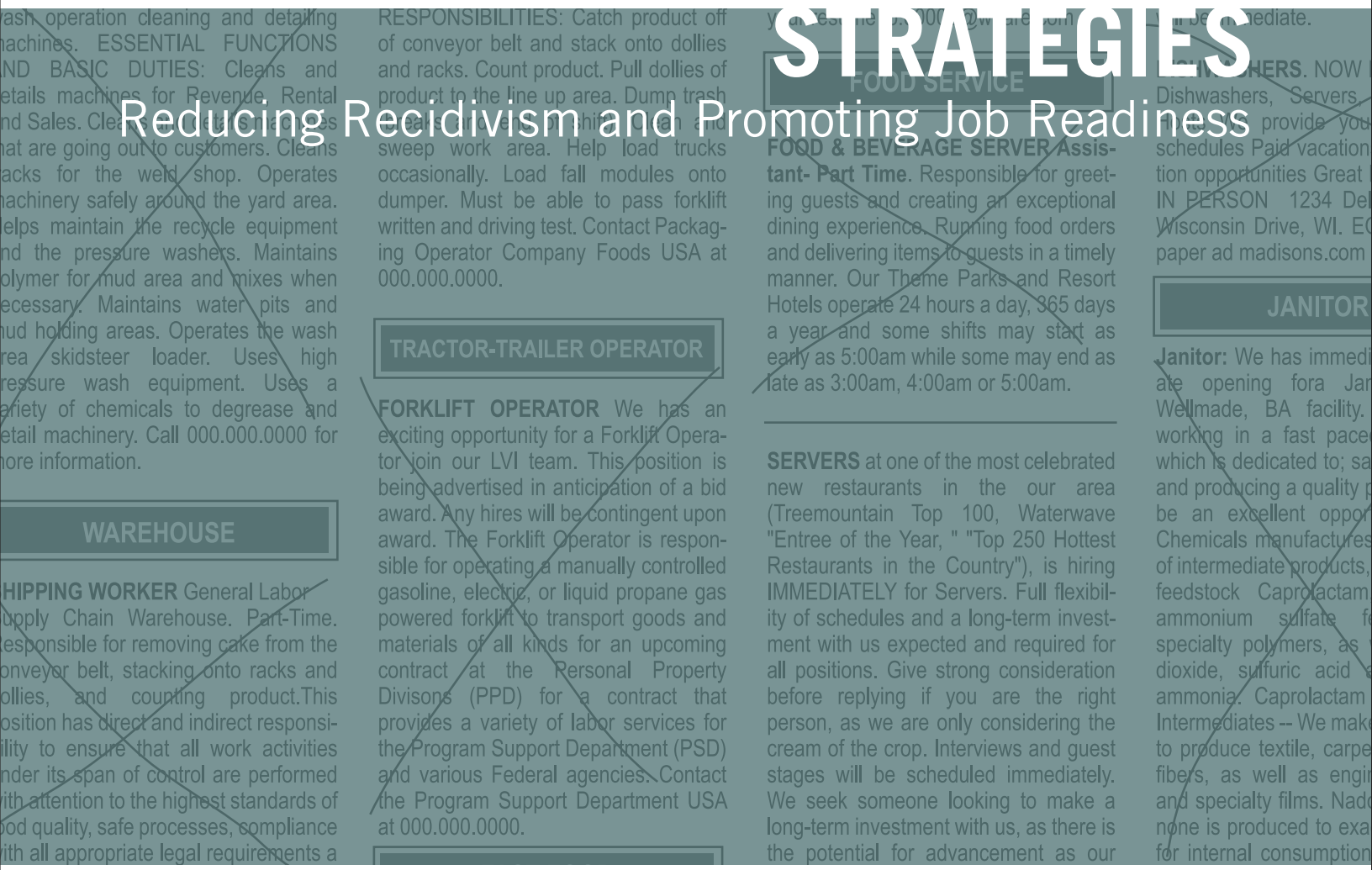
INTEGRATED REENTRY and EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness



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INTEGRATED REENTRY and EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES:

Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness

Prepared for
The Annie E. Casey Foundation;
the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice;
and the U.S. Department of Labor

by

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September 2013

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PREFACE

THIS WHITE PAPER is written for policymakers and practitioners engaged in the corrections and workforce development fields who recognize the need for the two systems to collaborate more closely to improve public safety and employment outcomes for people who have been incarcerated or are on probation or parole. It promotes close collaborations with reentry service providers and provides guidance on prioritizing scarce resources to more effectively reduce rates of reincarceration and joblessness. The paper also outlines principles that should drive both supervision and service decisions—decisions that can help ensure that front-line personnel's efforts are having the greatest positive effect.

Employment providers are already serving large numbers of individuals released from correctional facilities or who are required to find jobs as conditions of their probation or parole. Yet the corrections, reentry, and workforce development fields have lacked an integrated tool that draws on the best thinking about reducing recidivism and improving job placement and retention to guide correctional supervision and the provision of community-based services.

To address this gap, this white paper presents a tool that draws on evidence-based criminal justice practices and promising strategies for connecting hard-to-employ people to work. It calls for program design and practices to be tailored for adults with criminal histories based on their levels of risk for future criminal activity.

Some people question why limited resources should be focused on employing men and women who have been in prison, jail, or are on probation or parole when unemployment rates remain high across the nation for law-abiding individuals. With mounting research, it is clear there are significant benefits for our communities in working with this population. Successful reintegration into the workforce can make neighborhoods and families safer and more stable. Linking individuals who have been involved with the corrections system to jobs and helping them succeed can reduce the staggering costs to taxpayers for reincarceration and increases contributions to the tax base for community services. If releasees and supervisees are working, their time is being spent in constructive ways and they are then less likely to engage in crime and disorder in their neighborhoods. They also are more likely to develop prosocial relationships when their time is structured with work and they are able to help care and provide for their families.

Employment is a point at which the goals of the criminal justice, workforce development, family services, health and human services, and social services systems can converge. With budget cuts to all these systems, resources must be focused on the right individuals (i.e., people who would benefit the most from interventions), using the right strategies that are delivered at the right time. Improved outcomes for individuals returning to their communities, for their families, and for each system's investments can be realized by better coordinating the correctional supervision, treatment, supports, and other services being delivered at that point of intersection to individuals who have been incarcerated or are on probation or parole. This white paper is meant to facilitate discussions across systems by introducing a tool that can help put such a framework for coordination in place.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS PAPER is the result of a collaborative effort involving experts on reentry and recidivism reduction, workforce development and labor, and social policy research. It draws on an extensive review of the literature and related research, observations of programs in the field, feedback from national experts, several multidisciplinary forums and advisory group discussions, and a rigorous review process. Although the individuals involved in every aspect of the project are too numerous to thank, the authors hope they see their efforts reflected in this paper.

This project was built on the strong foundational work done by CSG Justice Center Director Michael Thompson and Center for Employment Opportunities Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Mindy Tarlow for the *Reentry Employment Services Matrix*, as well as the work conducted by then-Public/Private Venture Senior Vice President of Program Effectiveness Sheila Maguire on *Supporting Second Chances: Employment Strategies for Reentry Programs*. They have all provided much-appreciated guidance and tireless support for this effort. Dr. Harry Holzer, Professor at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, also helped the team navigate the employment research and think through difficult issues. Dr. Ed Latessa, too, generously gave his time and expertise in untangling the relationship between recidivism-reduction strategies and employment.

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INTRODUCTION

THE VAST MAJORITY of individuals who are in U.S. jails and prisons will eventually return to the community.[1] Criminal justice policymakers and practitioners everywhere have made it a priority to ensure these individuals, returning in large numbers each year, do not commit new crimes following their release.[*] As part of these efforts, state and local government officials have focused on the need for people released from prison and jail to have jobs, seeing employment as critical to successful reentry. Indeed, incarcerated individuals that have been asked about their post-release plans typically say that getting a job is crucial to their ability to stay crime free.[2] Workforce development agencies and employment service providers also recognize that people with criminal records are an important subgroup of their clientele. Many employment service providers already see large numbers of unemployed individuals with criminal records come through their doors who face a distinct set of barriers to joining the workforce because of their criminal history, in addition to a wide range of other needs.[†]

This white paper examines proven criminal justice approaches for reducing recidivism and promising practices from the employment field for improving job readiness.[‡] It provides a new integrated tool that can be used as a starting point for collaborations among corrections, reentry, and employment policymakers and practitioners to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and improve workforce preparedness for individuals returning from correctional facilities or who are on probation or parole. The paper provides guidance on how to make the best use of scarce resources by implementing assessment-based approaches that respond to individuals' risk of future criminal behavior (and other factors associated with reincarceration) and their needs for pre-release and post-release services in order to produce better public safety, reentry, and employment outcomes for the shared population.[§]

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[*] Approximately nine million people return to the community from jail annually. Amy L. Solomon, et al., *Life After Lockup: Improving Reentry from Jail to the Community* (Washington: Urban Institute, May 2008), available at ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/220095.pdf; Allen Beck, Jail Reentry Roundtable presentation, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, June 2006, available at urban.org/projects/reentry-roundtable/upload/beck.PPT. Nearly 650,000 individuals or more return from state prisons—ranging from a high of 692,303 in 2006 to 649,677 in 2010. Paul Guerino, Paige M. Harrison, and William J. Sabol, *Prisoners in 2010* (Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2011). As of the end of 2007, 1 in 31 U.S. adults were under some form of correctional control (i.e., prison, jail, probation, or parole). *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections* (Washington: Pew Center on the States, The Pew Charitable Trusts, March 2009).

[†] Some studies estimate there are more than 65 million individuals with criminal records in the workforce, searching for work, or of working age. Maurice Emsellem and Michelle N. Rodriguez, *65 Million "Need Not Apply": The Case for Reforming Criminal Background Checks for Employment* (New York: National Employment Law Project, 2011). Furthermore, some estimates suggest that one in every 33 working-age adults has been incarcerated in prison. John Schmitt and Kris Warner, *Ex-offenders and the Labor Market* (Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2010).

[‡] Recidivism is the repetition of criminal or delinquent behavior, most often measured as a new arrest, conviction, or return to prison and/or jail for the commission of a new crime or for the violation of conditions of supervision. Marshall Clement, Matthew Schwarzfeld, and Michael Thompson, *The National Summit on Justice Reinvestment and Public Safety: Addressing Recidivism, Crime, and Corrections Spending* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011). For the purposes of this paper, recidivism refers to individuals' return to prison or jail for any reason.

[§] For the purposes of brevity in this paper, the references made to individuals' risk of future criminal behavior, reoffending, or criminal activity also include their risk of violating the terms of their probation and parole that can lead to revocation. The exception is that in discussions of the paper's integrated resource-allocation and service-matching tool, and the Risk-Need-Responsivity recidivism-reduction principles on which the tool is based, the primary focus is on reoffending.

The Relationship between Employment and Recidivism

Employment can make a strong contribution to recidivism-reduction efforts because it refocuses individuals' time and efforts on prosocial activities,* making them less likely to engage in riskier behaviors and to associate with people who do. Having a job also enables individuals to contribute income to their families, which can generate more personal support, stronger positive relationships, enhanced self-esteem, and improved mental health.[3] For these reasons, employment is often seen as a gateway to becoming and remaining a law-abiding and contributing member of a community. Employment also has important societal benefits, including reduced strain on social service resources, contributions to the tax base, and safer, more stable communities.

MAKING COMMUNITIES SAFER AND MORE STABLE

As the reentry movement has advanced over the last decade, there has been increasing awareness that helping individuals avoid reoffending can increase their success in reclaiming their lives and can improve neighborhoods and communities. This is particularly true for neighborhoods that typically receive a disproportionate number of individuals returning from incarceration, and which also tend to lack social service resources.† Research confirms that these vulnerable areas already face high gang activity, poverty, and unemployment.[4] This high unemployment—especially among those returning from incarceration—contributes to the destabilizing impact on communities and families.

Although practical experience suggests that holding a job plays an important role in reducing recidivism, research on the link between employment and reductions in reoffending has revealed a complicated relationship. There is some evidence that people released from prison and jail that hold jobs in the community are less likely to recidivate, especially when earnings are above minimum wage.[5] Research also shows that job stability over an extended period of time can reduce the likelihood that an individual will reoffend.[6] However, research does not support the proposition that simply placing an individual in a job is a silver bullet for reducing criminal behaviors. All told, there are few studies that demonstrate a direct causal relationship between current employment service practices and recidivism rates.[7]

What various studies do suggest is that to reduce criminal behaviors and recidivism, employment service providers and corrections professionals must address individuals' antisocial attitudes and beliefs associated with crime, many of which also impact an individual's ability to succeed in the workplace.[8] In order for employment service providers to help lower individuals' risk of recidivism, individuals must be motivated to change their behavior (this is especially true of young males).[9] Their decision to live more prosocial lifestyles is integral to the success of employment and other programs. This finding is consistent with research that suggests older individuals (who are already on a trajectory toward desistance from crime) typically benefit more from employment programs than less motivated individuals.[10]

* Prosocial activities are those that reflect individuals' thinking about the welfare of others and/or the benefit to the community. In the context of this paper, they are chiefly related to law-abiding behaviors and positive social relationships.

† For instance, a data analysis project in Phoenix, Arizona, revealed one neighborhood that represented 1 percent of the state's population, but was home to 6.5 percent of the state's prison population. For information on how Arizona addressed its vulnerable neighborhoods and made more effective use of its public safety dollars, see *Reducing Crime and Generating Savings: Options for Arizona Policymakers* (New York: CSG Justice Center, February 2008), available at csgjusticecenter.org/jr/arizona/publications/reducing-crime-and-generating-savings-options-for-arizona-policymakers.

Emerging research does reveal that some employment-focused reentry programs can reduce criminal behaviors by effectively incorporating activities and services that address "criminogenic risks and needs"—that is, individuals' characteristics that have been linked to the likelihood of reincarceration, such as substance abuse and antisocial peers and attitudes. These findings are consistent with the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) principles detailed in Section I of this paper, which are used by growing numbers of corrections and reentry practitioners to reduce recidivism. In short, these principles guide practitioners and system administrators on how to use objective assessment tools to identify and serve individuals who are at a higher risk of committing a future crime.* They then help to direct needed services and supervision resources to these higher-risk individuals in ways that can achieve the greatest reductions in recidivism.

LIMITATIONS ON RESEARCH REGARDING EMPLOYMENT AND RECIDIVISM

There are several reasons why there is relatively limited evidence on whether employment-focused reentry programs reduce recidivism. Many programs simply focus on connecting individuals with employment, and of those programs that do address individuals' likelihood of recidivism, very few have been evaluated by experimental research that adequately considers important factors such as the participant's motivation to change and attitudes about work and crime.[11] When experimental evaluations have been conducted, they tend to focus on outcomes for the whole program instead of the effort's distinct components (such as coordinated case management, job-skills training, interview and resume preparation, and others). As a result, it is difficult to determine which specific practices are most effective.

Applying Workforce Development Principles to Individuals with Criminal Histories

Just as advances in the reentry field and greater recognition and adherence to the RNR principles have helped curb recidivism rates,[12] the workforce development and labor field has made significant strides in the design of strategies that can improve employability. Following passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), workforce development practitioners stepped up efforts to help hard-to-employ individuals (e.g., individuals with little work experience, low educational attainment, or reliance on government support programs) succeed through tailored programs, practices,

SCOPE OF THE POPULATION ADDRESSED BY THIS PAPER

This white paper focuses primarily on adults being released from prison or jail, probationers, and parolees who lack employment. For the purposes of this paper, the term "individuals with criminal histories" is sometimes used as shorthand to describe this population. Although this paper recognizes the valuable contributions of behind-the-bars programming, the recommended approaches primarily target the period of transition from correctional facilities to the community, and the days and months following release and/or at the start of community supervision. This focus also does not negate the need for long-term, ongoing services for these individuals, particularly as their circumstances change.

* Most risk-assessment instruments go beyond determining risks for committing a new crime and include the risks associated with technical violations of probation or parole that can lead to reincarceration (recidivism measures). This is particularly important for this population given that conditions of correctional supervision and release typically require individuals to seek employment and repay court-ordered fees and fines. (However, few risk tools determine whether the individual's risks are specifically related to technical violations versus the commission of a new crime.) There are also specialized risk-assessment tools that have been developed to determine specific areas of risk, such as violent behavior and sexual offenses. These risk tools may be used in addition to assessing the risk of reincarceration, but no risk tool exists that can predict the behavior of a specific individual.

and strategies. These approaches have included welfare-to-work and supportive employment programs, among many others.

On the heels of the enactment of PRWORA, federal, state, and local policymakers and employment service providers continued to explore strategies to promote growth in the workforce field and better engage business leaders. To this end, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) was passed to tailor the efforts of the public workforce system to employers' needs. WIA was also designed to provide Americans with the training, tools, and support they need to start and advance their careers. It has supported community "One-Stop Career Centers"* across the nation that often serve as the engine for the workforce development field by helping to provide the majority of employment-related services in many jurisdictions.

People with criminal histories are often some of the most difficult to place in jobs.[13] Because millions of adults in the nation have a history of involvement with the criminal justice system, they make up a considerable portion of the hard-to-employ population that is increasingly being seen by workforce development practitioners. Researchers have found that, like other hard-to-employ individuals, people who have been incarcerated have significant educational deficits. Only about half have earned a high school degree or equivalent and surveys confirm that "more than half were previously fired from a

HARD-TO-EMPLOY INDIVIDUALS WITH CRIMINAL HISTORIES: A SUPPLY-AND-DEMAND MODEL

Some experts frame the employment issue for individuals with criminal histories in an economic supply-and-demand context. "Supply-side barriers" include this population's characteristics that make them difficult to connect to long-term legitimate work: a tendency to have more antisocial thinking and a greater likelihood of behavioral health disorders, unstable housing, and other complex problems.[14] Additionally, many of these individuals may lack the skills and professional attributes that employers seek.

Employers also may not create sufficient "demand" for employees with criminal histories because business owners and agency leaders are less likely to be interested in hiring from this population for two sets of reasons: those related to personal characteristics and those related to criminal history status.[15] Some employers concerned about liability for employees' actions also may consider a criminal record as a proxy for lack of integrity.[16] A survey of employers found that only about 40 percent were willing to consider filling their most recent job vacancy with someone who has recently returned to the community following incarceration.[17] Furthermore, as of 2010, an estimated 92 percent of all large employers conducted criminal background checks as part of the application process for some or all job candidates, illustrating the extent to which employers are concerned with an applicant's criminal record.[18]

On April 25, 2012, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) updated its guidance on the use of criminal background checks for employment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, clarifying that blanket exclusions for individuals with criminal records violate Title VII because of its disparate racial impact. The guidance urges employers to consider the "nature of the crime, the time elapsed, and the nature of the job" in hiring decisions. (See eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/4-25-12.cfm.)†

* One-Stop Career Centers refer to the agencies funded through WIA to provide workforce development and employment services. Although these workforce development centers are colloquially referred to as "one-stops," the Department of Labor has begun using the term "American Job Centers" to describe both web-based and brick-and-mortar career and workforce resources, and the term One-Stop Career Center will only refer to physical resource facilities. See sidebar on page 22.

† For more information on what the EEOC's updated enforcement guidance means for employers' use of arrest and conviction records, see the National Reentry Resource Center announcement at csgjusticecenter.org/reentry/announcements/eeoc-updates-policy-on-criminal-background-checks.

job, and many depended on illegal income prior to incarceration."[19] Research shows that on average, incarceration triggers a 19-percent decrease in the number of weeks worked annually, and a 40-percent reduction in yearly earnings.[20] These monetary losses should raise deep concerns given that lower wages are associated with higher rates of criminal activity.[21]

Individuals with criminal records also face a number of legal barriers to employment [which organizations such as the American Bar Association (ABA) have described as one of many "collateral consequences" of a criminal conviction]. Many states have a confusing patchwork of restrictions that can vary in employer discretion, duration of their application, and in their reach.[22] According to an ongoing ABA review of state policies, there are many barriers for individuals with criminal records (an estimated 40,000 statutes and regulations),[*] and a projected 50 percent of those collateral consequences are job related.[23] For example, some authorities will not license people with felony (or even non-felony) records for certain professions, such as barbers, truck drivers, and health care providers. In some states these policies can have tremendous consequences. In Florida alone, statutory regulations and limitations targeting people with criminal records affect 40 percent of jobs.[24] Although some restrictions are certainly required, such as those related to individuals who work with children, others appear to be less about safety and more about prolonging the punishment of individuals with criminal histories.[25] Many legal aid providers offer low-income individuals with a criminal record free legal assistance in navigating these complicated barriers and securing professional and other licenses. Accordingly, these providers can be an important part of any program that seeks to increase employment opportunities for this population.

Although workforce agency staff are dedicated to helping hard-to-employ people overcome barriers to employment and find work, their services and programs do not always specifically focus on people with criminal histories and have sometimes yielded mixed results for this population. Section II of this paper provides an overview of the strategies that workforce development and labor professionals use for hard-to-employ adults that can be applied to individuals with criminal histories, with particular attention to "job readiness."[†] To improve outcomes for this population, it is important that best practices from the workforce development field be tailored to the reentry population in ways that attend to individual levels of job readiness *and* criminogenic risk factors.

Given the many employment challenges for this criminal justice population, policymakers and workforce service providers may well be wondering why they should receive so much attention for services when there are significant obstacles for individuals who have never broken the law and who are looking for work. The reentry population, admittedly, may include large numbers of individuals

[*] At the time of publication, the policies of 22 states have been comprehensively reviewed by the American Bar Association and are available in an interactive, state-by-state compilation of collateral consequences. For more information on this project as more states are reviewed, please see abacollateralconsequences.org. Additional information on the collateral consequences of having a criminal record imposed by federal laws and regulations can be found in "Internal Exile: Collateral Consequences of Conviction in Federal Laws and Regulations," published by the American Bar Association in 2009, at pdsdc.org/resources/publication/collateral%20consequences%20of%20conviction%20in%20federal%20laws%20and%20regulations.pdf.

[†] Job readiness is a determination based on personal characteristics that make an individual more or less competitive in the labor market. These characteristics generally include personal and family challenges, education and skill deficits, and other needs that may impair individuals' ability to attain and retain employment. For more on job readiness and other key employment terms see the definitions on page 18.

who are more difficult to employ than individuals without a criminal history. As the preface to this paper suggests, the answer is simply that

- individuals with criminal histories are already being seen by employment service providers in large numbers;
- like any diverse population, tailored approaches could achieve better results—in this case, both improved safety and employment goals;
- employment can have a stabilizing effect on families and vulnerable neighborhoods in the longer term; and
- employment programs that focus on recidivism reduction will ultimately lead to better labor market outcomes, as incarceration has been shown to reduce an individual's employment prospects and upward economic mobility over the long run.[26]

With scarce resources, workforce service providers need to know that by focusing on the right people with criminal records, at the right time, and with the right interventions, they can help reduce the chance that individuals will reoffend and improve the likelihood that individuals will successfully connect to the workforce.

The Need for an Integrated Tool

Policymakers and practitioners in corrections, reentry, and workforce development are all struggling to make the most effective use of their limited resources. Individuals returning from prison, jail, or beginning community supervision have varied types and levels of employment needs, which can be as intensive as immediate, subsidized employment along with a constellation of support services. With the enormous number of individuals returning from prisons and jails or beginning community supervision, state and local government officials and service providers need a common framework to think about which individuals with criminal histories should be prioritized for the most intensive programming slots that require considerable resources, and which individuals will be successful with services that are less resource intensive. It is critical to make the greatest investments in the individuals that will benefit most from recidivism-reduction strategies and employment services, particularly as jurisdictions struggle with unrelenting fiscal pressures.

Although there is broad acceptance that community-based employment service professionals are already serving people with criminal histories in large numbers, there has not been a framework or tool for linking the science of reducing risk for criminal activity with the promising strategies for improving outcomes for hard-to-employ populations. And while both corrections and employment personnel have long recognized the need to coordinate efforts to increase successes among their shared population, working through the practical, cross-systems issues in order to integrate responses can be challenging. Experts, researchers, and practitioners from both fields have made it clear that there is a need for easy-to-follow guidance for administrators and service providers on making evidence-based programming, supervision, and service decisions. This white paper is intended to help fill that gap.

With support from the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and with guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor, the CSG Justice Center worked in

partnership with Public/Private Ventures* and the Center for Employment Opportunities to develop a tool to help corrections and workforce development professionals focus their resources on positioning individuals with criminal histories to succeed in the workforce and avoid reincarceration. The challenge is that strategies from each field cannot simply be added together without thought as to how they may affect one another. This white paper is meant to prompt readers to think about how existing strategies can be combined in effective ways and how new and creative strategies inspired by the tool can be tested.

THIS PAPER IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS:

I. What works to reduce recidivism: risk/need principles that employment professionals can use to improve outcomes for individuals who have been involved in the corrections system

II. Proven and promising practices for improving outcomes for hard-to-employ individuals, including adults with criminal records

III. The resource-allocation and service-matching tool: an integrated approach to improving reentry and employment outcomes for individuals released from prison or jail, or who are beginning community supervision

Section I provides an overview of the principles that help guide corrections practitioners and administrators as they work to reduce individuals' likelihood of reincarceration and promote successful reentry. Similarly, **Section II** provides an overview of promising practices in the workforce development field. It provides a summary of relevant workforce strategies and examines some of the overlap with corrections and reentry principles. These sections help establish a foundation for productive discussions on improving outcomes for the corrections and workforce development systems' shared population.

The resource-allocation and service-matching tool that is featured in **Section III** represents a significant shift in how state and local governments typically address recidivism and job-readiness issues. By integrating the research-driven principles from the criminal justice and employment fields, it encourages collaborations through better communications and a common vocabulary, and helps identify the individuals that would benefit most from integrated recidivism-reduction interventions and employment-related services.

Although this paper sets out integrated responses that require resources and collaborative partnerships that may not be readily available in many jurisdictions, it can and should spark creative problem solving about how to align existing resources with priority initiatives and to pool capacity in innovative ways. It can also help identify gaps and areas that can be the focus of resource development or expansion as conditions in a jurisdiction permit.

* After nearly 35 years, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) has ceased operations. Their involvement and research prior to the July 2012 closing played a key role in the development of this white paper. P/PV documents, including their research review of employment services for the hard to employ "Supporting Second Chances: Employment Strategies for Reentry Programs," are hosted by the Foundation Center's PubHub, accessible at issuelab.org/resource/supporting_second_chances_employment_strategies_for_reentry_programs.

I. WHAT WORKS TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM:

Principles for improving outcomes among unemployed individuals with corrections system-involvement

BEFORE DISCUSSING PROMISING STRATEGIES for connecting individuals with criminal histories to jobs, it is important to understand their needs that are associated with criminal behaviors and what research reveals about how to stop the cycle of reoffending and reincarceration. Just as the workforce development and labor field has been working to find effective approaches to achieve employment goals, criminal justice professionals have tested and researched how to realize public safety and reentry goals. It is critical that there be a common understanding between these systems of each other's evidence-driven approaches in order for collaborative efforts to succeed in reducing recidivism while improving employment outcomes for individuals that have been incarcerated or are on community supervision.

Decades of experience and research have led corrections professionals to develop a set of guiding principles that, when implemented correctly, can help reduce reoffending and violations of probation and parole conditions (recidivism measures). These Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) principles help policymakers, administrators, and practitioners determine how to allocate resources, deliver services, and place the right people into the right interventions in order to have the greatest impact on public safety and recidivism.

A vast amount of research has been conducted on the effectiveness of RNR principles in a diverse range of settings (e.g., jails, prisons, probation, and parole). These principles have been tested and evaluated through randomized control trials and quasi-experimental design studies, as well as through meta-analyses. This body of research decisively indicates that proper implementation of the RNR principles can reduce the risk of recidivism.[27] These principles have increasingly been accepted by criminal justice professionals.

Workforce and labor professionals may feel the RNR principles resonate on a practical level.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS USED BY CORRECTIONS PROFESSIONALS

Criminogenic Risk (Risk): The likelihood that an individual will engage in new criminal activity. In this context, risk does not refer to the seriousness of a crime that a person may commit in the future. Instead, standard assessments generally provide information simply on the likelihood that a person will reoffend.*

Criminogenic Needs (Needs): The characteristics (such as antisocial attitudes, beliefs, and thinking patterns) or circumstances (such as a person's friends or family dynamics) that research has shown are associated with criminal behavior, but which a person can change.†

Risk/Needs Assessment: A comprehensive examination and evaluation of both dynamic (changeable) and static (historical and/or demographic) criminogenic factors that predict risk of recidivism. Results can be used to guide decisions about services, placements, supervision, and sentencing in some cases.

* See footnote on page 3 regarding how assessment instruments also often address technical violations, and how more specialized tools examine the likelihood of violence or the commission of sexual offenses.

† Although a person may have many needs, not all of them are associated with risk of recidivism. For example, a person's health condition or lack of stable housing can represent important needs, but research has not linked them to the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior.

In some fundamental ways, the RNR principles resemble the approach that workforce development practitioners and American Job Centers (formerly referred to as One-Stop Career Centers), in particular, use with their clients in triaging resources. The RNR principles emphasize the importance of using risk/needs assessments to understand an individual's distinct characteristics, skills, and problems, and then using these assessment findings to identify the appropriate levels of supervision, services, and treatment.

Matching individuals to the most effective combination of services and corrections supervision is dependent on trained personnel's use of reliable, validated screening and assessment tools. These tools can help identify individuals' risks and needs associated with future criminal activity ("criminogenic risks and needs"). As discussed more fully below, assessment tools are also used to identify individuals' challenges that, if unaddressed, can make it difficult for them to benefit from treatments and interventions. Many corrections agencies use assessment instruments to determine both placement and programming decisions for individuals within a facility based on their risks and needs.[*] The information can also be used to determine supervision levels for adults on probation and parole. Finally, applying the RNR principles can guide decisions on reentry plans and referrals to services that draw on the resources of multiple systems, such as substance abuse and employment programs.[†]

A basic understanding of the RNR principles and what information is collected by corrections' risk/needs assessment instruments can help workforce and labor service providers decide how to

- add value to their work through formal partnerships;
- use risk/needs information (when appropriate) to prioritize their own resources;
- work with other reentry providers to address needs related to job readiness;
- help with service matching; and
- support employment professionals' efforts to keep clients out of the criminal justice system, given the significant negative impacts that reincarceration has on individuals' future employability and their earnings prospects.[28]

Detailed below are the core components of RNR and how adherence to those principles helps reduce recidivism

The Three Components of the RNR Principles

1. Risk Principle: Match the intensity of individuals' interventions to their levels of risk for criminal activity.

Research shows that prioritizing supervision and services for individuals at moderate or higher risk of committing a future crime can lead to a significant reduction in recidivism among this group. Conversely, intensive interventions for individuals who are at a low risk of recidivism may actually be harmful and

[*] In both corrections facilities and in the community, corrections professionals typically use assessment instruments to determine if individuals fall within the categories of "low, medium, or high risk." Jurisdictions employ different assessment tools, and also use different cut-off scores to distinguish among the risk groups. Regardless of how these groups are defined, it is important that the higher risk groups—the priority groups—are truly at a significantly greater risk of recidivism.

[†] Most corrections and criminal justice agencies use, or have access to, risk-assessment tools and scores. Agencies may be able to share this information with service providers (contingent on appropriate sharing protocols and compliance with privacy mandates) to help achieve recidivism-reduction goals. If a local corrections partner does not use risk assessments or cannot provide this information, workforce agencies should not necessarily purchase these costly tools or expend resources on training staff in their use. Instead, they should initiate conversations with their criminal justice partners on how these tools can be acquired and implemented, and how the resulting relevant information can be shared.

contribute to increasing the person's likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior.* High-intensity programming or supervision for lower-risk individuals has been shown to be an ineffective use of resources.[29]

Figure 1. Using Risk Factors to Prioritize Services

Traditionally, community-based service providers have prioritized services and supports for individuals with criminal histories who volunteer or demonstrate a willingness to participate in reentry and employment programs. However, those individuals who are most at risk for committing a future crime (and for whom interventions have the greatest potential recidivism-reduction impact) may be the least willing to engage in services. Probation and parole officers also may prefer to work most with low-risk individuals who tend to be easier to supervise. Yet there is a growing awareness that programming in correctional facilities and supervision and community services for those on probation and parole should be prioritized by risk level and not by individuals' motivation.

Risk level is determined by static factors (unchanging factors or characteristics, such as the age at first offense or gender) as well as dynamic factors (factors or characteristics such as those noted below that can be changed through interventions):[30]

1. Presence of Antisocial Behavior: early and continuing involvement in a number and variety of antisocial acts in a variety of settings
2. Antisocial Personality Pattern: adventurous, pleasure-seeking, weak self-control, and restlessly aggressive
3. Antisocial Cognition: attitudes, values, beliefs, and rationalizations supportive of crime; displays of anger, resentment, and defiance; and negative attitudes toward the law and justice systems
4. Antisocial Associates: close association with criminals and relative isolation from law-abiding individuals, and positive and immediate reinforcement from peers for criminal behavior
5. Family and/or Marital: poor relationship quality with little mutual caring or respect, poor nurturance and caring for children, and few expectations that family members will avoid criminal behavior
6. School and/or Work: poor interpersonal relationships within school or work setting, and low levels of performance and satisfaction in school and/or work
7. Leisure and/or Recreation: low levels of involvement and satisfaction in noncriminal leisure pursuits
8. Substance Abuse: abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs (tobacco excluded)

Source: James Bonta and Don A. Andrews, *Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment and Rehabilitation* (Ottawa: Public Safety Canada, 2007).

* Studies have shown that low-risk individuals who are placed in a close supervision-only program may be more likely to be sanctioned for a violation of the terms of their supervision, especially if placed with high-risk individuals who exhibit antisocial behavior. Some close supervision programs' reporting requirements are difficult for individuals to comply with absent adequate treatment and supports, such as for adults with mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The reporting and compliance requirements may disrupt the very activities in supervisees' lives that are most likely to reduce recidivism, such as requiring an individual to keep leaving a new job to report to probation or parole officers. Clement, Schwarzfeld, and Thompson, *The National Summit on Justice Reinvestment and Public Safety: Addressing Recidivism, Crime, and Corrections Spending.*

2. Need Principle: Target criminogenic needs—factors that contribute to the likelihood of new criminal activity.

The need principle directs that treatment and case management should prioritize the core "criminogenic needs" that can be positively impacted through services, supervision, and supports. Research indicates that the greater the number of criminogenic needs addressed through interventions, the greater impact the interventions will have on lowering the likelihood of recidivism.[31] There is also evidence that the number of treatment hours an individual receives influences the effectiveness of the intervention. Higher-risk individuals require more program hours than lower-risk individuals, and providing too many treatment hours to lower-risk individuals can have adverse effects.[32] Structuring higher-risk individuals' time in programming helps minimize exposure to antisocial influences, whereas it can interrupt the very kinds of prosocial activities (including work and family time) that qualify individuals as lower risk.

> **Example:** A program likely to reduce recidivism will use interventions designed to change antisocial thinking, increase problem-solving skills, model positive interactions and relationships, and promote recovery from addiction in the context of other reentry goals (the "needs" related to the risk factors in figure 1 on page 11). These kinds of interventions typically employ cognitive behavioral strategies. Individuals will also have noncriminogenic needs such as lack of personal identification, transportation, or clothing. Although these needs are critical, in order to reduce recidivism, the need principle stresses the importance of addressing individuals' problems that research has most closely associated with criminal activity.

3. Responsivity Principle: Account for an individual's abilities and learning styles when designing treatment interventions.[33]

The responsivity principle highlights the importance of reducing barriers to learning by addressing learning styles, reading abilities, and motivation when designing supervision and service strategies.[34] There are two types of responsivity: general and specific, which have implications at the program and individual levels. The general responsivity principle refers to the need for interventions that help individuals address criminogenic risk factors such as antisocial thinking. Research shows that social learning approaches and cognitive behavioral therapies are generally effective in meeting a range of these needs, regardless of the type of crime committed. Prosocial modeling and skills development, teaching problem-solving skills, and using more positive reinforcement than negative have all been shown to be effective and reflect this approach.[35]

Specific responsivity refers to the principle that distinct personal needs may need to be addressed in order to prepare an individual for receiving interventions that can reduce reoffending behaviors. Specific responsivity relates to the "fine-tuning" of services or interventions, such as modifying a cognitive behavioral intervention to account for a cognitive impairment associated with some mental illnesses. It also accounts for the individual's strengths, personality, learning style and capacity, motivation, cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender characteristics, as well as behavioral health needs. Abiding by the responsivity principle can help ensure that interventions are accessible and tailored to individuals in ways that can motivate and prepare them for programming.

RNR IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES: ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT SELECTION AND USE

Although the RNR principles have been increasingly embraced and effectively applied in many jurisdictions across the nation, there are ongoing implementation challenges. In practice, many agencies struggle with finding and using the best screening and assessment instruments for their particular population. There are many different screening and assessment instruments within the corrections field[*]—each with its own strengths and weaknesses and ranging from informal questionnaires to scientifically validated tools for use with a particular group of people. Creating an instrument for a specific population that can be validated is an expensive and complicated process, yet tailoring an existing tool to distinct agency needs can diminish its validity.[†] Agencies may also lack trained personnel to administer the instruments and interpret the results, or may lack direction on how to best use those results to guide decisions about placement or programming in correctional facilities and supervision levels in the community. Agency policies may not align with RNR principles: For example, agency policies may encourage placing individuals into education, skills development, or other programming related to job readiness while incarcerated, but these policies may not prioritize enrolling individuals at higher risk for criminal behavior. Instead, these programs may operate under "first come, first served" policies. It can be particularly difficult to enroll the right people into the right program because higher-risk individuals may refuse participation or may be excluded if slots are filled by motivated individuals at lower risk.[‡]

Community supervision agencies experience many of the same challenges with selecting and implementing assessment tools as well as overseeing programming.[§] In addition, services that community supervision officers may think are important for individuals under their supervision may not mesh with what local service providers want to prioritize. Some probation and parole agency policies may also use the same supervision strategies for low-risk individuals that they use for high-risk individuals. For example, they may require numerous in-person check-ins at an out-of-the-way office for all supervisees. (In contrast, an increasing number of probation and parole agencies are instituting other types of monitoring for lower-risk individuals, such as kiosk check-ins, that may facilitate employment and enhance reintegration.)

[*] See, for example, Roger H. Peters, Marla G. Bartoi, and Pattie B. Sherman, *Screening and Assessment of Co-Occurring Disorders in the Justice System* (Delmar: CMHS National GAINS Center, 2008).

[†] For more information on validating an instrument, refer to Stephen D. Gottfredson and Laura J. Moriarty, "Statistic Risk Assessment: Old Problems and New Applications," *Crime and Delinquency* 52, no.1 (2006): 178–200; Christopher Baird, *A Question of Evidence: A Critique of Risk Assessment Models Used in the Justice System: Special Report (2009)* (Madison: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009); Edward J. Latessa, et al., *Creation and Validation of the Ohio Risk Assessment System Final Report* (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, School of Criminal Justice, Center for Criminal Justice Research, July 2009).

[‡] In some cases, for example, some lower-risk inmates will take limited substance abuse treatment slots if participation is tied to "good time" credits associated with early release. Research-driven strategies to change high-risk individuals' motivation levels may not be undertaken if slots are filled by willing lower-risk inmates.

[§] Sometimes courts will order individuals to enroll in treatment programs as a condition of probation without fully considering their risk levels/needs and appropriateness of the program.

Example: Barriers to learning and unresponsiveness to interventions can be associated with such issues as mental illness, low motivation, cognitive deficits, and poor physical health. Corrections officials and service providers need to consider addressing individuals' conditions that can interfere with service provision. Of particular note is the overlap in responsivity factors addressed by corrections professionals with the job-readiness factors that employment and reentry practitioners need to consider for job placement, retention, and advancement.

Integration of RNR Principles into the Resource-Allocation and Service-Matching Tool

Research has demonstrated that reducing recidivism requires that scarce corrections programming, treatment, and supervision resources be prioritized for people at higher risk for criminal activity (determined by the risk-factors score on a validated assessment tool).[36] The RNR principles should be integrated into any programs that serve large numbers of individuals with criminal histories—including employment programs. Application of the risk principle can help service providers and administrators triage their more expensive and intensive services and decide how to allocate other resources. Further, prioritizing by risk allows correctional supervisors to free up resources that had been devoted to managing and supervising low-risk individuals who receive unneeded services to refocus those resources where they will have greater impact. Accordingly, the resource-allocation and service-matching tool proposed in this paper will first examine individuals' levels of risk. Those at higher risk of reoffending will be given priority for supervision and services to increase their chances for safe reentry and successful employment.

SERVICES COMMONLY USED TO REDUCE THE RISK OF RECIDIVISM

The kinds of services that research has shown are most likely to reduce the risk of recidivism are those that attend to the eight core criminogenic risk factors discussed in figure 1 on page 11. These services are often found (to varying degrees) in mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, family counseling, or some halfway house and special employment efforts.

These services—whether provided in a community or correctional setting—typically embrace cognitive behavioral interventions and treatments. Cognitive behavioral interventions designed for the corrections population target individuals' thoughts, choices, and attitudes associated with criminal behavior. They help individuals recognize antisocial behaviors, develop new strategies for coping with problems, resist antisocial peer pressure, and be mindful of the perspectives and emotions of others.[37]

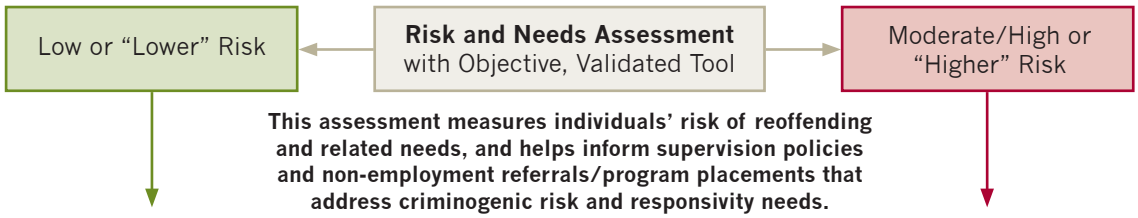
Cognitive behavioral interventions and treatments reflect principles of "social learning" that suggest individuals can effectively acquire attitudes, behaviors, or knowledge through observations and interactions with their peers and others around them.[38]

Thus, cognitive behavioral interventions can be delivered within classroom settings or treatment settings where providers use intensive feedback and instruction coupled with role play and rehearsal. Interventions such as motivational interviewing can be applied during case management meetings. Whether cognitive behavioral interventions are administered in pre- or post-release settings as stand-alone programs, woven into the broader program design, or used in regular interactions with the corrections populations, they are strong tools for professionals to use in reducing recidivism.

The labor and workforce development field is not only concerned with individuals with criminal histories when they are in the community unsupervised, but also has a vested interest in what services and strategies are delivered to individuals while they are in correctional facilities or on probation or parole. Institutional programs that address risk- or responsivity-related needs can be just as important as education or employment programming in preparing an individual for entering the workforce upon release. The supervision strategies applied to individuals on probation or parole can impact their ability to enroll in employment programming or hold a job. Although there is a clear mutual benefit for the corrections and employment fields to be working together, there is often a lack of understanding of how these benefits can be achieved and to what end.

Figure 2 depicts the initial action taken in the application of the resource-allocation and service-matching tool that emphasizes the need to use validated assessments to objectively determine individuals' levels of risk of criminal behavior.* It is the first step in matching people with criminal histories to employment services while reducing their risk of reoffending. These assessments can also inform supervision policies and non-employment-related service placements (such as mental health treatment) that may impact the effectiveness of employment interventions.

Figure 2. Grouping Individuals by Likelihood of Committing a Future Crime



Risk/needs information should also inform the type and intensity of employment service responses, but these decisions require a second assessment that is focused on individuals' levels of job readiness (discussed in the following section). Section II reviews the goals of employment-related services and details the importance of considering job readiness when working with hard-to-employ individuals. It reviews a range of employment program components and introduces key principles of effective service delivery for individuals with criminal histories.

* As discussed in later sections, risk/needs assessments also typically yield information about noncriminogenic needs that may be relevant to job-readiness issues. In addition to the responsivity needs (such as indicators of substance abuse and behavioral health), they also may indicate needs such as those related to financial issues (child support and court-ordered debts and fees) or stable housing that may also need to be addressed for successful reentry and employment.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SECTION I

1. RNR principles provide evidence-based guidance on who should be prioritized to receive interventions and help determine what needs those interventions should address in order to reduce reoffending. For employment providers serving people with criminal histories, the RNR principles help determine where resources can have the greatest impact not only on improving the likelihood that individuals can connect to the workforce, but also on increasing public safety by reducing their chances of future criminal activity.

2. RNR principles promote a cost-effective approach by ensuring that resources are focused on individuals with criminal histories who need services most, and are not misspent on individuals with criminal histories who are likely to succeed with little or no interventions (or worse, increase recidivism by interrupting prosocial activities and exposing low-risk individuals unnecessarily to high-risk releasees or probationers).

3. Validated, objective risk/needs assessments are essential for effectively implementing the RNR principles. To the extent that information from these assessments can be appropriately shared by corrections with workforce development professionals and other reentry or community-based service providers, the results can enhance service matching (including for responsivity issues) and reduce the burden of conducting multiple screenings.

4. For individuals with antisocial thinking, behaviors, personality patterns, and peers, cognitive behavioral interventions may be needed both to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and to prepare them for the workplace. Responsivity issues such as learning disabilities and mental, physical, or substance use disorders may also need to be addressed before corrections or employment interventions can be successful.

5. The resource-allocation and service-matching tool detailed in Section III of this paper begins with the application of RNR principles to ensure individuals who have been under corrections control are grouped by risk of future criminal behavior. In doing so, it makes certain that both employment services and recidivism-reduction interventions (including probation or parole supervision) are tailored to individual needs.

II. PROVEN AND PROMISING PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR HARD-TO-EMPLOY INDIVIDUALS

SECTION II EXPLORES how employment programming can lead to better outcomes for individuals with criminal histories by attending to both their job-readiness and risk-related needs. There is significant overlap between the factors that make someone high risk and those that impact employability. Antisocial attitudes, beliefs, peers, and personality patterns (what criminologists consider to be the "big four" criminogenic risk factors) clearly affect how someone might perform in the workplace. Individuals with these characteristics tend to have more negative attitudes about working, less stable employment histories, and an unwillingness to take low-paying jobs.[39]

Employment programs are exceptionally well positioned to address risk factors because they already have large numbers of adults with criminal histories coming through their doors and can provide a prosocial environment that counters negative peer influences and the amount of time individuals spend engaged in antisocial activities. Redressing risk-related attitudes and behaviors not only helps keep individuals out of prisons and jails, but also makes program participants more employable.[40] These mutually reinforcing benefits underscore the value in developing an approach for working with individuals with criminal histories that integrates best practices from the workforce development and corrections fields.

This section examines common challenges faced by hard-to-employ individuals, and proven and promising practices for overcoming those challenges. The discussion focuses on two topics:

1. **Employment program components to improve work outcomes (what to do):** This subsection outlines some promising components that are common in the workforce development field and attend to the needs of hard-to-employ individuals (including individuals with criminal histories)[*]
2. **Principles of service delivery to reduce recidivism (how to do it):** This subsection reviews five service-delivery principles that have been shown to reduce recidivism and can be applied to employment interventions. This discussion is only relevant to individuals with criminal histories.

These program components and service-delivery principles can be used to develop integrated service packages (discussed more fully in Section III) that address both the risk levels identified through the RNR assessment and the employment needs of individuals with criminal histories.[†]

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[*] The components are drawn from research on employment programs for hard-to-employ individuals broadly, rather than just those for individuals with criminal histories, because of the applicability of the findings and the paucity of consistent research findings regarding this latter subgroup. Although a growing number of programs focus exclusively on individuals with criminal backgrounds, the majority of programs in this field have come out of welfare reform efforts and other broader workforce development goals.

[†] In addition to many expert advisors, section II was written in consultation with then-Public/Private Venture (P/PV) Senior Fellow Sheila Maguire. The content is meant to complement P/PV's publication, *Supporting Second Chances: Employment Strategies for Reentry Programs*. Sheila Maguire, Laura E. Johnson, and Angelique Jessup, *Supporting Second Chances: Employment Strategies for Reentry Programs* (Philadelphia: Private/Public Ventures, 2012).

It is important to note that the research on how to improve employment outcomes (especially retention of unsubsidized jobs) for individuals with criminal histories is thin, due in large part to a lack of rigorous evaluations of existing programs.[41] While many studies have been conducted, few adequately control for participants' self-selection into programs and the studies that do have a high-quality research design have shown mixed results.[42] One of the challenges with research on workforce development strategies in general is that there is a tremendous amount of diversity in how programming and services are delivered across the field and there is little standardization in how agencies and nonprofit organizations operate—or even measure their success. Research findings are often heavily qualified, citing concerns about drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of particular programs when implementation varies so widely across programs and jurisdictions.[*] That said, research has revealed some promising practices for addressing the needs of hard-to-employ individuals. Given the important role employment plays in helping individuals reintegrate into the community, there is considerable value in helping the reentry and workforce development fields adopt and test innovative strategies for improving employment outcomes among their shared population.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FIELD

Hard to Employ: A term commonly used to describe individuals with chronic unemployment. It is often associated with such attributes as low levels of education (personal factors) or having a criminal record (external factors). In cases in which external factors determine that individuals are hard to employ, it is important to note that this classification does not indicate their job readiness.

Job Readiness: A determination based on personal characteristics that make an individual more or less competitive in the labor market. These characteristics generally include personal and family challenges, education and hard-skill deficits, soft-skill deficits or related attitudinal issues, and other needs that may impair an individual's ability to attain and retain employment (including what the RNR model considers "responsivity" factors). It is common for less job-ready individuals to have multiple, complex needs; although it is also possible for a single, severe problem to prevent readiness.[43] Services to address these obstacles to job placement are referred to as job-readiness or job-preparation services throughout this paper.

Job-Readiness Assessments: Typically a structured series of questions to help collect consistent, useful information from potential program participants. Most job-readiness assessments commonly ask questions about a person's history of employment; education and certification accomplishments; and attitude toward work, general motivation, and resilience when disappointment occurs.

Source: Definitions for hard to employ and job readiness are based on the definitions used by the MDRC in "Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ," available at mdrc.org/project_12_8.html.

[*] It is important to bear in mind that programs tend to fall along a continuum of effectiveness, and outcomes are often dependent on a wide range of factors.

The Needs of Hard-to-Employ Individuals

The term "hard to employ" can be used to describe individuals who, owing to their personal issues and external factors, have a particularly difficult time connecting to the labor market. Characteristics associated with people who are hard to employ include, for example, challenges with transportation and housing, education and skill deficits, and health or other needs that impair an individual's ability to attain and retain employment (including responsivity factors). Table 1 lists some of the common characteristics of hard-to-employ individuals.

Table 1. Examples of Common Characteristics of Hard-to-Employ Adults

Family, Logistical, and Legal Challenges	Education and Skill Gaps	Needs Related to Responsiveness to Interventions
• Responsible for child care	• Low education level	• Mental illness
• High-conflict family situation	• Lack of occupational skills	• Substance use disorder
• Transportation problems	• Limited work experience	• Learning disability
• Lack of stable housing	• Lack of "soft" job skills	• Lack of motivation
• Legal barriers to employment	• Gaps in work experience	• Negative attitudes about work
• Lack of proper documentation		• Poor physical health

Sources: LaDonna Pavetti, "Helping the Hard-to-Employ," in *Welfare Reform and Beyond: The Future of the Safety Net,* ed. Isabel V. Sawhill, et al., (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 135-142; Harry Holzer, Steven Raphael, and Michael Stoll, "Employment Barriers Facing Ex-Offenders," presented at *Reentry Roundtable on The Employment Dimensions of Prisoner Reentry: Understanding the Nexus between Prisoner Reentry and Work,* New York University, May 19-20, 2003; Krista Olson and LaDonna Pavetti, *Personal and Family Challenges to the Successful Transition from Welfare to Work* (Washington: Urban Institute, 1996).

Individuals with criminal records are often considered a subgroup of the hard-to-employ population because, as mentioned earlier, having a criminal record can create significant additional barriers to employment, including statutory limitations on accessing particular professions,* employer reluctance to hire individuals with criminal records, and logistical issues resulting from the terms of an individual's release or supervision. People under probation or parole supervision may be required to take drug tests, meet with supervision officers during work hours, or adhere to curfews that limit job opportunities. Supervision compliance challenges are especially problematic because conditions of release and supervision may require an individual to demonstrate efforts to seek or obtain employment. Probation or parole may be revoked for repeatedly failing to meet these conditions (although such an action would typically occur only if there were multiple violations of other conditions).†

* See the discussion and resources on page 5.

† Conditions of release/supervision are often determined at sentencing or by parole boards, and may not always be changed easily by parole or probation officers to accommodate the needs of individuals participating in employment programming.

Although the presence of a criminal record (particularly for a felony offense) typically defines individuals as hard to employ, there is still a broad range of job readiness within this group. The distinction is important. Job readiness is determined by personal characteristics that make someone more or less competitive in the labor market, including work experience and skill levels. In reality, individuals with criminal histories commonly have these deficits,[44] but it is also possible for someone returning home after incarceration to be very capable of rejoining the workforce given past work experience, education levels, and professional and technical skills.

Pre-employment Program Interventions: The Importance of Sequencing

The type and strength of job-readiness factors and prevalence of other barriers to employment will affect which types of services an individual needs and when and how they should be provided. For instance, individuals with responsivity issues such as severe mental illnesses, physical health problems, or substance abuse disorders would not benefit from employment services that relate to job readiness until those other needs are adequately addressed through treatment. It may be possible, however, for individuals with less severe issues to receive treatment concurrently with employment programming. This is especially relevant to individuals with criminal histories, who have much higher rates of behavioral and physical health problems than the general population.[45] Family and logistical barriers can also influence an individual's ability to participate in employment programming and should be addressed as soon as possible. The workforce-related recommendations in this paper are only applicable to individuals who are able to participate in and benefit from employment programming.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESSES

Some individuals with serious mental illnesses (SMI) may not be a good fit for the type of integrated reentry and employment programming described in this paper, as they will require more tailored or intensive services to address their behavioral health needs. For these individuals, referrals to specialized supported employment programs can help ensure that they get both the mental health and employment services they need.

Supported employment programs are designed to connect individuals with disabilities or SMI with the competitive labor market, while ensuring that they receive the necessary professional support services to succeed. Supported employment programs are closely integrated with these individuals' mental health treatment plans. Research has demonstrated that these programs can improve employment outcomes for the population with SMI.[46] Although these programs are not widespread, they are becoming more common in communities across the country, and should be considered as a key option when available. However, it is important to note that these kinds of programs are typically not designed to reduce individuals' risk of recidivism, and therefore may need to be supplemented by other cognitive behavioral interventions in a comprehensive case plan. When these evidence-based employment programs are not available, existing programs may need to address the responsivity issues among individuals with SMI.

Additional information on supported employment programs is available at store.samhsa.gov/product/Supported-Employment-Evidence-Based-Practices-EBP-KIT/SMA08-4365.

It is important that program administrators screen for functional impairments and other problems that can interfere with employment programming (this can be done in coordination with local service providers and/or corrections staff), and either treat these needs in-house or through referrals to community service providers.

Some risk-reduction, soft- and technical-skill development, or education interventions may also be required before connecting individuals to an employment program or job—although in most circumstances, these services can be provided simultaneously with job-readiness and placement services.[47] Deeply entrenched criminal thinking that makes individuals unresponsive to employment programming will likely need to be addressed with cognitive behavioral interventions before those individuals are able to succeed in programming or in a work setting. However, many higher-risk individuals with less deeply entrenched criminal thinking will benefit from employment programming at the same time as cognitive behavioral interventions, particularly because the development of soft skills that make someone more employable (nontechnical skills and attitudes, such as professionalism, the ability to collaborate, and communication and problem-solving abilities)[48] overlap with risk-reduction efforts aimed at antisocial attitudes and behaviors. Integrated risk-reduction and soft-skills training programs can be particularly effective. In contrast, education and technical skill deficits typically do not preclude an individual from participating in employment programs or connecting with the labor market unless they rise to the level of functional illiteracy* and/or lack a particular skill set required for the position. When possible, these deficits should be addressed at the same time an individual is employed to help with rapid attachment to a job or to provide career advancement.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS AS DISINCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Another common characteristic of hard-to-employ individuals with criminal histories is their high levels of financial obligation and debt with poor prospects of repayment upon release from prison.[49] Government officials can often garnish a significant portion of an individual's wages to repay these debts. For instance, child support enforcement officials can garnish up to 65 percent of a noncustodial parent's wages.[50] The individual may also owe fines, fees for court-ordered treatment, and victim restitution.

As a result, individuals are often motivated to pursue informal "under-the-table" employment rather than engage with the formal labor market to avoid having a significant portion of their wages directed to debt repayment.[51] Although there is agreement that child support and victim restitution, in particular, should be prioritized for repayment, this complex challenge requires the attention of employment and reentry service providers—as well as legal advocates who can press claims in court to modify some of these obligations—to help individuals meet their financial obligations within the prosocial structure of formal employment.[52]

Employment Program Components to Improve Work Outcomes (What to Do)

There are many programs that have been used over the past several decades in the workforce development field to help hard-to-employ individuals, including those with criminal histories. The discussion that follows highlights some of the common components of those programs that have been the subject of research, although this is far from an exhaustive list. Employment programs that incorporate these different components generally are trying to achieve two broad goals:

* In general, functional illiteracy refers to the inability to read, write, and compute at levels of proficiency necessary for daily life activities. However, definitions can vary and are generally complex, accounting for different types of literacy. For additional literacy definitions, measurements and rates, see Irwin S. Kirsch, Ann Jungeblut, Lynn Jenkins, and Andrew Kolstad, *Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Findings of the National Adult Literacy Survey* (Washington: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Goal 1: Promote Job Readiness—Improve individuals' hard skills (e.g., basic education, technical skills, or knowledge of technology) and soft skills (e.g., professionalism, the ability to collaborate, or oral communication) either through education, training, or work experience. Address non-skill-related barriers to employment (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, and logistical challenges such as housing and transportation) with in-house programming or referrals to community-based treatment and service programs.

Goal 2: Find and Retain Employment—Link individuals to long-term employment and continue to engage with them after job placement to promote retention, help with reemployment in the event of job loss, and assist with advancement opportunities.

Interventions provided in support of these goals are not necessarily sequential; certain problems may need to be addressed before an individual can begin working, whereas other issues can be resolved concurrently or even on the job.[53] In general, the impact of these different program components is greatest when they are combined to develop a comprehensive employment service package (such as hard-skill training to work in a new industry through a vocational training class, soft-skill development in a workplace professionalism class, and transportation services for getting to work reliably and on time). Research has shown that some of the more successful employment programs take a holistic approach to achieving these goals by drawing on multiple components simultaneously or in quick succession.

THE AMERICAN JOB CENTER NETWORK

The primary source for workforce development services is the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), enacted in 1998. WIA established the American Job Center Network (formerly the One-Stop Career Center Network) to provide employment and training services throughout the country. These centers are managed by state or local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), which are chaired by private-sector members of the community in order to encourage business participation in the process. It is the responsibility of the WIBs to connect American Job Centers with key partners, including public employment service providers, public assistance programs, community colleges, and other training or education providers.

The services provided through the American Job Center Network can vary across jurisdictions, but core services include providing information on job vacancies and student financial aid, and assisting with conducting a job search, writing a resume, and interviewing.[54] Although these core resources are very useful for more job-ready individuals, they are generally not considered sufficient alone for connecting less job-ready individuals with sustainable employment.[55]

For less job-ready individuals, some centers provide more advanced services (primarily focused on education and training), or refer individuals to other service providers for higher-level interventions. Policymakers and American Job Center leaders may need to consider new ways to build capacity and better target resources to maximize outcomes for individuals with criminal histories who are less job ready.

For more information on American Job Centers, see careeronestop.org. In the future, resources for job seekers will be consolidated under a single, streamlined website, which at this writing can be previewed at jobcenter.usa.gov.

Goal 1: Promote Job Readiness—Program Components

The program components that promote job readiness are intended to prepare an individual for competing in the labor market by increasing technical and soft skills and addressing other logistical or health problems that may reduce an individual's employability. Job-readiness services are not, however, always prerequisites to employment (except, as described above, in cases such as behavioral health and other severe impairments). Because of the need for immediate income, many individuals should not wait to go through lengthy training programs, education courses, and other extensive preparation before securing a paid position for which they are capable. Assessments should be used to determine the timing, level, and type of job-readiness interventions that individuals need.

• Education and Training

Education and training cover a wide range of programs, including Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED) preparation and certification, and post-secondary coursework, including vocational training.[56] Education and training are key components of job-readiness preparation and are critically important for increasing access to higher-quality employment opportunities.[57] Whether an individual receives basic education, post-secondary education, or more technical training is dependent on his or her distinct set of needs.

Basic education programs are oriented for adult learners (typically those reading below the ninth-grade level) and provide instruction in fundamental reading, writing, and mathematics skills. English as a second language (ESL) also falls into this category. Post-secondary education programs serve individuals with higher education levels and are often provided through partnerships with local community colleges.

> ***Implementation Tip:*** *Education programming tends to have the greatest impact on employment outcomes if it results in credentialing, such as completion of a GED, a post-secondary degree, or a trade license.*[58]
>
> *Teaching basic skills in the context of work rather than using traditional education formats helps students make the connection between basic education skills and the working world—revealing the real value of this training and facilitating skill retention when they are on the job.*

Sectoral training programs are a promising type of vocational training designed to improve the employment prospects of low-income workers by understanding the particular needs of the local labor market and training participants to meet those needs. Employers' feedback is addressed through the curriculum development and reflected in the instruction, which better positions program staff to broker job placements for program participants.[59]

> ***Implementation Tip:*** *Sectoral training programs have been shown to be most effective for individuals with at least a GED or high school diploma.*[60]

• Soft/Cognitive-Skill Development

Soft-skill development, including addressing cognitive-related attitudinal issues, is crucial for promoting individuals' success in the workplace. Typical soft-skill programming includes instruction on how to be professional on the job, how to manage conflicts with coworkers or

superiors, and how to manage time to ensure punctuality. Depending on individuals' deficits, they may be taught these skills prior to job placement, on the job, or both. The length of the course and setting (classroom or workplace) should vary by individual and program. For instance, programs with a transitional-job component may feature a shorter class, as soft skills can continue to be taught in the context of work by the program staff overseeing the workers. However, if a program is placing individuals into jobs with outside employers, they need to first ensure that basic soft skills such as professionalism and conflict resolution are developed and that individuals' attitudes toward work have been addressed.[61]

> ***Implementation Tip:*** *Motivation and attitudinal issues are best addressed through cognitive-based, social-learning approaches (i.e., using structured learning experiences to model and reinforce positive attitudes and behaviors).**
>
> *Programs can develop certificates of employability or rehabilitation for individuals that complete soft/cognitive-skill classes. Research has shown that employers respond positively when programs formally certify the job readiness of an individual.*[62]

• Transitional-Job Placements

Transitional jobs are a type of subsidized employment program in which temporary, income-generating employment is provided to hard-to-employ individuals with the goal of improving their employability through work experience, skills development, and supportive services.[63] What distinguishes transitional jobs from other subsidized employment is that they are intended to be a temporary, developmental experience that helps individuals learn and apply basic work-readiness skills to improve their competitiveness in the job market. The length of transitional-job placements varies by program and participant, but tends to range from 30 to 90 days. The wages for these job placements are typically paid in whole by the service provider agency, which serves as the employer of record.†

> ***Implementation Tip:*** *Research has shown that the impact of transitional jobs can vary depending on the length of the placement.*[64] *Programs should ensure that placements are long enough to teach the necessary skills, but not so long that individuals are no longer benefiting from their involvement in the program.*‡

• Non-skill-Related Interventions

There are a number of additional challenges that may prevent an individual from finding and maintaining employment that cannot be directly addressed by traditional job-preparation strategies.

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* Cognitive approaches that incorporate social learning techniques are considered best practices in the corrections field. There are a number of different cognitive therapy programs that are used with individuals who have been under correctional control. For additional information on these programs, see static.nicic.gov/Library/021657.pdf.

† There are a number of ways in which transitional-job programs can be funded. While nearly all transitional-job programs require public or private funding sources to subsidize the job placements, there are some ways in which these programs can recoup costs. For example, some transitional jobs are operated as social enterprises, in which they sell a product or service to the public and use that income to offset the cost of the program. It is also possible to develop job placements that public agencies will partially or fully fund, often out of their maintenance and repair budgets. For more information see Dan Bloom, *Transitional Jobs: Background, Program Models, and Evaluation Evidence* (New York: MDRC, 2010).

‡ In a 2012 study of the Center for Employment Opportunities, the Urban Institute found that transitional-job placements had the greatest effect on short-term unsubsidized employment outcomes when individuals participated for more than 30 days, but there were no additional benefits when participation was greater than 90 days. For more information see Jennifer Yahner and Janine M. Zweig, *Which Components of Transitional Jobs Programs Work Best?* (Washington: Urban Institute, May 2012).

As mentioned earlier, needs related to an individual's ability to learn or respond to programming, such as a serious mental illness, learning disability, or substance abuse issues, may need to be addressed in order for the participant to benefit from an employment program. Less serious problems may be addressed concurrent with other programming. Logistical challenges, including the need for stable housing, clothing, identification, transportation, and child care, may also prevent an individual from obtaining or holding a job. Responding to these needs can be done directly by a program if they have sufficient capacity, but most programs will likely need to establish partnerships in order to develop an extensive support network of social services in the community (especially for more complex needs like behavioral health problems). Partnerships with legal aid programs can also enable programs to provide clients with legal assistance to secure licenses, expunge criminal records, modify child support orders, and address other barriers that have legal solutions.

> ***Implementation Tip:*** *Screening for behavioral health and other needs that can affect employability or that interfere with training and other development is critical before placing individuals in employment programming.*[65]

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE OF IMPLEMENTING GOAL 1: PROMOTE JOB READINESS

The New York City-based Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) operates a transitional-job program that offers job-readiness programming both prior to and during employment. All participants enroll in a five-day pre-employment life skills class that teaches the basic expectations for behavior and performance on the job. During the first week, other barriers to employment are addressed, such as ensuring that individuals have proper identification. Participants are then placed in a transitional job for an average of nine weeks.

During that time, participants continue to receive soft-skill development services from their supervisor and job coach. CEO staff regularly assess the job readiness of participants through the use of a "Passport to Success," a small booklet with a checklist that reflects job-readiness factors (e.g., cooperation with supervisor, effort at work, and punctuality), which the site supervisor completes each day. Once individuals are deemed "job ready," they continue in a transitional job while working with a job developer to find full-time, unsubsidized employment. CEO then provides one year of job-retention services, including financial incentives.

CEO also provides vocational and hard-skill development programming through the CEO Academy. Pre-employment hard-skill services include construction and warehouse training. Job-ready individuals that demonstrate they can maintain unsubsidized employment, but want to pursue higher quality job opportunities, can enroll in a post-placement program that teaches the skills necessary to qualify for vocational programs at a partner community college. CEO pays the full tuition for the training.

For additional information about this program, visit ceoworks.org.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE BEHIND-THE-BARS JOB-READINESS PROGRAMS

Although this paper focuses largely on community-based employment programming, there are many opportunities for advancing job readiness prior to an individual's release from prison or jail. Education and training strategies can be applied in a classroom setting during incarceration. It is fairly common for adult basic education and GED preparation programs to be provided for prison inmates. Prisons and jails can also contract with local community colleges to provide post-secondary coursework that may include opportunities for credentialing. Soft skills can also be improved while individuals are incarcerated, often through the use of cognitive therapy programming, when available. Work experience can be provided through such programs as prison industries and work release. Research has shown that both of these program models can improve employment outcomes and reduce recidivism.[66] Coordination and information sharing between corrections and workforce service providers to develop the programming that is delivered during incarceration can have a significant effect on whether individuals will be successful in maintaining legal employment and avoid involvement with the criminal justice system after their return to the community.

Goal 2: Find and Retain Employment—Program Components

The set of program components that advance finding and retaining a job are intended to eventually link individuals to unsubsidized employment opportunities. Effective connections are typically generated through assessment and matching. There is little evidence that job placements alone will lead to permanent employment, which underscores the importance of job-retention support services. Retention builds the foundation for the stable work history needed for earning higher wages and accessing better job opportunities.[67] The components under Goal 2 can be implemented in combination to help individuals find and retain long-term employment.

• Non-transitional Subsidized Employment

Programs providing subsidized employment but not transitional jobs pay some of participants' wages for a trial period, during which the employers and/or program provides training and support services to better prepare participants for permanent, unsubsidized employment. Unlike transitional jobs, subsidized employment placements typically can convert into permanent jobs for the individual after the subsidy period ends. On-the-job training programs are a common subsidized employment program model, in which the employer is expected to provide training to employees in exchange for a short-term wage subsidy.

> ***Implementation Tip:*** *This option is best suited for individuals who do not require intensive job-preparation services, but would benefit from additional training or are struggling to find unsubsidized employment.*[68]

• Job Development and Coaching

Job development and coaching services are intended to connect an individual with unsubsidized employment opportunities. Job developers work with local employers to identify job openings. In contrast, job coaches help prepare the individual for a job search—developing a resume, searching for appropriate jobs, and completing the application process. Development and coaching responsibilities can be conducted by the same individual, but it is important to note that the skill sets for these two roles differ greatly. The intensity of job-coaching and development services can be tailored to the specific needs of participants, from programs that offer basic, self-directed, job-search assistance to programs with weekly job-coaching meetings and placement quotas for job developers.

Individual job-readiness levels should dictate when an individual receives job development and coaching services. For more job-ready individuals that do not have major risk-related attitudinal and behavioral issues, matching can be conducted right away, often referred to as rapid attachment. For less job-ready individuals, the strategies described under Goal 1 (such as basic skill development) should be completed before, or concurrently with, job development and coaching services.

Implementation Tip: *When individuals are determined to be job ready and fit for longer-term, unsubsidized employment, it may not be a skills deficit that blocks their opportunity to attach to the workforce. Sometimes collateral consequences and employer concerns may be a barrier to successful employment. Practitioners and job developers need to know how to address these barriers and be responsive to the needs of employers. Job developers should emphasize the skill sets and qualifications of the program participants, and ensure that the participants will continue to have access to the program's support services once employed. Job developers can essentially serve as a free, external human resources department for local employers by assisting with certifications and credentialing and then connecting employers to these potential new hires.*

- **Retention and Advancement Services**

Retention and career advancement services are typically provided to individuals after placement in an unsubsidized job to assist with any issues that have the potential to impact tenure. Services may include helping hard-to-employ individuals identify and address problems, or assisting with reemployment in cases of job loss. Staff may also work to match clients with higher-paying jobs or education opportunities to promote advancement.* Many programs will develop relationships with employers to mediate workplace issues, facilitate opportunities for advancement, and even provide on-site retention services.[69] Skill and career interest assessment tools can be used to guide longer-term career planning after initial placements.

OTHER STRATEGIES FOR INCENTIVIZING EMPLOYERS

Ideally, hiring should be promoted by first focusing on the positive attributes of clients. Yet sometimes job developers need to explore additional strategies to engage potential employers, such as using state and federal tools and resources that can help protect against loss or provide tax incentives. The Federal Bonding Program effectively insures an employer against financial loss if an employee with a criminal record steals or damages property. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit authorizes tax incentives of up to $2,400 for hiring people convicted of a felony within one year of their release date.

To learn more about Federal Bonding, visit bonds4jobs.com.

To learn more about the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, visit doleta.gov/wotc.

* Although education and training programs are categorized as job-readiness program components in this paper, they can also be used to promote advancement. When appropriate, programs should continue to connect clients with higher education and training opportunities (ideally that will result in credentialing) after they have connected with the labor force.

Implementation Tip: *Engaging individuals in voluntary employment-retention and advancement programs requires intensive marketing and other outreach strategies, strong program participant-staff relationships, and the use of incentives (potentially financial) to promote participation.*[70]

Promoting longer-term employment stability over immediate job stability is important. Evaluations of retention and advancement programs show individuals who moved up to better job opportunities during the course of the program on average tended to have better retention outcomes than participants who stayed employed at the same job over the course of the program.[71] *This is consistent with research that shows the quality of job placements factors into the effectiveness of employment interventions.*[72]

- **Financial Work Incentives**

Incentives, typically in the form of supplemental monthly cash payments, can encourage job retention. This work incentive model was developed in the 1990s during welfare reform efforts and has been shown to increase employment rates.[73] Payments can be provided for retaining employment or for moving to higher-quality jobs to encourage advancement (as measured by higher wages, better benefits, or full-time instead of part-time employment).[74]

Implementation Tip: *Programs that condition cash incentives on full-time work, or participation in job-preparation programming for part-time workers, have been shown to have the greatest impact on employment and earnings outcomes.*[75]

These incentives may be especially beneficial to individuals with criminal histories who are non-custodial parents, as this population is only eligible for a very small credit (about a tenth of the credit available to custodial parents) under the Earned Income Tax Credit, which is the largest work incentive program.[76]

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE FOR IMPLEMENTING GOAL 2: FIND AND RETAIN TRADITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

The Chicago-based Safer Foundation (Safer) began running Pivotal Staffing, LLC in 2005—an alternative staffing agency that provides placement services for individuals with criminal records through the use of job development and coaching strategies. Safer has a performance-based approach to creating or identifying positions, in which its job developers are given income incentives for placements and retention. Safer also provides supplemental services for its program participants, such as transportation assistance, career development services, and retention support groups. Its staff maintains a strong relationship with employers by screening individuals for job readiness and drug use.

For additional information, visit saferfoundation.org.

Integration of Employment Program Components into the Resource-Allocation and Service-Matching Tool

The eight employment program components (listed in table 2 below) have shown promise in jurisdictions where they are being used, but generally have not yet been comprehensively adopted by front-line professionals with scarce resources.

Table 2. Summary of Employment Program Components

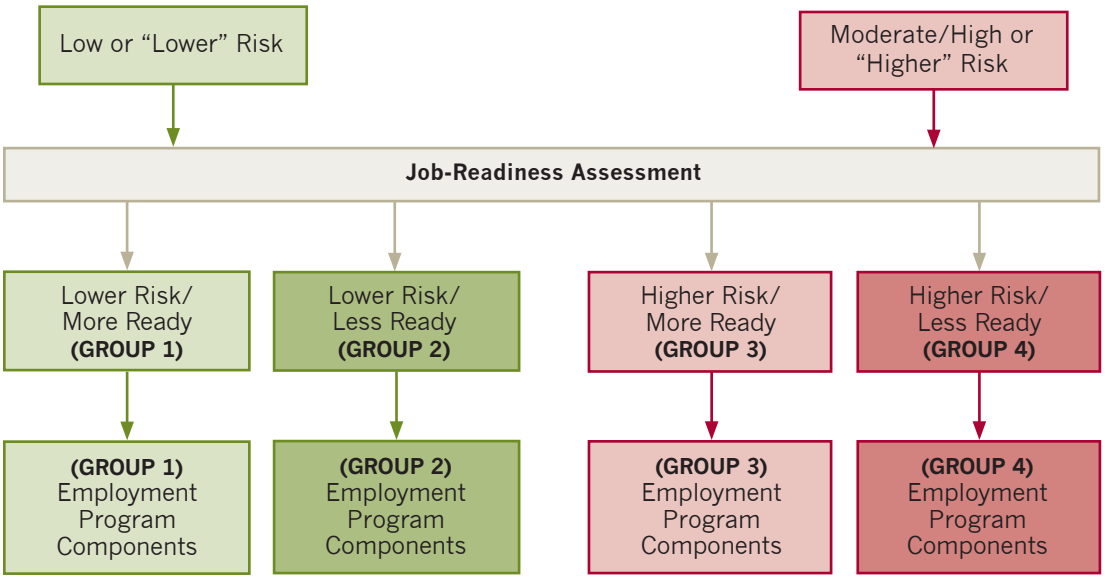
Goal 1: Promote Job Readiness	*Goal 2: Find and Retain Employment*
1. Education and Training	5. Non-transitional Subsidized Employment
2. Soft/Cognitive-Skill Development	6. Job Development and Coaching
3. Transitional-Job Placements	7. Retention and Advancement Services
4. Non-skill-Related Interventions	8. Financial Work Incentives

Implementing a comprehensive initiative that incorporates job readiness, placement, and retention components is a significant challenge for fiscally strapped municipalities, counties, and states. Opportunities for job placement continue to be very limited due to labor market conditions and pressure to reduce public-sector payrolls.[77] As such, it is critical that employment service providers triage their resources according to the job-readiness needs of individuals.

When working with individuals with criminal histories, workforce development providers can further triage their scarce resources by taking into account individuals' levels of risk. It is not feasible to spend thousands of dollars on costly employment program components for every individual reentering society from prison or jail. Simply spreading scarce resources among as many individuals as possible, without regard to their job readiness or risk levels, will have minimal impact on employment outcomes or recidivism reduction and will minimize the impact of whatever dollars are invested. By enrolling lower-risk/more job-ready individuals into less expensive programming or services that can meet their needs (such as basic job-coaching services or job fairs), resources can be freed up for higher-risk/less job-ready individuals to receive more intensive services (such as transitional-job placements or training). This risk/needs-based approach will ensure that resources are not misspent by giving individuals more interventions than they need to succeed. Policymakers and program administrators must be able to use objective assessments and evidence-based approaches to identify, prioritize, and serve the individuals who will benefit most from interventions and achieve system goals.

The resource-allocation and service-matching tool detailed in Section III uses job-readiness assessments to inform the delivery of employment services within risk groupings. Figure 3 illustrates this next step in effectively matching the right services to the right people by further disaggregating lower-risk individuals and higher-risk individuals by their levels of job readiness. These groups can later be matched to the appropriate employment program components.

Figure 3. Grouping Lower- and Higher-Risk Individuals by Job Readiness



Although it is clear that less job-ready individuals will, by definition, require more services than more job-ready individuals, it is important to note that service packages will be determined ultimately by assessments of individual needs. Because the factors that make an individual more or less job ready are so diverse, this paper can provide a starting point for discussions on appropriate service packages, but it does not dictate particular combinations of interventions that would ignore the need for individualization.

In order, however, to make the potential implementation of the tool more concrete, Section III does provide hypothetical case examples with possible program component options to address them. Ultimately, it will be up to front-line professionals to draw from the report findings and the tool to help determine which of the many program components they need to provide to meet individuals' distinct needs using available resources in their community.

Although job readiness is the primary factor that will influence which employment program components are appropriate to provide, risk should also play a role in these determinations. As discussed in the following section, certain program components can be implemented in ways that can better attend to risk factors while increasing job readiness.

Employment Service-Delivery Principles to Reduce Recidivism (How to Do It)

Recent evaluations have revealed that the way employment programs are implemented (service delivery) can impact recidivism reduction by providing a prosocial, structured, positive environment. There are five basic service-delivery principles that emerge when examining how employment program components can be carried out to both reduce recidivism and improve workforce outcomes. To be clear, these

underlying principles describe how any of the employment program components for hard-to-employ individuals can be structured to address the distinct needs of adults with criminal histories. These principles embrace the tenets of RNR and can help shape employment programs in ways that position them to assist participants in avoiding criminal activity.

Engagement: Address antisocial thinking and behavior through high-impact staff and client interactions (e.g., mentoring relationships or cognitive-based interventions).

Engagement refers to the positive interactions between program participants and staff. People at a higher risk of reoffending will often have entrenched antisocial thinking and behaviors, making it important to establish the support systems and prosocial ties that will help them avoid criminal activity. The impact of engagement can be enhanced by using strategies effective for this population such as research-based cognitive behavioral approaches and motivational interviewing techniques.[78] Staff should be trained on how to work effectively with a high-risk population, develop mentoring-type relationships with clients, and meet frequently in order to engage higher-risk participants in ways that encourage positive behavioral change and accountability. If access is permitted, service providers should try to develop these mentoring relationships before an individual's release to ease the transition to the community and ensure that immediate prosocial supports are available.[79]

Peer supports are also an important part of the engagement process. CEO's transitional-job program evaluation, for example, suggests that engaging individuals through small work crews provides peer supports that can help promote a participant's sense of community.[80] Many program components can achieve benefits through the use of small, interactive classes or peer meetings to discuss challenges such as finding and retaining employment (often referred to as "job clubs" in the workforce development field).

It is important to note, however, that engagement with peers can have unintended adverse effects for low-risk individuals if service providers place them with a group of high-risk individuals in intensive programming. Doing so can actually undermine the characteristics that make a low-risk individual less likely to reoffend.[81]

After release from prison or jail, or at the start of community supervision, employment reentry programs should adapt the intensity and type of engagement to the individuals' levels of criminogenic risk. These efforts will complement the efforts among a growing number of correctional personnel and probation/parole officers who are tailoring their supervision levels and related services to individuals' risk and needs, including the frequency, location, and intensity of their engagement.

Timing: Provide services shortly before or at the time of release, or at the start of community supervision, to address individuals' immediate problems, and adapt the services to individuals' changing needs over time.

Service providers need to ensure that timing is taken into account when matching individuals with appropriate employment-related services. It is not enough to provide the right services to the right people; they also need to be provided at the right time. Programs should engage a participant either before or immediately upon release from a correctional facility (or at the

start of community supervision) and provide more intensive services that attend to short-term needs in the first weeks and months after release.* During this period of particular vulnerability following release, service matching should be focused on stabilizing individuals so that they can participate in employment and other community-based programs. Service matching should also take into consideration the timing and intensity of any court-ordered programs that individuals are required to attend.

One of the most common immediate needs that employment programs can address is financial stability. The majority of individuals returning home from prison or jail face urgent financial challenges, such as rent, food, child support, restitution, and court fees and fines. Therefore, enrollment in programs that provide wages or other monetary support services soon after release is especially important. These cash supports can help position an individual to participate in programs, encourage them to stay enrolled, and help them resist turning to illegal sources of income.

However, for individuals with significant soft-skill and risk-related cognitive and behavioral deficits or responsivity issues, the immediate priority should be addressing those risk factors before finding employment. Within the high-risk grouping, there can be significant variation in individuals' readiness for work. Community supervision officers or other case managers that have access to risk and needs assessment information should work with employment service providers to help them gauge whether an individual's risk factors need to be addressed before that person can be placed in a work setting, or if those factors can be attended to at the same time that job-placement services are provided.

Over time, individuals' levels of job readiness and overall stability will likely change, requiring adjustments to the combination of program components they receive. What a person needs in the first few weeks and months after release may well be different from what they need 12 or 18 months later. A work-first strategy (i.e., prioritizing connecting someone to a job over education or training) may be appropriate during the first few months of an employment program, but as individuals' needs are addressed, they may be better positioned to benefit from a vocational training program that provides the skills needed to access better job opportunities. Just as important as changing or adding services is the need to ensure that participants are not enrolled in program components longer than necessary. Keeping someone in an education or training class for too long without providing meaningful opportunities to find a job may undercut their motivation for staying in the program. The use of career-planning assessments and closely monitoring progress can help service providers tailor the timing of program components to individual needs.

Incentives: Increase motivation for positive change and improve job performance with such measures as stipends for maintaining employment and peer-supported recognition for program completion.

Research confirms that behavioral change is facilitated when positive incentives outweigh punitive actions.[82] For individuals with very limited experience with success and achievement,

* While this paper focuses primarily on services provided in the community, it is important to note that service providers should be looking for opportunities to advance job readiness prior to an individual's release from prison or jail. Many correctional facilities provide some education or vocational training (as discussed in the text box on page 26).

incentives can be a powerful way to encourage good decision making. It is important to use incentives to encourage program participation and job attainment and retention. Financial support can be one of the most powerful incentives because it can be both a motivator and stabilizer. There are several types of financial incentives that can be used in employment programs. The most obvious is the provision of wages through employment. Most individuals returning from prison or jail want to find a job, and believe that employment is essential to successful reentry.[83] As a result, programs that place individuals in jobs (transitional, subsidized, or traditional) that provide immediate income tend to have better rates of program retention.[84] Programs can also provide incremental wage increases or raises at key milestones to reflect individuals' performance on the job. Other financial incentives include support payments for housing, child care, and transportation, and retention bonuses for individuals that find and maintain traditional, unsubsidized employment.

Program participation and positive behavioral change can also be promoted through non-financial incentives, such as recognition or awards provided in the presence of peers. Acknowledging certain milestones can help an individual stay motivated through the long and difficult process of finding a job. It is also important to ensure the program components align with the self-reported needs of participants (e.g., move them toward credentialing in a particular trade, finding a higher-quality job, or gaining immediate access to income) in order to achieve both personal and program goals.

Because most higher-risk individuals tend to have a long and substantial history of failures, appropriate incentives should be used more frequently than sanctions. Program participants with criminal histories should be aware of which types of sanctions result from particular misconduct before they are applied.[85] When sanctions are called for, they should be proportionate to the seriousness of the violation and used in quick response to misbehavior or violations of supervision conditions.[86]

Coordination: Collaborate with corrections, workforce, and reentry professionals and other service providers to ensure that interventions are provided in ways that support recidivism-reduction and employment goals.

Coordination among representatives from the many different agencies or organizations working with people under correctional control is essential for addressing criminogenic risk and responsivity factors that may undermine the effectiveness of employment interventions. Jail or prison staff, community supervision officials, employment and treatment service providers, employers, case managers and reentry coordinators, and individuals with criminal records (and their families) are among the many people who need to work together to build on any programming done in facilities and to establish the most effective plan for inmates transitioning to the community or beginning supervision.

Employment and corrections coordination is critical. Information sharing, especially regarding assessments, not only contributes to efficiency and reduces each system's draw on public resources, but can also help ensure that the right people are getting the correct combination of services with an appropriate level of intensity. Coordination can increase support for supervision requirements while helping to ensure that these mandates do not interfere with employment or other positive

change that can reduce recidivism. It is important to clarify the roles of community supervision officers and service providers and then support these roles through written policies and procedures. Employment and corrections personnel may also want to engage in some informal cross-training to ensure that each other's core principles and strategies are well understood.

Collaboration with other service providers (such as addiction or mental health treatment, housing, civil legal service providers, and other reentry outreach professionals) can also help ensure that intervention timing is coordinated and criminogenic needs and responsivity factors are prioritized. Employment services should be just one part of a comprehensive reentry case plan. Information sharing and coordinated responses may require formal cooperative agreements and legal assistance to meet all federal, state, and other privacy mandates.[*]

Finally, service providers for individuals with criminal histories should help support local employers. Employers may need to be kept updated on these employees' progress and outside appointments, program status, changes of address, and other information—particularly for high-need individuals. Service providers should view employers as potential partners and give them opportunities to be involved in the reentry employment planning process and express feedback and concerns about their employees or the design of program components. It is also important to coordinate with employers when developing training programs to ensure that the curriculum aligns with the needs of the local labor market. Every effort should be made, however, to minimize the imposition on employers of paperwork and administrative tasks that they may find burdensome.

Structured Time: Organize individuals' time with effective programming and positive activities to minimize opportunities for criminal actions and time with antisocial peers.

Individuals at higher risk for criminal activity should spend the majority of their time in planned, prosocial activities. A highly structured employment program can help ensure that higher-risk unemployed individuals are occupied as much as possible every day, either through enrollment in job-preparation programs or job placements. These employment programs can complement and connect with other constructive after-hours activities. Occupying so much time in structured activities addresses several core criminogenic needs: Antisocial influences from peers are minimized, free time is occupied in noncriminal activities, and program participants can practice new skills in these activity settings.

If individuals have a supportive family and/or are taking responsibility for family-related duties, job-preparation programs should be balanced with their time and commitments at home. Lower-risk individuals need to be protected from highly structured, time-consuming program requirements. Research is clear on this point: overwhelming lower-risk individuals with additional program demands can undermine the very qualities that define them as low risk by interrupting family time and prosocial activities.[87]

[*] For information on facilitating systems-level information sharing across the mental health and criminal justice systems, see John Petrila and Hallie Fader-Towe, *Information Sharing in Criminal Justice–Mental Health Collaborations: Working with HIPPA and Other Privacy Laws* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2010).

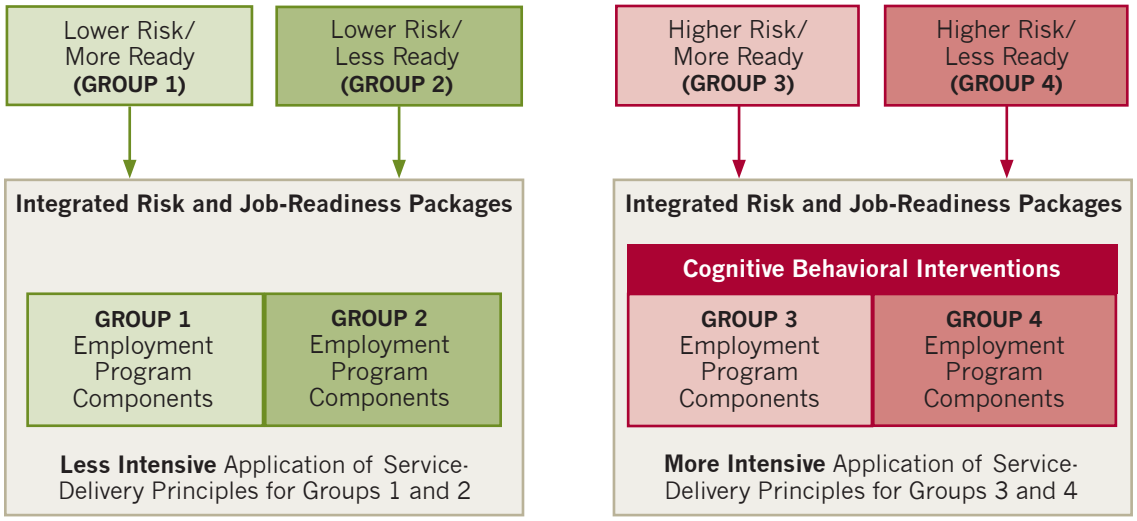
Integration of Service-Delivery Principles into the Resource-Allocation and Service-Matching Tool

Policymakers and service providers must ensure that employment program components (education, training, skill development, etc.) are delivered in ways that effectively address the needs of individuals with criminal histories. In other words, pick the right thing to do, and do it right.

Individual risk factors should help determine the intensity of service delivery provided to individuals. For example, higher-risk individuals will need more intensive engagement immediately following release or at the beginning of supervision. This group may need greater incentives, coordination, and structure as employment program services are delivered. Intensity can refer to the number of services an individual requires, the frequency with which a particular service is provided, and the characteristics of the interaction or engagement with the participant. By modifying the intensity of service delivery, employment program components can be tailored to better address individual risk factors. For instance, an individual may only require one type of job-preparation service, but can be enrolled in a program that meets daily to increase its intensity.

As figure 4 illustrates, once individuals are grouped according to criminogenic risk and job readiness, the resource-allocation and service-matching tool can help determine the intensity of the service delivery they receive. The risk/readiness categorization results in four groupings. Note that for the higher-risk groups, it is critical to prioritize cognitive behavioral interventions to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and improve their ability to succeed in the labor market. Section III examines how service providers can match individuals in all four groups to distinct, integrated service packages.

Figure 4. Matching Employment Program Components and Intensity of Service Delivery



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SECTION II

1. People returning to the community from correctional facilities or who are under probation or parole supervision represent a subgroup of the hard-to-employ population that many American Job Centers and workforce development practitioners already serve on a daily basis. Although individuals with criminal records share many of the same challenges as the hard-to-employ population, they have additional barriers to employment that must be addressed.

2. There are workforce program components that can be used for individuals with criminal histories to improve their employment outcomes, including education and training, soft/cognitive-skill development, transitional job placements, non-skill-related interventions, subsidized employment, job development and coaching, retention and advancement services, and financial work incentives. In most circumstances, program components need to be used in combination to meet individuals' complex needs as they change over time. Research has shown that simply helping a high-risk/high-need individual with a criminal history who is not job ready to write a resume and apply for jobs is not enough.

3. The factors that put an individual at higher risk of recidivating (criminogenic attitudes and behaviors, in particular) can have a significant impact on employability. As such, workforce development agencies and employment service providers interested in improving outcomes for individuals with criminal histories should draw from criminal justice best practices and collaborate with corrections professionals that conduct risk/needs assessments to develop integrated responses.

4. This paper suggests that to use resources most effectively, individuals should be grouped first by level of risk, followed by a second assessment to determine job-readiness levels. Distinguishing which people with criminal histories are more job ready and which are less job ready will help guide the service-matching activities described in Section III of this paper that provide the right combination of employment program components.

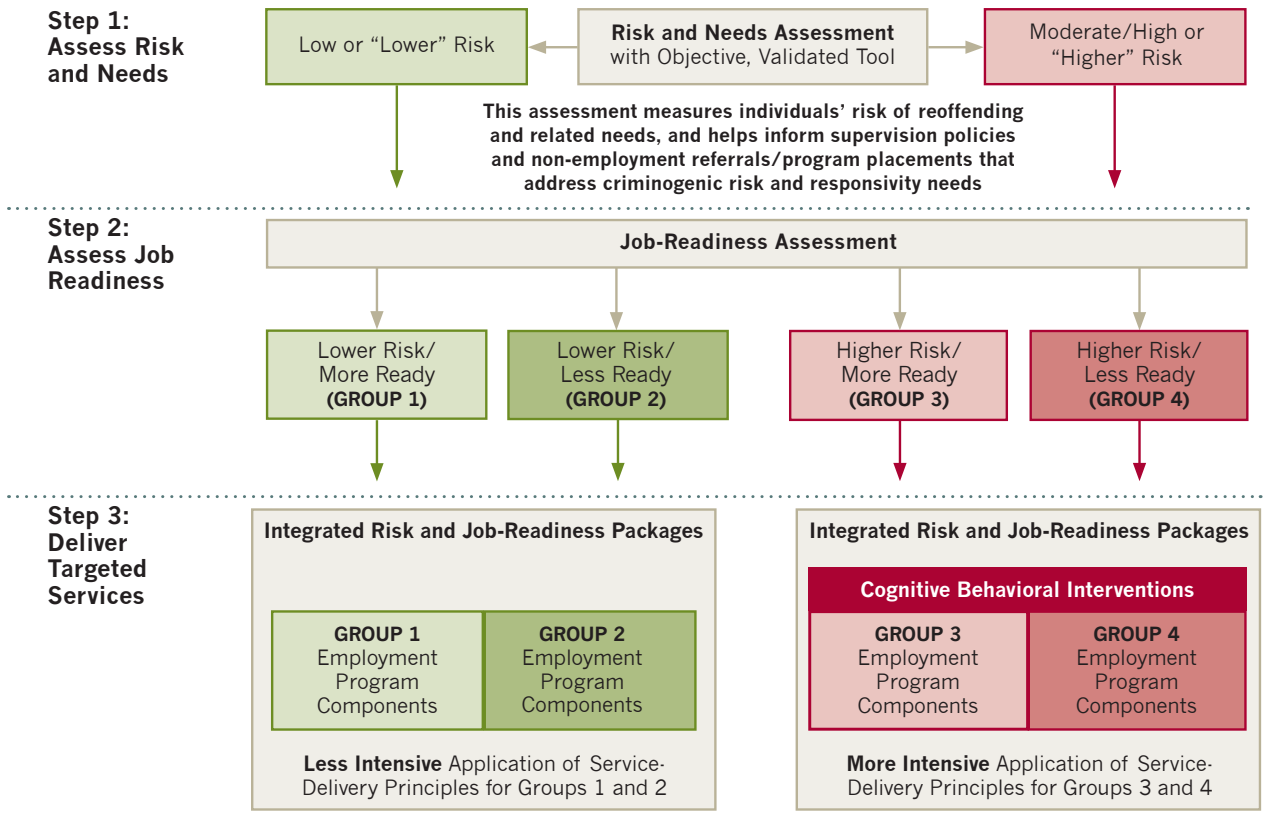
5. American Job Centers, as well as other workforce-development providers and their partners in the community, can be positioned to improve both employment and reentry outcomes for individuals with criminal histories. This requires the application of service-delivery principles (how to do it) to the employment program components (what to do). These service-delivery principles embrace RNR tenets and require policymakers and practitioners to pay particular attention to how individuals are engaged, the timing of engagement, incentives for program participants, coordination across systems that serve this population, and how individuals' time is structured. The service packages outlined in Section III integrate these principles.

III. THE RESOURCE-ALLOCATION AND SERVICE-MATCHING TOOL:

An integrated approach to reducing recidivism and improving employment outcomes

THE PREVIOUS TWO SECTIONS outlined the characteristics of hard-to-employ individuals with criminal histories, recommended approaches for reducing their likelihood of recidivating, and suggested ways to better position them to succeed in the workforce. To effectively implement those recommendations, policymakers and system administrators need to assess the levels of risk, need, and employment readiness for unemployed individuals with criminal histories and tailor and triage resources accordingly. The resource-allocation and service-matching tool has been developed to help with this assessment and resource-management process and to guide the development of integrated service responses across the corrections, employment, and reentry fields.

FIGURE 5. THE RESOURCE-ALLOCATION AND SERVICE-MATCHING TOOL: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER



An Explanation of the Tool

The resource-allocation and service-matching tool is based on two key dimensions: the risk of reincarceration and job readiness, which are used for grouping individuals being released from prison or jail or who are under community supervision. There are four groupings that result from these two assessments, and each can be tied to a combination of corrections and supervision policies, employment program components, and service-delivery strategies.

Sorting populations into these four groupings and then identifying the combination of services and supervision that is most appropriate for each subset is a complex undertaking. The precise combination of corrections strategies and services will be affected by the expertise and resources in any particular facility or jurisdiction. Before delving into the details of how to use the tool, there are some important considerations to keep in mind:

- The illustration of the tool and the narrative that follows suggest a clear sequence to assessing risk and needs and then aligning services to address them. In reality, however, the assessment and service-matching processes are iterative; assessments indicating the need for a particular program or intervention may become outdated over time due to relapses, regression, or progress. For instance, risk/needs assessments may be administered pretrial, at intake in a corrections facility, and again close to the time of an individual's release date. Job readiness may be assessed at intake and then reassessed throughout the months following release. Each assessment may yield different information. As people progress and regress during their involvement with the criminal justice system, their risk of reoffense and readiness for employment can change—effectively moving them from one grouping in the resource-allocation and service-matching tool to another. It is important to be mindful of these shifting dynamics and to use the most recent assessment information possible in making service decisions.
- The effective application of the tool relies on the appropriate use of updated objective criminogenic risk/needs and employment-readiness assessment instruments. Corrections should be using assessments validated for their population. Job-readiness assessments, although not typically validated for a specific population, should also reflect the research on what factors are predictive of employability, such as prior employment, welfare history, and educational attainment.[88]
- The tool suggests that each person can be assigned to one of four distinct categories. Defining distinct groupings can be very useful in making resource-allocation decisions at an administrative level and making referrals to particular service providers. When developing individual service plans, however, it is important to acknowledge the tremendous amount of diversity within each of these groupings. Every factor that is related to both criminogenic risk and job readiness has a spectrum of severity, functional impairment, and duration. Every service/supervision package supported by a network of community providers will ultimately need to be fine-tuned to each individual within each of these categories.

Despite these issues, the tool illustrates the paradigm shift necessary to develop the type of assessment-driven integrated responses needed to reduce reincarceration and improve job readiness among individuals with criminal histories. The following section walks the reader through the use of the resource-allocation and service-matching tool. The discussion focuses on how to identify different target populations and create tailored service packages. Sample scenarios are then provided to illustrate how an individual from each of the four groupings might be matched with services that address their specific reentry and employment needs.

> Although these scenarios provide examples of possible service packages (one of many potential combinations) and outcomes, they assume the availability of extensive resources, sometimes even ideal capacities, in order to highlight for readers a wider range of options. This abundance of resources is obviously not the reality found in most communities. These somewhat ideal scenarios do, however, illustrate a broader range of options that could potentially be made available.

What the use of the tool requires, then, is that program planners and administrators, as well as practitioners and front-line staff, collaboratively address how to make the most of available resources and determine if other partners can be brought to the table to expand the pool of resources and expertise. Through cross-systems discussions, the potential for reentry, employment, and corrections professionals to derive a greater impact from their investments is very promising. By using coordinated interventions to address criminogenic risk, workforce service providers' investments are less likely to be squandered on individuals that not only fail to enter the labor force, but are reincarcerated (making it even harder to become employed when re-released). Corrections professionals should be able to help structure probationers' and parolees' time in prosocial settings by drawing on employment services that are matched to supervisees' job readiness and that help secure the first steps to stability. And reentry professionals can focus their support on these and other efforts that can help individuals more successfully join the workforce.

How Policymakers, System Administrators, and Practitioners Can Use the Resource-Allocation and Service-Matching Tool

There is no question that corrections, employment, and reentry policymakers, administrators, and practitioners want to increase public safety by reducing reoffending, encourage individuals' successful return to the community, and improve rates of employment by using their resources to the greatest effect. Unfortunately, they sometimes lack the necessary information to make effective resource-allocation decisions to further these goals.

The tool includes three steps:

1. Assess risk and needs
2. Assess job readiness
3. Deliver targeted service packages based on risk/readiness groupings

There are many benefits that can be derived from the implementation of each of these steps:

Step 1: Assess Risk and Needs

The reliance on assessments allows the resource-allocation and service-matching tool to be used for capacity planning, program design, and service/supervision intervention package development. After selecting validated and current criminogenic risk/needs assessment instruments, administrators will need to determine what "cut-off scores" or other boundaries to use in determining which individuals will be deemed "higher risk" and which will be "lower risk" (see sidebar below on "Defining the Groupings"). The size of these groupings should help decision makers appreciate how individuals in correctional facilities and on probation or parole fall on the criminogenic risk/needs continuum. With this information, policymakers and administrators can evaluate their service capacity for addressing criminogenic needs (antisocial attitudes, peers, and thinking, as well as drug abuse and others) and better facilitate discussions among system leaders, line staff, and providers about how available resources can be allocated to meet recidivism-reduction goals. This analysis of needs and service capacity will also be critical when integrating other reentry and employment services in the steps that follow.

Information gleaned from Step 1 activities can also help shape reentry and employment program design and individual intervention plans. The screenings and assessments conducted by the corrections system often identify physical and mental health needs (for which care in correctional facilities is constitutionally protected)* as well as other responsivity factors such as education level and cognitive functioning. Probation and parole agencies may also use assessments to identify risk and service needs. Some screenings also include the identification of court-ordered fines, restitution, and child support.

DEFINING THE GROUPINGS

System administrators determine the cut-off scores for grouping individuals, in part, based on the distribution of individuals with "low" and "medium/high" risk and who are "more" or "less" job ready in the population being assessed. Users need to define low, medium, and high risk and level of readiness and then establish benchmarks determined by valid screening and assessment measures. For example, administrators will need to determine what numerical scores from risk/needs assessment tests qualify someone as low risk, and what scores qualify them as medium or high risk. If the resulting groupings do not adequately differentiate the population (for example, 90 percent qualify as high risk), then changes to cut-off scores may need to be made to further distinguish which individuals have the greatest risk. The same applies to assigning values to readiness results.

Administrators will then need to be mindful of their supervision, treatment, and employment resources when prioritizing subgroups and individuals within subgroups. For example, if there are more individuals who fall within a higher-risk category with intensive supervision needs than there are available program slots, a narrower slice of the subgroup should be addressed until capacity is increased. Alternatively, if the assessment process identifies fewer individuals with high risk/low readiness than anticipated, the group selected for more intensive supervision or services can be extended into moderate risk/need levels. It is important to recognize that individuals may move between these categories throughout their lives. Periodic reassessments may reveal the need for changes in how officials prioritize supervision, employment, and other services.

* Access to needed physical and mental health services by inmates is protected under the Eighth Amendment. Corrections facility administrators are required to identify the health needs of inmates, including mental health needs, and provide medication and supports.

All of this information is of value to employment service providers and reentry practitioners. In particular, information sharing with health systems that meets all legal mandates and privacy concerns can help ensure that important information follows the individual from the community to corrections and back to the community. Through closer collaborations, workforce development service providers can improve both employment and reentry outcomes. They can be part of a decision-making process that also improves supervision policies and non-employment-programming and service referrals.

Step 2: Assess Job Readiness

Job-readiness assessments typically ask questions about a person's history of employment, education and certification status, attitude toward work, general motivation, and resilience when disappointment occurs. The results can reveal whether an individual possesses the positive attitude and motivation that are critical to persisting through the difficult job search process and to navigating stressful work environments. The tool encourages corrections professionals either to assess for job readiness as part of their standard assessment practices—using a readiness assessment that works for employment service providers—or to allow employment service providers' access to incarcerated individuals to conduct a job-readiness assessment before an individual's release to help with transition planning. Job-readiness assessments should also account for factors that may undermine or contribute to an individual's success in an employment program (such as health, substance use, and learning disorders). This information would likely have emerged when the risk/needs assessment was conducted, but it is important to screen for this information if the most updated information is not available.[*] It is imperative that employment providers work with community supervision officers or corrections staff to determine whether an individual's criminogenic risk factors or responsivity issues are severe enough that they must be attended to prior to conducting job-readiness or placement activities.

From a policymaker's or administrator's standpoint, this second assessment step also has tremendous implications for resource allocations. Every jurisdiction has a distinct web of community-based service providers that can be used to reduce the likelihood a person will commit a crime in the future. Like risk/needs assessment instruments, readiness assessments can help reveal the numbers of individuals with criminal histories that require a range of employment-readiness and placement services. This information then can be used to help identify gaps in community-based service provider expertise or inadequate capacity. Screening and assessment information can help policymakers and administrators better understand the size of the population of individuals who may avoid a costly reincarceration if given proper services and supports. In particular, the assessment results can help administrators determine what types of coordinated reentry/employment services should be made available for individuals returning from incarceration or who are under supervision. After Step 2 has been completed, it should be clear what proportion of the targeted population falls into each of the four risk/readiness groupings, and how to shift resources to account for this distribution of needs.

The tool is also meant to help practitioners and program administrators meet demands for accountability by providing data-driven criteria to guide decision making. For example, if there are

[*] Pretrial and court services intake forms, with appropriate information-sharing agreements, can complement the screening and assessment processes within jails and prisons. The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Risk/Needs Assessment 101: Science Reveals New Tools to Manage Offenders* (Washington: Pew Center on the States, The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2011); Bonta and Andrews, *Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment and Rehabilitation*.

only 100 slots for a particular employment program, and the risk/needs assessment ranks 150 potential program participants as at high criminogenic risk with high need for services, it may be necessary to examine that group more closely to further distinguish those whose receipt of interventions would make the biggest impact on recidivism and employment outcomes. Additionally, if a lower-risk group is taking up some of the slots for services that affect employability, then it is worth considering whether some of those spaces could be freed up to serve individuals who will benefit more from the service. While these decisions can be difficult, the sorting tool can help guide these choices on how to make the most efficient use of public resources so that neighborhoods and families reap the greatest benefits.

Armed with assessment information, employment service providers can better direct interventions that are tailored to the needs of the population they are serving. By integrating program components and guiding their implementation with service-delivery principles, they can increase the impact of their efforts by attending to risk factors.

Step 3: Deliver Targeted Services

By applying the principles associated with risk reduction to employment program components, service packages can be tailored to address individuals' distinct criminogenic and job-readiness needs. The service packages described below have two elements:

1. Employment program components guided by job-readiness factors (but may also be influenced by risk considerations)
2. The principles of effective service delivery, including intensity considerations, based on risk/needs and responsivity levels

These service package descriptions are not meant to be exhaustive, but merely demonstrate the broad range of responses that can be applied to different groupings. Although the proposed service packages may not reflect the capacity of many jurisdictions, they should help present options if resources can be expanded or reallocated. Case examples are provided to demonstrate the integration of the service-delivery principles with employment program components. Given the significant variation among individuals, even within a particular grouping, the suggestions are not intended to be prescriptive at the individual level.

These case examples for each group also do not represent full case plans; rather, they are intended to highlight some of the key aspects of a collaborative reentry and employment effort. In reality, program participants may have other responsibilities or service needs that should be addressed through comprehensive case planning before they are prepared to engage with an employment program, or even concurrent with their participation in such a program. In many cases, a probation and parole officer or a reentry planner will handle much of the case management. Employment service providers are not expected to shoulder the responsibility of all case management needs for this population. Nonetheless, these examples focus on the specific needs that employment service providers will likely need to address either directly or through referrals to other community-based service providers.

Groups 3 and 4: The Higher-Risk Groups

GROUP 3: Higher Risk/ More Ready

GROUP 4: Higher Risk/ Less Ready

Groups 3 and 4 both consist of individuals that are at higher risk of future criminal activity, but have notably different levels of job readiness. Therefore, Group 4 (less job ready) will require more employment services than Group 3 to increase their employability; however, both groups will require intensive risk-reduction services to reduce their likelihood of reoffending. The more intense application of service-delivery principles (including corrections supervision coordination) will look very similar for both of these groups because of their higher-risk levels. In contrast, employment program components will be individually tailored to address different job-readiness levels.

Employment Program Components for Groups 3 and 4

Goal 1: Promote Job Readiness

Group 4 individuals will require programming that prepares them for employment and is also highly structured and engaging. Transitional-job placements can be well suited for targeting the needs of Group 4 given their integration of job-readiness services and intensive levels of engagement. If transitional-job resources are unavailable, education and soft-skill classes can also be intensive and effectively attend to job-readiness needs. It is important that service providers continually evaluate the job-readiness levels of Group 4 individuals to determine when they are suited for unsubsidized, competitive employment and can benefit from placement and retention services. As Group 4 individuals become more prepared for work, it is then appropriate to provide programming focused on finding and retaining employment.

In general, Group 3 individuals (higher risk/more job ready) should be provided with employment program components that focus less on soft-skill development and other basic job-readiness services than their Group 4 counterparts. Based on their job-readiness profile alone, Group 3 individuals may benefit more from employment program components that will help them find and retain employment, such as sectoral training versus basic education. However, because individuals in Group 3 are high risk, service providers should look for any risk-related attitudinal or behavioral issues that undermine their employability and engage these individuals in structured, prosocial activities that are appropriate for their higher level of job readiness.

To ensure that both of these higher-risk groups are truly ready for employment, service providers working with this population should prioritize the provision of cognitive behavioral therapy or other risk-reduction services (either in-house or through referrals) when the factors that make the individual high risk or unresponsive to interventions also affect their readiness for employment. Whenever possible, these services should be provided alongside other job-readiness efforts.

Goal 2: Find and Retain Employment

Groups 3 and 4 will both benefit from program components that focus on connecting to the labor force, although the timing of the delivery of these services will likely differ. Because of their higher levels of job readiness, Group 3 can usually be targeted for job-coaching and development services right away when coupled with risk-reduction strategies (assuming their cognitive and behavioral skills are high enough that they can successfully join the workforce). After Group 4 has received adequate job-readiness services, they, too, will need assistance finding unsubsidized, competitive employment through job-coaching and development strategies. For individuals placed in a transitional job or other temporary work setting, in order to prevent employment gaps, a job coach and developer should begin working with the individual on finding a permanent job while they are still working in a temporary setting. For individuals that only receive class-based job-readiness services prior to being placed in an unsubsidized job, intensive follow-up services will likely be needed to ensure that they are well supported as they make the transition into the workforce.

After connecting Group 3 and 4 individuals with jobs, it is imperative that employment programs continue to provide retention and advancement services. These services should be highly intensive for at least the first year after placement, and will likely need to include reemployment services given the often low levels of retention for hard-to-employ individuals. Financial incentives should also be provided to these groups to encourage job retention and/or advancement when possible.

The Application of Service-Delivery Principles for Groups 3 and 4

Engagement:

Service providers should engage Group 3 and 4 individuals in mentoring-type relationships and meet frequently to promote positive behavioral change. These relationships should be strengthened through the use of cognitive behavioral therapy, social learning approaches, and motivational interviewing techniques. Probation and parole officials should prioritize supervision resources for these groups, and also engage individuals through impactful interactions. This may require more frequent check-ins, home visits, and oversight tailored to individual needs.

Peer engagement can be promoted through different types of employment program components. For instance, a less job-ready individual in a transitional job could engage with peers through small work crews, whereas a more job-ready individual receiving job-coaching and development services could engage with peers through regular group meetings to discuss work-related challenges.

Timing:

Prior to and immediately following release, it is critical that Group 3 and 4 individuals receive intensive services that address their criminogenic needs and other destabilizing factors. Employment service providers should be in contact with and/or conduct job-readiness assessments of individuals in prison or jail prior to their release, when possible, or at the start of probation or parole in order to plan appropriate interventions and ensure services can be provided. Risk-reduction services and cognitive behavioral-based services are of particular importance on the heels of release to ensure a continuity of care from

prison or jail to the community and because the days directly following return to the community are when many individuals are at the greatest risk for reoffending.[89]

The timing of when more advanced services should be offered will likely differ across Groups 3 and 4 given their varying levels of job readiness. As mentioned above, once short-term stability concerns are addressed, it may be appropriate to quickly move Group 3 individuals into a job-coaching and development program, whereas Group 4 individuals will likely need more basic job-readiness interventions. Continual evaluations of these individuals' job-readiness levels are necessary to determine when they can be moved into more advanced program components that will help them transition into the workforce. Ongoing career planning can also help identify which services are needed at particular points in the process.

Incentives:

Policymakers, administrators, and practitioners should develop policies and practices that prioritize incentives for Group 3 and Group 4 individuals to participate in employment programs and to promote positive work-related outcomes. Examples include participation stipends, pay each week for attendance in a transitional-job program, or other participant-defined rewards for goal achievement (such as transit stipends) when available, as well as communication techniques that encourage an individual to engage in positive change. It is also important to encourage job retention and/or advancement through the provision of financial incentives whenever feasible for certain achievements (e.g., retaining a job for 90 days, advancing to a higher paying job, moving from part- to full-time employment).[90] Non-financial rewards, such as a certificate acknowledging a participant's completion of a program or a speech praising a participant's performance in the presence of their peers, can also be effective motivators. The use of incentives can help reinforce positive behaviors practiced in cognitive behavioral and employment-readiness programs.

Coordination:

Employment service providers and corrections personnel should share information and collaboratively plan for an individual's release from a facility or at the start of community supervision. As discussed earlier, because of the high criminogenic risks and needs associated with Groups 3 and 4, efforts should be made to continue the type of programming these individuals were receiving in prison or jail. Ongoing, frequent check-ins will help ensure job-preparation services and work requirements align with community supervision conditions.

It is also important for employment professionals to work closely with local service and treatment providers to whom they can refer participants for substance abuse, mental health, cognitive behavioral treatment, and other reentry and responsivity-related concerns (with priority given to those needs related to criminal conduct) that may impact an individual's success in an employment program. Similarly, corrections personnel should work with service providers to discuss how relapses frequently experienced related to substance abuse and other common violations of conditions of release and supervision can be addressed to reduce recidivism and encourage employment. Once individuals are placed in jobs, employment program personnel should reach out frequently to employers to address any issues that may arise on the job and to coordinate with local education and training programs that can position

employees to take advantage of advancement opportunities. Updates can be provided to probation and parole officers as well.

Structured Time:

Reducing recidivism for high-risk individuals requires structuring a significant portion of their time in reentry programming, including employment services, and other required activities such as court-mandated treatment or programs required under conditions of release or supervision.[91] The way in which time is structured can be adjusted to reflect individuals' different readiness levels, and job and supervision requirements. Group 4 individuals' time should be structured with program components oriented around promoting job readiness (e.g., education, training, soft-skill development, or transitional-job programs), whereas Group 3 may be better served through structured job-coaching, development, and post-placement services. After-work hours should be structured so they are spent to the extent possible with positive role models, supportive families, and prosocial peers. If individuals do not retain their jobs after connecting with the formal labor market, they should be reengaged in job-matching services and may also need to be enrolled in education or training programs to ensure that their time remains structured.

Case Example (Group 4):

GROUP 4:
Higher Risk/
Less Ready

Mike is 24 years old and being released on parole after serving three-and-a-half years of a four-year state prison sentence for possession of narcotics with intent to sell. This was his second felony conviction. Prior to incarceration, Mike frequently supported himself through drug sales, used drugs himself, and spent much of his time with other drug users and dealers. Mike dropped out of high school after tenth grade and has a very limited and unsuccessful employment history. While incarcerated, Mike was enrolled in a GED course but did not complete the program and was uninterested in job-training programs. He was often disruptive and expressed problems with people telling him what to do. Mike was granted parole on the condition that after release he enroll in a community-based drug treatment program and look for legitimate employment.[*] Mike is also a noncustodial father required to pay child support upon release.

Step 1: Assess Risk and Needs: In the weeks prior to his release from state prison, a risk assessment was conducted by Mike's case manager. Mike was categorized as at high risk for reoffending for a number of reasons, including his history of criminal involvement, drug use, limited self-control, and tendency to rationalize criminal and other antisocial activities. He did not maintain strong connections with his family while incarcerated and appears to lack friends who are not involved in using or selling drugs. Assessment and other related information about the conditions of Mike's release was passed on to the parole officer assigned to his case. The parole officer explained to Mike the benefits of signing a waiver that would allow his assessment

[*] In many instances, parole conditions will require parolees to seek employment. This may include the parolees' showing verifiable proof of their job-seeking activities, such as a list of businesses they contacted with names, dates, addresses, telephone numbers, and a contact person. Demonstrated engagement in an employment program, such as a transitional job, will also often meet this requirement. Most parole conditions allot a specific time period to secure employment once released (e.g., 90 days), but failure is unlikely to lead to a revocation where intermediate sanctions can be used and where no other violations have been found (although specific responses will vary across jurisdictions).

information to be shared with community-based service providers to assist him in successful reentry and meeting the conditions of his parole. Mike signed the waiver.

Step 2: Assess Job Readiness: The parole officer sets an intake appointment for Mike at a local employment program that is known to work with a reentry population, and sends his risk-assessment information to the provider in advance. A job coach from the employment program meets with Mike during his appointment to review his risk-assessment information and ascertain his level of job readiness in greater detail. The job coach determines that Mike is not job ready because of his low education levels and lack of soft skills due to his minimal work experience, negative attitudes toward working, and his conflicts with program supervisors while incarcerated. He also notes that Mike's financial obligations and limited support structure increase his need for immediate access to income.

Step 3: Deliver Targeted Services: Mike's profile is consistent with a Group 4 designation. Some of the actions and interventions for Mike could include the following:

- Mike's parole officer provides the job coach with a copy of Mike's parole case plan when he enrolls in the employment program. The program staff that work with Mike meet to discuss how they can ensure that program service requirements and supervision mandates can both be met without impeding program participation or putting Mike at risk of violating his parole. The job coach contacts Mike's parole officer to discuss his service strategy, and the officer agrees to be flexible on scheduling meetings and to keep the service provider apprised of any issues that could affect Mike's continued participation in the program, so long as the employment service provider and other partners provide updates and help ensure that Mike complies with his conditions of supervision.
- During their discussion, the employment service provider and parole officer agree that Mike will make little headway unless motivation, attitude, and criminal thinking are addressed. The parole officer also notes that substance use treatment is a critical intervention for both employability and successful reentry. In order to prevent delays in connecting Mike to employment-related services, they discuss how they can make these interventions concurrent. If there is an available slot, the employment service provider agrees to enroll Mike in "Thinking for a Change," a cognitive behavioral program that is run through the employment organization. If the program is full, the employment service provider agrees to work with the parole officer to find another cognitive behavioral program in the community that can mesh with the employment and drug treatment interventions. The parole officer refers Mike to a community-based substance use treatment agency that uses cognitive behavioral interventions and medication-assisted therapy, and holds group support meetings. The parole officer also encourages Mike to see if he can make some positive, immediate decisions about where to live by suggesting he get in touch with family members who have been a positive influence in the past.

- At the employment program, Mike is placed in a soft-skill development class (one that teaches how to dress, speak to others at work, be punctual, and more), which is designed specifically for high-risk individuals by incorporating the Thinking for a Change curriculum to increase motivation, model prosocial thinking, and help clients develop social and problem-solving skills. (Because slots for cognitive behavioral interventions are available for high-risk individuals within the employment service agency, Mike does not need to attend a class in the community.) Mike is told that if he shows up and participates in the program every day for a week (the first of seven weeks, with classes meeting only twice a week in subsequent weeks), he will have the opportunity to be placed in a paid transitional job.
- After completing the first week of classes, Mike is placed into a transitional job on a six-person work crew that provides groundskeeping services for the local municipality. The crew is closely supervised by a staff member trained in motivational interviewing techniques. The job is four days a week with shorter hours on the two days that Mike attends the soft-skills/cognitive behavioral classes, which continue for six weeks.
- Mike is paid weekly so he can address his immediate income needs. To further incentivize his participation and help Mike financially, the program offers transportation assistance, helps Mike make connections with other social service and reentry supports, and provides food during the soft-skills classes.
- Mike asks the employment program staff for help managing his child support payments. He is referred to the local legal aid program for assistance in filing for a downward modification to his child support payments while he is in the transitional job to ensure he can meet some of his obligation. Program staff notifies the parole officer of the referral and follows up with Mike to ensure that he continues to manage his reduced child support payments during his time in the program.
- While working his transitional job, Mike is paired with a job coach who prepares him for his unsubsidized job search by helping him develop a resume, complete applications, and practice for interviews. These activities occur on the one day of the week that Mike is not working in his transitional job. The coach works closely with a job developer to match Mike with appropriate employment opportunities. Mike remains in his transitional job during his search, with the understanding that if he does not find an unsubsidized job prior to completion of the program,* Mike's time will then be structured around risk-reduction services, job-search activities, or other job-readiness services.

* Programs with limited transitional job slots will typically need to have limitations on the length of a placement (e.g., 90 days) to ensure that participation can be prioritized for newly released individuals who have greater need for immediate income and the stability provided through a transitional job placement.

- Once Mike is placed in an unsubsidized job, he stops participating in classroom-based activities to ensure that they do not interfere with his work, although he is referred to a program that provides GED classes that can help him pursue advancement opportunities when he is ready. Mike receives a small monthly financial award from the employment program (not the employer) for the first year on the job to encourage job retention. For every month Mike stays at his job, his name is entered in a quarterly raffle for prizes such as gas cards. The program also hosts a ceremony every six months to recognize participants like Mike who have maintained their employment.
- The job coach and parole officer maintain close contact with Mike and his employer for the first year to help address any issues that arise on the job. The coach also continues to provide Mike with information on how to access services for additional career-planning guidance or reemployment services if needed after he completes the program.

TREATING GROUP 4 INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED RESOURCES AND/OR NO TRANSITIONAL JOBS

In the case example of Mike, the workforce development center is well resourced and actively engaged with the community supervision agency. Under these circumstances, the partnering agencies can support a transitional job program and enroll participants in ongoing job-readiness and risk-reduction services. However, such plentiful resources may not be available in many jurisdictions, requiring planners and program administrators to seek creative solutions and effective ways to expand collaborations and capacity.*

While the case example focuses on the community supervision-employment program relationship, there may be other key players that can help ensure that individuals get enrolled in necessary services, such as a local reentry task force. It is important for agency leaders and personnel to be clear on what the benefits are for involvement in the partnership, such as improved outcomes for a shared client population, pooling and leveraging existing resources, and sharing elements of a work plan.

The partnership must determine what is achievable with available resources and programming. Transitional employment can offer close supervision, immediate wages for low-skilled workers, and social learning opportunities. Yet sometimes, unpaid work opportunities (such as structured community service programs or internships) or subsidized, supported work programs can provide the necessary experience individuals need to practice positive workplace behaviors and attitudes. These other work experiences, if structured correctly, can provide the same benefits as transitional employment, as it is how services are delivered that impacts risk. To do so, they must include or be supplemented with social learning opportunities, risk-reduction interventions, and/or be closely supervised by someone modeling prosocial behaviors. Classroom-based services, such as education and training, may also be highly structured and incorporate risk-reduction approaches. Unpaid job-readiness services may want to use immediate financial incentives and awards to help support program participants and keep them engaged. All services should be balanced to ensure that individuals can fulfill their obligations but not be overwhelmed by all the program supports they receive.

* Although highlighted in the report, it is not intended that transitional jobs programs be perceived as a silver bullet, even in jurisdictions that can afford them. To maximize their effectiveness, it is important that other supportive services are also provided to participants. For many individuals, classroom-based job-readiness services such as education and training may be more appropriate.

Case Example (Group 3):

GROUP 3:
Higher Risk/
More Ready

Tanya is a 21-year-old woman serving a nine-month sentence in a local jail with six months probation for stealing cash and other valuables from a neighbor's home. It is not her first offense. At the time of her arrest, Tanya had few family supports and a live-in boyfriend with substance abuse issues. Although Tanya completed high school with good grades, she was known by her teachers as being impulsive and reckless. Despite these issues of self-control, Tanya has been able to find jobs in the past. An intake assessment at the jail identified her as having a mood disorder, for which she was provided medication. While incarcerated, she was given a work assignment and expressed interest in pursuing employment upon release. She plans to return to the same living arrangement with her boyfriend after her return to the community.

Step 1: Assess Risk and Needs: Upon release, Tanya met with her probation officer, who conducted a risk/needs assessment and reviewed the jail assessments. Because of Tanya's antisocial associates, criminal history, and indications of antisocial personality patterns (e.g., anger and low self-control), she is considered at high risk of reoffending. Her mental health issues are a responsivity concern because, untreated, her mood disorder may keep Tanya from being able to benefit from services, concentrate, or retain long-term employment.

Step 2: Assess Job Readiness: Tanya's probation officer makes an intake appointment with a local employment service provider that can assist Tanya with finding a job. At the appointment, Tanya is assigned a job coach, who contacts the probation officer for Tanya's risk-assessment information in accordance with the waiver Tanya has signed. The job coach conducts a more comprehensive job-readiness assessment, and determines that Tanya is relatively job ready.

Step 3: Deliver Targeted Services: Tanya's profile is consistent with a Group 3 designation. Some of the actions and interventions for Tanya might include the following:

- Tanya is referred by her probation officer to a mental health service provider upon release to ensure she continues her medication and receives treatment for her disorder so that it does not interfere with her ability to participate in reentry programming. The mental health service provider is an active member of the local reentry council and requests that the probation officer provide Tanya's risk/needs assessment information, which is permitted by the waiver Tanya had signed. Given Tanya's risk profile, the mental health treatment plan incorporates strong cognitive behavioral elements to address antisocial thinking and behavior. It is also designed to help Tanya consider the effects of her living situation and to create more prosocial support networks.*
- Tanya receives intensive job-coaching and development services. She meets frequently with her coach to work on job applications and prepare for interviews and also meets twice a week with a group of peers that is moderated by job coaches in order to discuss the challenges of reentering the workforce. These meetings

* Mental health service providers are increasingly aware of criminogenic risks and the need to provide interventions to address these needs. Fred Osher, et al., *Adults with Behavioral Health Needs under Correctional Supervision: A Shared Framework for Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Recovery* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2012). In communities where there is inadequate mental health service capacity, other partners may need to use trained personnel to provide cognitive behavioral therapy interventions to address criminogenic needs.

incorporate social learning techniques, as the job coaches and participants model and practice prosocial behaviors that will help with job retention.

- Tanya is also enrolled in a certification program, funded by the employment service provider, for an office administration position. The program meets twice a week at the local community college to structure more of her time, and to ensure that she can find a good job. The program also provides transportation assistance to ensure that she can make it to her classes.
- After Tanya is enrolled in these employment programs, her job coach touches base with her probation officer to ensure that meeting the conditions of her supervision will not interfere with her participation in this programming. The supervision officer agrees to schedule meetings during times when Tanya does not have class, and to change meeting times if they interfere with scheduled job interviews.
- While enrolled in the certification process, a job developer continues to search for a part-time job opportunity for Tanya that will provide more financial stability and structure the remainder of her time. After a month, Tanya secures a part-time job, and her employer is encouraged to contact the job coach and probation officer should any on-the-job issues arise. The job coach stays engaged with Tanya to ensure that she is able to complete her other program expectations (including her mental health treatment plan) while employed. Tanya receives a small financial award from the employment service provider for each month that she is employed, as well as for completing her service requirements, in order to incentivize continued engagement in her programs.
- The combination of mental health treatment, medication management, and cognitive behavioral interventions has helped Tanya manage her mood disorder and improve her attitude toward others. As Tanya begins to save her money, she is encouraged by her probation officer to think about changing her living situation.
- Six weeks after her release, as Tanya nears completion of her credentialing program, her job coach begins helping her search for full-time employment opportunities. The job coach helps Tanya update her resume to reflect her part-time work and new credential, and the job developer reaches out to local employers to find job opportunities and tout the employment program's support services as a hiring incentive. After eight weeks and numerous applications and interviews, a local company hires Tanya as a full-time office assistant, and the employment program acknowledges her accomplishments at a special event for program participants. The job coach remains in contact with Tanya for three additional months after her placement to ensure the transition goes well and she has the support she needs to succeed.

Groups 1 and 2: The Lower-Risk Groups

Lower Risk/
More Ready
(GROUP 1)

Lower Risk/
Less Ready
(GROUP 2)

Groups 1 and 2 are composed of individuals who are at a lower risk of recidivating, but have different levels of job readiness. Given their lower risk levels, Groups 1 and 2 have less of a need for, and are less likely to benefit from, placement in programs that are specifically designed to reduce risk factors related to criminal activity. Groups 3 and 4 should receive priority placements into these interventions instead.

Because Groups 1 and 2 are both low risk, the service-delivery principles associated with recidivism reduction will look very similar, but the program components that address job readiness will differ. Generally, Group 2 individuals should receive priority placements into job-readiness services. Group 1 is more likely to be successful with less-intensive programs and will benefit most from placements into job-retention services or self-directed programs.

Employment Program Components for Groups 1 and 2

Promote Job Readiness

Although Group 2 will benefit from job-readiness, placement, and retention program components, the intensity of service provision should be much lower than it would be for Groups 3 and 4. For instance, job-matching services could be provided on a once-a-week or monthly basis and be largely self-directed. Where there are limited resources, Group 2 should be referred to non-corrections-funded programs for education and training that are available in the community, as there will not be a risk-reduction value associated with the provision of job-preparation services, and there may even be adverse effects from putting them in the same program as high-risk individuals.

Group 1 individuals are the lowest-priority group for receiving more costly employment resources or risk-reduction services, both because of their low-risk levels and higher levels of job readiness. While non-skill-related barriers should be addressed upon release as needed, Group 1 individuals should not be placed in limited slots in more resource-intensive job-readiness programming.

Find and Retain Employment

Groups 1 and 2 may benefit from assistance with connecting to the labor market, but again, the intensity of service delivery for these individuals should be low. For instance, job-matching services such as resume writing, job searches, and interview practice could be provided on a once-a-week or monthly basis and also be largely self-directed. This is in stark contrast to the much more frequent and intensive job-matching services that would be delivered to Groups 3 or 4. These differences in the intensity of service delivery can significantly alter the costs of programs and their appropriateness for higher- versus lower-risk individuals.

Job retention is critical for developing a stable employment history and earning higher wages, and yet it is one of the greatest challenges in workforce development. As such, job retention and advancement is an appropriate program component to provide to Groups 1 and 2 following placement. As is the case for other programming for these groups, the intensity of follow-up service delivery should be low.

Service-Delivery Principles for Groups 1 and 2

Engagement:

Engagement for Groups 1 and 2 does not need to be as rigorous as for Groups 3 and 4. Service providers should not meet with individuals as frequently or place individuals in program components with intensive supervision. Corrections officers should deprioritize supervision resources for these groups by reducing the intensity of their engagement as well. It is also important to minimize these groups' exposure in programming to high-risk individuals that could serve as negative influences.

Timing:

Because Groups 1 and 2 are at lower risk for recidivating, service providers do not need to be as concerned with immediately addressing needs that are associated with reoffending. Over time, however, it is still important to adapt services to these individuals' changing needs. For instance, Group 2 should be transitioned into employment program components that will lead to workforce opportunities as job readiness improves.

Incentives:

Groups 1 and 2 should be encouraged to participate in appropriate programming through the use of motivational communication techniques. Where there are limited resources, financial incentives should be prioritized for Groups 3 and 4 if recidivism-reduction goals are to be considered in addition to improving individuals' employability.

Coordination:

Employment professionals should coordinate with supervising officers to ensure that the necessary and appropriate referrals are made to public and private community treatment and service providers. For Group 2, it is also appropriate to make referrals to employment services that typically respond to the general hard-to-employ population (although both the individuals with criminal histories as well as employment agency staff may need guidance on disclosing a criminal record, addressing employer resistance, and finding jobs that are not legally barred for people with their type of criminal record). Probation or parole supervision and reporting conditions should be structured to minimize disruption of prosocial activities and networks. Officers should use graduated sanctions, when possible, that also reduce the likelihood for probation and parole revocations for violations of supervision conditions (such as a substance abuse relapse). Here, too, there should be communication among corrections, employment, and other reentry service providers as needed, but comprehensive integration of complex responses should be less of an issue.

Structured Time:

Structured time spent in programs targeting job-preparation needs should not interfere with the participants' ability to reintegrate with his or her permanent support network (i.e., their families and communities). As such, even if someone in Group 2 could benefit from job-readiness programming, the actual hours spent in that program should not be too high. Although efforts should be made to encourage positive social connections, there is less need to structure the majority of individuals' time spent outside of employment programming for Groups 1 and 2.

Case Example (Group 2):

Lower Risk/
Less Ready
(GROUP 2)

Joseph is 32 years old and serving 18 months on probation for forging checks at a time when he was experiencing severe financial problems. He had no prior criminal history. Joseph is required to seek out employment as a condition of his probation, but has yet to find a job. He has a high school diploma, but has struggled with diabetes through the majority of his adult life, which when untreated has interfered with his ability to maintain steady employment or develop workplace skills. As a result, he has had limited exposure to professional settings. Joseph lives with family and has stable housing.

Step 1: Assess Risk and Needs: Joseph was assessed pretrial as low risk because of his stable family and housing situation, lack of criminal history, and otherwise prosocial attitude and remorse for how his actions affected the victims of his crimes. His probation officer reassesses Joseph's risk and needs at the start of probation and determines that his low-risk rating is still applicable. His physical health has been determined to be a responsivity issue.

Step 2: Assess Job Readiness: Joseph's probation officer refers him to the local employment service provider for job placement assistance. He is given a job-readiness assessment upon arrival and deemed not job ready because of his limited employment history. When asked about his interests and future plans, Joseph expresses a desire to explore long-term options in the manufacturing industry. The employment service provider also contacts Joseph's probation officer for his risk/needs assessment information. To help Joseph address and better manage his health issues, the employment service provider is given access to his health information through a signed consent form.

Step 3: Deliver Targeted Services: Joseph's profile is consistent with a Group 2 designation. Some of the actions and interventions for Joseph might include the following:

- Joseph's probation officer ensures that check-ins do not interfere with employment activities and refers Joseph to a clinic that provides health care to indigent persons so that he can start a medication regimen to manage his diabetes.
- Because Joseph is at low risk for future criminal activity, the employment service provider connects Joseph with a job-preparation program administrated by the local American Job Center that meets once a week and works on basic soft-skill development. The center also enrolls Joseph in a financial management class to ensure he avoids the problems that led to his criminal conviction. Finally, he is provided a scholarship-style grant* to participate in a certification course for forklift operations at a local community college.
- Joseph is also assigned a job coach who helps him write a resume and sample cover letter, and a job developer who identifies jobs that do not have legal barriers and fit Joseph's skill level. The job developer matches Joseph to an entry-level position at a warehouse. Once Joseph completes his certification, the job developer

* American Job Centers can use WIA, Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other federal and state funding sources to set up different services to meet the needs of their clients. Grants for education and training opportunities are fairly common, but the availability of these types of services may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

and coach help him pursue a more advanced position at the warehouse that fits his new credentials.

» Joseph's job coach stays in contact with Joseph for six months after placement in the warehouse position to help with any on-the-job issues and encourage job retention. Joseph is acknowledged at regular events for program participants as long as he remains employed.

Case Example (Group 1):

Lower Risk/
More Ready
(GROUP 1)

Maria is in her late 20s and was convicted of driving under the influence when leaving her 10-year high school reunion. Because this was Maria's first criminal offense and she was remorseful during the trial, she was sentenced to six months of probation during which time her license would be suspended. She is also required to complete a program for individuals convicted of DWI. As a result of losing her license, she also lost her job as a local delivery truck driver. Maria has a high school diploma and two years of community college, as well as a strong employment history. She has a stable group of friends who have not had trouble with the law and she has lived in the same apartment for several years. Maria tends to drink moderately in the evenings and on weekends; previously her drinking did not affect her ability to hold down a job.

Step 1: Assess Risk and Needs: Maria's probation officer assesses Maria as being at low risk for reoffending given her limited offense history, lack of antisocial thinking, stable living situation, and strong social network. The pretrial assessment concluded that Maria's substance use did not meet criteria for a substance use disorder and addiction treatment would not be necessary.

Step 2: Assess Job Readiness: Maria's previous job required her to drive in the course of her duties, so she turns to her local American Job Center for assistance finding a job that lacks this requirement and is accessible through public transportation until her license is reinstated. At that time, she would like to be able to drive to work, but does not want to continue doing delivery services. The American Job Center assesses Maria as job ready.

Step 3: Deliver Targeted Services: Maria's profile is consistent with a Group 1 designation. Some of the actions and interventions for Maria may include the following:

» Maria is given access to the American Job Center's core job-search services and given assistance with completing job applications as needed.

» Maria's defense attorney files an appeal with supportive testimony from her probation officer to encourage the judge to reinstate Maria's license for limited use of her vehicle only to get to and from work. The judge agrees as long as an alcohol detection device is installed and her travel is restricted to work and other necessary places.

» Maria is able to find a job, and continues to use the American Job Center on an as-needed basis to pursue advancement opportunities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SECTION III

1. The resource-allocation and service-matching tool can help employment, reentry, and corrections professionals improve outcomes for their shared population. Policymakers and administrators can use the tool to better determine whether their resources are being used to their best effect and practitioners can help ensure that the right people get the right interventions at the right time, and in ways that reduce their chances for reincarceration.
2. There are four groupings that result from criminogenic risk/needs and job-readiness assessments of unemployed individuals released from prison or jail or starting probation or parole. These groupings can be tied to a combination of corrections and supervision policies, employment program components, and service-delivery strategies aimed at reducing recidivism. Line-level staff can then individualize plans to meet the diverse needs of individuals within each grouping.
3. Using assessment data and cut-off scores to define the size of the four groupings and then determining the available service/supervision slots, system administrators can better decide whether resources should be developed or reallocated (such as when analyses reveal that lower-risk/more job-ready individuals are taking up spaces in programs that they do not need to succeed).
4. Although workforce development agencies already invest in employment interventions for people with criminal histories that come through their doors, they are often not oriented to identify higher-risk individuals and provide them with the type of intensive, specialized programming required to keep them out of prison and jail and connected to the workforce. The tool is meant to help jurisdictions narrow the population to be targeted for intensive services and leverage their collective resources through multisystem collaboration, cross-training, and planning to reduce individuals' criminogenic risk factors that affect employability. By applying certain service-delivery principles to traditional employment interventions, service providers can make better use of existing employment resources in the community to reduce recidivism.
5. The examples provided in this section primarily combine existing system responses for each of the four groupings, but it is hoped that through coordinated multidisciplinary planning, new integrated responses will be envisioned by corrections, reentry, and employment professionals that make the most efficient and effective use of their collective resources.

CONCLUSION

THE STRENGTH OF THE RESOURCE-ALLOCATION AND SERVICE-MATCHING TOOL is its integration of effective principles and strategies from both the employment and corrections systems. Clearly, there is much that each system can learn from the other. Employment professionals can take advantage of strategies that have proven effective for successful reentry, while corrections leaders and practitioners can improve outcomes for individuals with criminal histories by considering job-readiness strategies. The proposed tool provides a common starting point for policymakers and administrators to determine how their resources are best spent to achieve workforce and recidivism-reduction goals. Whether the tool and the principles have value and can be implemented effectively will be determined largely by the willingness of practitioners in the reentry, corrections, and employment fields to explore the many issues raised in this white paper and to test its approaches. It is hoped that the following benefits will result from such discussions and encourage both innovation and experimentation.

- **Making the Most of Limited Resources**

  The tool should not be seen as a means to do more with less—rather, it is meant to facilitate discussions about how resources can be used most efficiently to improve employment and reentry outcomes. The reality is that most jurisdictions simply cannot afford to give intensive services and supervision to everyone reentering the community from prison or jail, or to those who are on probation and parole.

  Workforce service providers that are already seeing large numbers of individuals leaving corrections facilities or who are on community supervision can take advantage of existing corrections assessments to more effectively triage and sequence their services. Risk/needs and job-readiness assessments can provide workforce service providers with information on the problems that individuals have that, if unaddressed, affect their ability to benefit from services. The application of RNR principles is especially important for employment providers serving large numbers of people with criminal histories, as many of the same characteristics that lead to reoffending can also affect whether they will be able to successfully connect with the labor force. These assessments provide information necessary for maximizing limited services, by helping both workforce professionals and corrections professionals match the right people with the right services, and ensure that services and programs are sequenced in such a way that they encourage growth and change in the program participants.

  Concentrating intensive resources on fewer individuals, and sequencing services properly, can have a far greater impact than trying to provide the most basic assistance to everyone.

- **Focusing Efforts on Programming with the Greatest Impact**

  The pressure on administrators and practitioners to show that their efforts are having their intended impact could not be greater. The recommendations in this paper may require some employment, corrections, and reentry programs and agencies to discuss reorienting their services to address the more complex needs of less job-ready individuals if they hope to improve outcomes for individuals with criminal histories. This may require adding capacity for specific evidence-based services, which might be funded by redirecting resources that were being used to provide more intensive services to individuals with lower levels of risk and needs that may actually succeed with less expensive and intense options. Integrated planning and responses envisioned by the resource-allocation and service-matching tool can also help ensure that program investments yield high returns. This white paper's recommended assessment-driven strategies reflect expert advisors' belief that approaches need to be flexible and tailored to individuals' changing needs over time to be effective.

- **Expanding the Use of Objective, Validated Tools to Reduce Recidivism and Provide Continuity of Care**

  There is no clearer message in this white paper than the need for validated assessments to inform decision making for behind-the-bars programming, community supervision, and reentry planning—including employment services. As a growing number of corrections professionals and researchers can attest, using validated assessments can help ensure that those individuals returning to the community with the greatest risk for reincarceration are matched to intensive supervision and service slots. These assessments can also shed light on responsivity factors that may affect an individual's ability to succeed in employment and other community programming.

  By expanding the use of these tools and sharing risk and needs assessment information with community-based service providers, in accordance with all legal mandates, corrections professionals can help facilitate continuity of care for individuals. Gains and investments made in programs during incarceration will not be lost at the time of reentry if they can be reinforced or continued in the community. Corrections practitioners have an opportunity to initiate this unbroken chain of coordinated recidivism-reduction interventions.

  Ultimately, the type of coordinated approach proposed in this paper can help ensure that probation and parole supervision and employment training/readiness activities are leveraged and complement one another, and can further the education, training, behavioral health, and other work that has occurred during incarceration so that neither system's efforts are undermined by the other.

- **Addressing Barriers to Implementation**

  This paper provides a basic understanding of the barriers to implementing the resource-allocation and service-matching tool and is meant to stimulate cross-systems discussions

addressing policies and practices that are inconsistent with RNR principles. For instance, corrections administrators may need to work more closely with judges to ensure that sentencing mandates do not result in limited intensive substance abuse treatment slots being filled with low-risk, low-need individuals. The discussion on RNR and promising employment practices helps highlight the importance of prioritizing high-risk/high-need individuals in behavioral health programs so that they can be ready for employment services and job placements. It may also be necessary to raise awareness about the need to prioritize the most intensive behind-the-bars treatment and programming for inmates posing the highest risk of reoffending and who have the greatest needs. (This prioritization does not affect the constitutional protections afforded all inmates for necessary health care.)

Community supervision agencies also have a role in ensuring that RNR principles are followed. Probation and parole agencies are increasingly applying RNR principles by using differential responses based on risk, and ensuring that supervisees' reporting requirements and other mandated programs do not interfere with job training and placement. Moreover, when individuals must look for employment or be placed in a job as a condition of their release or supervision, officers often have discretion about revocations and reincarceration. While revocation is usually made when other failures or violations occur (such as repeatedly failing drug tests), it is important to give full consideration instead to investing in finding structured, stabilizing employment or placement in more intensive treatment services that can put the individual on a path to successful reentry.

Finally, employment and reentry professionals may need to work with policymakers to address funding streams, program-evaluation criteria, and other factors that can complicate service providers' efforts to work effectively with individuals with criminal histories.

- **Breaking the Cycle of Reincarceration and Strengthening Communities**

The tool provides a platform to discuss the role of employment service providers in not only enhancing job placement and retention for people with criminal histories, but potentially to increase public safety. Similarly, corrections professionals can better use employment interventions to address risk-related challenges. This paper makes clear that corrections, reentry, and employment service providers have a vested interest in helping individuals with criminal histories succeed in the community.

Because individuals leaving prison have stressed the importance of having a job in order to avoid criminal activity, employment providers are in a special position to support these individuals and help them become contributing members of their families and communities. Employment service providers can work with other reentry partners to structure individuals' time in constructive ways with prosocial peers and address treatment needs that can also help reduce the likelihood of reoffending. And because the majority of people leaving prison and jail return to a disproportionately high number of neighborhoods already facing poverty, high unemployment, and high crime rates, there are clear benefits to the community when returning individuals' time is spent in legitimate employment.

In some ways, the proposed resource-allocation and service-matching tool is quite intuitive. Where the tool's impact will be felt most is in how resources are reinvested and the extent to which service matching will be better tailored to individuals' needs associated with the risk of criminal activity and job readiness.

The prospect of sharing valid assessment information and repeatedly reassessing or realigning community capacity for responding to the areas where there is greatest need is a daunting task. And although the tool is based on well-researched principles, at this writing, it has not been tested in jurisdictions as a planning tool to determine its utility for resource allocation and service matching at the individual level. Although many of the recommendations and components outlined in this document have been tested as parts of a particular program, the tool and its underlying principles have not yet been used to completely design or redesign an employment and reentry program.

The CSG Justice Center and its partners plan to test recommendations from this white paper to begin determining how the tool can support policymaking, program design, and service delivery. One or more sites will be selected to apply the tool's principles to improve resource allocation and service matching in order to advance positive job readiness and reentry outcomes for individuals with criminal histories.[*] Ultimately, it is hoped that policymakers and administrators will find the tool and related resources useful in better supporting the work of all front-line agency personnel and community-based service providers committed to building a strong workforce and to the safe and successful reintegration of individuals with criminal histories in our communities.

[*] Information about implementing the recommendations in this paper and other resources related to this project will be made available at csgjusticecenter.org/the-reentry-and-employment-project. The testing phase of this project will also be used to develop a suite of technical assistance tools to help policymakers, program administrators, and practitioners interested in improving outcomes for unemployed individuals with criminal histories.

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