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The Impact of Reentry Services on Juvenile Offenders' Recidivism

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Despite recent decline in juvenile crime, the formal processing and incarceration of juveniles has increased. Many incarcerated juveniles return to their communities with serious risk and need areas unaddressed, complicating their chances for successful reentry. Juvenile aftercare and/or reentry programs have emerged to address these youths' unique needs and the risk they pose to public safety. This study examined preliminary process and outcome indicators of a unique juvenile offender reentry program, including a strong mentoring component, compared to similar youth not receiving reentry services. The authors examined service delivery, as well as intermediate outcome measures and short-term recidivism outcomes, including time to first new offense and number of new official contacts within 6 months of release. Findings demonstrate that the program was delivered as intended, successfully created intermediate change in participants, and was modestly effective in reducing recidivism likelihood and increasing time to recidivism.

Keywords: *juvenile offenders; offender reentry; program evaluation; recidivism*

In recognition of the impact that chronic juvenile offenders have on the juvenile justice system (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999), and the significant impact of the release of serious and violent offenders on public safety, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and other federal agencies have begun funding program development and evaluation efforts to increase public safety by addressing reintegration issues related to juvenile offender reentry. Current aftercare or reintegration models call for the combination of approaches including surveillance (or "community restraint") and services (or "intervention"; Gies, 2003). Community restraint elements include the control of offenders through probation or parole contacts, urine testing, electronic monitoring, and other means to ensure public safety, whereas interventions include employment, cognitive-behavioral treatments (CBT), academic, and other services aimed at changing individual behavior.

Although juvenile offender aftercare programs began to receive attention in the early 1990s, increased interest in recent years has led to the development of two primary aftercare or reentry models, along with multisite demonstration projects which attempt to determine

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best practices in juvenile offender placement and reintegration. The two primary forms of juvenile aftercare/reentry programs include the “Intensive Aftercare Program” (IAP; Altschuler & Armstrong, 1994) with demonstration programs in three states and the “Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative” (SVORI) which includes both juvenile and adult offender reintegration programs with 37 programs specifically targeting juvenile offenders (Winterfield & Brumbaugh, 2005). Detailed explanations of the philosophy and components of each of these two types of aftercare are available elsewhere (e.g., Altschuler & Armstrong, 1999; Winterfield & Brumbaugh, 2005); however, both models share common characteristics, including a three-phase program design, needs assessment, and coordinated case management.

Specifically, each model calls for the coordination of case management and rehabilitative/reintegrative services over (a) an institutional or prerelease planning and services phase, (b) a reentry preparation or short term postrelease phase, and (c) a community-based services phase after release from placement. Client assessment allows for the development of individualized case plans and the identification of services both during placement and in the community to address the unique needs of the offender. Coordinated case management is an attempt to ensure continuity in services, improved matching of placement services to real-world problems faced by the offender, and to ensure that treatment services during placement are followed by aftercare in the community (Altschuler & Armstrong, 1999). By identifying and addressing the needs of the offender and improving support networks on return to the community, both models attempt to effect short- and long-term changes in offenders to improve public safety.

Research on Juvenile Reentry

Although there is some general agreement that “community restraint” alone is largely ineffective at reducing recidivism in intensive supervision probation/parole, there are indications that supervision combined with increased treatment services can reduce recidivism (Petersilia & Turner, 1993). At the same time, evidence is mixed regarding the effectiveness of intensive supervision combined with services as an aftercare strategy. Although most studies have found no difference in prevalence of reoffending between treatment and comparison groups, a few evaluations found an impact on offending prevalence (Land, McCall, & Williams, 1990), frequency (Sontheimer & Goodstein, 1993) and frequency and seriousness of later offending (Fagan, 1990), especially among program sites with strong implementation.

Although SVORI programs are in their infancy, the IAP demonstration sites in Colorado, Nevada, and Virginia began randomized studies in the late 1990s (Wiebush, Wagner, McNulty, Wang, & Le, 2005). Wiebush and colleagues (2005) examined outcomes for experimental and control groups in the IAP demonstration sites over a 12-month follow-up and found some evidence for improvements in intermediate outcomes (e.g., shorter institutional stays, lower probability of testing positive for illicit substances) but few significant differences in recidivism between treatment and controls using a variety of measures, including offending prevalence, frequency, seriousness, and time to new arrest. In the end, these authors concluded that implementation difficulties, coupled with small sample sizes and little statistical power, precluded definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the IAP model (Wiebush et al., 2005).

More generally, research on juvenile aftercare has been plagued by a predominance of null findings for program effect, as well as small sample sizes, implementation difficulties, and little consistency in program implementation and/or evaluation methodology across studies. In explaining the null findings, researchers have generally pointed to shortcomings in the implementation of treatment/service aspects of the programs. Like the study conducted by Wiebush and his colleagues (2005), the majority of aftercare or ISP studies that examined service delivery components found little to no difference in services received between treatment and control/comparison groups (MacKenzie, 1999), once again supporting the idea that “community restraint” alone is not enough (Gies, 2003). Conversely, many point to the results of several meta-analyses which support the effectiveness of various individual service-related components of aftercare programs as encouraging evidence for juvenile aftercare and conclude that aftercare and reintegration programs hold promise (Gies, 2003). As such, continued research is necessary to tease out community restraint and service components (MacKenzie, 1999) in an attempt to determine what goes on in the “black box” of reentry programming (Petersilia, 2004).

Community-Based Mentoring Services

Although aftercare programs focus primarily on the combination of services and surveillance with an explicit goal of reducing the likelihood of recidivism, community-based mentoring programs generally incorporate broader goals, most commonly the general well-being of participating youth. In general community-based mentoring programs target youth “at risk” for negative life outcomes based on environmental (e.g., high-crime neighborhood) or individual (e.g., poor academic performance) risk factors and match these youth with adults in the community in an attempt to provide a positive role model or support system for the youth to improve social bonding.

Research has generally found positive effects for community-based mentoring programs. For instance, a meta-analysis conducted by DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) that consisted of 55 evaluations of mentoring programs found a mean effect size for mentoring programs of .14 to .18 for the typical juvenile participating in these programs (using a variety of outcome measures). It is important to note that these authors were not able to differentiate effects for juveniles involved with the justice system and those who were not. In fact, whether these kinds of mentoring approaches can be equally effective for those involved in the juvenile justice system (who are typically older and exhibit more individual risk factors) is currently an open question (Snyder, 2004).

Mentoring for Justice System-Involved Youth

Some attempts have been made to incorporate mentoring into juvenile justice interventions, both as a diversionary option (Blechman, Maurice, Buecker, & Helberg, 2000) and in the form of aftercare for juveniles released from detention or correctional facilities (Aftercare for Indiana through Mentoring [AIM], 2004; Barnoski, 2002; Information Technology International, 2003; Jarjoura, 2003). These mentoring programs differ from other community-based

mentoring programs in both structure (e.g., partnerships with official agencies and service providers) and stated goals (e.g., explicit focus on reducing recidivism). Two large-scale mentoring programs aimed at system-involved youth include the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP), a federal initiative that began in 1996 and provides funding for individual projects targeting youth involved with the juvenile justice system (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998), and AIM, a comprehensive aftercare program including life-skills training, service provision, and the establishment of mentoring relationships between youth placed at correctional facilities and college student mentors (Jarjoura, 2003).

Research regarding the impact of mentoring programs for system-involved youth is mixed. A national evaluation of Juvenile Mentoring Program sites found significant reductions in several risk domains (e.g., aggressive behavior/delinquency, peer relationships; Information Technology International, 2003). Although these findings are encouraging, the study itself was plagued by a weak, prepost research design that did not include a comparison group, and risk reductions were not reported for justice system-involved versus other juveniles. Other research examining the impact of mentoring on system-involved youth is less supportive. For example, Barnoski (2002) reported a positive but nonsignificant impact of mentoring as a form of aftercare for institutionalized youth, and Blechman and colleagues (2000) found poorer outcomes for youth receiving diversion and volunteer mentoring services than youth receiving diversion and skills training, or diversion alone.

On the other hand, Jarjoura (2003; AIM, 2004) has found strong evidence of positive outcomes among youth involved in the AIM program using a rigorous experimental design and a 4-year follow-up period. Youth returning to the Indianapolis metropolitan area in 1997 were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (a) life-skills training while in the institution, (b) life-skills training plus mentoring services prerelease and postrelease (i.e., the full AIM program), and (c) no AIM services (control condition). After 4 years of follow-up, only 43% of youth receiving the full AIM program (i.e., life-skills training and mentoring) were reincarcerated, compared to 50% of life-skills-only participants and 62% of controls (AIM, 2004). Additional significant and positive outcomes included lower likelihood of arrest and conviction among AIM youth, as well as fewer new arrests and felony arrests among those youth receiving the full AIM program (Jarjoura, 2003; AIM, 2004).

In summary, although the impact of community-based mentoring on risk factors for delinquency is fairly well established, less is known about the effects of mentoring on delinquency or antisocial behavior (Roberts, Liabo, Lucas, DuBois, & Sheldon, 2004) and the impact of mentoring on justice system-involved youth. Some program evaluations have begun to provide positive results (e.g., AIM, 2004; Barnoski, 2002; Jarjoura, 2003), and there are indications that mentoring services may help improve compliance with community-based interventions for court-involved youth (Gur & Miller, 2004); however, the existing research on this issue is far from conclusive. One important outstanding issue examined in the current study relates to whether paid reentry professionals might be able to also establish the kinds of supportive and caring relationships (bonding) thought to promote change in community-mentoring relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Current Study

This study attempted to address some of the outstanding issues as part of the comprehensive process and preliminary outcome evaluation of an aftercare program for youthful offenders, which included traditional reentry planning activities, as well as mentoring relationships established with paid professionals. Specifically, we compared process elements (e.g., contacts, drug tests) and outcomes (i.e., analyses of time to reoffense and number of later contacts) for a group of youth returning from three or more weeks of out-of-home placement, who received reentry programming in addition to traditional probation/parole services with similar youth returning from three or more weeks of out-of-home placement in a neighboring county, which did not provide reentry services. As such, the current study adds to the literature in that it examines the implementation of an innovative juvenile offender reentry program, as well as its impact on several outcome measures. This study is also important because it begins to explore the implementation and effectiveness of juvenile reentry services as administered in a more rural area, whereas most of the existing research has evaluated juvenile reentry programs operating in larger cities around the country. Finally, this research examines a reentry program with a strong mentoring component incorporating paid adult mentors. As such, this study can add to the sparse literature examining the impact of this type of community-based mentoring on system-involved youth.

Program Description

This study included youth referred to a reentry services program operating in a mostly rural, Midwestern county (population approximately 51,000; the county does include one more urbanized area, a small city of approximately 30,000). The reentry program operates in collaboration with local out-of-home placement facilities and juvenile probation staff and is funded via state-administered federal monies matched by a contribution from a local county collaborative of human service agencies. The program began operation in 2003, and its two full-time staff members (Transitional Coordinators, or "TCs") are each assigned a specific caseload of 10-12 youths (the program serves approximately 50 youths per year). The program targets youth determined to be at risk based on factors such as prior offending/adjustment history, family circumstances that may make transition difficult, and time in out-of-home placement (three or more weeks). Youth are selected for reentry services by juvenile probation agents who attempt to make participation a court-ordered condition of their supervision. After referral, youth are assigned to a TC based on gender (all females are assigned to the female TC) and caseload availability. The reentry program is similar in many ways to the IAP or SVORI models, including three-phase design, offender assessment, individualized case planning, overarching case management components, and, most important, it calls for the integration of supervision and treatment services to reduce later offending among high-risk youth. Specifically, the addition of TCs to the traditional juvenile probation system is intended to allow for the combination of services and support with the community restraint functions of traditional probation.

The first phase (Placement) involves services and reentry planning while the juvenile is still in out-of-home placement. During this phase, the TC is introduced to the youth and attempts to build a relationship through personal visits and telephone calls and is involved with placement treatment plans and staff. In the second phase (Reentry Preparation), TCs are responsible for facilitating the transition to the home community, investigating and arranging community services, providing support during the transition, and developing individualized transitional plans. In the final phase (Community-Based Services), TCs aid clients in accessing services in the community (e.g., establish appointments, provide transportation), provide case management services, and serve in a mentoring capacity. The program is designed to last approximately 6 months following return to the community. Throughout the three phases, youth remain on probation and continue regular contacts with their probation agent.

Although the model is similar to IAP in terms of overall goals, phases, and case planning some differences exist. For example, IAP demonstration sites included youth placed at specific facilities, whereas the aftercare youth in this sample may come from any number of out-of-home placement facilities used by the county. In addition, a specific focus of the program is the attempt for TCs to develop an informal mentoring relationship, in addition to their roles as service brokers (facilitate community networking) and providing various surveillance functions. TCs attempt to meet with clients in a variety of settings including home, school, work, and formal office visits. In addition, TCs attend support group sessions (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous [AA/NA]), coordinate regular outings for groups of clients (e.g., bowling, dinners), and spend one-on-one time with clients in a variety of ways (depending on interests of the client), including school tours, local plays or performances, shopping, or sporting events.

Research Questions

Given that several previous evaluations of juvenile reentry programs have noted shortcomings in program implementation, one of the main goals of the current study was to determine whether enhanced reentry services were delivered as intended. To examine program implementation, and the program's success at achieving intermediate, short-term behavioral changes among participants, a series of process evaluation questions were posed at the outset of this study. These specific questions included examining the types of services delivered by the reentry program and how these compare to traditional probation services, with the expectation that reentry participants would engage in a broader range of services than those on regular probation. In addition, the study examined whether youth participating in reentry services fare better on intermediate outcome measures (e.g., percentage of drug tests that are positive) than do comparison juveniles. Finally, the reentry program's effectiveness was evaluated in terms of several recidivism measures, including an examination of criminal and noncriminal (status) reoffending rates, analysis of the time to reoffending (using survival analyses) and analysis of the number of later official contacts, with those juveniles participating in the reentry program expected to fare better on each these recidivism outcome measures.

Methods

Sample

The sample consisted of 63 youths served by the reentry program since its inception in 2003, as well as a comparison group consisting of 49 youthful offenders returning from out-of-home placement in a neighboring comparison county (these youth received only regular supervised probation). The comparison group was identified by probation staff in this neighboring county using the criteria of three or more weeks of out-of-home placement—a primary criteria for selection into the reentry program.

Census data (not shown) indicate that the two communities from which the samples were drawn are similar in terms of percentages of population under the age of 18, non-White, and median household income. Overall, the county from which the sample of reentry program youth is drawn is larger than the comparison group county, and although the comparison county is more rural, it also contains a small urban area, which accounts for approximately one third of that county's population. The counties are in the same state and under the same regional probation district, and thus procedures for case planning, client supervision, and other probation activities are similar across the two samples. In addition, with a few exceptions (e.g., specific local foster care placements), the two counties use the same out-of-home placement facilities for youthful offenders. Both counties assess youth at regular intervals using the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI), a risk/need and strengths-based prediction instrument used by probation officers to determine the types of services and level of supervision necessary for each youth.

Measures

Information on juveniles in each group was gathered from local juvenile court databases, paper probation and TC files, and electronic records of client contacts. This section describes various demographic, offense and placement history, service indicators, intermediate outcomes, and official recidivism measures utilized in the study.

Demographic and History Indicators

Available demographic indicators included the age of youth at return to the community, race/ethnicity, gender, and hometown (categorized as rural or urban). Information on official criminal justice system contacts occurring before and after release from placement was retrieved, including date, level (e.g., status offense, misdemeanor, or felony), and type (e.g., status, property, or persons) of the offense. Several offending and placement history variables were created, including dichotomous (Any Prior Official Contact) and continuous (Total Prior Official Contacts) variables indicating extent of offending history, variables representing seriousness of prior behavior overall (Any Prior Persons Charge) and youths' most recent charge (Most Serious Behavior of Recent Charge), and type of placement.

YLS/CMI assessments were completed by probation officers or out-of-home placement staff (or TCs in the case of reentry services) for youth in both groups. The overall score

represents risk factors in several domains, including prior offending history, family and parenting, education and employment, peer relations, substance abuse, leisure and recreation, personality and behavior, and attitudes and orientation, with higher values representing greater risk/need. Because the timing of this assessment varied across individuals, the YLS/CMI risk/need score that was nearest in time to release to the community (for reentry services youth this occurs within about one month) was used to compare overall risk levels of youth in the two groups.

Service Delivery Indicators

The reentry program attempted to improve the transition from out-of-home placement by providing TCs to increase access to services in the community, increase monitoring and supervision, and provide supportive mentoring relationships and prosocial activities for youth. As such, service delivery components such as contacts with youth, activities, and referrals/services are appropriate targets for service delivery analysis. Detailed information was available regarding the amount of contact between probation officers and youth, their parents, and agency partners for both groups; however, details regarding referrals/services were available only for reentry services youth. In addition, because TCs were only engaged with reentry services youth, details of TC-youth activities were only available for the reentry services group.

Probation officers in both counties had regular contact with the youth they supervised, as well as with parents, and with other agency partners (e.g., social services staff, school personnel). The reentry services program was an attempt to increase the amount of contact with these groups, as TCs working with the reentry services program had contacts with youth, parents, and agency partners on behalf of the youth participating in the program. As such, the appropriate analysis of increased level of contact would compare contact levels of probation officers only (for the comparison group) with total contact levels (both probation officers and TCs for those in the reentry services group). Contacts between probation officers and clients, their parents, and agency partners were recorded for each youth in both the treatment and comparison groups. Contacts between TCs and clients, their parents and agency partners were recorded for the treatment group, thus “Total Contacts” reflects both probation officer and TC contacts for the treatment group but only probation officer contacts for the comparison group. Contacts were recorded for each youth and variables were created to represent average contact levels per youth for each group (reentry services or comparison). Contact levels are reported per week-on-probation during the follow-up period to control for uneven follow-up times and differences in time on probation.

TCs maintained records of in-person contacts with youth, including amount of time spent and basic information on the type of contact (e.g., school visit, outing for dinner). These records were coded in an attempt to determine the distribution of supervision, treatment, and mentoring activities; however, this analysis is somewhat subjective due to limitations in record keeping.¹ Program data were limited to type of contact, and therefore a conservative approach was taken to determine the distribution of supervision, treatment, and mentoring activities. Specifically, all school, office, and home visits were treated as “supervisory” activities. Treatment activities were somewhat easier to code in a consistent manner, and this category includes all therapeutic activities, which TCs and clients engaged

in together (e.g., accompanying the juvenile on doctor visits, AA/NA groups, Restorative Justice Conferences). Finally, mentoring activities include prosocial leisure outings like bowling, movies, shopping, and dinner; and outings with clients involved life-skills (e.g., obtain ID, drivers license testing) and educational/occupational pursuits (e.g., touring college or technical school, job searching). Overall, the decision to consider all school, office, home, and field visits supervisory likely underestimates the amount of mentoring (and overestimates supervision) actually occurring, because these visits may also be mentoring related. Finally, both electronic and paper reentry services files contained information on referrals for services and the outcome of those referrals (e.g., whether the juvenile participated in that service or not). Referrals were divided into three broad service types: (a) Education/Occupational, (b) Treatment, and (c) Prosocial Activity/Life Skills. "Education/Occupational" services included referrals to schools (e.g., alternative school, high school, trade or technical school, secondary education) and employment-related referrals (e.g., Job Service, JobCorp, summer youth programs). Treatment-related services included referrals to substance abuse, mental health, counseling services, Restorative Justice, and Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment programs. Prosocial Activity/Life-Skills services included programming such as housing assistance, youthful parenting programs, cultural centers and support groups, and prosocial leisure activities (e.g., community arts programs or classes).

Intermediate Outcome Indicators

Electronic and paper probation (and reentry services) files were reviewed for urinalysis tests and results. In addition, follow-up YLS/CMI scores (approximately 6 months post release) were recorded for both groups, where available. Urinalysis testing activities (e.g., percentage of youth tested, number of tests administered) are generally considered program outputs (i.e., program products) and not participant outcomes (i.e., individual achievements). Unfortunately, this data set did not allow for examination of urinalysis outputs (e.g., number of tests delivered by reentry services staff) because paper and electronic files included the number of tests administered and their results, but detailed information on who administered the urinalysis tests was not available. Although it seems reasonable to assume that the addition of TCs would increase the frequency of urinalysis testing (as TCs are charged with this duty), differences in testing frequency cannot be attributed to reentry services alone, because probation officers supervising the two groups of youth may differ in testing practices. Thus, the outcome of interest was the percentage of tests administered that were positive or indicated drug use activity by the youth. Probation officers and TCs assessed youth in the reentry program at regular intervals using the YLS/CMI. YLS/CMI reassessment scores were coded for both reentry services and comparison clients, where available.²

Short-Term Outcome Indicators

Short-term outcomes (i.e., within first 6 months after release) included the prevalence of new official contact (as recorded in court database; Yes/No), number of new official contacts, prevalence of new official contacts for criminal offenses (Yes/No), and total number of new official contacts for criminal offenses. Criminal contacts include a subset of official contacts, which exclude traffic, alcohol/tobacco, and status-related offenses. In addition, the amount of

time that the juvenile spent in restrictive out-of-home placement during the first 6 months after returning to the community was examined. This measure accounts for time during the 6-month follow-up that the juvenile was not free in the community, at risk of reoffending.

Unfortunately, some of the client information available for youth receiving reentry services was not readily available for the comparison group of regular juvenile probationers. For example, in the comparison county, probation agency paper files rarely included case plans with the same level of detail as was used in the treatment county, preventing comparisons of the delivery of some program elements. Where adequate information was available comparisons of intermediate outcomes (e.g., drug testing, client contacts) between the groups were made; however, the comparison group computer and paper files generally included too little information related to services received, case planning, and follow-up YLS/CMI scores to allow for comparisons of these program elements. On the other hand, an examination of differences between reentry and comparison group clients was possible for all recidivism outcomes.

Overall Sample Characteristics

Table 1 provides demographic, offense history, and follow-up information on the total sample of 112 juvenile offenders included in the evaluation, as well as for the reentry services and comparison groups separately. The average age of youth in the sample was 16.5 years on return to the community. In all, 72% of the sample was male, and most (57.1%) came from the small urban areas in their respective counties. Forty-one percent of the sample was White, and the most common minority groups (not presented in tabular form) were Native American (42.9%) and Hispanic (13.4%). Forty-two percent of these youths' current offenses (i.e., most recent contact prior to placement) involved a property-related offense (e.g., theft, vandalism), 23% a persons-related offenses (e.g., assault, threats, sexual conduct), and 35% involved "other" types of offenses (e.g., underage alcohol or tobacco-related offenses, traffic offenses, disorderly conduct, or low-level drug offenses, such as marijuana possession).³

The juveniles examined in this sample tend to have a significant offending history, as evidenced by numerous prior official court contacts. Ninety percent have experienced at least one prior officially recorded court contact, and the average number of prior official contacts for the sample was 5.59. In total, 56% of the sample have a history of persons-related offending (at least one officially recorded contact for a persons-related offense), and the average YLS/CMI risk score at the time of return to the community was 21.89 (i.e., "medium" risk). These youth were returning to their home communities from a variety of different placement settings, including foster care or residential treatment (35.7%), chemical dependency or mental health treatment facilities (32.1%), and detention centers (32.1%). Finally, 6-month follow-up data were available for all youth.

Although the treatment (reentry services) and comparison group are similar in many respects, some statistically significant differences exist between the two samples (two-tailed significance reported for group comparisons). In particular, juveniles referred to the reentry services program were significantly more likely to come from the small urban area in their county (68.3%) than youths from the comparison county (42.9%; $\chi^2[1, N = 112] = 7.26, p = .007$).

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

	Total Sample (<i>N</i> = 112)	Reentry Services (<i>N</i> = 63)	Traditional Probation (<i>N</i> = 49)
Age at release—Mean (<i>SD</i>)	16.50 (1.39)	16.32 (1.42)	16.75 (1.32)
Race/ethnicity			
% White	41.1	44.4	36.7
% Non-White	58.9	55.6	63.3
Gender			
% Male	72.3	71.4	73.5
Hometown***			
% Urban	57.1	68.3	42.9
Most serious behavior of recent charge*			
Other (%)	34.8	28.6	42.9
Property (%)	42.0	41.3	42.9
Persons (%)	23.2	30.2	14.3
Most recent placement			
Foster/residential (%)	35.7	38.1	32.7
CD/MH treatment (%)	32.1	28.6	36.7
Detention (%)	32.1	33.3	30.6
Any prior official contact* (%)	90.2	85.7	95.9
Total prior official contacts [†] —Mean (<i>SD</i>)	5.59 (3.37)	4.40 (2.62)	7.12 (3.63)
Any prior persons charge (%)	56.3	57.1	55.1
YLS/CMI Overall risk score—Mean (<i>SD</i>) ^a	21.89 (6.95)	21.56 (7.59)	22.5 (5.67)
Follow-up through 6 months (%)	100	100	100

a. Total sample size 94 (61 reentry services, 34 probation).

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. [†] $p < .000$.

The comparison group includes youth with a more extensive offending history, both in terms of having any prior offense (95.9% of comparison youth, 85.7% of reentry youth; $\chi^2[1, N = 112] = 3.24, p = .07$) and number of prior official contacts (average 7.12 for comparison group, 4.40 for reentry services youth; $F = 21.28, df = 1, 110, p = .000$). Finally, a marginally significant difference exists between the groups in terms of most recent offense behavior. Youth in the reentry services group were more likely to have experienced a persons-related offense, whereas those in the comparison group experienced more “other” charges ($\chi^2[2, N = 112] = 4.62, p = .09$). The two groups were not significantly different in terms of age at release from placement, race/ethnicity (percentage non-White), gender, most recent placement type, history of person-related offending (defined as having any prior persons-related charge), or YLS/CMI Risk Score.

Results

Implementation difficulties in previous research point to the importance of examining service delivery and intermediate outcomes, in addition to recidivism. Differences between

the comparison group (probation services only) and reentry services group (probation and reentry services) on these service delivery indicators can provide a description of the additional supervision and/or services provided by the reentry program. In addition, several intermediate outcome measures (of “improved transition”) were available, including measures of adjustment (i.e., urinalysis results and changes in YLS/CMI risk/need scores) and short-term recidivism outcomes. Differences between the comparison group (probation only) and reentry services group (who received probation and enhanced reentry services) on these outcomes can provide indicators of the short-term impact of additional reentry services.

A series of bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted to address the questions of interest—whether services and outcomes differed for youth involved in reentry programming compared to those released from out-of-home placement without additional reentry services (probation only). Bivariate analysis of several service delivery indicators are presented first, followed by bivariate analysis of intermediate outcomes (urinalysis results and YLS/CMI scores). Finally, bivariate and multivariate analyses assessing the impact of reentry services on time to new charge and number of new charges controlling for relevant differences between groups are presented.

Services Delivered

Table 2 provides a between-group analysis of contact with youth, their parents, and agency partners, and descriptive statistics for the treatment group (reentry services), including length of program, activity participation, and service referral.

Probation officers serving both the reentry services and comparison youth had similar levels of contact with youth, parents, and agency partners (see Table 2). Although probation officers in the reentry services group recorded slightly more contacts per week on probation with youth and parents than probation agents in the comparison group (.30 vs. .27 for youth; .20 vs. .19 for per youth parents), these differences are not statistically significant. The two groups had very similar levels of contact between probation officers and agency partners (both averaged .43 contacts with agency partners per youth per week). It appears that the base level of contact delivered by probation officers did not differ for youth in the reentry services and comparison groups.

“Total contacts” with the youth, their parents, and agency partners include probation officer and TC contacts for the reentry services youth but only probation officer contacts for the comparison group. Youth in the reentry services group experienced significantly more total contacts per week on probation (1.05) than comparison group youth (.27; $t = -6.08$, $df = 66.09$, $p = .000$). Total contacts with parents (.44 vs. .19 per youth; $t = -5.24$, $df = 99.42$, $p = .000$) and agency partners (.71 vs. .43 per youth; $t = -2.34$, $df = 87.75$, $p = .02$) were also significantly higher for the reentry services group. The additional contacts provided by TCs represent a 292% increase in contacts with the youth, a 137% increase in contacts with parents, and a 65% increase in agency partner contacts (see Table 2) relative to probation only.

Detailed information on TC-youth activities and referrals/services for youth in the reentry services group is also provided in Table 2. Youth served by the reentry services program

Table 2
Service Delivery

	Traditional Probation (<i>N</i> = 49)	Reentry Services (<i>N</i> = 63)	Percentage Difference	
PO—Youth contacts per week on probation	.27 (.15)	.30 (.19)	12.08	
PO—Parent contacts per week on probation	.19 (.17)	.20 (.21)	6.64	
PO—Agency partner contacts per week on probation	.43 (.34)	.43 (.56)	1.03	
Total youth contacts per week on probation ^{a,†}	.27 (.15)	1.05 (1.00)	291.69	
Total parent contacts per week on probation***	.19 (.17)	.44 (.32)	136.99	
Total agency partner contacts per week on probation**	.43 (.34)	.71 (.84)	64.54	
			Reentry Services (<i>N</i> = 63) Mean	
Time in program (months)			7.18	
TC-Youth time spent together (hours)			45.78	
TC-Youth activities	Mean		Percentage of Activities	
Total activities	41.68			
Supervisory activities	18.75		44.97	
Treatment-related activities	4.12		10.36	
Mentoring activities	18.62		44.67	
Youth referrals/Services	Percentage Referred	Referrals (Mean) ^b	Complete (Mean) ^b	Percentage Complete ^c
Education/vocational	68.3	2.26	1.23	54.42
Treatment	93.7	3.31	1.88	56.80
Prosocial activity/life-skills related	44.40	1.89	1.04	55.03

Note: PO and total contacts are Mean (*SD*).

a. Includes 42 comparison youth for whom information was available.

b. Among youth receiving at least one referral of type.

c. Percentage of referrals considered complete or ongoing.

p* < .10. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01. †*p* < .000.

spent an average of 7.18 months in the program and approximately 46 hours in face-to-face contact with TCs (see Table 2). On average, 41.68 activities were recorded for each youth, most of which were supervision or mentoring related. TCs recorded an average of 18.75 supervisory activities, 4.12 therapeutic activities and 18.62 mentoring activities per youth. Overall the distribution of TC-youth activity appears to be a nearly even split between the two categories of supervision (44.97% of activities) and mentoring (44.67% of activities).

In the reentry program, 68% of youth received at least one referral to an education/occupational service, 94% were referred to some type of “treatment” service, and 44% were referred to a prosocial activity/life-skills service in the community (Table 2). Many youth were referred to multiple services of each type. For example, among youth referred to education/occupational services, the average number of education/occupational referrals

was 2.26, and the average number of services considered complete or ongoing at the time of program (reentry services) completion was 1.23 (or 54.42% of education/occupational referrals). Similarly, among youth referred to treatment-related services, the average number of referrals was 3.31, of which 56.8% (average 1.88) were considered complete or ongoing. The average number of prosocial activity/life-skills referrals was 1.89, 55.03% of which were considered complete or ongoing (average 1.04 per youth) at the time of reentry services completion.

Overall, results presented thus far regarding program implementation reveal that the RSP was successful in delivering a significantly higher number of staff (TCs and probation officers) contacts with juveniles than with those on regular probation. In addition, juveniles participating in the RSP spent a considerable amount of time with their TC engaged in both supervisory and mentoring type activities. Finally, the RSP staff members were successful in providing referrals for education/occupational and treatment-related services, with more than half of the referred services either complete or ongoing at the time the juveniles complete the reentry program.

Intermediate Outcomes

This section includes detailed information on two intermediate outcome measures—percentage of urinalysis tests that were positive during the first 6 months following release and change in YLS/CMI risk/need score from release to 6 months post release. Urinalysis output information (e.g., number of tests administered) is provided in this section only to aid in interpretation of the urinalysis outcome analysis (percentage of tests that were positive).

A significantly higher percentage of urinalysis tests administered to juveniles in the comparison group indicated drug use (62.17% positive) than those administered to reentry services youth (34.27% positive; $F = .1071$, $df = 1, 60$, $p = .03$; see Table 3). The lower rate of positive tests observed in the reentry services group does not appear to be because of more selective testing of youth in the program (i.e., creaming subjects for testing), as a significantly greater proportion of reentry services youth were subjected to tests (74.1%) than comparison youth (30.6%; $\chi^2[1, N = 112] = 21.58$, $p = .000$). In addition, tested youth in the reentry group completed an average of 3.13 urinalysis tests, significantly higher than the frequency of tested youth in the comparison group (average 1.53 tests in the first 6 months following release).

YLS/CMI risk/need score changes for reentry youth are also provided in Table 3. The average risk/needs score declined 17.3% from release to the community (Pre-Reentry Services) to 6 months post release (Post-Reentry Services; see Table 3). This analysis is limited to reentry services youth, and its result is promising but only suggestive of the program's impact. The YLS/CMI is intended to identify youth at risk for future problem behaviors, and thus reductions in risk/need scores may indicate real changes in youth that will translate into better short- and long-term outcomes. At the same time, it is possible that these youth would have experienced changes with or without receiving reentry services, and in the absence of adequate comparison data, this possibility cannot be adequately examined in the current study.

Table 3
Intermediate Outcomes

	Traditional Probation (<i>N</i> = 49)	Reentry Services (<i>N</i> = 63)	Percentage Difference
Urinalysis within 6 months of release			
Percentage of tests that are positive ^{a,**}	62.17	34.27	-44.88
Percentage tested [†]	30.6	74.06	142.03
Number of tests ^{a,†} —Mean (<i>SD</i>)	1.53 (1.06)	3.13 (2.11)	104.58
Number of positive tests ^a —Mean (<i>SD</i>)	.87 (.99)	1.11 (1.45)	27.59
	Reentry Services Pre (<i>N</i> = 61)	Reentry Services Post (<i>N</i> = 46)	Percentage Change
YLS/CMI risk/need score—Mean (<i>SD</i>)	21.56 (7.48)	17.83 (10.36)	-17.30

a. Among 15 comparison and 47 reentry services clients receiving at least one drug test in the first 6 months following release.

p* < .10. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01. †*p* < .000.

Thus far, results indicate that the reentry services program provided increased levels of contact with youth, their parents, and agency partners. Youth in the reentry services program also appear to have spent a substantial amount of time engaged with their TCs in supervisory and mentoring activities and received and participated in a variety of referrals to community-based services. In addition, it appears that youth in the reentry services group were less likely to test positive for drugs when urinalysis tests are administered, even though more of these youth were tested, and they were tested more frequently than comparison youth. It was not possible to determine whether the increased testing frequency is attributable to the presence of TCs (because data on who administered the tests were not maintained in the records). However, data on probation officer contacts suggest that the probation officers supervising reentry and comparison sample juveniles had similar numbers of contacts with youth in each sample. Given that probation officers appear not to have differed in their supervision of the juveniles in the two samples, it may well be that the additional testing frequency was because of the presence of the TCs. In addition, comparison of pre- (at release to the community) and post- (after program completion) YLS/CMI scores indicate positive changes in risk/need scores coinciding with time spent in the reentry services program, suggesting that these youth may experience fewer problem behaviors in the future. The next section examines short-term recidivism for youth in the reentry services and comparison groups, measured by official court contacts.

Short-Term Recidivism

This section includes bivariate and multivariate analyses assessing the impact of reentry services on time to new charge and number of new charges. Results are generally presented at the two-tailed significance level; however, because participation in the reentry program

Table 4
Sample Outcomes—6 Months Post Release

	Total Sample (<i>N</i> = 112)	Reentry Services (<i>n</i> = 63)	Traditional Probation (<i>n</i> = 49)	Test Statistic	One-Tailed <i>p</i> Value
Any recidivism					
Has new court contact	42.0%	36.5%	49.0%	$\chi^2 = 1.76$.10
Number of court contacts—Mean (<i>SD</i>)	.69 (1.06)	.48 (.76)	.96 (1.31)	$t = 2.30$.01
Criminal recidivism ^a					
Has new criminal contact	34.8%	28.6%	42.9%	$\chi^2 = 2.48$.06
Number of criminal contacts—Mean (<i>SD</i>)	.46 (.82)	.35 (.63)	.61 (1.0)	$t = 1.71$.05
Time restrictive placement (days)—Mean (<i>SD</i>)	23.86 (38.36)	23.46 (37.07)	24.37 (40.33)	$t = .12$.45

a. Excludes status and traffic offenses.

was hypothesized to have a negative effect on recidivism, the relationship between group membership (i.e., reentry services or traditional probation), and outcomes are reported at the one-tailed significance level in both bivariate and multivariate analyses.

Bivariate Analyses

Bivariate analyses examining outcomes for the entire sample ($N = 112$) and subsamples of youth receiving reentry services ($n = 63$) and traditional probation ($n = 49$) after release from out-of-home placement are presented in Table 4. Outcome measures were restricted to the first 6 months after release, a period of time for which data on the full sample of 112 juveniles were available.

Within 6 months of release from out-of-home placement, 42% of the total sample had experienced a new officially recorded contact, and the average number of contacts within that period was .69. Overall, 34.8% of the total sample experienced a new official contact for a criminal offense within the first 6 months of release, with an average number of the criminal contacts of .46 (Table 4). Finally, youth spent an average of nearly 24 days in new restrictive placements during this time period.

Several statistically significant differences in outcomes exist between the groups at the bivariate level (all reentry services effects tested with one-tailed p value). Approximately 37% of reentry services youth experienced a new official contact within 6 months of release, marginally less than the 49% among youth in the probation only group ($\chi^2[1, N = 112 = 1.76, p = .10, \text{one-tailed}]$). Reentry youth also experienced fewer new official contacts during the first 6 months after release (mean .48 vs. .96 for comparison youth), and this difference was statistically significant ($t = 2.30, df = 72.64, p = .01, \text{one-tailed}$). Results were similar for new criminal contacts. Reentry services youth were marginally less likely to experience a new criminal contact (28.6% vs. 42.9%; $\chi^2[1, N = 112 = 2.58, p = .06,$

one-tailed]) and experienced significantly fewer new criminal contacts during the initial 6 months following release (.35) than the youth in the probation only group (.61; $t = 1.71$, $df = 110$, $p = .05$, one-tailed).

Multivariate Analyses

Although bivariate statistics indicated that juveniles in the reentry program experienced better outcomes than those in the comparison sample, the two groups also exhibited significant initial differences on several variables, which can be expected to relate to the individual's propensity for reoffense (e.g., offense history). As such, the following series of multivariate analyses attempted to determine whether recidivism differences maintain when controlling for these other factors (i.e., demographic characteristics and offense history; refer Table 1). The type of regression was dictated by the nature of the dependent variable, with survival analysis (Cox regression) employed to predict time to first reoffense and Poisson regression (e.g., count models) employed for the number of new official contacts. Both analyses include controls for age at release to the community, race (dichotomized as White = "0," non-White = "1"), gender (Male = "1"), residence in the small urban area of the county (yes = "1"), number of prior official contacts, and seriousness of prior offending history (a dichotomous variable representing whether the individual has a history of persons-related offending; yes = "1").

Survival Six Months Post Referral

The results of the Cox regression analysis predicting time to first reoffense are provided in Table 5. The first column of Table 5 lists the predictor variables, with the results of each regression analysis (any reoffense and criminal reoffense) provided in the remaining columns. Survival analysis allows for the censored nature of reoffending data, controlling for the fact that not all cases survive to the end of the data-collection period without reoffending. Given this fact, survival analysis is useful because it calculates survival probabilities (likelihood of remaining offense-free) over uneven follow-up periods and allows for a comparison of group survival functions.

Controlling for other factors, youth with prior persons-related offenses remained offense-free significantly longer than youth without a prior persons-related offense. This result appears both in the survival model for time to any reoffense ($p = .02$) and in the model of survival time prior to first criminal reoffense ($p = .01$). None of the other control variables (age at release, race, gender, living in small urban area, or number of prior official contacts) were significant predictors of time to first reoffense or time to first criminal offense. Central to the purpose of this analysis, receipt of reentry services (vs. traditional release to probation) was associated with longer survival time prior to first court contact for any type of offense, but this difference was not statistically significant. Youth involved in reentry services did experience marginally longer survival time prior to their first criminal offense ($p = .08$, one-tailed).

As these results indicate, only prior persons offending was significantly related to survival time—youth with prior persons-related offenses showed significantly longer times to

Table 5
Cox Regression Predicting Survival to 6 Months Post Release ($N = 112$)

	Any Reoffense Within 6 Months			Criminal Reoffense Within 6 Months		
	B (SE)	Wald χ^2	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Wald χ^2	Exp(B)
Age	-.14 (.11)	1.49	.87	-.18 (.12)	2.20	.84
Non-White	.53 (.33)	2.67	1.70	.40 (.35)	1.29	1.49
Male	.50 (.36)	1.92	1.64	.52 (.41)	1.64	1.69
Urban	-.04 (.32)	.02	.96	-.20 (.35)	.34	.82
Number of prior court contacts	.03 (.05)	.30	1.03	-.02 (.06)	.12	.98
Prior persons	-.70 (.30)	5.25**	.50	-.84 (.33)	6.31**	.43
RSP ^a	-.33 (.34)	.94	.72	-.54 (.38)	2.07*	.58
	-2LL = 409.22 $\chi^2(7, N = 112) = 11.54, p = .12$			-2LL = 339.62 $\chi^2(7, N = 112) = 13.60, p = .06$		

a. Reentry Services effects tested with one-tailed significance.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. † $p < .000$.

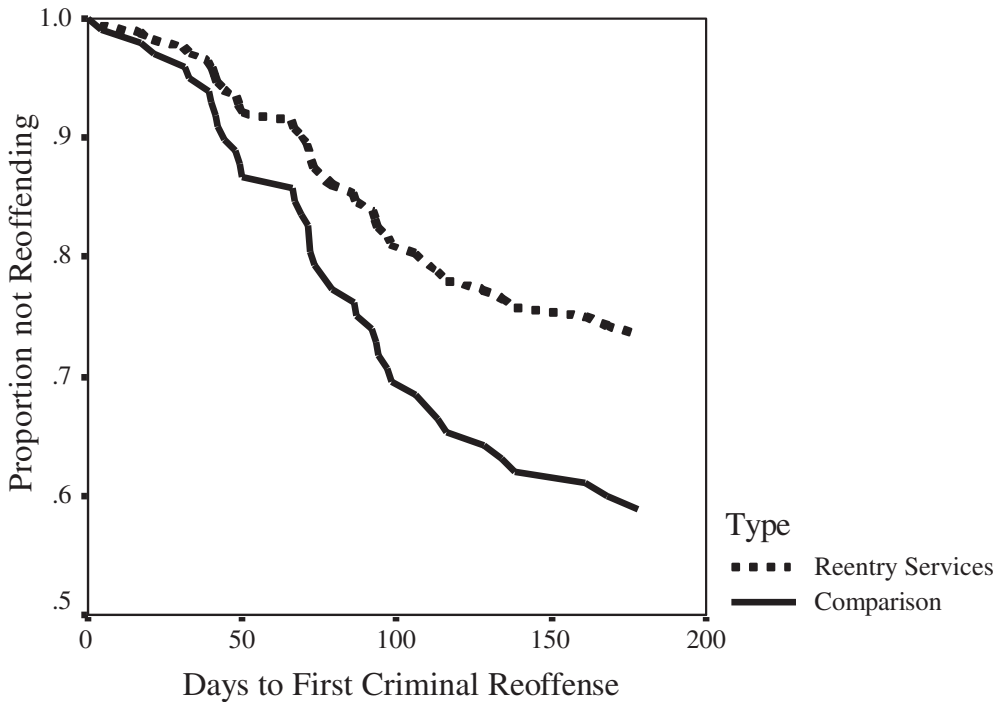
reoffense than did youth without these characteristics; however there was a marginally significant impact of reentry services receipt on time to a new criminal offense. This possible reentry effect is depicted graphically in Figure 1, with the “survival curve” for the reentry services group represented by the dotted line. As the curves in Figure 1 demonstrate, juveniles served by the reentry program reoffend at a slower rate (i.e., survive longer) than do those released to probation only, controlling again for initial group differences.

Number of Later Contacts

Results of the overdispersed Poisson regression analyses predicting the number of court contacts postreferral are presented in Table 6. Results predicting number of new court contacts and number of new criminal contacts are presented in a manner similar to those presented in Table 5 (reentry services impacts are again presented at the one-tailed significance level). The dependent variable in this analysis was the number of new contacts per week at risk (within the first 6 months of release), with time “at risk” defined as time during the 6-month follow-up period that the juvenile was free in the community and not in a restrictive out-of-home placement.

Results reveal that living in a small urban area was marginally related to a smaller number of new official contacts ($p = .09$) and number of criminal contacts ($p = .08$) per week at risk, indicating that youth in the smaller urban areas experienced fewer new official contacts and official contacts for new criminal behavior, controlling for other factors. Youth with a prior person-related offense once again had better outcomes than youth who had no prior person-related offenses. Those with a history of person-related offending experienced significantly fewer official contacts per week at risk in the first 6 months after release ($p = .04$); however

Figure 1
Survival Proportions Up to 6 Months Post Release



this variable was not a significant predictor of the number of criminal contacts per week at risk. Age at release, race, gender, and number of prior contacts were not significantly related to the outcome of interest, controlling for other factors. Receipt of reentry services was significantly related to a smaller number of new official contacts ($p = .02$, one-tailed) and marginally related to number of later “criminal contacts” ($p = .08$, one-tailed) per-week at-risk. Again, note that these smaller numbers of new official contacts and criminal contacts maintained, controlling for several factors related to reoffending propensity.

Discussion

In general, the existing research on reentry/aftercare programming for juvenile offenders provides relatively little information about whether and how such programming may work to reduce recidivism. This is especially the case because several studies have found that these programs often suffer substantial implementation difficulties, a problem which did not seem to plague the program studied here. In addition, very little is known about the implementation and effectiveness of reentry programming in smaller urban or rural areas. The current results suggest that if well implemented, these programs can work in such

Table 6
Count Model Predicting Number Contacts 6 Months
Post Release (Overdispersed Poisson; $N = 112$)

	Court Contacts per Week at Risk		Criminal Contacts per Week at Risk	
	B (SE)	T	B (SE)	T
Intercept	-5.98 (3.26)	-1.84**	-6.65 (5.22)	-1.28
Scale	.52 (.00)	0.00	.70 (.00)	0.00
Age	.24 (.19)	1.29	.32 (.29)	1.08
Non-White	-.08 (.48)	-0.17	-.21 (.76)	-0.28
Male	.97 (.69)	1.40	.92 (1.11)	0.82
Urban	-.82 (.49)	-1.67*	-1.37 (.79)	-1.72*
Number of prior court contacts	-.09 (.08)	-1.18	-.20 (.13)	-1.57
Prior persons offenses	-.98 (.47)	-2.07**	-1.23 (.77)	-1.60
RSP ^a	-1.05 (.51)	-2.08**	-1.10 (.77)	-1.43*
	LL = -74.44		LL = -31.97	

a. Reentry Services effects tested with one-tailed significance.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. † $p < .000$.

areas, although potential difficulties in accessing needed services in more rural areas were noted. Finally, little is known about the effectiveness of mentoring for system-involved youth or reentry programming that combines mentoring by paid professional staff with supervision and service provision. The current study would seem to suggest that such paid professional mentors could in fact be part of a successful reentry services program.

The current study was designed to address several of these shortcomings in the existing literature by comparing a sample of reentry participants to a similar group receiving only traditional probation in a neighboring county. Differences existed in the percentage of each sample residing in small urban area of county and in the extent of each group's average offending history; however, bivariate analysis of background variables generally indicated that these two groups of youth were similar in many respects. Several indicators of program service delivery suggested that the program was successful in increasing contact with the juvenile participants, their parents, and personnel from other agencies, relative to those on traditional juvenile probation. In addition, juveniles involved in the reentry program received a number of referrals to community-based services and participated in or completed a substantial proportion of those referred services. TCs also engaged in a number of mentoring and supervisory activities with these juvenile offenders.

Despite increased testing frequency, juvenile offenders in this program were significantly less likely to test positive for drugs, and reentry participants also appeared to experience improvements in their level of risks and needs as measured by the YLS/CMI. Multivariate statistical analyses controlling for initial group differences generally revealed that reentry participants experienced marginally lower risks of recidivism postreferral and that they tended to survive somewhat longer until their first reoffense. The typical static

correlates of crime (age, race/ethnicity, gender) were not found to significantly affect recidivism risk; however, it is likely that in this sample of relative high-risk juvenile offenders (all of whom spent at least 3 weeks in an out-of-home placement and who are relatively likely to reoffend) these factors are less important in predicting outcome than they might be in a more heterogeneous sample (comprising individuals with more variable probabilities of recidivism).

Although these implementation and outcome results were generally positive, several unanticipated findings also emerged. For instance, those juveniles residing in small urban areas seemed to have better recidivism outcomes as did those who had prior person-related offending. It may be that those individuals living in the more urban parts of these two largely rural counties have better (i.e., more convenient) access to necessary treatment activities. Access to appropriate rehabilitative services is a common issue in rural settings. Future research examining the operation and impact of reentry services outside the more traditional, large urban setting is, therefore, required to examine this (and other) potential barriers to treatment access. On the other hand, although violent offending is generally an indicator of seriousness of offense history, it is also true that violent offending is a rare occurrence even among serious offenders. Better recidivism outcomes found among youth with a history of persons-related offending may be partially explained by the rarity of violent offending in general and among juveniles in particular.

Although this study generally reports positive results regarding the operation and effectiveness of this small juvenile reentry program, it is not without limitations. First, a quasi-experimental design was utilized. Although appropriate multivariate statistical procedures were employed to control for initial group differences, limitations in the data available mean that many likely important control variables (e.g., measures of individual motivation, level of involvement with antisocial peers, level of self control, etc.) were necessarily not included. Second, given the overall size of this program (set in a relatively rural part of the country), the number of cases available for analysis was relatively small, limiting the ability of the study to uncover what might be smaller treatment effects. As such, it is unclear whether several marginally significant improvements in recidivism among reentry participants might actually be significant treatment effects, had more statistical power been employed in the analyses. Third, because the program is comparatively new (as is the focus on offender reentry in general) only very preliminary, short-term outcome data were available (6 months). Finally, despite attempts to fully examine the fidelity with which the program was delivered, limitations in the amount of detailed service delivery data recorded by program staff restricted the extent to which program processes and intermediate outcomes could be examined, especially among the members of the comparison group receiving only traditional probation.

These limitations notwithstanding, the preliminary results presented here do provide reason to speculate that the addition of comprehensive reentry services can improve both intermediate adjustment to the community and success in desisting from crime and delinquency, even for relatively serious juvenile offenders. Key to effective programming may well be the delivery of such services with integrity, meaning that additional services must not only be planned, but available, delivered to and engaged in by participants, as they were in this case. Ongoing program monitoring (e.g., of service referrals and client engagement) is likely needed to ensure that programs deliver the intended services to their participants.

Even more interesting is the finding that this unique reentry services program, including a focus on mentoring activities provided by paid professional staff, appears to contribute to program effectiveness. In line with previous research suggesting that control approaches alone may be inadequate to aid reintegration and reduce recidivism, this combined supervision/intervention model, emphasizing mentoring relationships between the transitional staff and the clients, may prove to be an effective tool for helping similarly situated, serious juvenile offenders. It may be that the one-on-one mentoring aspect of this program provides an additional “active ingredient” beyond the potentially effective combination of supervision and specific treatment services (e.g., drug treatment, educational services). Prosocial bonds created and strengthened through the mentoring process may increase the juvenile’s chances of successful reintegration and desistance.

These hypothesized bonds to the paid mentor may, for instance, increase the participant’s motivation to participate in needed services, so as not to disappoint the mentor. On the other hand, such direct involvement of the mentors may improve service participation simply because the staff often accompany juveniles to their treatment meetings. Whatever the mechanism of action, indirectly through the development of bonds or directly through provision of transportation and accompaniment, the mentoring aspect of this program does seem to yield promising results. Future research on larger scale programs and in more diverse, urban settings is needed to confirm these results; however, at first blush these results suggest a promising, innovative approach to the delivery of reentry services to serious juvenile offenders.

Consistent with at least some of the existing research (Land et al., 1990; Sontheimer & Goodstein, 1993; Fagan, 1990), this study suggests short-term positive outcomes for youth involved in reentry-related services. It is important, however, to continue to examine outcomes over a longer period of time and to examine the relationship between service delivery and outcomes (both intermediate and short- and long-term recidivism) more thoroughly. Future research with this data will examine long-term impacts of reentry-related programming and whether reentry services work similarly for different types of youth. In addition, it is important to understand how specific program components relate to later outcomes. Future research will continue to examine not only the impact of reentry services on juvenile recidivism, but the relationship between program components (e.g., supervision, mentoring) and youth outcomes. Specifically, plans are in place to examine whether specific program components (e.g., frequency of contact, specific service referral) or combinations of services predict better recidivism outcomes. Although much remains to be examined regarding the effectiveness of reentry services, the authors hope that the current results can improve the state of knowledge about whether and how aftercare and mentoring services can reduce recidivism among youthful offenders.

Notes

1. A TC visit to school could be considered “supervisory” in nature if the goal is to check on attendance or progress of the student but would be considered “mentoring” if the visit is related to attending a presentation during which the youth is receiving some sort of award. Unfortunately program data are limited to type of contact, and each of these activities would be recorded by the TC as a school visit. Recognizing this limitation in the data, the current analyses treat all home, school, office, and field (e.g., on the job) visits as supervisory activities.

2. Unfortunately, comparison group files contained few follow-up YLS/CMI assessments (only 10 of 49 youth); thus, analysis of the YLS/CMI risk/need change over time is limited to reentry services youth for whom both assessments were available (46 of 63 reentry youth).

3. Crimes in the "Other" offenses category were grouped as such because they are generally less serious types of offense than the property and violent crimes included in the other two categories. For the most part, this group of offenses included those related to underage use of alcohol and tobacco, public order and traffic offenses, and illegal drug possession.

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