

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS EVALUATION



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**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS (ESP)**

**PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Research has shown that the development and implementation of employment programs is a key component to the rehabilitation of criminal offenders. The existence of a criminal record restricts the occupations workers can enter, increases the chances of dismissal from a job and generally limits employment prospects. The lack of education, job skills and access to support services also present employment barriers for offenders. Employment development, employability skills training, job placement and employer/offender supported work reduces the rate at which offenders return to crime.

The need to rehabilitate probationers by assisting them to secure employment led to the creation of the Employment Services for Probationers (ESP) program. This program was a cooperative effort between the Texas Employment Commission (TEC), the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (CJAD), and the Community Supervision and Corrections Departments and TEC offices in the site counties. The program was designed to assist probationers in obtaining stable employment by providing individual job placement assistance. Employment was, in turn, expected to reduce the recidivism rate of offenders involved in the program.

The ESP program began operation in January 1991 and continued through January 1992. The program operated in six sites throughout Texas. Sites included Bell/Lampasas, Nueces, Colorado/Gonzales/Lavaca, Smith, El Paso and Lubbock Counties. The total funds appropriated for the ESP program were \$1,187,369.

Employment Services for Probationers consisted of two program components. The referral and intake component, which identified eligible probationers and enrolled them into the program, and the employment services component. Employment services consisted of a job search workshop, intensive employment counseling and job development. The delivery of these services varied from site to site, with TEC providing all employment services in Bell and El Paso Counties, the CSCD providing the job search workshop and TEC providing job placement and development in Lubbock, Nueces and Smith Counties and the CSCD providing all employment services in Lavaca County.

The program proposed to serve 4,095 unemployed and underemployed probationers. Entry into the program was limited to those probationers without serious physical or mental disabilities. Each site was also able to target ESP assistance to those who could most conceivably find employment, limiting the intake of probationers receiving income assistance and those without transportation.

Intake was completed on 3,295 probationers. As with any service oriented program, participation in ESP, though mandatory, could not realistically be enforced. Of the 3,295

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probationers entering the program, 2,439 or 71% participated in at least one of the employment services offered. ESP intakes fell into the following participation groups.

- Intake Only (No Show): Probationers for whom program intake was completed but who did not report for employment services.
- Job Preparedness Services (Partial Services): Probationers who were enrolled into the job search workshop but who did not report for job placement services.
- Job Preparedness/Job Placement Services (Full Services): Probationers who were enrolled in both the job search workshop and the job placement component of the program.

Sixty-three percent (2,082) of ESP probationers participated in full employment services, 8% (267) participated in partial services and 29% (946) did not received any employment service.

## ESP EVALUATION

The Criminal Justice Policy Council received funding to conduct the evaluation of the ESP program. Data was collected on all ESP probationers at intake, 60 days after intake and one year after intake. This information was used to determine program participation, employment status and return to criminal activity. Data was also gathered from the TEC wage database and from the Department of Public Safety's Criminal History database.

The program evaluation was designed to assess the implementation of ESP and determine if the goals of the program were met. The specific outcome questions addressed by the evaluation are detailed below.

- Are probationers who participate in the ESP program more likely to acquire employment and remain employed than those probationers who have not participated in the program?
- Are probationers who participate in the ESP program less likely to recidivate than probationers who have not participated in the employment program?

## CONCLUSIONS

Examination of ESP implementation and operation indicates that specific program characteristics effect the participation and employment of probationers entering the program. Features that appear to be associated with program participation and secured employment include:

- effective communication between TEC and CSCD staff;
- low employment counselor to client ratios;
- good rapport and communication between program personnel and area employers; and
- sanctions to motivate participation in the program.

Labor market and offender characteristics also effected the employment of program participants. These included:

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- county unemployment rate;
- demand for specific job types;
- education and skill level of probation population; and
- employment history of probationers in the program.

Preliminary outcome results indicate that participation in the ESP program increases employment rates for probationers.

- Approximately three out of four (71.5%) of the probationers who participated in job preparedness and job placement services (full services) earned a wage during the follow-up period.
- Approximately 2 out of 4 (55%) of the ESP probationers who did not report for employment services earned a wage. Employment was defined as any job resulting in one or more days of work.

Assisting probationers to secure stable employment was the goal of the ESP program. Data shows, however, that the length of employment was not enhanced by program participation.

- ESP probationers earned a wage in each quarter after referral at the same rate regardless of services received. This seems to indicate that simply securing employment for a probationer does not produce a stable work force participant.
- The underlying factors of education, skills and limited social services remain barriers affecting the employment stability of the offender population.

An analysis of rearrest revealed that employment reduces the incidence of recidivism for probationers who participated in the program as well as those who received no services.

- Seven percent of probationers employed in all quarters after referral were arrested during the one year follow-up period.
- For ESP probationers working three quarters or less, 9% of program participants compared to 13% of those receiving no employment services were arrested.
- Those with no job were arrested the most frequently. Eleven percent of the unemployed participants and 17% of "no service" probationers without jobs were arrested.
- This preliminary data shows the importance of employment in reducing recidivism. Length of employment, however, appears to be the most critical factor in a probationer's return to criminal activity. Complete one year employment and recidivism data will be presented in the final program outcome evaluation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Employment Services for Probationers program was designed to help unemployed and underemployed probationers acquire stable employment and increase their chances of succeeding under community supervision. Some recommendations to consider for future program development and expansion are examined below.

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- ***Redefine the criteria for eligibility.*** Thirty-seven percent of probationers entering the program did not participate in full employment services, 29% failed to show up for any employment service. Fifty-seven percent of those not participating in full services, however, earned a wage during the follow-up period. This seems to suggest that not all probationers entering the ESP program needed the intensive employment services offered by the program.
- ***Development of standard procedures for communication between the probation and TEC offices.*** These procedures should require meetings between the site probation officers, the ESP employment officer and TEC employment counselors at least quarterly to discuss client progress and problems that arise in the program.
- ***Maintain low employment counselor to probationer ratios.*** Lower caseloads give employment counselors the time needed to match probationers to job openings, make job development contacts and monitor the progress of the probationer in the program.
- ***Development of viable sanctions that can be used to enforce program participation.*** In most cases, it is not realistic for a probationer to be revoked for failure to participate in an employment service. Realistic punishments or sanctions such as increased community service hours allow enforcement of program participation.
- ***Tracking of probationers in program components.*** No information was kept on probationers within the program components. Because of this, it is impossible to differentiate between those that enrolled into a component and those that completed the employment service. Information was also not available on the length of time probationers remained in employment.
- ***Use of employment programs in conjunction with educational or vocational services.*** Preliminary program analysis shows that program participation does not enhance the number of quarters probationers work after referral. Probationers will continue to find employment in low paying jobs that offer limited opportunities for advancement unless steps are taken to ensure they have the skills and training necessary to secure stable employment. Future program operation should consider requiring probationers with educational achievement below a specified level to attend vocational and/or educational classes. The combined use of educational training and part-time employment would allow probationers to earn a wage while improving their opportunities for stable employment.
- ***Focus employment efforts on the placement of probationers into jobs that have the potential to become full-time, permanent positions.*** Research conducted on Project Rio found that the relationship between employment and criminal activity is moderated by factors related to the quantity and quality of employment. The extensive use of temporary one day labor opportunities limits the potential long-term impact of programs like ESP.
- ***Continued evaluation of program outcome measures.*** It is essential to continue fine-tuning and adapting programs like ESP to meet the multiplicity of social and economic problems of offenders that affect their potential recidivism. Continued monitoring of program outcomes is critical to effectively accomplish this goal.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

## I. INTRODUCTION

Development and implementation of employment programs is a key component to the rehabilitation of criminal offenders. The existence of a criminal record restricts the occupations workers can enter (Portney, 1970), increases the chances of dismissal from a job (Leonard, 1967), and generally limits employment prospects (Leiberg, 1978; Thornberry & Christianson, 1984). Employment development, employability skills training, job placement and employer/offender supported work reduces the rate at which offenders return to crime (Clark, 1990).

Maintaining gainful employment is one of many requirements when an offender is sentenced to probation. The probationer is responsible for paying fees and demonstrating stability and responsibility in order to complete a successful probation. Research has repeatedly supported the fact that steady employment is associated with reduced recidivism (Blakely 1992), however, employment opportunities tend to become more limited for persons having a criminal record.

The employment problems of offenders are related to social-structure and economic labor market barriers in communities as well as the lack of employable skills. Previous efforts to evaluate the accessibility of employment opportunities for different groups within communities suggest that unemployment problems are not entirely related to the individual, but involve an interaction of individual and social-system variables (Clark, 1990). Therefore, it is understandable that efforts to rehabilitate offenders fail when the focus is simply on changing the individual rather than strengthening the interaction of the person and social systems.

The need to rehabilitate offenders by assisting them in obtaining employment led to the creation of the Employment Services for Probationers (ESP) program. This program was a cooperative effort between the Texas Employment Commission (TEC), the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and the Community Supervision and Corrections Departments, and TEC offices in the site counties. The program was designed to assist probationers in obtaining stable employment by providing individual job placement assistance. Employment was, in turn, expected to reduce the recidivism rates of offenders involved in the program.

The ESP program began operation in January, 1991 and continued through January, 1992. Partial funding was provided through August 31, 1992 for selected ESP sites. Total appropriations for the program were \$1,187,369. The Criminal Justice Policy Council received funding to conduct the evaluation of the ESP program. The Criminal Justice Policy Council (CJPC) is a state agency created in 1983 by the 68th Legislature to determine the long range needs of the criminal justice system.

## PREVIOUS OFFENDER EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROGRAMS

The problem of unemployment among criminal offenders was formally recognized in public policy by the U.S. Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962. The concept that offenders comprise a severely disadvantaged group in need of training and development in areas of employment skills was stated in this federal legislation. The Manpower and Training Act of 1962 concluded that if offenders did become employed it was usually at part-time, temporary, and low paying jobs. Four types of programs were included in the Manpower Act: skills training, employability development, job development, and work experience (Perry, Anderson, Rowan, & Northrup, 1975). Skills training was conducted within the correctional institution. Employability development usually included workshops on interviewing, resume preparation, counseling, pre-vocational training, and job placement. Job development programs were

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oriented toward generating placement opportunities and employment situations upon release from custody. Work experience was usually comprised of work release or community service programs. Offenders who, prior to conviction, held jobs in skilled professions often lost the opportunity to work at those jobs and thus fell into the unskilled occupations. Although efforts were successfully directed at enhancing the skills of individuals, these efforts were ineffective in changing the type of job opportunities available to ex-offenders. Several other programs have been developed in the last few years to address the unemployment problems of offenders.

The Living Insurance for Ex-Prisoners (LIFE) experiment of 1972 in Baltimore, Maryland examined the effects of transitional aid payments and job placement on rates of rearrest among males under the age of 45 with prior histories of theft related convictions who had not previously been on a work release. There were four groups studied in the LIFE evaluation. The first group received weekly aid payments, the second received vocational counseling and job placement services, the third received payment and placement services, and the fourth was a control group. The participants were found to have come from a low socioeconomic background, with little educational attainment, weak job and work histories, and a large number of previous arrests. The program results were poor due to the lack of successful job placements service and the short time of service provision. However, participants not receiving financial aid were arrested earlier and were more likely to return to prison indicating that financial aid was beneficial to the offenders. The program did not succeed in increasing employment opportunities for offenders and therefore did not reduce recidivism.

Texas was selected to build on the LIFE project in 1976 to test the validity of the project on a larger, more diversified population. This evaluation was called the Transitional Aid Research Project (TARP). This project was similar to the LIFE experiment, however, this evaluation measured the effects of short-term financial assistance and job placement services on arrest and employment rates over a state wide basis and included women, first offenders, and inmates with a history of alcohol or drug abuse. The results of the study indicated that financial aid did not have an effect on the total arrest rate and that financial aid was a disincentive to work during the time that money was distributed. The results also showed no significant differences due to job placement (Smith, Martinez, & Harrison, 1978).

Project RIO (Reintegrating of Offenders) was established in Texas by the Texas Employment Commission in 1985 to provide intensified job-related services to the high risk offender population. This program was the first employment program of this type in Texas and was oriented towards reintegrating parolees into society. In Project RIO, inmates are first introduced to the program inside the institution. TEC counselors work individually with the offender to prepare them for the work force. A twenty hour workshop is conducted in which instruction on basic job preparedness skills, resume preparation, and interview performance are taught. TEC also helps to ensure that employers are aware of the incentives available for hiring parolees. TEC staff process parolees to become eligible for the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC) program, providing a tax incentive to employers for hiring offenders who qualify for assistance.

A study conducted by Texas A&M University in 1991 on Project RIO found that the incidence of rearrest and reincarceration of program participants clearly declines as their wages increase. The findings also indicate that the relationship between employment and criminal activity is moderated by factors related to the quantity and quality of employment. Project RIO releasees were twice as likely to have obtained employment since their release from prison than non-RIO releasees. The longer the RIO participant was employed, the likelihood of rearrest was significantly reduced. Participation was associated with a decreased probability of reincarceration. The A&M study concluded that employment and participation in RIO contributes significantly toward reduced recidivism among ex-offenders, translating into savings in reincarceration costs for the state of Texas.

## OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION

The evaluation of the ESP program was conducted by the Criminal Justice Policy Council. A process evaluation was conducted to determine the effectiveness of ESP implementation. The outcome evaluation sought to determine the effectiveness of ESP in securing employment for probationers and examine the relationship between ESP participation and recidivism. An employment market survey was also conducted as part of the process evaluation.

Demographic, criminal history and base line employment information were gathered on each probationer at intake into the program. A follow-up was conducted sixty days after the initial intake date to determine the extent of probationer participation and gather employment information. One year after intake into the program, a "status" form was completed on each ESP probationer. This information will be used to determine the probation, employment and criminal justice status of each ESP probationer one year after program intake.

In addition to information gathered on ESP intakes, demographic, criminal history and employment information was collected on a sample of probationers in three of the six ESP sites. To evaluate various process approaches, one comparison site was selected from each of the following three program categories: 1) Workshop conducted by CSCD, job placement services provided by TEC; 2) Workshop and job placement conducted by TEC; 3) Workshop and job placement services conducted by the CSCD. The three sites in the comparison sample were Lavaca/Gonzales/Colorado, Bell/Lampasas and Smith counties. A random sample of unemployed probationers on the caseload in January 1990 was gathered from each site. This group did not receive any ESP employment services.

The process evaluation included a survey of employers in each of the six ESP sites. Questionnaires were sent to a random sample (2,030 out of 9,000) of employers located throughout the ESP sites to determine employment opportunities and opinions about the hiring of probationers. In addition to a series of labor market questions, a series of optional questions were asked specifically addressing issues regarding the employment of probationers. Approximately 750 responses were returned for review. Of those 750 returned, 488 (65%) answered the optional questions about hiring probationers.

A phone survey of 65 (35.3%) of the 184 probation officers working in the ESP sites was also conducted. Probation officers were questioned about the project to determine the effectiveness of interagency communication and the extent of familiarity with the program.

Preliminary program outcome was measured using TEC wage information and DPS criminal history information. The TEC Wage Database was used to conduct the "Phase One" employment analysis. Data from four (4) quarters of wage reporting (January 1991 through December 1991) was collected on all ESP probationers entering the program between January and April 1991. Similar wage data from 1990 (January 1990 through December 1990) was collected for probationers in the comparison sample. Utilizing a computer program, ESP participants and the comparison sample were identified and classified as securing employment during the follow-up period.

One year rearrest data was collected to determine the impact of ESP on recidivism. Data was collected from the Department of Public Safety's Computerized Criminal History database for each ESP participant entering the program between January and April 1991. Each ESP probationer was followed for one year, so that the last participant in this sample entered in April 1991 and was followed through April 1992. A similar procedure was utilized for the non-ESP comparison group with one year follow-up encompassing January 1990 through January 1991.

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DPS data captures arrest and incarcerations as reported by local counties.

The preliminary program outcome evaluation analyzes data gathered on probationers entering the program between January and April 1991. A subsequent employment and recidivism study will be conducted after all probationers entering ESP have completed one year experience with the program. The last month of ESP intake was completed in January 1992. Complete one year outcome data will be available in early 1993.

### REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report is divided into an additional six sections. The overall ESP program description is provided in Section II. This section details ESP program goals, objectives, and development, the referral process, site selection, and the characteristics of each selection site. Section III describes the program operation and the characteristics of the ESP population served, detailing demographic characteristics and offender data. Section IV examines the effectiveness of ESP in securing employment for participants. This evaluation is composed of findings from the 60 day follow-up information. A "Phase One" follow-up of employment rates for a sample of ESP cases and a comparison sample of non-ESP cases is provided in Section V. Section VI details a preliminary examination of recidivism data twelve months after program participation. This analysis is based on recidivism rates for a comparison group of non-ESP probationers and recidivism rates for ESP probationers. Section VII provides the summary with final conclusions and recommendations for future program development in this area.



## **II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

## II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### DEVELOPMENT, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Employment Services for Probationers program was designed to help probationers acquire stable employment and increase their chances of succeeding under community supervision. The Governor's Office, using federal funds (Wagner Peyser 7B funds) administered by TEC to target job development, provided funding for the program on January 1, 1991. The program formally began on February 1, 1991 in six sites throughout the state and was funded through January 31, 1992. Partial funding was provided through August 31, 1992 for selected ESP sites.

The ESP program was a multi-agency federally funded program, requiring not only interagency cooperation, but cooperation between state and local entities. Therefore, successful implementation of the program required effective planning, communication, delegation of responsibility, and cooperation between participating agencies. Services were developed for probationers entering the program through the cooperation of TEC, the Community Justice Assistance Division (CJAD) of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the selected county Community Supervision and Corrections Departments (CSCD), and the local TEC offices. CJAD is the division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice which regulates the local Community Supervision and Corrections Departments. CSCD's are the local probation departments which supervise probationers in the area.

The ESP budget stated that the ESP program would allow for 3,500 to 4,000 probationers to be served in the six locations. Total projected costs for the ESP program were \$1,187,369. A goal of securing employment for 50% of the clients enrolled in the employment component of the program was proposed.

TEC, CJAD, and the local TEC offices, developed the following program goals:

- provide individual employment services to qualified probationers to assist in achieving stable employment;
- through stable employment, ultimately reduce the recidivism rate among probationers.

TEC and CJAD jointly developed the ESP pilot program and implementation procedures which included:

- joint planning for program development and implementation;
- establishment of program eligibility and a referral process for CSCD designated ESP participants;
- job development and placement efforts for ESP participants at selected sites;
- information sharing with staffs and the public that would advance the goals and purposes of ESP such as media programs to encourage employers in the area to hire ESP probationers.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

### PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The ESP program consisted of two components: the probation referral and intake component and the employment services component.

### PROBATION REFERRAL AND INTAKE

The referral and intake component of the program was the responsibility of the local CSCD. Referral/intake consisted of the services listed below.

- Identifying the offender as being in need of ESP services. Probation officers were responsible for the identification of potential program participants.
- Scheduling an appointment for the probationer to meet with the ESP employment officer.
- Interviewing the probationer to determine eligibility and ability to participate. The ESP employment officer met with each potential ESP probationer to discuss the program and complete program intake. Each probationer entering the program was required to sign a promise to participate in employment services.
- Scheduling eligible offenders for employment services.
- Tracking of probationers who did not show up for services. The ESP employment officer was the link between the probation office and TEC and was instrumental in contacting probationers who failed to report for employment services.

### EMPLOYMENT SERVICES COMPONENT

The employment component of the ESP program consisted of a job search workshop, intensive employment counseling and job development. The agency which delivered the specific ESP services differed from site to site.

The services provided by TEC in the employment component consisted of:

- a 20 hour job search workshop delivered for Bell/Lampasas and El Paso counties;
- job development, job placement, counseling, labor market information and other employment services were delivered for Bell/Lampasas, El Paso, Lubbock, Nueces and Smith County.

The services provided by the CSCD's in the employment component were:

- conducting the job search workshop, job development, job placement, counseling, and all other employment services in the Lavaca County site;
- conducting the job search workshops in Nueces, Lubbock and Smith counties.

The employment component consisted of a job search workshop which provided the probationer with interview and job search skills. Workshops were held at either the probation office by the ESP officer or at TEC by the ESP employment counselor. In the workshop the probationer was counseled and provided with information designed to give the skills necessary in finding employment such as resume writing, proper attire, telephone etiquette, and interviewing

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techniques. The probationer then used the learned job preparedness skills to acquire employment by either developing leads or using the employment referral matching procedure provided by the employment counselor.

An equally important component of the program was intensive job counseling. The probationer received intense counseling and individually guided employment placement services. The caseload of an ESP employment counselor was much smaller than the caseload of an employment counselor assisting the general public. (Approximately 1 to 150 compared to 1 to 1500). Working more closely with the probationer was intended to enhance the ability of the offender to secure employment.

An Employability Development Plan was completed for all ESP participants. This plan helped in matching the probationer to specific job openings and job skills and encouraged the applicant to set specific long term and short term employment goals.

## ESP SITE SELECTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ESP program operated in six sites throughout Texas. The sites included Bell/Lampasas, Colorado/Gonzales/Lavaca, Nueces, Smith, El Paso, and Lubbock counties. Initially, eighteen counties applied for the program. The selection of counties to receive ESP funding was based on the factors detailed below:

- Inclusion of an employment program in the Community Justice Plan: Selection required that the CSCD list unemployment programs in their annual Criminal Justice plan and that those programs receive placement in the priority goals for the 1991/1992 fiscal year.
- Geographic area within the state: Since ESP was a pilot project, a variety of geographic locations was preferred to aid in evaluating program effectiveness as impacted by geographic location.
- Size of the county/counties: Variation in size of location was also a factor, with a desire to pilot test both urban and rural sites.
- Cost efficiency factor: A formula was developed which divided the funding requested by the projected number of participants to establish the cost-efficiency of the proposed project.
- Quality factor: Whether the proposal contained outcome measures addressing unemployment, recidivism reduction, fee reduction, networking/communication within the community, an educational component, and a self-image/worth component.
- Future of program with reduced or no future funding: The promise for continued funding for a program which would make the probability of institutionalizing the program greater.
- Need for employment program: Need was based on the percentage of unemployed felony probationers in the county. Documentation was necessary to support the need for employment assistance relative to other competing sites.
- Implementation strategy: In order to be selected, counties had to provide detailed implementation strategies which included:

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- program endorsement by the administrative district judge;
- designation of employment specialist to coordinate probationer referrals and serve as liaison with the CSCD and the employment service provider;
- identification of the type and nature of service that would be made available for the employment component of program;
- commitment to assist in program evaluation efforts.

Each site represented one Community Supervision and Correction Department (CSCD). As a pilot project, the delivery of services differed in each site, although, the services delivered were essentially the same. In the Bell/Lampasas and El Paso County sites the CSCD referred and screened eligible probationers while the Texas Employment Commission conducted a twenty hour job search workshop and performed job development, job placement, counseling and other employment services. In the Smith, Nueces and Lubbock County sites, the CSCD referred and screened eligible probationers and conducted a job workshop. The TEC performed job development, job placement, counseling and other employment services for the program. Lubbock also administered the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRATS) to determine the scholastic level of probationers in reading, spelling, and arithmetic. In the Lavaca/Gonzales/Colorado County site the CSCD provided all referral, intake and employment services to ESP probationers.

Table 1 indicates the variation in service delivery by ESP site.

TABLE 1: ESP PROPOSED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES BY SITE					
	CSCD CONDUCTED WORKSHOP	TEC CONDUCTED WORKSHOP	TEC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	CSCD EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	WRATS TESTS
LAVACA	X			X	
NUECES	X		X		
BELL		X	X		
SMITH	X		X		
EL PASO		X	X		
LUBBOCK	X		X		X

Bell/Lampasas Counties: Located in Central Texas, this site is an urban/rural area reporting 46% unemployment among felony probationers. The major cities in these counties include Temple, Killeen, Belton, and Lampasas. The population of these two counties according to the 1990 U.S. Census was 204,609.

This site did not begin the program with an employment officer to coordinate referrals and intakes into the program, rather all probation staff were responsible for the referral and intake of probationers and the scheduling of appointments with specialized TEC staff. As the program

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

evolved, however, an employment officer was hired to specialize in the ESP program. The ESP employment officer and TEC counselors met with the probation officers once a month in Killeen and every two weeks in Temple to discuss client progress and problems that arose in the program. A close working relationship developed between the ESP employment officer, the TEC counselors and the site probation officers.

There was a total of six TEC employment counselors in the Bell/Lampasas site. The same counselor who taught the probationer in the workshop also counseled the probationer and referred him or her to jobs. A statement of work search was given to the probationer to keep track of all the employers contacted and the results and notes from each contact. Employers who hired ESP probationers received a certificate of appreciation for hiring a probationer.

Nueces County: Located in South Texas, this site is a semi-rural area reporting 63% unemployment among felony probationers. The major city in this site is Corpus Christi. According to the 1990 U.S. Census the population of Nueces County is 291,945.

All probationers referred to the program were reassigned a probation officer in the same building as the employment counselor and the TEC ESP office. The ESP employment officer screened all potential participants to determine their needs and program eligibility. Probationers were then directed to the TEC employment counselors, located in the same building. This was designed to reduce the chance of no shows. After initial confusion over who was to conduct the job search workshop, TEC agreed to refer ESP probationers to their regular job workshop. The TEC counselors scheduled probationers for ESP employment services.

Lubbock County: Located in North Texas, this site is a rural area reporting 69% unemployment among felony probationers. The major city of this site is Lubbock. The population for the county reported by the 1990 U.S. Census is 222,636.

In this site the CSCD conducted the workshop and TEC performed job development, placements, and intensive counseling. The probation department proposed to develop a quasi-specialized case load to provide direct services to program participants. Probationers on this caseload were required to make job contacts with area employers. All employment contacts were verified. If the probationer falsified a contact, he or she was ordered to do community service work at the local landfill. The probationer was registered with the TEC counselor before attending the workshop to increase the chances of employment while in the workshop. The workshop was conducted by the ESP employment officer and the length of the workshop was determined by individual needs. Probationers with at least a twelfth grade education were not required to attend the workshop. Unlike all the other sites, Lubbock required all probationers to complete a Wide Range Achievement Test (WRATS) to determine scholastic level. This test consisted of arithmetic, spelling, and reading comprehension. Scoring below a third grade level put a probationer in an education program along with the ESP workshop.

Smith County: Located in East Texas, this site is a rural area reporting 49% unemployment among felony probationers. The major city in this county is Tyler. The population reported by the 1990 U.S. Census is 151,309.

The department proposed to develop a specialized caseload to provide direct services to eligible probationers. An ESP probation employment officer conducted an Employment Seminar which was the prerequisite to all other employment services. This workshop consisted of a three day, ten hour program of classroom instruction which provided the tools necessary to conduct an effective job search. The workshop had to be completed before the probationer was referred to the TEC counselor. The ESP employment officer served as the contact person with TEC. TEC employment counselors conducted all job counseling, placement and development services for workshop graduates.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

Lavaca/Gonzales/Colorado Counties: Located in Central Texas, this site is a rural area reporting 46% unemployment among felony probationers. The population reported by the U.S. Census in 1990 for these counties are 55,500.

The CSCD operated with an employment specialist to develop employment services for the targeted offenders. There is no local TEC office in this site. If the probationer met the criteria for referral into the program, the probation officer made an appointment for the client with the ESP officer. The employment officer pooled the clients together until there were enough people to have a workshop in each of the counties. The ESP officer served as both the ESP officer and the employment counselor. The referral of the client into the ESP program also meant the referral of the client to the employment portion of the program. The ESP/employment officer taught the workshop, got referrals for the clients of the ESP workshop, and counseled them throughout the program until the client became employed.

El Paso County: Located in West Texas, this site is an urban area reporting 35% unemployment among felony probationers. The major city in this site is El Paso. The population of El Paso County according to the U.S. Census of 1990 is 591,610.

The ESP employment officer traveled to 6 of the local CSCD offices to conduct program intake. Employment services were located in one central location. The Job Search Workshop and placement program were patterned after Project RIO components. TEC provided the workshop, placement services, and intensive employment counseling for ESP probationers. Intake and placement services were available in Spanish. The site did not propose or provide a job search workshop for Spanish speakers.

### PROGRAM REFERRAL AND INTAKE

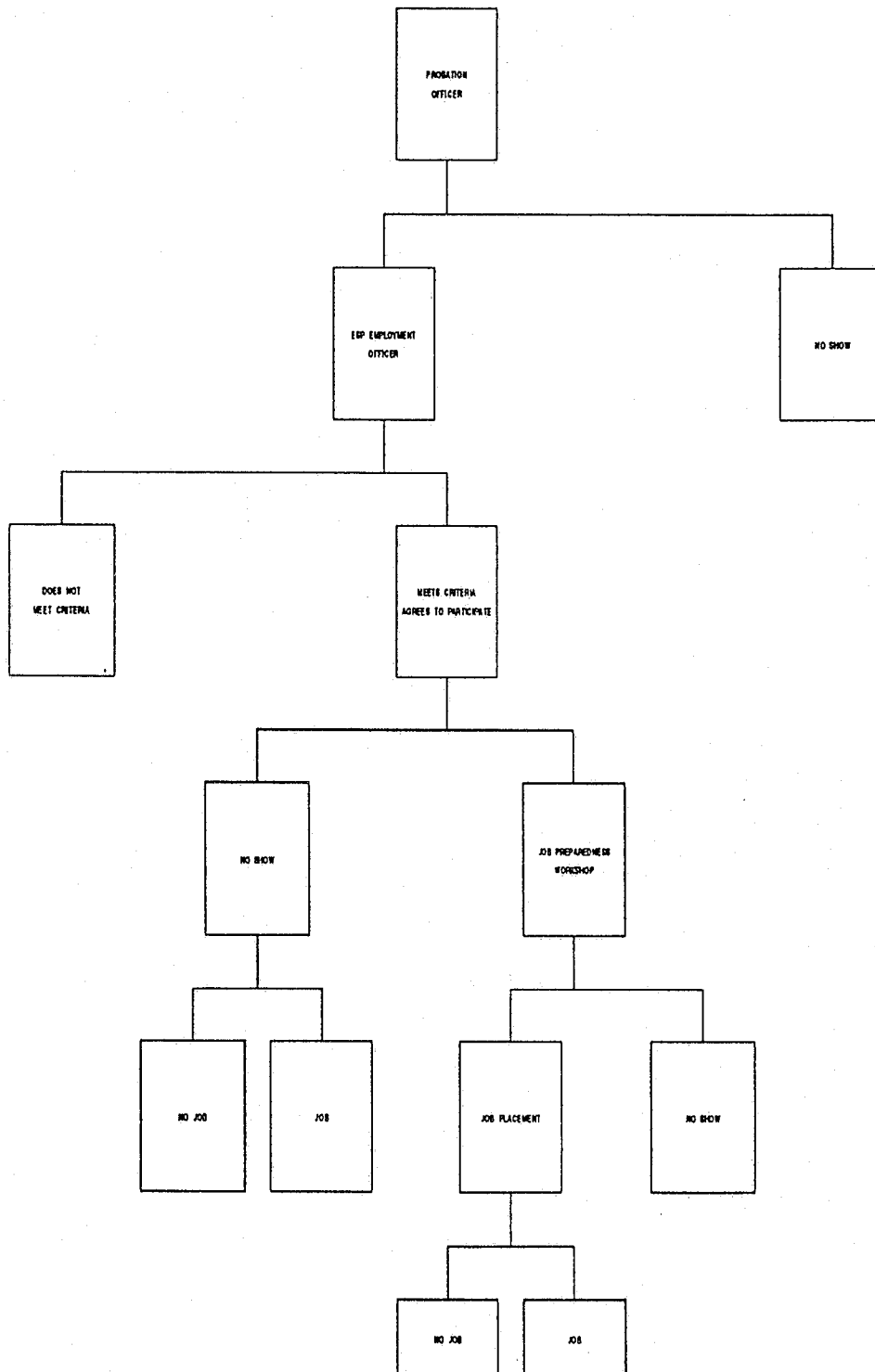
A probationer referred to the ESP program was eligible to participate in the ESP workshop and receive individualized job placement services. All misdemeanor and felony probationers who were unemployed or working less than thirty hours per week were eligible for the program. There were no limits in eligibility due to criminal history or the probationer's current offense. Probationers with serious health, mental, or substance abuse problems that prevented them from working were not referred into the program. Students were also not referred.

The offender was first referred to the program by their probation officer. The referral may have been completed at intake or at any time during the probation period. Once referred, the probationer met with the ESP officer who determined if the probationer qualified for the program. If the probationer had no interest in participating or had the potential of becoming disruptive to the program the probationer would not be allowed to enter the program. All probationers completing intake signed an agreement promising to participate in the program.

Before a probationer was referred to employment, the employer was contacted and advised of the offense committed by the possible applicant. Acceptance by the employer had to be granted before the probationer was referred for employment. In addition to referring probationers to job openings, the ESP/TEC counselor often initiated job developments by contacting employers and identifying possible employment for the offenders. Having the private sector cooperate in hiring probationers benefited both the employer and the community by reducing unemployment as well as crime. Some businesses also qualified for tax credits when hiring felony probationers and veterans on probation.

Chart 1 shows the flow of ESP intakes through the program.

CHART 1: ESP PROCEDURE FLOW CHART





**III. ESP PROGRAM OPERATION**

### III. PROGRAM OPERATION

#### OVERVIEW

Probationers have historically had high rates of unemployment. Barriers to employment relate to a number of different factors. In general, employers are hesitant to hire a person with a criminal history. Some employers and professions actually prohibit the hiring of persons convicted of a felony offense. Probationers also customarily lack the education, job skills and support services essential to gaining employment. An offender with a eighth grade education, no previous work experience, no transportation and a child in need of day care is very difficult to place. It is for this person, however, that employment may be the critical factor that keeps them from continued criminal activity.

Each of the selected ESP sites demonstrated a need for employment services in their original request for funding. The basis for this "need" was a large proportion of unemployed probationers under supervision in their jurisdiction. The average unemployment rate for felony probationers in the departments selected for the ESP program was 51%. The probation population in these counties at the time the program began operation was approximately 14,598. This includes both felony and misdemeanor probationers.

#### ESP INTAKE

The ESP program proposed to serve 4,095 unemployed and underemployed probationers. Entry into the program was limited to those probationers without serious physical or mental disabilities. Each site was also able to target ESP assistance to those who could most conceivably find employment, limiting the intake of probationers receiving income assistance and those without transportation. Students were also not referred to the program.

Table 2 shows the number and percent of probationers entering the program by site as well as the number and percent of probationers who received full employment services.

**TABLE 2: ESP INTAKES AND FULL PARTICIPANTS BY SITE**

SITE	PROPOSED TO SERVE	NUMBER INTAKES	NUMBER FULL PARTICIPANTS
BELL	900	609 (68%)	423 (47%)
EL PASO	1,500	1,087 (72%)	659 (44%)
LAVACA	149	85 (57%)	80 (54%)
LUBBOCK	425	469 (101%)	327 (77%)
NUECES	750	795 (106%)	463 (62%)
SMITH	371	250 (67%)	130 (35%)
TOTAL	4,095	3,295 (81%)	2,082 (55%)

A pilot program often has difficulty legitimizing the need for the services it provides. The effects appear in the number and type of persons entering the program. Unlike many pilot programs, ESP did not suffer from a lack of legitimacy. Intakes into the ESP program represented 81% of the proposed program goals. The ease with which ESP was accepted by both the probation and TEC departments may be attributed to a number of factors. First, the program had a strong foundation of support based on its adaptation from Project Rio, the parole employment program. Five of the six sites were operating Project Rio programs at the time ESP began and many of the ESP employment counselors had prior experience working with Rio. An ongoing exchange of information greatly facilitated the implementation of the program and the intake of probationers into the program.

The training of probation officers in the sites also attributed to the high number of intakes into the program. A survey of probation officers in the site counties indicated that 96% of the officers contacted knew of ESP and the majority had received formal training about program and the services it offered. Fifty percent of those interviewed had weekly contact with the ESP employment officer in their jurisdiction. Overall, probation officers in the survey were satisfied with the program and willing to refer probationers under their supervision for services.

Lastly, the use of employment services was not a new concept in any of the ESP sites. Most of the sites had previous experience with one or more employment programs for probationers. Also, the referral of probationers to TEC for employment services was common practice in many of the sites. The ESP program simply allowed for more intensive and individualized service.

ESP intake procedures, though adequate, were at times problematic. The largest obstacle was getting the probationer to the employment officer for intake into the program. Not all sites set specific appointment times for the probationer to meet with the employment officer for intake into the program. The supervising officer would not know if the probationer had contacted the employment officer until the next regularly scheduled visit--often as long as one month. Even when specific appointment times were made, employment officers could do nothing but contact the supervising officer about a missed appointment and attempt to locate the probationer to reschedule. None of the sites could force a probationer to enter the program. Even those counties that included program participation in the probation judgment could do little but revoke the probationer for failing to participate.

In El Paso, Nueces and Smith counties the employment officer did not meet probationers at their home CSCD office. Probationers, in most cases, were required to travel to the location of the employment officer for intake into the program. Those without transportation had great difficulty making the initial contact necessary for intake into the program.

Additional problems in the intake of probationers into ESP are explained below.

- A month delay in the start of the El Paso program.
- A limited number of new probationers eligible for the program. After probationers on the caseload at the time the program began had been served, program intakes were limited to offenders recently sentenced to probation and newly unemployed probationers. This presented a problem for the smaller ESP sites as the number of intakes was often too low to form a workshop class.
- Limited services for Spanish speaking probationers.
- A high turnover rate for probation officers in the sites. The frequency with which the

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

probation officers left their positions necessitated the constant training of new officers about the program. New officers were also not always aware that a probationer had been referred to the program, making employment service follow-up more difficult.

### OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of probationers entering the ESP program varied by program site. In general, however, offenders entering the ESP program were between the ages of 19 and 29, Hispanic, had not graduated from high school or received a GED and were serving their first probation sentence. Property offenders made up 39% of intakes, while probationers convicted of DWI made up 24%. The majority of ESP probationers had been placed on regular probation for a felony offense. The average sentence of those entering the program was 5 years.

The work history of those entering the program was, for the most part, unstable. Laborers made up 39% of intakes, service employees 24%, skilled labor 18% and professionals 2%. Approximately 5% of ESP intakes had no prior work experience. Eighty-nine percent of ESP probationers were unemployed at the time of intake into the program.

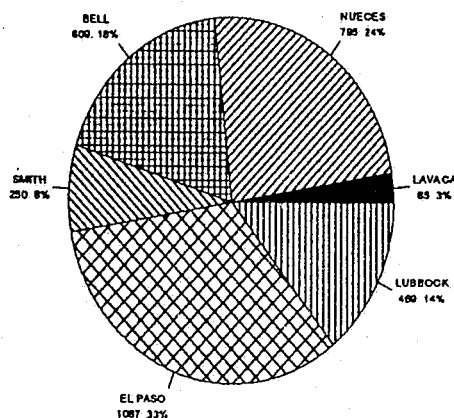
Demographic information for all ESP probationers is provided in Table 3.

**TABLE 3: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ESP INTAKES**

TOTAL INTAKES: 3,295			
<b>AGE:</b>		<b>SEX:</b>	
17-19	15%	MALE	77%
20-29	47%	FEMALE	23%
30-39	27%		
40+	11%		
<b>ETHNICITY:</b>		<b>EDUCATION:</b>	
WHITE	25%	LT 12/NO GED	52%
BLACK	22%	12/GED	40%
HISPANIC	53%	13+	8%
<b>OFFENSE:</b>		<b>OFFENSE TYPE:</b>	
VIOLENT	12%	FELONY	64%
PROPERTY	38%	MISDEMEANOR	36%
DRUG	17%		
DWI	24%		
OTHER	9%		
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS:</b>		<b>WORK HISTORY</b>	
UNEMPLOYED	89%	STABLE	17%
UNDER EMP.	11%	MODERATE*	34%
		UNSTABLE	49%
<b>PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT</b>			
PROFESSIONAL	2%		
SKILLED	18%		
CLERICAL	8%		
LABORER	39%		
SERVICE	24%		
OTHER	4%		
NON-WORKING	5%		
* Moderate is defined as satisfactory employment but no periods of continuous employment with one employer; someone who is almost continuously employed, but changes jobs and job types frequently.			

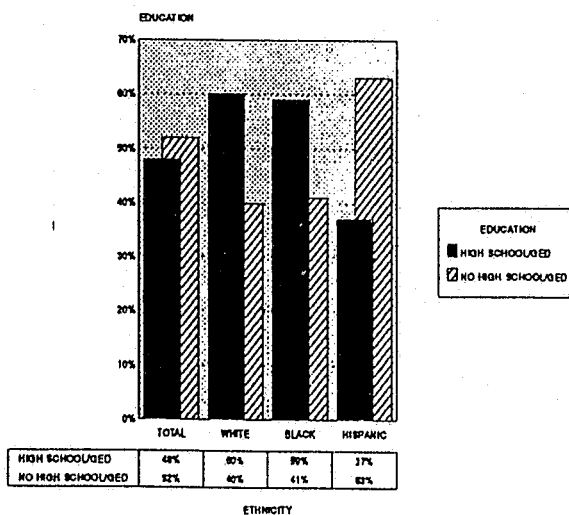
Charts 2 through 7 graphically illustrate the distribution of ESP intakes by various demographic and offender variables. In some cases the information has been presented by ESP site.

CHART 2: ESP INTAKE BY COUNTY

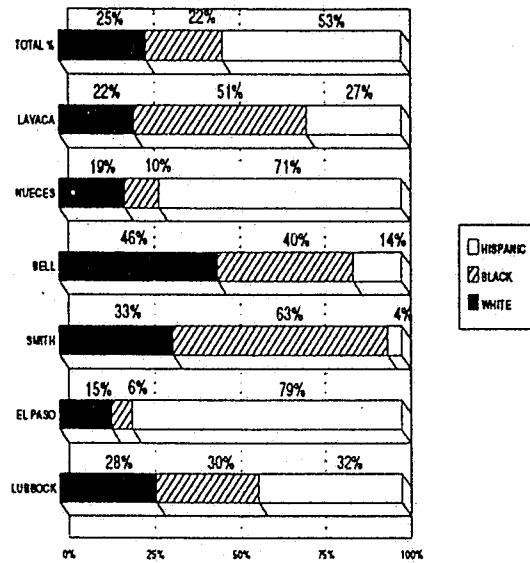


TOTAL REFERRALS = 3295

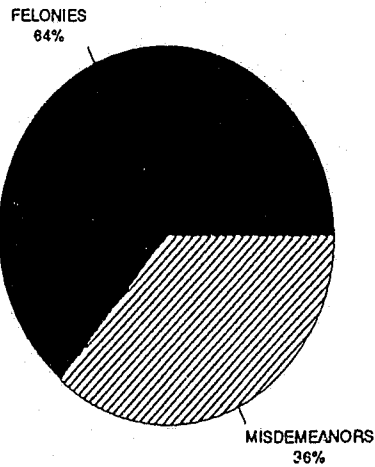
CHART 3: EDUCATION BY ETHNICITY OF INTAKES



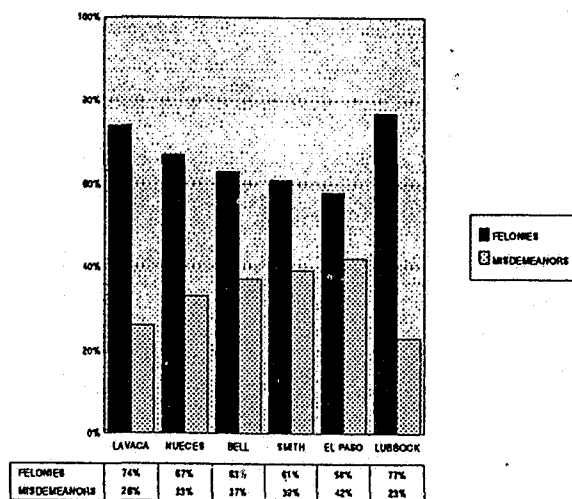
**CHART 4: ETHNICITY OF ESP INTAKES BY COUNTY**



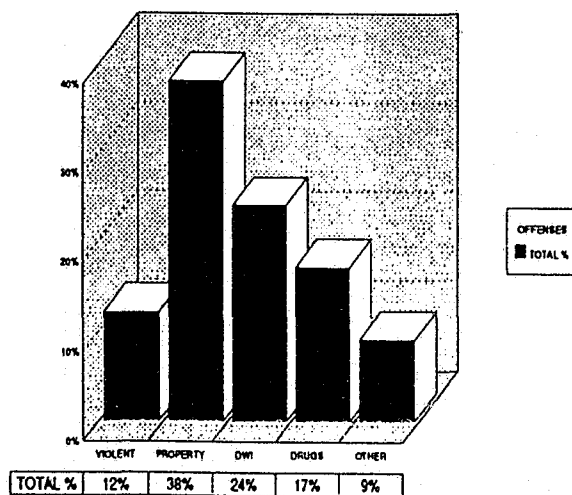
**CHART 5: OFFENSE CLASSIFICATION OF ESP INTAKES**



**CHART 6: OFFENSE CLASSIFICATION OF ESP INTAKES  
BY SITE**



**CHART 7: OFFENSE OF ESP INTAKES BY SITE**





## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

### EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PARTICIPATION

Prior to ESP, a probationer seeking employment assistance through TEC would receive no specialized services. An employability plan would be completed on the offender and he or she would be entered into the job matching database. The employment counselor assisting the probationer would have a caseload of approximately 1500 persons and contact with the offender would be limited to notification of appropriate job opportunities.

Intake into ESP allowed probationers access to the individualized employment services offered through the program. As with any service oriented program, participation in ESP, though mandatory, could not realistically be enforced.

The employment component, as described previously, consisted of a job search workshop, intensive job placement and job development. The delivery of these services varied from site to site, with TEC providing all employment services in Bell and El Paso counties, the CSCD providing the job search workshop and TEC providing job placement and development in Lubbock, Nueces and Smith counties and the CSCD providing all employment services in Lavaca County.

The delivery of employment services was comparable in all the site locations. The job search workshop, which provided the probationer with basic job preparedness skills, lasted approximately three to five days. All of the sites encouraged the probationer to begin making contact with employers in the area while in the workshop. With the exception of Smith County, job placement services could be received prior to workshop completion.

Job placement services began with the completion of an employability development plan. This plan assessed the probationer's skills and experience and recorded any limitations or barriers to employment the probationer might have. This information was then matched with the listing of job openings in the area. Whenever possible, probationer's having specific employment interests were matched with their occupation of choice. Probationers with excessive barriers to employment were referred to social services as well as employment opportunities.

There were no limits to the job placement services received through the program. Probationers were referred to known jobs listed in the central job bank database as well as encouraged to find employment through newspaper listings and employer contacts. Probationers finding temporary or part-time employment or employment outside their field of interest could continue their job search while working. Once enrolled, probationers could return for services without an additional referral into the program. Only after a probationer failed to show up for two consecutive job interviews were they refused further services.

Of the 3,295 probationers entering the program, 2,349 or 71% participated in at least one of the employment services. Participation is defined here as enrollment into the job preparedness component and/or the job placement component of the program. As the tracking of probationers in the various components was minimal, it was not possible to differentiate between participation and completion of the program components. It is, however, possible to make a distinction between those probationers enrolled in both the job preparedness and job placement components (full services) and those probationers enrolled in the workshop only (partial service).

ESP intakes have been grouped according to participation in the program. Each group is defined on the next page. The number of ESP probationers falling into each of the three groups is presented in Chart 8.

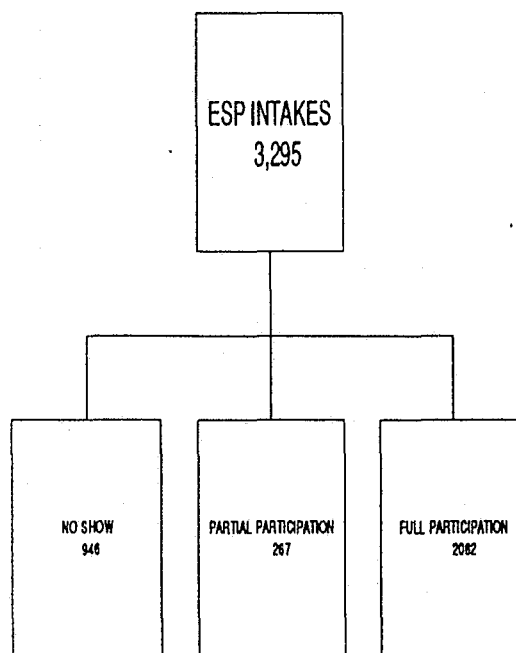
## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

Intake Only (No Show): Probationers for whom program intake was completed but who did not report for either employment component. In Bell, El Paso and Nueces counties, probationers who did not report to the TEC office had no access to employment services.

Job Preparedness Services (Partial Participation): Probationers who were enrolled into the job search workshop but who did not report for job placement services. In Lubbock, Smith and Lavaca counties, probationers were automatically enrolled in the workshop conducted by the employment officer at the CSCD. These probationers did not participate in the job placement component of the program.

Job Preparedness/Placement Services (Full Participation): Probationers who were enrolled in both the job search workshop and the job placement component of the program. With the exception of Lavaca County, probationers registered with the Texas Employment Commission received full employment services.

CHART 8: ESP PARTICIPANT GROUPS



Attrition from intake to full participation status occurred for a variety of reasons, the most common of which was lack of interest in the program. Probationers also dropped out of the program prior to receiving full employment services because of limited support services and transportation. Some probationers obtained employment on their own prior to full participation.

Table 4 provides demographic, criminal history and employment information on each of the three participation groups. Ethnic differences between the groups reflect the site populations. El Paso and Nueces counties did not offer partial services to ESP probationers. Probationers in these counties fell into the "no show" or "full participation" groups.

**TABLE 4: ESP INTAKES BY EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION**

	NO SHOW	PARTIAL PARTICIPATION	FULL PARTICIPATION
<b>SEX:</b>			
MALE	79%	74%	76%
FEMALE	21%	26%	24%
<b>AGE:</b>			
17-19	20%	18%	12%
20-29	47%	49%	47%
30-39	22%	22%	29%
40+	11%	11%	12%
<b>ETHNICITY:</b>			
WHITE	22%	28%	26%
BLACK	15%	49%	22%
HISPANIC	63%	23%	51%
<b>EDUCATION:</b>			
< 12/NO GED	57%	51%	49%
12/GED	36%	40%	42%
13+	7%	9%	9%
<b>OFFENSE TYPE:</b>			
FELONY	63%	71%	64%
MISDEMEANOR	37%	29%	36%
<b>OFFENSE:</b>			
VIOLENT	11%	11%	12%
PROPERTY	39%	46%	37%
DRUG	18%	15%	17%
DWI	23%	16%	25%
OTHER	9%	12%	9%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS:</b>			
UNEMPLOYED	90%	85%	89%
PART-TIME	10%	15%	11%
<b>WORK HISTORY:</b>			
STABLE	15%	16%	17%
MODERATE	34%	37%	35%
UNSTABLE	51%	47%	48%
<b>USUAL WORK:</b>			
PROFESSIONAL	2%	2%	2%
SKILLED	17%	15%	18%
CLERICAL	7%	8%	8%
LABORER	39%	45%	39%
SERVICE	25%	21%	25%
OTHER	4%	4%	4%
NONE	6%	5%	4%

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

Little significant variation occurs between the groups. The primary factors associated with differences in participation rates appear to be the result of variations in the structure of the program, the ease and accessibility of employment services and the sanctions associated with non-participation.

The percentage of intakes participating in full employment services is presented in Table 5.

**TABLE 5: PROBATIONERS PARTICIPATING IN FULL  
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES BY SITE**

<b>SITE</b>	<b>INTAKES</b>	<b>FULL PARTICIPATION</b>
<b>BELL</b>	609	423 (69%)
<b>EL PASO</b>	1087	659 (61%)
<b>LAVACA</b>	85	80 (94%)
<b>LUBBOCK</b>	469	327 (70%)
<b>NUECES</b>	795	463 (58%)
<b>SMITH</b>	250	130 (52%)

As previously stated, participation in the ESP program, though mandatory, could not realistically be enforced. Probationers entering the program were expected to keep appointments with employment counselors, attend the job search workshop and show up for job placement services. Without a mechanism to ensure participation, probationers were likely to drop out of the program. Three program features appear to have been influential to program participation.

*Communication:* Each ESP site developed a procedure by which the ESP probation and TEC staff could exchange information. Good communication and information sharing led to higher participation rates. For example, communication between the probation department and TEC was exemplary in Bell County. At least once a month the ESP employment officer and TEC counselors met with the CSCD probation officers to discuss client progress and problems that arose in the program. If a probationer missed an appointment with the employment officer, both the probationer and his/her supervising officer were called immediately and a new appointment time was set up. Missed appointments with the TEC counselor resulted in a call to the employment officer, a call to the probationer and, if necessary, a call to the supervising officer. Calls were also made to notify the supervising officer, the employment officer and, if necessary, the TEC counselor of secured employment. In Bell County, 69% of intakes participated in full employment services.

Just as good communication can increase participation, problems with communication can limit the number of probationers receiving services. In Nueces County where the ESP probation and TEC offices were housed in the same building, only 58% of intakes participated in employment services. Nueces was the only ESP site where probationers met with the employment officer without first making an appointment. Intake forms completed by the probation officer were sent to the employment officer as the probationer was referred. Often, forms would arrive weeks before the probationer and be misplaced or would never arrive. Nueces also experienced some confusion over enrollment in the employment service component.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

Lavaca County, as a one person operation, clearly shows how reducing the complexities to communication can benefit program participation. All intake and employment services were provided by one ESP employment officer. This officer knew the exact status of each probationer entering the program and was able to respond immediately to keep the probationer in the program. Ninety-four percent of Lavaca County intakes participated in full employment services.

*Use of Sanctions:* Many of the ESP sites encouraged the district judges in the area to require participation in an employment program, specifically ESP, as part of an offender's probation judgement. Short of revocation, however, little could be done to enforce participation requirements. Lubbock County was successful in developing an enforceable sanction for program drop-outs. ESP probationers were placed into a specialized caseload and required to make at least two job contacts a day until employed. Job contacts were verified and if false information was discovered the probationer was required to work in the local landfill for a specified number of hours. In Lubbock County, 70% of ESP intakes participated in employment services.

*Transportation:* Transportation was also recognized as a possible barrier to employment services. El Paso County routinely passed out bus tokens to ESP participants. The TEC office in Nueces County was instrumental in arranging for a bus route to the new CSCD building which housed all ESP probation and TEC operations. Unfortunately the bus service did not begin until August, and, even then, the schedule precluded probationers from traveling to the ESP office in the afternoon. In Smith County, probationers without transportation were not eligible for ESP services.

Additional factors and program components which effected employment service participation are listed below.

- *Employment Counselor to Client Ratio:* ESP offered intensive, individualized employment service to all probationers entering the program. However, the number of employment counselors differed from site to site. The ratio of employment counselors to probationers for each site were:

Bell	1: 71	Lubbock	1:164
El Paso	1:132	Nueces	1:154
Lavaca	1: 85	Smith	1: 65

Although the ratio of employment counselor to probationer was low in Lavaca County, the employment officer was also responsible for all screening and intake functions for the site. Bell County, with six employment counselors, was able to provide more individual attention by assigning one counselor to a specific group of probationers. The counselor would teach the workshop and then assist the probationers in their job placement efforts.

- *Completion of Job Search Workshop:* Smith County required all probationers to complete the job search workshop prior to referral for job placement services. All other ESP sites allowed the probationer to receive job placement services regardless of their status in the workshop. The workshop requirement reduced the number of probationers receiving full employment services, as those who did not complete the workshop were not eligible to receive ESP employment services from TEC.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

- *Availability of Job Search Workshop:* The Nueces County CSCD proposed to provide a job search workshop for ESP probationers. This workshop never took place. TEC agreed to refer ESP probationers to their regular TEC job search workshop. This workshop was not held in the same facility as the other ESP employment services and was not specifically targeted to offenders.
- *Lack of Services for Spanish Speaking Probationers:* None of the ESP sites proposed employment services to Spanish speaking probationers. No Spanish services were provided. This lack of services effected to the number of probationers receiving full employment services, especially in El Paso and Nueces Counties.

## JOB DEVELOPMENT

The final employment service provided by the ESP program was job development. Job development was conducted by the TEC employment counselor or, in Lavaca County, by the ESP employment officer. The purpose of job development was to contact employers in the area, inform them of the ESP program and determine if they would consider hiring a probationer. Employers were given information on the tax credit and federal bonding programs available to businesses hiring offenders. A record was kept of all employers willing to hire offenders. ESP probationers were then referred to these employers when making job contacts.

A questionnaire was sent to a random sample of employers in each of the ESP sites. In addition to a series of labor market questions, specific questions were asked concerning the employment of probationers. The responses from this questionnaire revealed a divided experience and opinion regarding the hiring of probationers. Fifty percent of those responding stated that they would hire a probationer. Of those employers indicating they would hire a probationer, 62% had hired a probationer in the past. Only 15% had not been satisfied with probationer work performance. The remaining fifty percent of those responding stated they would not hire a probationer. Eighty-five percent of this group had never hired a probationer.

The results of this questionnaire indicate that successful efforts to recruit new employers of probationers could improve future opportunities for employment. For the ESP program, a good rapport between the employment counselor and employers in the area greatly assisted in the placement of probationers. The initial contact from the employment counselor was often able to dispel employer fears about hiring an offender. Often a job opening was discovered that was not listed in the central job bank. Job development also provided the employment counselors with a more complete knowledge and understanding of the local labor market.

Job development also included meeting with local business clubs and associations as well as providing information to newspapers and radio stations in the area about the ESP program.

Each site differed in their approach to job development. Bell County presented employers hiring probationers through the program with a certificate of appreciation. El Paso would participate in local job fairs, setting up booths and distributing information to area employers. In Lavaca County, the employment officer used local radio, newspapers and direct mail to inform area residents and businesses about the program.

**IV. 60 DAY EMPLOYMENT  
OUTCOME**

#### IV. 60 DAY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME

##### ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYMENT

The primary goal of the ESP program was to assist probationers in acquiring stable employment. In order to determine if the program was effective in achieving this goal, it is necessary to examine the employment of those probationers entering the program.

The following terms are used in the examination of the program outcome. Definitions are based on the Texas Employment Commission glossary of terms.

*Employment:* One or more days in a full time job. Temporary jobs and day labor are considered employment.

*Placed:* Employment of an individual referred by the employment counselor for a job or an interview. To be considered as a job placement, the following requirements had to be met: a job order form had to be completed prior to referral; the employer had to be contacted to make arrangements for the referral; and the job had to be verified from a reliable source.

*Obtained:* Employment of an individual within 90 days of receiving one or more of the following services: participation in job search activities; participation in a job search workshop; employment counselling or testing; or development of an employability plan.

*Secured Employment:* Total employment derived from all placements and obtained employments.

Two methodologies were used to determine probationer employment. The first involved a follow-up conducted sixty days after the probationer's initial intake date. The name of each ESP probationer was entered into the TEC employment database to determine the extent of probationer participation and to gather employment information. In Lavaca County, the employment officer was asked to complete a participation/employment information form sixty days after intake. Sixty day employment information was available for only those probationers who participated in the job placement component of the program (full participation).

The second methodology used the TEC Wage Database to conduct the "Phase One" employment analysis. Data from four (4) quarters of wage reporting (January 1991 through December 1991) was collected on all ESP probationers entering the program between January and April 1991. Similar wage data was collected from 1990 (January 1990 through December 1990) for probationers in the comparison group. The comparison group was randomly selected from unemployed probationers on the caseload as of January 1990 in Smith, Lavaca and Bell Counties. Utilizing a computer program, ESP and comparison group probationers were identified and classified as securing employment during the follow-up period.

##### ANALYSIS OF 60 DAY EMPLOYMENT FOLLOW-UP

Sixty days (60) after intake into the ESP program, a follow-up inquiry was made to determine if the ESP participant had secured employment. This 60 day process was able to measure the employment of only those ESP probationers who participated in job placement services (full participation).



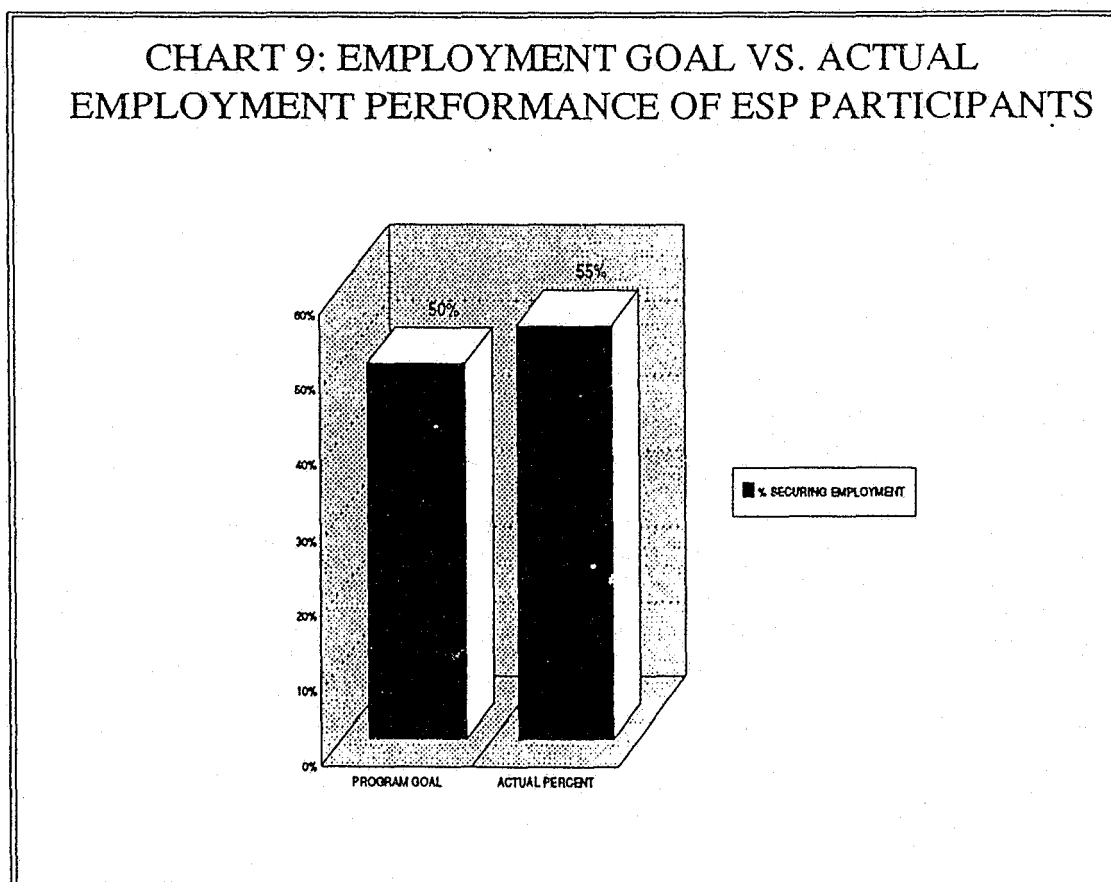
## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

All discussion in this section refers only to those probationers who received full employment services. A "participant" is, therefore, a probationer who participated in the job placement component of the program. As previously discussed, full participants represented 2,082 or 63% of all intakes.

Job placement services consisted of the completion of an employability development plan, job counseling, the matching of job skills to existing job openings and referral to employment opportunities listed in the central job bank or to area employers. All employers were notified of the probationers criminal justice status prior to referral. This allowed for informed, candid interaction between the ESP probationer and the potential employer.

ESP probationers were encouraged to consider all employment opportunities. In areas where the labor market was sluggish and unemployment rates were high, probationers were routinely referred to day labor opportunities.

Chart 9 indicates that 55% of ESP participants secured employment during the 60 day follow-up period. The goal of the program was to employ fifty percent of those receiving full employment services. Forty-five percent of those receiving full employment services remained unemployed 60 days after program intake.



Probationers securing employment were, for the most part, Hispanic (47%). Thirty-two percent of the ESP participants who became employed were White, 21% were Black. The average age of those finding jobs through the program was 28. Fifty-two percent had graduated from high school or earned a GED.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

Of the offenders employed through the program, thirty-seven percent had been placed on probation for a property offense. Violent offenders made up 12% of those employed, drug offenders 17% and DWI offenders 26%. The majority, or 67%, were felony offenders serving their first probation sentence. The average sentence of those employed was 5 years.

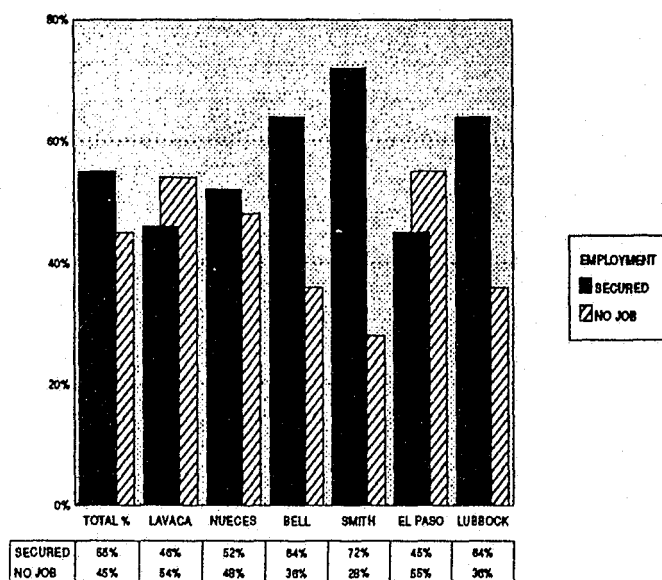
The majority, or 53%, of participants working 60 days after program intake secured employment after referral from their employment counselor. The remaining 47% obtained their own job after receiving ESP employment services. Although the average number of referrals to employers prior to employment was 2, twenty-two percent of probationers gained employment without ever being referred and 37% were employed after just one job referral. Thirty-five percent of the those employed qualified for the targeted jobs tax credit. Sixty-two percent had previously received TEC services.

Participants employed through the program entered labor jobs most frequently (69%). Jobs in the service sector made up 15% of employment while skilled labor made up 7% and clerical 5%. Less than one percent of ESP participants entered professional jobs. Previous work experience for this same group consisted of labor (40%), service (24%), skilled labor (19%) and clerical employment (8%). Two percent of those securing employment had prior work experience as professionals, 3% had no prior work experience.

### EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE BY SITE

Employment performance measures the success of the participant in securing employment. A probationer who secured employment may have been placed by the ESP employment counselor or may have obtained employment after receiving one or more employment services. The percentage of participants securing employment 60 days after program intake differed for each ESP site. Differences appear to be the result of program operation, participant characteristics and area employment opportunities. The method of service delivery did not appear to effect program performance. Chart 10 shows the percentage of participants securing employment by county.

**CHART 10: ESP SECURED EMPLOYMENT BY SITE**



Smith, Lubbock and Bell Counties were the most successful sites in employing ESP probationers. Approximately 72% of the probationers in Smith County who participated in full ESP employment services secured jobs. Both Lubbock and Bell Counties were able to employ 64% of those participating in the full employment services.

By grouping the three counties with the highest employment performance (Bell, Smith, and Lubbock), and comparing them to the three remaining counties (Lavaca, Nueces, El Paso), inferences can be made regarding the specific program, offender and labor market characteristics that influence participant employment.

*Program Characteristics:*

- **Employment Counselor to Client Ratio:** Intensive, individualized service delivery effects not only program participation but employment. The two counties with the lowest counselor to client ratios (Bell and Smith) employed the highest percentage of participants. Lower caseloads gave the employment counselor the time needed to match the probationer with job openings, make job development contacts and monitor the progress of the probationer throughout the employment component. In sites where employment counselors were expected to serve a large number of probationers, both participation and employment suffered.
- **Completion of the Job Search Workshop:** The job search workshop provided ESP participants with basic skills necessary to find a job. These skills included resume writing, employer contact, interview performance and application completion. In Smith County, where 72% of ESP participants secured employment, the ESP workshop had to

be completed before the probationer could receive placement services. Although it reduced the number of probationers eligible to receive full employment services, it prepared participants to find employment. Smith County had the highest percentage of probationers who obtained employment (60%). See Chart 11.

Nueces County, which employed 52% of participants did not conduct an ESP job search workshop. Probationers in this site were referred to regular TEC job workshops as availability allowed.

- Good Rapport with Area Employers: Contact between the employment counselor and area employers helped to promote the program and provided businesses with information about tax credits and bonding programs available to those hiring offenders. Employment counselors in both Bell and Smith Counties routinely contacted employers and met with area business clubs and associations. In Lavaca County, the employment officer's close contact with employers was especially important. The Texas Employment Commission has no office serving the Lavaca/Gonzales/Colorado area. The ESP employment officer created a database of area employers and job openings in order to serve program participants. Lavaca County placed the highest percentage (86%) of participants in the program.
- Use of Sanctions: The ability to enforce program participation increases program performance. In Lubbock County, ESP probationers were required to contact at least two employers a day while unemployed. Job contacts are verified and if false information was discovered the probationer was required to complete community service work in the local landfill. Not wishing to work in the landfill, ESP participants made job contacts and were able to secure employment.

*Offender Characteristics:*

- Stable Work History: The probationer's work history was rated by the employment officer at intake. Prior work history and experience can greatly effect a persons ability to get a job. The counties showing the highest employment for participants also had lowest proportion of the probationers with unstable work histories. For example, in Bell County 16% of program participants were given an unstable work history rating. In contrast, 81% of Lavaca participants and 64% of Nueces participants had unstable work histories.
- Education: The job opportunities available to a person without a high school diploma or GED are limited. A probationer with a GED or high school diploma has a broader range of placement possibilities regardless of the labor market. The educational achievement of ESP probationers varied significantly between the sites. The 60 day employment of program participants was, however, not significantly influenced by the education of the probationer. The employment rate of participants with a twelfth grade education or GED was similar to the employment rate for participants without a diploma. This seems to suggest that the jobs probationers secured through the program were, for the most part, unskilled labor positions.
- Prior Work Experience: On the average, 4% of program participants had no prior work experience. In Lavaca County, however, 13% of participants had never held a job.
- Offense of Conviction: A survey of employers in ESP sites gathered information on the type of probationers employers would be reluctant to hire. The majority stated that they would not hire anyone with a drug or alcohol problem or anyone convicted of a violent offense. Property offenders would only be hired under certain conditions. The

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

proportion of drug, violent and property offenders in the participant population varied in each ESP site. This variation may have effected the sites ability to secure employment for program participants.

### *Labor Market Characteristics:*

- Unemployment Rate: The unemployment rate for ESP sites ranged from 3.2% in Lavaca County to 11.5% in El Paso. With the exception of Lavaca County, the three counties employing the highest percentage of participants had the lowest unemployment rates. The more people there are in an area seeking employment, the less likely an offender will be selected.
- Labor Market Demand/Job Availability: A large proportion of the labor market in each of the ESP sites was composed of labor and service jobs which often require limited experience or skills. Many of the program participants had prior experience in service and unskilled jobs. The ability of continue in these types of jobs, however, is often effected by the type of offense for which the probationer was convicted. A property offender will have difficulty securing employment where making change or dealing with money is required. A survey of employers also indicated that property offender would not be hired for jobs where they would have access to the property of patrons. Offenders would, therefore, have difficulty securing employment with a hotel or motel. Certain industries and employers actually prohibit the hiring of person convicted of the felony. For example, a felony offender may not work in a nursing home or for most school districts.

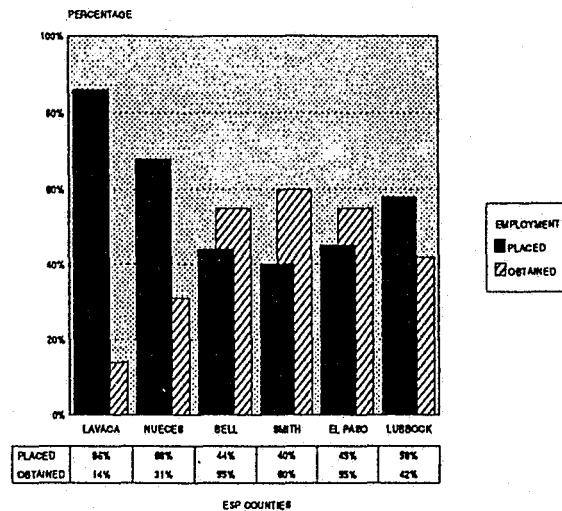
The combination of prior work experience, offense of conviction and local economy can effect the ability of an offender to find employment. For example, in Bell County, where the local economy is centered around the trade and service industry supporting Fort Hood, 40% of participants had previously worked in the service industry. In Lavaca and Nueces Counties where laborers made up the majority of participants, the local economies were driven by the oil industry.

- Dominance of Local Economy by one Industry/Organization: The most telling example of this is Bell County where the local economy is geared toward serving the soldiers stationed at Fort Hood. During the Gulf War, the economy faltered as army personnel left the area to go to the Middle East. Employment opportunities for ESP participants decreased and the program began to rely on day labor placements. The return of troops in June and July aided not only the local economy but the ESP program's ability to employ probationers.

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

Charts 11 through 15 depict the characteristics of ESP participants employed sixty days after intake. There were no significant differences between the characteristics of employed and unemployed participants within each site. Variation did, however, occur between the sites.

## CHART 11: PLACED AND OBTAINED 60 DAY EMPLOYED BY SITE



## CHART 12: 60 DAY EMPLOYED PRIOR TEC SERVICES

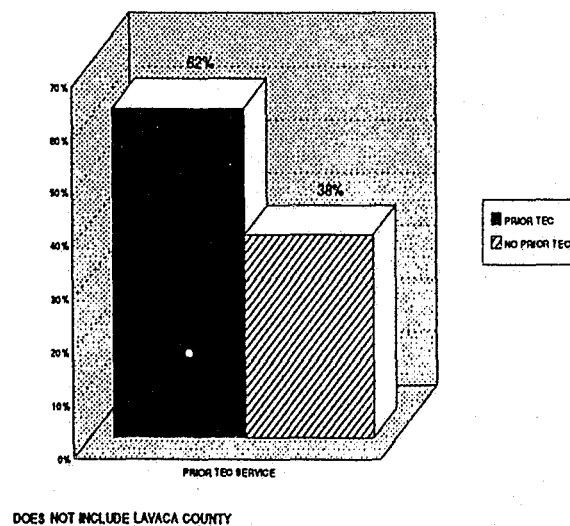


CHART 13: 60 DAY EMPLOYED BY EDUCATION

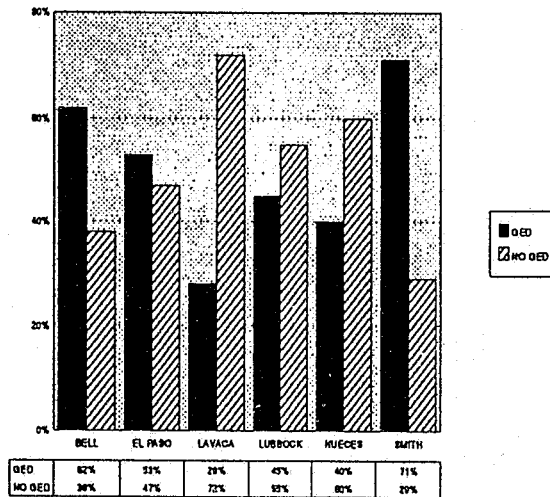


CHART 14: ETHNICITY BY 60 DAY EMPLOYED

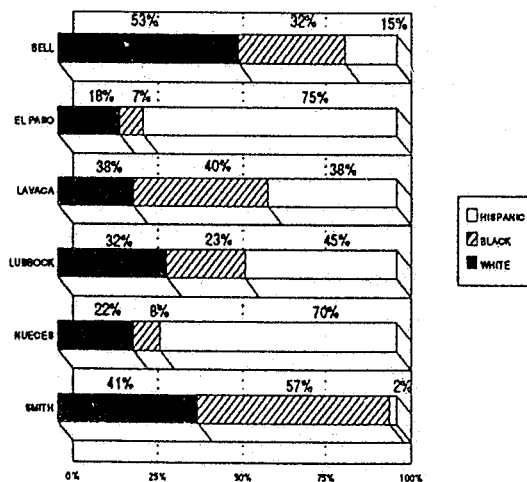
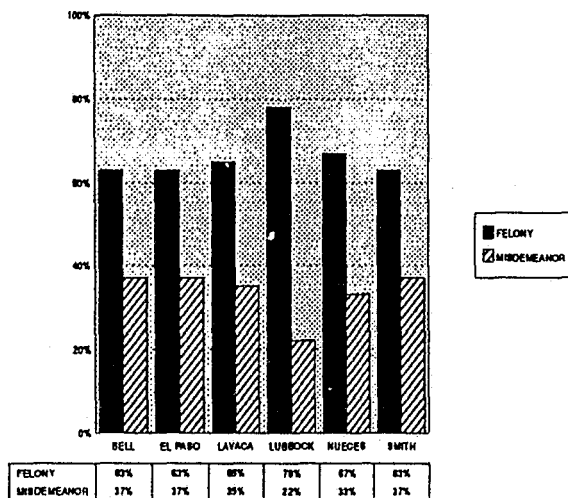


CHART 15: OFFENSE CLASSIFICATION OF 60 DAY  
EMPLOYED





**V. PHASE ONE EMPLOYMENT  
RATES**

## V. PHASE ONE EMPLOYMENT RATES

### COMPARISON BY PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The Phase One employment analysis examined employment based on wages reported to the TEC wage database. As described previously, four quarters of wage data were matched to all probationers entering the ESP program between January and April 1991. Probationers working at least one day were considered as having a wage. Because it was not possible to differentiate between full time and part time employment, probationers working less than thirty hours when referred to the ESP program were not included in the analysis below. Wage data has been grouped according to ESP participation categories. These groups are defined below:

- Full Employment Service Participants (Job Preparedness/ Placement Participants): ESP probationers entering the program between January and April 1991 who were enrolled in both the job preparedness and job placement components of the program. This group consisted of 816 probationers, 712 of whom were unemployed at program intake.
- Partial Employment Service Participants (Job Preparedness Participants): ESP probationers entering the program between January and April 1991 who were enrolled in the job search workshop only. This group consisted of 109 probationers, 90 of whom were unemployed at intake.
- No Employment Service (ESP Intake Only): ESP probationers entering the program between January and April 1991 for whom program intake was completed but who did not report for either employment component. This group consisted of 257 probationers, 232 of whom were unemployed at intake.

The percent of ESP probationers reporting wages in each of the participation groups is shown below in Table 6.

TABLE 6: PERCENT OF ESP PROBATIONERS REPORTING WAGES JANUARY 1991 TO DECEMBER 1991*	
FULL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PARTICIPANTS:	71.5%
PARTIAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PARTICIPANTS:	63%
NO EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:	55%
* Includes only those probationers unemployed at time of intake into the ESP program.	

Wage records show that increased participation in the ESP program effects the probability of employment. At the end of the follow-up period, 71.5% of probationers receiving full employment services had worked at least one day. Fifty-five percent of the probationers who received no employment services also reported a wage during the period. The threat of program participation may have encouraged probationers in the "no services" group to find employment on their own. However, Phase One employment rates seem to suggest a need to redefine or narrow program eligibility.

## COMPARISON OF ESP PARTICIPANTS AND NON-ESP PROBATIONERS

The wage records of ESP probationers participating in full employment services in Bell, Smith and Lavaca Counties were compared to the wage records of probationers in the non-ESP comparison group. The comparison group was selected from a sample of probationers in these three ESP sites prior to program implementation. A random sample of probationers unemployed in January 1990 was collected to generate the comparison sample. This group did not receive ESP services in the one year follow-up, however, it was possible that some form of employment service was provided. It must be noted that probationers selected for the comparison group may not have met the secondary eligibility criteria used by some of the ESP sites when referring probationers to the program. Smith County, for example, did not refer probationers to the program unless they had some form of transportation. The referral of probationers receiving income subsidies was also limited. Data collected on the comparison group shows that 35% of these probationers were receiving some form of income assistance. No data was available on the other eligibility criteria used by the sites.

Each group is defined below.

- ESP Full Employment Service Participants from Target Counties (ESP Target): ESP probationers from Bell, Lavaca and Smith Counties who entered the program between January and April 1991 and who participated in both the job preparedness and job placement components of the program. This group consisted of 306 probationers, 265 of whom were unemployed at intake.
- Comparison Group: Sample of unemployed probationers on the caseload in Bell, Lavaca or Smith County in January 1990. Four quarters of wage data were collected on this sample beginning January 1990 and ending in December 1990. Probationers found in both the target and comparison groups were removed from the comparison sample. This group consisted of 161 unemployed probationers.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

The characteristics of ESP "target" participants and the comparison group are shown in Table 7. Overall the comparison group is slightly older, less educated and has a higher percentage of misdemeanor cases than the ESP target group.

TABLE 7: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS BETWEEN ESP TARGET PARTICIPANTS, AND NON-ESP PROBATIONERS		
	ESP:TARGET	NON-ESP:COMPARISON
<b>AGE</b>		
17-19	18%	18%
20-29	45%	44%
30-39	26%	23%
40 +	11%	16%
<b>ETHNICITY</b>		
WHITE	44%	47%
BLACK	42%	40%
HISPANIC	14%	13%
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
LT 12/NO GED	38%	45%
12/GED	62%	55%
<b>OFFENSE</b>		
VIOLENT	9%	12%
PROPERTY	43%	34%
DRUG	17%	16%
DWI	25%	29%
OTHER	6%	11%
<b>PROBATION</b>		
FELONY	63%	52%
MISDEMEANOR	37%	48%

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

Table 8 shows the percentage of ESP target participants and non-ESP comparison group probationers reporting wages during the Phase One follow-up. If any wages were reported in the four quarters following intake into the program or in the four quarters following selection for the comparison sample, the probationer was considered to have secured employment during the follow-up period. A "wage" is indicated regardless of the length of employment. As in the previous comparison, only those probationers working one day or more have been included in the analysis.

TABLE 8: PERCENT REPORTING WAGES: ESP TARGET PARTICIPANTS AND COMPARISON GROUP		
	WAGES REPORTED	NO WAGES REPORTED
ESP TARGET	72%	28%
COMPARISON	50%	50%

Wage data shows that approximately 3 out of 4 (72%) of the target county employment participants secured employment during the follow-up period. In contrast 2 out of 4 (50%) of the non-ESP comparison group probationers were employed during a similar follow-up period. While it appears that the ESP program positively impacts the employment of probationers, comparison group employment may have been effected by labor market conditions and by the ability or willingness of the probationers to secure employment (secondary eligibility criteria). The percent of comparison group probationers reporting wages, however, does closely resemble the wages reported by the "no services" ESP group.

### NUMBER OF QUARTERS EMPLOYED

As previously stated, the primary goal of the ESP program was to assist probationers in acquiring stable employment. Stability in employment equates with the length of the job and the possibility of permanence. The analysis of TEC wage data shows that participation in the ESP program increases the likelihood of employment. Length of employment, however, may be for as little as one day or for one year.

TEC wage records report the total wages earned for the quarter, not the length of time employed. Because of this, it was not possible to determine the length of time ESP probationers were employed. Wage records were, therefore, used to determine the number of quarters in which the probationers earned a wage after referral. Four quarters of information was gathered for ESP probationers entering the program between January and March. Three quarters of information was collected for probationers entering in April. Wage records for the comparison groups were also analyzed.

## QUARTERS OF EMPLOYMENT BY EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION

Table 9 reports the percentage of probationers in each employment participation group who worked at least one day in every quarter after referral.

TABLE 9: NUMBER OF QUARTERS WORKED BY ESP PARTICIPATION GROUP			
	ALL QUARTERS AFTER REFERRAL	1 TO 3 QUARTERS AFTER REFERRAL	NO JOB
FULL SERVICES:	21%	51%	28%
PARTIAL SERVICES:	21%	41%	38%
NO SERVICES:	22%	33%	45%

The preliminary data shows that participation in the ESP program has no noticeable effect on the number of probationers employed in all quarters after referral. Probationers receiving full job preparedness and job placement services maintained employment in all quarters at the same rate as those who failed to report for employment services. Differences in the percent working one to three quarters reflect differences in the number of probationers who were not employed during the follow-up period.

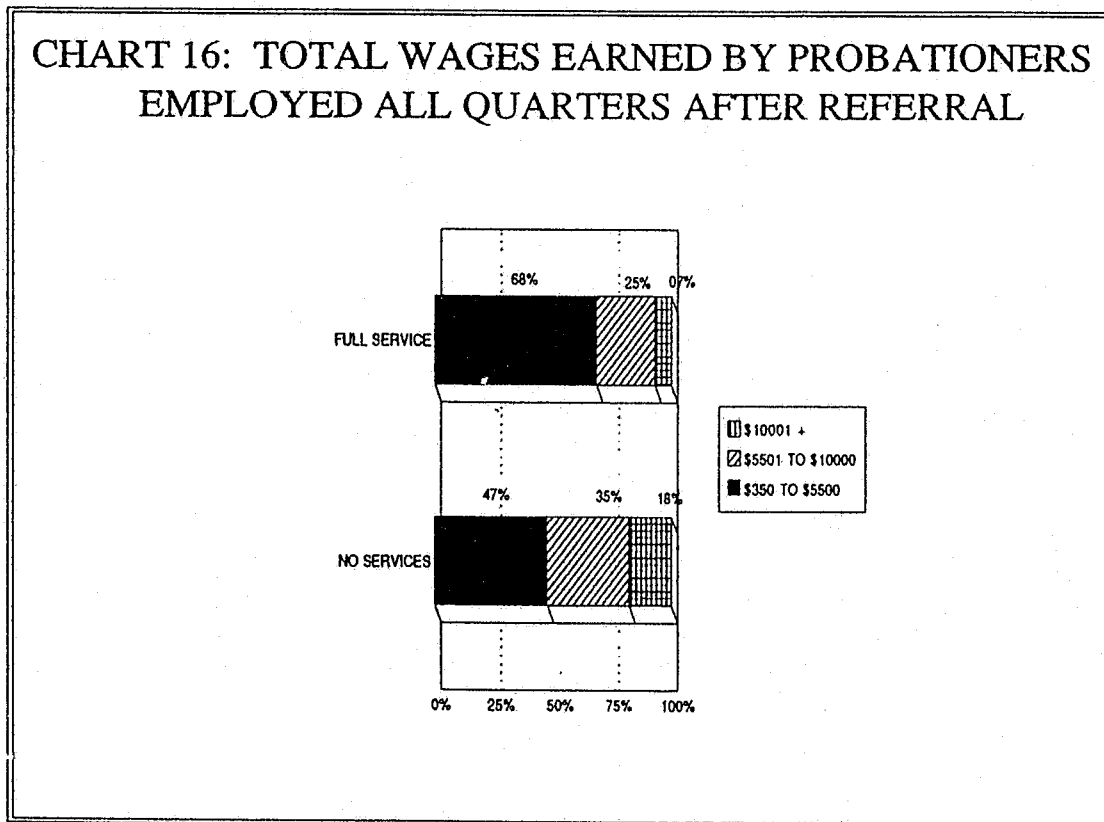
Although the percentage of probationers earning a wage in all quarters after referral remained the same regardless of participation, the actual number of quarters worked differs slightly. Thirty-nine percent of probationers receiving full employment services earned a wage in three or more quarters, sixty-one percent earned a wage in not more than two quarters. Thirty-three percent of probationers in the remaining two groups earned a wage in three or more quarters, sixty-seven earned a wage in two quarters or less. A breakdown of the number of quarters worked is shown in Table 10.

TABLE 10: QUARTERS WORKED BY ESP PARTICIPATION GROUP					
	ALL	3	2	1	0
FULL SERVICES:					
	21%	18%	18%	15%	28%
PARTIAL SERVICE:					
	21%	12%	21%	9%	38%
NO SERVICE:					
	22%	11%	11%	11%	45%

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

ESP probationers earning a wage in all quarters after referral may have worked one day in each quarter or may have been employed in a permanent position. An analysis of wages provides some information on the nature of jobs held by the probationers entering the program. A probationer working full-time in a minimum wage job would earn approximately \$1800.00 a quarter.

Chart 16 presents the total wages earned for probationers who worked in each quarter after referral. Probationers referred between February and April could not have been employed a full four quarters. The number of probationers who received partial services and who worked in all four quarters after referral was too small to include in this Chart.



The median total income for probationers participating in full employment services was \$4014.00. Probationers receiving no employment services earned a median income of \$5617.00 over the four quarters

Preliminary wage data indicates that participation in the ESP program did not increase the earnings of probationers working in all quarters after referral.

COMPARISON OF ESP AND NON-ESP PROBATIONERS

The number of quarters worked by target ESP participants was compared to the employment of probationers in the comparison group. The results appear in Table 11 below.

TABLE 11: NUMBER OF QUARTERS WORKED: ESP TARGET PARTICIPANTS AND COMPARISON GROUP			
	ALL QUARTERS AFTER REFERRAL	1 TO 3 QUARTERS AFTER REFERRAL	NO JOB
ESP TARGET	19%	53%	28%
COMPARISON	16%	34%	50%

Overall, a higher proportion of ESP target participants were employed throughout the follow-up than probationers in the comparison sample. A slightly higher proportion of ESP participants were employed at least one day in each quarter of the follow-up. This proportion, however, is effected by the large number of probationers in the comparison group that did not earn a wage. If the number of quarters worked is measured for only those probationers employed during the follow-up period, 27% of ESP participants and 36% of probationers in the comparison group reported four quarters of wages during the follow-up.



**VI. PRELIMINARY RECIDIVISM  
EVALUATION**

## VI. PRELIMINARY RECIDIVISM EVALUATION

The secondary goal of the ESP program was, through stable employment, to reduce the rate at which probationers returned to crime. In order to determine the impact of ESP on recidivism, one year rearrest data was collected from the Department of Public Safety's Computerized Criminal History database. All probationers entering the program between January and April 1991 were tracked for one full year. A similar procedure was conducted for the non-ESP comparison sample using January 1990 to January 1991 data. DPS data captures arrest data on approximately 89% of those arrested in the state.

Research in recidivism shows that, in the aggregate, rearrest is the most reliably reported measure of recidivism. Arrests may, however, overestimate recidivism by counting those offenders who are arrested but never charged or prosecuted. The time frame of this report precluded the use of revocation and incarceration as a measures of recidivism for the preliminary analysis.

Complete one year recidivism data will be collected using ESP status reports as well as DPS data. The final program outcome evaluation will consider both arrests, revocations and incarcerations.

### ARREST BY EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION & NUMBER OF QUARTERS WORKED

Research has shown that lack of employment is a factor in the recidivism of offenders. Probationers securing employment through the ESP program should, therefore, be arrested less frequently than probationers who remain unemployed. Table 12 presents one year rearrest rates for ESP probationers by employment participation group and number of quarters worked. The small number of probationers receiving partial services prohibited their inclusion in this table.

TABLE 12: PERCENT OF ESP PROBATIONERS ARRESTED ONE YEAR AFTER PROGRAM INTAKE BY PARTICIPATION AND NUMBER OF QUARTERS WORKED			
	ALL QUARTERS AFTER REFERRAL	1 TO 3 QUARTERS AFTER REFERRAL	NO JOB
FULL PARTICIPATION	7%	9%	11%
NO SERVICE	7%	13%	17%

The data shows that probationers employed during the period were arrested less frequently than those that did not secure a job. Although program participants had a slightly lower incidence of rearrest than those receiving no employment services, the number of quarters worked appears to be the critical factor in recidivism.

## COMPARISON OF TARGET ESP PARTICIPANTS AND NON-ESP PROBATIONERS

The number of ESP target participants arrested after one year was compared to the arrests of probationers in the comparison group during a similar time period. The percentage of working and non-working probationers rearrested after one year appears in Table 13. The small number of probationers in the comparison group prevented the analysis of arrests by the number of quarters worked.

TABLE 13: PERCENT REARRESTED: ESP TARGET PARTICIPANTS AND NON-ESP PROBATIONERS		
	WAGE	NO WAGE
ESP TARGET	7%	11%
COMPARISON	20%	11%

Probationers in the ESP target group were arrested much less frequently than those in the comparison group. Such a large variation can not be the result of the ESP program alone. As mentioned previously, arrests often overestimate the criminal activity of offenders. A known offender will have a much higher incidence of arrest simply because of his or her criminal justice status. Also, it is important to remember that an arrest may be the result of a traffic violation, a probation violation or a new offense. An examination of incarceration in the final outcome evaluation will provide more accurate information on the recidivism of these two groups.

**VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

## VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Employment Services for Probationers pilot project provided an intensive program of employment services designed to enhance the employability of probationers. The pilot project allowed for local variation in the delivery of employment services. The evaluation of the program was, therefore, able to assess the overall ESP program as well as make site to site comparisons.

Examination of ESP implementation and operation indicates that specific program characteristics effect the participation and employment of probationers entering the program. Features that appear to be associated with program participation and secured employment include:

- effective communication between TEC and CSCD staff;
- low employment counselor to client ratios;
- good rapport and communication between program personnel and area employers; and
- sanctions to motivate participation in the program.

Labor market and offender characteristics also effected the employment of program participants. These included:

- county unemployment rate;
- demand for specific job types;
- education and skill level of probation population; and
- employment history of probationers in the program.

Preliminary outcome results indicate that participation in the ESP program increases employment rates for probationers.

- Approximately three out of four (71.5%) of the probationers who participated in job preparedness and job placement services (full services) earned a wage during the follow-up period.
- Approximately 2 out of 4 (55%) of the ESP probationers who did not report for employment services earned a wage. Employment was defined as any job resulting in one or more days of work.

Assisting probationers to secure stable employment was the goal of the ESP program. Data shows, however, that the length of employment was not enhanced by program participation.

- ESP probationers earned a wage in each quarter after referral at the same rate regardless of services received. This seems to indicate that simply securing employment for a probationer does not produce a stable work force participant.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

- The underlying factors of education, skills and limited social services remain barriers affecting the employment stability of the offender population.

An analysis of rearrest revealed that employment reduces the incidence of recidivism for probationers who participated in the program as well as those who received no services.

- Seven percent of probationers employed in all quarters after referral were arrested during the one year follow-up period.
- For ESP probationers working three quarters or less, 9% of program participants compared to 13% of those receiving no employment services were arrested.
- Those with no job were arrested the most frequently. Eleven percent of the unemployed participants and 17% of "no service" probationers without jobs were arrested.
- This preliminary data shows the importance of employment in reducing recidivism. Length of employment, however, appears to be the most critical factor in a probationer's return to criminal activity. Complete one year employment and recidivism data will be presented in the final program outcome evaluation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Employment Services for Probationers program was designed to help unemployed and underemployed probationers acquire stable employment and increase their chances of succeeding under community supervision. Some recommendations to consider for future program development and expansion are examined below.

- ***Redefine the criteria for eligibility.*** Thirty-seven percent of probationers entering the program did not participate in full employment services, 29% failed to show up for any employment service. Fifty-seven percent of those not participating in full services, however, earned a wage during the follow-up period. This seems to suggest that not all probationers entering the ESP program needed the intensive employment services offered by the program.
- ***Development of standard procedures for communication between the probation and TEC offices.*** These procedures should require meetings between the site probation officers, the ESP employment officer and TEC employment counselors at least quarterly to discuss client progress and problems that arise in the program.
- ***Maintain low employment counselor to probationer ratios.*** Lower caseloads give employment counselors the time needed to match probationers to job openings, make job development contacts and monitor the progress of the probationer in the program.
- ***Development of viable sanctions that can be used to enforce program participation.*** In most cases, it is not realistic for a probationer to be revoked for failure to participate in an employment service. Realistic punishments or sanctions such as increased community service hours allow enforcement of program participation.
- ***Tracking of probationers in program components.*** No information was kept on probationers within the program components. Because of this, it is impossible to differentiate between those that enrolled into a component and those that completed the employment service. Information was also not available on the length of time probationers remained in employment.

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PROBATIONERS

- ***Use of employment programs in conjunction with educational or vocational services.*** Preliminary program analysis shows that program participation does not enhance the numbers of quarters probationers work after referral. Probationers will continue to find employment in unstable, low paying jobs that offer limited opportunities for advancement unless steps are taken to ensure they have the skills and training necessary to secure stable employment. Future program operation should consider requiring probationers with educational achievement below a specified level to attend vocational and/or educational classes. The combined use of educational training and part-time employment would allow probationers to earn a wage while improving their opportunities for stable employment.
- ***Focus employment efforts on the placement of probationers into jobs that have the potential to become full-time, permanent positions.*** Research conducted on Project Rio found that the relationship between employment and criminal activity is moderated by factors related to the quantity and quality of employment. The extensive use of temporary one day labor opportunities limits the potential long-term impact of programs like ESP.
- ***Continued evaluation of program outcome measures.*** It is essential to continue fine-tuning and adapting programs like ESP to meet the multiplicity of social and economic problems of offenders that affect their potential recidivism. Continued monitoring of program outcomes is critical to effectively accomplish this goal.

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