommendations concerning needed program and research activities in this area.

II. PROGRAM OPERATIONS

This chapter assesses the ways in which potential clients are referred to employment services programs, eligibility criteria for program participation, the specific services provided to clients and the flow of clients through various program processing stages. Program goals are also considered, since these will influence other program activities.

The major goals of most employment services programs are to increase clients' employability and to reduce their recidivism. Many programs have specified additional goals, such as to provide needed social services or to increase the receptivity of the business community toward ex-offenders. Also, some programs have established specific operational objectives related to their general employment and recidivism goals, such as placing a certain number or percentage of clients in jobs or achieving a predetermined recidivism rate.[60] Moreover, a few programs have established specific objectives for individual program functions as well as for the entire project.[52, 53]

Thus, program goals may be stated in very broad terms or quite precise ones. However accomplished, the specification of goals will affect a program's day-to-day operations, including types of services delivered and methods of identifying potential clients.

A. Client Identification Methods

The major ways by which potential clients come to employment services programs are through:

- prison outreach activities conducted by the programs;
- referral by prison officials or parole officers;
- referral by other community-based programs;
- referral by friends or relatives; and
- releasee walk-ins.

These client identification mechanisms are discussed below.

One of the most direct ways to insure that releasees receive the employment assistance needed during the transition from prison to the community is to begin working with them while they are still incarcerated. By the time of release, the program has both established a relationship with the client and made a preliminary assessment of employment prospects. In addition, programs may be able to arrange job interviews for inmates who can obtain furloughs, so that the time required to obtain a job after release can be minimized.

Although most programs acknowledge the usefulness of such outreach activities, the extent to which they can be conducted depends upon staff workload, the proximity of the prison and the receptivity of prison officials to these efforts. Many programs have reported that prison officials have been uncooperative and made it difficult for them to schedule interviews with inmates, obtain space in which to hold job readiness workshops, insure that inmates will be able to make scheduled job interviews or otherwise assist releasees with employment problems.

At present prison staff sometimes act as if their primary responsibility is to maintain order within the institution, not to prepare inmates for establishing law-abiding lifestyles after release. The incentive structure perceived by corrections officials often reflects such priorities: officials receive much adverse publicity if order is not maintained in the prisons but none if few efforts are made to rehabilitate inmates or equip them to return to the community. Thus, prison staff may see little reason to cooperate with programs which help releasees adjust to post-prison life. As a result of the difficulties experienced with corrections staff, many employment services programs have deemphasized their prison outreach activities and rely on other means of identifying potential clients.

Even if prison officials are uncooperative toward programs seeking to conduct outreach activities within the institution, they may nevertheless refer releasees to these programs. In addition, a releasee's parole officer may recommend the program. Since having a job is a condition of parole in many jurisdictions,[49] parole officers will frequently refer unemployed parolees to programs which can provide assistance in obtaining work. In some cases this mechanism may be a formalized one, in which, for example, individual parole officers are matched with specific program staff who always serve that officer's parolees. More commonly, the mechanism is a less formal one in which parolees are merely referred for service.

A controversial issue associated with client referral by parole officials concerns the impact of pressure by parole agents on parolee outcomes. Program staff often state that parole agents "force" releasees to appear at the program by threatening them with parole violation if they do not. Many program staff members assert that the great majority of the parolees who are "coerced" into the program lack motivation and drop out after a brief period. However, other program staff think that the threat of parole violation may provide the incentive releasees need to obtain jobs and succeed in them.

Despite this wide difference in opinions, there is little evidence available with which to resolve the controversy. Analyses have not been conducted of the relative success rates of parolees who were pressured into program participation versus those who were not so influenced.

Another mechanism by which programs obtain clients is through referral from other community-based programs which provide various services to releasees and other groups. In some cases, however, programs which could provide such client referrals are either unaware of the existence of the employment services program or unsure of the services it offers. Frequently, there are no formal linkage or communications mechanisms between programs, and individual staff members develop working relationships across programs on an ad hoc basis. Therefore, the extent of referrals received from other community-based programs is

likely to depend on staff aggressiveness in contacting other programs to discuss services of mutual interest.

Clients may also be referred to programs by family or friends who are familiar with the services offered. In addition, some clients are "walk-ins" who may have learned about the program in a variety of ways.

Although there are a number of methods by which potential clients can be identified, the relative effectiveness of these methods has not been assessed. In addition, few programs analyze the extent to which the various methods, considered collectively, result in identifying all members of the universe of potential clients. This universe is determined both by the number of prison releasees returning to the community the program serves and by the program's eligibility criteria.

B. Eligibility Requirements

Before potential clients can receive services, their eligibility for the program must be determined. Criteria for client acceptance vary widely among employment services programs which aid prison releasees. Table 2 shows the types of eligibility limitations in effect at the 257 programs which responded to the mail/telephone survey conducted as part of this study.[63] The most common restrictions are ex-offender status, age and residency requirements.

Programs which are funded under a Comprehensive Employment and Training Program (CETP), the State Employment Service (SES) or a Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) can only serve persons who meet the eligibility requirements of those organizations. CETP eligibility is usually limited to individuals who have been unemployed or underemployed for a certain time and who meet age and residency requirements. The SES requires clients to be "employable," and DVR clients must possess a physical or mental disability which constitutes a substantial vocational handicap and could be overcome through DVR's services.

Programs may also establish informal eligibility criteria based on applicant motivation. For example, some programs will not enroll clients until they have visited the program several times, taken a short job readiness course or otherwise evidenced motivation to complete the program.

To some extent eligibility criteria, whether formal or informal, reflect broader program philosophies concerning the need to serve as many people as possible or, alternatively, to focus services on a relatively small group of individuals who are "most likely to benefit" from the program. Some programs may "cream" the potential client universe and serve only individuals who can be helped most easily, rather than persons with more serious problems. Although programs which cream may have high success rates, many of their clients might have succeeded without the programs' interventions. If so, the benefits to society might be greater for programs serving a more "hard-core" clientele, even if those programs have lower success rates. Unfortunately, such issues regarding the appropriateness of client eligibility criteria have not been systematically analyzed.

TABLE 2.—Selected Eligibility Limitations at Employment Services Programs (N=257)

LIMITATION	Programs Reporting Limitation	
	Number	Percent
Only serve ex-offenders	117	46%
Only serve clients older than a certain age	101	39
Only serve clients younger than a certain age	14	5
Only serve males	25	10
Only serve females	8	3
Only serve probationers and parolees	30	12
Only serve residents of the same county where the program is located	50	20
Only serve persons released from correctional facilities in same State where program is located	31	12
Only serve persons recently released from prison	30	12

NOTE: A program may have more than one limitation on clients who can be served.

C. Assessment of Client Needs

Assessment of client needs is usually an early program task. It may be done by staff specialists, the client's assigned counselor or third parties (e.g., another component of a Comprehensive Employment and Training Program or Vocational Rehabilitation program). It may be a very formalized process, incorporating vocational and psychological testing, or a loosely structured activity, consisting primarily of an open-ended interview with a counselor.

The major purpose of the client needs assessment is to determine whether the program's services seem appropriate for assisting the releasee in becoming employed. If not, the person is usually referred to another organization which may be more able to aid the releasee. In addition, even clients who are accepted for a program may require some services the program does not offer. During the needs assessment, these services will be identified, along with agencies which provide them.

The assessment of client needs often includes consideration of the client's vocational aptitudes and interests as well as past work experiences. The information acquired during the assessment process may be used to develop an "employability plan." This plan, jointly prepared by the client and program staff, indicates the steps which must be taken for the client to become employable. In some cases, the client signs a written agreement to comply with the plan and complete the tasks described in it. In other cases, an informal understanding is reached between counselor and client that each of them will engage in certain activities, designed to increase the likelihood that the client will find suitable work.

Although the comprehensiveness of the assessment process varies substantially across programs, little is known about the relative value of brief versus more intensive assessment. "Better" employability plans may result from more detailed assessments, but a lengthy assessment process may itself discourage clients from continuing in the program. A releasee who is seeking immediate job referrals may see little need for the interviews, tests or other assessment procedures which the program uses.

At present adequate data are not available to determine the "best" assessment procedures. Little is known about the relative efficacy of testing versus relying only on interview information or about the usefulness of the various tests employed. Nor is much known about the extent to which releasees drop out of programs during the assessment phase and whether these drop-outs are related to the assessment procedures used.

D. Counseling

Counseling is an important component of most employment services programs. Usually, a client is assigned to a counselor at an early stage in program processing; that counselor serves as the client's major linkage to services provided by the program and also as the mechanism by which the client is referred to other programs for selected services.

The counselor's role varies considerably across programs. In some cases the counselor is responsible for all client service activities, including assessment of needs, referral to job opportunities and follow-up assistance after placement. In other programs, specialists provide many of these services, and the counselor both guides the client to them and provides advice on matters not handled by the specialists.

Whatever their designated role within a program, individual counselors may implement that role in very different ways. Some counselors are very aggressive in trying to motivate their clients to overcome employment barriers and in insuring that clients receive any services they need in order to do so. Other counselors have a much more passive approach and view themselves primarily as resources which clients can use during their job searches.

Major variables in counseling approaches are the frequency and length of counseling sessions. Some programs require clients to attend counseling sessions once a month while maintaining regular telephone contact. Other programs mandate counseling sessions once a week. Still others are unstructured, requiring no set frequency of counseling sessions as long as counselors maintain steady contact

with clients. Depending upon client needs and staff time, counseling sessions may vary in length from fifteen minutes to more than an hour.

Most programs believe that more frequent or more extensive client-counselor contact will lead to stronger inter-personal relationships, which will in turn help the client readjust successfully. However, this hypothesis has not been carefully tested.

In addition to the extent of counseling provided, the background of the counselor may affect the client-counselor relationship and eventual client rehabilitation. Counselors may have varied academic training (e.g., sociology, psychology, social work) and different types of experience (e.g., former parole officer, prison counselor, manpower program employee). Also, most programs have at least one ex-offender on the staff.

The usefulness of ex-offender counselors has been widely discussed in the existing literature and at employment services programs themselves. Ex-offenders are often considered to make good counselors, because they can more easily identify with the client. This may result both in greater understanding of the client's needs and in a lesser likelihood of being manipulated (or "conned") by the client. Additionally, some staff members think that certain clients may be more at ease with ex-offender counselors and that this will lead to greater honesty and openness, resulting in early identification of problems and high levels of client success.

Ex-offender counselors may pose problems, however. One problem which may occur "from selecting an insufficiently mature ex-offender of the same background as the client is that the two may become stuck on the point of their fight against the 'establishment,' [which] becomes the scapegoat; no behavior change is demanded, and no responsibility is accepted, though the staff member may teach the participant how to beat the system."[44]

Another problem arises when ex-offender staff think that their status as ex-offenders automatically makes them good counselors. Such staff members may resist efforts to train them in counseling techniques. In addition, ex-offenders may experience a number of role conflicts, caused by having "establishment" jobs where they deal with clients experiencing a community readjustment which the ex-offender counselors may themselves have undergone quite recently. Also, in some cases ex-offender staff may be so assertive about rejecting their criminal past that they antagonize clients, rather than creating the rapport with them which is often considered an advantage of ex-offender counselors.

Despite possible disadvantages of ex-offender counselors, most program directors agree that they can be a valuable asset. Directors usually report that staff are not hired <u>because</u> they are ex-offenders, but rather because they possess other attributes <u>likely</u> to make them good counselors. Moreover, some directors have expressed reluctance to hire "the professional ex-offender," an individual who seeks employment only at programs serving ex-offenders and develops neither career goals nor a non-offender identity.

Qualities considered necessary for an effective employment services program counselor, whether an ex-offender or not, are similar to those of counselors at other human services programs. One survey of program directors found that the

most frequently cited qualities are competence, dedication, maturity and demonstrated responsibility, character, empathy and flexibility.[44]

Despite the importance of counseling in many programs, few programs evaluate the counseling function or individual counselor performance. One program which does so is Project H.I.R.E. in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Each counselor is rated for accountability (70%), relationships with peers and clients (20%) and skill development (10%). The accountability rating is based on counselor performance with regard to eight objectives concerning client outcomes and program length:

- obtain stable employment;
- obtain job placement only;
- obtain other employment (e.g., part time, seasonal or temporary);
- obtain other manpower services;
- obtain reasonable wages;
- obtain other appropriate community services;
- minimize program length for positive terminees; and
- minimize program length for non-positive terminees.

A specific performance goal is stated for each objective at the beginning of the evaluation period, as are the weights to be attached to each.[52] This system insures that individual counselors will know what is expected of them and the priority which they should attach to meeting the various goals. It also permits the director to assess both the overall performance of the program and individual staff contributions to goal achievement.

Although such analyses would appear to be quite useful, few programs conduct them. As a result, there are a number of important knowledge gaps concerning counseling. For example, little is known about the relative effectiveness of counseling conducted in person, over the telephone or through a mixture of personal and telephone contacts. Nor is much known about the impact of specific counseling techniques on client performance, the relative importance of various counselor characteristics in improving client outcomes or the influence of greater counselor-client contact on client success rates.

An analysis of counseling provided to disadvantaged persons through the Labor Department's Manpower Development and Training programs concluded that counseling was typified by "unfortunate misuse of terminology, obscure goals, unexplored assumptions, haphazard techniques and disagreement about what to do to whom and under what circumstances."[57] Such a conclusion seems equally appropriate for counseling conducted by employment services programs assisting prison releasees.

E. Training Services

Prison releasees often have a number of training needs, which employment services programs may try to meet. Four major types of training are:

- job readiness training, to orient releasees to the world of work and assist them in developing the skills needed to seek and keep jobs;
- skills training, to help releasees qualify for occupations requiring specialized knowledge;
- supported work training, to permit releasees to gain work experience in a "sheltered" environment, before obtaining a regular job; and
- educational training, to teach releasees basic skills they often lack (e.g., reading, arithmetic) or otherwise provide them with needed instruction.

Although a single employment services program rarely provides all of these types of training itself, most programs try to insure that releasees' training needs will be met in some fashion. If the employment services program does not offer the required training, the releasee will usually be referred to another community agency for that assistance.

1. Job Readiness Training

Job readiness training is designed to prepare releasees for the world of work. Trainees are usually advised about the best techniques for seeking employment as well as ways to keep a job, once one has been obtained. Such training may be particularly important for prison releasees, who not only have been removed from the job market for a period of time but also often had very erratic employment histories before incarceration.

Job readiness training covers such topics as the following:

- resume preparation;
- completion of job applications;
- ways to identify job openings;
- how to handle a job interview;
- how to follow up on a job interview;
- appropriate dress for the job interview and at work;
- the need for punctuality and regular attendance on the job;
- ways to establish good working relationships with peers and supervisors; and

- how to solve problems which arise at work.

A variety of techniques may be used in job readiness training, including lectures, films, role playing (often especially helpful in teaching releasees how to act during a job interview), rap sessions and written exercises designed to provide releasees with experience in preparing resumes, completing job applications or other work-related tasks. Selection of specific techniques depends in part upon the length of time allocated to job readiness training. Wide variation exists across programs, with such courses ranging from a few hours to several weeks.

At some programs job readiness training is merely one of a number of services offered to interested clients, but at other programs it is required of all clients. Indeed, a program may use the job readiness course as a screening device, to determine whether releasees have sufficient motivation to become successfully employed. At such programs, releasees who do not complete the job readiness training may be dropped from the program altogether.

Job readiness training is often a separate, full-time activity for clients of employment services programs. However, the Vocational Alternatives Program in Decatur, Illinois, provides a two-week, half-time job readiness course in conjunction with half-time on-the-job training.[60] Thus, the course not only instructs releasees in the skills needed to get and keep jobs but also assists them in resolving problems experienced at their jobs.

Although there is widespread agreement that releasees lack job readiness skills, little is known about the extent to which training in such skills contributes to client success. Programs specializing in job readiness training may analyze client outcomes, but these programs rarely assess the outcomes of similar groups of non-clients. Thus, the impact of program services cannot be adequately determined.

There has also been little analysis of the relative value of job readiness training vis-a-vis other program services, such as counseling or job placement. In addition, the optimal length of job readiness training has not been assessed. Existing courses, ranging from a few hours to several weeks, reflect significant differences in the resources allocated to this activity.

2. Skills Training

Prison releasees often have few marketable skills and thus without training would qualify only for low-paying "dead-end" jobs. Consequently, many employment services programs attempt to meet releasees' needs for skills training. Because such training requires special equipment and facilities, releasees are usually referred to other local programs for this service. However, some employment services programs provide skills training themselves.

Releasees' needs for skills training reflect the fact that adequate training is rarely provided to prison inmates. Thus, individuals leave prison with poor skills and correspondingly poor job prospects. Past studies have repeatedly found that inmates' activities during imprisonment do little to prepare them for future gainful employment. For example, an analysis of released Federal prisoners concluded that institutional training and work experience had little influence on

post-release employment status. The negligible difference between inmates who received vocational training and prisoners who did not indicated that the training had been of little benefit to releasees. The study also found that inmates trained in professional or technical skills were most likely to achieve successful post-release employment but that only a small percentage of prisoners received such training. Instead, most prison training programs were associated with institutional maintenance.[50]

A review of manpower projects in the correctional field over the 1963-73 period had similar findings. The study concluded that in general those projects had not considered the seasonality of employment, wage levels, occupational status or the needs of the community to which the inmate would probably return after release. Moreover, although most projects had surveyed prisoners concerning their occupational interests, those interests had not played a significant role in the selection of training areas. Most of the training offered had been in blue-collar and service occupations.[57]

A 1975 analysis, based on information from 560 prisons, confirmed the conclusions of earlier studies. Selected findings include:

- Vocational preparation in correctional institutions is generally inadequate.
- Less than half of in-prison industries, maintenance and service activities have as their primary goal the development of inmate job skills for employment upon release.
- The vocational preparation offered in formal vocational training programs is inadequate both in quantity and quality. The number of programs per institution is generally too small to meet the diversity of inmate training needs. Over half the inmates. . . want other types of training which are not available at their institution.
- Only 32% of the programs, by their own admission, have adequate, modern facilities with all necessary equipment in operable condition. . . . Only half of the directors of vocational training regard developing specific job skills as the most important goal for their programs.
- There is an apparent lack of relationship of job training to individual and local job market needs. Less than half of the inmates who participated in training. . . [had a] job waiting for them that was related to the training they received in the institution.
- Wardens estimated that 70% of the inmates need to acquire job skills in order to obtain steady outside employment. . . only 34% are likely to acquire sufficient job skills during their stay [in the institution].[40]

Some correctional facilities have recently begun to emphasize the development of viable prison industries. Such industries operate in a business-like fashion, in which inmates work a full day and receive wages based on their

output, productivity standards are comparable to those of similar community-based businesses and the enterprises are expected to be self-supporting or profit-making. The establishment of prison industries may result in improved job prospects for prison releasees, if the industries require skills which are in demand in local labor markets. If the skills needs of the communities to which releasees will return are not adequately considered when prison industries are initiated, inmates will continue to receive inappropriate training while they are incarcerated.

Since many offenders now lack good jobs skills when they are imprisoned and receive poor training during their incarceration, they return to the community with low skill levels and high training needs. Many employment services programs will try to meet these needs, usually by referring the releasee to another program for training.

A major training resource in most communities is the local Comprehensive Employment and Training Program (CETP), funded through the Department of Labor. However, staff at a number of employment services programs have expressed considerable dissatisfaction with CETP operations. Reasons include:

- Waiting lists may be so long that it takes several months for releasees to enter training.

- CETP staff may be so concerned about trying to achieve high placement rates that they pay little attention to the quality of the training provided or to the likelihood that the trainees will remain employed after the initial placement.

- The program may have little of the individualized instruction which releasees often require.

Another training resource available in some areas is the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), funded through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. However, eligibility for DVR services requires that the client have a disability. While ex-offender status was once considered a sufficient vocational disability, DVR programs are now returning to an earlier emphasis on serving the physically handicapped.

Thus, training resources for prison releasees may be quite limited within a community. In addition, even the resources which exist may be poorly equipped to meet the special needs of releasees. Therefore, some employment services programs offer their own training courses, despite the problems involved in doing so (e.g., obtaining appropriate equipment and instructors).

Although the fact that releasees often lack job skills has been well documented, there has been little analysis of the impact of skills training on clients' employment outcomes. Questions which should be addressed include:

- Do releasees who receive skills training obtain "better" jobs (e.g., higher wages, higher skill level, more potential for advancement) than those who do not?

- Is the skills training provided at available programs appropriate for meeting the needs and desires of prison releasees?

- Does the skills training offered at programs reflect the labor market needs in the community?

Such questions could be assessed in a number of ways. For example, the outcomes of trained releasees could be compared with the outcomes of otherwise similar releasees who did not receive training. The relevance of the training could be addressed by analyzing the percentage of releasees who obtained employment in the areas for which they were trained, releasees' opinions about the importance of the training they received and employers' perspectives about the adequacy of the skill levels of trained releasees.

3. Supported Work Training

Since many prison releasees are relatively unfamiliar with work environments, some employment services programs offer supported work training. Such training is designed to provide releasees with work experience in a setting which lacks the full pressures of regular employment. These pressures can be reduced in several ways. For example, a group of releasees may work together, so that peer pressure caused by the releasee's ex-offender status is lessened. Also, work supervisors may be specially trained and particularly sensitive to releasees' adjustment problems.

Assistance to Offenders, Inc. (ATO) of Atlanta, Georgia, operates a supported work program by soliciting contracts from local employers. At present, most of the clients work under a maintenance contract with Atlanta's Omni Coliseum. ATO clients comprise the work supervisors and assistant supervisors as well as the work crews. All participants are evaluated weekly in terms of criteria important in "normal" work environments. These criteria include:

- punctuality;
- ability to follow directions;
- understanding of job duties;
- willingness to seek guidance;
- extent of cooperation with others;
- willingness to assist others;
- ability to work well with others;
- assumption of responsibility for quality of work performed; and
- overall attitude toward work.[60]

Most programs assume that after a short period of supported work releasees will have sufficient skills, work habits and confidence to obtain suitable jobs in a normal work setting. However, this does not always occur without external pressure on the releasee to obtain another job, as the experience of a supported work program run by the Vera Institute of Justice in New York City illustrates. Vera's Wildcat Corporation provides work experience for former drug abusers and

ex-offenders in such diverse jobs as cleaning public buildings and running off-track betting parlors. Vera has found that participants acquire good work habits but often stay in the supported work program without looking for jobs in the competitive labor market. As of January 1, 1975, a total of 3,051 persons had entered the Wildcat program and only 438 had moved on to non-supported jobs.[71]

A national supported work experiment now in progress may provide considerable insight concerning the types of individuals most likely to benefit from this kind of assistance. The three-year study, based on supported work activities at thirteen sites, will analyze the experiences and outcomes of approximately 15,000 to 18,000 participants a year. Ex-offenders are expected to comprise between one-fourth and one-half of the clients served.[68]

4. Educational Training

Prison releasees often possess low education levels. According to the President's Commission on Income Maintenance Programs, the majority of inmates in U.S. prisons have had less than nine years of formal schooling.[51] Also, 61% of State inmates incarcerated in January 1974 did not graduate from high school, as compared with 36% of the national male population over eighteen years of age.[66] Thus, many prison releasees enter employment services programs with poor educational backgrounds, which may hinder their efforts to obtain employment.

Although some employment services programs have their own educational instructors to meet releasees' needs, most programs refer clients to local resources, such as adult education courses or community colleges. Tuition for program participants may be reduced, or other special arrangements made.

Few analyses have been conducted of the educational training provided to clients of employment services programs. However, a number of assessments have been made of education programs for prison inmates. Because the educational disabilities of inmates are similar to those of prison releasees, the findings of these studies are relevant for community-based employment services programs. Selected findings include:

- Remedial education is most effective when offered concurrently with vocational or job readiness training.
- A nontraditional teaching design (e.g., team teaching, individual tutors and educational machines) should be employed.
- Nontraditional teaching methods and materials (e.g., individualized teaching materials and the use of role playing) are more effective than traditional ones.
- Nontraditional teachers (e.g., formerly trained project participants, college volunteers and community workers) can direct the use of educational materials without academic training or certification in the field of education.[57]

These findings suggest that employment services programs' heavy reliance on referral agencies for educational training may be unwise. This is because most referral sources (e.g., adult education programs, colleges, G.E.D. programs) use

traditional educational techniques, focused around a classroom situation where a teacher instructs a group of students.

Since group instruction of releasees seemed somewhat ineffective, the Experimental Manpower Laboratory for Corrections (EMLC) in Elmore, Alabama, developed individualized educational materials and assessed their use with ex-offenders. Findings included:

- Materials and procedures must be concrete, varied and short.
- Teaching machines inherently motivate interest, but personal attention and varied activities are a necessary supplement to their use.
- Learning contingencies (e.g., rewards) can be manipulated to encourage maximum performance.
- The use of individually programmed instruction reduced preparatory and training time when compared with traditional methods.[46, 47]

Thus, releasees' needs for individualized instruction and nontraditional teaching methods seem well established. However, little is known about the employment outcomes of releasees who receive such services or about the relative importance of educational training as compared with other employment services. Although staff members at programs often assert that educational training (particularly in reading and arithmetic) is a precondition for a releasee to obtain suitable employment, this hypothesis has not been systematically tested.

F. Supportive Services

The operations of many programs reflect the belief that a variety of supportive services are a necessary complement to employment services. Experience at these programs has shown that "marital, financial, housing and legal problems can be traumatic for the released offender. . . . [T]his transition period [has been referred to] as 'postrelease shock.'"[57]

Since employment services alone may be inadequate for successful readjustment, many programs assist the releasee in obtaining such supportive services as:

- legal aid;
- assistance in finding suitable housing;
- medical attention;
- specialized counseling (e.g., on marital difficulties or drug abuse problems);
- immediate financial aid;
- assistance in obtaining food, clothing or transportation; and
- help in making child care arrangements.

Usually, supportive service needs will be identified at an early stage of client processing (e.g., during an initial assessment interview or counseling session). In addition, a releasee's counselor often continues to identify such needs and try to have them met throughout the client's participation in the program. Although some supportive services may be provided by the program itself, it is more common to refer the releasee to other community agencies for assistance. Both employment services and supportive services are typically provided to a releasee in parallel.

Techniques for identifying appropriate referral agencies vary considerably. Some programs have developed manuals describing community resources, eligibility requirements and referral procedures. Other programs rely primarily on the initiative of individual counselors to identify appropriate referral agencies. As a result, some counselors may have broad knowledge of existing community resources, while others are unaware of many local programs which could provide important services to prison releasees.

Once an appropriate referral agency has been identified, the actual referral may be made in a variety of ways. Some counselors merely give the client information about a program which offers the needed service, while others will call the program and try to facilitate service delivery. Counselors often try to develop personal relationships with individual staff members at other programs as a means of obtaining better or faster services for their clients. Such efforts may be especially important when a client is referred to a program having many applicants for service or long waiting lists.

After a releasee has been referred to another community program, contact between the referral program and the employment services program varies. In some cases, particularly where there are formal agreements between programs rather than only informal arrangements developed by individual counselors, the programs may prepare reports on the services provided and the client's progress. In other cases, staffs of the two programs may exchange information through periodic telephone calls. In still other cases, counselors may obtain no information at all from the referral program but receive feedback from the client about the quality of the services provided.

Releasees sometimes have difficulty obtaining adequate supportive services. Indeed, one analyst concluded that "the key problem in the development of community-based programs for ex-offenders is the failure of community agencies to coordinate efforts and the absence of a continuum of supportive services to releasees."[27] Moreover, an analysis of nine projects serving ex-offenders found that most projects did not seek to maximize linkages with outside agencies to expedite the referral process and that generally there were no formal arrangements or definite procedures for providing services to project participants.[2]

Although supportive services may be crucial for a releasee's successful readjustment to the community, there has been little analysis of the best way to provide such services or of whether certain supportive services seem especially critical. A few programs analyze the types of referrals made and whether the releasees were successfully served. Such information is useful in identifying "good" referral agencies as well as those where special efforts may be needed to improve inter-program relationships and client service. However, the lack of systematic analyses across programs makes it difficult to determine the precise role of supportive services in releasee readjustment.

G. Job Development

Job development is the identification of employment opportunities for program participants. It may be accomplished in a variety of ways, including through an area-wide publicity campaign, analysis of the local labor market to identify potential employers of releasees, meetings with employers to explain the program's services and the releasees' need for employment and collection of "job orders" from employers willing to hire releasees.

A number of programs began their job solicitation efforts with a mass mailing to area employers. For example, the Clearinghouse for Ex-Offenders in Louisville, Kentucky, mailed several hundred letters to employers to explain the program and solicit jobs for releasees. These letters were usually followed by a telephone call and, in the case of employer interest, a visit by a staff member.[60] Most programs emphasizing job development try to update the results of such mass mailings periodically, by contacting previously uncooperative employers or employers who are new to the area.

In some communities efforts have been made to centralize job development activities. This approach avoids duplication of work by different programs and reduces the chance that employers will become annoyed when many programs contact them with the same questions.

Job developers may use varied approaches to try to persuade employers to hire releasees. These approaches may emphasize:

- an employer's responsibility for assisting a disadvantaged group;
- an employer's need to fulfill the requirements of an affirmative action program;
- the opportunity for an employer to receive pre-screened job applicants, whose abilities and interests have been matched with the job openings; or
- the fact that all program clients (and the employer) can receive follow-up support from the program, if problems arise on the job.

For the most part individual program staff members develop their own techniques for soliciting jobs from employers. Few programs have written guidelines for job development. However, a comparative analysis of correctional manpower programs developed a number of general conclusions about this activity:

- Personal visits to employers are preferable to telephone contacts.
- The time between job development and participant placement should be relatively short.
- The participant's record should not be hidden from the prospective employer, nor should abilities be overestimated.
- Development activities should feed information back to a program, so that employer concerns can be considered during other parts of the program.

- Coordination with other community employment services (e.g., Employment Service job banks) is important but should not substitute for a program's own job development activities.

- Employers should be made aware of and assisted with on-the-job supports needed by the ex-offender.[57]

Similar points about ways to perform job development are contained in a manual prepared by Employ-Ex, Inc., of Denver, Colorado, and distributed to all staff job developers. Selected suggestions include:

- The job developer should note that the risk an employer takes by hiring a program client may be less than the risk incurred when individuals are hired off the street. This is because the background, work history, employment potential and limitations of clients are likely to be better known than for walk-in job applicants.

- The job developer should not imply that program clients will always work out successfully, but should emphasize that the program screens clients for aptitude, interest and employment potential before referring them to job openings.

- All program services should be explained to potential employers, not just job development and placement activities.

- Employers should be contacted periodically, even if specific jobs are not being solicited. This will help maintain a continuing relationship between the program and employers.

- The job developer should try to see that the line foreman or immediate supervisor of the releasee supports the program, not just the top management or personnel department of the firm. The supervisor often plays a crucial role both in hiring employees and in determining whether a releasee will remain employed.[15]

During the process of job development, program staff may try to obtain a variety of information on the companies contacted. Besides data on the type of firm and the nature of any jobs available, job developers may consider:

- whether the employer has a personal interest in hiring ex-offenders;

- past experiences with ex-offender employees;

- the existence of any formal policy on the hiring of ex-offenders;

- whether job applicants must pass any tests and/or take a physical examination;

- whether bonding is required for employees;

- whether employees need any tools, equipment or uniforms;
- the presence or absence of a unionized labor force and any requirements for joining a union;
- the availability of public transportation to the company;
- the availability of company training or apprenticeship opportunities;
- the possibility of job upgrading or promotions;
- whether the company provides any social services to employees (e.g., day care, counseling); and
- whether the employer has special seasonal or temporary work requirements.

Such information assists program staff in making appropriate client referrals for any job openings identified. Job developers sometimes play an active role in this referral process. For example, at some programs job developers must approve all referrals. At other programs they may contact the company prior to a client's referral in order to provide background information on the individual. At still other programs job developers have little to do with the referral process. This is handled by counselors or placement specialists, and job developers focus only on identifying possible job opportunities.

Although job development is an important component of many programs, there are major gaps in existing knowledge about the effectiveness of these activities and the best ways to provide them. For example, little is known about how often employers should be contacted or the mix of personal and telephone contacts which will be most effective in identifying job openings. Nor is much known about the relative impact of the different approaches used to persuade employers to hire program clients. Such approaches, as discussed earlier, include appealing to the employer's sense of social responsibility and emphasizing the advantages to the employer of hiring program clients.

The extent to which job development activities lead to jobs for program clients is sometimes unknown. Although most programs require clients to report on the outcomes of job interviews, programs do not always analyze these data to assess the percentage of the job opportunities identified by job developers which resulted in client employment. Also, programs may have little information about the placement rates or job performance of clients who found jobs as a result of job developers' efforts versus clients who found jobs in other ways. Thus, there are a number of unresolved issues concerning the impact of job development efforts.

H. Job Placement

Job placement services may consist merely of referring a client to a job opening or may encompass a number of activities, including:

- counseling clients about job interests;

- assessing clients' employment potential within the context of the local job market;
- screening available job openings to identify those which match clients' abilities and interests;
- referring clients to specific job openings; and
- discussing the results of job referrals with the client, the employer or both.

Job placement activities may be conducted by specialists on the program staff, in conjunction with job development efforts or as part of the assistance counselors provide to clients.

Placement methods vary considerably among employment services programs. Counselors may receive lists of job openings from job developers or other counselors and compare these openings with the skills and interests of their clients. If a client seems appropriate for a job, the counselor may arrange the referral directly, or another staff member (e.g., job developer) may do so.

In some cases programs have access to the computerized daily "job bank" listings of the State Employment Service. Clients can be referred to these jobs after the referral has been approved by the Employment Service. However, many program staff members are dissatisfied with the Employment Service. As a 1971 study of the Model Ex-Offender Program (MEP) concluded: "Many staff were critical of the Job Banks and reluctant to use them because of the limited number of listings and excessive competition for vacancies. A consensus of MEP staff indicated that ex-offenders were at a decided disadvantage in competing with individuals who were 'clean' for listed vacancies."[23]

Once an appropriate job opening has been identified, many counselors will help prepare the client for the job interview. At many programs this consists of a relatively unstructured conversation with the client, during which the counselor reviews important points about job interviews. A program in Geneva, Illinois, uses a more formal review process, based on a written checklist which covers such items as:

- materials to take (e.g., Social Security card, driver's license, resume);
- completion of the application (e.g., answering all questions, providing accurate information, indicating references);
- appropriate dress; and
- interview techniques (e.g., using proper language, discussing criminal record honestly, projecting positive attitude).[62]

Besides preparing the client for the interview, programs may provide employers with background information on the client. At some programs a staff member may accompany the client to the job interview, although other programs consider this inappropriate because it fosters client dependence on the program. Staff presence at the interview may indicate to the employer that the program

supports the client and will continue to do so if job problems arise. As an evaluation of several ex-offender programs connected with various State Employment Services (ES) concluded:

> Experienced job developers working as part of Employability Development Teams felt that an individual's chance of being hired increased as much as 50% if accompanied to an interview by a representative of the Employment Service. The special interest shown in behalf of the applicant impressed employers and an ES presence relaxed applicants and facilitated the initial interview. In States where Employment Development Teams were not part of standard operating procedures, most counselors and job developers were not sold on the idea but agreed that accompanying clients on their first interview helped—if for no other reason than to assure that the ex-offender followed through with the referral, arrived at the assigned destination, and did so on time.[23]

After a job referral has been made, most program staff attempt to learn the outcome of the interview. Some programs ask an employer to return a postcard indicating whether the client was hired and, if not, the reasons. Other programs telephone the employer to acquire this information. If a client is not hired, feedback from the employer may help the counselor prepare the client for future job interviews. Besides follow-up contact with the employer (or, at some programs, instead of this contact), programs often ask the client to report on the interview outcome.

Since job placement is a major objective of many employment services programs records on the number of placements made are usually maintained. Although the level of detail of the placement information varies across programs, information commonly obtained includes employer name, date of hire, starting salary and occupational area. Additionally, some programs assess the job mobility and wage history of clients after they have been placed.

Placement data are analyzed in a number of different ways at various employment services programs. The following examples illustrate the types of information programs have considered important in documenting the outcomes of their placement activities:

- A job readiness training and placement assistance program for parolees reported that of all clients graduated over a five-year period, 68% achieved successful employment (defined as securing and holding the same job for sixty days after graduation).[1]

- A comprehensive employment services program reported that the overall employment rate for participants was 48%, and 64% for graduates of the program.[36]

- A centralized employment services program for releasees served 1,289 individuals over a 16-month period and made 2,332 job referrals, 34.1% of which resulted in job placements, or one placement for approximately every three referrals.[70]

- One program reported that over a six-month period, average hourly wages of program clients at placement increased from $3.00 to $3.69.[9]

Programs sometimes compare the placement rates for different staff members as a measure of individual performance. However, programs rarely compare placement rates with client characteristics (e.g., age, race, sex, criminal history), to assess which types of clients are being served most effectively, or with job characteristics (e.g., occupations, individual companies, geographic locations of companies with most placements), to plan more effective job development and placement strategies. In addition, most programs do not compare the placement rates for their clients with those of otherwise similar groups of non-clients (e.g., parolees or participants of other programs). The lack of such comparisons makes it difficult to judge a program's impact on improving clients' employability.

I. Follow-Up Activities

Since prison releasees have not held regular jobs for some time, they may have difficulty adjusting to the work environment. To help the releasee with this problem, many programs provide follow-up assistance after a job has been obtained. This may be accomplished in many ways. Some programs telephone clients periodically to discuss their job experiences and identify potential problems. Other programs also contact the clients' employers to obtain their assessments of clients' progress.

Although follow-up activities are often performed by a client's counselor, a program may have full-time follow-up specialists. For example, the Vocational Alternatives Program in Decatur, Illinois, has a "community worker" whose job is to solve problems that clients and employers experience after job placement. If an employer reports that a client has not appeared for work that day, the community worker will contact the client and, if possible, get the client to the job. Besides such "trouble-shooting," the community worker maintains a regular schedule of follow-up contacts with clients, their families and their employers for a 42-week period after placement. This contact is weekly for the first two months and monthly thereafter.[60]

The length of follow-up contact after placement varies considerably across programs. Many programs funded under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) conduct follow-up for 30-60 days after placement. Other programsmay provide follow-up assistance for as long as a year. Even if there is no formal follow-up activity by a program, counselors may encourage clients to contact them whenever job problems arise. In such cases, follow-up contact may occur many months after placement.

In addition to providing a service to releasees and employers, follow-up activities provide a mechanism for programs to evaluate their impact on releasee rehabilitation over time. For example, programs can analyze the percentage of time that releasees were employed during a follow-up period. This information may provide a different perspective on the program's effectiveness than would be obtained from analysis of placement rates alone. For example, a program may experience high rates of job retention but have difficulty obtaining placement for some clients. In such a case, a relatively low placement rate

might be explained by the program's emphasis on making placements at jobs which clients are likely to keep.

Follow-up activities may also result in such information of interest as whether job upgrading, job changes or salary increases have occurred. In addition to employment-related information, programs may try to analyze the recidivism rates of clients. Such analysis often relies on data available from existing police or court records.

Although follow-up efforts would seem important for successful releasee readjustment, little is known about the best ways to perform such activities. The conclusion of a 1971 study of the Model Ex-Offender Program (MEP) in five States is still relevant:

> Some States toyed with the idea of using mailed questionnaires or telephone contacts. Others intended to use para-professionals and ex-offenders to contact MEP participants in the field. In general, States were uncertain about the duration of follow-up, number of contacts, by whom, and at what point in time follow-up should be terminated.[22]

J. Client Flow

The services discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter may be provided in different combinations and in various orders by individual programs. Some programs have a very structured service delivery process, while others do not. Also, some programs provide all services, while others offer only a few.

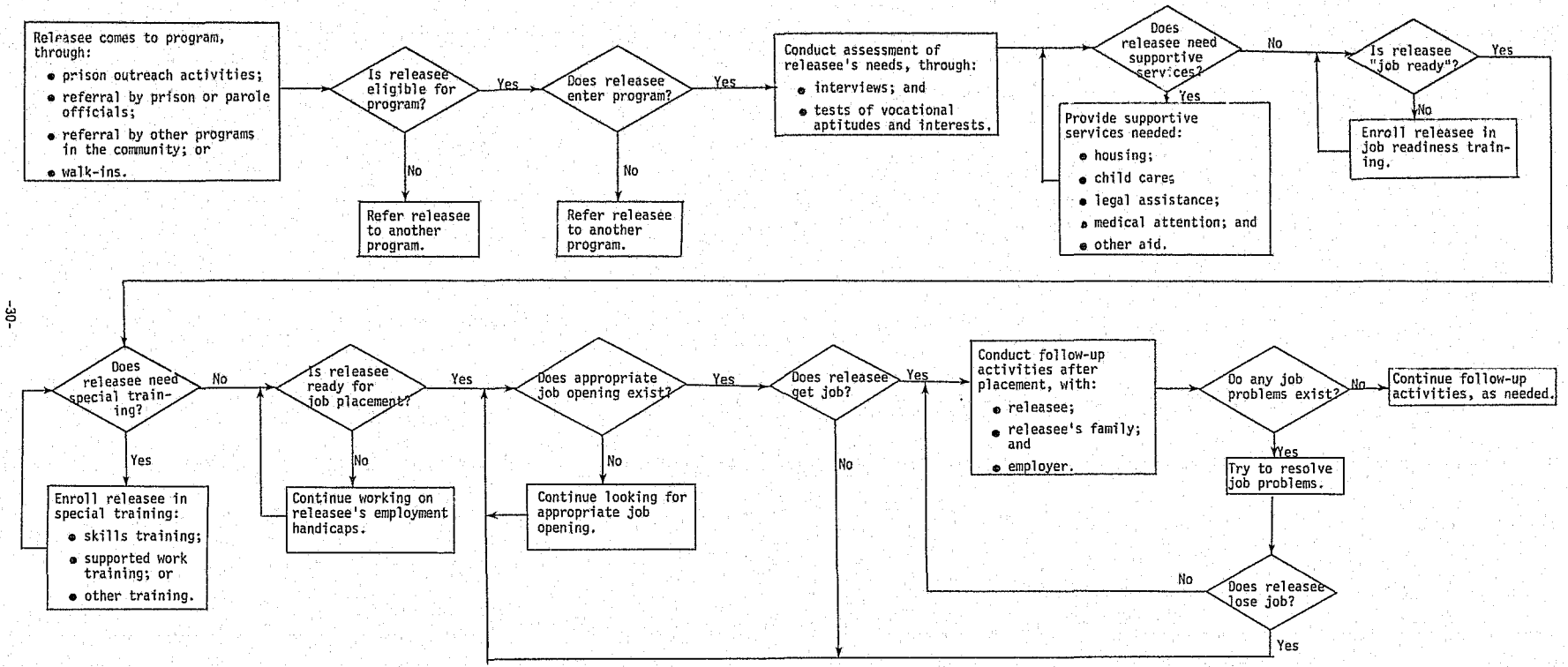
The flow diagram shown in Figure 2 illustrates one way that clients might be processed by a program offering comprehensive services. As shown, releasees may come to the program in a variety of ways. They may have been contacted by the program as part of its prison outreach efforts, referred by prison or parole officials or sent by local service agencies. Releasees may also have heard about the program from other sources and walked in to seek employment assistance.

Once at the program, the releasee must be screened for eligibility. Most programs have established criteria concerning individuals who can receive services. Often an eligible releasee must reside in a certain area, be at least a specified age or meet requirements related to economic need. Ineligible applicants will usually be referred to another program (if one exists), which may be able to provide the assistance needed.

After a releasee enters an employment services program, the first task of the staff will probably be to conduct an assessment of the client's needs. Commonly, the releasee will be interviewed about employment history and job goals and may also be tested to determine aptitudes, interests and skills levels. The needs assessment will result in identification of activities which must be undertaken to help the releasee become employable and find work. Such activities may include:

- assisting the releasee in obtaining needed supportive services, such as housing, child care or legal aid;

FIGURE 2.—Client Flow Through Employment Services Program



- enrolling the releasee in job readiness training, so that job seeking skills can be developed; and

- arranging for any special training the releasee may require, such as instruction in specific skills or training in a supported work environment.

When the releasee is ready for job placement, the program staff will often help identify appropriate employment opportunities. In some cases the program will formally refer the client to a job. If the releasee is not hired, the program may contact the employer to discuss the reasons for rejection. This information may reveal weaknesses which the releasee should correct before applying for other jobs. If so, the program may assist the releasee with such tasks.

Once the client finds work, the program may conduct follow-up activities to help the releasee resolve problems which arise on the job. Besides interviewing the client, the program may contact the employer or the releasee's family to identify possible problems needing attention. Typically, if follow-up is conducted, it is performed most frequently immediately after employment has been obtained. As time passes, follow-up contact will become less common and eventually cease.

It should be emphasized that Figure 2 illustrates one of many possible ways that clients can be processed by employment services programs. In practice, programs reflect a number of variations in the client flow shown in Figure 2. At some programs several of the steps indicated will occur at essentially the same time. For example, a releasee's supportive service needs, extent of job readiness and special training requirements may be assessed simultaneously.

Programs lacking some of the services shown in Figure 2 will usually refer the client to local agencies offering the service. Typically, the releasee's counselor coordinates the referral and continues to maintain contact with the client. If problems arise at the other agency, the counselor may try to intercede on the client's behalf.

Programs may conduct a number of activities which are not shown in Figure 2. For example, the solicitation of job openings from employers is an important aspect of many programs' operations, although this activity is conducted apart from the client flow process. Similarly, programs maintain a variety of records not reflected in the client flow chart.

The types of services offered to clients and the manner in which such services are provided may have an important influence on client outcomes. These outcomes may also be affected by a variety of other factors, including the way a program uses its resources and the external conditions existing in the community. These topics are considered in the following chapters.

III. PROGRAM RESOURCES

An analysis of employment services programs requires assessment of the way they use such resources as staff, funds and facilities. The resource considerations discussed in this chapter complement the assessments of program services (Chapter II), external factors affecting service delivery (Chapter IV) and outcomes of program operations (Chapter V).

A. Staff

Staff members of employment services programs have a variety of academic backgrounds and encompass many different types of past work experiences. Many of the staff have college degrees in such fields as psychology, social work and sociology. Other staff members are ex-offenders, who frequently have poor educational backgrounds. In terms of experience, staff may have worked in the State Corrections Department or Parole Division, at the State Employment Service or other employment and training programs or with one of the many local human service agencies. Programs emphasizing job development may try to use individuals with a business background to contact local employers.

Although employment services programs usually have no difficulty recruiting suitable staff, they may experience high turnover rates. Many of the program directors interviewed during the course of this study commented that staff seem to "burn out" quickly (often within a year or so). Counseling prison releasees and dealing with their varied problems frequently requires a level of involvement and emotional intensity which cannot be maintained for long periods of time. In addition, counselors may have high caseloads and receive relatively low salaries. All of these conditions contribute to the high staff turnover rates many programs experience.

Past studies have sometimes identified desirable staff characteristics and training approaches. For example, one analysis concluded:

- While the most desirable mixture of professional and paraprofessional staff is unknown, most programs agree that it is important to maintain such a mix.

- Important job considerations for project participants are not usually considered for project staff. Career ladder mobility, frequent "feedback raises," and internal promotions are not generally structured for the paraprofessional. Projects often expect paraprofessional staff members to show middle-class work behavior and simultaneously establish rapport with lower-class participants.

- Since the paraprofessional is often hired for similarity with the ex-offender, training for personal and job competency is mandatory.

- Both professional and paraprofessional staff need training but often for different reasons: to introduce the professional to a new setting, new client and set of techniques; to structure the work behavior of the paraprofessional to meet program goals.

- A lack of project cross-fertilization concerning staff training and organization is evident; most projects developed training programs in isolation of available material developed by others.[57]

Evaluation of staff performance occurs in various ways at different programs. Often program directors will review statistics developed by the staff concerning the number of clients interviewed, referred to other programs for services, referred to job openings and placed in employment. Some programs also periodically evaluate individual staff members in terms of criteria such as:

- extent to which previously established goals were met;

- performance of assigned duties;

- relationships with clients, other staff members and referral agencies; and

- extent of improvement in various skill areas.[52, 53]

Although certain programs evaluate staff performance, relatively little is known about the staff characteristics which are associated with different levels of program or client success. Nor is there much information concerning the best ways to provide staff training or to reduce high turnover rates.

B. Funds

Funding levels for employment services programs vary greatly. During this study information on funding was obtained from 219 programs. Of these, 25% had annual budgets of less than $50,000; 17%, between $50,000 and $100,000; 28%, between $100,000 and $300,000; 9%, between $300,000 and $500,000; and 21%, more than $500,000.[63] Such budget differences reflect differences in both the number of clients served at the various programs and the types of services offered. Some programs try to provide minimal services to a large number of clients, other programs offer extensive services to a limited clientele, and many programs operate between these extremes.

For all levels of operation, program directors report frequent difficulties in obtaining continuity of funding. Many funding agencies support programs only on a year-to-year basis, and program directors often must spend much of their time trying to insure funding when the current grant year ends. Such activities reduce the time available for program directors to improve the delivery of services to clients.

To obtain funding, programs must often comply with a variety of data collection and reporting requirements. The need for such information may be poorly understood by program staff, and indeed some of the reporting demands may be excessive. As a 1971 study stated:

> Estimates of time spent by [program] counselors. . . filling out forms and generating written materials ranged from 30 to 35%. Much of this effort was spent filling out. . . reporting forms. There was general annoyance at the reporting requirements. . . and most staff viewed its relevance and reliability with a jaundiced eye. In their estimation, the system consumed an unwarranted and disproportionate amount of staff time and provided scant useful feedback to program operators.[23]

Although programs are often required to collect much information, these data are frequently never analyzed to assess program effectiveness. Funding sources often seem more concerned with the generation of information than with the analysis of it. Consequently, programs may lack adequate assessments of client outcomes.

In addition, programs often lack even relatively simple analyses of the program activities for which their funds are spent. For example, analysis of program expenditures by function or service would indicate a program's relative emphasis on different activities and might suggest needed changes. Also, a comparison of amounts budgeted versus expended, both overall and by function, would indicate the relationship between planned activities and actual program operations. Large differences might suggest that either the planning process or program operations should be revised.

An analysis of the unit costs of program services, such as conducting an interview to assess client's needs or performing job development activities for a given time period, could also indicate areas where program changes are needed. For example, if the assessment interview seems too costly, it may be possible to design briefer assessment procedures or to use lower paid staff members for this activity. Other cost analyses could consider the cost per client placement or cost of achieving successful client rehabilitation (defined perhaps as retaining employment for a certain period of time and not reverting to criminality). Such analyses would permit accurate estimation of the optimal cost of an employment services program designed to achieve a specified level of client rehabilitation through the provision of certain services. At present, such estimation is hindered by the lack of appropriate cost and outcome data for employment services programs.

C. Facilities

Two important considerations concerning facilities are the adequacy of space and the appropriateness of a program's location. Lack of space can hinder a program's operations, by discouraging clients from seeking service at a place that seems overcrowded and by adversely affecting staff morale. In addition, if a program is located in an area relatively inaccessible to many potential clients, it may have difficulty maintaining adequate client

loads. A program may find it helpful to be located close to the parole department or other agencies with which it interacts frequently, since this can facilitate referral of clients among the programs.

IV. EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING PROGRAMS

A number of external factors may affect employment services programs for prison releasees. Two major types of external factors must be considered: the universe of possible clients and "environmental" factors. Although an employment services program can, to some extent, select from the universe of potential clients those whom it will serve, a program has relatively little influence on the overall size of that universe or the characteristics of persons within it.

Similarly, although programs may take actions designed to change environmental factors, they still must operate under some conditions over which they have little control. Such environmental factors include the nature of the corrections and parole systems with which the programs interact, the type and quality of referral agencies in the community and the nature of the local labor market (including employer attitudes toward hiring prison releasees).

A. Universe of Potential Clients

The universe of potential clients consists of the prison releasees returning to the area the program serves. If there are a large number of releasees, the program may have to decide which of the potential client groups will be served and which will not. This consideration may be an important factor in a program's determination of eligibility criteria (discussed in Chapter II).

The characteristics of potential clients must be considered, both because certain types of clients will need certain kinds of employment services and because some clients are more likely to be successfully rehabilitated than others. Characteristics of interest include age, race, sex, education, marital status, living arrangement, employment history and criminal record.

A significant problem related to the universe of possible clients concerns those portions of the universe whose needs are not being met. The largest such group consists of women releasees.

Available evidence indicates that female ex-offenders are at least as disadvantaged as men and encounter as many problems, if not more, in attempting to secure employment. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons reported in 1975 that the majority of female offenders in the Federal prisons are black (52%), are not married (91%), have dependent children and possess either minimal or no employment history.[64] An analysis conducted by the Female Offender Resource Center of the American Bar Association shows that women releasees face a variety of problems in making the transition from prison to the community. These problems were summarized as follows:

- Because she is poorly educated, she finds it difficult to be accepted into higher paying jobs or into training or apprenticeship positions where she could earn enough money to support herself.

- Because she is a mother and the sole supporter of her children, she frequently cannot secure employment until she is able to make day care arrangements.

- Because she is a minority member, she has to cope with racial and cultural prejudice.

- Because she is poor, fewer community or family resources are available to help her train for a better job or attend school.

- Because she is without job skills, her employment options are limited.[17]

Although most employment services programs accept women releasees, the programs often make few efforts to meet women's special needs. For example, different types of jobs may have to be solicited from employers to correspond with women's skills. Additionally, women may need different supportive services, such as assistance in making child care arrangements. Moreover, women are often incarcerated in different institutions than men, so many programs' outreach efforts would have to be expanded if women were to be included.

Given these special problems, many programs make little effort to serve women releasees adequately. Program directors sometimes explain this by observing that program resources are limited and men comprise the great majority of prison releasees. However, in many jurisidictions crime by women is rising. Thus, the lack of adequate services for women trying to make a successful transition from prison to employment may become an increasingly serious problem.

B. Environmental Factors

A number of environmental factors may affect program operations, including:

- the nature of local corrections and parole systems;

- the type and quality of other service agencies in the community; and

- the nature of the local labor market.

Although programs may have little control over these factors, the manner in which they adjust to them will influence the extent of services available to clients and the degree to which clients achieve successful outcomes.

1. Corrections and Parole Systems

Cooperation by corrections system staff will help programs identify potential clients and begin assisting them before their release. Without such cooperation, programs can only serve clients after they have been released and are faced with a variety of transition problems which may make successful employment adjustment more difficult to achieve.

Whether corrections officials will cooperate with employment services programs will depend on such factors as:

- corrections officials' past experiences with similar programs;
- their assessment of the employment services program's competence; and
- their opinions about the importance of such programs for prison releasees.

A wide variety of relationships exist between corrections officials and employment services programs. In some cases corrections officials have changed their procedures to facilitate programs' activities. For example, corrections officials in Connecticut, which requires an inmate to have a job as a condition of parole, modified their regulations so that entry into a specific employment services program would be considered as the equivalent of a job commitment.[60] On the other hand, corrections officials may hinder program operations. Several of the program directors interviewed during this study observed that they had once tried to provide more services to inmates but had been forced to curtail these activities due to the opposition of corrections staff.[60]

The attitudes of individual parole officers may be as important as those of corrections officials, since parole officers can both refer potential clients to programs and monitor clients' employment progress. Despite the need for good relationships with parole officers, programs rarely assess these relationships in a systematic manner. Factors to consider in such analyses would include:

- level of cooperation with the program;
- nature of program activities designed to influence parole officers to become more cooperative;
- extent of program success in influencing parole officers to become more cooperative;
- the accuracy of parole officers' information about the program; and
- amount of communication between parole officers and program staff concerning client progress.

2. Local Service Agencies

Because employment services programs usually cannot provide all the types of assistance that clients need, they must interact with other local agencies. To be effective, employment services programs must often seek to establish and maintain good working relationships with these various community service programs.

Areas of interest in examining employment services programs' relationships with other local agencies include:

- whether adequate services are available from other community programs;
- the extent to which the employment services program makes use of the other community services available;
- the level of cooperation between the employment services program and other community programs, as well as efforts to increase these cooperation levels; and
- the extent to which releasee clients are successfully served by the various community programs.

3. Local Labor Market

The condition of the local labor market will affect program operations and client success levels, since it will be more difficult for releasees to obtain jobs when the local economy is depressed than when it is prosperous. Whatever the condition of the economy, employer attitudes toward hiring releasees will affect the ease with which releasees obtain jobs. In addition, statutory restrictions on ex-offender employment may limit releasees' job prospects.

The state of the economy may cause programs to change their goals concerning the types of jobs sought for clients or the percentage of clients they expect to place in jobs. This is illustrated by the experience of the Model Ex-Offender Programs (MEPs) funded by the Department of Labor:

> Because of unfavorable labor market conditions in each of the States and general cutbacks in hiring by major firms, job developers were sore pressed even to locate vacancies. Sluggish economic conditions in local areas forced most job developers to abandon efforts at expanding employment opportunities and creating new jobs in favor of placing ex-offenders in any jobs that were available. . . .The employment market blight (and competition from other manpower programs) diluted the effectiveness of MEP job developers and forced many of them to settle for putting ex-offenders in minimum wage jobs. Such nuances of employability planning as relationship of job to previous training, work experience or individual aptitude were conceptually sound but unrealistic when considering the paucity of job vacancies in many of the MEP States.[23]

Regardless of the state of the economy, programs will be affected by employers' attitudes concerning the hiring of prison releasees. Positive attitudes include:

- The company has an affirmative action plan, committing it to hiring disadvantaged individuals, and releasees are often disadvantaged.
- Employment services programs provide a useful service by screening their clients and referring only releasees who are qualified for the job.
- The program can assist the releasee or the employer in resolving any problems which may arise on the job.

Just as positive employer attitudes can contribute to effective program operations, negative attitudes can hinder program efforts. Negative attitudes include:

- Releasees are one of many disadvantaged groups; giving special attention to one group would lead to demands from them all.
- Prison releasees are untrustworthy.
- It is unwise to hire a prison releasee for a job when an equally qualified non-offender is available.

Although programs rarely assess their relationships with employers in a systematic way, the following analyses could be helpful:

- extent to which programs have tried to change employers' attitudes and their success in doing so;
- level of cooperation received from employers, both during the hiring process and after releasees are at work; and
- the extent to which companies continue to accept referrals from programs and thus establish an on-going relationship with the programs.

Another aspect of the local labor market which may affect programs' abilities to serve clients is the extent to which statutes restrict employment opportunities for prison releasees. A statutory search conducted in 1973 found 1,948 separate statutory provisions that affect the licensing of persons with an arrest or conviction record. Overall, the search found a total of approximately 350 different licensed occupations affected by restrictive statutory provisions.[7]

There are a variety of methods to remove these legal barriers, and many program officials have been lobbying at the State and local levels for such removal. As a result, some progress has been made in recent years. For example, Florida enacted a general law in 1971 which provides that a crime shall not be a bar to a license unless it directly relates to the occupation

sought. Altogether, legislative measures affecting the occupational licensing or public employment of ex-offenders have been passed in at least fifteen States since 1971, and other States are considering such action.[6, 7]

Thus, the statutory restrictions limiting employment of ex-offenders will vary among communities and affect programs' abilities to place prison releasees in certain types of jobs. The extent to which program staff work to remove such statutory restrictions may have an important impact on the program's future ability to serve releasee clients adequately and assist them in achieving successful outcomes.

V. OUTCOMES

Employment services programs may have a variety of impacts on their clients and the surrounding community. To increase clients' employability and to decrease their recidivism are two of the major goals of most programs. This chapter reviews the available evidence concerning the extent to which programs meet these and other goals.

Most of the existing information on program outcomes appears in analyses of individual employment services programs; there has been little comparative analysis of cross-program results. Relevant data on the probable impact of programs is also provided by analysis of closely related activities, such as prison-based employment programs or community-based programs serving various disadvantaged groups. Therefore, findings from such analyses are included, where appropriate. As discussed below, the analyses reviewed vary widely in quality and scope.

A. Employment Impact

Three major aspects of programs' impacts on releasees' employment must be considered:

- job placement outcomes;
- the extent of job stability; and
- job quality.

These are considered below.

1. Job Placement

Many programs assess the extent to which clients obtain jobs, and most report that the majority of clients are successfully placed. Examples of reported placement rates include:

- During a 17-month period, 71% of all persons accepted into a job development and placement program obtained employment while participating in the program.[14]
- Within thirty days after completing a program specializing in job readiness training, 68% of the clients had become employed at starting salaries well above the minimum wage.[1]
- The average placement rate over one year for five Model Ex-Offender Programs was 51% of all ex-offenders receiving services.[69]

- One employment services program reported that 59% of the 145 clients served between December 1975 and May 1976 were placed in jobs.[9]

- Of the 418 persons needing employment when they were referred to a program over a one-year period, 297 (or 71%) were placed in jobs.[54]

- A State Model Ex-Offender Program reported that of 3,432 persons enrolled since the program began, 854 (or 25%) were placed in jobs and 92 (or 3%) were enrolled in training.[28]

Thus, although there are exceptions, most existing analyses indicate that the majority of program clients are placed in jobs. This finding is of limited value, however, because programs rarely compare the placement outcomes of their clients with those of similar individuals who did not receive program services. Therefore, the extent to which successful job placement should be attributed to the programs' interventions or to other causes cannot be determined. It is possible that many program clients would have achieved successful job placement even if they had not participated in the program. Including such clients in overall program placement rates overstates the program's actual impact.

Besides the lack of comparative analysis of programs' placement outcomes, there are other limitations to past studies. Programs often make little effort to analyze placement data so as to assess the utility of the various services provided to clients or to evaluate program effectiveness in serving different types of clients. Analyses of overall placement rates alone may mask important differences in outcomes for various client groups or for individuals who received different sets of program services.

In addition, placement data are assessed in a wide variety of ways, making cross-program comparisons difficult. Some programs analyze placements for all clients who entered the program, while others consider only those clients who "graduated" from the program. Additionally, some programs assess placement at the time of program completion, while others (particularly programs specializing in job readiness training) analyze whether a job was obtained within a certain number of days or months after leaving the program. Besides these differences, the definition of "placement" varies across programs. Existing definitions include:

- placement on any job;

- placement on any full-time job;

- placement on a full-time job which pays at least a certain wage; and

- employment on a full-time job for a given time period (often 30 or 60 days).[60]

A more serious problem with job placement analyses stems from the intrinsically limited assessment they provide of employment outcomes. Important considerations besides job placement include the extent to which employment is maintained (i.e., job stability) and the type of jobs obtained (i.e., job quality). These are discussed below.

2. Job Stability

It is important to consider the job stability of clients placed by employment services programs. If many clients leave their jobs soon after placement and become unemployed, the placements probably had little impact on the clients' lives. In this case placement rates alone would be a poor measure of program performance.

On the other hand, clients may change jobs as part of an employment upgrading process. As one study concluded: "Successful employment frequently takes place in a series of jobs rather than in one; the ex-offender. . . with little employment history may try a number of jobs before he stabilizes. What appears to be a lost employee may, in fact, be a successful rehabilitation experience."[44]

A number of studies have documented that releasees' first jobs may be held only a short time and that ex-offenders placed in jobs through program assistance may leave them soon after:

- A 1969 study found that the median length of releasees' first jobs was four months; and of their longest jobs, eight months.[50]
- Project Crossroads, a Manpower Development and Training program for first offenders, found that almost all the former participants were working in non-Crossroads jobs four months after project termination.[56]
- Data from the Federal Bonding Assistance Demonstration Program showed that young ex-offenders left bonded jobs within three months.[67]
- The Experimental Manpower Laboratory for Corrections found a mean of approximately five weeks for prison releasees' first jobs, with a range of zero to twelve weeks.[31]

Such job turnover may occur for a variety of reasons. Releasees may have been placed in low-paying, unskilled jobs which offer few incentives for long-term employment. Releasees may also have lacked an appropriate orientation to the world of work and been unable to meet employers' expectations about punctuality, attendance, dress or relationships with supervisors and peers.

In order to assess employment stability and the reasons for job turnover, programs must conduct follow-up activities to determine clients' employment histories over time. Since this is more difficult than analyzing placement rates alone, fewer programs engage in such studies. Programs which do so typically analyze job stability in one of two ways. One method is to assess the percentage of clients who are employed at a certain time after program completion. For example, one job placement program found that ninety days after positive termination from the program, 70% of the former clients were employed or attending school, 44% were employed at the same job they had obtained at the time of termination and generally clients' salaries had increased during that period.[10]

The second type of job stability analysis considers the percentage of a follow-up period during which releasees are employed. Such analysis may also address whether clients were available for employment during the follow-up period, or were unable to work because of poor health or other reasons. One study of this type found that former clients were employed on 71% of the days that they were available for employment over a 17-month follow-up period. The time available for employment ranged from 30 to 360 days for various former clients.[14] Such analyses which consider the percentage of time employed may better reflect releasees' employment experiences than the analyses which assess only whether releasees were employed or unemployed on a certain date. However, these "continuous" measures are somewhat more difficult to derive than the dichotomous ones more commonly used by programs.

Again, as in the case of placement rates, even programs which analyze job stability rarely compare the outcomes of their clients with those of similar groups of non-clients. Thus, little is known about the programs' influence on clients' job stability.

3. Job Quality

A comprehensive assessment of releasees' employment adjustment must consider job quality as well as job placement and stability outcomes. As one author explains:

> Research has indicated that the "quality of employment" may be as important to parolees as the employment per se. . . . The mere fact that the parolee is steadily employed and thus has less time to engage in criminal activities is not enough to counter the effects of low pay, low prestige, and lack of future on the man himself. Steady employment at a series of marginal jobs merely confirms the parolee's self-image and probably contributes to recidivism.[45]

Outcome analyses have also demonstrated the importance of job quality in achieving employment success. For example, one study concluded:

> The occupational area is far more than a matter of vocational skills. The degree to which the individual is involved in his work and derives positive feedback ("satisfaction") from it is a crucial matter in the role of occupation adjustment. . . .[J]ob participation and job status are highly discriminating items differentiating postadjudicated successes from failures. . . .[H]aving a job. . . as such is not the fundamental predictor. What does predict is what the person does on the job.[30]

Despite the apparent importance of job quality, many programs make little effort to assess the nature of the employment which clients secure. The salary paid is a useful indicator of job quality, since releasees will rarely consider low-paying jobs good ones. However, wages alone are an incomplete measure of quality, since salary levels may not reflect important differences in working conditions, prestige, opportunities for advancement or similar factors.

Although there have been few systematic analyses of job quality, it is apparent that many releasees are placed in low-paying, entry-level jobs of poor quality. Such placements may reflect the reality of the job market, as compared with releasees' skills and work experiences. However, they may also reflect biases on the part of placement counselors concerning the types of jobs which releasees can handle, and such biases may be unwarranted. For example, a study conducted for the Department of Labor suggested that releasees who had been trained for professional, technical and managerial work performed better in their jobs than those trained in blue-collar occupations.[50]

B. Recidivism Outcomes

Most programs assume that improving releasees' employment statuses will reduce their recidivism rates. Indeed, much of the public funding of such programs is based on this assumption. Consequently, the available evidence concerning recidivism outcomes is summarized below. Two major aspects are considered: recidivism rates and recidivism patterns.

Most of the available information concerning programs' impacts on recidivism rates appears in analyses of individual programs. Although conducted in different ways, these analyses usually indicate that program clients experience lower rates of recidivism than are commonly thought to occur for ex-offenders as a whole. Examples of findings from these analyses include:

- Over a nine-month period one program's clients experienced lower recidivism rates (25.5%) than a group of non-participant releasees (36.3%).[12]

- A comprehensive employment services program for young male parolees found that participants had a parole delinquency rate of 15%, while a control group of parolees had a rate of 23%. The recidivism rate for parolees in the program was 6%, as compared with 12% for the control group.[76]

- A program for ex-offenders reported that the rearrest rate over one year for persons who entered the program between January and June 1975, was 12.8%.[14]

- Another employment services program found that clients experienced an 11% recidivism rate over a one-year period.[1]

- A program in operation for six months reported that the rearrest rate for all persons served (145 individuals) was 3.4%; for placed clients, the rearrest rate was 2.3%.[9]

- Over a period of 15 to 18 months, an average of 23% of the enrollees in five Model Ex-Offender Programs were estimated to have returned to prison. This was compared with a projected recidivism rate of 51% for all releasees in the five participating States.[24]

As these examples illustrate, some programs assess clients' recidivism rates without comparing them to those of non-clients, while other programs have developed a variety of comparative analyses. In some cases these comparisons rely on recidivism estimates developed on a Statewide, or even national, basis. However, preliminary results from a study now in progress suggest that past estimates of such recidivism rates may have been inflated. The study's findings, based on a comprehensive literature review, indicate that the recidivism rate in the 1970's was about 23%; and in the 1960's, 33%.[42]

In addition to developing appropriate comparisons of clients' recidivism outcomes, programs must assess those outcomes over an adequate time period. Not only do the opportunities for committing crimes increase over longer time periods but a program's influence over client behavior may also diminish as time passes. Whatever the reason, most longitudinal studies have found that recidivism rates increase over time.

This is illustrated by a three-year follow-up study, conducted by the Experimental Manpower Laboratory for Corrections, which compared the outcomes of parolees who had participated in a prison-based program with those of regular parolees. While the recidivism rates of program participants were initially lower than those of non-participants, there was little difference in the recidivism rates of the two groups by the end of the three-year period.[31] Thus, analyses of recidivism outcomes may provide a quite different perspective on program impact if conducted over a period of several years, rather than a shorter time period.

Another important consideration in analyzing recidivism outcomes is to assess the types of individuals who achieve the greatest improvement. Of particular concern is whether persons with better employment outcomes usually experience lower recidivism. However, programs often fail to correlate the employment and recidivism outcomes of their clients or of comparison group members.

The considerations discussed above have been handled in many different ways by individual employment services programs. Although these differences alone make cross-program comparisons difficult, the problem is compounded by the many differences in definitions and data collection techniques used at the various programs. For example, programs may measure recidivism through rates of rearrest, conviction on new charges or return to prison. In some cases parole violations are excluded from these rate calculations, and in other cases they are included.

Moreover, programs often must rely on recidivism data collected by other sources, such as police or parole officials, and these data may be inaccurate. Programs may also analyze prison entrance records, but these may be incomplete and certainly will not reflect incarcerations in other States. Such data collection problems are illustrated by a 1972 evaluation of Model Ex-Offender Programs' recidivism outcomes. Commenting upon programs' efforts to collect recidivism data, evaluators said that the duration of follow-up (90 days) and limited staff time forced most programs to develop "shortcuts" for identifying possible recidivists. Many programs compensated for weak follow-up systems by periodically checking enrollee lists against prison admission records, by using the local "grapevine" to obtain information on clients and by maintaining frequent contact with parole officers.[24]

Recidivism data collected through such methods may be inaccurate, as shown by the experience of the Georgia Model Ex-Offender Program (MEP). Program records indicated that 8.5% of enrollees were back in prison after 18 months. When the General Accounting Office (GAO) conducted a thorough follow-up study, using FBI and other records, it found a 26% recidivism rate.[69]

Besides recidivism rates, recidivism patterns should be considered, since there may be important differences in the frequency and severity of crimes committed by groups having identical rates of overall recidivism. Analysis of such differences is essential for assessing the impact of employment services programs.

Considerations of the types of crimes committed should differentiate misdemeanors from felonies and crimes against persons from crimes against property. One systematic way of conducting such analysis relies on scales which categorize crimes according to their severity.[75] In order to construct such scales, a number of factors must be considered. For example, there must not be too many categories or too broad definitions of criminal behavior.

Although more difficult to develop and implement than analyses of recidivism rates alone, assessments of criminal severity provide much greater insight about client outcomes. Criminal activity may become less serious as a result of programparticipation, even if the total number of arrests or convictions does not decline significantly. As in the case of other analyses, outcomes of clients must be compared with those of non-clients, in order to assess the impact of the program on changing client behavior.

C. The Need for Comparative Analyses

Unless the outcomes of program clients are compared with the outcomes of individuals who did not receive program services but are otherwise similar to participants, program impact cannot be accurately determined. Without comparative analyses it is not possible to assess the probable outcomes of clients, had they not participated in the program. Such information is crucial for evaluating program performance.

The most appropriate analyses would be based on the random assignment of individuals to control groups, which received no services, and experimental groups, which received program assistance. However, such random assignment is often opposed by programs, for a variety of reasons. In such cases comparison groups can often be used to assess program impact. Possible comparison groups include:

- releasees who were eligible for an employment services program but could not participate because of waiting lists or other neutral factors;
- releasees who are served by other community-based programs (e.g., Comprehensive Employment and Training Programs, Vocational Rehabilitation programs or the State Employment Service); and
- releasees returning to the community who are not served by a program but rather seek employment on their own.

Differences in the backgrounds of the comparison group and program client group must be assessed, since such differences might affect outcomes. For example, past studies of prison-based employment programs have found that the more successful clients tended to be older, white, males, better educated, with more stable employment histories and living patterns and with a less serious criminal career.[57] Although fewer studies have been conducted of community-based employment services programs, it is reasonable to expect similar findings. Thus, the comparison and client groups should be similar in terms of such characteristics as age, race, sex, employment history, criminal record and criminal justice status (e.g., under supervision or not).

Analysis of the recidivism outcomes of program clients and comparison group members should consider patterns of criminality (i.e., the severity and frequency of criminal activity) as well as the overall recidivism rates of the two groups. In addition, it is important to analyze outcomes over a sufficiently long time period (probably a minimum of three years) to assess whether any changes in recidivism appear to be permanent or temporary in nature. Finally, such analyses should consider whether certain program services are consistently associated with better outcomes and whether programs have greater impact with certain types of individuals. An important issue in this regard, as discussed in Chapter II, is whether persons under pressure from parole officers have better outcomes than releasees lacking such influence.

Analyzing outcomes for individuals with different characteristics would help programs identify clients who are likely to need high levels of service as well as those for whom the transition to a legitimate lifestyle within the community may be relatively easy to accomplish. In addition, it is important to consider the relationship between the employment status of individuals and their recidivism outcomes. Although many programs assume that employment is a key factor in reducing recidivism, they often do not compare the employment and recidivism outcomes of individual clients. Besides overall analyses of employment and recidivism rates, such studies should consider whether certain job characteristics (e.g., occupational fields, wage levels, opportunities for advancement) are systematically associated with lower recidivism.

Analyses of outcomes should also consider program characteristics. Differences in such program variables as the type of services offered, the extent of client contact or the length and type of follow-up activities may be consistently related to outcome differences. An issue of interest is whether a broad range of services should be provided, including various supportive services, or only more limited assistance, focused primarily on job placement.

D. Other Program Impacts

Besides their possible effects on the employment and recidivism outcomes of clients, programs may have a number of other important impacts. For example, program services may assist clients in readjusting to community life or in achieving "human upgrading," even if these services appear to have little directimpact on employment or recidivism rates.

An employment services program may have a number of effects on the community in addition to its impact on clients. For example, if a program successfully

reduces client recidivism, less harm will be inflicted on citizens, and the community will be correspondingly "safer." There will also be a lessened burden on all parts of the criminal justice system (police, courts, corrections) as a result of lower recidivism levels. In addition, if programs increase client employment, the financial burden on welfare, unemployment compensation and similar assistance systems will be decreased. Moreover, employed clients will generate tax dollars and thus become producers of public revenue, rather than merely consumers of it.

Programs may also have a positive impact on the attitudes of certain groups with which they interact in the community. For example, job development activities may change employers' attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders; such a change could help many individuals who are not program clients as well as persons who are. Also, program activities within prisons may influence corrections officials to become more concerned about ways to help inmates prepare for their eventual return to the community.

Other attitudinal changes induced by employment services programs could occur at the many community-based programs which provide various human services. These programs include Comprehensive Employment and Training Programs, vocational schools, Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, adult education programs and similar activities. Through their contacts with these programs, employment services staffs may influence them to provide better assistance to prison releasees and other ex-offenders.

Although employment services programs may have a variety of impacts on the community, these effects have not been carefully documented. Indeed, it would be difficult to analyze many of these impacts in a systematic manner, since they involve attitudinal changes which may occur at a slow rate over a long time period. Consequently, much of the information available concerning such possible program effects as changed employer or prison official attitudes will probably continue to be largely impressionistic in nature. This is not a serious limitation, however, because these types of program impacts are usually considered secondary ones; it is programs' anticipated effects on clients' employability and recidivism which usually account for their continued support.

A complete assessment of program outcomes would also consider the cost of achieving them. At present, programs have conducted only limited analysis of the costs of providing their various services. In addition, the lack of appropriate outcome data precludes consideration of the cost-effectiveness of employment services programs.

Outcome studies based on comparison groups are needed, so that program benefits can be determined and systematically compared with program costs. Such analyses of programs providing different sets of services (e.g., job readiness training versus job placement assistance) would permit assessment of the types of services which result in the greatest "pay-off." Without such outcome studies, conclusions regarding program impact will continue to be based largely on impressionistic and anecdotal information, rather than substantiated analytical evidence.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

As this report has demonstrated, there are a large number of programs which provide varied employment services to assist prison releasees. Despite widespread interest in such programs, and substantial public funding of their activities, there has been relatively little systematic analysis of program impact. Most existing studies are descriptive, rather than evaluative, and focus on one program, rather than cross-program comparisons. In addition, studies which assess outcomes often use quite limited impact measures, such as placement or rearrest rates, and do not consider such factors as job stability, job quality or the severity of crimes committed.

The most serious limitation of past studies, however, is the lack of data on the outcomes of program participants, as compared with individuals who did not receive program services. Without such analyses, the effectiveness of employment services programs cannot be adequately assessed. Thus, the primary recommendation of this study is that client outcomes be analyzed and compared with those of appropriate groups of non-clients. This analysis should consider outcomes over a period of several years for programs emphasizing different types of services and aiding clients with various characteristics. Such a study would permit assessment of:

- the types of services which seem most effective with different types of clients;
- the durability of changed behavior over time; and
- the extent to which the programs' interventions appear responsible for any changes in the employment or recidivism outcomes of their clients.

A second recommendation is to prepare a "handbook" providing step-by-step instructions on ways to conduct evaluations at different levels of complexity. At present many employment services programs could improve their evaluation activities by reallocating the time now spent on data collection efforts, so that more appropriate evaluative data were acquired and analyzed. However, many programs lack the technical expertise to revise their data collection and analysis efforts in these ways. Therefore, preparation of a handbook to guide such revisions is recommended.

Third, an analysis should be conducted of ways to improve linkages between the Department of Labor and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) at the Federal, State and local levels. Employment services programs are in the somewhat unusual position of serving a client population which is of interest to two major Federal agencies, one of which (LEAA) allocates its funds mainly at the State level and the other, the local level. Thus, a number of problems of intergovernmental and interagency coordination arise, including problems of funding continuity for individual programs at the local level and of overlapping topics for research projects developed at

the Federal level. More formal methods for planning and coordinating activities concerning employment services for prison releasees could be of benefit to both Labor and LEAA.

Fourth, useful materials developed at individual employment services programs should be disseminated to other programs. For example, programs specializing in certain services have sometimes developed manuals synthesizing their experiences in providing these services and discussing various ways of delivering them. Such manuals would be of interest to many other programs, which either provide these services currently or are considering offering them in the future. As part of this study, useful programmatic information acquired during site visits was provided to LEAA in a report entitled "Selected Program Materials."[62] Disseminating this or a similar report could help individual programs improve their present operations.

Fifth, linkages between staffs of corrections facilities and community-based employment services programs should be improved. Since the time immediately following release from prison is a critical adjustment period, prerelease efforts are needed to help prepare inmates for handling such community reintegration problems as obtaining employment. Many employment services programs have tried to conduct such prerelease activities but abandoned them because of lack of support by corrections staff. However, there are a number of areas where corrections officials support prerelease activities, such as special prerelease centers, designed to prepare inmates for life in the community, or furlough programs, which permit selected community reintegration problems to be resolved before release. Analysis of such prerelease activities and dissemination of information about them could be useful to States currently lacking adequate prerelease assistance for inmates.

Additionally, corrections officials may require pressure from funding sources in order to become more attentive to the prerelease needs of inmates. There may also be a need for such activities as staff training, technical assistance or demonstration programs to test ways of improving linkages bewteen prisons and community-based programs serving releasees.

A sixth recommendation concerns the lack of adequate employment services for women releasees. Although many programs accept women releasees, few attempt to meet the special needs of women offenders, such as developing appropriate jobs to match women's skills or providing assistance in making child care arrangements. Analysis of the special needs of women releasees, and of ways to meet these needs, would be an important initial step in expanding the services now available to women.

Finally, it may be necessary to explore ways of establishing job creation programs for releasees. Such programs may be needed because of the difficulty of finding jobs for releasees when there are high local unemployment rates and because the social cost of releasees' unemployment is likely to be quite high. A demonstration program could provide a useful test whether such job creation efforts would have a high pay-off.

These various recommendations have covered a wide spectrum of evaluation and program needs. If implemented, the proposed activities would provide essential information concerning program impact, improve the present delivery

of services to prison releasees and test the efficacy of new approaches for assisting individuals in making the transition from prison to employment.

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