What We Know About Prison Conditions, Programs, Reentry and Release Planning for Longtermers

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Defining Our Terms

For the purposes of this presentation, longtermers refer to individuals who are incarcerated for 10 years or more

A "program" is a planned, coordinated group of activities or services carried out according to guidelines to achieve a defined purpose (CrimeSolutions.gov)

• May be brand name (i.e., Moral Reconation Therapy[®]) or those that are home-grown, generic in nature (i.e., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; substance use treatment) (Lipsey, 2010)

For our purposes, programs have the following features:

- Target and are delivered to incarcerated individuals
- Are intended to facilitate positive behavioral change
- Rely on sound theory and are considered to be effective according to rigorous evaluation (Przybylski, 2008)



Defining Our Terms (continued)

"Conditions" refer to the environment in which incarcerated people live and prison staff work

• Tied to security levels, programming opportunities, freedom of movement

"Reentry planning" begins at admission and extends beyond the time of release to prepare prisoners for long-term post-release success

"Release planning" represents a distinct part of reentry planning, focusing on the period of release and in the days and weeks that follow



Why Prison Conditions, Programs, Reentry and Release Planning Matter

Longtermers make up a large and growing share of standing prison populations

• CCJ research found longtermers make up 57% of the prison population (Council on Criminal Justice, 2022)

Most incarcerated individuals will be released, including longtermers (Congressional Research Services, 2015)

Evidence-informed programs

- Reduce recidivism and victimization (Lawrence et al 2002, Przybylski 2008, Duwe 2017)
- Promote redemption (Maruna 2001, Maruna 2011, Maruna et al 2003)
- Linked with reductions in disciplinary infractions in prisons, safer prisons (Gerber et al 1994, Gover et al 2008, Steiner et al 2008, Steiner et al 2014, Duwe 2017)
- Produce a positive return on investment (Aos et al 2006, Przybylski 2009, Duwe 2017)

Participation in programs has positive impact on institutional environment (Gover et al 2008, Steiner et al 2008, Steiner et al 2014, Duwe 2017)

• Enhanced safety for staff and incarcerated population



Obstacles to Safe and Rehabilitative Conditions, Effective Programs, and Reentry and Release Policies

Long termers tend to be housed within restrictive settings, which can affect program availability and participation

• Research finding: Higher security levels can contribute to increased recidivism rates (Gaes & Camp, 2009))

Statutory and administrative impediments:

- Housing restrictions and movement challenges
- Lack of incentives (Mohr et al, 2021)
 - Ability to reward with increased privileges, earn back lost sentence credits ("dead time"), and earn time off prison sentences
- Security concerns often override programming interests
- Competing demands (e.g., work assignment conflicts with program schedule)
- Inadequate funding, staff hiring and retention challenges

(Lynch et al 2001, Mumola et al 2007, Crittenden et al 2017)



Obstacles (continued)

Available program slots often prioritized for those near release (Bench and Allen 2003, Chen and Shapiro, 2007, Gaes and Camp)

• While longtermers constitute a large share of standing prison population, they account for a small share of overall prison releases

(Council on Criminal Justice, 2022)

Lack of specialized programs and reentry planning to meet the unique needs of longtermers, particularly older individuals (Foster et al 2006, Osborne Association 2018, Illinois Public Media 2020, Anderson 2003, Belenko et al 2012, The Impact of an Aging Inmate Population on the Federal Bureau of Prisons 2016, Crittenden et al 2017, The Osborne Association 2018)

Poor program integrity and delivery (Barnoski 2004, Przybylski 2008, Lipsey 2009)



Opportunity to Address Needs and Leverage Assets

Longtermers have not only unique needs, but also strengths and assets that can be leveraged in multiple ways (Maruna et al 2009, The Osborne Association 2018)

- Have unique health needs that place strain on correctional institutions during incarceration and the community upon reentry
 - Research shows that significant percentage of individuals who engage in chronic violent offending have traumatic brain injuries (McKinlay and Albicini 2016, Allely 2016)
 - Research shows that incarceration causes premature aging and can exacerbate age-related illnesses
- Most expensive cohort to incarcerate while statistically posing least danger to public safety (The Osborne Association 2018, Nellis et al 2021)
- Unique ability to positively influence incarcerated peers and culture (McNeill et al 2012, Barrenger et al 2018)



Opportunity to Promote Desistance

What is desistance?

• The process of ceasing engagement in criminal activities (Rocque, 2021)

Lessons learned from desistance research:

- Desistance is a process, not an event (Bushway et al 2001, National Research Council 2008, McNeill et al 2012, US DOJ 2021)
 - Characterized by ambivalence and vacillation
 - Stages of change (Prochaska et al 1992, Freeman et al 2001, Prochaska et al 2002, McNeill 2012)
- Essential role of hope and supportive interpersonal interactions (Burnett 2004, Burnett et al 2005, Farrall et al 2005, Skeem et al 2007, McNeill et al 2012)
- Key facilitators:
 - Meaningful work, pro-social relationships (National Research Council, 2008)
 - Opportunity to contribute, peer-to-peer influence (McNeill et al 2012, Barrenger et al 2018)



Opportunity to Expand Effective Programs

There is a growing body of evidence-informed programs, proven to help promote desistance and reduce recidivism:

(MacKenzie 2006, Lipsey et al 2007, Przybylski 2008, Duwe 2017)

- Education/vocational training (Steurer et al 2001, Florida Department of Corrections 2001, MacKenzie 2006, Przybylski 2008, Davis et al 2013, Duwe 2017)
- Cognitive-behavioral interventions (Allen et al 2001, Wilson et al 2005, Golden et al 2006, Aos et al 2006, Lipsey et al 2007, Przybylski 2008, Duwe 2017)
- Substance use disorder services (Piehl et al 1999, Mitchell et al 2005, Belenko et al 2005, Aos et al 2006, Przybylski 2008, Przybylski 2009, Duwe 2017)
 - Time in treatment, aftercare matter (Griffith et al 1999, McCollister et al 2003, Dacosta-Sanchez et al 2022)
- Mental health services (Sacks et al 2004, New Freedom Commission on Mental Health 2004, Roman et al 2006, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2007, Osher et al 2007, Przybylski 2008, Mayfield 2009, Skeem et al 2011, Blandford et al 2012)
- Treatment for sexual offenders (Schmucker et al 2015, Przybylski 2015)
- Restorative justice (Nugent et al 1999, Latimer et al 2005, McNeill et al 2007, Strang et al 2013, Wilson et al 2017, Maryfield et al 2020)



Examples of Programs Specifically for Long-Termers

PA Long Term Offender Program (PA DOC program)

- Designed for lifers and individuals serving sentences with minimum expiration dates of 10 years or more
- Targets those in first 2-4 years of sentence
- Mandates use of peer assistants

GA Statewide Lifer's and Long-Term Offender Program (GA DOC program)

- Available to all lifers, individuals serving a 20+ year sentence.
- Designed to support pro-social thinking and behavior
- Upon successful completion, participants can become mentors or work in various capacities throughout the prisons system



Opportunity to Improve Reentry and Release

Comprehensive transition planning and community-based support:

- Life skills (Zhang et al 2019, Schrantz 2015)
- Housing
- Employment
- Post-release supervision
- Behavioral and medical health
 - Seamless aftercare
 - Access/transportation
- **Community engagement/support** (Burke 2008, Roman et al 2006, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2007)



Opportunity to Improve Policies and Operations

Improve assessment processes and case management practices:

- Classification reassessments; ongoing risk assessment (Schrantz et al 2018)
- Specialized screening/case management training
 - Trauma-informed, aging process, aging services (The Osborne Association 2018)
 - Cross-train between security and clinical staff

Longstanding but often underutilized best practices:

- Encourage/incentivize participation in programming by linking it to good time/earned release (Mohr et al 2021, Schrantz et al 2018)
- Use of longtermers and those with lived experience in program development and delivery (McNeill et al 2012, Barrenger et al 2018)



Opportunity to Improve Implementation

Thorough implementation and competent program delivery are key

- Sound delivery results in larger reductions in recidivism
- Poor delivery can not only degrade a program's effectiveness, but it can increase recidivism (Petersilia 1990, Barnoski 2004, Mihalic et al 2004, Rhine et al 2006, Przybylski 2008)

Adherence to principles of effective correctional intervention (Andrews 1995, Gendreau 1996, Gendreau et al 1999, Andrews et al 1999, Lowenkamp et al 2004, Andrews et al 2005, Andrews et al 2006, Smith et al 2009)

- Risk, Need, and Responsivity
 - More intensive programming for higher risk offenders (Sperber et al 2013a, Sperber et al 2013b, Lowenkamp et al 2004, Smith et al 2009)
 - Target dynamic criminogenic needs (Sperber et al 2013, Andrews et al 2006, Smith et al 2009)
 - Be responsive to the motivation, cognitive ability, age, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics of the participant (Andrews et al 2010, Blanchette et al 2006, Smith et al 2009)



Opportunity to Improve Implementation (continued)

Key considerations for effective program delivery:

- Sufficient funding and training
- Adherence to program model (core components; exposure/dosage)
- Quality of practitioner delivery (use of prescribed techniques/methods) (Fixsen et al 2005, Mihalic et al 2004)

Requires dedicated focus on implementation:

- Change management
 - Culture eats strategy/training for breakfast
- Staff development (in-service training)
- Administrative supports (policy, data, evaluation)
- Leadership (especially adaptive leadership)

(Fixsen et al 2005, Bourgon et al 2011)



Key Takeaways

Most longtermers will eventually be released

- Recidivism reduction, redemption, and desistance from crime are key public safety concerns
- Evidence-based programs are effective at reducing recidivism, increasing safety for incarcerated individuals and staff, producing a positive return on investment
 - Programs can benefit everyone: incarcerated people, staff, and communities
- There is robust body of knowledge about what works
 - Opportunity to develop programs and policies for longtermers
- Implementation matters
 - Adopting what works is not enough; programs and policies must be properly implemented/delivered if they are to result in positive outcomes



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Culture eats strategy for breakfast is a phrase attributed to Peter Drucker but made famous by two business executives. In 2006, the Associated Press news service published an article about Ford and Mark Fields who was, at that time, the President of Ford America.

"The (Ford) team's headquarters was a windowless conference room next to a long row of engineers' cubicles. The walls of the conference room were papered with charts, goals and timetables. One of Fields' favorite slogans on the wall: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

"You can have the best plan in the world, and if the culture isn't going to let it happen, it's going to die on the vine," Fields said.

The phrase is also linked with Richard Clark, a former Merck CEO. The Harvard Management Update in 2008 reported that the pharmaceutical executive had invoked the saying.

