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FY 2011 Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects: Evaluability Assessment of the Minnesota Department of Corrections High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project

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Evaluability Assessment of the FY 2011 Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects

Minnesota Department of Corrections High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project

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Glossary

BJA—Bureau of Justice Assistance
COMS—Correctional Operations Management System
CSG—Council of State Governments
DOC—Department of Corrections
EA—Evaluability Assessment
LS/CMI – Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory
LSI-R—Level of Service Inventory-Revised
ISR—Intensive Supervised Release
MCF—Minnesota Correctional Facility
NIJ—National Institute of Justice
RTI—RTI International
SCA—Second Chance Act
RTM—Reentry Team Meeting
SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely
TTA—Training and Technical Assistance
TAP—Transition Accountability Plan
TPC—Transition from Prison to Community Initiative
UI—Urban Institute

Evaluability Assessment of the FY 2011 Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects

Minnesota Department of Corrections High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project

Evaluability Assessment Summary

In 2008, the Second Chance Act (SCA): Community Safety Through Recidivism Prevention was signed into law with the goal of increasing reentry programming for offenders released from state prisons and local jails. Programs funded through Title I of the SCA must create strategic, sustainable plans to facilitate the successful reentry of individuals leaving incarceration facilities. Other key requirements include collaboration among state and local criminal justice and social service systems (e.g., health, housing, child services, education, substance abuse and mental health treatment, victim services, and employment services) and data collection to measure specified performance outcomes (i.e., those related to recidivism and service provision). Further, the SCA states that program reentry plans should incorporate input from local nonprofit organizations, crime victims, and offenders' families. It also requires that grantee programs create reentry task forces—comprised of relevant agencies, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and community members—to use existing resources, collect data, and determine best practices for addressing the needs of the target population.

Consistent with the objectives of the Second Chance Act, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funded 22 adult offender reentry demonstration grants in FY 2011. Eight FY 2011 SCA projects¹ were selected by BJA for this evaluability assessment (EA). These projects target adult offenders under state or local custody (and about to return to the community) for comprehensive reentry programming and services designed to promote successful reintegration and reduce recidivism. Intended to proactively address the multiple challenges facing former prisoners upon their return to the community, the grants may be used to provide an array of pre-and post-release services, including education and literacy programs, job placement, housing services, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. Risk and needs assessments, transition case planning, case management, and family involvement are key elements of grantees' SCA projects. The goals of the SCA projects are to measurably (1) increase reentry programming for returning prisoners and their families, (2) reduce recidivism and criminal involvement among program participants by 50 percent over five years, (3) reduce violations among program participants, and (4) improve reintegration outcomes, including reducing substance abuse and increasing employment and housing stability. (See Appendix A for the initiative's SCA logic model.)

¹ Boston Reentry Initiative (MA); Hudson County (NJ) Community Reintegration Project; Johnson County (KS) Reentry Project; Minnesota DOC Revocation Reduction Demonstration; Missouri DOC Second Chance in Action Initiative; New Haven (CT) Reentry Initiative; Ohio DRC Healthy Environments, Loving Parents (HELP) Initiative; and Solano County (CA) Women's Reentry Achievement Program (WRAP). In March 2013, the EA study expanded to include two additional FY 2011 sites: the Beaver County (PA) ChancesR program and Palm Beach County (FL) RESTORE Initiative.

Evaluability Assessment Objectives and Activities

Evaluability assessment is crucial in determining if a project is a candidate for meaningful evaluation (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer 2004). At minimum, an evaluable program must have well-defined program goals, target populations, and eligibility criteria, as well as reliable and accessible performance data, and a defensible counterfactual (Barnow and The Lewin Group 1997). The current EA study, conducted by the Urban Institute (UI) in partnership with RTI International, is designed to determine what level of future evaluation activity is supportable in each of the eight² SCA sites and to identify the most appropriate research design and methods for each site. While most EAs seek to determine whether a program is evaluable, the EA study's funder, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), is interested in some level of evaluation in *all* eight adult SCA sites; therefore, EA data collection must support more nuanced evaluation recommendations than "Evaluate: Yes or No." Specifically, the EA aims to answer two questions: Is the program evaluable? And if so, how, and at what level of effort?³ Design options must address both the recommended level *and* type of evaluation, including the suggested mix of process, outcome, impact, and cost analyses.

The following criteria (Barnow and The Lewin Group 1997; Wholey et al. 2004) guided EA work in the eight SCA sites.

1. **Measurable outcomes.** Program goals must be clearly stated, consistently understood by staff and partner agencies, and translatable into measurable results.
2. **Defined program components and their hypothesized relationship to outcomes.** An underlying theoretical model and logic model must indicate how program components, both in-facility and community-based elements, contribute to outcomes.
3. **Case flow and attrition.** How clients enter the program, as well as when, how, and why they discharge (either successfully or unsuccessfully) from the program must be documented to inform sample size estimates, comparison group construction, and evaluation recruitment timelines.
4. **Precise target population and eligibility criteria.** The EA must document how eligible participants are defined in each SCA site and how closely projects and their partners adhere to delineated eligibility criteria, including when and why sites deviate from established parameters. Eligibility criteria must be well-defined and consistently applied to minimize selection bias that might arise from arbitrary enrollment rules.
5. **Intake procedures.** Related to items 3 and 4, it will be critical to map how potential participants are identified and referred to the program, including the

² Eight sites were selected by BJA and NIJ for study, however, one site (Johnson County, KS) declined further participation in the grant program after the EA study began. In March 2013, NIJ and BJA, in conjunction with the EA, identified two additional sites—Beaver County (PA) and Palm Beach County (FL)—for the EA. Ultimately, the EA study conducted site visits to nine projects and compiled nine site-specific EA reports. A brief memorandum describing the Johnson County program was also compiled.

³ If the program is not evaluable, we will indicate what would be required to bring it in line with evaluation requirements.

point at which this referral occurs; this will have implications for planning random assignment procedures (i.e., what point in program operations should random assignment occur) should the program warrant such rigor and for identifying appropriate comparison subjects if quasi-experimental alternative designs are necessary.

6. **Ability to collect and maintain data.** An accurate management information system that includes data needed for the evaluation must be available. For impact evaluations, comparable data must exist (or be possible to create during the evaluation timeframe) for both treatment and comparison group subjects; site support for primary data collection must be evident.
7. **Presence of a clear counterfactual.** Impact evaluation designs also must consider appropriate comparison or control groups. Clearly documenting the services that are available to such individuals is therefore critical.

Likewise, the EA examined whether the program was mature and stable enough to warrant evaluation (Zedlewski and Murphy 2006); core program elements must be sufficiently fixed (static) to allow for meaningful evaluation.

The forthcoming Evaluation of the FY 2011 BJA SCA Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Project, which also will be conducted by RTI and UI, entails a research design (subject to revisions based on the Evaluability Assessment of the sites selected by BJA and NIJ for further study) that envisions (1) process/implementation evaluation in all eight sites, (2) recidivism outcome (treatment group only) or impact evaluation (treatment and comparison groups) based on administrative records (secondary data) of arrest and incarceration, (3) more intensive impact evaluation that collects primary data (three waves of interviews) for both treatment and comparison groups, and, where feasible, uses random assignment to construct treatment and control groups, and (4) two different levels of cost analysis (cost studies 1 and 2), in which the sites selected for the intensive impact evaluation would also participate in a more intensive cost study given the ability to use the primary interview data to generate more information about benefits other than recidivism outcomes.

Cognizant of this design,⁴ EA data collection activities consisted of

- **Review of program materials and documents**, including program and partner materials such as blank intake and assessment forms, orientation materials, program handbooks, redacted transition case plans, annual reports, and program logic models to document operations.
- **Analysis of BJA aggregate performance data** including process measures, recidivism outcomes, and other reintegration indicators that may underscore program performance.

⁴ UI and RTI partnered on both the EA work (Focus Area 1 of the evaluation solicitation) and the full evaluation (Focus Area 2), and proposed to use the same teams for both evaluation projects to facilitate critical efficiencies (knowledge, resources, execution, celerity) while building a solid knowledge base of the sites and their capacity for evaluation to the benefit of Focus Area 2 work.

- **Pre-visit phone interviews** with SCA coordinators and project directors in each site were conducted to outline EA objectives and obtain updated project information.
- **Site visits and semi-structured interviews** with policy-level stakeholders and program staff and partners to assess capacity and readiness for evaluation across multiple EA domains and to collect supplemental information on training and technical assistance (TTA) needs. Specifically, interviews with individual stakeholders at the policy-level within the criminal justice system tracked the SCA initiative’s efforts, evolution, and adaptation over the earlier funding period, and the impact of the grant on cross-systems coordination, collaboration, and data exchange, as well as changes in policies and procedures. Semi-structured interviews with program and partner staff documented screening, assessment, case planning, transition planning, case flow, business-as-usual, and other critical program operations. Additional site visit activities included
 - **Review of program case files and administrative records** to determine data quality, verify the scope and content of client-level data routinely collected, and generate case flow and sample size estimates.
 - **Direct observation of program operations to determine logistics** that may inform subject recruitment and enrollment procedures for the full evaluation.

Drawing on the data collected from the above activities, this report (1) describes the SCA program including the implementation status of the site’s SCA program operations, activities, and characteristics, including adherence to stated policies and protocols and fidelity to the SCA reentry model, (2) examines program maturity, stability, and readiness for evaluation, (3) describes “business as usual” and identifies defensible, viable comparison groups, where possible, (4) documents site capacity for evaluation, including data availability (sources, data format, and technological capabilities) and quality to support process, outcome, impact and cost analyses, (5) examines the scope of any local evaluation efforts, and (6) concludes by presenting the range of viable study design options and evaluation recommendations.

The EA team conducted a site visit to the Minnesota Department of Corrections (MN DOC) High Risk Recidivism Reduction Project from January 14 to 17, 2013. During the visit, the EA team met with DOC leadership, institutional and key program staff, community partners, and other stakeholders at DOC’s central office and Lino Lakes Correctional Facility. Additionally, the team observed an SCA program pre-release orientation session (for new program clients), a steering committee meeting, and a core team meeting. Following the site visit, the EA team conducted follow up via email and telephone to clarify program features and operations.

Minnesota Department of Corrections High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project Summary

The MN DOC's High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project⁵ is a new reentry program developed by DOC's Community Services Division to serve release violators⁶—a unique, high-risk population, including sex offenders, that historically has not received reentry support services. The overarching case management framework used in the program's design is the National Institute of Corrections' Transition from Prison to Community (TPC) model. MN DOC's focus on reentry increased around 2005 with the introduction of the TPC model by the National Governor's Association and the formation of a unit dedicated to reentry services. The design of the SCA grant program was influenced by preceding reentry initiatives including the Serious and Violent Reentry Initiative, the MN Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program, and the Prisoner Reentry Initiative.

The SCA program serves release violators committed to the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)—Lino Lakes who will be returning to Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, or Ramsey County under community supervision. Eligible participants receive individualized transition planning and case management from a reentry coordinator for two to six months prior to release. Soon after enrollment, participants attend an orientation group session during which they are introduced to the program's services and expectations and meet key community partners. Upon release, a reentry team meeting is held to review client goals and to set up a schedule of services. Post-release services are offered through a community hub for 6 to 12 months. Co-located services include case management, employment assistance (including wage subsidies for transitional employment), transitional housing assistance, bus cards, and weekly life skills and mentoring groups.

Implementation

Three SCA awards have supported the program since October 2010.⁷ After a delayed implementation, enrollment began in April 2011. Enrollment has been conducted in three waves that align with the SCA funding. Random assignment, built into the program's design, has resulted in a total of 192 treatment group participants and 114 control group members over the three waves (Exhibit A shows program enrollment by study group and wave). Enrollment stopped in February 2013 to ensure that participants receive the full duration of post-release services before the grant end date (September 30, 2013). Despite several implementation challenges, discussed below, program operations were stable at

⁵ Program staff and stakeholders universally referred to the project as “the Second Chance grant.” For the purposes of this report, the project is referred to as the SCA program from this point forward.

⁶ A release violator is an individual who has been found to be in violation of his/her release conditions during their community supervision period and returned to prison for an amount of time up to and including their remaining sentence. According to MN sentencing guidelines, offenders committed to the Commissioner of Corrections to serve a prison sentence following conviction for a felony offense, serve two-thirds of their sentence in the community under supervision.

⁷ FY 2010 (October 1, 2010 to March 31, 2012, with no cost extension); FY 2011 (October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012); FY 2011 supplemental (October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2012, with no cost extension).

the time of the EA visit. Furthermore, the EA team observed that core components of the program are well-defined, mirror those initially proposed, and align with the SCA model.

Exhibit A. MN DOC SCA Program Enrollment

Enrollment Dates	Treatment Group	Control Group	Total
FY 2010 4/11/2011 to 10/20/2011	93	46	139
FY 2011 11/7/2011 to 4/9/2012	72	42	114
FY 2011 Supplemental 9/17/2012 to 2/11/13	27	26	53
	192	114	306

The program experienced quite a few implementation challenges, the majority of which were encountered during the 12 months following initial implementation.

- **Delayed implementation.** The program experienced implementation delays initially due to the time required to hire program staff and set up contracts with partner organizations. In April 2011, six months after the first SCA funding period began, MN DOC’s SCA grant program was set up—key program staff (grant facilitator and reentry coordinator) were hired, contracts with community partners were in place—and enrollment began. Subsequent to the grant award in October of 2010, the DOC applied for a waiver of the cash match requirement. Approval of the waiver was received in December 2010 which delayed the project implementation by approximately three months. Due to implementation delays, the FY 2010 award period ended prior to completion of the first cohort’s post-release phase. Participants still in the post-release phase continued to receive services through the hub but the provision of wage subsidies, transitional housing, and bus cards ended. However, stakeholders reported that the majority of the participants who receive these financial supports do so soon after release and therefore they would have likely received them before the grant period had ended.
- **Fragile fiscal environment.** Soon after the program got underway, the MN state government shut down for 21 days, just as the first enrolled participants were releasing to the community. The only contracted services that were available during this time were housing and case management and employment assistance services offered at the hub by the program’s lead community partner, Emerge Community Development. The program’s budget was reduced significantly in FY 2011 based on the amount the DOC could contribute to the cash match requirement, resulting in a decrease in some SCA services (e.g., groups offered less frequently, fewer transitional housing beds).
- **Reduction in program size.** The SCA program was offered at two prisons when first implemented—MCF-Rush City and MCF-Lino Lakes. SCA services were discontinued at Rush City after the first wave of enrollment due to the decrease in SCA services. The reentry coordinator at Rush City was relocated to Lino Lakes in December 2011 where she provided case management services with the Lino Lakes reentry coordinator until July 2012, after which her position was eliminated.

- **Victim impact class eliminated.** A pre-release victim impact class was offered once early in the program but was discontinued due to scheduling challenges that prevented participants from completing the class. A total of 20 SCA program participants (10 from each facility) participated in the class.
- **Changes in key partners.** New partners to provide housing and mentoring services were brought on board in June 2011 and February 2012, respectively. Stakeholders reported that the new (and current) partners are a better fit with the SCA program than the original vendors. Mentoring services were not provided consistently prior to February 2012.
- **Key community partner staff turnover.** Key SCA program staff at Emerge were reassigned and replaced with new staff who required training and time to become acquainted with program operations and procedures. A new hub coordinator was hired in the fall of 2012 and two new hub case managers joined the program, in May 2012 and then in September 2012.
- **Collaboration.** Stakeholders reported that it took significant time for the program to establish clear roles and responsibilities among key staff and partners as well as to develop procedures for sharing client and program information (e.g., release forms, shared client database).
- **Funding.** Stakeholders reported that the biggest implementation challenge has been incremental SCA grant funding and associated uncertainties that made program planning difficult.

Despite the challenges experienced throughout implementation, DOC leadership, program staff, and key partners demonstrated strong support for the SCA program. Stakeholders reported that the DOC is committed to increasing services to release violators and is working to get the SCA program elements firmly embedded in the agency. Beyond the SCA program, DOC leadership is enthusiastic and committed to improving services and systemwide processes to support offenders' successful reintegration back into the community.

The DOC would like to expand the program with the addition of two reentry coordinators and by making services available once again at Rush City. The DOC has proposed using state funding to support this expansion; if granted, the expansion would happen in fall 2013 at the earliest. Additionally, the DOC would like to bolster pre-release services by adding programming (e.g., cognitive behavior therapy, living under supervision) to address the unique needs of the target population. Also under consideration is bringing the SCA program's post-release service provider partners into the facility to provide services prior to release (e. g., life skills/domestic violence group).

The DOC is in the early stages of implementing enhanced services in four facilities, following an extended planning phase, as part of the ongoing TPC initiative to make agency wide reentry improvements. As part of that effort, the DOC is transitioning from the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) to the Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI). The LS/CMI will be used to assess needs. Risk will be assessed by MNSTARR, a new instrument developed by DOC's Planning and

Performance Unit. It will be implemented as part of the TPC roll out in the coming months.

Program Logic

The MN DOC SCA program largely reflects the key elements of the SCA Prisoner Reentry Initiative Logic Model with respect to its overarching goals, design, operations, and implementation as illustrated in the logic model created by the MN DOC program (Appendix B).

The program seeks to reduce recidivism and increase service delivery among high-risk release violators (including all levels of sex offenders). The long-term targeted outcomes of the program are

- Increased public safety,
- Reduced recidivism rate of high-risk release violators by 50 percent compared with the recidivism rate of the control group,
- Stronger government and community relationships, and
- Enhanced capacity for reentry services.

The resource inputs and program activities support the achievement of the SCA targeted outcomes and goals.

- High-risk release violators, including sex offenders, are identified and enrolled in the program.
- Risk of re-offending is assessed using a validated risk/needs assessment; results contribute to reentry services and transition planning.
- Transition planning includes a Transition Accountability Plan (TAP), SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goals, and a Reentry Team Meeting (RTM).
- Individualized case management and referrals to services provided during incarceration and following release.
- Chemical dependency is assessed and referrals for treatment are made.
- Community-based services are co-located at a community resource hub.
- DOC community partner agencies partner to deliver the program.

Program staff track short and long-term outcome measures during both pre- and post-release phases.

Program Operations

Exhibit B outlines the key characteristics of the MN DOC SCA program which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Exhibit B. MN DOC High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project Site Characteristics

SITE	Minnesota Department of Corrections (Lead agency) * New program
ENROLLMENT and CASEFLOW	* 192 treatment, 114 control as of February 11, 2013 * Enrollment concluded February 11, 2013 to ensure six months of post-release services * 197 total treatment anticipated by March 31, 2013
TARGET POPULATION and ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	* Male * Release Violators (RVs) without a new sentence * Committed to MCF-Lino Lakes [treatment group only] * Returning to Hennepin, Anoka, Dakota, and Ramsey Counties * 60–180 days in facility prior to release * At least 150 days of supervised release in community * Exclusions: detainer; early release resulting from appeal or resentencing; unavailable to work with reentry coordinator during pre-release (e.g., administrative segregation or facility transfer) [treatment group only]
PRE-RELEASE CORE COMPONENTS	* 60–180 days * Pre-release orientation * Individualized case management, transition planning, and support (e.g., developing resume, obtaining identification) by reentry coordinator * Transition Accountability Plan/ SMART goals * Chemical dependency (Rule 25) assessment and treatment referral * Transitional housing referral, when needed * Employment assessment Note: Very little, if any, pre-release programming is available to RV population
POST-RELEASE CORE COMPONENTS	* Six to 12 months of community resource hub services * Co-location of services at community resource hub * Reentry team meeting upon release * Individualized case management, advocacy and referrals * Employment preparation, job development and placement, retention support; wage subsidies (up to eight weeks) * Housing assistance (rent subsidies or transitional independent group housing) * Life skills (domestic violence prevention) group * Group mentoring * Bus passes
FEASIBILITY OF RANDOMIZED/QUASI-DESIGN	RANDOM ASSIGNMENT—in place (mandatory participation)
LOCAL EVALUATION	YES—internal * Random assignment * Measuring criminal justice outcomes, employment stability
PROGRAM STABILITY	* Operations and core components well-defined and stable * Strong support for program and commitment to serving RV population * Would like to add two additional reentry coordinators (one at Lino Lakes and one at Rush City); have proposed using state funding for expansion * Would like to enhance pre-release component by adding programming (e.g., cognitive behavior therapy) and bringing community partners to offer services (e.g., life skills group) in the facility

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Implementation delays—as a result, FY 2010 funds ended prior to completion of FY 2010 participants' post-release phase (no wage subsidies, housing, transportation; however most had received services) * Fragile fiscal environment—state shut down when first participants began releasing, program budget reduced * Reduction in program size (from two correctional facilities and reentry coordinators to one) * Victim impact class (pre-release) discontinued * Changes in key partners (housing, mentoring) and hub staff; mentoring not provided consistently before February 2012 * Key stakeholder collaboration—time required to establish clear roles and responsibilities and develop information sharing procedures * Incremental nature of grant funding and associated uncertainties
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Target Population, Selection, and Enrollment

The program targets male release violators committed to Lino Lakes Correctional Facility returning to one of four metro area counties in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area (Anoka, Dakota, Ramsey, and Hennepin Counties). Eligible participants must have 60 to 180 days in the facility prior to release and at least 150 days of supervised release or intensive supervised release (ISR) in the community remaining on their sentence.⁸ Overall, offenders are excluded from the program due to detainers,⁹ extension of confinement time beyond 180 days, extended time in segregation, early release resulting from appeal or resentencing, transfer out of the treatment facility lasting more than 30 days, and previous study enrollment (in either the treatment or control group).

The program’s selection and enrollment processes are illustrated in a case flow diagram in Exhibit C. Random assignment, conducted by the DOC’s Planning and Performance Unit, has been integrated into the program design since enrollment began. Once a week, the data analyst generates a list of offenders who meet eligibility criteria. Eligible offenders are randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group.¹⁰ DOC program staff receive the list of treatment participants; the control list is not shared. As shown in the attached case flow diagram, study participants may become ineligible and subsequently excluded after enrollment. The reentry coordinator has some ability to influence facility staff decisions regarding transfers in an effort to maintain participants’ eligibility.

Pre-Release Processes and Core Components

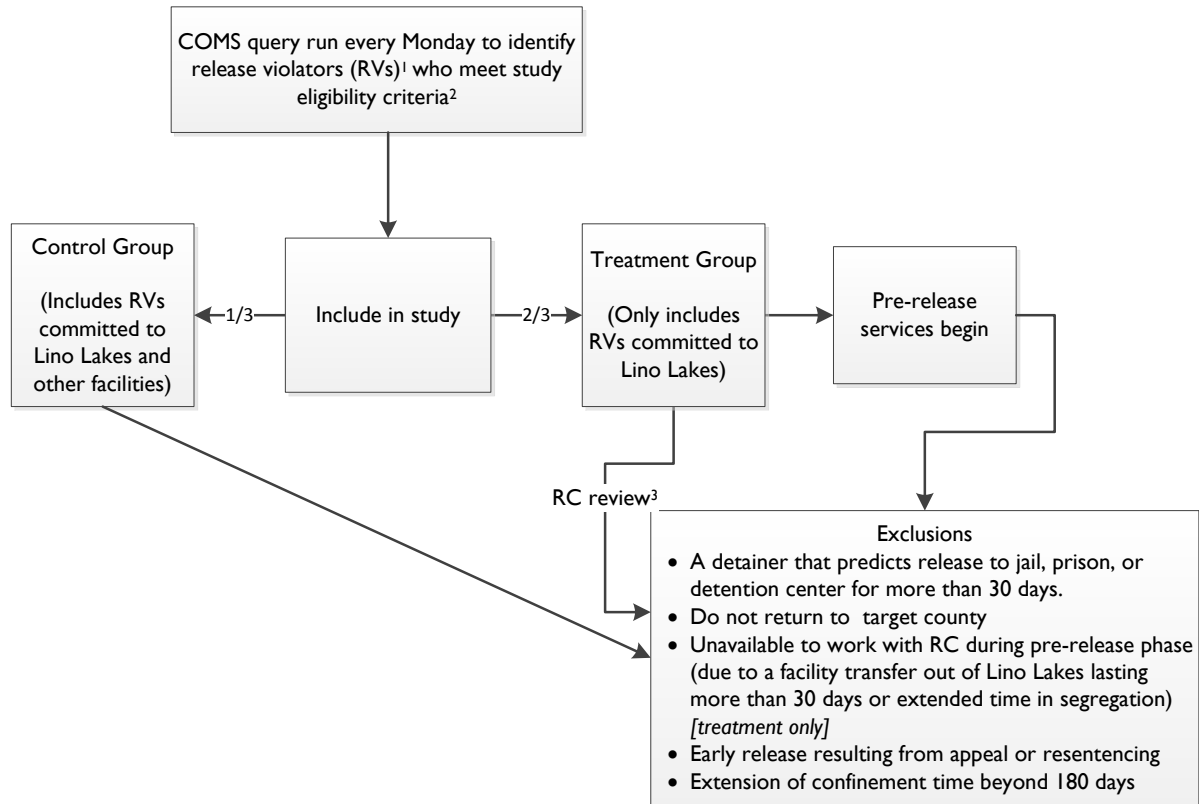
Once a month, a pre-release orientation is held for newly enrolled SCA program participants. During the orientation, participants learn about program expectations and resources and services offered through the program. Service providers from each of the four partner community organizations attend, and each provider describes the services

⁸ Initially, the requirement was 180 days of community supervised release; however, this was reduced to 150 days to increase the pool of eligible participants.

⁹ Specifically, offenders are excluded if they have a detainer that predicts release to jail, prison, or a detention center for more than 30 days.

¹⁰ Approximately two-thirds are assigned to the treatment group. Program staff reported that the numbers do not warrant a 50/50 group assignment.

Exhibit C. MN DOC's High Risk Recidivism Reduction Project Case Flow



1. A release violator has been found to be in violation of their release conditions during their community supervision period and returned to prison for an amount of time up to and including their remaining sentence. Offenders committed to the Commissioner of Corrections (according to MN Sentencing Guidelines) to serve a prison sentence following conviction of felony offense, serve two-thirds of their sentence in prison and one-third in the community under supervision.
2. Eligibility criteria:
 - Release violator without a new sentence
 - Male
 - Committed to MCF-Lino Lakes [applies to treatment group only]
 - Returning to Hennepin, Anoka, Dakota, and Ramsey Counties
 - 60–180 days in facility prior to release
 - At least 150 days of supervised release or Intensive Supervised Release in community
 - Have not been enrolled in study (treatment or control group) previously
3. The reentry coordinator assists with identification of detainees; they are not always visible to the data analyst. At a later date, the data analyst reviews the control list to weed out cases with detainees as well as other exclusion criteria.

available through the program. Following the presentation, participants are given the opportunity to ask questions of each of the providers and the reentry coordinator. Following the orientation, the hub case manager completes intake paperwork and an employment assessment with each participant.

The primary element of the pre-release phase is case management and transition planning provided by the reentry coordinator. The reentry coordinator meets initially with each participant to introduce the program and obtain information releases to share information with key program community partners. The Coordinator then meets individually with participants as many as ten times a month throughout the pre-release phase to develop a TAP and SMART goals. The frequency of meetings varies and depends on a participant's level of engagement and/or their needs. Offenders placed in discipline or administrative segregation for a duration of time that prevents them from receiving pre-release services will be excluded from the program. Additional support is tailored to participants' individual needs and may include assistance with developing a resume, obtaining identification, scheduling medical appointments, practicing budgeting skills, and locating housing options and resources. If an offender has no viable housing options, the reentry coordinator will make a referral to the SCA program's housing partner (ATTIC Correctional Services, Inc.) for placement in temporary transitional group housing or for a short-term rent subsidy. The reentry coordinator administers a risk/needs assessment (LSI-R) when a participant's scores are one year old. Additionally, when appropriate, the reentry coordinator conducts a Rule 25 chemical dependency assessment (which facilitates an offender's access to state-funded chemical dependency treatment following release) and initiates a referral for substance abuse treatment.

Approximately one month prior to release, the reentry coordinator and the hub case manager schedule a RTM to be held at the hub immediately following a participant's release (described below). Additionally, the reentry coordinator contacts the participant's county supervision agent to share information about the client, inform him/her that the offender is enrolled in the SCA program, and invite him/her to the RTM.

Post-Release Processes and Core Components

Post-release services are co-located at the community resource hub located in north Minneapolis. All hub services are managed by Emerge Community Development, a community-based provider of workforce development and housing programs. The core SCA program services available through the hub are offered by Emerge and three additional community partner organizations. Emerge offers individualized case management (provided by the hub case manager) and extensive employment assistance including workforce development, job club,¹¹ financial literacy training, and employment preparation, placement, and retention support.

Within 72 hours of a participant's release, the RTM is held at the hub. At a minimum, the participant, the assigned supervision agent, the reentry coordinator, and the hub case manager attend. The group collectively reviews the participant's TAP and goals that were

¹¹ The job club is a 14 hour class offered twice each month that focuses on job searching, financial education, and interviewing skills.

developed prior to release. A calendar of the hub's program offerings is reviewed and a schedule of services and next steps are developed.

Immediately after the RTM, if possible, participants meet with Emerge staff to discuss employment-related goals and barriers (e.g., skill sets, interests), and conduct employment searches. To support the transition to employment, wage subsidies are available for the first 256 hours of employment to incentivize the hiring of SCA clients by employers. Two group sessions are offered on a weekly basis: life skills¹² (provided by The Family Partnership) and group mentoring¹³ (provided by the Council on Crime and Justice). To assist with transportation, a fixed number of bus passes are available to every participant. Although not supported by grant funds, participants have access to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings that are held at the hub.

ATTIC Correctional Services, Inc. provides housing assistance. Participants in Hennepin or Ramsey County with no housing options may be placed in transitional independent group housing (a furnished three-bedroom house shared by three program participants) for up to 90 days. The SCA grant covers a total of six beds (one apartment in each county) and provides a week's worth of provisions (e.g., utensils, cleaning supplies, small amount of groceries). Participants who live in Dakota or Anoka County may receive assistance with rent for independent housing.

The hub case manager follows up with participants at least weekly, provides assistance, and makes referrals as needed. The reentry coordinator moves to the hub to provide services as participants release to the community. The reentry coordinator's primary duties are to conduct follow-up risk/needs assessments, follow-up with participants to assess the extent to which they have fulfilled their TAP and SMART goals, and close out files. The reentry coordinator coordinates with the hub case manager who works with employers, family members, and with participants to ensure clients are connected to and receiving services.

Wage subsidies for transitional employment, rent subsidies, transitional housing, and bus passes are available for six months after a participant releases from prison. Hub services are provided for 12 months. Participants are eligible to receive up to one year of additional services from Emerge following their participation in the SCA program and are transitioned to Emerge's Northside Reentry Connections program.

¹² The name of this group has evolved over the course of the grant from domestic violence prevention, to anger management, to life skills. The *Healing Generations* curriculum (developed by The Family Partnership) is used as a guide for the group. The group covers domestic violence and anger management topics from a trauma-informed care approach. Participants receive a certificate of completion after attending 8 of 12 sessions. Attendance is rolling; participants do not have to progress through the session sequentially.

¹³ The mentoring group sessions include a facilitator and trained volunteer mentors. Each session begins with introductions and a brief check-in for mentees to discuss personal struggles and/or successes; the second half of the session includes a short presentation delivered by a mentor on a topic of his/her choice, followed by a group discussion of how the topic relates to their own transition experiences.

All program participants are released to the community on either supervised release or ISR,¹⁴ provided by the four target counties' local community corrections agencies that operate under standard state guidelines.¹⁵ Supervision is not conducted differently for SCA program participants. Supervision revocations are made in accordance with DOC Guidelines for Revocation of Parole/Supervised Release and Promulgated Rules, administered by the DOC Hearings & Release Unit. However, stakeholders did report that it is valuable to receive information about participants in advance from the reentry coordinator given that supervision agents do not communicate with clients prior to their release to the community.

The SCA program defines program completion loosely—a participant is considered a successful completion if they are in the community for six months without revocation and do not completely refuse services. The program does not have a formal graduation.

Most stakeholders acknowledged the challenges to serving the release violator population and many pointed out that engagement levels varied among participants. Some expressed frustration over offering a program to offenders who do not take advantage of the resources made available to them when others outside of the program are eager for services. Although program participants are enrolled in the program regardless of whether they wish to be, engagement is not compulsory; that is, there are no penalties for not partaking in services. Additionally, it is important to note that the program's four-county post-release geographic target area is quite large and geographically diverse. Two of the target counties (Dakota or Anoka) are suburban. Parts of Dakota and Anoka Counties are located as much as an hour away from the hub and several hours away via public transportation, presenting an obstacle to offenders who wish to access hub services.

Key Staff and Resources

Oversight for the program is provided by DOC's Reentry Services Unit situated within the Community Services Division. DOC staff key to the program (supported by a combination of grant and matching funds) include the reentry coordinator, the grant facilitator (both hired for the program in 2011), and a data analyst. The grant facilitator coordinates activities and communication across program staff, community supervision agencies, and community partners, as well as ensures that case flow and research study fidelity are maintained and that participants are tracked accurately. Additionally, two reentry services unit administrators (whose time is supported by a grant match) provide leadership around program policy and procedure. Contracts with community partners (all executed with a combination of grant and matching funds) provide hub case management services, employment assistance, housing assistance, domestic violence prevention programming, and group mentoring. Grant funds also cover transitional group housing

¹⁴ For a description of ISR see:

<http://www.doc.state.mn.us/publications/backgrounders/documents/ISRbackgrounder.pdf>

¹⁵ The program's four target counties are among 32 MN counties that provide probation, supervised release or parole services under the provisions of the Minnesota Community Corrections Act of 1973. The MN DOC provides these services to adult offenders in the remaining 55 counties.

beds and rent subsidies, job wage subsidies for transitional employment, bus cards, and chemical dependency assessments.

Two interagency groups support and provide guidance to program operations, as well as provide a forum for information sharing among key program stakeholders. The SCA Grant Steering Committee consists of the grant facilitator, the reentry coordinator, two DOC reentry administrators, and supervisory-level representatives from the four target county community corrections agencies. The committee reviews project activities, goals, and budget, and makes recommendations for program adjustments and improvements as needed. The committee initially met monthly but now meets quarterly. A Core Team Meeting—which includes DOC program staff and representatives from the four community partner agencies—is held biweekly to review the status of individual client cases, discuss client needs, and share information about available resources to meet clients' needs.

Stakeholders reported that since the grant's inception, many efforts have been made to improve collaboration among the DOC, each of the four community corrections agencies, and the key community partner organizations. Program staff and partners have collectively worked hard to develop program processes and procedures to coordinate service provision and share information. Stakeholders reported that these efforts have opened the lines of direct communication among key stakeholders and increased timely access to information. Furthermore, the SCA grant has resulted in the forging of new collaborative working relationships and the strengthening of existing partnerships between DOC and the community partner organizations, as well as increased participation and buy-in from community corrections agents.

Business as Usual

The majority of release violators in Minnesota are housed at Lino Lakes. Some are housed at Rush City and some are transferred due to special needs (e.g., to Oak Park Heights for medical treatment or Stillwater for higher custody level). Release violators are separated from other offenders at Lino Lakes, who are primarily individuals in sex offender and chemical dependency treatment. Release violator offenders who are not in the SCA program receive minimal programming, especially if committed for less than 180 days. Some education, parenting, and anger management programs are available, but enrollment into treatment programs is prioritized for new commitments. Likewise, transitional programming is very limited for release violators. A three-day pre-release class is offered at all DOC facilities, yet DOC policy does not mandate release violator offenders from repeating this class within two years and thus excludes most release violators. All offenders have access to resource fairs, held annually at most facilities, as well as a resource center that maintains written and computer-based resources to assist with job and resource searches. These services are coordinated by a DOC transitions coordinator.

Stakeholders reported there are few staff at Lino Lakes who are qualified to administer Rule 25 assessments for chemical dependency. As a result, offenders who may otherwise qualify do not gain eligibility to subsidized substance abuse treatment in the community. The LSI-R is administered to all DOC new commits at the time of intake and again four

to five months prior to release. Release violators are not reassessed with LSI-R; however it may be given in the community by the supervising agent.

All offenders receive an assigned facility case manager within 24 hours of commitment. Offenders with chronic medical issues are also assigned a medical release planner who ensures the continuation of care upon release. Facility case managers' release planning with offenders is limited to making basic preparations including housing and supervision level classification. In preparation for release, case managers submit an agent assignment request to the community corrections agency in the county where the offender will be releasing. This request includes summary information about the offender¹⁶ as well as the address where the offender intends to live upon release that has been provided to the case manager by the offender. Release violators are not released without a release address that has been approved by the county community corrections agency. Beyond this exchange of information, there is limited outreach from facility to community—case managers may communicate with an offender's county supervision agent or make arrangements for post-release services on a limited basis; and following release, case managers do not conduct any follow up or provide post-release assistance.

The conditions of supervised community release and revocation procedures are the same for non-program participants as they are for SCA program clients.

Offenders may independently directly apply for services at Emerge. Emerge is a community-based non-profit organization that offers a wide variety of housing and workforce programs to over 3,500 diverse persons annually including low-income, homeless, refugees, youth, and criminal justice-involved individuals. Many of their programs are available to the public.

Potential Comparison Groups

The DOC's random assignment process—which is implemented with integrity by the DOC's Planning and Performance Unit—created a control group that could also be used for an external evaluation. A consideration for the future is the size of the eligible participant pool. Program staff reported that the pool is shrinking since a small number of release violators account for the bulk of release violations, and therefore they are finding that many of the release violators screened for eligibility have previously been enrolled in the study. Suggestions for increasing the pool were offered: expand the post-release geographical area, expand the program back into MCF-Rush City, and reduce the length of required post-release supervision.

Training and Technical Assistance

The Council of State Governments (CSG) provided training and TTA to the MN DOC's SCA program during a site visit in the summer of 2012 and several teleconferences. Stakeholders reported that the majority of TTA centered on funding related questions and

¹⁶ The agent assignment request information packet includes summary information about the offender including demographics, assessments (e.g., LSI-R, chemical dependency, sex offender), discipline history, institutional work and education programming, medication, etc.

issues, options for the overall project, and performance measurement reporting requirements.

Stakeholders identified a few areas in which they would like TTA support: sustainability planning, extending evidence-based practice information to community partners (e.g., offering a DOC-sponsored training event), and enhancing institutional (pre-release) practices and services. They are currently exploring how to incorporate motivational interviewing and have requested assistance from CSG to identify cognitive and life skills best practices and programming that could be added to address the unique needs of the target population.

As previously discussed, stakeholders reported that program staff and partners are collectively engaged in ongoing efforts to develop program processes that facilitate service coordination, information sharing, and collaborative working relationships among the DOC, each of the four community corrections agencies, and the key community partner organizations. Although these efforts have greatly enhanced communication and collaboration, stakeholders and the EA team recognized that there is still room for improvement. In particular, with respect to representation on the two formal interagency groups, the steering committee lacks consistent community partner representation and the core team meeting would benefit from the presence of community corrections agents.

Data Elements, Data Sources, Systems, and Strategies

The SCA program uses a web-based database, Client Track, which was developed specifically for the grant as an extension of Emerge's client database. Client Track is housed at Emerge, but SCA program staff and the other three community partners have access to the system—they can enter client data and run reports. The database is used to track a range of information about program participants—it includes demographics, case financial assessments, employment history, employment skills, goals for employment, case manager notes, and services received at the hub (e.g., life skills and mentoring group attendance, job club participation, case manager contacts) which are recorded in units of service. Stakeholders reported that not all partners have always consistently entered information, but efforts have been made to ensure complete and accurate data.

The DOC maintains an offender management system—Correctional Operations Management System (COMS)—which tracks all incarcerated offenders. Among other data, COMS includes offender ID (state identification number and offender identification number, both maintained for life), screening and assessment scores and common education and institutional programming enrollment (including a flag for SCA program enrollment), a discharge plan (the TAP), and case manager notes. COMS is updated daily. Data are extracted using SPSS and imported into Microsoft Excel or Access. The Hearings and Release Unit maintains an Access database separate from COMS.

The Court Services Tracking System is used in all counties in Minnesota. This system tracks county-level supervision data (e.g., probation contacts, urinalysis results, client tasks).

Other statewide data sources include:

- Bureau of Criminal Apprehension: statewide arrest and conviction data
- Minnesota Court Information System: court records
- Department of Employment and Economic Development: employment data

Local Evaluation

The DOC's Performance and Planning Unit is conducting an internal evaluation of the SCA program and has used random assignment since program enrollment began. The study's outcome measures include recidivism (return to prison without a new sentence, return to prison with a new sentence, re-arrest, and a new conviction) and employment. A report on the first SCA grant cohort (i.e., participants served with FY 2010 funds) is expected in the spring of 2013 after all participants from that cohort have been released for six months.

Support for Additional Evaluation Activities

Program stakeholders were very hospitable, forthcoming, and eager to share the details about SCA program operations with the EA team. Most key stakeholders expressed a basic understanding of and an appreciation for evaluation. The DOC is highly invested in program evaluation as demonstrated by their internal study utilizing random assignment. DOC program leadership would welcome participation in the SCA evaluation.

When asked what they would like to learn from an evaluation, stakeholders said they were interested in knowing how recidivism is impacted across the different SCA grantee sites as well as what types of measures can be taken on the front end to prevent crime. Stakeholders also expressed an interest in expansion of the program to other large communities in the state.

Evaluability Assessment Recommendations

We believe that the MN DOC's SCA program meets all the criteria that guided the EA and would therefore be a strong candidate for the evaluation's proposed *impact study*. In addition, in accordance with the proposed evaluation design, we recommend *process and implementation evaluation*, a *recidivism outcome analysis* using administrative records, and a *cost analysis*. Evaluation recommendations and considerations are summarized in Exhibit D.

As described throughout this report and in Exhibit D, the program has many attributes that contribute to it being a good candidate for the impact study. Furthermore, the unique target population (high-risk release violators) and the hub service model merit additional study. A process and impact evaluation to document the impact of co-located service delivery on program participant outcomes would yield useful information of interest to the broader field.

Exhibit D. MN DOC High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project Evaluation Recommendations

SITE	Minnesota Department of Corrections (Lead agency)
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Strong support for evaluation * Random assignment * Service data (unit level) for treatment group * MN DOC conducted basic cost analysis of FY 2010 services * Unique population targeted (high-risk release violators) * LSI-R scores used for transition planning/goal setting * Strong commitment (MN DOC and key community partners) * Collaboration (MN DOC /key community based partners)
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Pre-release component currently doesn't include services (e.g., educational, vocational, mental health/substance abuse treatment) * Recent key partner staff turnover * Eligibility criteria may need to be modified eventually to ensure continued level of case flow * If funding interrupted some aspects of the program are likely to be affected
LEVEL/TYPE OF EVALUATION RECOMMENDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Process/implementation * Recidivism outcome * Cost study I * Viable impact site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Other outcomes * Cost study 2 * Unique population targeted (high-risk release violators) * Colocation of services post-release

Aside from these strengths, there are a couple of considerations to bear in mind for future evaluation, including anticipated program and systemwide changes (e.g., reentry enhancements), variable program dosage (however, data exist to measure this), hub staff turnover, and a shrinking pool of eligible offenders which may warrant eventual modification of eligibility criteria to ensure continued level of case flow. Lastly, if funding were interrupted, some aspects of the program are likely to be affected.

Summary

Minnesota DOC's High Risk Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Project aims to reduce recidivism among a unique, high-risk population of release violators through collaborative case management and the co-location of services supported by DOC and community agency partnerships. The program is a strong candidate for the evaluation's impact study given that it is a stable, well-defined program that has a steady case flow and already has a random assignment processes in place.

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