A Multi-Site Process Evaluation of Three Federal Reentry Courts in a Southern District of Federal Probation

Patricia Ann Southerland

University of Southern Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: https://aquila.usm.edu/masters_theses

Recommended Citation
https://aquila.usm.edu/masters_theses/22

This Masters Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact Joshua.Cromwell@usm.edu.
A MULTI-SITE PROCESS EVALUATION OF THREE FEDERAL REENTRY COURTS IN A SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FEDERAL PROBATION

by

Patricia Ann Southerland

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved:

William W. Johnson
Director

Lisa S. Nored

Mary K. Evans

Maureen A. Ryan
Dean of the Graduate School

May 2014
ABSTRACT

A MULTI-SITE PROCESS EVALUATION OF THREE FEDERAL REENTRY COURTS IN A SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FEDERAL PROBATION

by Patricia Ann Southerland

May 2014

Over the years, prison populations have varied extensively. For the first time in over 30 years, national prison populations began to decrease in 2010. While there are a number of factors influencing this trend, part of such decrease has been the result of changing parole practices. In attempts to respond to the growing parole population and reduce recidivism among parolees, the U.S. court system has begun implementing reentry courts. The current study sought to evaluate the implementation well as pro-active application of evidence-based practices among three reentry court program sites. Three federal reentry courts in a southern district of federal probation in a southern state were selected for the purposes of this study.

A total of 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted on graduates of the reentry court programs (n = 13) and contextual stakeholders (n = 9) in the reentry court process. Additionally, a review of each program site materials as well as on-site observations was conducted for data analysis. By comparing and contrasting the perceptions of graduates as well as stakeholders, conducting on-site observations, and reviewing program materials, the current study provided insight into what works in these programs. Particular attention was also given to assessing the effectiveness of such practices as well as challenges faced by both practitioners and policymakers in
implementing what has been deemed an effective evidence-based practice—reentry court.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who helped me throughout the writing of this thesis. First, I would like to thank Dr. Wesley Johnson, whose guidance and support laid the foundation for this project. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time working alongside Dr. Johnson, and I could not have asked for a better mentor. It has been a true honor to have spent time among such a creative and distinguished scholar.

I would also like to thank Dr. Mary K. Evans, whose enthusiastic personality and expertise were undoubtedly instrumental in the completion of my thesis. My time spent working for and getting to know Dr. Evans has truly been a pleasure. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Lisa Nored. I greatly appreciate all the time and effort she dedicated to the finalization of this project. Finally, I would like to personally thank U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services for their ongoing support and dedication throughout my research process.

I would also like to thank all of my fellow graduate students who have undoubtedly been a great influence on me. This journey has truly been an interesting one. I wish you all the best of luck! I would like to send a special thank you to my close friends Esther, Heather, and Amanda. I am truly blessed to have so many special people in my life and will forever be grateful for all the kindness I have been shown.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................. iv

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ........................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
   Statement of the Problem
   Summary

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................. 9
   Setting the Stage: Punishment, Rise of the Prison, and the Emergence of Community Based Corrections
   The Problem: Prisoner Reentry Crisis
   Progression of Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) in the Federal Probation System
   Importance of Evaluation Research and Criminal Justice Policy
   Reentry Court Evaluation Research
   Relevant Theory
   Summary

III. METHODOLOGY ...................................................................................................... 44
   Introduction
   Research Design
   Sample Selection
   Instrumentation and Measures
   Data Collection and Procedures
   Data Analysis
   Limitations
   Summary

IV. FINDINGS .................................................................................................................. 57
   Introduction
   Participant Characteristics
   Research Questions
V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction
Analysis and Discussion
Policy Implications
Limitations
Future Research
Conclusion

APPENDIXES

REFERENCES
LIST OF TABLES

Table
1. Graduate Characteristics .................................................................58
2. Stakeholders Characteristics .............................................................59
3. Characteristics by Program Site .........................................................71
4. Program Completion Components ....................................................72
5. Risk Categories ..............................................................................75
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Model

1. Initial Program Site (RCPS1) ................................................................. 62
2. Program Site Two (RCPS2) ................................................................. 64
3. Program Site Three (RCPS3) ............................................................... 68
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

America’s prison population has fluctuated extensively over the years. As rates of incarceration have increased in past decades, the field of corrections has struggled to meet the magnitude of demands of incarcerated offenders within state and federal correctional facilities (Garland, Wodahl, & Mayfield, 2011; Knollenberg & Martin, 2008). Over the last 30 years, our nation’s prison population has increased dramatically (Pratt, 2009; Visher & Travis, 2003). More recently, a parallel effect has simultaneously occurred due to the increased annual rate of offenders released from prison.

Within our nation’s correctional facilities, substantial amounts of offenders are housed with over half a million of these offenders being released each year (Berger & DaGossa, 2013; Visher & Travis, 2003). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2012), in 2011 there were over six million offenders under correctional supervision in state and federal facilities. Furthermore, one in every 50 adults was supervised in the United States under some form of community corrections (Glaze & Parks, 2012). However, between 2009 and 2012, the overall population within correctional facilities decreased by almost 45,000 prisoners (Carson & Golineli, 2013; Glaze & Parks, 2012; Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2011).

The consistent flow of offenders released from correctional facilities poses problems not just for the offenders, but also for the community in which they are released. As a result, a heightened level of awareness has emerged among concerned members of communities in which offenders choose to reside after a period of incarceration (Byrne & Taxman, 2004; Garland et al., 2011). Additionally, there are many problems faced by former inmates that include the label of being once incarcerated,
substance abuse, mental and physical health problems, lack of opportunities for employment, and limited resources that aid in successful reentry (Petersila, 2003). Furthermore, offenders are also forced to face factors that are a result of prison institutionalization and culture (Byrne & Stowell, 2007). Consequently, the overreaching demand of the public to deal with substantially high numbers of these offenders now released from prison has raised several questions regarding the need for effective reintegration strategies for successful reentry.

The multidimensional and complex issues surrounding the process of prisoners reentering society has ironically become the most problematic dilemma facing the field of corrections. A radical change in the number of prisoners reentering society has occurred over the past decade (Maruna & Label, 2003). As a result, changes in probation and parole practices as well as *get tough* on crime approaches has made the process of reintegration for offenders a more unstable and difficult transition (Maruna & Label, 2003). Furthermore, changes in sentencing structures and the demise of the rehabilitation paradigm have resulted in a new set of demands on policymakers who are forced to address a new social problem—the overwhelming community response to care of offenders post-release (Mears, 2010; Petersilia, 2003; Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

In response, policymakers and researchers have begun to promote a paradigm shift in criminal justice policy and practices catered to a renewed interest in rehabilitation and the process of reentry (Corbett, 2008; Cullen & Jonson, 2011). Furthermore, the use of evidence-based practices (EBP) has fueled support for innovative reentry strategies and will play an important role in addressing possible prison overcrowding and the revitalization of community corrections (Corbett, 2008; Lutze, Johnson, Clear, Latessa, &
Slate, 2012). Some scholars believe that the correctional process is missing a key aspect: the application of evidence-based practices in the implementation of future criminal justice policy and practice regarding micro-level information such as post-release offender needs (Lowenkamp, Holsinger, Robinson, & Cullen, 2012). Moreover, the relatively recent shift in the central focus of corrections towards the use of evidence-based practices has produced positive results. Cullen (2007) asserts that rehabilitation should be affirmed as the current paradigm in efforts to guide criminal justice policy and practice.

To address the growing concerns of both the public and policymakers regarding the overwhelming numbers of offenders released from prison more recently, reentry court programs that aid in community reintegration have been implemented (Gottschall & Armour, 2011; Slate, Buffington-Vollum, & Johnson, 2013). The reestablishment of the rehabilitation paradigm based upon the concept of therapeutic jurisprudence came with the introduction of reentry initiatives in 2002 (Severson, Bruns, Veeh, & Lee, 2011). Reentry courts have been defined as,

Specialized courts that aid in the reduction of recidivism and improve public safety through the use of judicial oversight to apply graduated sanctions and positive reinforcement, to marshal resources to support the prisoner’s reintegration and to promote positive behavior by the returning prisoners.

(Lindquist, Walters, Rempel, & Carey, 2013, p. 1)

Reentry courts at both the federal and state level are implemented in efforts to address the growing needs of offenders post-release. The mission of these courts is to establish a
level of accountability among offenders and provide services that aid in reintegration (Lindquist et al., 2013).

High profile political figures have also made efforts to address the current evolving number of offenders released into the general public by providing aid for reintegration. In 2008, now-former President George W. Bush signed into law a piece of legislation referred to as the Second Chance Act (Garland et al., 2011; Gottschall & Armour, 2011). President Bush stated,

I’m about to sign a piece of legislation that will help give prisoners across America a second chance for a better life. This bill is going to support the caring men and women who help America's prisoners find renewal and hope. (Bush, 2008)

This legislation was enacted in an effort to further promote the implementation of programs and courts that aid recently released offenders with reintegration back into the community. Through this effort, funding was allotted for programs such as reentry courts and their initial establishment.

More recently, a leading innovation in the new millennium of community corrections is being implemented at the federal level. The prisoner reentry phenomenon has sprung the interest of federal judges and other federal authorities to find ways to aid offenders in the reintegration process. The introduction of federal reentry courts was done to address the need for reentry management among federal offenders post-release. Federal reentry court programs, much like those implemented at the state level, are mimicked after drug courts (Vance, 2011).
Currently, there are over 200,000 offenders housed within federal correctional facilities in the United States with large numbers of offenders being released yearly (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2013). Furthermore, the number of offenders released from federal and state prisons exceeded the number of admissions from 2010-2011, totaling over 600,000 offenders being released back into the community (Carson & Sabol, 2012; Guerino et al., 2011). Moreover, the average federal offender has changed considerably. Factors contributing to changes in federal inmate population have led to an increased rate of offenders that have a prior record, are more likely to have been in prison before, and are more likely to abuse illegal substances. Given all these emerging factors, federal offenders are now at higher risk on community supervision and require more services post-release (Cadigan, 2004).

The idea of reentry courts was introduced over a decade ago; however, these problem-solving courts have not been implemented or studied as in-depth as drug courts or other specialty courts (Lindquist et al., 2013; Vance, 2011). Prior research has failed to adequately evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of such courts, as well as establish a clear, distinct model for the reentry court process (Lindquist et al., 2013). Specifically, there has been scant research in peer reviewed journals conducted on Federal Probation and Pretrial Services regarding the introduction of federal reentry courts. In the past, little attention has been paid by policymakers to the growing problem of prisoner reentry and the reintroduction of rehabilitation as the goal of future criminal justice policy. There is a need for further research on the use of comprehensive strategies like reentry and problem solving courts that focus on rehabilitation, judicial supervision, and individual accountability (Lattimore, Steffey, & Visher, 2010).
Statement of the Problem

Mears (2010) suggests that our nation’s criminal justice system stands at a crossroads. Continued investment in current criminal justice policies and the overall fiscal burden placed on policy makers has driven the need of increased reliance on accountability and evidence-based practices (Mears, 2010). As public demand for accountability and efficient criminal justice policy continues to increase, so does the concern for research and evaluative practices that provide methodically and empirically sound support for the emergence of programs such as federal reentry courts. With the current stance of our nation in a state of reentry chaos, any criminal justice policy to follow will be inevitably crisis-driven.

Lutze et al. (2012) argue that it is time to bring forth an era in community corrections that attempts to provide solutions for the evolving antagonism between punitive methods and the multidimensional process of offender reintegration. Particularly in time of crisis, correctional policy is catered to address the overwhelming social awareness of the public as well as political interests. Research within the field of community corrections suggests that rational criminal justice policy practices should implement correctional programs that are evidence-based. These programs should be designed to produce measurable outcomes, have a theoretical framework, and be addressed through innovative evaluation research to ensure the desired results are being produced (Lutze et al., 2012).

An ongoing implication for future research suggests that there is a more in-depth need for program descriptions and evaluations. According to Welsh (2006), pre-evaluation research is also important due to geographical circumstances and differences
in program implementation. Essentially, the purpose of evaluation research is to demonstrate that programs such as reentry courts have been implemented effectively within the initial program design (Welsh, 2006).

The goal of the current study is to evaluate and assess the use of evidence-based practices in the implementation of three federal reentry courts in a southern district of federal probation. By conducting a multi-site process evaluation on these federal reentry courts, the current study will address challenges faced by offenders as well as practitioners and policymakers in implementing what has been deemed an effective evidence-based practice—reentry court. Furthermore, a multi-site evaluation of these programs will provide an outlined examination of key aspects of operation such as intended implementation, activities, attainment of objectives, and achievement of overall goals.

Summary

A multi-site process evaluation will be conducted on the three federal reentry courts that illustrate participant characteristics of the overall target population, effectiveness of the screening and assessment process, the use of sanctions/incentives, and a variety of other program components. In-depth interviews will be conducted with each graduate of the three programs sites as well as the contextual stakeholders (i.e., judges, supervisory probation officers, and treatment providers) in the reentry court process (n = 22). By comparing and contrasting the perceptions of both groups (i.e., reentry court graduates and contextual stakeholders), conducting on-site observations, and reviewing program materials, the current study is able to provide insight into what works within these programs.
The current study on federal reentry courts will be divided into four additional chapters. A review of the literature concerning the characteristics and overall goals of the implementation of reentry courts will be provided in Chapter II. This chapter will be divided into several sections including the historical progression of community corrections, the prisoner reentry crisis, the progression of evidence-based practices in the federal probation system, implementation of reentry courts, and current reentry court evaluative research. A theoretical framework will also be presented within this chapter.

Chapter III will provide an illustration of the methodology used in the current study. The research questions facilitating the current study will be introduced in the beginning of this chapter. Chapter IV will provide a presentation of the data used for analysis and findings. A review of the multi-site process evaluation as well as a discussion of the conclusions of the current study will be presented in Chapter V.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout our nation’s history there have been several philosophical and paradigm shifts in the implementation of criminal justice policy. Furthermore, rapid changes in technology and research have led to several innovations in policy practices. In the past several decades, the correctional pendulum has swayed between the uses of punitive forms of punishment and rehabilitation. Many events during this time period ultimately lead to the re-emergence of community-based corrections, substantial growth in the federal system of probation and pretrial services, and the use of evidence-based practices (EBP) in implementation of programs that highlight rational criminal justice policy and practices.

This evolution of the correctional system, however, did not occur in a vacuum. The following sections highlight the various periods and paradigms shifts that led to the rise of the prison, the emergence of community-based corrections, the progression of federal probation, and the recent concentration on what works in the implementation of future correctional policy. The use of evidence-based practices, current evaluation literature on reentry courts, the evolving problem of prisoner reentry, the importance of creating accountability and effectiveness in American criminal justice policy, and relevant theory will also be addressed.

Setting the Stage: Punishment, Rise of the Prison, and the Emergence of Community-Based Corrections

Since our nation’s early establishment punishment, has varied in form and implementation. As early as the 1700s, different types of punishment were used as a
form of deterrence by the state (Foucault, 1977; Welch, 2005). Foucault (1977) illustrated the historical use of punitive types of punishment as a public spectacle and a form of power by the king. These forms of punishment seemed to collectively satisfy the public’s desire for vengeance and were perceived to serve as a deterrent for observers (Wodhal & Garland, 2009). However, as these events became more atrocious in nature, the public started to question the rule and sovereign power of dictatorship (Welch, 2005).

The introduction of institutionalization and various penal practices resulted in the emergence of penitentiaries and differing perceptions regarding crime in mainstream America during the late 1790s to early 1800s. Ultimately, penal sanctions were moved from public viewing and placed behind walls of punitive institutions (Welch, 2005). The introduction of prisons as a new form of punishment seemed ideal (Pratt, 2009). Ironically, this move mystified the use of incapacitation and the public perception surrounding methods used behind prison walls (Welch, 2005). Alternative sanctions were soon introduced to address the overwhelming public concern about the inhumane conditions in prisons and the failure of these institutions to effectively address the complexities of crime (Welch, 2005; Wodahl & Garland, 2009).

A paradigm shift in thinking as a response to the failed efforts of prison systems to effectively deter criminal actions gave rise to the rehabilitation ideal during the 1900s. During this time, a great deal of attention focused on the aspect of rehabilitating offenders by addressing criminogenic needs (Wodahl & Garland, 2009). This progressive rehabilitative movement contributed to the introduction of new sentencing options. Some of these alternatives were community-based and later became known as probation and parole (Wodahl & Garland, 2009).
Probation and parole initially began as a state and local initiative (U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). Due to the lack of federal probation and parole services, community-based alternatives were implemented through the use of suspended sentences until the matter came before the Supreme Court in *Ex parte United States* (1916) (U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). Later, more commonly known as the *Killits* case (1916), laid the foundation for the introduction of the Federal Probation Act of 1925 (Chappell, 1939; Meyer, 1952; U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013; Weller, 1994). This legislation provided the federal courts with a system of probation and gave them executive power to place offenders under federal supervision (U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). During this time, federal laws were also becoming more prevalent as a response to governmental attention regarding civil rights and crime control (Meyer, 1952). Following enforcement of the Federal Probation Act of 1925, federal prisoners were moved from state prisons and jails to federal correctional facilities in the late 1930s.

Administration of federal probation was initially under the office of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice (U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). However, in the 1940s, administration shifted from the Federal Bureau of Prisons to the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008; U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). During this time, the use of medical/rehabilitation model practices allowed for prisons and community-based sentencing options to coexist within the correctional system (Wodhal & Garland, 2009). Punishment of offenders was then focused on indeterminate sentencing designed to achieve rehabilitation (Pratt, 2009; Seiter & Kadela, 2003). However, the use of indeterminate sentencing failed to effectively address the considerable public concern of increased crime rates.
The medical model and its use of treatment soon came under public attack leaving the correctional system in a state of crisis (Pratt, 2009). One of the primary factors in the above said crisis was the wide acceptance of the results from the Martinson’s Report (1974) meta-analysis which claimed that nothing works (i.e., no treatment works for offenders) (Bryne & Stowell, 2007). Almost simultaneously, the enactment of the Speedy Trial Act (1974) by Congress expanded the use of federal probation and created a separate pretrial services division of Federal Probation to assist in the processing of offenders (Bryne & Stowell, 2007; Makowiecki, 2012; U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). The goal of the Speedy Trial Act was to reduce the amount of crime committed by offenders released into the community (U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). The introduction of the Martinson Report (1974), the demise of the medical model, and a reduction in the funding for rehabilitation resulted in more attention being placed on punitive sanctions (Cullen, 2007; Cullen & Jonson, 2011; Maruna & LeBel, 2003; Pratt, 2009; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Settles, 2009). Given these emerging factors, punishment would soon become the primary objective of the correctional system (Bourgon, Bonta, Rugge, Scott, & Yessine, 2010; Cullen, 2007).

Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980 and made criminal justice policy a centerpiece in his campaign and administration (Hagan, 2010). In an effort to promote stricter guidelines and policies regarding supervision of offenders, Reagan signed into law the Pretrial Services Act of 1982 (Bryne & Stowell, 2007; Makowiecki, 2012; U.S. Courts, Federal Courts, 2013). The development and passage of the Federal Pretrial Services Act resulted in expanding the amount of supervision for offenders being charged with federal offenses prior to trial (Bryne & Stowell, 2007).
Furthermore, the age of Reagan, lasting almost a decade during the 1980s, was a turning point in the perception and interpretation of punishment in the correctional system (Hagan, 2010). The Regan administration made specific efforts to expose fear of crime as an overriding political concern. To address the overwhelming “veil of fear,” a committee was appointed by the president to write a crime report. However, instead of exposing actual crime rates, the major focus of this secret crime report was altered to further perpetuate fear and ignored the fact that crime was actually decreasing. Arguably, the release of this secret crime report could have made a difference in the overreliance of punitive efforts and mass imprisonment that would characterize the 20th century. However, the report was never released for public viewing, paving the way for the age of Reagan, America’s reliance on punitive punishment, and mass imprisonment (Hagan, 2010).

The crack cocaine and drug abuse epidemic also exploded into mainstream America during this time. As a result, the popularization of a retributivist approach and intense effort of drug laws caused a dramatic increase in prison population and contributed to America’s addiction to incarceration (Hagan, 2010; Pratt, 2009). Ultimately, this explosion in prison populations was a continuing result of the changes in federal laws, sentencing/punishment guidelines, and “war on drugs” policies that were inevitably fear-driven (Mauer, 2001). Furthermore, the Reagan Administration promoted get tough on crime approaches that would set the stage for the next two presidencies’ political crime agendas (Hagan, 2010). As a result, the correctional system became engulfed in the political arena where politicians placed their attention on furthering retributive crime policy (Pratt, 2009; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis & Petersilia, 2001).
In response, a philosophical shift in criminal justice policy and practice occurred focusing more on punishment, deterrence, and incapacitation (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). Ironically, the correctional system had effectively exhausted the punishment paradigm even though prison populations were still steadily increasing. Neither politicians nor the public realized that there was essentially “[n]o way to imprison or punish their way out of the crime problem” (Cullen, 2007, p. 717).

The fall of the rehabilitation model placed a new set of demands on policymakers resulting in a paradigm shift towards a new penology that concentrated on risk assessment, classification, management of aggregates, and evidence based practices/what works approaches to crime, raising incarceration rates, and offender reentry programs (Feeley & Simon, 1992; Pratt, 2009; Seiter & Kadela, 2003). This movement raised attention of scholars and practitioners who began concentrating on what works and the use evidence-based practices. The use of such practices focused heavily on rehabilitation of the offenders as a result of overcrowding of prisons (DeMatteo, LaDuke, Locklair, & Heilbrun, 2013; Lutze et al., 2012).

Due to the ever-changing social and institutional forces, the aforementioned events set the stage for substantial growth of the federal system and its use of probation and parole (Wodhal & Garland, 2009). Furthermore, the moral panic that had been imbedded in the political agenda throughout the age of Reagan lead to a change in public expectations regarding supervision of offenders and its effectiveness in reducing crime (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008; Hagan, 2010). Growing attention of the public concerning crime and the management of offenders created a need for outcome-based measurements. Thus, the introduction of evidence-based practices allowed practitioners
to establish empirically sound methods for addressing the inadequacies of the punishment paradigm (Cullen, 2007). As a result, criminal justice policy began to move back towards rehabilitation and forward to incorporate evidence-based correctional methods (Cullen, 2007; DeMatteo et al., 2013; Gottschall & Armour, 2011).

The Problem: Prisoner Reentry Crisis

It is beyond the scope of the current study to explore the entire body of literature on prisoner reentry and political response. However, it is important to address a broad overview of the prisoner reentry phenomenon in order to better understand the need for evidence-based practices, such as reentry courts that aid in reintegration. The substantial amount of offenders being released from both federal and state correctional facilities has produced a need for programs that are grounded in evidence-based practices and rational criminal justice policy evaluation (Mears, 2010).

There is little dispute among politicians, practitioners, and scholars that offender reentry is an evolving social problem that can no longer escape attention (Listwan, Cullen, & Latessa, 2006). A considerable amount of scholarly research has focused on “prisoner reentry” and the difficult transition from prison back into the community (Garland et al., 2011; Mears, 2010; Petersilia, 2001; Visher & Travis, 2003). The revolving door through which offenders continually return to prison has become a major concern in corrections and the implementation of crisis-driven policy (Mears, 2010). The increased rate of offenders released from federal and state correctional facilities has resulted in government action to implement policies that aid in reintegration (Listwan et al., 2006). Moreover, the issues surrounding prisoner reentry have been addressed as “[o]ne of the most pressing problems we face as a nation” (Petersilia, 2001, p. 370).
According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2001), the annual growth of prison populations in our nation’s correctional facilities increased an average of 60,799 prisoners each year between 1990 and 2000 (Beck & Harrison, 2001). This was an increase of 607,989 prisoners in 10 years (Beck & Harrison, 2001). However, the largest annual growth in prison population since 1999 occurred in 2002. The average number of prisoners in state and federal correctional facilities rose to 2.6% (Harrison & Beck, 2003). The overall prison population during this time increased by 36,623 prisoners, which was more than twice the increase in 2001 (i.e., up 15,521). During 2006, the prison population grew at its fastest rate since 2001. Overall, there was 2.8% increase in the number of prisoners in state and federal correctional facilities. This was the largest increase in prison populations in the past five years (Sabol, Couture, & Harrison, 2007).

Prison populations consistently grew at a steady rate until 2007 when the average growth of prison populations slowed to 1.8% (Harrison & Beck, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; Sabol et al., 2007; West & Sabol, 2008).

The U.S. prison population grew at its slowest rate in 2008; however, 2009 marked the third year of the smallest increase in prison populations since 2000 (Cooper, Sabol, & West, 2009). Furthermore, the number of prisoners released from correctional facilities increased substantially in 2009 (West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010). During this time, prison admissions decreased by 2.5% while prison releases increased by 2.2%. In 2010, for the first time in over 30 years, the U.S. prison population decreased (Guerino et al., 2011). Moreover, for the first time since 1977, the number of prisoners released from correctional facilities exceeded the number of admissions by roughly 5,000 releases (Guerino et al., 2011). In 2011 and 2012, prison populations continued to decline. In
2011, prison populations in both state and federal correctional facilities declined by 15,023 prisoners since 2010 (Carson & Sabol, 2012). The U.S. prison population declined for the third consecutive year in 2012. This was a 1.7% decrease in our nation’s prison population since its last decrease in 2011 (Carson & Golineli, 2013). Paradoxically, the number of releases continued to increase indicting a shift nationwide in correctional philosophy (Carson & Golineli, 2013; Guerino et al., 2011).

Political Response

Of the estimated 650,000 offenders released annually, it is predicted that two-thirds will return to prison within a few years (“The Price of Prisons,” 2004). The fiscal burden of operating prisons and the required resources have indirectly created a bipartisan concern. Reflective of this change, the Second Chance Act was purposed in an attempt to allocate funds for treatment programs that target offenders post-release. This bill attempted to help offenders successfully reenter society and provide aid in the reconstruction of community relationships (“The Price of Prisons,” 2004). In September 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law the Second Chance Act of 2007. President Bush approved this new line of legislation in an attempt to reduce the growing rate of recidivism among offenders post-release by funding programs that aid in reintegration (Garland et al., 2011; “The Price of Prisons,” 2004). More recently, President Barack Obama and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder have attempted to relay the significance of reentry programs as a part of community corrections and the importance of providing aid to offenders post-release (Gottschall & Armour, 2011).

During an address to the Department of Justice in April of 2011, the U.S. Attorney General stressed reasons why rehabilitation should be implemented as a part of
community corrections. Attorney General Holder also held an inaugural meeting in Washington, D.C., at the Cabinet addressing the Reentry Council regarding the advancement of reentry strategies within federal agencies (Holder, 2011). Attorney General Holder stated in the meeting that,

Reentry provides a major opportunity to reduce recidivism, save taxpayer dollars and make our communities safer. More than two million people are behind bars, and 95 percent of them will be released back into their communities. By developing effective, evidence-based reentry programs, we can improve public safety and community well-being. (Holder, 2011, p. 1)

The Obama administration proposed $187 million dollars in 2012 for the purpose of implementing programs that aim to divert individuals from recycling through correctional facilities (Gottschall & Armour, 2011). Such legislative action shows strong political support for programs that aid in the reentry process and opens the door to address the *pains of reentry* like that of the *pains of imprisonment* (Garland et al., 2011).

In response to legislation, there have been several initiatives focusing on the process of offender reentry. Among these initiatives are the Office of Justice Program’s Reentry Court Initiative (RCI) combined with the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) six core elements in the reintegration and reentry process. These elements include (1) assessment and planning, (2) active oversight, (3) management of social support services, (4) accountability to the community, (5) graduated/parsimonious sanctions, and (6) rewards for success (Lindquist et al., 2013; Taylor, 2013). First introduced in 2000, the RCI was designed to provide technical assistance to states that were attempting to implement reentry courts. All RCI sites were encouraged to design their reentry court model around
the Department of Justice’s six core elements. The primary objective of this initiative was to “[e]stablish a seamless system of offender accountability and support services throughout the reentry court process” (Lindquist et al., 2013, p. 2).

Progression of Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) in the Federal Probation System

Substantial growth in the federal system of probation and pretrial services occurred regarding the supervision of offenders as the correctional pendulum continued to sway from punishment to rehabilitation. Moreover, the progression of Federal Probation and Pretrial Service and its supervision processes were redesigned, placing a larger focus on the importance of reducing future criminal behavior. A new movement under the guidance of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (AO) began to focus on measuring outcomes rather than actions (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008; Gregoire, 2008). The foundation and effectiveness of the federal probation system would be assessed by attempting to produce two basic outcomes: public protection and recidivism reduction. Essentially, Federal Probation and Pretrial Services was transformed from an enforcement model to using evidence-based practices that better helped administration address concerns regarding accountability and the development of effective criminal justice policy (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008; Mears, 2010). The use of evidence-based practices or what works led to the implementation of criminal justice policy and practice would be based on the best practices (Gregoire, 2008; Huges, 2008).

The Charter for Excellence was created as a result of the Federal Judicial Center (FJC) conference with the Chiefs of Federal Probation and Pretrial Services in 2002 (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008). This charter further perpetuated the need for the
federal system of probation and pretrial severs to shift from output measures to outcomes. According to Huges (2008), the Charter for Excellence outlines a memorandum of understanding between probation and pretrial officers, their goals, and values of the system of federal probation. With the approval and leadership of the Criminal Law Committee (CLC), the AO began to develop a new system for outcome measurement and the use of evidence-based practices in probation and pretrial services (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008; Huges, 2008). The new system led to the introduction of a supervision model based on the objective of using offender supervision to produce outcomes and preferred results (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008).

The federal probation system supervision monograph, *The Supervision of Federal Offenders (Monograph 109)*, was revised to support this movement in supervision policies and practices (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008; Huges, 2008). The main objective of these revisions was to demonstrate that current legislation was being outlined in federal policy (Huges, 2008). Monograph 109 outlined the federal supervision process by focusing on (1) the use of risk/needs assessments in identifying factors that affect the supervision process, (2) treatment services and assessable controls to address offenders’ needs, (3) sanctions and incentives in response to compliance, and (4) supervision processes regulated by procedural justice constructs.

The ultimate goal of the monograph was to clearly define the meaning of outcomes of post-conviction supervision. Emphasis was also placed on the reentry process prior to release and was directly connected to the primary objectives of public safety and recidivism reduction (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008; Huges, 2008). Monograph 109 states, “[T]he purpose of supervision planning is to create an evolving,
individualized outcome-based plan of action to monitor compliance with the conditions of release and intervene as necessary to address any identified risks” (Huges, 2008, p. 5).

Recently, the AO began to knowingly recognize and make further efforts to use evidence-based practices in the federal system of probation and pretrial services. Efforts have been made to train and educate all federal employees throughout the system by creating a website to assist in training, funding presentations on evidence-based practices, and providing financial assistance for the implementation of evidence-based programs (Alexander & Vanbenschoten, 2008). Pretrial services and post-conviction evidence-based practices began to be implemented, and all districts were required to design an evidence-based program that included (1) risks/needs assessment, (2) cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), (3) communication/motivational interviewing, and (4) evaluate/test program implementation.

The use of evidence-based practices by Pre-trial Services is defined and implemented as,

The conscientious use of the best evidence available, to inform decisions about release, detention and supervision of individual defendants as well as the design and delivery of policies and practices to achieve the maximum, measurable reduction in a defendant’s failure-to-appear and committing offenses while on release. (Federal Probation and Pretrial Services, 2013)

Additionally, post-conviction evidence-based practices is defined by the AO as “[t]he conscientious use of the best evidence available, to inform decisions about the supervision of individual offenders as well as design the delivery of policies and
practices, to achieve the maximum, measurable reduction in recidivism” (Federal Probation and Pretrial Services, 2013).

More recently, the use of post-conviction evidence-based practices has prevailed in the implementation of federal reentry courts. The introduction of these courts was a proposed solution to growing recognition of the substantial amounts of offenders returning to communities post-release (Listwan et al., 2006). According to Lowenkamp et al., (2012) in order for any agency to effectively implement and use evidence-based practices (i.e., reentry courts), a variety of solutions must be addressed to maximize the desired results of these practices. Initially, evidence-based practices should be clearly defined and recognized by the agency, and the use of imitation-based practices (IBP) should be disregarded. Furthermore, there should be a variety of programs and options within the evidence-based practice design model. Routine assessments regarding level of criminogenic thinking among offenders should also be conducted to ensure that programs are using the best practices (Lowenkamp et al., 2012). Thus, the implementation of reentry courts in addressing micro-level offender needs required Federal Probation and Pretrial Services to move beyond a “one size fits all” model by definition (Lowenkamp et al., 2012, p. 14).

Movement towards the use of evidence-based practices has led to several positive steps for Federal Probation and Pretrial Services (Lowenkamp et al., 2012). The transformation of practices within the federal system of probation and pretrial services, mainly within the last eight years, has shown substantial implementation in efforts to provide a comprehensive outcome-based supervision system. The introduction of pro-social practices and program interventions that focus on micro-level offender needs has
shown that the *nothing works* era has passed (Huges, 2008). Current research supports the rehabilitative ideal in addressing and effectively changing criminogenic behavior and *what works* on a micro-level for federal probation supervision (Listwan et al., 2006; Lowenkamp et al., 2012).

**Importance of Evaluation Research and Criminal Justice Policy**

The current stance of our nation’s criminal justice policies is in a state of crisis. More recently, there has been a shift from ideologically driven policy to more rational policy that is grounded in the use of evidence-based practices (Mears, 2010). The current debate among scholars is that the criminal justice system operates within a “closed system” and is essentially enclosed in a little *black box* (Kraska & Brent, 2004; Mears, 2010). Historically, implementation of criminal justice policies have lacked methodically and empirically grounded support. Many policies do not have a systemic, evidence-based foundation and have created a criminal justice system that has been referred to as a closed system (Kraska & Brent, 2004; Mears, 2010). Such systems, driven by ideology, fail to benefit from reliable research and suffer from policy relevance. Thus, there is a need for more rigorous and innovative research to assess and improve criminal justice policy (Mears, 2010; Welsh, 2006).

Mears (2010) argues that although our current stance of policy implementation is very flawed, it is not beyond repair. He proposes that the solution for improving policy is the use and application of evaluation research. The growing problem in terms of policy is the lack of offender accountability and use of efficient policy evaluations that increase the implementation of rational policy/practices or essentially the use of *what works* initiatives. According to Mears (2010), the use of a hierarchical evaluation framework
can improve policy development and ensure that (1) there is a clearly defined need for policies, (2) all policies have a sound theoretical framework, (3) implemented correctly, (4) are effective, and (5) produce desired results in a cost-effective manner.

It has been suggested that evaluation research can guide policy and is driven by the ability to ask relevant questions (Mears, 2010; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). The broad argument is that evaluation research should be intertwined with criminal justice policy to increase efficiency and accountability (Mears, 2010; Welsh, 2006). Welsh (2006) also argues that a more comprehensive approach to the use of evaluation research in program implementation and development is needed to further build on the conceptual framework regarding evaluations.

The use of evaluation research and how it is defined varies (Mears, 2010; Rossi et al., 2004). The broad conceptualization of what evaluation research is and how it is used is illustrated by Rossi et al., (2004). According to Rossi and his colleagues,

Program evaluation is the use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs in ways that are adapted to their political and organizational environments and are designed to inform social action to improve social conditions. (p. 16)

Mears (2010) states that,

Evaluation research is fundamentally driven by a focus on policy-relevant questions. It aims to answer critical questions that policy makers, administrators, and the public may have about specific social problems… and aims to produce empirically based evidence about policies, not anecdotal accounts that confirm opinions about them. (p. 37)
Also, Welsh (2006) states that a “[p]rocess evaluation refers to the collection of information to determine to what degree that program/policy design is being carried out as planned” (p. 605). Moreover, the use and application of evaluation research has been referred to as a hierarchy or having five domain types (Mears, 2010; Rossi et al., 2004). Both Mears (2010) and Rossi and colleagues (2004) illustrated these components as building blocks within the evaluation perspective. Essential types of evaluation are as follows (1) needs evaluation, (2) theory/design evaluation, (3) implementation/process evaluation, (4) impact or outcome, and (5) cost and efficiency.

The use of evaluation research (e.g., process/program evaluation) usually depends upon the social and political framing of a policy. Often, evaluation research is conducted as a result of the public’s concern to address issues related to specific social problems (Rossi et al., 2004). Furthermore, policymakers bear the burden of demonstrating that a program or correctional intervention (e.g., criminal justice policy) has been implemented correctly and is following the original program design (Welsh, 2006). The creation of policy and implementation of programs as a result cannot be further overlooked.

Mears (2010) proposes a solution—the use of evaluation research which demonstrates that programs or practices are effective in achieving desired outcomes. Accordingly, Bogue et al. (2004) proclaim that there are eight principles of effective correctional intervention (1) assess actuarial risk/needs of offender, (2) enhance intrinsic motivation of the offender, (3) target interventions, (4) skill train with directed practice (i.e., cognitive behavioral programming), (5) increase positive reinforcement of the offender, (6) engage/promote ongoing support of the offender within the community, (7) measure relevant process/practices, and (8) provide measurement feedback.
Conducting evaluation research in the criminal justice system can improve policy both directly and indirectly. The application and use of evaluation research can improve policy by helping to illustrate the framework in which evidence-based practices and accountability can be conceptualized. Furthermore, this technique of social science research can reveal the implementation and use of criminal justice policy that is irrational and assist in altering it (Mears, 2010). The development of policies is usually done in an inefficient manner, and as a result, there is a risk of poor program design and implementation. In order for a policy to be effective and produce desired results, it has to be implemented in the manner in which it was intended (Mears, 2010). Evaluations can increase the opportunity for the development of more balanced policies within the criminal justice system and work to bridge the gap that exists between ideals and realization (Mears, 2010). Thus, evaluations open the little black box of criminal justice policy to reveal its interworking (Mears, 2010).

Reentry Court Evaluation Research

In 2008, there were at least 43 districts in the federal system with reentry court programs and several more in the implementation process. A general model was used within these courts; however, variation usually exists in the target population, participation status, level of offender, and court manner (Vance, 2010). This section will provide details regarding evaluation research conducted on state and federal reentry court programs to date. Specifically, it will provide a more detailed synopsis of the literature on federal reentry court programs and a general overview of the findings. The participants, program duration, and key stakeholders involved in the reentry court program process will also be identified.
Participants, Program Duration, and Key Stakeholders

Participants of reentry court programs typically vary at both the state and federal levels. Participants selected for participation at the state level range from those in the general prison population, nonviolent offenders that have substance abuse issues, to offenders with serious mental health problems (Lindquist, Hardison, & Lattimore, 2003). Participants at the federal level are usually assessed as medium to high-risk offenders (Knollenberg & Martin, 2008; Vance, 2011). A consistent disqualifier for the programs at both the state and federal level were individuals that were classified as sex offenders (Knollenberg & Martin, 2008; Lindquist et al., 2003; Vance, 2011). The duration of state reentry court programs range from a minimum of six months (i.e., 24 weeks) to 24 months (i.e., 96 weeks) (Lattimore & Visher, 2009; Lindquist et al., 2003; Lindquist et al., 2013; Severson et al., 2011). The minimum program duration at the federal level was 12 months with a maximum of 13 months or 52 weeks (Vance, 2011).

Key stakeholders in federal reentry court programs have been identified as the judge, United States probation officer, United States Attorney, assistant defender, and contracted treatment provider (Knollenberg & Martin, 2008; Vance, 2011). Stakeholders involved at the state level vary substantially (Lattimore & Visher, 2009; Lindquist et al., 2003; Lindquist et al., 2013; Severson et al., 2011; Wilson & Davis, 2006).

The implementation of reentry courts is still in its infancy, thus, there is a lack of process evaluation literature that assesses the effectiveness of these programs (Lindquist et al., 2013). Furthermore, the establishment of reentry courts at the federal level as well as the implementation of these programs has yet to be fully addressed by scholars. Moreover, limited research at the federal level has been conducted on recidivism
reduction of reentry courts (Vance, 2011). While it is beyond the scope of this study to review all the literature on state reentry programs, it is nonetheless important to address some of the comprehensive evaluative research conducted.

**State Reentry Court Program Evaluations**

Project Greenlight was the first reentry program implemented and evaluated that drew extensively on the “what works” literature in attempts to reduce recidivism among offenders post-release (Wilson & Davis, 2006). Recidivism outcomes for this study were defined as new arrests. The study examined and compared 735 offenders that were divided into three groups. The results of this study indicated that participants of the reentry program were significantly different than the comparison groups in regards to recidivist outcomes. Overall, results revealed that there were a higher number of new arrests among the reentry court participants. Wilson and Davis (2006) explain that overall negative outcomes can be attributed to assignment, program design, and implementation. This evaluation essentially laid the foundation of evaluation research of correctional interventions in regards to the implementation of programs that aid in reentry (Wilson & Davis, 2006).

Of the evaluations to date, Lattimore and Visher (2009) provide the most recent completed comprehensive evaluation of state reentry programs. In their study, 12 adult Serious Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) programs (Iowa, Indiana, Maryland, Missouri, Maine, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington) were evaluated using both qualitative (program material and interviews) and quantitative methods (questionnaire survey). Results of this evaluation indicated that reentry court participants received more services and had better outcomes
in regards to substance abuse issues, obtaining employment, and housing when compared to the group of offenders that did not participate. Overall, participation in SVORI programs were associated with better outcomes; however, recidivism results were mixed. These results were consistent with other evaluations (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006).

Lindquist et al. (2013) provide an extensive in-process multi-site program evaluation comprised of three components: (1) process evaluation, (2) impact evaluation, and (3) cost-benefit analysis. The goal of this study was to examine the implementation, outcomes, and fiscal cost of state reentry courts across eight state sites (Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Missouri, New Hampshire, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia). However, at this time only one of the components—process evaluation—had been conducted.

The process evaluation examined whether the programs were being implemented according to the initial program design. The completed process evaluation revealed that across all eight sites, participation in reentry court was deemed as a condition of supervision. Furthermore, several characteristics of the sites were consistent in including the use of post-release services, substance abuse and employment service, hearings, supervision, drug testing, and group decision-making in regards to sanctions and incentives. A difference in program implementation was found in the enrollment of participants, program size, voluntary/mandatory participation, and targeted population (Lindquist et al., 2013).

Lindquist et al. (2003) also conducted a multi-site process evaluation (phase 1) on nine state sites prior to the aforementioned study by conducting telephone interviews and reviewing program materials. The process evaluation examined the implementation of reentry court programs across nine sites (California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Iowa,
Kentucky, New York, Ohio, and West Virginia). The researchers addressed program status, target population, program organization/operations, services, agencies involved, and barriers encountered (Lindquist et al., 2003).

The results of the process evaluation revealed that all but one site was at operational status. Target population as well as enrollment varied across the eight sites that were able to stay in operational status. Program organization/operations differed in judicial authority and the availability of services for participants. Program length also varied from six months to 18 months as well as agencies involved and barriers encountered.

A more in-depth process evaluation was conducted on reentry court programs (Delaware, West Virginia, and Ohio), which relied on the use of strong judicial authority. Interviews were conducted regarding perceptions of the effectiveness of the reentry court on 56 key stakeholders and three to four participants at various stages of the programs. Overall, results concluded that key stakeholders had favorable perceptions of the support and effectiveness of the program in reducing recidivism. However, the participants’ perceptions of the support and effectiveness of the program ranged from pretty successful to positive. The researcher suggested that further investigation was needed regarding the implementation, costs, and barriers encountered, as well as initial goals of these programs to provide a more valuable insight in establishing reentry court programs (Lindquist et al., 2003).

Severson et al. (2011) conducted a multi-year state reentry program evaluation in attempt to determine the success of the program in reducing recidivism. Recidivism was measured by three outcomes (1) positive urinalysis, (2) returning to prison, and (3) a new
conviction. The reentry court participants were compared to a sample of probationers on regular supervision. Findings indicated that reentry court participants had more returns to prison, positive urinalyses, and a higher Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) score. Overall, these factors led to higher levels of recidivism among reentry court participants.

*Federal Reentry Court Program Evaluations*

In 2005, the District of Oregon established a federal reentry court. This program was composed of six components: (1) transitional planning, (2) multi-disciplinary training in EBP, (3) integrative case management, (4) research-informed use of monitoring, sanctions, and rewards, (5) research-informed use of services to enhance accountability and reduce barriers of reentry, and (6) establishment of quality data collection and evaluation systems to measure effectiveness at micro and macro levels (Close, Alltucker, & Aubin, 2008, p. ii; Vance, 2011, p. 65). The key stakeholders were identified as a federal district judge, probation officer, assistant United States Attorney, public defender, treatment provider, and community service coordinator (Vance, 2011). Participation in the program was voluntary, and each participant signed a reentry court participation contract. Monthly reports on the participants’ progress were conducted and addressed at each hearing before the judge. Additionally, former graduates of the program were allowed to participate at these hearings for encouragement. Graduation from the program was assessed after 12 months of sobriety and post-graduate participants may be eligible for a sentence reduction of one year (Vance, 2011).

Close et al. (2008) examined the District of Oregon Reentry Court by conducting a study on post-graduate participants. These participants volunteered for the program and
maintained a full year of sobriety in order to satisfy the criteria for graduation.

Recidivism outcomes of the study and effectiveness of the reentry court was determined by analyzing the number of urinalysis (both positive and negative), number of sanctions, and services received. The study compared 114 participants of reentry court to a population sample of probationers that were on regular supervision. Results revealed that there were significant differences between reentry court participants and the comparison group regarding number of urinalysis, services received, and imposed sanctions. Reentry court participants were found to have more supervision, support services, as well as imposed sanctions.

Overall, the findings indicated that probationers on regular supervision had a higher success rate in terms of less supervision, substance abuse services, and imposed sanctions. These probationers also had higher levels of employment in comparison to reentry court participants. Additionally, the study revealed that offenders were better able to obtain stable employment without the services of these correctional interventions. The researchers, however, stressed that the results of the study should be interpreted with caution due to the lack of information on the comparison group (Close et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the evaluators of this program proposed several recommendations for the implementation of reentry courts: (1) improve outcome measurements, (2) conduct qualitative interviews, (3) conduct a mixed-methods program evaluation, (4) develop criteria for programs, (5) conduct multi-site evaluations, and (6) develop replication strategies (Close et al., 2008).

Also in 2005, the Accelerated Community Entry Program (ACE) was established in the Western District of Michigan. The criminogenic risk factors for enrollment in the
program included (1) history of anti-social behavior, (2) anti-social personality, (3) anti-social attitudes and values, (4) criminally deviant peers, (4) substance abuse, and (5) dysfunctional family relationships (Knollenberg & Martin, 2008, p. 56). Participants for the program were identified as those being released from correctional facilities in Berrien County, Michigan and were screened using the Risk Prediction Index (RPI) assessment instrument. Potential participants were told about the program, asked to participate, and signed a contractual agreement. The key stakeholders in ACE were identified as the judge, United States probation officer, contracted treatment provider, and government counsel. Meetings with the court took place every month, and violations/sanctions were addressed during this time. Participants were eligible for graduation after receiving 12 months of rewards and completing the requirements of the program. After program completion, participants had to serve an additional 12 months on supervised release (Knollenberg & Martin, 2008).

Knollenberg and Martin (2008) completed a process evaluation on the Western District of Michigan’s reentry court. The study evaluated whether the Accelerated Community Entry (ACE) Program was implemented according to the initial program design and followed program policies within the first 12 months of implementation. For the purposes of conducting a process evaluation of ACE, the researchers conducted personal interviews and administrated surveys to reentry court participants and key stakeholders. Interviews and surveys were conducted on six participants and five key stakeholders. The process evaluation revealed that both groups believed the program was being implemented as intended. The reentry court participants also expressed overall positive perceptions of the program, and the majority stated that ACE was a good
program (Knollenberg & Martin, 2008, p. 59). However, results should be interpreted with caution. There were several limitations to this study, which included small sample size, lack of generalizability, low response rate, and the unreliability of survey instrumentation used.

In 2006, the District of Massachusetts implemented the Court Assisted Recovery Effort (CARE) federal reentry program. Offenders were eligible to participate in the program based upon their history of drug abuse and if they were on supervised released or if they volunteered to participate in the program (Vance, 2011). Disqualifiers for the program included diagnosis of mental health issues and/or being registered as sex offender. The duration of the program was 52 weeks or 13 months consisting of three 12-week phases and one 16-week phase. The first phase consisted of the participants attending court sessions, meeting with their probation officer, and participating in therapy. The second and third phase required all of the components of the first phase only in lesser amounts in addition to obtaining of a job in the third phase. In the final phase of the program, the participants met before to judge once per month, maintained employment, and continued treatment (Vance, 2011). Sanctions and incentives were also used when necessary.

Vance (2011) summarized an evaluation of the District of Massachusetts Court Assisted Recovery Effort. The study compared 46 participants of the reentry court to a matched comparison group of 68 offenders who were on traditional supervision. Data was collected in regards to new charges, revocations, compliance, employment, urinalysis (positive and negative), substance abuse issues, family/residential status, and treatment services. The study attempted to address whether reentry court program participants
were more successful in maintaining sobriety, employment, and obeyed the law (Vance, 2011). Overall, the findings concluded that reentry court participants had a better chance for success than the comparison group. However, the program’s participants were found to have significantly more positive urinalysis. The researchers noted that the study was not without limitations due the small sample size and lack of generalizability.

Furthermore, the researchers were not sure why the reentry court participants achieved better outcomes and suggested a number of potential explanations (Vance, 2011).

The Eastern District of Pennsylvania created a pilot federal reentry court program called Supervision to Aid Reentry (STAR) in 2007. Participant selection for the program was based upon the following criteria: (1) incarceration in federal prison, (2) Risk Prediction Index (RPI) score between 5-7, and (3) whether the offender was currently on supervised release. Participation in the pilot reentry program was voluntary and participants were required to meet twice a month for reentry court. The successful completion of the program occurred at the end of 52 weeks, and participants were to be eligible for up to a year reduction off of their supervised release.

Taylor (2013) summarizes a 2010 process evaluation conducted on the STAR pilot federal reentry court. Data for the evaluation was collected by conducting interviews on the reentry court participants and the key stakeholders in the reentry court process. Observations were also conducted and program materials were reviewed though the conduction of ethnographic research. The results of the process evaluation revealed several key components that were critical to the reentry court’s effectiveness: (1) judge’s role, (2) sanctions/ incentives, (3) services, and (4) social capital (Taylor, 2013). Reentry court participants were able to create positive perceptions of the criminal justice system
through interactions with the judge and use of graduated sanctions/incentives. Furthermore, participants agreed that they had extensive access to social services and were able to build social capital with family and other participants, which aided in the reentry process (Taylor, 2013).

Additionally, Taylor (2013) conducted an impact evaluation by comparing 60 first-time participants to a matched sample of probationers on regular supervision 18 months post-release. Overall, the findings revealed that the reentry court participants were less likely to have supervision revoked and new arrests; however, they were more likely to maintain employment when compared to offenders on regular supervision (Taylor, 2013). Several limitations of this study were noted by the researchers. These limitations include a small sample size and the construction of a statically matched comparison sample.

Each of these programs was similar in nature; however the aforementioned studies failed to produce definitive results regarding the effectiveness of these programs using evaluation research. However, three of the four federal reentry court programs (ACE, CARE, and STAR) produced promising results in targeting higher-risk offenders (Vance, 2011). Furthermore, research on correctional programs should attempt to implement empirically and methodologically sound practices that can assist in the creation of rational criminal justice policy. Thus, the current study will attempt to bridge the gaps in research and provide a more in-depth understanding of correctional programs utilizing identified evidence-based practices to evaluate the implementation of three federal reentry courts in a southern district of federal probation.
Criminal Justice Theory

General systems theory (GST) was proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s (Bowler, 1981; Kraska & Brent, 2011). This theory argued that a system could be best understood by evaluating the sum of its parts using a macro explanation approach. Furthermore, it attempted to explain the components of a system and how each component interacted within the overall system (Bowler, 1981). The systems perspective was furthered in the mid-1900s with Talcott Parson’s introduction of the structural-functionalism framework (Kraska & Brent, 2011; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

According to Parson’s theoretical framework, systems act on different levels with each of the lower levels providing momentum for the higher controlling levels. Furthermore, he argued that these systems were interdependent, worked towards equilibrium, can be static or ever-changing, moved towards integration, and were self-maintained. Overall, structural functionalism or systems theory focused on the positive and negative functions of social structures and saw society as a system, a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

Scholars have attempted to use systems theory in understanding the components of the criminal justice system (Bernard, Paoline, & Pare, 2005; Kraska, 2004; Van Gigchm, 1978). The broad theoretical argument is that the criminal justice apparatus operates as system which is composed of subsystems that processes inputs, throughputs, and outputs (Kraska & Brent, 2011). Viewing the criminal justice apparatus as a system allows the structure and function of the system and its subsystems to be revealed.
The systems perspective, however, is not a single approach of study. This perspective of thinking is multi-faceted consisting of two strains: open system and closed system strain. The open systems perspective of strain attempts to understand and improve the larger system by taking a macro approach (Kraska & Brent, 2011). Kraska (2004) argued that the use of GST or the “systems perspective” could prove useful in making the criminal justice as a system more effective by detecting problems and taking into consideration organizational/managerial concerns. However, many scholars have concentrated on closed system strain and what happens within the system itself or particular subsystems (Kraska & Brent, 2011). Thus, closed system strain focuses on how the system is supposed to work rather than how it is operating in reality (Kraska & Brent, 2011).

Systems theory argues that there is inconsistency on how to reach the desired outcomes of processing both within the criminal justice system as whole and its subsystems (Bernard et al., 2005). This lack of consistency within the system (i.e., criminal justice system) is a result of the failure to establish objective standards for assessing whether processing is completed or defective. Thus, this poses the risk of defective products leaving the system and reentering society as an output, which increases public safety and recidivism outcomes. Defective products are not sufficient because they require more efforts from the criminal justice system and cause conflicting pressure in regards to closing a case indefinitely. However, it is easier for practitioners within the criminal justice system as a whole to complete processing and send the outputs back into society. As a result, the output, which was not a completed product, can then reoffend and be sent back through the criminal justice system as additional input. The
conflicting pressures of agents within the system of criminal justice, in attempts to keep cases closed, indirectly results in cases being reopened and offenders recycling back through the system (Bernard et al., 2005). This process has often been referred to as the *revolving door* phenomenon by scholars (DeMatteo et al., 2013; Petersilia, 2001; Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

The emergence of reentry courts into the larger system of criminal justice are a relatively new innovative concept or proposed solution. Reentry courts are essentially a subsystem component that operates within the larger system of criminal justice apparatus. It can be argued that reentry courts promote the use of cost-effective, evidence-based practices through collaboration across the criminal justice system’s reentry continuum while working to reduce recidivism and reintegrate post-release offenders back into society. These correctional interventions promote a redesign of the system and aim to produce a more *completed product* (Bernard et al., 2005). Reentry courts receive inputs (i.e., post-release offenders) from other criminal justice subsystems and process them in hopes to produce desired outcomes (i.e., reduction in recidivism, successful community reintegration, reduce stigma/labeling, public safety) using evidence-based practices.

A common goal of the criminal justice system and reentry court programs is to change offenders into non-offenders. This subsystem aims to successfully reintegrate non-offenders back into society and reduce recidivism outcomes while satisfying victims and the general public (i.e., restorative justice). Agencies (i.e., federal probation) input post-release offenders into correctional interventions such as reentry courts in an attempt to process them in hopes of producing non-offenders. If correctional interventions are not effective or bypassed, there is a risk that these individuals will continue to commit
subsequent crimes post-release (i.e., recidivate) and be labeled *defective products*,
returning to the system as additional *input* (Bernard et al., 2005). Consequently, this is
not a desirable output for the use of reentry courts; rather these subsystems work to
improve the overall system.

*Criminological Theory*

Braithwaite’s theory of reintegrative shaming was grounded in several other
*labeling* theories and has been referred to as a more complex integrative theory.
Braithwaite’s theory used variations of labeling, subcultural, opportunity, control,
differential association, and social learning theory in his development of reintegrative
shaming (Cullen & Agnew, 2011; Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002). Labeling theories
used by Braithwaite in his theory of reintegrative shaming were originally grounded in
the work of Frank Tannenbaum (1938). Tannenbaum’s development of the
*Dramatization of Evil* focused on society’s role in *tagging* individuals as *criminal* and
how these *tags* influenced societal reaction (Tannenbaum, 1938). This contribution to
criminology served as a foundation for the development of several other theories that
focused on society’s reaction to *tagged* or labeled individuals (Becker, 1963; Braithwaite,
1989; Lemert, 1951).

The process of reentry into the community after incarceration is impacted by the
stigma of being labeled criminal and the loss of ties to society. Incarceration weakens the
relationships between the community, family, and other peer groups. This level of
weakened pro-social bond and disintegrative stigmatization can result in issues such as
the loss of employment opportunities for post-release offenders. Consequently, the lack
of support networks and engagement in criminal activity can result in the offender
serving as an additional *input* and being recycled back through the criminal justice system (Bernard et al., 2005; Cullen & Agnew, 2011).

The implementation and use of evidence-based practices in restorative justice reforms such as reentry courts can assist offenders in creating or recreating pro-social positions within society. According to Braithwaite (1989) the impact of society’s reaction through the use of formal or informal controls can result in more or less criminality. In this context, incarceration attempts to shame the offender and the severity of the shame is dependent upon others’ reactions to it. Disintegrative stigmatization increases crime because there is limited or no effort to recreate bonds with conventional society. The offender or *defective product* is prevented or discouraged from forming new pro-social bonds and resorts to joining groups that reinforce criminal activity and thus recycles back through the system (Bernard et al., 2005; Braithwaite, 1989; Fox, 2010).

Braithwaite’s (1989) concept of reintegrative shaming allows shaming to be preceded by efforts to effectively reintegrate the offender back into society and thus result in a *completed successful product* of the system. The influences and implementation of reentry courts based on concepts of restorative justice strengthen pro-social ties and *restores* the offender back into society. In theory, this concept attempts to produce desired outcomes (i.e., recidivism reduction) of the subsystems and the criminal justice system as whole (Cullen & Agnew, 2011; Vold et al., 2002).

Reentry programs operating as subsystems in the system of criminal justice provide ways in which offenders can recreate their identity through pro-social bonds in addition to giving back to society through community outreach services (Fox, 2010). Furthermore, these programs attempt to reintegrate the offender after a term of
incarceration and work to diminish the *stigmatized identity* or *label*, as well as others’ reactions to it (Becker, 1963; Braithwaite, 1989; Fox, 2010; Lemert, 1951; Tannenbaum, 1938). Thus, restorative justice correctional interventions have contributed to the altered perceptions of prisoner reentry and the process of reintegration by triggering a shift in society’s reaction as well as working to improve the system of criminal justice *outputs* (Bernard et al., 2005; Fox, 2010). Overall, reentry courts demonstrate ways in which restorative justice correctional interventions work to decrease disintegrative stigma and produce overall desired outcomes of the system as a whole.

Since reentry courts are still in their infancy, there is scant scholarly research on the theoretical basis of such programs. The theories in this section have been used to guide this research and will serve as relevant theory for the current study. While this study does not test specific criminal justice or criminological theories, it does explore these foundations in understanding the implementation of reentry courts.

**Summary**

Reentry courts are a new approach to the use and application of therapeutic jurisprudence in an attempt to address the needs of offenders post-release (DeMatteo et al., 2013; Maruna & LeBel, 2003). Reentry court programs first emerged building on the successes of drug and other problem-solving courts (Vance, 2011). More recently, the overwhelming concern of the public and policymakers regarding *prisoner reentry* has resulted in the design and implementation of federal reentry courts (Garland, et al., 2011; Petersilia, 2001; Vance, 2011). Federal reentry courts have been introduced as a leading innovation in community corrections aimed at the management of federal offenders post-
release. Overall, these courts are designed to focus heavily on rehabilitation, judicial supervision, and individual accountability.

Prior research has failed to adequately assess the effectiveness, implementation, and operation of reentry courts. More specifically, there is scant research regarding the implementation of federal reentry courts and the use of evidence-based practices. It is argued that there is a need for evaluation research to determine whether these programs are essentially doing what works (Mears, 2010). The current study will attempt to bridge the gap in research regarding federal reentry courts as well as evaluate whether such programs are effective in using evidence-based practices. An explanation of the methodology as well as the research questions guiding the current study will be illustrated in the following chapter.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to conduct an exploratory analysis of the implementation of federal reentry courts. Specifically, this study involved a process evaluation that focused on the operations and implementation of the aforementioned reentry court programs. An implementation, or process, evaluation illustrates whether the implementation of a policy (i.e., reentry court) and its operations match the original program design (Mears, 2010; Rossi et al., 2004).

Participants selected for interviews in the study included graduates of the reentry court programs (n = 13) and contextual stakeholders (n = 9) in the reentry court process. In all, the approximate sample size was 22. Additionally, the researcher was allowed to conduct on-site observations and take field notes during court proceedings. Thus, relying on program materials, observations/field notes, and interviews of program graduates and contextual stakeholders, this study examined the implementation and effectiveness of three federal reentry courts according to what has been deemed evidence-based practices.

This chapter is divided into the following five sections: research design, instrumentation/measures, data collection, data analysis, and limitations of the study. In closing, a brief summary is provided to conclude this chapter.

Research Design

There is scant research on federal reentry courts. This exploratory analysis employed qualitative strategies to evaluate the implementation of federal reentry courts. The results in this analysis were obtained using a qualitative approach, which aims to
answer questions through observations and examining individuals and their environments in a social setting framework (Berg, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain this approach as “research that stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 8). Moreover, qualitative research methods conducted at various stages of an evaluation can help determine the focus of the evaluation, implementation, improvements, and/or overall changes to a program (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthron, 2013). This analysis involved the evaluation of three federal reentry court programs in a southern district. A process evaluation was conducted for each site. Comparisons of the implementation of the three programs were made.

Evaluations aim to improve overall designs, policies, and practices (Weiss, 1999). Furthermore, evaluation research increases the chance for more balanced policies within the criminal justice system and works to bridge the gap that exists between ideals and realization (Mears, 2010). Thus, evaluations open the little black box of criminal justice policy to reveal how it is designed to work and how it is actually working (Mears, 2010). Additionally, the use of evaluation research can demonstrate whether programs or practices are effective in achieving desired outcomes and use of evidence-based practices (Mears, 2010). The following framework for evidence-based practices developed by Bogue et al. (2004) was used as a standard for the evaluation of federal reentry courts in the current study (Appendix B). The eight evidence-based principles for effective interventions are as follows:

1 The bulk of what falls under the umbrella of the criminal justice system occurs within a “black box.” We know very little about what actually makes up this system and the operations which can directly affect society. Mears (2010) proclaims that the “black box” is primarily composed of unexamined and largely hidden criminal justice programs, rules, and protocol. Evaluation research aims to open this “black box” by revealing how criminal justice policy is being implemented, designed, and currently operating.
1. Assess actuarial risks/needs
2. Enhance intrinsic motivation
3. Target interventions
   a. Risk principle
   b. Need principle
   c. Responsivity principle
   d. Dosage
   e. Treatment
4. Skill train with directed practice (use Cognitive Behavioral treatment models)
5. Increase positive reinforcement
6. Engage ongoing support in natural communities
7. Measure relevant processes/practices
8. Provide measurement feedback

Sample Selection

Program Selection

There were only a few federal reentry court programs in existence at this time.
The programs in the current study were chosen as a convenience to the researcher.
Cooperation to conduct the analysis was obtained from the regional office of Federal
Probation and Pretrial Services in a southern district. This district was located in a
southern state with only three reentry court program sites. All federal reentry court sites
in this southern state were included in the current study. Thus, a total of three federal
reentry courts in a southern district of federal probation were compared and evaluated for
this analysis.
Participant Selection

To effectively understand the implementation of reentry court programs, in-depth interviews were conducted with participants from each site. From the aforementioned sites, a purposive sampling technique, or “judgmental sampling,” was used in participant selection (Hagan, 2006). Specific criteria were used by the researcher to select particular groups of participants that matched the overall purpose of the study. These groups included graduates of the reentry court and contextual stakeholders in the reentry court process. The criteria for selection of participants (n=13) of the three reentry court programs was contingent upon their successful completion of the program requirements. This group of participants included all graduates of the reentry court programs to date. Moreover, contextual stakeholders (n=9) were selected based upon their direct involvement in the reentry court process. This group of participants included reentry court judges (n=3), supervisory probation officers (n=4), and contracted treatment providers (n=2). In all, the approximate number of participants for this study was 22.

Instrumentation and Measures

In-depth Interviews

For the purposes of the first component of this qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted as a part of the process evaluation. This method allowed the researcher to ask the participants a variety of predetermined questions regarding their perceptions of the reentry court programs. Two variations of interview instruments were used to collect qualitative data from reentry court graduates and contextual stakeholders (Appendix C). Each instrument included similar sets of open-ended questions that were asked to interviewees. Furthermore, the wording of questions
asked by the researcher was adapted to each group of participants based upon their section criteria. This approach was used to facilitate faster interviews that would be more easily analyzed and compared.

Interviews were intended to capture data regarding various aspects of the reentry court programs such as the target population, program eligibility, goals, organization, function, level of supervision, sanctions/rewards, compliance, and treatment services. A combined total of 22 interviews (i.e., graduates (n = 13), contextual stakeholders (n = 9)) was conducted by the researcher. The length of each interview was approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Open-ended questions were structured to follow questions that the process evaluation was expected to address. Additionally, a portion of the instrumentation used for the interviews included questions that targeted the primary agency’s research concerns. This set of questions was incorporated into the overall interview instrumentation by the researcher. All questions were followed by subsequent follow-up questions that depended on the direction of the interview. Furthermore, additional questions were asked if the interviewee mentioned anything that the researcher felt may have been relevant. This method of probing was necessary to elicit further responses from the interviewees. The interviews of both groups of participants were intended to provide an independent source of information to answer the evaluation questions. The findings from the interviews were integrated into the overall evaluation.

Program Materials/Observations

The second component of this qualitative analysis included a review of the program materials readily accessible to the researcher. The researcher evaluated program materials obtained from three federal reentry courts in a southern district of federal
probation. These materials were analyzed to determine what the program was designed to do in comparison to what it was actually doing. Program materials included the agencies’ policies, records, and internal data sources pertaining to reentry court program sites and offenders.

The final component of this qualitative analysis involved observations taken directly by the researcher. Specifically, the focus of this observational research was to describe and explain the design and implementation of federal reentry courts as well as the context of the study. The researcher participated in monthly court proceedings, staff meetings, and informal conversations with staff of the reentry court programs over a period of three months. Field notes were taken throughout all opportunities for direct observations by the researcher.

Data Collection and Procedure

For the current study, three types of data collection methods were used: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) observations, and (3) program materials. The researcher employed a method of triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple methods of data collection to investigate the same phenomenon (Berg, 2007). According to Patton (2002), the three primary data collection methods are interviews, observations, and documents. Thus, each one of these methods was used for data collection in the current study. Data access was obtained through Federal Probation and Pretrial Services. After several meetings with Federal Probation and Pretrial Services, approval (Appendix D) for research was obtained through the chief of a southern district of federal probation in a southern state.
Interviews

The first set of interviews for data collection was conducted on graduates of the reentry court programs. The researcher conducted semi-standardized, in-depth interviews with offenders who had graduated from the three federal reentry court program sites. Consent for these interviews was obtained through Federal Probation and Pretrial Services as a condition of the participants’ supervised release and prior participation in the reentry court program. Under administrative supervision, the researcher interviewed each participant that graduated from the reentry court programs by asking them a variety of questions that attempted to invoke their perceptions of the federal reentry courts. Interviews were conducted within the specific time frame provided by the primary agency. Furthermore, interviews took place at the primary agency at each site location. The researcher traveled to the primary agency at all three sites to conduct interviews. In the event that complications occurred, alternate arrangements were made to conduct interviews via videoconference. However, it should be noted that the quality of responses could have varied depending on the actual interview method used for data collection (i.e., face-to-face, videoconference). Specifically, face-to-face interviews were anticipated to provide more in-depth responses in comparison to the alternate method of interview data collection (i.e., videoconference).

Data was collected for the second set of interviews on the contextual stakeholders directly involved in the reentry court process. These participants included reentry court judges, supervisory probation officers, and contracted treatment providers. Access to these participants was provided through Federal Probation and Pretrial Services. Semi-standardized in-depth interviews were conducted with each member of the staff.
Interviews with these participants were directed at implementation of the reentry court program sites, their perceptions of the federal reentry courts, as well as demographic information. Each stakeholder was given the opportunity to accommodate their busy schedule and interviews were conducted within regular workday hours (i.e., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). The specific location and time of the interviews was determined by the judges, federal probation supervisors, and treatment providers directly involved in the reentry court process. Interviews were also conducted within the specific time frame provided by the participant being interviewed.

Additionally, at the beginning of each meeting, before the interview actually began, an oral presentation was given to each member of the reentry court staff. The researcher reviewed the consent form, which explained the overall nature of the research and answered any questions the participant might have had. More specifically, this discussion detailed the purpose of the study, description, risks/benefits, and confidentiality. Information provided in the consent form explicitly stated information pertaining to the study, the in-depth interviews, and their participation (e.g., being voluntary and confidential). The participant indicated having been informed of the overall nature of the study via signing the consent form (Appendix E). A copy of this form was provided to the participant.

The researcher recorded all interviews with a video camera; and field notes were taken throughout the interview process. The videos were used to review and transcribe each interview conducted by the researcher in the study. The procedure of recording the interviews allowed the researcher to increase fidelity in the data collection while placing little emphasis on taking field notes. All interviewees were thanked for their participation
and debriefed before the interview was concluded. Furthermore, each participant was allowed to ask further questions and the researcher ensured that the participant was not under any form of distress after the interview. Following interviews, all recordings were kept in a password protected computer and a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office.

**Program Materials/Observations**

An analysis of the latent content of program materials, such as policies and records, was conducted by the researcher. Latent content is subjective in nature and requires an interpretation or examination by the researcher or evaluator (Berg, 2007). This analysis of the latent content of written documents was done to help determine overall structural themes presented. Data collected from these sources was used to identify type and amount of services received, activities, and operations of the programs, etc. Furthermore, the researcher drew on their knowledge of the federal probation system gained from working as an intern for U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services during the Fall 2013 semester. During the course of three months, the researcher kept a journal of field notes regarding on-site observations of various reentry court proceedings. These notes were transcribed in order to present overall themes and constructs. Additional or supplementary data was also provided by Federal Probation and Pretrial Services through Probation and Pretrial Services Automated Case Tacking Services (PACTS) database. This data was used to describe characteristics of graduates of the reentry court program sites.
Data Analysis

Research Questions

After examining the extant evaluation literature on federal reentry courts, four questions were formulated for the current study. The first question (i.e., research question one) was addressed as the primary research question guiding the process evaluation for this study. The research questions that guided the study were as follows:

Research Question 1: Are the three federal reentry court program sites implemented according to the initial program design (i.e., program site one, evidence-based practices)?

Research Question 2: What are the similarities/differences in structural and design characteristics among the three reentry court program sites?

Research Question 3: How is the three programs’ service delivery and support function consistent with the design?

Research Question 4: What is the degree of conformity among the programs’ design and implementation?

Univariate statistics such as descriptives and frequencies were used to analyze demographic variables in the current study. Specifically, descriptive statistics were used to measure variables on the interval level to determine the mean, range, and standard deviation. Moreover, frequencies were used to measure variables on the nominal level to determine exact percentages. To address each of these measures, results from this section of data analysis was presented in a variety of tables. Furthermore, this analysis also presented a discussion of the implications of qualitative findings within the current study.
A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data was used by the researcher for the purposes of this section of analysis. Thomas (2006) explains this method of analysis as “the use of detailed readings to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations of raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (p. 238). Data analysis was guided by a set of evaluation standards chosen by the researcher; however, findings came directly from the raw data, not prior expectations of models. The eight evidence-based principles for effective interventions chosen as the evaluation standards provided a focus of relevance for conducting analysis, not a set of expectations regarding the findings of this study.

Categories or overall themes identified and constructed throughout the process evaluation developed from raw data collected. The researcher used an immersion technique which involved multiple readings or analysis of the raw data. All raw data was then coded by the researcher according to overall themes. Findings from this method of analysis were a result of the researcher’s interpretation of the data. Thus, this analysis was thematic in nature including overall themes and quotes determined from the interview data as well as any other finding within program materials and observations/field notes.

Limitations

The researcher would like to note that the present study was not without limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small. The use of a small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings to larger populations of graduates and contextual stakeholders in reentry court programs. However, it would be impossible for the researcher to obtain such in-depth information and conduct a quality evaluation using a
substantially larger sample size (e.g., sample of 500 participants). Qualitative sampling for the purposes of the current study was specifically aimed at generating insights into program implementation and effectiveness, not generalization from sample to the population. Second, one site was limited in participant selection for interviews. There were no graduates from one of the three reentry court sites in the current study. Therefore, only the perceptions of the contextual stakeholders were reflected for that site in the present qualitative analysis. Third, participant bias raised concerns regarding the findings of this study. Participant bias is the tendency of the participants to act according to what they believe the researcher wants, which can occur during interviews and informal observations and/or conversations. This poses the risk that the data might not actually illustrate the phenomenon being studied. Lastly, the current study was limited due to the lack of inter-rater reliability for qualitative interpretations of data analysis. To help increase the reliability and validity of the study, the researcher used a triangulation method of data collection (i.e., interviews, program materials, observations).

Summary

The current study sought to evaluate the implementation of federal reentry courts according to what has been deemed evidence-based practices. A process evaluation was conducted to determine whether the programs were implemented according to the initial program design. Three federal reentry courts in a southern district of federal probation in a southern state were selected for this study. A total of 22 in-depth interviews were conducted on graduates of the reentry court programs (n = 13) and contextual stakeholders (n = 9) in the reentry court process. Program materials and observation/field notes were also used for the purposes of this qualitative analysis. The results of this
analysis are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V will highlight a discussion of the findings and conclusions of the current study.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to present an exploratory analysis of the implementation of federal reentry courts in a southern district of Federal Probation and Pretrial Services. A total of three reentry court program sites were examined. Participants selected for the purposes of this study were graduates of the reentry court sites and contextual stakeholders in the reentry court process. A total of 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted on the aforementioned participants. An examination of program materials, as well as on-site observations/field notes, were included within the current analysis.

Participant Characteristics

The participant sample (n = 22) for the current study included graduates of the program sites as well as stakeholders. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of program graduates (n = 13) in the current study. Overall, graduates of the programs were exclusively black (90%), were male (100%), had some high school education (62%), and had a low/moderate risk level (92%). The average age of admission among the reentry court graduates was 38, and graduates ranged in admission age from 29 to 53 years. Graduates, on average, were incarcerated for 97 months, and the length of incarceration ranged from 13 to 182 months. Program site one (i.e., RCPS1) had the highest average length of incarceration at 100 months.

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics of the stakeholders at each program site. Overall, stakeholders were disproportionately white (78%), were male (78%), and had a master’s degree. The average age of stakeholders was 47, and age ranged from 31 to 74
years. Years of service ranged from 4 to 28 with an average of 14 years. The highest average age of stakeholders and years of service was at program site one (i.e., RCPS1).

Table 1

Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RCPS1 (n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Male</em></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Black</em></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>White</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Age (range)</td>
<td>38 (29-53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>High School Education</em></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Some College</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bachelors</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration Length (range)</td>
<td>100 (48-182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Level (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Low/Moderate</em></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Moderate</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number; There were no RCPS3 graduates.

Research Questions

This exploratory analysis was guided by four research questions. The findings of the current analysis were used to answer these research questions. Research question one served as the primary question guiding the current study. Each method of data collected
was transcribed into word format and an inductive approach for analysis was used to discuss findings and general themes. To better illustrate findings, models and tables were developed using program policies, observations, and interview transcripts from each program site.

Table 2

Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RCPS1 (n = 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (range)</td>
<td>55 (42-74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Degree</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Service (range)</td>
<td>18 (5-28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.
Research Question 1 (primary): Are the reentry court program sites implemented according to the initial program design (i.e., site one, evidence-based practices)?

Program Sites

The first reentry court program site (i.e., RCPS1) was established in 2010 and was the first federal reentry court program implemented in the state (see Model 1). Since a distinct model for design has not been developed for reentry courts, the implementation of the programs in the current study did not follow a specific design/implementation criteria. As a result, site one served as the initial design for the two additional programs implemented in the same district of Federal Probation and Pretrial services. Thus, ideally following this design the second program site (i.e., RCPS2) was established in 2011, and the third in 2012 (i.e., RCPS3).

Initial Design Consistencies

Findings indicated that program site two and three remained relatively consistent with the initial design (i.e. program site one) throughout various theme components. These theme components included (1) approach, (2) evidence-based principles, (3) reentry team/roles, (4) target population, (5) implementation, (6) staff concerns, and (7) desired outcomes.

Approach. Program site two and three focused mainly on reaching offenders that were reentering society after serving time in the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The main motivation behind using this approach was to increase accountability among high-risk offenders in attempts to reduce incidents of crime and drug use, thereby resulting in recidivism reduction. Additionally, this aspect was implemented consistently with the initial design which comprised criminogenic factors addressed, services provided,
voluntary participation, and the use of evidence-based practices. Services provided to the
target population at the sites included substance abuse/mental health treatment, cognitive
reasoning skills training, education/literacy referrals, and job training (see Model 1-3).

Reentry team/roles. The reentry court team and distinct roles were implemented
according to the initial design at program sites two and three. These sites incorporated a
workgroup and/or reentry team that included a Federal District Judge, U.S. Probation
Officer, contracted treatment provider, Federal Public Defender, and Assistant U.S.
Attorney. Workgroup meetings were held before each monthly court hearing throughout
the duration of the programs. The treatment provider was not known to participate
actively in workgroup meetings at any site. The Federal Public Defender and Assistant
U.S. Attorney were considered members of the workgroup; however, they were not
active members of the team nor did they play distinct roles in meetings and/or court.

Each member of the workgroup team was assigned a distinct role in the program
process. The role of the judge at each site was to provide judicial oversight and play an
active role the operation of the court. Furthermore, decisions made by the judge included
possible sanctions and/or rewards as well as termination from the program. The role of
the U.S. Probation Officer included providing crucial information to the court and team
regarding conduct, recommendations for sanctions/rewards, as well as intensive
supervision of program participants. Additionally, the treatment provider’s role at each
site included providing information to the court regarding progress of participants and
involvement in treatment activities. The Federal Public Defender and the Assistant U.S.
Attorneys’ roles included ensuring that the participants’ rights were protected and the
proper procedure in the court process was maintained.
Model 1: Initial Program Site (RCPS1)
**Target population.** The target population also remained similar in regards to criminogenic factors addressed and procedures of orienting participants. Consistency in these procedures included the probation officer identifying participants (i.e., target population) after release from the BOP. Referrals were made by the supervising probation officer regarding offenders that were eligible to participate in the programs. Once the referral was approved, contractual agreement to enter the program was signed by the participant. Furthermore, all participants targeted for the programs were on terms of supervised release and were expected to engage in and complete evidence-based services, maintain employment, comply with conditions of supervised release, maintain sobriety, and positive connections with family/community at program site two and three.

**Implementation.** Outputs of the implementation of the program sites two and three were relatively consistent with the initial program design. Case management, intensive supervision, judicial contact (i.e., monthly court hearings), the use of sanctions/incentives, and incorporation of evidence-based practices (i.e., cognitive behavioral therapy) were a part of the implementation output at the program sites.

Monthly court hearings involved participants appearing before the court in which they were provided a review of their progress in the program from the reentry court workgroup or reentry team. During these hearings, the judge provided participants with rewards for compliance or imposed sanctions for noncompliance of the program requirements. Rewards included verbal praise and the presentation of certificates for the successful completion of a program phase or level. Family members, as well as members of the community were encouraged to attend these monthly hearings for support.
Model 2: Program Site Two (RCPS2)
Sanctions for violations in the programs ranged from judicial reprimand, increased supervision reporting, additional urine surveillance, to electronic monitoring, curfew, and community service for the initial design. Recommendations for sanctions and violations were reported verbally during monthly court hearings and in a report to the judge for program site three.

The only possible incentive offered was the early termination of the terms of supervised release. To be eligible for this incentive, participants were required to complete the program (i.e., graduate) and maintain 12-24 additional months of clear conduct on regular probation as initially designed. This remained similar at program site two and three according to the initial design.

*Evidence-based principles.* Only program site three remained consistent with the use of evidence-based practices in the process of the program implementation. These practices included (1) assessment of actuarial risks/needs, (2) target interventions, (3) cognitive behavioral treatment methods, (4) increase positive reinforcement, (5) engage ongoing social support, and (6) measure relevant process/provide measurement feedback.

*Desired outcomes.* Outcomes intended from the initial program design were assessed from the perceptions of the staff at program site two and three. Short-term outcomes of the programs were identified as “keep ’em straight [referring to program participants],” providing avenues for employment and ways to build social capital by actively participating in the community. Long-term goals included *recidivism reduction,* creating positive members of society and changing the thinking of program participants to mirror that of the initial design model.
Staff concerns. There was a consistency among stakeholders’ concerns regarding judicial support and program duration at sites two and three. Stakeholders at the initial design site reported that the program duration was adequate. However, perceptions of stakeholders varied across the other two program sites for the initial design. These members of the reentry court staff felt that the program length was not sufficient in addressing the needs of its target population.

Initial Design Discrepancies

Findings also indicated that program site two and three deviated from the initial design model (i.e., program site one) throughout various theme components. These theme components included (1) evidence-based principles, (2) reentry team/roles, (3) target population, (4) implementation, and (5) staff concerns.

Evidence-based principles. The incorporation of evidence-based practices deviated from the initial design of implementation at program site two. This site primarily focused on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and skills training of stakeholders and did not specify the incorporation of other evidence-based practices or a degree of conformity to the initial design criteria (see Model 2). It was not clear whether the participants in the program site two were receiving all components of CBT techniques since there was deviated from the initial design.

Reentry team/roles. Program site two deviated from the initial design in implementation through the judicial oversight of a magistrate judge. The differences in judicial oversight\(^2\) became readily apparent when petitions for termination and/or revocation occurred at this site (i.e., site two). Moreover, the Federal Public Defender

---

\(^2\) Judicial oversight of programs such as reentry courts is optional to judges. Due to the lack of support from Federal District Judges, site location two was supervised by an appointed magistrate.
and Assistant U.S. Attorneys were considered active members of the workgroup and played distinct roles in meetings and/or court.

Target population. Criteria to participate in the programs differed in regards to served time served in Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and Post-Conviction Risk Assessment (PCRA) score. Program site two deviated from the initial design by requiring a risk assessment score of 9-13 and no minimum length of incarceration specified. Additionally, program site three deviated from the initial design by reducing the number of months served in BOP to 48. Procedures at program site two also required that the reentry court team make all final decisions pertaining to participation regardless of agreement to sign a program agreement contract.

Implementation. Outputs of the implementation of the program site two included additional sanctions such as writing assignments and short-term incarceration (e.g., a weekend in local correctional facility). This site also required mandatory judicial contact and treatment activities, and violations were only reported in a formally written report to the judge.

Staff concerns. Aspects of staff concerns that deviated across the program sites were recruitment of participants, consistent policies/procedures for the operation of the programs, and program recycling.\(^3\) Stakeholders indicated that the programs needed to make more efforts in recruitment while providing the application of policies and procedures.

\(^3\) Program recycling was allowed by all three program sites. This was explained as a process in which participants terminated from the programs were allowed to participate an additional time. Overall, stakeholders and graduates of the programs believed that a “second chance” was reasonable.
**EBP Principles**
- Assess risk/need
- Target interventions
- Cognitive behavioral treatment methods
- Increase positive reinforcement
- Engage ongoing social support
- Measure relevant process/provide measurement feedback

**Approach**
- Reintegration
- Criminogenic factors
  - Substance abuse
  - Dysfunctional family relationships
  - Criminal associations
  - Antisocial values/personality
- Services
  - Substance abuse/mental health treatment
  - Cognitive reasoning skills training
  - Education/literacy referrals
  - Job training

**Inputs: Target Population**
- Identification/orientation
- Criteria
- Supervised release
- Incarceration (48 months or more)
- PCRA (7 or more)
- Criminogenic factors
- RC approval contract
- EBP
- Employment
- Comply w/supervised release
- Maintain sobriety
- Positive connections w/family

**Desired Outcomes**
- **Short-term**
  - Keep out of trouble
  - Employment
  - Community outreach
- **Long-term**
  - "Reduce recidivism"
  - Create productive members of society
  - Change thinking

**Outputs: Implementation**
- Case management; Supervision
- Judicial authority; Sanctions /incentives; Evidence-based practices; Four phases

**Reentry Team**
- Judge
- USPO
- Treatment provider
- Prosecutor
- Defender

**Judicial Concerns**
- Program support
- Program duration
- Recruitment
Evaluation Standards and Themes

Of the evaluated evidence-based principles used throughout data analysis, all eight were incorporated into the program implementation in some form. These principles include (1) assess risks/needs, (2) enhance intrinsic motivation, (3) target interventions, (4) skill train with directed practice, (5) increase positive reinforcement, (6) engage in ongoing support in natural communities, (7) measure relevant process/practices, and (8) provide measurement feedback.

Assess risks/needs. The risks and needs offenders considered for participation in the programs at all sites were assessed regarding criminogenic risks/needs. Offender assessments were computed using U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Post-Conviction Risk Assessment (PCRA)\(^4\) tool. Depending on the assessment results, a participant’s initial scores could potentially increase or decrease in regards to criminogenic factors.

Enhance intrinsic motivation, positive reinforcement, and skill train. It was clear that the staff was supportive of participants progress and program completion. Various interaction and motivational aspects were exhibited throughout court hearings, contact with the supervising probation officer, and the program therapist. Skills training was also provided through the use of verbal praise and cognitive strategies. Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to engage the community as part of each program completion criteria.

Target intervention. Aspects of the programs included assessing criminogenic factors among high-risk populations. As a result of the level of discretion given to members of the program staff, it was revealed that these standards were not always

\(^4\) Assessment used to determine the level of risk of offenders, likelihood to recidivate, and various criminogenic factors present post-conviction.
followed. The standard of responsivity was followed regarding the use of treatment activities that maintained evidence of effectiveness (i.e., cognitive behavioral therapy). Additionally, dosage (i.e., program duration or exposure) as well as treatment interventions were offered.

*Engage ongoing support in natural communities.* The incorporation of community service/outreach projects provided ways to build social capital. Moreover, there was strong support present for involvement in community activities and the opportunity for offenders to give back to their communities. Examples provided regarding engagement in community activities included guest speaking at various local correctional facilities for juveniles and secondary schools.

*Measure processes and provide feedback.* The measurement of processes pertaining to the programs and methods of providing feedback to the participants were tracked using an offender management database (i.e., PACTS). This was the only method used to maintain accurately, detailed documentation of case information and management. Progress feedback was provided at each program site through verbal interaction as well as certificates were given for the completion of phases/levels.

*Research Question 2: What are the similarities/differences in structural and design characteristics among the three reentry court program sites?*

There were various similarities as well as differences in structural and design characteristics among the three program sites. In order to evaluate these similarities and differences among sites (i.e., research question two), tables were constructed that further detailed characteristics of programs by site and structural components (see Table 3 and 4).
Table 3 shows the characteristics of the programs by site. The findings showed that all three programs sites were implemented within one year of each other and have remained consistent in dosage (i.e., program duration, 12 months). Program site one was constructed along a three phase/level design structure. However, program site two and three were organized along a four phase/level completion structure. The program capacity and number of stakeholders for both program site one and three remained consistent, whereas, program site two did not provide a specified program capacity number and included two additional active stakeholders (i.e., defender, prosecutor).

Although all three program sites included a treatment provider, these individuals differed in orientation from private firms to state entities (See Table 3).

Table 3

*Characteristics by Program Site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RCPS1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Year</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Duration</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Completion Components</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Capacity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Provider</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 breaks down the components of the structural organization of the programs by site. Although the program sites were organized differently by structure, all three programs had integrated treatment activities and court sessions for participants. Treatment activities consisted of cognitive behavioral therapy sessions with a contracted treatment provider at a private or state facility. Generally, higher levels of treatment sessions were offered in the earlier initial stages of the programs’ duration. The amount of sessions offered to offenders at each program site varied according to phase/level.

Table 4

*Program Completion Components*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>RCPS1</th>
<th>RCPS2</th>
<th>RCPS3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase/Level One (months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Treatment Sessions</em></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Court Sessions</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase/Level Two (months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Treatment Sessions</em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Court Sessions</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase/Level Three (months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Treatment Sessions</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Court Sessions</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase/Level Four (months)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Treatment Sessions</em></td>
<td>_</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Court Sessions</em></td>
<td>_</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Program site one (RCPS1) did not include a phase/level four.

Program site one and three remained consistent across the first three phases or levels. An additional treatment session in the fourth phase for program site three was added.
Program site two provided more treatment sessions in the later stages of the program duration. Overall, program site one and two offered the least number of treatment sessions (i.e., 16) and program site three provided the most (i.e., 17). Court sessions were also an integrated completion component throughout program duration (see Table 4). These sessions differed according to the length of each phases/levels of the program with typically one court session per month. The overall number of court sessions remained consistent (i.e., 12) across all three program sites (see Table 4).

Research Question 3: How is the three programs’ service delivery and support function consistent with the design?

Service Delivery and Support Function

The delivery of services among the three program sites was critical in avoiding implementation failure. According to the initial design model of the program sites, services offered to offenders included substance abuse/mental health treatment, cognitive-behavioral reasoning skills (i.e. CBT), educational/literacy referral, and job training (reference Model 1). These services were specified and delivered at each program site. Substance abuse and mental health treatment, as well as cognitive reasoning skills, were delivered through treatment sessions with a cognitive behavioral therapist. These particular services were only accessible to offenders that qualified to participate in the programs. Services such as education/literacy referrals and job training were available in the programs although these services were also accessible to offenders on traditional supervision. Overall, graduates of the programs expressed that they received the amount of services offered.

---

5 According to Rossi, Lispey, and Freeman (2004), implementation failures occur when a program either offers no intervention or not enough is delivered; second, the wrong intervention is delivered; and third, the intervention is unstandardized, varying across the target population.
Support functions of programs were maintained with the initial design across program sites. These functions included providing the correct services to the participants in a timely, accessible, and sufficient manner. Findings revealed that the intended services were provided through contracted treatment providers at either state or private entities. These vendors were contracted through funding provided by Federal Probation and Pretrial Services. However, the full cost of services was not covered with funding and offenders participating in the programs were required to supply a co-pay (i.e., $10.00 per session) for therapy sessions, as well as purchase an established workbook (i.e., one-time payment of $49.00) for the cognitive-behavioral treatment sessions. Additionally, the accessibility of these treatment methods was within range (e.g., geographical location) of the offenders, which further facilitated participation in the programs.

*Risk principle, criminogenic need, responsivity, dosage, and treatment.* Table 5 shows risk level categories for assessment. The program sites attempted to target high risk offenders 47% likely to have their supervision revoked and be rearrested (40%) between 498-810 days from their initial assessment. Findings revealed that all three program sites prioritized primary supervision and treatment activities to higher-risk offenders. However, there was a degree of assessment as well as discretion that allowed offenders of low/moderate and moderate risk levels access to services. As prior findings indicated (i.e., Table 1), the majority of participants in these programs was low/moderate risk (92%). Furthermore, dosage of services was also offered in a timely manner throughout the program duration.\(^6\)

---

\(^6\) These dosages differed according to structural and design characteristics.
Stakeholders of all three program sites believed that the program targeted high-risk offenders that had prior substance abuse issues, dysfunctional family relationships, criminal associations, and anti-social values/personality (i.e., criminogenic needs).

Majority of stakeholders also indicated high risk offenders were targeted through the

Table 5

*Risk Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Low/Moderate</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revoked Supervision</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rearrested</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Range (days)</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>498-810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Developed from assessment instrument used to determine risk level.

programs. A judge from program site three stated, “These are for higher risk, higher needs offenders [referring to the programs]…those are the ones we limit our program too.” Another stakeholder stated, “These are not the addicts [referring to offenders]. This is real important...no drug use problems. These are the dealers, makers, sellers.” Other responses referring to the target population included “risky offenders” and “high-risk for reoffending.”

Additionally, treatment methods provided to participants were evidence-based and supported to provide consistent results in the reduction of recidivism. Stakeholders revealed that the use of these strategies was a crucial component to the programs. A probation officer from site one said, “These are high risk offenders…there is huge chance they will reoffend and go back to prison. With this program, CBT helps with the thinking and relationships in their lives. We see benefits.” Another stakeholder stated, “That is
why we do it. So many therapies out there...so vague. We are interested in what’s in their heads. Ability to demonstrate different thinking. Yeah, something we can measure.”

Gradates of the programs also expressed effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral treatment methods and long-term impact on their lives in reducing subsequent crimes. One graduate of the program stated, “It helps a person find themselves because a lot of us get in trouble because we think that we have to impress someone... or that we think that everything that is fast is gone last.” Following that statement, several other responses referring to CBT sessions indicated, “Biggest impact,” “Rational thinking,” “Stop, man...think. Listen.”

Research Question 4: What is the degree of conformity among the program design and implementation?

Findings from addressing prior research questions revealed program site two deviated substantially from the initial program design in its implementation. Program site three also deviated in operational components; however, the implementation of this site remained relatively consistent with the initial design model (i.e., site one).

The critical components were consistent across program sites regrading service delivery and support functions, which would potentially lead to implementation failure if not maintained. As such, there was no clear degree of conformity between program site two or three in implementation back towards the initial design. There was an overall perception among stakeholders and graduates that lacked an expressed desire to conform to the initial design model. Overall, both groups reported that the program differences were not substantial enough to respecify implementation.
Stakeholders reported that the programs were effective as implemented because they provided offenders tools to successfully reenter society, positive reinforcement for good behavior, structure, and accountability. Others indicated that the success of the program for the offenders participating depended greatly on whether the offender wanted to change and had no relation to the current implementation of the program sites. A judge from program site two stated, “The dynamic of accountability that the program offers from classes, court, and teamwork in groups motivate the participants to meet goals that help them establish lifestyle changes and acclimate back into society successfully.” A stakeholder from site one also believed the following,

I think the program is effective [right now] because it is a tool that helps the offender to make changes they need too. Some people just need a little more attention and focus to redirect them. I think reporting to the judge and other aspects hold them accountable.

Additionally, a therapist or treatment provider for site three stated, “Depends on the individual. They have to want it and have to want to not let anything prevent them from getting it, then it shows wonders.” Almost all of the stakeholders mentioned that the offenders who choose to participate in the program sites have access to more services as well as more intensive levels of supervision. Stakeholders also expressed certainty that these services were delivered to the target population regardless of deviation from the initial design.

There was general consensus that the impact of these programs were substantial and implementation differences across sites did not hinder an offender’s success. In addition to the individual impact, other responses indicated that the family (i.e., building
of social capital) and community aspects were also positively affected. Examples given regarding the impact of the programs included reduction in recidivism, financial gains due to a decrease in incarceration rates, and overall safer community environments.

While many perceptions indicated that it was unrealistic to think that every participant would be impacted or impact facets of society positively, there was an overall consensus a positive change had occurred in some form as a result of the program sites. The judge from program site one recalled, “If we can keep a participant out of the penitentiary and on supervised release in the program… that is a possible 26,000 dollars a year saved. That alone is a major financial benefit.” Another stakeholder believed that, “Impact on the individual shows great progress. Community impact is also tremendous because we are dealing with former high level gang members and main drug dealers that are now going out and positively addressing communities.”

Additionally, a majority of the graduates believed that the program sites were effective and had an impact on them. These respondents indicated that the program helped them to stay out of prison, learn accountability, and gave them a second chance (i.e., change the way they think). A graduate that was incarcerated for the longest in the program stated, “Ya, know. Three years and I still go in strong. With this [program] you get everything right, no looking after ya back.” Another graduate expressed,

We all gone mess up. So sometimes it might take to falling one or two times, but that does not mean turn ya back on me. Give me a chance, just do not shut the door on me the first time. This [program] gave me that.

All graduates expressed a degree of appreciation from each program site’s current implementation and effectiveness. Furthermore, they recalled that services offered were
beneficial in the effectiveness of the program and believed that they had received the correct services and amount promised. There was a general consensus among the group that the therapy sessions (i.e., cognitive behavioral therapy) were very beneficial to their progress and completion of the program.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

America’s addiction to incarceration and the “revolving door,” through which offenders return to prison, have been the subject of controversy for several decades and are increasingly in the forefront of criminal justice policy debates (Pratt, 2009). The perplexity of fluctuating prison populations in America has elicited polarizing responses from policymakers and practitioners regarding the use of practices supported by empirical evidence (Mears, 2010). In response, new innovative strategies such as reentry courts have been implemented to address “crisis” within the correctional system and provide avenues for success among offenders post-conviction (Knollenberg & Martin, 2008; Lattimore et al., 2010; Lindquist et al., 2013; Severson et al., 2011; Vance, 2011).

This study sought to add to the limited empirical literature on reentry court programs by providing an integrated comparison and multi-site process evaluation of three federal reentry courts. The commonalities and differences in implementation, structural components, and the application of evidence-based practices of the programs were evaluated across all three sites. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings from the current analysis.

Analysis and Discussion

Initial Program Design

The findings from this analysis revealed that there was no one distinct model used in the implementation of the examined reentry court program sites. Program site one served as the initial design model and structural guideline for the design and implementation of program site two and three. Thus, while there was a degree of
consistency in the design of the programs, there were also notable discrepancies in the implementation assessed across program sites (see Model 1-3 referenced in Chapter IV).

**Program Consistency**

There was an overall degree of consistency regarding the initial design across identified themes at program site two and three. Each program site was managed by a workgroup team that included individuals from the U.S. Court System, U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services, and various contracted treatment providers. The judge, probation officer, and treatment provider were considered integral roles and remained consistent with the initial design at each program site. The incorporation of such roles within correctional intervention programs like reentry courts allows the decision-making process to shift from an individualized, adversarial organizational structure to a more collaborative, workgroup based approach. Such methods allowed more of a balance of power among team members while theoretically permitting an emphasis on rehabilitative goals and an incorporation of therapeutic jurisprudence (Butts, 2001; Rudes & Portillo, 2012; Taxman & Bouffard, 2002; Wolff, 2002).

Each program site also set the same approach for targeting high-risk offenders recently released from a period of incarceration in a federal correctional facility. These specific offenders were targeted in attempts to increase accountability while reducing recidivism outcomes among the target population. Prior research has shown that this population of offenders is more likely to commit subsequent crimes post-conviction and is in greater need for pro-social thinking skills. Prioritizing resources and reentry programs for these high-risk offenders reduces recidivism rates while increasing public safety and accountability (Bogue et al., 2004; McGuire, 2001).
Additionally, components of identifying and orienting participants such as referrals for program participation, targeting criteria, as well as contractual expectations of participants were uniform across program sites. Each program site used the same strategies for supervising program participants, which included accurate detailed case management methods (i.e., PACTS), intensive supervision, judicial contact, and sanctions/incentives. Utilizing such components provides for the assessment of potential outcomes, promotion of behavioral changes, and an emphasis placed on rehabilitative goals (Bogue et al., 2004; Rudes & Portillo, 2012).

While program site two remained consistent throughout various identified themes, findings showed that there was also a degree of deviation from the initial design. Program site two did not incorporate the application of evidence-based principles according to the initial design policy in its implementation. However, these principles were applied throughout program processes to a degree consistent with the initial design. Judicial oversight assessed as well as the active incorporation of a Federal Public Defender and Assistant U.S. Attorney changed the dynamic of judicial authority presiding over program participants at this site location. Components of identifying and orienting participants, assessment scores, length of incarcerated specified, and measurement of progress also deviated from the initial design. Additionally, supplementary sanctions were available for noncompliance in the program at this site and all feedback was provided to the judge in a formal written report. Program site three did not deviate from the initial program design in regards to the aforementioned aspects of program site two.
Perceptions of desired outcomes of the programs and various staff concerns were consistent with the overall approach of the initial reentry court design model. Both short-term and long-term desired outcomes remained relatively consistent across program sites. Key desired outcomes included reducing recidivism and establishing ways to obtain employment as well as build social capital. Providing opportunities for high-risk populations to actively engage in the community and recreate conventional bonds encourages pro-social community ties and behavior (Bogue et al., 2004; Clear & Sumter, 2002).

There was also consistency found among stakeholders regarding staff concerns, which included lack of judicial support and program duration and/or dosage. To the contrary, aspects of staff concerns also deviated across program sites. Various stakeholders believed that there was a need for better recruitment methods of offenders and the application of more consistent policies and procedures for program operation. Although programs like reentry courts are supposed to address the issues offenders may face with reintegration, it is clear that there is a substantial variation between and among programs regarding content and operation (Wilson & Davis, 2006).

*Evaluation Standards and Themes*

Comparison and assessment of the reentry court program sites with evidence-based evaluation standards (i.e., Eight Evidence-Based Principles, EBP, for Effective Interventions), showed that the implementation of these programs were somewhat consistent with various principles. Prior research has shown that the assessment of risks/needs (i.e., principle one) provides individual and aggregate level information essential for the implementation of correctional programs that incorporate the *best*
practices (e.g., risk, need, responsivity) (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006; Bogue et al., 2004; Bonta & Andrews, 2007; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996).

At all three program sites, the risks and needs of offenders were assessed periodically using an assessment instrument (i.e., PCRA). Furthermore, the timely use of such measures allowed offender assessment to become more accurate and routine. Moreover, each site location was able to prioritize treatment and resources to higher risk offenders based upon a variety of criminogenic needs, responsivity, treatment type, and dosage of services (i.e., EBP principle three) (Bogue et al., 2004; McGuire, 2001; Lipton et al., 2000; Taxman & Byrne, 2001; Wilson & Davis, 2006). Although such principles were incorporated in the program, there was a level of officer discretion in the assessment of risk that allowed low/moderate to moderate offenders’ eligibility in the programs (see Table 5 referenced in Chapter IV).

Further findings revealed that the programs’ staff incorporated the use of intrinsic motivation (i.e., EBP principle two), skill training (i.e., principle four), and positive reinforcement (i.e., EBP principle five). The use of techniques to motivate and positive reinforcement of acceptable conduct among offenders participating in programs (i.e., reentry courts) provides avenues for behavioral change which is strongly influenced by personal interaction with program staff (Aso et al., 2011; Bogue et al., 2004; Harper & Hardy, 2000). All three program sites incorporated ways in which staff members motivated and encouraged offenders to successfully complete the program. Various interactional components of each program were exhibited throughout personal contact in

---

7 Assessment used to determine the level of risk of offenders, likelihood to recidivate, and various criminogenic factors present post-conviction.
monthly court hearings, contact with the supervising probation officer, and participation in treatment activities.

The training of staff using directed practices such as cognitive-behavioral methods has been supported as a key component in creating pro-social attitudes and behaviors (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; McGuire, 2001). Accordingly, all three programs were operated and implemented with components of evidence-based treatment sessions (i.e., cognitive-behavioral therapy). Treatment activities were provided through a contracted treatment provider specializing in cognitive skills training and psychological behavioral methods. However, treatment providers varied between private and state entities. The majority of the fiscal costs of program components such treatment was budgeted through Federal Probation and Pretrial Services with the exception of a participant co-pay.

Prior research has indicated that interventions that target higher risk offenders and extreme populations are more successful when participants are actively engaged in the community (Bogue et al., 2004; Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, Rooney, & McAnoy, 2002; Clear & Sumter, 2002). Consistent with EBP principle six, findings revealed that all three program sites provided ways in which the participants could give back to society. For example, opportunities to engage in community outreach and service projects (e.g., guest speaking to juveniles, volunteering at a shelter) were incorporated into the programs at various phases/levels of completion. The inclusion of such projects that allow offenders to contribute to society post-conviction provides avenues in which social capital can be reestablished (Bogue et al., 2004).
With respect to EBP principle seven and eight, each program site utilized a case management system (i.e. PACTS) to maintain offender information. This often times was used to measure outcomes in order to provide measurement feedback. However, at the time of this evaluation, all three program sites were new in implementation and had a relatively small number of graduates. Thus, the evaluation of outcomes in assessing program fidelity had not been established. Additionally, progress feedback was provided to participants of the programs through verbal interaction and phase/level completion certificates. Such methods of measuring process and providing measurement feedback at the individual level have been shown to build offender accountability and enhance behavioral changes (Bogue et al., 2004). Additionally, assessing program fidelity and delivery of services at the organization level provides ways in which programs produce desired outcomes through the use of evidence-based practices (Bogue et al., 2004; Rossi et al., 2004).

**Structural and Design Characteristics**

Structural and design characteristics varied across program sites two and three in comparison to the initial design. Findings showed that there were differences in program completion components among program sites (see Table 3-4 referenced in Chapter IV). All program sites remained consistent in providing treatment and monthly court sessions. Higher levels of treatment were found to be present in the earlier stages of all three programs although the number of sessions differed. Prior research indicates that the incorporation of evidence-based treatment activities should be an integral part of the best correctional programs. Methods of treatment supported by empirical evidence provides
the greatest long term impact on the offender and other facets of society (Bogue et al., 2004; Taxman & Bryne, 2001).

The duration of each program also remained similar to the initial design model although organizational structure characteristics differed. Program site two and three were organized along a four phase/level structure and used a state entity for treatment delivery that differed from the initial design. Differences found among program site two characteristics consisted of the inclusion of five active stakeholders and no specified program capacity specified. Given that treatment activities involved cognitive-behavioral skills training, the lack of a specified program capacity at site two poses some critical issues to the effective administration of this treatment type.

*Service Delivery and Support Function*

The delivery of services and support functions are a critical part of program implementation. Findings indicated that services were provided to participants in the programs and were specified at each program site. Specific services provided to participants included substance abuse/mental health treatment as well as cognitive-behavioral skills training. Utilizing methods such as cognitive-behavioral therapy in program implementation requires the active engagement of small groups in the learning environment (Wilson & Davis, 2006). However, program site two did not specify a limit on program capacity regarding treatment activities which could pose problems in the delivery of these services (see Table 3 referenced in Chapter IV). Other services such as educational/literacy referrals and job training were available to the participants as well as offenders on regular supervision. Although there was a degree of discretion in the
assessment of participants, support functions of services were maintained, and assessable services were provided through treatment activities with a licensed therapist.

Overall, stakeholders reported that the necessary criminogenic factors, treatment activities, and target population were addressed according to the initial design model (i.e., program site one). Graduates of the programs also expressed a degree of effectiveness from the services provided as well as the long-term impact these services had on their lives. However, the content of the services delivered (i.e., substance abuse/mental health treatment, CBT) and duration of contact of such services were not assessed in the current evaluation.

Degree of Conformity

Prior research has shown that “real world” delivery of services and program support functions oftentimes deviate from the initial design (Bouffard & Taxman, 2004; Rossi et al., 2004). Findings from this analysis revealed that program site two deviated from the initial design in implementation. Program site three remained consistent with the initial design although a degree of discrepancy in operational components was found. Perceptions of stakeholders revealed that the current implementation of the programs was effective and the difference in implementation, as well as the program’s mode of operation did not hinder the offenders’ success. Additionally, graduates of the programs expressed some degree of appreciation and effectiveness of the programs. There was an overall consensus among graduates of the program that they received the type and degree of services planned in the initial program design model of site one.

As noted by Rossi et al. (2004) critical components such as service and support functions are crucial to avoid implementation failure. Findings from this analysis
indicated there was no clear degree of conformity with the initial design for all three program sites. However, further evaluation of impact or outcomes of the program sites is needed to directly assess whether it is necessary for the current implementation to converge with initial design. This method of evaluation will allow the researcher to determine the actual process of implementation and how it directly affects desired outcomes of the programs as a whole.

Policy Implications

There is simply no one rehabilitative intervention or a one-size-fits-all model that will essentially eliminate criminal behavior and thinking (Severson et al., 2011; Vance, 2011). However, there are some potential positive implications for implementing correctional interventions such as reentry court programs. Prior research has shown that there have been some positive outcomes of such programs that have effectively resulted in a reduction of harm and an increase in public safety (Herz & Walsh, 2004; Severson et al., 2011; Wilson & Davis, 2006).

Findings from earlier studies and this analysis demonstrate that reentry court programs can positively affect offenders and other facets of society. Overall, participants in reentry court programs (i.e., graduates) and those operating the programs (i.e., stakeholders) reported positive experiences. These findings suggest that more reentry courts are needed. With the recent increase in prison releases, these programs provide a structured process that has the potential to help offenders successfully acclimate back into society and reduce subsequent criminal behavior. Furthermore, these reentry court programs pose solutions to the overcrowding of prisons and America’s addiction to incarceration (Pratt, 2009). The potential fiscal savings alone of decreasing prison
populations by implementing reentry courts provide an additional rationale for policymakers as well as practitioners.

Additionally, the recent movement towards the use of evidence-based practices in the implementation of correctional interventions can provide further support of these programs and practices. When addressing a complex issue such a reentry post-conviction, it is crucial that best practice models is implemented. Evidence-based practices were used across all three program sites in the current study. Nevertheless, the guidance from this analysis suggests that there remains a need to further standardize the implementation and operation of reentry court programs. At the same time it should be noted, implementing such rehabilitative efforts is an evolutionary process and programs need to be able to adapt their practices as evidence-based methods become available. However, the evolution of program efforts in incorporating such practices relies heavily on fiscal and structural aspects of the correctional system.

Limitations

The researcher would like to note that findings of the current study should be interpreted with caution due to certain limitations. These limitations included a relatively small sample size, a lack of participants from program site three, participant/researcher bias, and inter-rater reliability. The lack of participants (i.e., graduates) from program site three limits the ability to assess further potential differences in implementation of the initial program design. There could possibly be some degree of shortfalls and/or discrepancies at program site three that could not be assessed at this time with the limited number of respondents. Furthermore, the sample size of the participants in program sites one and two was relatively small. However, sampling for the purposes of the current
evaluation was specifically aimed at generating insights into implementation; not
generalization from sample to the population. Furthermore, this analysis revealed a
number of observations useful in the assessment of these reentry court programs.

Participant and researcher bias could be also a potential limitation to the current
study. Since methods of observational research was utilized as well as interviews
conducted, participants may have acted in a way they believed the researcher desired.
Moreover, there may also be a degree of bias in the results that was unintentionally
portrayed by the researcher. Additionally, inter-rater reliability of the study was limited
as a result of one researcher collecting and interpreting data in a qualitative analysis.

Future Research

Future research should further address the reentry court program sites by
conducting an impact or outcome evaluation. When implementing a program, there is
often variance from the initial program design model when the actual process is
examined. As a result, measuring outcomes is necessary to better understand the method
of implementation that actually occurred (Rossi et al., 2004). This process can
potentially provide insight into “what works” and how program implementation and
operation can ultimately influence outcomes.

The programs evaluated in the current study were designed to affect the social
problem of prisoner reentry in a positive manner, thereby reducing recidivism among the
target population. Since these programs were relatively new in implementation,
outcomes could not be assessed due to low numbers of graduates as well as time length
since graduation. An assessment of the extent to which these programs produce the
intended or desired outcome can provide methods for improvement or convergence to the
initial program design. As a result, insights can be gained on the true measures of effectiveness using a more holistic approach.

Measuring the efficacy of program implementation is crucial for policymakers to determine how to allocate funding. Thus, in addition to an outcome/impact evaluation, it would be important to conduct a cost-benefit\(^8\) and cost-effectiveness\(^9\) evaluation of the three program sites. Such evaluations in the criminal justice field allow policymakers to establish the clarity of programs and if they are beneficial to the criminal justice system and should be concentrated on more specifically (Rossi et al., 2004).

Additionally, the use of evidence-based practices/principles in the implementation of correctional interventions such as reentry courts should be addressed further. Prior research has indicated that the organizational management aspects of such practices can raise fiscal costs and require probation officers to expand their role to achieve positive outcomes (Lutze, 2014). Furthermore, the current movement towards the use of such practices raises issues regarding the level of training provided to program staff (Lutze, 2014). As a result, the training to staff when incorporating evidence-based practices as a part of the organizational model should also be investigated.

Conclusion

The current exploratory analysis sought to examine the implementation of three federal reentry court programs in a southern district of federal probation in a southern state. Overall, there is a lack of program evaluation research on federal reentry courts since these programs are relatively new in implementation. The purpose of the current

\(^{8}\) Evaluation or analysis that directly compares benefits to costs in monetary terms (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004).

\(^{9}\) Evaluation or analysis that relates costs expressed in monetary terms to units of substantive results achieved (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004).
The findings of the current evaluation illustrated that there was a strong consensus among the stakeholders and graduates that the programs were, in fact, effective programs. Although there was a degree of variation across program sites in regards to the initial design and structural characteristics, there was no clear indication that this had a substantial negative effect on program implementation. Overall, there was an expressed need by stakeholders for more programs as well as judicial support. Services were provided and specified as delivered in a manner congruent with the initial design and as defined by evidence-based practices. This analysis suggests that the use of evidence-based practices had an impact on program design and implementation. Such practices used placed emphasis on individual offender accountability and enhanced organizational structure. However, the effectiveness of EBP strategies on the offenders in the programs evaluated in this analysis should be addressed by subsequent outcome evaluations.

To combat prior notions that rehabilitation does not work, the reentry court program sites served as examples of how subsystems of the criminal justice apparatus can promote a cost-effective, evidence-based methods grounded in the use of cognitive behavioral therapy to target offenders attempting successful reintegation following imprisonment. Each program site operated within the criminal justice continuum in attempts to produce a more completed product of the system. As a result, inputs (i.e., offenders) were processed through implementation components of the court (i.e., outputs) in attempts to produce desired outcomes. Additionally, the overall approach of
these programs was to reintegrate offenders back into society successfully by attempting to reduce stigma. These restorative justice approaches worked to decrease disintegrative shaming and provided avenues for additional services proactively applying evidence-based practices.

Community corrections manage over twice the number of offenders that are housed in correctional facilities (Lutze, 2014; Matz, Wicklund, Douglas, & May, 2012). Thus, such creative, alternatives to traditional criminal justice processing is critical to the future of the criminal justice system. Reentry courts, along with initiatives such as Justice Reinvestment, need to be further explored to maximize the utilization of scarce criminal justice resources and maximize quality of life in communities.

In summary, criminal justice policy is oftentimes based on outdated customs, ideologically based concepts, and ill-conceived common sense (Mears, 2010). The assessment and evaluation of programs such as reentry courts can serve to counterbalance existing irrational criminal justice policies. Evaluation research helps to repair the system by creating informative, policy relevant evidence. It is no longer a question about what works in the implementation of criminal justice policy and organizational structure but how can evidence-based methods inform correctional practice.
APPENDIX A

INTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5347 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 21, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 13110807
PROJECT TITLE: A Multi-Site Process Evaluation of Three Federal Reentry Courts in a Southern District of Federal Probation
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Patricia Southerland
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Science and Technology
DEPARTMENT: Criminal Justice
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 11/11/2013 to 11/10/2014

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board
APPENDIX B

EIGHT EVIDENCE-BASED PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight Evidence-Based Principles for Effective Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assess actuarial risks/needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Enhance intrinsic motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Target interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. <em>Risk Principle</em>: Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. <em>Need Principle</em>: Target interventions to criminogenic needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. <em>Responsivity Principle</em>: Responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender when assigning programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. <em>Dosage</em>: Structure 40-70% of high-risk offenders’ time for 3-9 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. <em>Treatment</em>: Integrate treatment into the full sentence/sanction requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Skill train with directed practice (use Cognitive Behavior treatment methods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Increase positive reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Engage ongoing support in natural communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Measure relevant processes/practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Provide measurements feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Reentry Court Stakeholder Interview Guide

**Introductory Statements:**

I would like to ask you some questions about the reentry court programs in your district.

[Read consent letter, participant’s copy, and proceed with interview after consent has been given]

**Opening Question:**

I would like you to think about your role as well at the process of implementing and operating the reentry courts in your district. To the best of your ability, I would like you to please elaborate on the process as well as your experiences in implementing what has been deemed an evidence based practice.

**Questions/Follow-up:**

- **Goals/Objectives**
  1. What is your role in the program?
  2. What departments and/or organizations were involved in the implementation of the reentry court programs?
  3. Who would you consider the key stakeholders in the reentry court program?
  4. How is information on participants shared among the key stakeholders (e.g., judges, probation officers, treatment providers) in reentry court?
  5. What are the objectives/goals of the program?
  6. Are the program objectives/goals realistic?
  7. Do you believe that the program has achieved its overall goals/objectives thus far?
8. What resources are available for the program? (e.g., funding, agency collaborations, service providers, etc)

9. Do you believe there is sufficient amount of resources for the program?

Program Characteristics

10. What services are currently available in the program?

11. Are the current services different from the original services offered?

12. How do you feel about the level of support received from program services?

13. What are the procedures (i.e., supervision, court meetings, program length, sanctions/incentives, and cognitive behavioral therapy)? Please explain.

14. What are the major components of the program?

15. Are all components of the program necessary? Why?

16. What population of offenders does the program target?

17. Can you explain your reasoning for choosing the target population?

18. What are the characteristics of the target population? (e.g., general demographics, criminal history, mental health, substance abuse, length of incarceration)

19. How long is the reentry court program?

20. Is the length of the program sufficient to effectively address the target population’s needs? Why or why not?

21. How are participants recruited or identified for the reentry court?

22. How are officers encouraged to motivated offenders to participate in the program?

23. What is the criterion for eligibility to participate in the reentry court program?

24. During participation in the program, what are the participants required to do?

25. Do you believe the level of supervision provided by reentry court is adequate?
26. What is the main reason you believe offenders choose to participate in reentry court?

27. What are the short and long term objectives of the program?

28. What are some of the possible sanctions/incentives??

29. What is the criterion for termination from reentry court?

30. What methods are used to measure progress and provide feedback to the participants?

Impact

31. What kind of impact do reentry court programs have?

32. In what ways does your program reduce recidivism among graduates?

33. How has the program been successful in treating substance abuse among participants?

34. How has the program been successful in assisting in family/community reintegration?

35. Have you experienced any barriers or unintended consequences in the implementation or operation of the reentry court?

36. In what ways does the program offer opportunities in which the offender can give back to the community? (e.g., community outreach)

37. Do you believe that there is a difference between reentry court participants and probationers on regular supervision? Please explain.

38. Do you believe that the reentry court is effective? Why?
**Reentry Court Graduate Interview Guide**

**Introductory Statements:**

Per your reentry court participation agreement, I would like you ask you some questions about your experience in the reentry court program that you participated in.

**Opening Question:**

Since you are a graduate of the program, I would like you to think about your experience in the program before graduation. Please explain, to the best of your ability, the conditions surrounding your experiences in reentry court.

**Questions/Follow-up:**

Program Characteristics

1. How did you hear about the program?
2. Who approached you about your participation?
3. Were you given a choice to participate?
4. How were you motivated to participate in the program?
5. What was the main reason you chose to participate in the program?
6. Was the program what you expected? Why or why not?
7. What type of services did you receive? (e.g., substance abuse/mental health, education, housing, aftercare)
8. Do you believe that services offered in the program were beneficial? Why?
9. Do you think you had more access to services than other probationers? Why or why not?
10. Was the level of supervision provided by the reentry court program was enough?
11. How was the program staff supportive of your progress?
12. How often did you meet with your probation officer during the program?

13. What happened during meetings for the program?

14. Did you receive any sanctions or rewards in the program? If so, what kind?

15. What part of the court supervision did you feel assisted you the most in the program?

16. How often did you meet with the judge in the program?

17. Can you elaborate on what occurred during court meetings/hearings in the program?

18. Do you think other participants took the program seriously? Why or why not?

19. Can you explain any barriers or obstacles you faced while participating in the program?

Impact

20. Do you believe that the program is beneficial in deterring future crimes? Please explain.

21. Would you recommend the program to other probationers? Why or why?

22. How did the program help improve your family relationships?

23. How did the program help you reenter your community?

24. After completing the program, what do you believe the purpose of the program was?

25. What part of the program had the biggest impact on you?

26. What part of the program was the least helpful to you?

27. What is your overall opinion of the reentry court staff?

28. What is your overall opinion of the other reentry court participants?
29. Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?

30. Do you believe that the reentry court was effective for you?
University of Southern Mississippi
Jo Ann Johnson
Manager
Institutional Review Board Committee

Ms. Johnson,

Patricia Southerland, a graduate student at the University of Southern Mississippi, is hereby granted permission by the United States Probation Office in the Southern District of Southern Mississippi, to conduct research and gather information at all three of our divisional offices in Jackson, Hattiesburg and Gulfport for the purpose of her thesis which is titled, "A Multi-Site Process Evaluation of Three Federal Reentry Courts in a Southern District of Federal Probation".

If you have any questions, please contact me at (228) 563-1850.

Sincerely,

Steven Villarrubia
Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer
Hello,

My name is Patricia Southerland and I am a Master’s student in the School of Criminal Justice at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am interested in the implementation and operation of federal reentry courts in the state of Mississippi. The primary objective of this research is to conduct a multi-site process evaluation of the three federal reentry courts in your district. First, this research will attempt to provide a better understanding of how these programs are being implemented. Secondly, it will attempt to inform researchers and policymakers of the benefits and risks of currently implemented policies as well as how to improve them. I am requesting your participation in this study to determine if these correctional interventions are being implemented according to evidence-based practices.

After this presentation, you will be provided with a consent form which will further detail the information regarding the purpose of the study and your participation. You can consent to the interview and your participation in the study by signing the consent form. During this interview you will be asked to answer some questions regarding you perceptions of the effectiveness of the reentry court programs. This interview is designed to be approximately an hour in length. If there are any questions that you would rather not answer or that you feel uncomfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or continue on to the next question. Please be aware that your participation in this interview and research is completely voluntary. All interview responses will remain confidential and will not be assessable by anyone other than myself. Furthermore, you will be debriefed after the interview is concluded to minimize any distress or discomfort that might arise from the interview. All documents pertaining to the interviews and the study will be properly destroyed.

If you choose to participate, I will be incredibly appreciative of your help and your participation will be a substantial contribution to scholarly research. This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Manager of the IRB at 601-266-5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Any questions about the research should be directed to Patricia Southerland at (601) 266-4509. Thank you very much for your time.

____________________________________________  ________________________
Signature of Person Giving Oral Presentation         Date

____________________________________________  ________________________
Signature of Witness         Date
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Participant’s Name ________________________________________

Consent is hereby given to participate in the research project entitled A Multi-Site Evaluation of Three Federal Reentry Courts in a Southern District of Federal Probation.

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, I wish to stop this interview, I may do so without an explanation. All procedures were explained and information was given about all benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected.

The opportunity to ask questions regarding this research was given and I am aware that all data will be used in a Master’s thesis. All information pertaining to this research will be strictly confidential, and no names will be disclosed. Any new information that develops during the projects will be provided if that information may affect the willingness to continue participation in the project.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, you may contact Patricia Southerland at the University of Southern Mississippi (601) 266-4509. This project and related consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

A copy of this consent form will be given to the participant.

I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time during this interview, I consent to participate in today’s interview.

_____________________________________________                    ___________________
Signature of Participant                     Date

_____________________________________________                     ___________________
Signature of Primary Investigator            Date
REFERENCES


*Crime & Delinquency, 47*(3), 291.


*Federal Probation, 75*(2), 64-73.


