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Assessing the Effectiveness of San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Reducing Recidivism

Jeremiah Platon

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Assessing the Effectiveness of San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services in
Reducing Recidivism

Submitted by Jeremiah Platon

EMPA 396 Graduate Research Project in Public Management

Golden Gate University

San Francisco, California

Faculty Advisors:

Dr. Jay Gonzalez and Dr. Mick McGee

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Abstract

With a strong focus on reducing California's high recidivism rates, Assembly Bill 109 encourages to consider alternatives to incarceration and to adopt evidence-based practices. As a result of the legislation, non-serious, non-violent, and non-sexual offenders being released from state prisons now face difficult challenges in securing housing and employment. Vocational rehabilitation programs can be helpful in a way to mitigate these problems to allow those who were formerly incarcerated to concentrate on adjusting to life after prison. The review of scholarly publications and practitioner studies include the (1) definition of vocational rehabilitation (VR); a brief background and history of VR, (3) the benefits and challenges of VR; (4) brief background of Assembly Bill 109 and its impact to VR; and (5) theories regarding motivating behaviors associated with committing crimes. Mixed methods were used in this study to collect quantitative data from 85 formerly incarcerated adults and qualitative data from 8 key informants, which included top management to line staff. Data collected in this research will further examine the effectiveness of San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services and hope to serve as an evidence-based model for other counties in helping formerly incarcerated adults reintegrate back into society.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Recidivism remains an ongoing problem in the United States, and especially in the State of California. According to a 2012 report by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), just over 65 percent of those released from California's prison system return within three years. Subsequently, this number has not changed substantially over the years. The report additionally reveals insight into a few factors that influence recidivism including the way that 73 percent of the recidivists perpetrated another wrongdoing or violated parole within the first year of their discharge from jail (CDCR, 2012). Nonetheless, formerly incarcerated individuals face a myriad of challenges when released, including finding housing and receiving proper treatment programs, trying not to reoffend, and, perhaps most importantly, gaining and keeping employment. It's a fight that hundreds of thousands of people face each year when they are released from correctional facilities. They find that they may be free from prison, but they are not free from the struggles that come with finding community employment while trying not to reoffend. However, there are programs out there, such as San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), that are built on the understanding that employment is critical to the success of becoming self-sufficient, once again.

Background of the Problem

Formerly incarcerated individuals who are released can find gaining employment a significant barrier, which could potentially lead them back to recidivate. Formerly incarcerated individuals need stable jobs for the same reasons as every other citizen: to support themselves

and their loved ones, pursue life goals, and strengthen their communities. But how many formerly incarcerated individuals can find work right away?

Unfortunately, just having the status as formerly incarcerated can potentially dissuade employers from hiring these individuals. Ajunwa and Onwuachi-Willig (2018) points out a discernment in which the labor market can be quite “extensive, occurring both as a result of governmental and private action.” For instance, obtaining employment in licensed profession fields can be difficult because many government statutes either directly or indirectly prevent them from getting work licenses in a variety of areas, such as nursing, barbering, and education to name a few (Ajunwa & Onwuachi-Willig, 2018). Obtaining employment in private industry, formerly incarcerated individuals can automatically be disqualified before given the chance to interview, because of lengthy criminal background checks that are done beforehand.

Vocational rehabilitation, where the workplace is used to assist an injured employee to return to pre-injury employment, is a complex and multi-factorial process (Blackman & Chiveralls, 2011). Returning to pre-injury employment does not just include coming from a physical impairment, but from an emotional or mental impairment as well (Blackman & Chiveralls, 2011). Formerly incarcerated individuals are among those that would undoubtedly benefit from returning to their pre-injury employment status by participating in vocational rehabilitation programs.

The following two stories from participants in San Mateo County's VRS program demonstrate examples of the substantial barriers experienced by formerly incarcerated individuals prior to employment. These two stories represent examples of how VRS carries out its mission by “creating pathways towards self-sufficiency through vocational counseling and assessment, case management, job training, and job placement” (County of San Mateo, n.d.).

Ms. Tiana Bettencourt, a 41-year-old female with five children, who has had a 20-year meth addiction and was incarcerated twice in the same year was seeking a change in her life. For Ms. Bettencourt, it wasn't until after the second incarceration that she realized that something had to change and that she had to become a better role model for her children. Because the charges were non-violent, non-serious, and non-sexual, Ms. Bettencourt was sentenced to the AB 109 program in San Mateo County. Being part of the AB 109 cohort granted her the chance to seek services with Service Connect, where they were able to refer her to the VRS program located in San Carlos, CA. During the first month at VRS, Ms. Bettencourt was assigned to the Work Center, where she was closely supervised by VRS staff while she did various assembly and production work. But because Ms. Bettencourt was able to display a strong work ethic and dedication to her rehabilitation in the first month, VRS staff decided that she was better off in a fast-paced working environment with the Catering Connection.

The Catering Connection offers VRS clients the opportunity to work with experienced, professional chefs in a fully-equipped commercial kitchen to prepare and cater gourmet meals to internal (county) and external (non-county) customers. Once Ms. Bettencourt started working with the Catering Connection, she was able to interview for the 18-month driving position with VRS. Ms. Bettencourt was then awarded the driving position and stated that the extension from 6- to 18- months with VRS proved to be "impactful" and "life-changing" (Personal interview, December 3, 2018). During this extended time, she did not let time go to waste. While Ms. Bettencourt was busy delivering meals to customers in San Mateo County, she also worked with VRS job developers to work on writing resumes and gaining letters of recommendations from VRS supervisors. Towards

the end of the 18- month program, Ms. Bettencourt was able to land a job as an AOD (Alcohol and other drugs) counselor with the Latino Commission in San Bruno, CA. Since leaving VRS, Ms. Bettencourt has proven herself to be self-sufficient and is now working a second job with Our Common Ground in Redwood City, where she gladly helps others struggling with addiction, withdrawal, and recovery.

In this second example, Ms. Miriam Morales describes her journey as a “long walk to freedom” (Personal interview, December 18, 2018). Ms. Morales was born in Mexico but grew up in the United States, where she fell into a life of drugs. At 16 years old, Ms. Morales had her first child and became a high school dropout. She later had four more children with different fathers. But becoming a parent didn't bring happiness into her life. That happiness came in the form of methamphetamine (meth). She became addicted to meth and, subsequently lost custody of her children. For Ms. Morales, there was nothing in the world that mattered except her next encounter with meth. And as much as she wanted to get clean and change her life around, she realized she didn't know where to start.

Without a high school education, a family, and a full-time job to be self-sustainable, Ms. Morales started to sell drugs. When Ms. Morales finally got arrested for drug possession, she told the arresting officer, "thank you for your help" (Personal Interview, December 18, 2018). Ms. Morales was tired of the life that she was living and saw this not as a failure, but as an opportunity to change her life. This opportunity at a new life came in the form of the judge dropping her charges and sentencing her to one year in prison plus probation. After her sentence, Ms. Morales was able to connect with services that would soon change her life around.

Ms. Morales was able to connect with San Mateo County's Service Connect program where they picked her up at the time of release and drove her to a residential program that she had to commit to for 90 days. Upon completion of the residential program, Ms. Morales was then referred to the six-month VRS program, where she was able to start working and receive temporary income. Ms. Morales was now in a "safe and healthy environment" surrounded by Service Connect and VRS staff to help her along the way (Personal Interview, December 18, 2018). While working in production with VRS, she was able to receive other services such as job development, job coaching, resume writing, and job interviewing skills to help prepare her for community employment. The services offered by Service Connect and VRS, ultimately helped her land a full-time job as a counselor for a women's residential home. After getting her GED (General Educational Development), Ms. Morales was able to enroll with the College of San Mateo and pursue her associate's degree in social science. Ms. Morales has dedicated her next chapter in life to others who are suffering from substance abuse.

The examples provided by Ms. Bettencourt and Ms. Morales describes their challenges before and after receiving services from San Mateo County. For Ms. Bettencourt, it was the long battle of substance abuse that triggered her motives for offending. Although Ms. Morales experienced substance abuse, she lacked an education to gain and sustain employment. These reintegration challenges (substance abuse, housing, food, clothing, employment, etc.) are reasons that San Mateo County's VRS, along with the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) from other departments, such as Human Services, Health System, Service Connect, Behavioral Health and Recovery (BHRS), Probation, and the Sheriff's Departments have created a supportive, multi-disciplinary approach in helping to reduce recidivism.

Statement of the Problem:

The problem investigated in this research concerns the services and support systems for returning formerly incarcerated individuals to gainful employment. Governments and local community-based organizations provide the “safety net” for helping people return to a “new normal” life. In this case, it is about creating and shaping the new setting which includes training for employment. This problem, if mitigated, provides countless individuals with new skills for employment, i.e., a job and income but more importantly, a sense of renewed hope and aspiration to change their lives in productive ones. The problem investigated in this study is about creating a new beginning for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Purpose of this Study:

This research paper examines the effectiveness of San Mateo County's VRS in helping to reduce recidivism. Every individual may have different intentions and motivations which places them in a position to recidivate. This paper does not focus on eliminating recidivism. However, the purpose of this research is to examine how VRS uses its services to re-integrate formerly incarcerated individuals back into society, efficiently and effectively, which could be used as an evidence-based practice for other counties. Recommendations will be provided later for key leaders and stakeholders.

Significance of the Study:

Vocational rehabilitation programs can be pivotal to the success of gaining employment for a formerly incarcerated individual. The significance of effective vocational rehabilitation and the ability to return to work is supported by relevant literature. Employment-focused re-entry programs provide job readiness courses, job assessment and development, and postplacement activities (Buck, 2000). Participation in the labor force has the potential to boost self-esteem and provide adequate economic support to offenders (Osher et al., 2003). Employment is an essential measure of the success of offender re-entry, as it not only offers the best chance for economic self-sufficiency but also has been shown to decrease recidivism (Buck, 2000; Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

Research Questions and Hypothesis:

The main research question of this study is: does San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services, help lower recidivism? This study examined whether or not formerly incarcerated individuals receiving the proper services to address underlying problems as it relates to gaining and sustaining employment? For example, substance abuse and addiction can undermine vocational rehabilitation for individuals who don't receive proper treatment. The Center for Substance Abuse and Treatment (2005) explains, "Although highly important to an offender's recovery, vocational training and employment can create problems when they are mandated ...before the offender has been engaged in [substance abuse] treatment".

The hypothesis of this study is: San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services are effective in transitioning formerly incarcerated individuals back into society. The author of this research paper arrived at this hypothesis through their own observations as an employee for

San Mateo County, working as a rehabilitation production supervisor. Through deductive reasoning, a formerly incarcerated individual who is able to take advantage of the services (counseling, job development, job placement, etc.) being offered by VRS can increase their chances of gaining and sustaining employment.

Assumptions and Limitations:

The amount of time – eight weeks – to complete this study is a serious limitation. The assumption made by this researcher is the services that VRS offers to help formerly incarcerated individuals are effective in helping to reduce recidivism. Additionally, a limitation of this study was a lack of evaluation data on the effectiveness of San Mateo County's VRS in helping to reduce recidivism. This limitation was mitigated by scheduling and completing several interviews with subject matter experts to supplement empirical quantitative evaluation data.

Definition of Terms:

1170(H): Passage of AB 109 enacted penal code section 1170(h) which mandated that certain felons who have committed non-violent, non-serious and non-sex offenses (N3) will be housed in county jail as opposed to state prison.

AOD: Alcohol and Other Drugs.

Community Corrections Partnership (CCP): All 58 California counties are required to establish a Community Corrections Partnership in order to implement the Public Safety Realignment Act. The Community Corrections Partnership acts as the governing body

responsible for developing and submitting Public Safety Realignment Act implementation recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Proposition 47: California Proposition 47, the Reduced Penalties for Some Crimes Initiative, was approved by voters on the November 4, 2014 ballot as an initiated state statute. The initiative reduced the classification of most non-serious and nonviolent property and drug crimes from a felony to a misdemeanor.

Public Safety Realignment Act (AB 109) – The Public Safety Realignment Act is a California state law that went into effect October 1, 2011. The law addresses overcrowding in the California state prison system through transferring responsibility for incarceration and supervision of many low-level inmates and parolees from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to the county level.

Recidivism: Recidivism is an arrest and/or criminal filing of a new crime committed within three years of release from custody or committed within three years of placement on supervision for a previous conviction.

Service Connect: Service Connect provides a range of services aimed at supporting former inmates as they reenter the community. Service Connect is available to individuals who have served sentences for specific low-level offenses, who live or plan to live in San Mateo County, and who are enrolled in Post Release Community Supervision or who served their sentence in county jails under the 1170(h) program.

Vocational rehabilitation (VR): a set of services offered to individuals with mental or physical disabilities. These services are designed to enable participants to attain skills, resources, attitudes, and expectations needed to compete in the interview process, get a job, and keep a job.

Expected Impact of the Research:

The expected impact of this study was to complete a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis in assessing the effectiveness of San Mateo County's VRS. Providing data for VRS will allow management and leadership to identify best practices. This research will benefit not only VRS but could be used throughout San Mateo County's CCP members to improve overall effectiveness to reduce recidivism.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The following themes were examined in this literature review of scholarly publications and practitioner studies include the following themes: (1) definition of vocational rehabilitation (VR); a brief background and history of VR, (3) the benefits and challenges of VR; (4) brief background of Assembly Bill 109 and its impact to VR; and (5) theories regarding motivating behaviors associated with committing crimes. Each theme is described in separate sections below.

Defining Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation traditionally refers to the provision of some type of service to enhance the employability of an individual who has been limited by a disabling, physical condition (Elliot & Leung, 2004). Individuals with these conditions may experience significant mobility restrictions; have restricted access to certain environments essential for education, work performance, or training; or have limited educational and training opportunities during their childhood and youth that subsequently impair their preparation for work (Elliot & Leung, 2004). Chan et al. (1997), defines vocational rehabilitation as:

“A dynamic process consisting of a series actions and activities that follow a logical, sequential progression of services related to the total needs of a person with a disability. The process begins with the initial case finding or referral, and ends with the successful placement of the individual in employment. Many activities and developments occur concurrently and in overlapping time frames during this process.”

Researchers have estimated that 53 million Americans have a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003), and 26.4 million Americans of working age have a work related

disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Researchers also estimated that as many as 3.3 million Americans might benefit from vocational rehabilitation services (Hayward & Schmidt-Davis, 2000). Recognizing the importance of work, vocational rehabilitation professionals have consistently advocated for it as a fundamental human right of people with disabilities (Marrone & Golowka, 2000). Therefore, job placement of people with disabilities at the highest level possible has been central to defining the mission of many vocational rehabilitation programs (Chan et al., 2005; Rubin & Roessler, 2001).

Background and History of VR

For more than a century, rehabilitation legislation in the United States has assisted persons with disabilities for purposes of gaining employment. Early legislation began with the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 which was the first legislation in the US that provided federal matching funds for vocational education programs. In 1920, the civilian vocational rehabilitation was enacted as a temporary program. In 1935, the Social Security Act established vocational rehabilitation as a permanent program. The rehabilitation legislation under which vocational rehabilitation services are currently provided is in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Under Section 504, organizations and employers are forbidden from excluding or denying qualified individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.), individuals with disabilities are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. These major life activities include caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning. For purposes of employment, qualified individuals with disabilities are persons who, with reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the job for which they

have applied or have been hired to perform (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Since its commencement, vocational rehabilitation has been a case management and purchase of services program. Vocational rehabilitation counselors assess an applicants' medical and psychological documentation to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. If the applicant is determined to be eligible for rehabilitation services, the counselor assists the client in developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE was mandated by law under the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. The IPE formalizes the planning process through which the vocational goal, service delivery and time frames for service delivery are determined. The IPE identifies the individual's employment objective, consistent with his/her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities and capabilities and provides a plan for monitoring progress towards achievement of goals.

The Rehabilitation Act also went beyond providing legal protection, and made specific reference to providing direct services to aid persons with disabilities to obtain employment (Rothstein, 2014). Civil rights protections for individuals with disabilities expanded with the passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), specifically under Title I, which focuses on employment practices.

Title I of ADA prohibits private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies and labor unions from discriminating against appropriate qualified individuals with disabilities in employment application process, hiring, firing, career growth opportunities, salary and/or compensation, training, and other conditions and privileges of employment (ADA, 1990). An employer is required to make an accommodation if it would not impose an "undue hardship" on the employer's business. Undue hardship is defined as "an action requiring significant

difficulty or expense when considered in light of factors such as an employer's size, financial resources and the nature and structure of its operation” (ADA, 1990). Another provision of the ADA is specific to the questions that employers may ask during an employment interview. The ADA strictly limits the circumstances under which an employer can ask questions pertaining to disability (ADA, 1990).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1972 and the ADA has both made an impact on vocational rehabilitation. According to Golden (2006):

“ADA was influenced by the earlier Rehabilitation Act in several important ways. First, Congress was convinced that the Rehabilitation Act alone was not sufficient to end the widespread discrimination against people with disabilities that exists in this country. Secondly, where courts interpreted the Section 504 antidiscrimination provisions very narrowly, Congress clarified their intention to provide broader protections in the ADA. Finally, much of the ADA is based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and its regulations.”

In contrast, the ADA influenced the Rehabilitation Act during its reauthorization in 1992. In 1992 the Rehabilitation Act was amended to reflect the language, goals and objectives of the ADA. The Rehabilitation Act adopted the ADA's emphasis on integration as its own, and translated the principles and policies of the ADA into government rehabilitation programs for people with disabilities.

Benefits and Challenges of VR

While legislation of VR has evolved significantly over the years, many critics of VR have found inadequacies in providing the level of services needed for disabled job-seekers (Certo et al., 2008; MacInnes et al., 2014). Individuals with disabilities who are able to overcome the

initial barriers associated with acquiring a job, may continue to face numerous barriers to maintaining employment (Miller et al., 2014). In addition, employers are often hesitant to hire people with disabilities due to misconceptions of their abilities, needs, and safety and liability concerns (Yeager et al., 2006). Furthermore, employers frequently are apprehensive about hiring people with disabilities due to the assumed expensive costs of the potential accommodations that the employee with a disability may need in order to work successfully (Kaye et al., 2011).

Therefore, VR professionals must have a thorough understanding of the real concerns of employers about hiring and retention of persons with disabilities and be able to address their concerns and needs. Helping individuals with disabilities develop flexible, versatile, and adaptable work skills to meet employer expectations and requirements for jobs will improve their odds of obtaining employment (Chan et al., 2010).

In general, the benefit of participating in vocational rehabilitation has affected individuals with disabilities on employment outcomes. According to a study from Dutta et al. (2008), "the United States state-federal rehabilitation service program, which spends more than 2.5 million annually, plays a large and instrumental role in helping people with disabilities obtain and retain employment." The employment rates of people with disabilities after receiving vocational rehabilitation services are consistently found to be around 60 percent (Rosenthal et al., 2006; Kaye, 1998). Employment outcomes achieved by state vocational rehabilitation agencies remain relatively constant among fiscal years, although considerable variance has been observed by disability type, with persons with sensory/communicative impairments having the best outcomes and people with mental impairments having the poorest (Rosenthal et al., 2006). Job placement and on-the-job support services appear to contribute most significantly to

employment outcomes, and manufacturing and service jobs tend to be the most common job placement outcomes (Rosenthal et al., 2006; Kaye, 1998).

AB 109 population

This VR literature reviewed at this point concerned individuals with physical and/or mental barriers to gaining and sustaining employment. However, there is another and larger population which includes individuals who have committed crimes, served their sentences, and have been released back into society to find employment.

In 2011, California Assembly Bill (AB) 109, also known as the Public Safety Realignment Act, went into effect and dramatically changed California's policies around the sentencing, incarceration, and supervision of prisoners. The goals behind realignment were to decrease the number of inmates in state prisons, decrease the number of low-level offenders in prison, reduce recidivism, and increase prisoners' community integration after release (Owen & Mobley, 2012). Realignment defines "low-level offenders" as offenders who are non-serious, non-violent, and non-sexual (N3). These N3 offenders are sent to county jail and/or post-release supervision rather than state prisons for sentences up to three years in length.

However, this population of formerly incarcerated individuals faces serious challenges for reentry into society. Many of these individuals have the following characteristics: little education, few job skills, little job experience that may result to employment, substance and alcohol dependency. Furthermore, each individual cope with a criminal record that can stand in the way of employment opportunities following release.

According to a study by Nally et al. (2014), "over one third of offenders never find employment following release from prison." Researchers concluded that this may, in part, be a result of both specific job-related issues (such as inadequate skills or limited previous

experience) and broader factors such as the impact of disability, substance abuse, dependency, and limited literacy and numeracy (Graffam et al., 2008). The United States, for example, incarcerates a significantly greater proportion of its citizens than any other Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) country (almost 700 per 100,000), with the United Kingdom and similar countries having much lower rates of imprisonment (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2015) in terms of educational attainment, lack of employment history, and levels of disability. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that levels of education, training, and employment for ex-prisoners everywhere are much lower than for the general population (Newton et al., 2018).

Background and History of AB 109

Formulating policy requires recognizing policy problems, developing public policy proposals, and engaging in political activities, such as lobbying with bureaucracies (Kingdon, 2011). These three processes can be referred to as the problem stream, policy stream, and political stream, respectively. When these streams intersect at critical stages, policy development and solutions can quickly come together through a “policy window” – open for a short time, when the conditions to push a given subject higher on the policy agenda are right (Kingdon, 2011). Subsequently, this policy window opened in the spring of 2011 and paved the way for Governor Edmund G. Brown to sign AB 109 into law. Governor Brown (2011) stated that, “cycling these offenders through state prisons wastes money, aggravates crowded conditions, thwarts rehabilitation, and impedes local law enforcement supervision.”

In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Plata* that California must reduce its prison population to 137.5 percent of design capacity. The Supreme Court agreed with a three-judge panel that overcrowding was the triggering mechanism of the violation and upheld the

panel's order to reduce the state prison population. California's prisons are designed to house a population just under 80,000, but at the time of the decision under review the population was almost double that. The resulting conditions are the subject of two federal class actions that resulted to the reduction of the prison population and the enactment of AB 109.

In *Coleman v. Brown*, filed in 1990, the District Court found that prisoners with serious mental illness do not receive minimal, adequate care. A Special Master appointed to oversee remedial efforts reported 12 years later that the state of mental health care in California's prisons was deteriorating due to increased overcrowding. In *Plata v. Brown*, filed in 2001, the State conceded that deficiencies in prison medical care violated prisoners' Eighth Amendment rights and stipulated to a remedial injunction (*Brown v. Plata*, 2011). But when the State had not complied with the injunction by 2005, the court appointed a Receiver to oversee remedial efforts. Three years later, the Receiver described continuing deficiencies caused by overcrowding. Believing that a remedy for unconstitutional medical and mental health care could not be accomplished without reducing overcrowding, the *Coleman* and *Plata* plaintiffs moved their respective District Courts to convene a three-judge court empowered by the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995 (PLRA) to order reductions in the prison population. The judges in both actions granted the request, and the cases were consolidated before a single three-judge court (*Brown v. Plata*, 2011). Finding that the prison population would have to be reduced if capacity could not be increased through new construction, the court ordered the State to formulate a compliance plan and submit it for court approval.

Impact of AB 109 on California Counties

Although these realignment policies have resulted in a decrease of the state prison population, counties across California must handle post-release supervision of N3 offenders,

sentencing new prisoners, and choices between incarceration and alternatives. A fundamental principle of AB 109 is that counties should have a steady hand in designing their own approach to managing offenders who are now under their supervision. Lin and Petersilia (2014) suggests that “fiscal policy and correctional practices should align to promote a justice reinvestment strategy that fits each county,” and defines “justice reinvestment” as a “data-driven approach to reduce corrections spending and reinvest savings” using “evidence-based strategies designed to increase public safety.” It is laudable that the state endorsed the use of a data-driven approach and evidence-based strategies; however, counties need additional support to meet this challenge (Flynn, 2013). As Petersilia and Snyder (2013) note, “This is the biggest penal experiment in modern history.” However, because no state funding was set aside for an evaluation, and counties were not legally obligated to keep track of or evaluate their locally sentenced and supervised populations, most of how this policy has affected the counties remains unknown (Mischynski, 2012; Petersilia and Snyder, 2013).

As a result of AB 109, each county is responsible for creating a Community Corrections Partnerships (CCP) to design the county's realignment implementation plan, which they submit to the county Board of Supervisors. The CCP Executive Committee members include: Chief probation officer, Human and Health Services, Chief of police, Sheriff, District Attorney, Public Defender, presiding judge of the Superior Court or his/her designee, and a representative from either the County Department of Social Services, Mental Health, or Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs, as appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. If the plan is approved, the CCP is in charge of overseeing and implementing the plan as well as allocating state funds to the necessary agencies involved in carrying out the plan (CDCR, 2013).

Although neither the CDCR nor any other state agency is required to approve the local realignment plans in the implementation of AB 109, CDCR does provide state funding, as well as a variety of realignment information and documents for counties to help them with the implementation of local plans (CDCR, 2013). CDCR does not oversee the implementation of each county's local plan. CDCR notifies counties of an inmate's release, and the CDCR Case Records Unit prepares inmates' pre-release packets and post-release packets for County Probation Departments to facilitate a post release community supervision (PRCS) (CDCR, 2013). CDCR also shares monthly population projections for counties to learn the projected increase in sentenced offenders so that counties can manage jail populations, as well as Average Daily Population (ADP) projections for counties to identify the total resources needed at full implementation (CDCR, 2013).

Maslow's Hierarchy Theory

With an influx of formerly incarcerated individuals being released in many counties, the need for county stakeholders and leaders to start conceptualizing possible determinants of offenders recidivating is now on the agenda for budgetary reasons. One possible theory would be to understand the motivations of individuals recidivating. Are formerly incarcerated individuals meeting their everyday, basic needs to become sustainable? According to Abraham Maslow (1946), there is a five-level hierarchy of needs which outlines as necessary for the achievement of a "completely satisfied individual"; or in his terms, a self-actualized being. Those needs are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization.

Physiological needs can be described as the most basic of human needs; those needed for human survival. These include breathing, water, food, and shelter (housing). Safety needs are those needs which create stability and predictability in our lives: personal and financial security,

health and well-being, and employment and access to resources. Love/belonging needs are centered around social interactions and interpersonal relationships: friendship, family, and intimacy. Esteem needs reflect our desires for respect, self-esteem and the need to belong. Lastly, self-actualization is the state which the individual achieves when all other needs have been met.

Each need, or level, is fulfilled in sequence and serves as motivation until all the needs of the individual are met in self-actualization. While Maslow emphasized that individuals will generally be motivated to seek each need in the order described, he also stated that the order of his hierarchy is “not nearly as rigid as we may have implied” and that in some individuals will seek needs in different order (Maslow, 1946). Attempts to address a need may create an on-going process of human motivation and self-discovery that increases over time (Maslow, 1946). This aligns closely with the representation of recovery for an individual to becoming a self-actualized individual (Jacobson and Greenley, 2001; Onken et al., 2007).

According to Newton et al. (2018), “prison administrations are seeking to address these needs by offering a range of different pre- and post-release services that aim to improve the employability of ex-offenders and ex-prisoners. These include work readiness training, vocational education and training, and job placement to enhance skill sets and address poor work histories. It is often assumed that offenders who find employment will be less likely to re-offend than those who do not (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2014; Ajunwa & Onwuachi-Willig, 2018; Buck, 2000; Sampson & Laub, 1977). A good job not only provides the means for basic survival, but also is a key element in rebuilding the self-esteem, attachment to a conventional lifestyle, and a sense of belonging in the community (Visher et al., 2005).

Identifying Criminogenic Behaviors

While most low-risk offenders who are able to meet and satisfy Maslow's theory, individuals that are considered high-risk to recidivate will need a more comprehensive treatment theory, as in a risk/need/responsivity model (RNR) (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990). According to Bewley & Morgan (2011), "comprehensive treatment emphasizes the need to assess offenders on risk factors that are associated with recidivism." The 'risk' focuses on treating offenders with the highest risk of returning to prison, as they have consistently been found to benefit the most from treatment (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). While 'need' focuses on treating a specific set of risks of an offender, also known as criminogenic needs (Bewley & Morgan, 2011). Lastly, the 'responsivity' factor of RNR focuses on having treatment tailored to the learning styles of the individual offender to ensure effectiveness (Bewley & Morgan, 2011).

Wooditch et al. (2013) describes these criminogenic needs as an "underlying theory that offending is a product of the history of criminal justice involvement and specific criminogenic needs." By attending to these dynamic criminogenic needs through proper treatment and control programming, one can affect offending behavior. Criminogenic needs are also assessed with the help of structured instruments; risk and needs assessments (Andrews et al., 2006). The measurements typically result in an intervention instrument, such as a sentence plan that directs the interventions during imprisonment, which goals should be reached, and which programs are needed in order to target the criminogenic needs. These criminogenic needs include: antisocial cognitions, antisocial associates (peers), family and marital relations, leisure activities, and substance abuse.

Antisocial cognitions, or antisocial thought patterns, is a criminogenic need that reinforces participation in criminal activity. Henning & Frueh (1996) states that cognitive

thinking errors reinforces criminal lifestyles through self-interest, minimization of prosocial activities, denial of responsibility for behavior, and pleasurable or deviant thoughts about criminal activity. While, antisocial associates are needs of an individual to spend time with deviant peers, which increases offending behaviors by providing the techniques, motives, and reinforcement for committing crimes (Wooditch et al., 2013).

Family and marital relationships that are strong and healthy will help in reducing offending behavior (Andrews et al., 2006). Family members and other supportive individuals facilitate informal social controls – those interpersonal bonds which link ex-inmates to churches, law-abiding neighbors, families and communities. Leisure activities can be associated with an old adage, as Andrews & Bonta (2003) points out, “idle times make idle hands”. An individual with free time and not engaging with activities, that are associated in meeting basic needs, can increase offending behavior. Lastly, substance abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs can significantly increase the likelihood of offending behaviors. According to a report by the National Institute of Justice (2010), the prevalence of alcohol and drug use is “4 times higher among offenders than in the general population.” Substance abuse can interfere with an individual's relationships with family or friends, as well as the ability to fulfill work or school obligations in resulting to offending behaviors (Andrews et al., 2006; Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Wooditch et al., 2013).

Overall, the RNR model of risk and needs assessment and offender treatment incorporates evidence-based practices for reducing recidivism (Casey et al., 2011). As the name implies, the model has three principles: assessing risk, addressing criminogenic needs, and providing treatment that is responsive to the offender's abilities and learning style. The RNR model also suggests individuals and social/situational factors intersect to create values,

cognitions, and personality orientations that are conducive to criminal conduct (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). These ways of thinking and responding are learned and reinforced through feedback, and eventually result in individual differences in the propensity for criminal behavior (Casey et al., 2011).

Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted a number of key issues regarding benefits and challenges of vocational rehabilitation. For individuals with disabilities, there are inadequacies that include the misconception, attitudes, and liability concerns that may prohibit an employer from hiring. Each author demonstrates different approaches used in VR with the main goal of gaining or sustaining employment. With employment as a main goal, San Mateo County introduced a new population that would be able to benefit and hopefully fill a void or need. In supporting the study's hypothesis, meeting an individual's basic need, formerly incarcerated adults will be able to build a foundation towards self-sufficiency.

Chapter 3 - Research Methods

A mixed methods case study design was used for this research study. A mixed method approach provided this researcher the ability to 1) examine real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and possible influences for the formerly incarcerated population; 2) provide an application of quantitative research assessing program effectiveness and qualitative research exploring the meaning and understanding of the constructs; and 3) data gathered quantitatively and qualitatively helped formulate a holistic framework for generating solutions or new understandings of the problem.

The main research question examined in this study was: does San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) transition formerly incarcerated individuals back into society and help with reducing recidivism? By participating in VRS, will formerly incarcerated individuals learn new skills to find gainful employment? This problem, if mitigated, will provide a sense of hope and new opportunities.

The research hypothesis of this study was: San Mateo County's VRS are effective in transitioning formerly incarcerated individuals back into society. The independent variable is San Mateo County's VRS and the dependent variable are the formerly incarcerated transitioning back into society. Although the dependent variable in this study shows there are different reintegration challenges; such as family support, drug treatment, employment, and housing, the "safety net" resources that the independent variable is able to provide (e.g., counseling, case management, job training, and job placement) will depend on the variability of engagement. Refer to Chapter 4 for complete findings.

Data Collection Plan Overview

Primary data was collected to assess the effectiveness of San Mateo County's VRS was taken from surveys (quantitative) of formerly incarcerated individuals participating in VRS and key-informant interviews (qualitative) (see future appendices). A survey tool via Google Forms was used to collect and analyze data from the targeted population (formerly incarcerated). While interview questions were created and sent via email, which included a brief introduction to the purpose of the research as well as information regarding confidentiality.

Population sampling strategy

San Mateo County employees will be used in the qualitative analysis regarding the effectiveness of VRS reintegrating formerly incarcerated individuals back into society. These Subject Matter Experts were selected with backgrounds in social work, counseling, and job development. Participants were also chosen for this study who serves as members of the San Mateo County's Community Corrections Partnership in recommending implementation plans to the County Board of Supervisors.

Procedure

To gain quantitative data, the researcher reached out to at least 100 participants who were formerly incarcerated and have participated in the VRS program. These participants were given a link to an online, confidential survey to gain understanding of contributing factors to imprisonment, as well as reintegration challenges after being released from prison, and the effectiveness of services which are provided by San Mateo County's VRS.

To gain qualitative data, the researcher reached out to key stakeholders and staff that provides direct or ancillary services to the formerly incarcerated population. The researcher

asked approximately 10 questions to briefly describe their experience as it relates to the research hypothesis: San Mateo County's VRS are effective in transitioning formerly incarcerated adults back into society.

Key informants included: (See appendices)

1. Senior Probation Officer
2. Vocational Counseling Manager
3. Vocational Job Coach (Community Worker)
4. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
5. Service Connect Manager
6. Service Connect Social Worker
7. Employment Services Program Director (CCP member)
8. Human Services Agency Director (CCP member)

Operational Definitions

San Mateo - formed in April 1856 out of the southern portion of then-San Francisco County with a population of fewer than 5,000 people and little in the way of commerce. Today, more than 764,000 people call San Mateo County home, and it stretches the boundary of Silicon Valley northward. Innovation thrives here in industries including bioscience, computer software, green technology, hospitality, financial management, health care, education, and transportation. The County prides itself on how that prosperity fosters its commitment to protecting and enhancing the health, safety, welfare and natural resources of the community.

The County of San Mateo provides for the health and welfare of all people within its borders and serves as the local government for the unincorporated areas. Voters elect a five-member Board of

Supervisors and six additional County officials: The Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder/Chief Elections Officer, District Attorney, Controller, Coroner, Sheriff and Treasurer-Tax Collector.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) - a department under San Mateo County's Human Services Agency. VRS offers a unique opportunity in which clients can receive vocational counseling, case management, job development, and job placement upon receiving referral from these County programs:

- o Behavioral Health and Recovery (BHRS) - San Mateo County BHRS provides a broad spectrum of services for children, youth, families, adults and older adults for the prevention, early intervention, and treatment of mental illness or substance use conditions. BHRS is also committed to supporting treatment of the whole person to achieve wellness and recovery and promoting the physical and behavioral health of individuals, families, and communities we serve (BHRS, n.d).
- o Sheriff Work - The San Mateo County Court Work Program is a resource provided to the Courts. The program offers productive alternative sentencing for non-dangerous defendants in the form of public service work. Non-profit and government agencies volunteer to participate in the program by providing public service work opportunities. The Court Work Program provides a way for defendants to make positive contributions to the community. In addition, the program is an appropriate alternative for financially deprived defendants who are able to perform public service work but unable to pay fines (San Mateo County Probation, n.d.).

- o General Assistance (GA) – GA provides short-term cash assistance to low-income individuals who are residents of San Mateo County (San Mateo County Human Services, n.d).
- o CalWORKs - CalWORKs offers temporary cash assistance to low-income families with children along with services to help parents find and keep a job. CalWORKs can also help children who are not receiving financial support and care from their parents. HSA staff can also assist with health insurance and food assistance (San Mateo County Human Services, n.d).
- o Service Connect (Realignment) - Service Connect of San Mateo County provides a range of services aimed at supporting former inmates as they re-enter the community. Service Connect is available to individuals who have served sentences for specific low-level offenses, who live or plan to live in San Mateo County, and who are enrolled in Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS) or who served their sentence in county jails under the 1170h program (San Mateo County Human Services, n.d.).

Effective in transitioning formerly incarcerated individuals back into society - according to San Mateo's Public Safety Realignment Act Report (2015), performance goals that were adopted in FY 2015-16 included: (1) 80 percent SB 678 (Evidence-based practices in the sentencing and supervising of felony offenders) success rate (20 percent of which will be based on year-over-year improvement; and (2) 20 percent incarceration rates (specifically year-over-year reduction in the number of second-strike admissions to state prison, year-over-year new prison admissions, and per-capita rate of prison admissions) (San Mateo County Manager's Office, 2015). It is expected that the state will maintain this structure for growth distribution for approximately five

years until statewide performance factors directly related to 2011 public safety realignment are identified (San Mateo County Manager's Office, 2015).

Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variable in this study is San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services. For more than forty years, VRS has partnered with private industries to provide career opportunities for thousands of county residents. VRS offers a paid training and transitional work experience, hands-on job training, job coaching and mentoring. Clients who are referred to the VRS program are assigned to either working in a production assembly, catering, shipping or receiving setting.

The dependent variable in this study is the formerly incarcerated adults transitioning back into society. Since training and development can improve an individual's chances to effectively gain and sustain employment, the researcher hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between both variables.

Internal and External Validity

According to O'Sullivan et al. (2017), internal validity refers to the evidence that a specific independent variable caused a change in an observed dependent variable. Internal validity is also a confirmation of the correctness of the study design. A possible threat to internal validity was the researcher's vested interest in this study that could have resulted in research bias. The researcher is employed as a rehabilitation production supervisor with VRS. Evidence that disproves the methods studied may arise and the researcher must report these findings.

While external validity is the extent to which the results of the study can reflect similar outcomes elsewhere, and can be generalized to other populations or situations (O'Sullivan et al., 2017). A possible threat to external validity was the selected population's validity. The

researcher felt it was necessary to increase the number of questionnaire participants for a robust quantitative analysis.

Limitations:

Finding relevant literature, conducting interviews with stakeholders, and administering surveys in 8 weeks is a severe limitation. Also, surveys that will be generated for the targeted population of formerly incarcerated individuals will depend upon the availability, especially if they participated in the program and left to another state or county.

Conclusion

The research design focuses on assessing the effectiveness of San Mateo County's VRS in reducing recidivism. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analysis will answer the research hypothesis that services that are provided from San Mateo County's VRS are effective in reintegrating formerly incarcerated individuals back into society. The results of the findings will also recommend further research studies in improving services.

Chapter 4 - Results and Findings

Introduction

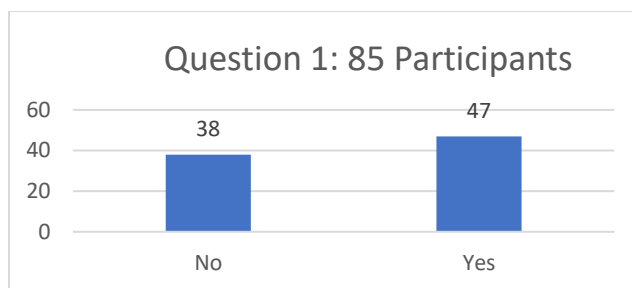
The research question examined in this study is: does San Mateo County's VRS helps formerly incarcerated adults reintegrate into society. In gathering data, it was important to seek out findings from each component of the study and consider where discoveries from each method agree, converge, or offer complementary information. Provided in this chapter is a review of the study's research methodology of the sample population, and the quantitative and qualitative data results and findings which address the research question.

Overview of Methodology

Data for this study was collected using a mixed method research. Quantitative data was collected from a sample population of eighty-five formerly incarcerated male and female adults, current or former participants of San Mateo County's VRS and included a mix of different ethnicities to include Hispanic, African-American, Caucasian, Asian, and Pacific Islander descent. Qualitative data was collected from eight key informants selected that provided their perspectives from their personal experiences and expertise.

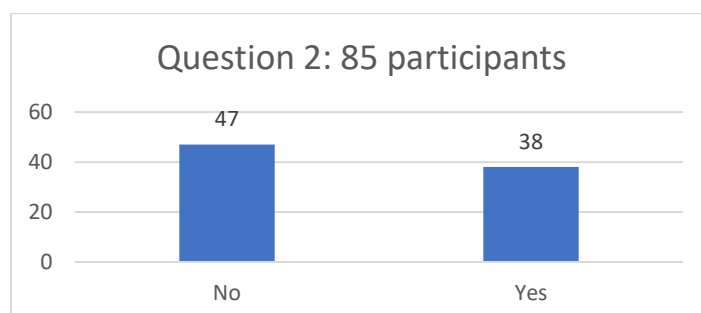
Survey Data

Question 1: Do you feel that you had adequate communication skills to sustain a job prior to your imprisonment?



This data suggests that while 56% of respondents show that they did have the adequate skills before going into prison, 44% of the respondents claimed they could've used more skills to enhance their chances to sustaining or gaining employment. Everything in a workplace environment results from communication. Therefore, good reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are essential in completing or achieving goals. Although VRS is able to provide assistance to these individuals through working with a job developer to focus on resume writing, interview practice, and job applications, implementing a soft skills training program to focus more on communication abilities would greatly help VRS clients.

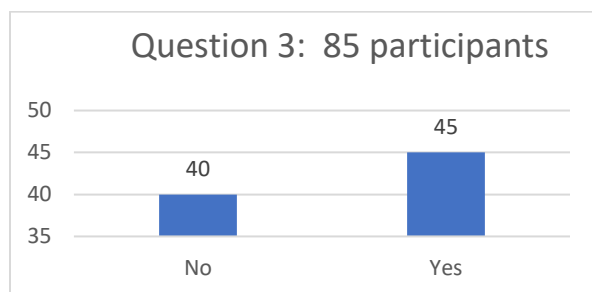
Question 2: Do you think being unemployed was the primary reason you re-offended?



This data shows that over half of the respondents does not consider employment as a factor in terms of committing crimes, while 45% of the respondents claimed unemployment directly contributed going back to prison. Using Maslow's theory, employment provides the resources for any individual to meet basic needs (food, clothing, safety), before moving up to

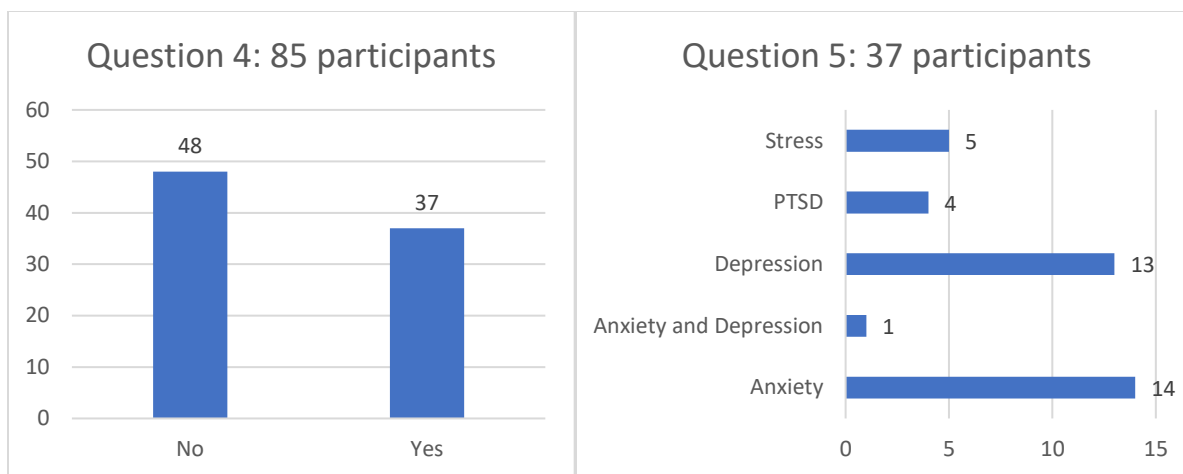
higher needs (esteem, self-actualization). But while employment is important in providing basic needs, several key informants discussed that there are moderating variables that needs to be addressed, such as substance abuse, addiction, and mental health before even considering employment.

Question 3: Did you feel you had a safe place to live prior to imprisonment?



This data suggests 53% of the respondents claimed they had a safe and stable housing in place, while 47% of the respondents were homeless. In January of 2017, San Mateo County reported there were approximately 1,253 individuals that were homeless (See appendix). These individuals include households living in streets, in cars, in RVs, in tents/encampments, and emergency shelters and transitional housing programs. San Mateo County provides this collaboration effort of addressing this issue of homelessness through several transitional housing programs such as Safe Harbor Shelter (Samaritan House), Spring Street Shelter, and LifeMoves for these clients to return to stable housing.

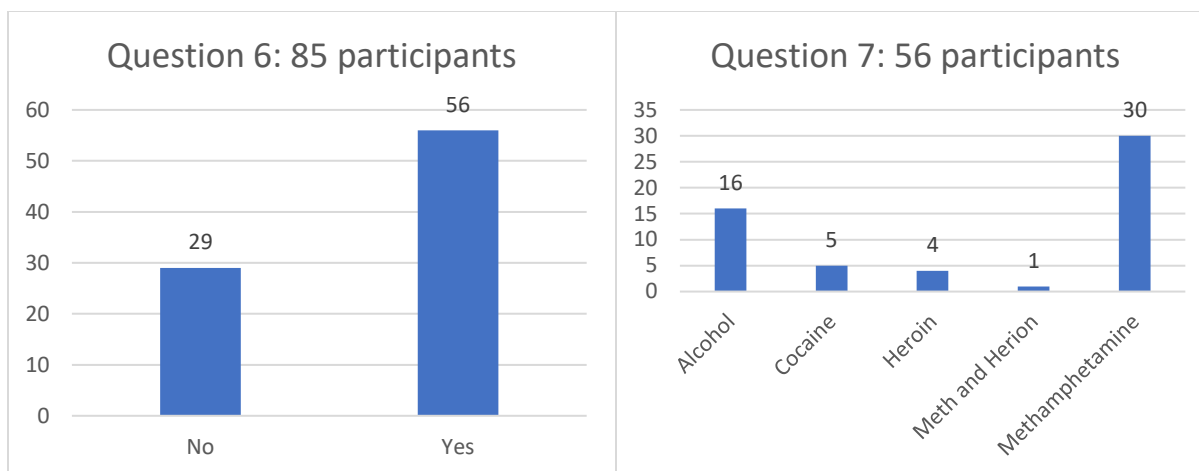
Question 4: Did you experience any psychological problems prior to imprisonment? Question 5: If you answered Yes to Question 4, what types of psychological disorders may have contributed to your imprisonment?



This data shows 56% of the respondents did not experience any psychological problems prior to prison, while 44% of the respondents admitted to having psychological issues. Of the 44% of the respondents, 5 reported stress, 4 reported PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder), 13 reported depression, 1 reported co-disorders of anxiety and depression, and 14 reported anxiety. These respondents must first confront the stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace. Despite the ratification of the American Disability Act (ADA), which prohibits discrimination against mental health impairments, mental health conditions continue to be viewed as a liability, and assumptions are often made about an individual's ability to perform well. This reality can create psychological barriers to applying for jobs. Additionally, searching for job can be a stressful and emotionally draining process, which can worsen symptoms of mental health conditions. To support these respondents, VRS collaborates with BHRS (Behavioral, Health, and Recovery Services) to help provide treatment with mental health clinicians, psychiatrists, alcohol and drug counselors, peers, and other professionals through county clinics, community agencies and a private provider network.

Question 6: Were you experiencing any addiction or substance abuse prior to imprisonment?

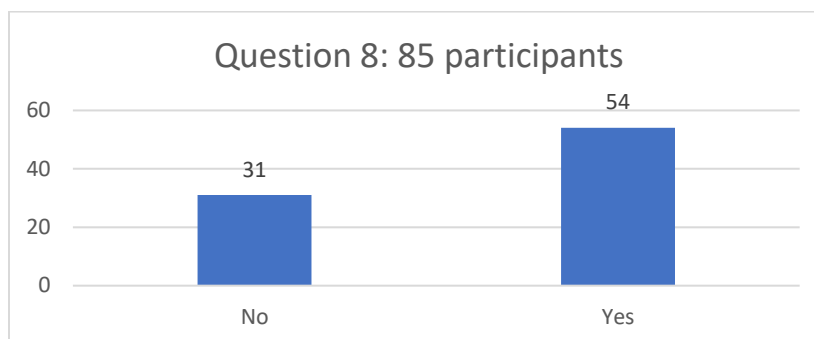
Question 7: If you answered Yes to Question 6, what type of substance/addiction?



This data shows that 56 (65%) of the respondents were experiencing addiction and/or substance abuse prior to imprisonment, while 29 (34%) of the respondents were free from substance abuse. Of the 56 respondents, 16 (29%) reported alcohol abuse; 5 (9%) reported cocaine abuse; 4 (7%) reported heroine; 30 (54%) reported just methamphetamine (meth); and one (1%) reported both meth and heroine. While drug abuse affects not only individual users, but also families and communities. VRS clients who are experiencing these types of challenges are referred to BHRS and/or AOD (Alcohol and Other Drug) Services. With the predictor variables – mental health symptoms – identified, treatment and recovery goals are tailored to each client's and their family's readiness to address these issues. Some of the treatment services that VRS clients may receive through BHRS and AOD include:

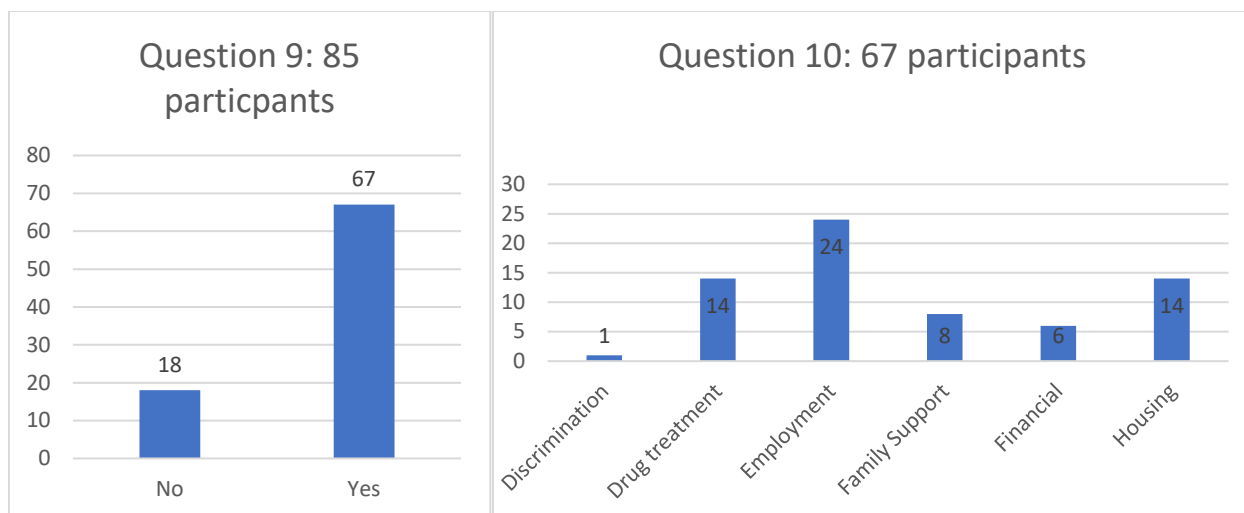
- Sober Living – residential sober living treatment program
- Mental Health Services –psychiatric services including assessments, counseling, and medication treatment plans
- AOD Residential – supportive infrastructure with peer counselors
- Mental Health Case Management – an individual service plan to set out goals and strategies
- AOD Case Management – Communicates case/treatment plans appropriately with probation officers, social workers, and family members

Question 8: Did you lack income to meet your basic needs (food, clothing, etc.) after imprisonment?



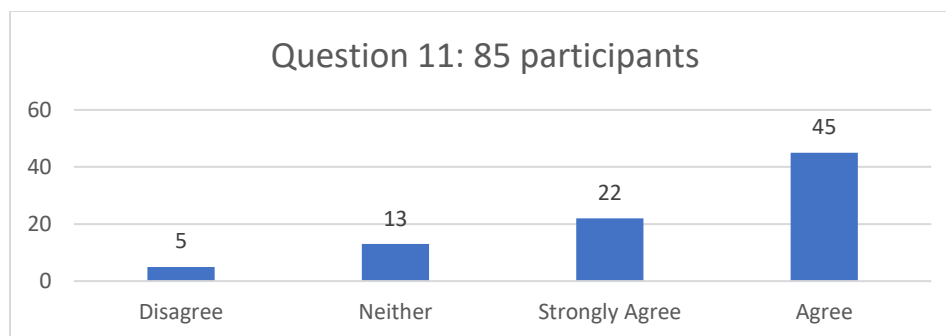
This data shows that 54 (64%) of the respondents, after being released from prison, was not able to meet their basic needs, while 31 (36%) of the respondents reported they had sufficient resources to support themselves. Several key informants have stressed the importance of the formerly incarcerated population finding employment to overcoming these challenges. In response to this employment challenge, clients who are referred by Service Connect to VRS are able to work and receive temporary income for up to six months. These respondents are assigned to a rehabilitation production supervisor working in either catering, production assembly, or shipping and receiving, while they work on their resumes and job applications towards community employment.

Question 9: Did you experience any challenges returning to your community after imprisonment? Question 10: If you said Yes to Question 9, what were your most serious reintegration challenges?



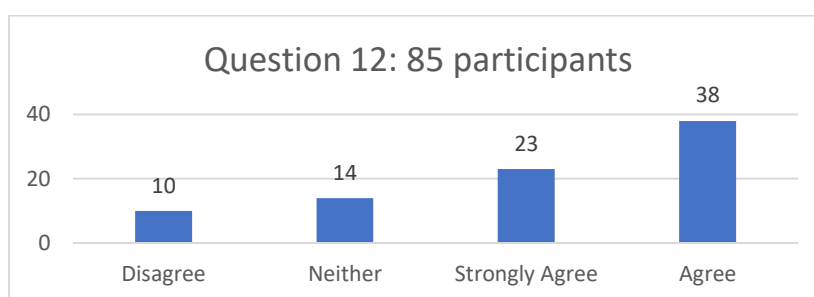
This data suggests that 67 (79%) respondents experienced reintegration challenges after imprisonment, while 18 (21%) respondents reported they had plans in place after being in prison. Of the 67 respondents; 24 were employment related; 14 were drug treatment; 14 housing related; 8 family support; 6 were financial related; and one was due to discrimination. While VRS may address certain reintegration challenges such as employment, housing (shelters, transitional housing), and drug treatment (BHRS and AOD), respondents having issues with family support is a mediating variable that needs to be addressed. There are legitimate concerns when an individual's family are not able to bring up issues of addiction, and opt to ignore the problem for fear of pushing their loved one away during a confrontation or intervention. Supporting VRS clients who are facing these challenges are encouraged to re-connect with their loved ones through social activities.

Question 11: Do you believe vocational rehabilitation can help reduce or eliminate these reintegration challenges?



This data suggests that 67 (78%) of the respondents were in agreement that the services provided by VRS were effective in reintegration back to society, while 18 (21%) of the respondents disagreed and had no effect in addressing their challenges. As noted by key informants, vocational rehabilitation is just a “small step” to an individual’s overall success. If an individual is not ready to make that step, the program, or rehabilitation, will not work and make a negative impact on county resources.

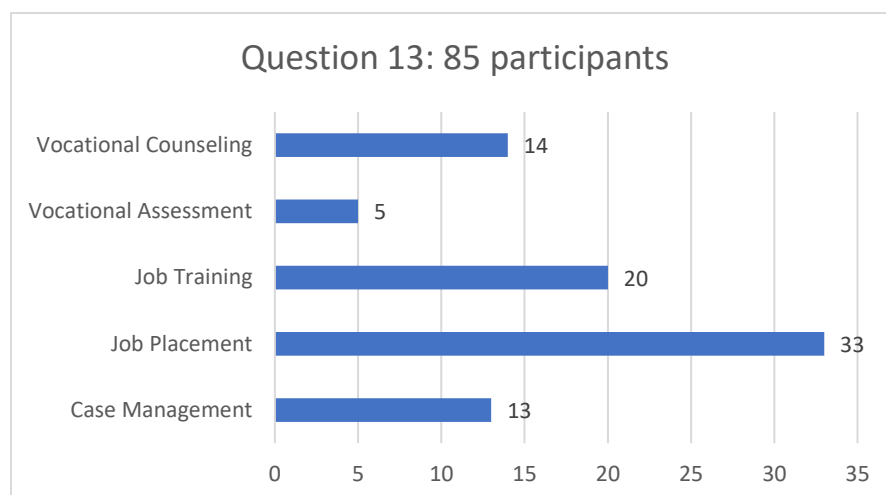
Question 12: Do you agree or disagree with statement: “San Mateo County’s Vocational Rehabilitation Services helped prevent me from reoffending?”



In answering the research question of this paper, this data shows, out of the 85 respondents, who believed that VRS helped prevent them from committing any crime(s): 61 (72%) agreed; 14 (16%) were undecided; and 10 (12%) disagreed. Successful realignment implementation in San Mateo County depends on the county agencies all working together to reduce recidivism. As the data shows, services provided by VRS, along with the collaboration of

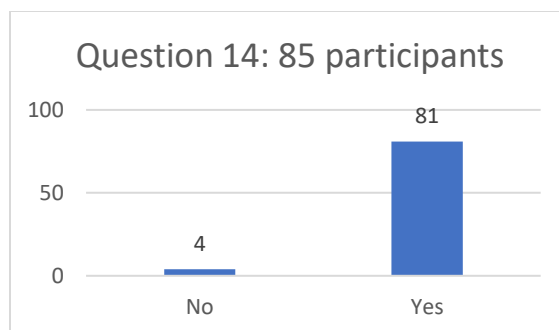
different departments (Service Connect, Probation, BHRS, Health Services) within San Mateo County are effective in giving formerly incarcerated individuals the tools and resources in overcoming barriers.

Question 13: What do you think are beneficial in vocational rehabilitation services?



This data shows the breakdown of what services of VRS has been effective for the sample population. According to the respondents: 33 (39%) were job placement, 20 (24%) were job training, 14 (16%) were vocational counseling, 13 (15%) were case management, and 5 (6%) were vocational assessment. While most of the respondents felt that job training and job placements were most beneficial in vocational rehabilitation, these comments are consistent with other researchers in terms of obtaining how training and development can lead to employment (Ajunwa & Onwuachi-Willig, 2018; Blackman & Chiveralls, 2011; Buck, 2000; and Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

Question 14:



This data suggests that the majority of the 81 (95%) respondents would recommend San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services to others. This overwhelmingly supports the research question that the programs that are offered by VRS has contributed, in one or more ways, to an adult's success to reintegrate back into society. San Mateo County, with the collaboration of different departments, has provided a "safety net" of services to help the formerly incarcerated population prepare for life after prison.

Interview Data

Structured interviews were conducted from mid- January to early- February 2019, with eight key-informants from San Mateo County: (Interviewee A) Agency Director of Human Services Nicole Pollack, (Interviewee B) Employment Services Director Jennifer Valencia, (Interviewee C) Senior Probation Officer Chris Sanchez, (Interviewee D) Vocational Counseling Manager Wendy Jordan, (Interviewee E) Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC), (Interviewee F) Vocational Job Coach (Community Worker), (Interviewee G) Service Connect Manager Amanda Geipe, and (Interviewee H) Service Connect Social Worker. The names of the vocational rehabilitation counselor, vocational job coach, and service connect social worker were kept confidential.

1. What are your major responsibilities in your current position?

Interviewee A. The Director of Human Services Agency oversees 8 branches (Office of Agency Director, Financial Services, Administration and Information Services, Staff Development, Community Collaborative Outcomes, Children and Family Services, Economic Self-Sufficiency, and Employment Services) to provide direct service to clients or support to the Agency.

Interviewee B. The Employment Services Director is currently on assignment (6 months) as the Children and Family Services Director. But prior to her current assignment, she served as the Employment Services Director for three years.

Interviewee C. The Senior Deputy Probation Officer is currently assigned to the Post Release Community Supervision Unit (PRCS) with San Mateo County Probation Department. His main responsibilities are to orientate defendants while they are in custody and preparing for their release on Mandatory Supervision.

Interviewee D. The Vocational Counseling Manager oversees the counseling staff (counselors, job development, and job coaches) of VRS.

Interviewee E. The VRC's role is to guide the individual through returning to employment. This includes teaching and coaching communication skills, time management, goal setting, planning for the future, discussing and processing through mental barriers that might slow or stop an individual's progress, connect individuals to resources and job opportunities, and provide a voice of hope when hope is difficult to find.

Interviewee F. A job coach's role is to help clients with job retention and building rapport with community employers.

Interviewee G. Service Connect Manager's role include program oversight of individuals coming from realignment, program management, staff supervision, and daily operations.

Interviewee H. The role of a Social Worker under Service Connect is case management.

This may involve providing information and assistance, interviewing clients to assess their needs, and assist clients in meeting a variety of emergency needs including financial, housing, and emotional crises.

Analysis: In gathering qualitative data, it was necessary to gain important feedback from individuals from top management to front-line staff, who all play a key role in providing direct or indirect services to formerly incarcerated adults of VRS. San Mateo County is able to provide services effectively through collaboration and from a multi-disciplinary approach. Different agencies and departments such as Human Services, Health, Probation, and Sheriff's Office working collectively to implement the AB 109 Public Safety Realignment Act.

2. How long have you been in your profession?

Interviewee A. Twenty-three years of experience in the County.

Interviewee B. Twenty-seven years of Social Service experience.

Interviewee C. Twenty-one years working in the Probation department.

Interviewee D. Twenty-seven years working in vocational rehabilitation.

Interviewee E. Nine years working as a mental health professional.

Interviewee F. Six years working as a job coach.

Interviewee G. Nine years working in the County.

Interviewee H. Six years working as a Social Worker.

Analysis: A total of 128 combined years and an average of 16 years experience in fields of vocational rehabilitation, employment, public assistance, probation, social work, and social services to gain a clear and unbiased understanding of working with the formerly incarcerated population.

3. What do you consider to be the main purpose of prison rehabilitation programs?

Interviewee A. The main purpose of the prison rehabilitation program is to teach clients skills for behavioral changes upon release so they can effectively reintegrate into society and reduce criminogenic behavior. This ultimately should lead to reduced recidivism rates.

Interviewee B. Connect offenders with education or employment so they can be a productive member in the community. In other words, not a drain on the system. However, the main purpose is to assist individuals in understanding their personal challenges such as addiction or mental health so they can get the services necessary. These two challenges often impact their ability to relate to the communities in which they live.

Interviewee C. To prepare defendants living in society. Job skills, decision making skills, substance abuse counseling, parenting skills all work towards reintegration. Ultimately, it is hoped that the defendant is able to function in society without reoffending.

Interviewee D. Break the bad behaviors and prepare them, if needed, for suitable rehabilitation programs that will be effective.

Interviewee E. Reduce recidivism with those that have already gone through the prison system with the hope of reaching out and educate others to reduce criminal behavior.

Interviewee F. The bottom line, as always, to reduce costs, crime, and boost the economy by aiding participants towards self-sufficiency.

Interviewee G. It varies on the prison and the intervention strategies that are being used for that particular prison. For example, a certain prison might be able to offer employment education, GED, or psychological programs versus another prison who doesn't offer anything due to resources.

Interviewee H. Connect client with the proper services to reintegrate them back into the community.

Analysis: From top management's perspectives, education, employment, and job skills were considered to be the main themes in prison rehabilitation programs. From the front-line's perspectives, prisons are not always in uniform with one another. In other words, different prisons vary and will have a different set curriculum or intervention strategies, such as offering a GED program, that they use to rehabilitate offenders.

4. In your opinion, how effective are prisons in rehabilitating offenders?

Interviewee A. It varies based on each individual and their needs and behaviors. The effectiveness depends on the way the program is implemented and the client's readiness and ability to benefit from the program. For example, a client with severe mental health issues that is still actively using substances will not show as much benefit from participating in anger management programs. The underlying mental health and substance abuse issues need to be addressed first.

Interviewee B. The sooner you introduce inmates to resources available in the community or how to incorporate self-care makes a difference in their success. Most offenders have difficulty asking for assistance and advocating for themselves.

Interviewee C. Prison's efforts are better than in previous years, but still lacking. A correctional facility's first priority is safety and managing of a large number of offenders, so they cannot have rehabilitative programs for every offender. Also, it is my experience that some offenders participate in programs while locked up just to pass the time. Not to actually learn or benefit from it.

Interviewee D. There's still much that needs to be done in prison programs in order for rehabilitation to be effective for an individual.

Interviewee E. Not that great. Prisons alone need more in-custody programs to address the human aspect of inmates. Prisons are run by logistics, i.e. a very structured schedule, keep inmates in line until they finish their sentence, keep society safe. Due to this, prisons are dehumanizing and one loses the sense of self that is unique to the human experience. We strip away the basic aspects of human nature such as finding safe community to belong to, connections to people we love, and opportunities for growth and exploration.

Interviewee F. They must not be very effective considering how prisons are still full.

Interviewee G. There's a lack of continuity from prisons to local parole and/or probation.

For example, an individual's medications might get lost from the initial (60 day) transition or there may be a gap in medical coverage when the transfer was made.

Collaboration needs to happen right away for that certain individual to be successful.

Interviewee H. All prisons are not the same, therefore different results and outcomes.

Analysis: Six of the eight interviewees indicated that prisons are not making much of an impact in rehabilitating offenders. Underlying issues such as substance abuse and mental health should

be addressed before rehabilitation. Collaboration was stated by both from management and front-line staff to coordinate services effectively.

5. Based on your experience, in what ways, if any, does vocational rehabilitation affect formerly incarcerated individuals?

Interviewee A. The individual needs to be ready for vocational rehabilitation. It is a good stepping stone if substance abuse and mental health needs are being actively managed. Employment helps to prevent recidivism. Employment provides structure, a sense of accomplishment, and structures a person's time in a positive manner. Employment can also help someone establish a more positive peer group that do not engage in illegal activities.

Interviewee B. Clients who received services from vocational rehabilitation received counseling, testing and real work setting assessments. This allowed them to perform individually and in group settings. What we learned from vocational rehabilitation is formerly incarcerated individuals more often than not had difficulty with change. We were able to change assignments, supervisors, and locations of work to determine who can handle the impact of change. This allowed us to learn the tolerance for each individual and know which real work assignments in the community would be most compatible. Vocational rehabilitation allows this population a chance to test the waters with added support to help them reintegrate into the community.

Interviewee C. Yes, there are numerous instances where defendants on probation have benefitted from vocational rehabilitation. Usually it is because of housing, employment and psychotropic medication management, that defendants stay stable.

Interviewee D. Vocational rehabilitation gives the formerly incarcerated population the work experience that they lack in order to gain employment.

Interviewee E. Vocational rehabilitation is a great combination of self-sufficiency and support, while the individual learns their new routine and how to continue on with their lives.

Interviewee F. Participants are exposed to staff that are ready to help. The experience depends greatly on the participant (readiness and openness to services). As a vocational rehabilitation staff, I believe we all recognize that basic needs must be stabilized for the client to get and keep a job. Clients are referred to resources they may not know existed or thought they needed.

Interviewee G. If an individual is motivated for change, and does not have additional barriers, vocational rehabilitation can help. Vocational rehabilitation is just one piece of a giant, big puzzle for an individual to be successful. An individual receiving vocational rehabilitation will help them gain new skills for jobs, how to function in a job, how to set routines for oneself and the ability to show up on time for work.

Interviewee H. Vocational rehabilitation is able to occupy an individual's time through meeting their employment goals.

Analysis: Engagement, on behalf of a client, is the theme shared by seven of the eight interviewees. If an individual is not ready to meet halfway, vocational rehabilitation will not work. However, if individuals are motivated for change, vocational rehabilitation can be a supportive environment that allows for training and coaching to occur for each individual.

6. What types of service interventions do you think are most needed by formerly incarcerated individuals for successful reintegration into society?

Interviewee A. Mental health treatment, medical treatment, and substance abuse treatment are the most needed.

Interviewee B. In addition to stabilizing addiction and mental health, housing is a huge challenge. The "Ban the Box" for employment has assisted offenders to have greater opportunities for employment. Unfortunately, having a job does not always mean housing can be secured. This is true for permanent housing but it is also a concern for temporary shelter. Many of the homeless shelters will not take sex offenders and this leads them to homelessness. When offenders do not have the same opportunity to connect with community as non-offenders, they are at higher risk to recidivate.

Interviewee C. In San Mateo County, housing is the biggest need. The lack of affordable locations, defendants being disqualified due to their record, their need for mental health or substance abuse counseling or status as a sex offender, all lead to a shortage of options. Once they are on the street or living day to day, they often times resort to their old, bad habits.

Interviewee D. Substance abuse treatments and mental health treatments.

Interviewee E. Housing, mental health services, vocational training, financial education and counseling.

Interviewee F. Housing, food, mental health, and AOD (alcohol and other drugs).

Interviewee G. Addressing Maslow's hierarchy, the basic needs must be met before an individual can focus and prevent themselves from criminogenic behaviors. Housing, mental health, drug or alcohol treatment programs.

Interviewee H. AOD, housing, and mental health assessments.

Analysis: In going back to the literature review, there's a correlation in addressing Maslow's hierarchy of needs to reducing recidivism. As stated by the Employment Services Director and others, an individual coming out of prison needs to be connected with services "right away". From probation's perspective, an individual can resort back to committing crimes if their needs are not met. In addition, housing was repeatedly stated by the interview participants as a huge challenge. While there are certain individuals who are able to meet the criteria for San Mateo County's transitional housing programs, housing remains an issue for not just the formerly incarcerated population, but for many in the bay area.

7. How does the educational background of formerly incarcerated individuals help reduce recidivism?

Interviewee A. Education is closely linked to reduction of poverty. Education can help a person obtain a better job and quickly reintegrate into society that helps reduce recidivism.

Interviewee B. Overall, education has been used as a basic screening criterion for employment. Applications are often screened for basic criteria and education is part of that. The discipline of education to teach deadlines, teamwork, and how to communicate through active discussion or through written documents is critical to success. If former inmates have no concept of how to follow rules or meet deadlines, then they are more likely to not be successful in mainstream community.

Interviewee C. Education can be an important part of reducing recidivism, as it ties into getting better paying jobs, can improve the defendant's morale and self-worth, and provides them with constructive use of time.

Interviewee D. An individual may have an undiagnosed learning disability. Education may not always be the answer. Coping skills, financial management, and soft skills can help these individuals who lack education.

Interviewee E. Education gives individuals new tools, new ways of operating out in the world. Not only does the individual feel a sense of accomplishment, they can put the new skills and knowledge to practical use which can give them a job, a sense of independence, and a feeling that they are a role model to others.

Interviewee F. Higher education increases their success for several reasons.

Communication and organizational skills: in a work setting it makes a difference with interpersonal skills, customer service, time management, and self-advocacy.

Employment opportunities: reduces recidivism if a formerly incarcerated individual can be self-sufficient.

Interviewee G. Education does not play a major factor in success of reintegration. If an individual is experiencing drug or substance abuse, a degree will not save you from going back to prison.

Interviewee H. Having a degree can help an individual get a job and be self-sufficient.

When your self-sufficient, your able to meet basic needs.

Analysis: Seven out of eight interviewees agreed that education can lead to a healthy, self-sufficient life. Education gives formerly incarcerated individuals at the opportunity to learn and gain new knowledge. As noted by Service Connect staff and probation, some individuals who are in prison lack even a high school education. As a result, certain prisons offer the opportunity to get their GED's while in custody.

8. What are some of the barriers to employment encountered by formerly incarcerated individuals?

Interviewee A. Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Physical Health are the main barriers. It is important to note that family dynamics and peer groups can have a negative impact on the justice-involved client. The client may be pulled or fall back into previous activities or behaviors (such as drug use) if the family or peer group is still behaving in the same manner prior to the client's incarceration.

Interviewee B. Some barriers include CDL revoked due to offense, Inability to effectively communicate, inability to take direction from supervisors, inability to work collaboratively in a team setting, inability to professional communicate (not everyone needs to know your story), inappropriate boundaries, and the inability to stabilize medication.

Interviewee C. Their criminal record is a huge problem, but something they have given themselves. Also, employment and housing are tied closely. Whatever jobs the defendant can get, a lot of times does not pay the bills needed to live in this county. Lastly, some defendants lack work experience, so issues like showing up to work regularly and on time, staying sober and relating to coworkers can occur.

Interviewee D. Breaking the initial barrier of being in a long, lengthy prison sentence.

Interviewee E. Substance abuse, unaddressed mental health such as depression, anxiety and psychosis. Learning a new routine without constant supervision. Lastly, learning to trust themselves and others in a society that constantly labels them as "unworthy".

Interviewee F. Background checks prior to employment, identification cards, stigma, untreated mental health issues, AOD, and basic needs not being met.

Interviewee G. Housing issues, mental health, AOD, and their criminal backgrounds.

Interviewee H. Upon released from prison they normally don't have identification. If

homeless, not having an actual address to use when applying for jobs can be a barrier.

Analysis: While six of the eight interviewees mentioned mental health, substance abuse, and physical health as barriers to employment, having identification cards and a home address was brought up as additional barriers. Most, if not all, employers will ask for two or more forms of identification (social security, driver's license, or state issued ID) before hiring an individual. These individuals who are released from prison with an expired license and lack the necessary resources to renew his/her license, may feel the burden and lose hope. In response to these barriers, Service Connect Social Worker says that these individuals are able to receive the necessary funds in renewing their identification cards. In addition, individuals who are homeless, may use a Post Office in Redwood City as their home address and will hold their mails for thirty days.

9. How does the collaboration of different departments and agencies (Probation, Sheriff's Office, Human Services, Health Services, etc.) help with reducing recidivism?

Interviewee A. A multi-disciplinary approach helps agencies to see an individual holistically and provide a coordinated array of services and monitoring to support an individual's pro social behavior upon release. A multi-disciplinary team can support the client based on his/her individual needs.

Interviewee B. Collaboration with the departments has strengthen in these last couple of years. We have a greater understanding of each other and the critical roles we play. We worked collaboratively and with our respective counsel to establish a multi-disciplinary team and sharing agreement.

Interviewee C. The collaborative effort of all agencies is huge. The defendant knows that all parties helping them are speaking regularly. Having the agencies working on defendant's needs before release from custody and throughout probation makes chances for success greater. Lastly, from the probation officer's perspective, having other agencies on hand to handle the rehabilitation and assistance, frees us up to focus on the most important parts of our job: public safety and reporting information to the court.

Interviewee D. Having a united front to help these individuals will help. We're all pieces to an individual's puzzle to successful reentry back into the community.

Interviewee E. Each department has a different perspective and set of skills. Working together as a team gives each person the opportunity to change and become self-sufficient. In the helping professions, we try too hard to wear too many hats in order to serve our clients. I think we forget that no one can be everyone to anyone.

Interviewee F. Creates consistency and everyone is on the same page. Also, client may communicate important information to one agency that is essential to the rest but not shared by client. Learning each other's systems and procedures helps us serve the client better. As staff, we get a better understanding of other programs' expectations and can support client with meeting those expectations.

Interviewee G. Getting these individuals back on their feet right away is important. In order to achieve this, focusing on coordinating services and collaborating with different departments is critical. This means what intervention strategies were used from each department, how the individual responded being out of custody, and other information that could help bridge the gaps so that collaboration is a joint effort.

Interviewee H. Collaboration helps tremendously. This means that each provider must be open in sharing information amongst each other.

Analysis: All of the interviewees felt strongly about the importance of collaboration in San Mateo County. The old adage, “two heads are better than one” has been around for over centuries for a reason. More effective problem solving happens when you combine resources in talent, experience (128 years combined), and infrastructure.

10. Is there anything else that you would like to add but think might be important to this research?

Interviewee A. I think it is important to note that employment is almost the last step to helping a client non-recidivate. Family dynamics and their support system cannot be underestimated.

Interviewee B. San Mateo is currently undergoing evaluation and the report should be released in the Spring on how well collaboration is going with the Community Partnership and impacts on offenders.

Interviewee C. No further comments.

Interviewee D. No further comments.

Interviewee E. It's important to remember that we are all human. Our basic needs of belonging, having a sense of self and a sense of mastery of a skill/knowledge, doesn't change no matter the mistakes one has made in their life.

Interviewee F. No further comments.

Interviewee G. Research how we can create a healthy reward system, engagement in positive behaviors, and measures of success.

Interviewee H. To encourage clients in providing their own case plans.

Significant Key Findings of Survey Data:

Based on the findings and the literature review, the study reveals that an individual's hierarchy of needs must be satisfied in order to be successful in life as well as San Mateo's vocational training program. These needs satisfied in the hierarchical order suggested by Maslow may include food, water, clothing, and shelter.

In addressing if there were challenges returning to their communities after imprisonment, 79% of the respondents were in agreement. In identifying what were these challenges, drug treatment (21%), housing (21%), and employment (36%) were the most common barriers. As a result, vocational rehabilitation has affected over 78% of the respondents in response to these challenges. Services such as vocational counseling, assessment, job training, and job placement has made a major impact on reducing criminogenic behaviors. Lastly, when asked if these respondents would recommend San Mateo County's VRS, over 95% of those who are current or have participated VRS would recommend the services that are offered to others.

Significant Key Findings of Interview Data:

Structured interviews were conducted through in-person, telephonic, and e-mail with eight key informants. The interview consisted of two general topics; personal and professional experience on prison rehabilitation and vocational rehabilitation in San Mateo County.

From a prison rehabilitation perspective, most interviewees felt that prisons, in general, are not making much of an impact in rehabilitating offenders. While each prison or correctional facilities may have different program for rehabilitating their offenders, most of the offenders who participate are there to just pass time. Not to actually learn or benefit from. Also, when an offender transfers from state to local corrections, there's a lack of continuity in terms of an

offender's medications, gap in medical coverages, or support services for an offender to be successful. Collaboration and information sharing must happen right away among state and local agencies for these offenders in reintegration back into the community.

From the vocational rehabilitation perspective, top management expressed that these individuals must be motivated for change for vocational rehabilitation to be effective. This would include changing their previous criminogenic behaviors and creating a structure that supports a sense of accomplishment, adds a sense of purpose, and open to gaining new skills in obtaining and sustaining employment. Through San Mateo County's VRS, formerly incarcerated adults are able to gain the necessary work experience that they lack in order gain employment. While most of the interviewees felt that vocational rehabilitation can make a positive impact, the importance of addressing any underlying mental health and substance abuse issues was made very clear during the interviews. An individual to be successful must have a stable foundation, which includes managing their mental health conditions, and meeting their basic needs. As a County, there is a "safety net" of services that include service interventions and assistance with transitional housing, shelters, drug treatments with BHRS, and job placements with community partners. Lastly, the theme of collaboration resonated among all of the interviewees. A multidisciplinary, collaborative effort not only increases an individual's success of reintegration but creates consistency and helps coordinate an array of services to support these individuals upon release from prison.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine, analyze, and assess the effectiveness of San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services in reducing recidivism. The summary and recommendations were derived from this researcher's analysis and evaluation of the relevant literature review and primary data gathered from surveys and interviews conducted with key informants, which represented various top management to line staff employees of San Mateo County.

In applying Maslow's theory for the formerly incarcerated population, data collected from survey questions were framed if lower level basic needs were being met before moving on to higher level growth needs. For example, physiological needs that include the ability to provide for food and shelter, a little over half (53%) of the 85 respondents were able to meet this need. This still meant that the other 47 percent of the respondents had a deficiency, or the inability to meet this particular need. Emotional needs are expressed in a way for individuals to connect to the external world, particularly with other people, and how we interact with the environment. When asked if there were any challenges returning to their communities or environment after imprisonment, over 80 percent of the respondents agreed that it was difficult to manage and be successful in their communities. While many of the respondents reported challenges like drug abuse, housing, family support, and employment, 78 percent of the respondents believed that San Mateo County's VRS is effective in helping to address these reintegration challenges. In assessing the effectiveness of San Mateo County's VRS in reducing recidivism, or reoffending,

72 percent of the respondents confirmed that the services offered has contributed back into living a healthy lifestyle.

While data collected from the surveys reveal that this researcher's hypothesis is valid, it was necessary to gain insight and expertise from stakeholders and front-line staff who provide direct and non-direct services. From a multi-disciplinary approach, majority of the respondents from the interviews confirmed that collaboration is needed to coordinate services for these individuals coming from prisons or local corrections. The sooner you introduce the available resources in the community or how to incorporate self-care makes a difference in their success. This would include not just receiving services from VRS, but services that would help with drug addiction (AOD), managing mental health (BHRS), and obtaining stable housing (Dept. of Housing) with transitional programs and/or shelters within San Mateo County. This would indicate that both survey and interview data is aligned with Maslow's theory in meeting basic needs. Respondents also firmly established that while vocational rehabilitation can be effective, the individual must be ready to receive assistance in terms of a client's readiness and engagement level. Lastly, respondents agree that vocational rehabilitation can be effective in terms of combining self-sufficiency and support while the individual learns their new routine and reintegrate back into society.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Encourage the County to extend the current VRS program for the formerly incarcerated adult population from six- to nine- months of paid transitional employment in the next fiscal

year, FY19-FY20. This gives the individual more time to secure stable housing in the competitive bay area housing market while learning new employment skills.

Recommendation 2:

Encourage VRS to implement an internal tracking mechanism that tracks an individual, longitudinally, to ensure the intent of the program is being met next fiscal year, FY19-FY20. This will allow to identify what worked during and after participating the VRS program.

Recommendation 3:

Encourage VRS to Implement a soft skills training program next fiscal year, FY19-FY20. As indicated from the survey data, 45 percent of the respondents felt that they did not have the adequate communication (speaking and writing) skills to sustain a job. This will benefit clients to gain the necessary soft skills to build on communication gaps. Management indicated that most individuals released that served long sentences tended to be either completely compliant and not engage in teambuilding or were completely offended and in the "fight or flight" mode for anything deemed as conflict.

Recommendation 4:

Encourage the County to allow for better access to identification cards and/or assistance in regaining their driver's license next fiscal year, FY19-FY20. Management indicated that most individuals who go to jail get their CDL revoked due to an offense or failure to pay Child Support. By providing assistance in obtaining identification, it will allow individuals to apply for employment and show proof of identification.

Recommendation 5:

Encourage the County to secure more community employment partnerships that will allow for less stringent background checks as soon as possible. For example, San Mateo County has a public-private partnership with South Bay Recycle in providing transitional employment that can last up to a maximum of two years.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Invitation for Research Project Interview

My name is Jeremiah Platon and I am currently completing my Executive Master of Public Administration at Golden Gate University. I would appreciate it if you could kindly participate in a brief interview for my final research thesis on, "Assessing the effectiveness of San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services on reducing recidivism". Thank you.

Confidentiality:

Your responses will be kept completely confidential.

- The interview will be recorded, upon approval, and a transcript will be sent to you for your review and amendments if needed.
- Access to the interview transcript will only be limited to the researcher and thesis advisors.
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed.
- Any recordings of the interview will be kept secured by the researcher.
- If at any point in time you feel uncomfortable with a question, you can skip the question or withdraw from the study and any answers will NOT be recorded.

Other Concerns:

If you have any questions or concerns this research, please contact my professors, Dr. Mick McGee (mmcgee@ggu.edu) or Dr. Jay Gonzalez (jgonzalez@ggu.edu), from Golden Gate University.

Interview Questions:

- 1) What are your major responsibilities in your current position?
- 2) How long have you been in your profession?
- 3) What do you consider to be the main purpose of prison rehabilitation programs?
- 4) In your opinion, how effective are prisons in rehabilitating offenders?
- 5) Based on your experience, in what ways, if any, does vocational rehabilitation affect formerly incarcerated individuals?
- 6) What types of service interventions do you think are most needed by formerly incarcerated individuals for successful reintegration into society?
- 7) How does the educational background of formerly incarcerated individuals help reduce recidivism?
- 8) What are some of the barriers to employment encountered by formerly incarcerated individuals?
- 9) How does the collaboration of different departments and agencies (Probation, Sheriff's Office, Human Services, Health Services, etc.) help with reducing recidivism?
- 10) Is there anything else that you would like to add but think might be important to this research?

Appendix B

Questionnaire Survey

Confidential Survey

My name is Jeremiah Platon and I am currently completing my Executive Master of Public Administration at Golden Gate University. I would sincerely appreciate it if you could kindly answer a confidential survey for my final research thesis on, "Assessing the effectiveness of San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services on reducing recidivism". This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Your name is not being asked and your answers will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you.

Survey Questions:

1. Do you feel that you had adequate communication (speaking and writing) skills to sustain a job prior to your imprisonment?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Do you think being unemployed the primary reason you re-offended?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Did you feel you had a safe place to live prior to imprisonment?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Did you experience any psychological problems prior to imprisonment?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. If you answered Yes to Question 5, what types of psychological disorders do you feel may have contributed to your imprisonment? (Circle all that apply)
 - a. Anxiety
 - b. Depression
 - c. Stress
 - d. Suicidal
 - e. Psychotic
 - f. PTSD
 - g. Other: _____ (Please list here.)
6. Were you experiencing any addiction or substance abuse prior to imprisonment?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. If you answered Yes to Question 6, what type of substance abuse or addiction did you have?
- a. Alcohol
 - b. Prescription and Over-the-Counter (OTC) medicine
 - c. Heroin
 - d. Cocaine
 - e. Marijuana
 - f. Cigarettes
 - g. Methamphetamine
 - h. Other: _____ (Please list here.)
8. Did you lack income to meet your basic needs (food, clothing, etc.) after imprisonment?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
9. Did you experience any challenges returning to your community after imprisonment?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
10. If you said Yes to Question 9, what were your most serious challenges of returning?
- a. Financial
 - b. Discrimination
 - c. Employment
 - d. Housing
 - e. Drug treatment
 - f. Family support
 - g. Others: _____ (Please list here.)
11. Do you believe vocational rehabilitation services can help reduce or eliminate these reintegration challenges?
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly Agree
12. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "San Mateo County's vocational rehabilitation services helped prevent me from reoffending."
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither
 - d. Agree

- e. Strongly Agree

13. What do you think are the beneficial vocational rehabilitation services?

- a. Vocational counseling
- b. Vocational assessment
- c. Case management
- d. Job training
- e. Job placement
- f. Others: _____ (Please list here.)

14. Would you recommend San Mateo County's Vocational Rehabilitation Services to others?

- a. Yes
- b. No