

Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Project

Transitional Jobs for Ex-Prisoners:

Two-Year Results from a Random Assignment Evaluation of the Center for
Employment Opportunities (CEO)

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Prisoner Reentry

- Four-fold increase in U.S. incarceration rate since the 1970s.
- More than 2 million currently incarcerated; nearly 700,000 released from prison per year.
- Recidivism rates are high: two-thirds rearrested, half re-incarcerated within 3 years.

Reentry and Employment

- Wide range of barriers to successful reentry, but most experts believe employment is crucial.
- Two types of labor market challenges:
 - Characteristics that make ex-prisoners hard-to-employ (limited work and education, health problems, etc.)
 - Additional impact of incarceration (legal barriers, employer discrimination).
- Few proven employment models for this group.

Enhanced Services for the Hard to Employ Project

- Funded by ACF and ASPE (with DOL) to test promising employment strategies for groups facing serious barriers to steady work.
- Led by MDRC, with Urban Institute and other partners.
- Four sites, each targeting a different type of hard-to-employ population; like four separate studies.

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)

- One of the largest and best known employment programs for ex-prisoners.
- Started by the Vera Institute of Justice; independent since 1996.
- Serves approximately 2,000 parolees annually.
- Uses a transitional jobs (TJ) model; TJ widely seen as promising for ex-prisoners:
 - Source of legitimate income in critical post-release period.
 - Opportunity for staff to identify, correct workplace issues.

The CEO Model: Immediate Work

- Participants placed in CEO work crews (TJs) within one week after enrollment; supervised by CEO staff.
- Work 4 days/week; paid daily.
- Day 5: Meetings with job coach, job developer, fatherhood program, etc.
- When deemed “job ready,” receive help finding permanent job, then retention services after placement.
- Participation in CEO is voluntary for most, but meets a parole condition to seek or maintain employment.

The CEO Evaluation

- During 2004-2005, ex-prisoners who showed up at CEO were assigned, at random, to:
 - Program group: Regular CEO program, or
 - Control group: Limited job search assistance.
- Random assignment only in weeks when there were more participants than slots.
- Sample size: 977 (P: 568; C: 409)

The CEO Evaluation: Target Group

- Evaluation targets a subset of CEO's population: parolees who showed up at CEO after referral by regular parole officer.
- Other key CEO populations in special programs were not included in the study for contractual reasons.

Data Now Available

- Baseline data.
- Quarterly UI-covered earnings from NY State and Nat'l Directory of New Hires.
- Criminal justice data: arrests, convictions in NYS; incarceration in NYS prisons and NYC jails.
- Client survey (n=531; response rate=68%).
- Child support enforcement data.
- Data from CEO MIS and payroll system.

Characteristics of Participants

- Average age: 33
- Over half are fathers; few live with children.
- 2/3 African-American; 1/3 Latino.
- 43% no high school diploma or GED.
- 81% ever worked.
- Average of 7 prior convictions; 5 years in prison.
- Time since release:
 - 40% came to CEO within 3 months after release from state prison; model was designed for them.
 - 60% came to CEO longer after release (not expected).

Participation in CEO Activities

- Good test:
 - 79% of program group completed initial 4-day life skills class.
 - 72% of program group worked in CEO crew (TJ).
 - Average of 8 weeks in TJ

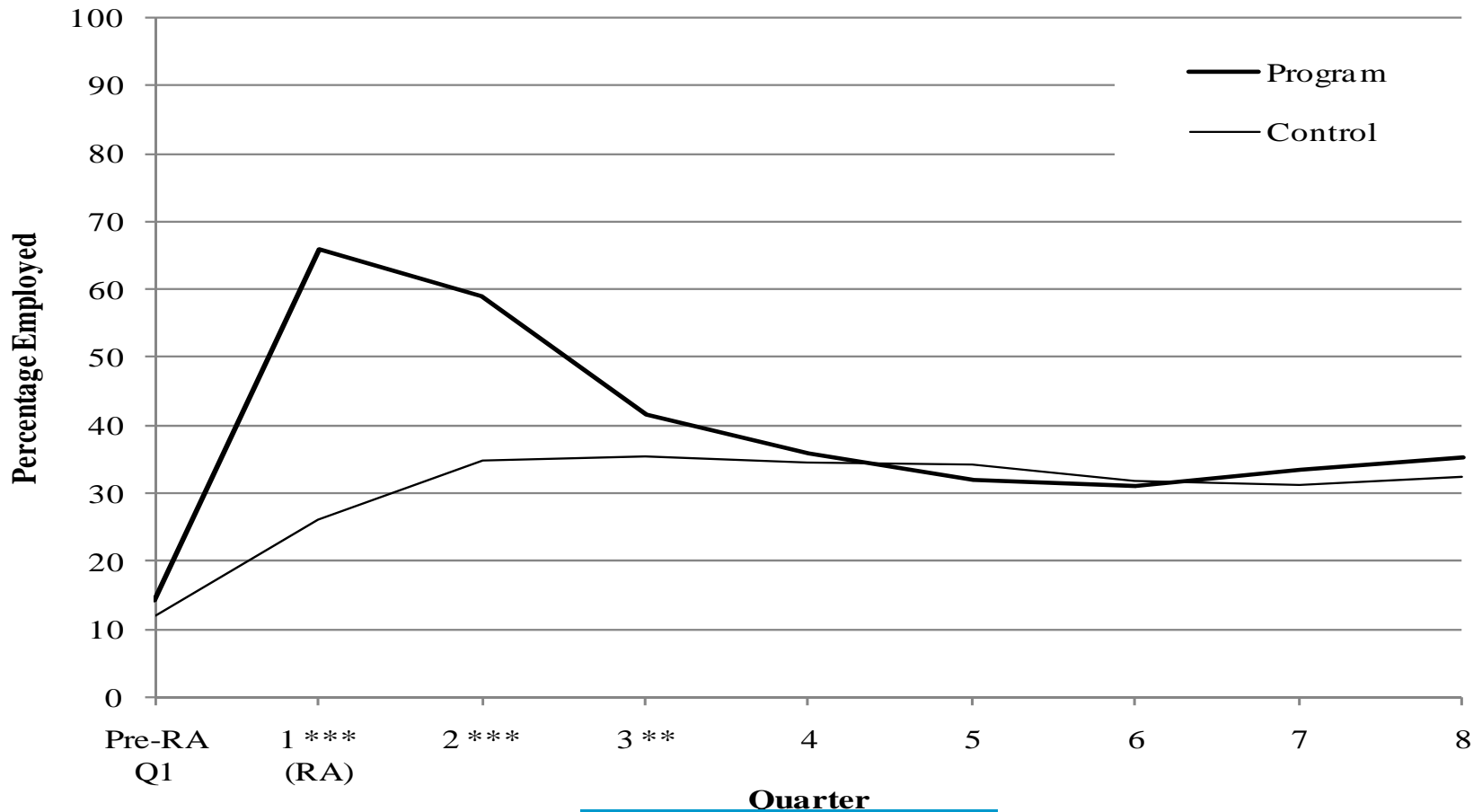
Impacts on Employment and Recidivism: Background

- Currently have 2 years of follow-up (3 planned)
- CEO TJs are included in UI data.
- Statistical significance levels: *=10% **=5% ***=1%
- In addition to full sample, two groups are studied:
 - Recently released ex-prisoners: enrolled within 3 months after release (n=377; P=222, C=155)
 - Not recently released ex-prisoners: enrolled more than 3 months after release (n=551; P=314, C=237)

Summary of Impacts

- Large but short-lived increase in employment; driven by TJs.
- Decreases in several measures of recidivism in Year 1 and Year 2.
- In Year 1, decreases in recidivism only for recently-released sample members; in Year 2, CEO also reduced recidivism for those not recently released.

Percent employed in UI-covered jobs



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Two-year impacts on recidivism

Outcome (%)	Program group	Control group	Difference
Arrested	37.3	41.8	-4.1
Convicted of a crime	30.5	38.3	-7.7**
Convicted of a violent crime	4.4	5.8	-1.5
Incarcerated in jail or prison	49.5	55.4	-5.9*
Incarcerated in prison	25.3	27.2	-2.4
Incarcerated in prison for new crime	4.2	6.8	-2.6*

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Selected recidivism Impacts by year

Outcome (%)		Program Group	Control Group	Difference
Arrested:	Year 1	21.7	22.9	-1.3
	Year 2	22.8	27.5	-4.6*
Convicted of a crime:	Year 1	15.5	17.3	-1.8
	Year 2	20.2	26.3	-6.1**
Convicted of a felony:	Year 1	1.4	3.1	-1.7*
	Year 2	5.2	4.5	0.7
Incarcerated in prison, new crime: Year 1		0.8	3.0	-2.2**
	Year 2	3.4	3.8	-0.4

Recidivism: Subgroup Findings

- *Recently released* group:
 - Year 1: Significant decreases in felony convictions and incarceration in state prison.
 - Year 2: Mixed: Decrease in violent crime convictions, increase in felony convictions, no impacts on incarceration.
- *Not recently released* group:
 - Year 1: No significant impacts on recidivism measures.
 - Year 2: Decreases in felony convictions, incarceration in prison for new crimes.

Coming Attractions

- Report in early 2009, including results presented here, plus additional data (e.g., job characteristics, child support, program costs).
- Report in 2010 with three years of follow-up.
- The Joyce Foundation has developed another 5-site RA evaluation of TJ programs in Midwest; results in 2010.