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Test Design

Employment Services for Ex-Offenders

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Test Designs are developed by design groups composed of representatives of the National Institute of Justice and LEAA. The documents are prepared with contractual assistance, and are reviewed by a panel of experts conversant with the critical research and operational issues in the topic area.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	i
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. The Wide Acceptance of Employment Services for Ex-Offenders	1
B. Theoretical and Research Support	2
C. Ex-Offender Employment Needs	6
D. Ex-Offender Employment Programs	8
E. Program Outcomes	11
F. The Need for Additional Research	16
II. PRIMARY GOALS AND OVERVIEW OF THE TEST PROGRAM	17
A. Primary Goals	17
B. Overview of the Test Program	18
III. PROGRAM ELEMENTS OF THE TEST DESIGN	20
A. Basic Program Structure	20
B. Targeted Clients	23
C. Service Offerings	24
IV. EVALUATION ELEMENTS OF THE TEST DESIGN	32
A. The Experimental Design	32
B. Analytic Framework	34
C. Number of Cases to be Studied	35
D. Evaluation Measures	36
V. IMPLEMENTATION AND NIJ SUPPORT	41
A. Implementation	41
B. NIJ Support to Participating Sites	43
VI. SITE SELECTION CRITERIA	44
A. Criteria Essential to Program Development and Implementation	44
B. Criteria Facilitating Program Development and Implementation	45
SOURCE MATERIAL FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR EX-OFFENDERS TEST DESIGN	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY	47

PREFACE

As part of its research and development mandate, the National Institute of Justice (formerly National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice) designs and field tests programs based on research findings. The knowledge and action goals of the Field Test Program are:

- to add to the knowledge base in the field of law enforcement and criminal justice;
- to develop information on the effectiveness of specific criminal justice practices;
- to contribute to improved policy-making in the areas being tested;
- to identify those criminal justice practices in need of further development; and
- to generate hypotheses for further research.

Each individual field test is an experiment, conducted in a limited number of sites, to determine the effectiveness of a concept or program strategy under controlled or quasi-controlled conditions, and to assess the transferability of the concept and its suitability for further demonstration.

This effort has been designed to test a set of program components for assisting new releasees from prisons and jails in obtaining and retaining employment. The design consists of organizational and program elements that will be implemented and evaluated uniformly in sites selected by the National Institute. There are five primary purposes for this field test:

- to assess the impact of a carefully designed employment intervention on the labor market entry and career mobility patterns of institutional releasees who have exhibited a pattern of property offenses;
- to assess the effectiveness of the program in increasing the cumulative duration of employment experiences of releasees;
- to assess the degree to which program services affect the recidivism rates of program participants;
- to determine the responsiveness of different ex-offender sub-populations to employment interventions; and
- to identify the causes and correlates of the employment success and failure of releasees.

Two to three agencies that provide ex-offender employment services will be selected to develop and implement the test program. These sites will be selected on the basis of a number of factors, including experience in providing employment services to ex-offenders in a community-based setting, utilization of a comprehensive approach to address the multiple needs of clients, level of cooperation with corrections and probation/parole agencies, and the degree of coordination with a network of social service agencies. Each site selected to participate in this test will be required to adhere to the administrative guidelines, program strategies, and provisions of the evaluation design that are specified in this document. Specific aspects of the test program may be negotiated with sites in order to adapt the program design to local conditions and established procedures within the selected agencies. Technical assistance will be provided to sites throughout the test period. The field test will be evaluated by an independent evaluator selected by NIJ on a competitive basis.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Wide Acceptance of Employment Services for Ex-Offenders

In 1973 the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals stressed the importance of employment services as rehabilitative tools which could reduce recidivism rates for persons under supervision in the criminal justice system. Ex-offender employment issues were incorporated into many of the standards and goals in the Commission's Corrections volume, including standards for rehabilitation (Standard 2.9); retention and restoration of offenders' rights (Standard 2.10); mobilization and coordination of community resources (Standard 7.2); development of community-based correctional programs (Standards 9.9, 12.6, and 16.4); development of prison industry programs (Standards 11.10 and 16.13); and employment of ex-offenders in the criminal justice system (Standards 10.4, 12.8, and 14.4).¹ More recently, the American Correctional Association and the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections developed standards for correctional agencies and institutions, recommending the allocation of specific resources to assist employable offenders to prepare for and find suitable employment.²

The emphasis given to employment services for offenders and ex-offenders in these standards indicates the wide acceptance that employment services have as a component of rehabilitative and crime reduction strategies. Further evidence of this acceptance is provided by: (1) the fact that many states require employment as a standard condition of parole; and (2) the substantial public investment that has been made in employment assistance programs for offenders and ex-offenders. Federal support for these programs has been furnished primarily through the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1968, and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973.

¹ National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Report on Corrections (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973).

² Commission on Accreditation for Corrections, Manual of Standards for Adult Probation and Parole Field Services and Manual of Standards on Adult Community Residential Services (Rockville, Maryland: Commission on Accreditation for Corrections, 1977).

B. Theoretical and Research Support

The rationale for providing employment services as part of offender rehabilitation and crime reduction efforts is based in sociological and economic theories of criminal behavior. These theories generally specify unemployment as a contributing factor to crime, and employment as a contributing factor to crime prevention and rehabilitation.

Sociological opportunity theory, for example, suggests that illegal behavior results from the disparity between the goals and values of society (i.e., status and material possessions) and the legitimate means available to the individual to achieve these goals.³ Obtaining employment is a primary means of changing the offender's real and perceived access to these goals, thereby reducing or eliminating the illegal behavior.

Labelling theories and various self-concept theories suggest that society applies the criminal or delinquent label to individuals through the processes of its institutions, i.e., schools, family, and the criminal justice system.⁴ This labelling process reinforces and prolongs criminal behavior. Employment and the status afforded to individuals in legitimate work roles can counteract the negative effects of labelling.

Reference group, peer influence, and subculture theories attribute criminal behavior to the influence of significant others.⁵ According to these theories, an individual's criminal behavior results from influences of a peer or reference group that can foster and reinforce illegal behavior. Conversely, affiliation with a non-criminal peer group can reinforce non-criminal behavior. Ex-offenders who obtain legitimate jobs may join non-criminal peer groups of co-workers who may counteract previously established criminal norms and behavior patterns.

Economic theory suggests a substantially different basis for the relationship between employment and crime. According to these theories, criminal behavior can be attributed to a rational weighing of the costs and benefits

³ Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs (New York: The Free Press, 1960).

⁴ H.S. Becker, Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance (New York: The Free Press, 1963).

⁵ See Lynn Curtis, Violence, Race and Culture (Lexington, Massachusetts: East Lexington Books, 1975) for a detailed analysis of crime rates using subculture and counterculture theories.

of crime by the individual. Thus, an individual is more likely to commit crimes when: (1) his level of economic deprivation, whether real or perceived, is great; (2) his opportunities for legitimate activity are limited; (3) the positive benefits from legal activities are perceived to be few or insignificant; or (4) the risks associated with illegitimate activity are minimal or perceived as minimal.

Several theorists have expanded the economist's concept of the "rational" criminal to include consideration of sociological factors which influence the individual's calculation of the rewards and costs of legitimate and illegitimate options.⁶ These influences include peer groups, age, taste for risk, and the individual's desire to abide by socially accepted norms.

Research Support

In addition to the economic and sociological theories of criminal behavior, there is research evidence that provides substantial if inconsistent support for the contention that employment and unemployment affect patterns of criminal behavior. Three major reviews of this research indicate that there is a dilemma on this point. These reviews revealed that many studies claim to have found substantial effects of employment and unemployment on criminal behavior, but that other equally rigorous studies have indicated weak or no effects. Gillespie and Glaser⁷ each concluded that these studies generally support the validity of the economic model of crime. Tropp,⁸ on the other hand, concluded that those studies which are precise in their findings and reliable in their methodology are in sharp conflict with one another. Thus, the dilemma has not been resolved.

⁶ Sheldon Danziger and David Wheeler, "The Economics of Crime: Punishment or Redistribution," Review of Social Economy 33 (October 1975): 113-131.

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, "Economic Factors in Crime and Delinquency: A Critical Review of the Empirical Evidence," by Robert Gillespie (1975), reproduced in U.S. Congress, House, Unemployment and Crime. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Crime of the Committee on the Judiciary, 95th Congress, 1st and 2nd sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978); and Daniel Glaser, "Economic and Sociocultural Variables Affecting Rates of Youth Unemployment, Delinquency and Crime," January 1978. (Prepared for the Institute of Industrial Relations, UCLA, Conference on Employment Statistics and Youth, and contained in U.S. Congress, House, Unemployment and Crime, pp. 708-740.)

⁸ Richard A. Tropp, "Suggested Policy Initiatives for Employment and Crime Problems," in Crime and Employment Issues, Leon Leiberg ed. (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1978).

Research supporting the validity of the economic model of crime includes the analysis of information obtained through parolee interviews about their post-release needs and studies of the post-release experiences of releasees. In a study of the criminal careers of habitual felons, offenders were asked about the needs they anticipated upon release from prison. Employment was the need they cited most often. In another study which assessed the post-release needs of parolees, the researchers reported that:

When they were asked what kinds of things they had run up against when released, the parolees' statements were dominated by concern for their physical and material needs. In fact, over one-half of their comments centered around jobs, money, credit, debts, place to live, etc. Personal and social problems, such as meeting new people, being involved with drinking or drugs, and trouble in dealing with relatives, were the themes for about one-fourth of their responses. The remaining responses included "no problems" and general statements.

Studies by Glaser¹¹ and Pownall¹² traced the post-release employment and recidivism patterns of released prisoners. These studies indicated that unemployment may be among the principal factors involved in the recidivism of adult offenders. In recent research on released prisoners in Texas¹³ and Georgia,¹⁴ unemployment was one of the principal predictors of arrest during the first year after release. These post-release studies indicate that unemployment increases the risk of recidivism and that employment reduces these risks.

⁹ Joan Petersilia, Peter W. Greenwood, and Marvin Lavin, Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons (Santa Monica, California: Rand, 1977).

¹⁰ R. Erickson, W.J. Crow, L.A. Zurcher, and A.V. Connett, Paroled But Not Free (New York: Behavioral Publications, 1973).

¹¹ Daniel Glaser, The Effectiveness of a Prison and Parole System (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1964).

¹² U.S. Department of Labor, Manpower Administration, Employment Problems of Released Prisoners, by George A. Pownall (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969).

¹³ Charles L. Smith, Pablo Martinez, and Daniel Harrison, An Assessment: The Impact of Providing Financial Assistance to Ex-Prisoners (Huntsville, Texas: Texas Department of Corrections, 1978).

¹⁴ Jack L. Stephens and Lois W. Sanders, Transitional Aid for Ex-Offenders: An Experimental Study in Georgia (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Offender Rehabilitation, 1978).

Research based on aggregate crime and unemployment rates suggests a strong positive correlation between crime and economic indicators. Studies by Brenner¹⁵ and Robinson, Smith, and Wolf¹⁶ found significant positive correlations between unemployment rates and prison admissions over time spans of 36 and 11 years, respectively. Studies by Fleisher,¹⁷ Weicher,¹⁸ and Danziger and Wheeler¹⁹ provided support for the hypothesized inverse relationship between income level and crime. While this research supports the economic model of crime, the extensive methodological problems of these studies limit their explanatory value. The high correlations between unemployment and crime found in these studies may be spurious. Some critics suggest they result from poor specification of the economic variables analyzed, inconsistent use of age-specific data, or limitations in arrest, conviction, and prison admission data.²⁰ Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that unemployment and crime may be correlated due to their association with a third factor, such as family influence or a decision to "go straight."²¹

Using individual (rather than aggregate) data, Witte concluded that attempts to explore the relationship between labor market performance and crime:

¹⁵ Harvey M. Brenner, Time Series Analysis of the Relationships Between Selected Economic and Social Indicators, 2 vols. (Springfield, Virginia: National Technical Information Services, March 1971).

¹⁶ William H. Robinson, Phyllis Smith, and Jean Wolf, Prison Population Costs--Illustrative Projections to 1980 (U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, April 1974).

¹⁷ Belton M. Fleisher, "The Effect of Income on Delinquency," American Economic Review 56 (March 1966): 118-121.

¹⁸ John C. Weicher, "The Effect of Income on Delinquency: Comment," American Economic Review 60 (March 1970): 249-256.

¹⁹ Sheldon Danziger and David Wheeler, "Malevolent Interdependence, Income, Inequality and Crime," Readings in Correctional Economics, American Bar Association, Correctional Economics Center, Washington, D.C., 1975, pp. 35-66.

²⁰ National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, "Economic Factors in Crime and Delinquency: A Critical Review of the Empirical Evidence."

²¹ Charles Wellford, "Manpower and Recidivism," Proceedings: The National Workshop on Corrections and Parole Administration (New Orleans, Louisiana: American Correctional Association, 1972).

. . . provides consistent but weak support for the expected inverse relationship between wage and crime and weak, if any, support for the expected relationship between unemployment and crime. To date, the strongest relationship between labor market performance and crime which has been found is that between employment stability (a measure of employment satisfaction) and crime.²²

In summary, the empirical relationships among employment, unemployment, and crime are both complex and largely unvalidated. Simple conclusions such as "unemployment causes crime" and "employment deters crime" are not supported by the available research evidence. As part of their background research for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) supported Employment and Crime Project, researchers at the Vera Institute of Justice noted:

Our review qualifies the widely accepted view that unemployment directly causes crime and that employment is always an effective deterrent to criminal activity. While these direct (causal) relationships clearly obtain for some groups in certain circumstances, they do not fully account for other employment and crime relationships among different sub-populations, nor for divergence within the same sub-population over time. Thus our review leads us to expand and specify particular employment and crime relationships and to consider instances where the relationship between employment and crime is indirect, brought about by other institutional and subcultural patterns.²³

In short, whether its influence is direct or indirect, at least under some situations, employment remains a crucial variable in efforts to support the post-release adjustment of the ex-offender.

C. Ex-Offender Employment Needs

Despite the apparent importance of employment for the successful readjustment of certain releasees, this group often confronts a variety of obstacles in obtaining steady employment with decent wages. These obstacles are generally

²² Ann Dryden Witte, "Unemployment and Crime: Insights From Research on Individuals," statement prepared for the Hearing of the Joint Economic Committee on the "Social Costs of Unemployment," October 1979.

²³ U.S. Department of Justice, "Employment and Crime Project: A Research Design," by the Vera Institute of Justice (background paper), New York, January 1979, p. 2.

referred to as "barriers" to employment. Extensive descriptions of these barriers have been provided in the literature and include such factors as inadequate vocational counseling, assessment, prison industry, and treatment program services in correctional systems;²⁴ inadequate financial resources of released prisoners;²⁵ inability to provide services coordinated with predetermined release dates;²⁶ formal legal restrictions on ex-offender employment opportunities;²⁷ bonding problems;²⁸ limited labor market opportunities;²⁹ and discrimination against ex-offenders by employers.³⁰

The list of barriers also includes consideration of the ex-offender's limited or inadequate vocational skills, ability to cope, work experience,

²⁴ U.S. General Accounting Office, Correctional Institutions Can Do More to Improve the Employability of Offenders (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1979).

²⁵ Kenneth J. Lenihan, Financial Resources of Released Prisoners (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Social Research, 1974) and Robert Horowitz, Back on the Street--From Prison to Poverty--The Financial Resources of Ex-Offenders (Washington, D.C.: American Bar Association, 1976).

²⁶ Leon Leiberg and William Parker, The Mutual Agreement Program: A Planned Change in Correctional Service Delivery, Parole Corrections Project, Resource Document Number 3 (College Park, Md.: American Correctional Association, 1973).

²⁷ H.S. Miller, Closed Door--The Effect of a Criminal Record on Employment with State and Local Public Agencies (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Institute for Criminal Law and Procedure, 1972); James W. Hunt, James E. Bowers, and Neal Miller, Laws, Licenses, and the Offender's Right to Work (Washington, D.C.: American Bar Association, 1974); and U.S. Department of Labor, Removing Offender Employment Restrictions--A Handbook on Remedial Legislation and Other Techniques for Alleviating Formal Employment Restrictions Confronting Ex-Offenders, by the American Bar Association (Washington, D.C.: American Bar Association, 1976).

²⁸ R.R. Smith and W.O. Jenkins, Bonding Assistance--A Demonstration Project on Prisoner Training Programs--Final Report (University of Alabama: Rehabilitation Research Foundation, 1972).

²⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, "Analysis and Synthesis of DOL Experience in Youth Transition to Work Programs," by Regis Walther (Springfield, Virginia: National Technical Information Services, 1976).

³⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, "Employer-Barriers to the Employment of Persons With Records of Arrest or Conviction," by Neal Miller (draft report), 1979.

value system, self-confidence, motivation, health, substance abuse pattern, understanding of the labor market, and general job-seeking ability. This myriad of barriers poses both external and personal obstacles to the offender. Many ex-offenders become discouraged after being refused employment because of their criminal history. Others lie about their criminal history in order to obtain employment, but face termination if the truth is discovered. Ex-offenders frequently have poor job search skills and are unable to identify those employers who are willing to hire them. This group may find little support within traditional social service programs, which are often resistant to serving ex-offenders for a variety of reasons. For example, ex-offenders may be considered "high risk" clients who will lower program success rates and threaten program funding. Furthermore, program intake staff may allow their subjective impressions, fears, or dislikes regarding ex-offenders to influence the intake decision. Many program directors may also make explicit, objective decisions to reject specific types of clients because the constellation of available services in their programs is not suited to the special needs of these clients. For example, many employment programs will not accept applicants with severe drug problems, learning disabilities, retardation, or mental illness. A significant proportion of the ex-offender population suffers these handicaps. Unfortunately, many programs lack the resources or linkages with other social service agencies that could expand their services and permit the acceptance of these clients.

The problems of ex-offenders in obtaining access to employment programs are further exacerbated by the competition among many different populations for employment services. Service populations such as displaced homemakers, unemployed youth, or chronically unemployed non-offenders are often viewed as more "deserving" of social services than the former criminal. This bias may be the most detrimental barrier faced by ex-offenders who need and desire assistance.

D. Ex-Offender Employment Programs

The complexity of the employment related problems of ex-offenders has led to the development of a variety of programs designed to assist them in obtaining and maintaining employment. Founded on the assumption that improved employment prospects will reduce the risk of recidivism, these programs include classroom skill training, vocational counseling, work release and pre-release, financial assistance to new releasees, and work experience and supported work, as well as apprenticeship training, basic education, job readiness workshops, job placement assistance, and on-the-job training.

Three "core" services are common to most ex-offender employment programs:

- job preparation--includes the basics of the job search process, interview and application procedures, work habits, increasing the client's technical/vocational skills and social adjustment;
- job development--identifies and creates new employment opportunities and solicits positions for specific clients; and
- job placement--matches clients' skills and interests to identified job openings; also, arranges employer interviews.

The particular organization of these services and the context in which they are delivered are determined by the chosen delivery strategy, the types of clients targeted for assistance, and the program's funding source. Currently, the overwhelming majority of ex-offender employment services are supported with CETA funds.³¹ As such, the services and operations of these programs reflect the guidelines for CETA-funded services.

Established ex-offender employment programs use many different service delivery strategies. A recent NIJ study identified six basic groupings of programs:

- job development and placement;
- residential services;
- supported work/work experience;
- skill training;
- job readiness; and
- financial assistance.³²

The following descriptions of each approach are taken from the NIJ report.

³¹ Without CETA support for programs targeted to ex-offender employment problems, these services would virtually disappear. In those jurisdictions where local prime sponsors are reluctant to support offender programs, ex-offenders must use employment services which often fail to address their special needs (i.e., Federal/State Employment Service).

³² U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Employment Services for Ex-Offenders: Program Models, by Cicero Wilson and Kenneth J. Lenihan (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, forthcoming).

Job development and placement programs usually incorporate the three "core" services described above. They provide assessment, counseling, and job development for clients at various skill levels. Clients are matched to jobs and interviews are arranged by staff. Development activities require frequent labor market analyses to determine where employment opportunities are expanding and contracting. The time period between intake and placement usually ranges from two to six weeks. More time is required if clients are routed into pre-placement preparation services such as short-term skill training, adult basic education, or work experience services.

The residential services approach is designed to provide 24-hour support and guidance for ex-offenders and releasees who are making the transition into the community and the labor market. This approach provides a sheltered residential environment to ex-offenders who have difficulty adjusting to the world outside of prison. The ex-offender's work day and nonwork time are supervised; support and counseling are provided to insulate the client from negative influences such as drugs, alcohol, and friends who are still involved in crime. This approach has a variable time frame depending on which employment services are used. However, clients typically remain in the residential component for up to six months.

The supported work/work experience approach is designed to provide peer support, graduated stress, and close supervision to clients with poor work habits, a history of substance abuse, and adjustment problems. Participants in these programs receive a stipend or taxable minimum wage and usually work 30 to 40 hours per week for 15 to 50 weeks. A small business is often developed to serve as the worksite. This approach is designed for high risk, hard-core unemployed ex-offenders, many of whom have had little previous work experience. Structured job tasks and performance ratings provide participants with feedback on their ability to meet the performance standards for unsubsidized jobs.

Skill training services address the ex-offender's lack of education and technical skills by offering remedial work and/or new training in the skills needed for employment. These services are provided in a variety of settings, including colleges, adult education courses at local high schools, vocational schools, union apprenticeships, and on-the-job training in companies. Training services are usually given within a 20-week period. Skill training is often found as part of the services included in other employment programs.

Programs using a job readiness approach are designed to teach ex-offenders job-finding skills. Ex-offenders frequently do not know how to apply for jobs, what the application procedures are, how to conduct themselves in interviews, or what is expected of them in work settings. The job

readiness programs provide training in the application and interview processes, employer expectations, client work habits, and related job preparation skills. These instructional services are generally presented in a workshop or classroom format with group discussions, films, video-tape feedback, and practice activities such as role-playing. The amount of time allocated for readiness training ranges from three to 60 hours. Again, the strategies and services contained in the job readiness approach are often included as a component of other types of programs such as those emphasizing job development and placement.

The financial assistance approach is designed to provide new releasees from correctional institutions with cash assistance in order to relieve financial pressures upon release. The financial assistance provided by these programs should not be confused with the emergency aid offered by most ex-offender employment programs to meet immediate subsistence needs. In contrast, financial assistance programs provide weekly or bi-weekly cash payments to individuals and offer either referral or direct assistance in job placement. Financial assistance is provided for one to three months based on the rationale that cash assistance will give the ex-offender time to adjust to the community and stabilize living arrangements while seeking employment.

E. Program Outcomes

Despite the wide variety of ex-offender employment services and the substantial amount of federal funding to support those services over the past decade, there is little evidence that such programs have had a consistent and substantial impact on the employment and recidivism outcomes of the ex-offenders served. A state-of-the-art study of employment services for ex-offenders sponsored by the National Institute of Justice concluded that:

- There is great variation across programs in the types of employment services offered and the ways these services are delivered; however, little is known about the types of services which seem most effective or about the best method for providing any given service.
- Many programs have analyzed whether clients obtain jobs, and most have reported that the majority of clients are successfully placed.
- Available analyses usually indicate that program clients experience lower rates of recidivism than are commonly thought to occur for ex-offenders as a whole.

- Most outcome studies use quite limited impact measures, such as placement and rearrest rates, and do not consider such factors as job stability, job quality or the severity of crimes committed.
- Few studies compare the outcomes of program clients with those of similar groups of non-clients; consequently, the extent to which successful client outcomes can be attributed to the programs' interventions cannot be determined.³³

Earlier reviews of offender and ex-offender employment services reached similar conclusions. In a study of Manpower Development and Training Act funded prison-based training programs, no strong relationships between post-release performance and training program characteristics were found.³⁴ Rovner-Pieczenik³⁵ and McCreary and McCreary³⁶ noted the lack of information and consensus about the most effective alignment between service and delivery mechanisms with specific clients. In a review of assessments of a broad range of offender rehabilitation efforts, Lipton, Martinson, and Wilks concluded that with few exceptions ". . . the rehabilitative efforts that had been reported had no appreciable effect on recidivism."³⁷

³³ U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, "The Transition From Prison to Employment: An Assessment of Community-Based Assistance Programs--National Evaluation Program Phase I Report," by Mary A. Toborg, Lawrence J. Center, Raymond H. Milkman, and Dennis W. Davis, Washington, D.C., 1977, p. i.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, An Evaluation of the Training Provided in Correctional Institutions Under the MDTA, Section 251, 3 vols., by Abt Associates Inc. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Abt Associates Inc., 1971).

³⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, A Review of Manpower R&D Projects in the Correctional Field, 1963-73, Manpower Research Monograph No. 28, by Roberta Rovner-Pieczenik (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1973).

³⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Job Training and Placement for Offenders and Ex-Offenders, by Phyllis Groom McCreary and John M. McCreary (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April 1975).

³⁷ Douglas S. Lipton, Robert Martinson, and Judith Wilks, The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies (New York: Praeger, 1975).

In a more recent review of research evidence and program outcomes, Tropp concluded:

Programs that attempt to reduce crime by affecting an offender's employment status--generally do not in fact improve his employment status, and therefore cannot plausibly be expected to diminish his propensity toward criminal behavior, its frequency, or its seriousness; decay steeply in their impact after several months . . . in [1] those few instances where there is good data indicating [a] transient positive effect upon employment status and post-release recidivism; and . . . [2] those very few instances when the data indicates that the employment status gains are not transient. Moreover, most program evaluations extended over too brief a follow-up period to report whether employment status or crime reduction gains do not decay over time.³⁸

In short, the evidence of sustained positive effects of employment services on the job performance and recidivism of ex-offenders is equivocal at best. Factors contributing to this uncertainty include the absence of adequate control groups, the lack of extended follow-up, and the use of measures that frequently omit consideration of job stability and quality.

Attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of ex-offender employment programs have also been hampered by the failure to adequately identify pre-program differences in the program participants. Research conducted by Sviridoff and Thompson on the ways in which offenders combine criminal activity with employment indicates³⁹ that many ex-offenders are not appropriate targets for employment services. Sviridoff and Thompson identified five types of employment-crime linkages or patterns: (1) alternating work and crime; (2) committed criminal pattern; (3) commitment to conformity; (4) concurrent work and crime; and (5) unemployment leading to crime. The researchers also explored the movement of individuals between the various types of linkages. Those ex-offenders who are committed to crime, or view work and crime as alternating or concurrent activities, are less susceptible to employment program interventions than clients who are committed to conformity or become involved in crime only at times of economic duress. The failure to differentiate program participants on these dimensions prior to treatment suppresses the recognition of program effects on particular sub-populations and thus frustrates the attempt to measure program success.

³⁸ Tropp, "Suggested Policy Initiatives for Employment and Crime Problems," p. 27.

³⁹ Michelle Sviridoff and James W. Thompson, "Linkages Between Employment and Crime: A Qualitative Study of Riker's Releasees" (unpublished manuscript), 1979.

The performance of existing programs may also be limited by flaws in their design or intervention strategy. Wilson identified a large number of design flaws in his review of existing models. He noted two particularly debilitating flaws:

- EEPs (ex-offender employment programs) are not designed to address the post-placement behavior and adjustment needs of ex-offenders.

EEPs focus on preparing ex-offenders to enter the labor market, developing jobs, and placing clients. After preparation and placement, ex-offenders are essentially on their own to either succeed or fail. Post-placement services such as adjustment counseling, social service referrals, career guidance counseling, and crisis intervention assistance are minimal or non-existent in most EEPs.

- EEPs are not designed or implemented in a manner which will have maximum impact on the recidivism of the total ex-offender target population.

As a result of: (1) the general absence of planned re-entry services and post-placement adjustment services; and (2) the denial of employment services to ex-offender groups who are most likely to recidivate (i.e., clients with a history of drug abuse, learning disabilities, retardation, or mental illness), EEPs are not designed or implemented in a manner which will have maximum impact on client recidivism rates. These problems are further complicated by the emphasis most practitioners place on the employment goals of their programs. Resources are focused on labor market entry (i.e., placement) and correction of skill deficiencies (i.e., job preparation services and training). Additional services are not provided to ex-offenders after job preparation and placement to help them obtain necessary crisis intervention or social services. Without these additional services, many ex-offenders who graduate from training or are successfully placed return within several months to the ranks of the chronically unemployed and are characterized by a high risk of recidivism.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ National Institute of Justice, Employment Services for Ex-Offenders: Program Models.

These considerations argue for broadening the scope of ex-offender employment programs to address other factors that may be important to successful community adjustment. These factors include interpersonal support, peer group and family influences, leisure activities, coping or social problem solving capability, self-reliance, job satisfaction, and job stability. Interviews with habitual felons indicate the importance of interpersonal support (i.e., someone who cares) upon release from prison.⁴¹ Similarly, peer group and family influences are often cited by program administrators as contributing factors in both successful and unsuccessful outcomes.

Greenwood's surveys of inmates indicate that "high times" and "economic duress" are primary reasons for high levels of criminal activity:

The motivational factor respondents rated most important included problems of unemployment, debts, and the need for routine income. This factor was labelled economic duress. The next most important factor generally reflected hedonistic reasons for crime such as excitement and kicks, money for high-living, money for drugs or alcohol, or good opportunity. This factor was labelled high times. The least important factor, labelled temper,⁴² involved motives of temper or passion.

In light of the "high times" motivation of chronic offenders, the ex-offender's use of leisure time is an important factor to consider in the design of programs, yet few existing programs focus on leisure counseling and activities.

Another factor is the level of the ex-offender's self-reliance. Ex-offenders who have acquired the skills to conduct a job search and to identify sources of social services are better equipped to avoid long spells of unemployment and minimize a variety of personal problems. Similarly, coping or social problem solving capabilities may affect the ex-offender's success in maintaining employment. Programs frequently fail to develop these measures of self-reliance in their clients or they lack the resources to assist ex-offenders after the initial job placement.

⁴¹ Petersilia, Greenwood, and Lavin, Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons, p. 52.

⁴² Peter W. Greenwood, "Rand Research on Criminal Careers: Progress to Date," Santa Monica, California, 1979.

F. The Need for Additional Research

The lack of reliable research evidence upon which to determine the efficacy of existing employment services for ex-offenders was best summarized in a recently published overview of the current state of knowledge about offender rehabilitation:

The techniques that have been tested seem rarely to have been devised to be strong enough to offer realistic hope that they would rehabilitate offenders, especially imprisoned felons, and when techniques have been tested in good designs, insufficient attention has been paid to maintaining their integrity, so that often the treatment to be tested was delivered in a substantially weakened form. It is not clear that all the theoretical power and individual imagination that could be involved in the planning of rehabilitation efforts have ever been capitalized on.⁴³

Given the wide acceptance of employment services as a component of ex-offender rehabilitation, and the absence of conclusive evidence on their effects, the National Institute of Justice is supporting a field test of comprehensive employment services for ex-offenders. The specific goals of the test effort are described in Section II of this document. Section III presents the programmatic elements of the test and Section IV the evaluation issues to be addressed. The implementation schedule and site selection criteria can be found in Sections V and VI, respectively.

⁴³ Lee Sechrest, Susan D. White, and Elizabeth D. Brown, eds., The Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders: Problems and Prospects (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1979).

II. PRIMARY GOALS AND OVERVIEW OF THE TEST PROGRAM

A. Primary Goals

There are three primary goals of the program to be field tested and several objectives associated with each goal.

The first goal is to facilitate labor market entry for releasees by means of comprehensive employment services. Releasees typically experience a long time lag between release from prison and employment. This period is usually idle time during which the releasee must depend on family and friends for support since few have resources to support job search efforts. The objectives associated with this goal are:

- to reduce the time lag between the client's release from prison and the acquisition of employment;
- to reduce idle time between the client's release from prison and acquisition of employment assistance and/or social services;
- to provide necessary resources to support the client's job search efforts; and
- to increase the client's marketability¹ and knowledge of job search procedures by means of comprehensive employment services.

The second goal of the test program is to increase the cumulative duration for releasees. Typically, employment programs focus on getting the client prepared for and placed in a job. Resources are rarely allocated for services designed to affect long-term employment. Existing employment programs usually rely solely on the quality or type of training, or the match between the client's interests and the placement to keep the client employed for a substantial period of time (i.e., 12 months or longer). This program will attempt to go beyond these typical activities to increase the length of time during which clients are gainfully employed. Objectives associated with this goal are:

¹Marketability refers to the client's value to potential employers in terms of work habits, ability to adjust to the social expectations in a work setting (i.e., accept supervision, avoid conflicts with co-workers), and ability to respond to training, as well as technical skills and previous work experience.

- to match the client's interests and skills to employment opportunities;
- to facilitate the client's social adjustment on the job;
- to increase the client's earnings as a function of the cumulative duration of employment; and
- to facilitate the improvement of the client's position in the labor market by means of promotions or job changes.

The third goal of the test program is to reduce the rate and severity of recidivism for program participants as compared to control groups not receiving program services. This goal may be achieved as a result of the successful attainment of the two preceding goals. Objectives related to this goal are:

- to reduce the economic stress of program participants; and
- to increase the access of program participants to non-criminal peer groups through continued employment.

B. Overview of the Test Program

Program participants will be provided with a broad array of employment services. The target client group consists of institutional releasees with histories of income-producing crimes. The implementing agency at each test site will be an ex-offender employment program with at least two years of experience.

Operations of the test program will be facilitated by a service delivery system which is characterized by its:

- community-based nature, although assessment and re-entry functions are performed in the institution prior to the release of clients;
- comprehensive approach to the social development, skills development, career development, and subsistence needs of clients;
- rapid access of clients to needed employment and social services;

- network of agencies which provide a wide range of services without costly duplication; and
- cooperation with corrections and parole/probation departments so that client identification, program intake and the development of treatment plans are coordinated between the test program and these criminal justice agencies.

Since every participant will have a different constellation of needs, the test program will offer individualized treatment rather than a standard set of services applied uniformly to every participant. The individualized treatment approach requires a large array of services provided by a network of social service agencies working in close cooperation with the primary implementing agency. Referral, monitoring, and tracking procedures will: (1) facilitate the access of the participant to needed services; and (2) provide detailed service delivery data for the evaluation. After the program participant has received preparation and placement services, the test program will place emphasis on social adjustment on the job, self-reliance, and career growth and development.

III. PROGRAM ELEMENTS OF THE TEST DESIGN

The ex-offender employment program design is comprised of three inter-related components: (A) basic program structure; (B) targeted clients; and (C) service offerings.

A. Basic Program Structure

The elements of this component define the setting and delivery mechanism for the test program.

1. Comprehensive Employment Services

A primary element of the field test is the provision of comprehensive services to releasees without regard to their education, skill level, previous work history, or history of substance abuse. As a result, program participants will exhibit a broad range of needs, including re-entry counseling, skill training, basic education, individual and family counseling, financial assistance, drug and alcohol treatment, legal assistance, interpersonal support, work experience and assistance in developing good work habits, career counseling, job placement assistance, and a variety of post-placement supportive services.

A variety of job preparation services, placement mechanisms, and supportive services will be offered directly by the ex-offender agencies funded at each test site, including:

- assessment;
- preparation for re-entry or return to the community;
- stabilization in the community;
- job preparation;
- job development and job search;
- job placement;
- personal and interpersonal skills development;
- career planning; and
- post-placement support.

In addition, individualized services matched to the social adjustment needs of particular clients will be provided through linkages with existing social service agencies in the community (see #3 below).

2. Operation by an Experienced Ex-offender Employment Program Providing Services in the Community

Agencies with experience in providing job preparation, job development, job placement, and supportive services to a variety of ex-offenders in the community will be selected to implement the test program. These agencies must have an existing employment program targeted exclusively to ex-offenders or a combination of offenders and ex-offenders. Appropriate host agencies for the field test would be:

- a community services division of a corrections or parole agency that has a contract for employment services with a community-based non-profit program;
- a non-profit ex-offender employment program; and
- a central coordinating agency for a comprehensive offender employment system.

The field test is designed to upgrade the service capability of established ex-offender employment programs rather than to develop and implement new programs. The above agencies will have established placement and job preparation services. These services are likely to be supplemented with a host of support services tailored to the ex-offenders' specific needs. In addition, the vocational and educational graduation rates and the percentage of previous clients placed in jobs will be consistently high in these programs.

Key elements of the program design require the provision of services and support to the releasee in the community. Correctional institution-based programs generally do not command the resources needed to provide these services and therefore will not be funded as test agencies.

¹ Graduation and placement rates are a function of the type of ex-offenders served. Programs which serve populations with a high proportion of chronic felons, drug abusers, or ex-offenders under 21 would be expected to have graduation and placement rates ranging from 40% to 60%. Programs which service a population with a small proportion of these types of ex-offenders would be expected to have rates ranging from 60% to 80%.

Key program and research elements of the field test require the identification of program participants and the provision of services prior to release; therefore, a cooperative relationship between test sites and corrections and parole authorities must be demonstrated. The test program will also be required to maintain cooperative working relationships with the local CETA prime sponsor.

3. Linkage with Existing Network of Social Service and Correctional Agencies

This field test will provide extensive supportive services for program participants during the job preparation phase and after placement on a job. These services should be available within the program's jurisdiction and should be complemented by effective referral systems with a variety of social service agencies. Many ex-offenders encounter problems in gaining access to social services. Agencies often reject ex-offenders or place them on waiting lists because they are regarded as high-risk clients. In order to guard against these timing and access problems, the test program will be required to demonstrate the existence of effective referral mechanisms with agencies providing the following kinds of service:

- drug and alcohol treatment;
- family counseling or community mental health services;
- adult basic education services;
- vocational, aptitude, and psychological assessment services;
- emergency subsistence services (i.e., emergency food, housing, and financial assistance); and
- legal services.

Test programs will also be required to establish client tracking and monitoring procedures for all referrals. A written agreement between the agencies should be developed for those cases where the test site must establish a new interagency referral process. The interagency agreement should specify the number and types of clients to be referred, procedures for recording and communicating client progress to the primary agency, conditions under which referrals will not be accepted, and a contingency plan for clients who are referred but not accepted. It is recommended that the primary implementing agency develop written agreements with all agencies in the network.

B. Targeted Clients

The elements of this component broadly define the releasee population to be served. Admission to the program is limited to inmates who meet the following criteria:

- Participants will be sentenced male or female inmates from adult federal, state, or local correctional facilities who are within six months of release, and who have served a minimum of three months in the institution.
- Participants must have exhibited a pattern of income producing offenses.²
- Participants must desire assistance in obtaining employment upon release (i.e., voluntary participation).

The rationale for these selection criteria is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The program elements being tested are designed to create a supportive environment for the recently released offender to find and retain employment. The target client group includes individuals whose incarceration has resulted in separation from positive and negative community influences. Many ex-offenders are willing to try a legitimate life style immediately after release, or may at least take a "vacation" from crime.³ Unlike new releasees, ex-offenders who have been in the community for some time have had an opportunity to re-establish affiliations with old friends or persons engaged in criminal activity; indeed, they may have re-established patterns of criminal behavior. Other elements of this test program require services

²If the majority of an individual's arrests and convictions have been for income producing crimes, he or she will be considered to have exhibited a pattern of income producing offenses, even if the most recent conviction/offense is a non-income producing crime. Income producing crimes include prostitution, sale of drugs, embezzlement, and forgery, as well as property offenses.

³See Joan Petersilia, Peter W. Greenwood, and Marvin Lavin, Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons (Santa Monica, California: Rand, 1977) and R. Erikson, W.J. Crow, L.A. Zurcher, and A.V. Connett, Paroled But Not Free (New York: Behavioral Publications, 1973). Parolee interviews suggest that noninvolvement in crime is often due to "promises to family" or to "taking a vacation."

(i.e., intake, counseling, job preparation) to begin prior to release from the institution. Program participants must be identified at a point sufficiently prior to their release to enable these pre-release services to be provided. Thus, the test program will focus on sentenced inmates who have been incarcerated for a minimum of three months and who are within six months of release.

Another criterion for selecting program participants is their pattern of offenses. Consistent with the economic and sociological theories of criminal behavior cited earlier, the test program will serve releasees who exhibit patterns of income producing crimes. These offenders comprise the largest proportion of inmates and parolees in many jurisdictions. A program that can successfully reduce the recidivism of individuals convicted of income producing offenses could have a significant impact on crime rates in the given jurisdiction.

C. Service Offerings

The services to be provided by the test program are designed to: (1) facilitate labor market entry for releasees; (2) increase the cumulative time employed for program participants; and (3) reduce the rate of recidivism of program participants. The services to be offered will include planned re-entry services, core employment services, and post-placement supportive services.

Planned re-entry services are required to prepare the incarcerated inmate for return to the community and to enable program staff to arrange job preparation and community support services for new releasees. Job development activities can also be initiated at this time with the information gained through planned re-entry interviews and assessments. Finally, participants who require jobs immediately upon release can be better served when a planned re-entry process is used.

Core employment services provided by ex-offender employment programs typically include job preparation, job development, and job placement. These core services are essential to the achievement of the program's first goal--facilitating labor market entry. They also help ex-offenders to overcome their skill deficiencies, poor work habits, and limited knowledge of the labor market and effective job search techniques.

The third set of program services is delivered in the post-placement phase of the program. Post-placement support is essential to increase the ex-offender's cumulative time employed, social adjustment to the work setting, and job satisfaction. These services are designed to provide assistance to ex-offenders at the point where program effects tend to deteriorate--after the initial job placement.

The program elements will be implemented in the following sequences:

- Planned re-entry services, which will require a minimum of two to four weeks of intake and assessment activities prior to the participant's release.⁴
- Core services, which will require from two to four months of job preparation, job development, and placement services depending on the type of services required.
- Post-placement supportive services, which will be provided to each participant for three months after an initial placement on a job.

The program elements described below are mandatory elements of the test programs. Sites will have the flexibility to tailor specific techniques and procedures to local conditions and needs. Such modifications will be negotiated between NIJ and the test sites during the preliminary planning stages of the program. More specific guidance on each of the program elements may be found in the⁵ Program Models report, which is a companion document to the Test Design.

⁴The amount of time devoted to planned re-entry services for a participant by test program staff will depend on when the participant is designated as eligible for the program. The time between program entry and release from the institution will vary. The test program will use all the time available to prepare the client for community re-entry. Inmates who have served long sentences will require more than two to four weeks to prepare for release. Institutional staff will be responsible for initiating re-entry counseling as early as possible.

⁵U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Employment Services for Ex-Offenders: Program Models, by Cicero Wilson and Kenneth J. Lenihan (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, forthcoming).

1. Planned Re-entry Services

Many inmates return to the community with short-term arrangements for housing, food, and transportation. The releasee rarely has adequate resources to support himself without the assistance of family, friends, or social service agencies. Jobs arranged by family and friends to qualify the inmate for parole are often fictitious or temporary. Frequently, the new releasee experiences lengthy delays between release and stable employment. During this period of unemployment, the releasee may also encounter extensive delay in obtaining social services due to waiting lists, application procedures, or eligibility problems. It is during this⁶ period that the releasee may reestablish a pattern of criminal activity.

Planned re-entry services are designed to ease the releasee's transition back into the community and to accelerate the delivery of employment services. Specific arrangements for housing, food, and clothing should be made by the program when friends or family have not done so. Test programs will verify these arrangements in advance to reduce the need for emergency services when the offender is released. (It is noted that existing ex-offender employment programs typically encounter many walk-in clients who must be given emergency housing, food, and clothing before employment services can begin.)

Once the program participant is identified in prison--usually several months prior to release--the program staff will perform the intake and assessment functions that are normally performed after release. These intake and assessment services will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- an introduction and orientation to the program;
- an opportunity to complete work and criminal history forms;
- a review of community resources that will be available upon release;
- assessment services to identify aptitudes and interests;
- career and vocational counseling; and
- short-term remedial education.

⁶Petersilia, Greenwood, and Lavin, Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons, found the median time between release and reinvolvement with crime for young adults was 9-12 weeks, with 30 percent of those individuals who return to crime doing so within four weeks.

Program staff should verify work history information by contacting previous employers listed by the participant. This information could be obtained either by telephone or written request. Information should be requested on the client's hourly wage, time employed, general strengths and weaknesses, and reason(s) for termination from the job. Counseling, training, or other preparatory services can then be focused on the specific strengths and weaknesses that the participant exhibited in prior work settings. The client's interests, attitudes, expectations, and self-evaluation are also important for specifying needed preparatory services. Vocational and aptitude tests should be used to corroborate the participant's appraisal of his strengths and weaknesses.

All of the assessment and vocational interest information must be summarized in a career action plan. This plan will stipulate the type of preparatory services needed by the client to obtain employment. In addition, the plan should specify the types of jobs or occupations to which the participant aspires. The career action plan, as well as all planned re-entry services, should be coordinated with the client's parole supervision plan.

The assessment and interview data on each participant will be used to identify those client attributes correlated with success/failure patterns. Given the importance of the assessment and background data to the field test analysis, the career action plan and assessment interview forms will be standardized for use at all test sites. Participating sites, the evaluation grantee, and NIJ will negotiate the content and format of these forms during the planning stages of the program.

A job preparation workshop, designed to increase participants' confidence about their ability to enter the labor market, should be included as an element of planned re-entry services. The workshop should identify the principles of finding jobs, completing applications, and responding effectively in interviews. Program participants should be given guidance on effective strategies that may be used to: (1) overcome barriers to employment opportunities; and (2) respond to questions about criminal history on employment applications and in interviews.

⁷The career action plan is described in more detail in the report, Employment Services for Ex-Offenders: Program Models (forthcoming National Institute of Justice publication). Sample forms are included in the appendices of that document.

⁸Detailed descriptions of job preparation workshops are included in the NIJ Employment Services for Ex-Offenders: Program Models document.

2. Core Services

Core services will include:

- Job preparation services, which may consist of any combination of skill training, education, work experience, counseling, and on-the-job training.
- Job development services, to identify new opportunities for ex-offenders to gain employment and expand the number of opportunities at companies that already hire ex-offenders. Job development activities may include direct solicitation of employers for jobs, utilization of unions and business organizations to identify new opportunities, employer education seminars, job fairs, and on-the-job training contracts. In screening potential placement opportunities, program staff should consider variables such as work atmosphere, level of support and counseling provided by the company to new employees, training and advancement opportunities, and employee benefits. This process requires frequent labor market analyses to determine where employment opportunities are expanding and contracting.
- Job placement services, including staff-arranged interviews and maintenance of an employer file which identifies the sensitivities of each company contacted. This process also requires labor market analyses. Self-placements by program participants are not recommended for initial job placements.¹¹

⁹ Skill training and education courses in typical ex-offender employment programs provide an average of 10 to 16 weeks or 400 to 600 hours of instruction.

¹⁰ Work experience services are designed to provide graduated levels of responsibility, stress, and supervision. Participants are usually placed in nonprofit agencies and are provided with a stipend or taxable wage. Participants work 30 to 40 hours a week for three to 15 weeks and receive detailed feedback on their performance.

¹¹ Self-placement can be effective and reinforce the client's self-reliance if the program teaches the principles of job finding, allows the client to practice the skills in role-playing sessions, and develops criteria to determine if the client has achieved an adequate level of mastery. The program should also help each client to develop a network of job search contacts. A self-placement process which encourages job search without the proper training and support can lead to extreme frustration or to the client's acceptance of a job that is inappropriate given his interests and financial needs. Once employed, all program participants should be taught to recognize and obtain better jobs. Participants should also be taught how to give notice of termination properly, and to move from job to job without interrupting the flow of wages.

The core services should be implemented in a manner that facilitates the achievement of the test program's goals. Thus, programs must be able to place participants in labor market positions that provide good wages, advancement opportunities, and satisfying work experiences. Programs that place most of their clients in minimum wage, secondary labor market jobs have not met with much success.¹² Since labor market opportunities will be beyond the direct control of the test programs, the placement of some participants in minimum wage or part-time positions may be necessary; however, these participants should be encouraged and assisted to move to better positions as soon as possible.

Core services will have the maximum impact on clients when the services are supplemented with supportive services. Services such as financial assistance, drug or alcohol counseling and treatment, family counseling, medical assistance, legal assistance, and transportation assistance are necessary to ensure the full participation of clients in the various preparation services. The network of social service agencies comes into play at this phase of program operation. The test program will coordinate its services with those already available in order to avoid duplication. The services available within the network of agencies should also be considered in selecting the specific constellation of preparation services to be offered directly by the test program. Program staff will monitor service delivery by network agencies and provide assistance and support to staff members when needed.

3. Post-Placement Support Services

Many clients fail soon after their initial job placement. This failure may be observed as poor performance, poor attendance, or termination of employment. Many factors are believed to contribute to this failure, such as employer/employee conflict, conflict with co-workers, family or medical problems, drug or alcohol abuse, and client frustration due to dissatisfaction with pay or advancement opportunities. The negative influence of the ex-offender's peer group is another important factor which may adversely affect job tenure. Employed ex-offenders are sometimes ridiculed by their peers for working or refusing to participate in criminal activities. Existing programs typically allocate few resources to address these problems.

Post-placement support services will be provided to test program participants in order to increase job tenure, improve the social adjustment of program participants to their work settings, and assist in resolving

¹² Placement of ex-offenders in minimum wage jobs is pervasive in programs where the staff regard the ex-offender as "fortunate" if he can obtain any job regardless of pay or working conditions.

problems which threaten their continued employment. As indicated earlier, programs must have access to a network of social service agencies which will reliably serve clients referred to them. In addition, test program staff must monitor the employer-client relationship to identify problems on the job before they lead to dismissal or termination. Staff members must exercise caution when visiting job sites, however; the purpose of the visit is to assist in resolving problems and should not be used to draw attention to the employee's status as an ex-offender. To guard against unnecessary or disruptive post-placement visits, employers should be required to contact the program before firing a client. Likewise, clients should be required to contact the program before quitting. This technique allows program staff to intervene before an employer-employee bond is irreversibly severed. If participants lose their jobs due to poor work habits or job performance, post-placement support service staff should recycle them through job preparation and job placement services.

Post-placement support should also increase the client's exposure to people who are not involved in crime. Research on parolee needs after release indicate that parolees rank the need for interpersonal support as second only to the need for employment.¹³ Interpersonal support services will be a key element of post-placement services.

Post-placement support services will typically include, but are not limited to:

- regular on-the-job counseling after placement;
- joint employer/client counseling sessions;
- hot-line services to receive calls for assistance when on-the-job problems arise;
- career counseling and assistance in finding the next job on the client's career path;
- referral to educational, substance abuse, skill training, or family counseling services;
- volunteer sponsors to provide interpersonal support and encouragement to clients who have been placed in jobs; and

¹³ Petersilia, Greenwood and Lavin, Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons.

- leisure counseling.¹⁴

The post-placement support phase of this program is not merely follow-up in the traditional sense. These services should be viewed as a component of primary treatment. The follow-up period to track client outcomes begins when the client has completed the three-month post-placement support phase.

¹⁴Leisure activities and leisure counseling are often overlooked in ex-offender programs. As noted in the introduction to this document, criminal behavior may be motivated by the need for money for "high times" (i.e., drug use, expensive cars). Clients should be introduced to alternative leisure activities that are reasonable and inexpensive.

IV. EVALUATION ELEMENTS OF THE TEST DESIGN

The purpose of this section is to present the research questions of interest and the approach developed to address them in the field test evaluation. Particular attention has been given to avoid the common deficiencies in program design and evaluation methodology that were cited earlier. An independent organization will be chosen by NIJ to conduct the evaluation. The evaluation grantee will work closely with the test program staff to collect the qualitative and quantitative data required by this design. A full description of the evaluation effort will be set forth in an NIJ solicitation to be announced in the Spring of 1980 by the Office of Program Evaluation.

The major objectives of the evaluation are:

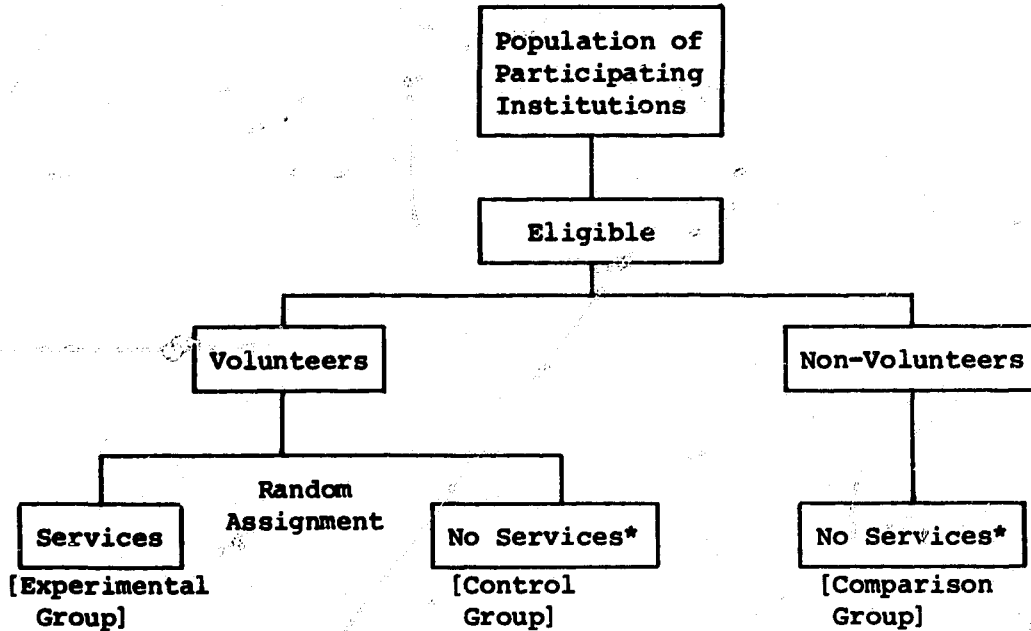
- to assess the impact of a carefully designed employment intervention on the labor market entry and career mobility patterns of institutional releasees who have exhibited a pattern of income producing offenses;*
- to assess the effectiveness of the program in increasing the cumulative duration of employment experiences of releasees;
- to assess the degree to which program services decrease recidivism rates of program participants;
- to determine the relative effectiveness of the program intervention on various client sub-populations; and
- to identify the causes and correlates of the employment success and failure of the releasees, and the conditions under which success/failure is observed.

A. The Experimental Design

Given the need for more definitive information on the impact of employment services on institutional releasees, the most powerful design for assessing the effects of the test program will be used--an experimental design with random assignment of eligible releasees to experimental (program services) and control groups. (See Figure 1 below.)

*See note #2, page 23 for a definition of "income producing offenses".

FIGURE 1



*Both control and comparison groups will receive the services normally available in the test jurisdiction.

The primary advantage of the experimental design is that it strengthens the relationship between the experimental variables and observed outcome measures. It also minimizes the number of rival hypotheses associated with: (1) pre-treatment differences in the experimental and control groups; and (2) changes in the environment over time (i.e., influx of many new jobs in the test community, or changes in police arrest practices). For example, if one group is substantially younger or has less work experience on the average, the group's success rate may differ significantly from that of other groups due to these factors and not to the program services themselves. Random assignment of releasees to experimental and control groups offers maximum assurance that the groups to be studied are equivalent. Except for the provision of program services, the groups will be exposed to the same environment and environmental changes.

Two other groups will be constructed. The first will be a control group composed of eligible inmates who volunteer for the program but

who do not receive program services. The second, a comparison group, will be composed of inmates who did not volunteer but who meet all other eligibility criteria. Both groups will receive "normally available services" if they so desire. To provide additional comparative information, the employment outcomes of program participants (i.e., wages, occupational levels attained, duration of employment, and spells of unemployment) will also be compared with employment statistics for comparable non-offender groups in the general population.² Both of the latter comparisons should be considered supplemental analyses, intended to expand upon but not to replace the primary comparison between program participants and true controls.

B. Analytic Framework

The analytic framework for the evaluation is designed to assess two levels of program impact:

- short-term impact of the program elements on clients' entry into the labor market and their means of support during the initial months after release; and
- long-term effects of program services on participants' cumulative time employed, average job tenure, general quality of life, and recidivism rates.

Short-term program effects refer to those which occur during treatment and within three months after treatment is terminated. Long-term effects refer to those which occur or continue to occur between four and twelve months after treatment ceases.³

¹ A "no treatment" control or comparison would not allow evaluators and policymakers to determine if the test program services are superior to whatever releasees normally receive.

² Reports from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the DOL occupational classification will be used to compare releasees with the general adult male (and female) population in the appropriate geographic areas.

³ While many researchers and policymakers recommend measuring long-term effects for two, three, and even as long as five years after treatment ceases, the budget and time frame for the field test preclude such lengthy follow-up periods.

In addition to a determination of the aggregate effects of program services on participant performance, efforts should be made to assess⁴ the contribution of various program components to the observed effects. Relevant questions would include:

- Did various combinations of employment services differentially affect the occupational and wage levels of program participants as compared to controls?
- Did post-placement supportive services increase the job tenure or cumulative time employed for program participants when compared to control group releasees who acquired jobs?

The analytic framework for the field test also addresses the issue of the relative effectiveness of program elements with various offender types. The data collected during the assessment phase of the program should be used to identify those client attributes associated with program success and failure, and to delineate sub-populations in terms of their responsiveness to test program services.

C. Number Of Cases to be Studied

Sample sizes must be of sufficient magnitude to allow the application of rigorous statistical tests to the data. In order to fulfill the level of rigor required by the evaluation design, program services must be provided to 250 to 300 eligible releasees at each site during the treatment phase of the field test. Another 250 to 300 eligible releasees per site will be assigned to the true control group not receiving program services. The comparison group composed of non-volunteers will number 100 to 150. These sample sizes for each site will provide an adequate level of statistical power for an analysis of main effects⁵ and will allow for some analysis of interactions among variables.

⁴ As long as service delivery records are maintained, disaggregation is possible and should be attempted.

⁵ These sample sizes were estimated with procedures outlined in Jacob Cohen's Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: Academic Press, 1977). Estimates for the population parameters were taken from the Transitional Aid Research Project (TARP) reports: Jack L. Stephens and Lois W. Sanders, Transitional Aid for Ex-Offenders: An Experimental Study in Georgia (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Offender Rehabilitation, 1978); and Charles L. Smith, Pablo Martinez, and Daniel Harrison, An Assessment: The Impact of Providing Financial Assistance to Ex-Prisoners (Huntsville, Texas: Texas Department of Corrections, 1978).

The process for selecting the samples will require that the pool of releasees from which the test groups are selected be much larger than the final sample size. The selection process will:

- identify the total number of inmates to be released from participating institutions within the intake period (six months);
- screen out those inmates who have not exhibited patterns of income producing offenses;
- determine which of the inmates with patterns of income producing offenses desire assistance in obtaining employment;
- randomly assign eligible inmates to experimental and control groups; and
- assign non-volunteers to the comparison group.

The number of releasees per site may need to be as high as 1,000 to 1,500 during the intake period in order to yield the required 250 to 300 for each test group. Test sites will be able to draw releasees from as many jails or correctional institutions as needed, provided that all releasees participating in the experimental, control, and comparison groups have served a minimum term of three months and are expected to return to the same jurisdiction in which the program operates.

D. Evaluation Measures

The purpose of this section is to present the range of measures that should be used to assess the achievement of program objectives. These measures are not intended to represent an exhaustive list of all possible effective measures.

1. Measures of labor market entry

To assess the degree to which the test program has facilitated the labor market entry of program participants, the timing and level of entry into the labor market must be measured. Indices of timing and level of entry might include, but are not limited to:

- time from release to first job;⁶
- proportion of participants employed at a self-supporting wage; and
- distribution of participants across detailed, standard occupational categories in comparison to the distribution of non-offender populations.

2. Measures of job tenure

In addition to the information on labor market entry for releasees, the assessment of program effects must measure job tenure so that the impacts of the program on recidivism rates can be explored in terms of job satisfaction, total earnings, length of time on the job, and the duration of unemployment. These measures may include:

- total weeks employed vs. unemployed;
- number and duration of spells of unemployment;
- number and duration of jobs held;
- number of full-time and part-time jobs;
- total earnings;
- hourly rate of pay for each job;
- number of promotions and/or wage increases at each job held;
- number of job changes to better position or salary level;
- number of lateral changes to jobs in comparable occupational or wage category;
- proportion of clients placed in jobs which match their stated interests, skill level, and income requirements;
- level of satisfaction with job expressed by releasees in the test groups; and

⁶ Participation in the program may delay labor market entry because of training or other types of job preparation. The evaluation should determine the duration and effects of such delays.

- level of satisfaction expressed by employers.

3. Measures of recidivism

It is recommended that multiple measures of recidivism be used to obtain an accurate and detailed description of reinvolvement in criminal activity. Indices of reinvolvement with crime may include, but are not limited to:

- number, severity, and rate of new arrests by week from release;
- number, severity, and rate of new convictions by week from release;
- proportion of property vs. non-property crimes committed;
- number, severity, and rate of reincarcerations by week from release;
- levels of self-reported crime by releasees (i.e., type, severity, and income produced); and
- number and type of parole revocations.

4. Identification of success/failure patterns

Interviews with staff, releasees, and employers should be conducted to identify the causes and correlates of success and failure experienced by program participants. These interviews should focus on key events which contributed to voluntary terminations, dismissals, raises, promotions, and long spells of employment and unemployment. This analysis should also focus on the support service needs exhibited by successes vs. failures. Such factors as family status and conflicts, financial indicators (e.g., savings, purchase of car), and personal development (e.g., post-placement training, education, drug independence) obtained from interviews and project files should be analyzed to identify the patterns of success or failure exhibited by program participants.

5. Program process measures

A system for monitoring the attainment of program process goals is an integral component of this evaluation design. Such data are not intended to

⁷ It should be noted that arrest is probably the only measure of recidivism that will occur with sufficient frequency to satisfy the power requirements of the analysis.

satisfy short-term operational management needs. Rather, the data will be used to identify the conditions associated with successful program implementation and the implications for successful program replication. At a minimum, the following three types of data will contribute to this assessment: client characteristics; service delivery information; and in-program performance.

a. Client characteristics

The collection and periodic aggregation of demographic and socioeconomic data on program participants will provide information on a number of important indicators of program processing. The issues to be addressed by these data include:

- The correspondence between program eligibility criteria and actual participant characteristics. While stated eligibility criteria may be fairly broad in principle, in practice these criteria may be interpreted in different ways by those involved in the selection process. A periodic examination of client characteristics and offense history may reveal a need to adjust the criteria or develop a better understanding of program objectives among selection and referral sources.
- The correspondence between participants' needs and the available services. Given the introduction of intensive service offerings, one would hope to see programs accepting those participants who stand to benefit most from the services, including those who have serious criminal histories. Information on participants' education and employment histories, length of confinement, prior offenses, family ties, and related indicators may lead to modifications in the available services or eligibility criteria.

b. Service delivery information

It is important that: (1) a coherent program of services be established for each client; and (2) the test programs maintain some mechanism for assuring that the elements of a client's service program are delivered. Projects will typically draw on a mix of their own resources and those of other agencies to deliver services. Thus, resource development and the establishment of referral linkages become important and measurable aspects of project processing.

The range of measures to be considered will include, but not be limited to:

- o the number and type of services offered directly by the project;

- external services to which referrals may be made;
- the number of participants applying for and receiving services, by type of service;
- the level of each service, as appropriate (e.g., hours of counseling, number of job interviews arranged, number of hours of training provided, duration of education or training courses); and
- time required to complete each phase of treatment.

c. In-program performance

Information about client participation and performance in program services is necessary to analyze the attainment of process goals. Measures of client participation will include, but not be limited to:

- drop-out rates;
- attendance rates;
- graduation rates from educational and vocational courses;
and
- performance ratings based on behavior while in the program.

V. IMPLEMENTATION AND NIJ SUPPORT

A. Implementation

Grants will be awarded to selected sites to implement the test (approximately \$185,000 to each of three sites) and to an independent firm for the evaluation of the test effort. The field test will have a duration of 24 months and will consist of five phases. (See Figure 2.) The evaluation will extend over a 33-month period to allow for completion of follow-up analyses and to prepare the final report.

The initial phase, start-up, will involve up to three months of staff training, planning, coordination with network agencies, and identification of the pool of inmates for the test groups. The evaluation grantee will design the summary forms for client assessment information and treatment plans (i.e., the career action plan) during this phase. The summary forms will be standardized and used at all sites. The evaluator will also begin inmate data collection in phase 1.

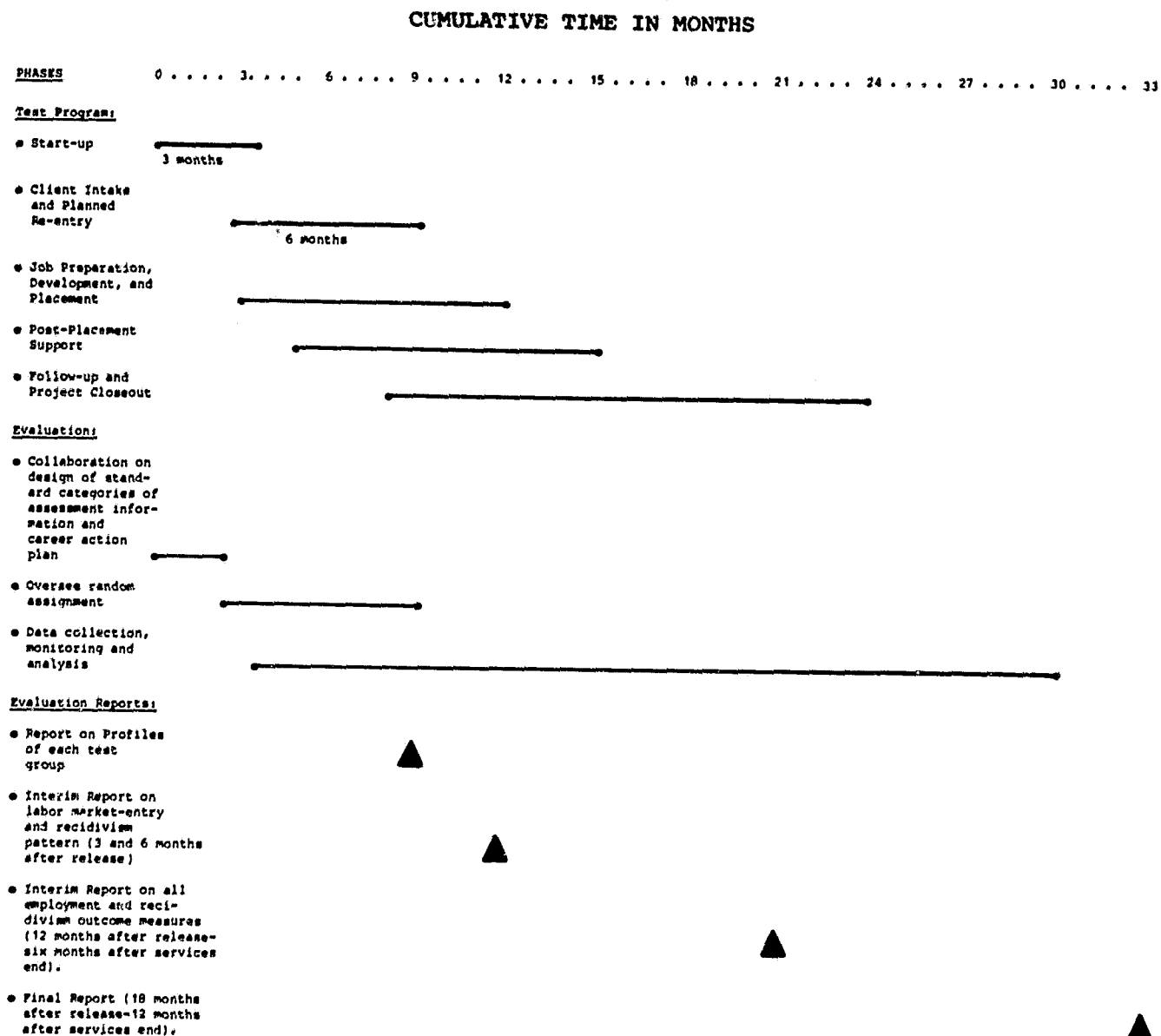
During phase 2, client intake and planned re-entry, test sites will assign eligible inmates to test groups, conduct intake assessments, and provide planned re-entry services. This phase will have a duration of six months.¹ During phase 3, job preparation, development, and placement, program participants will receive core employment and supportive services. In phase 4, post-placement support, participants who have been placed on jobs will receive assistance to facilitate their adjustment to their work settings and maintain their employment.

The final phase of the program, follow-up and project close-out, will entail follow-up interviews with program participants, final data preparation by the evaluator, and project close-out activities.²

¹At this point the rate of intake and release is not known. It is clear that the release process will cause some participants to start the community-based services as early as the fourth month of the program or as late as the eighth or ninth month. Since the duration of services will differ according to the individual needs of the clients, the month at which clients exit program services will range from approximately month 7 or 8 to month 15 or 16.

²Follow-up interviews will be supervised by the evaluator. The evaluation grantee will, in all probability, use its own staff to conduct interviews, but may use program staff to assist in locating clients.

FIGURE 2: FIELD TEST PHASES



Evaluation reporting requirements are scheduled to provide feedback to NIJ on a timely basis. The summary forms prepared in phase 1 will be submitted to NIJ for approval. The evaluator will produce three subsequent interim reports and a final report over the 33-month period. The first interim report will provide profiles of each of the test groups (month 9-10). The other reports will address program performance and outcomes for the test groups 6, 12, and 18 months after release from correctional institutions.

B. NIJ Support to Participating Sites

The National Institute of Justice will provide implementation assistance to the test sites through an independent consulting firm. Support will include training for key program personnel, and consultant services to assist program planning and implementation. Various conferences and meetings will be sponsored to enable key personnel from each of the participating programs to discuss problems and issues of mutual concern.

VI. SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

The following are the criteria to be used by the National Institute of Justice in selecting candidate sites for the ex-offender employment program test design:

A. Criteria Essential to Program Development and Implementation

- The prospective site must have an existing community-based ex-offender employment program which has been operative for at least two years and preferably longer, and which provides some but not all the services required in the test design.
- Candidate test sites must provide evidence of the existing ability to prepare ex-offenders¹ for employment, develop jobs, and place program participants.
- The prospective site must have the capacity to serve 250 to 300 clients for the duration of the field test without dramatically increasing its existing operational capacity.
- Working relationships must exist between correctional institutions, jails, and parole and social service agencies that provide needed supportive services.
- The prospective site must have a sufficient number of releasees returning to its catchment area from jails and prisons to meet the required sample sizes for the test.
- The prospective site and relevant correctional agencies must be willing to allow releasees to be randomly assigned to experimental and control groups.
- The prospective site must be willing to participate fully in the evaluation of the test program. The collection, maintenance, and reporting of specific data will be required by the test design.

¹ This evidence may include, but is not limited to, program assessments or ratings by independent agencies, or data on the comparative performance of the potential site and other employment services for ex-offenders. This evidence may be supplemented by in-house studies or statistics on graduation and placement rates. The prospective site must report the local unemployment rate and the program drop-out or negative termination rate.

- The prospective site must have a stable funding base for its existing service.
- The prospective site must have approval from its existing funding source to participate in the field test.

B. Criteria Facilitating Program Development and Implementation

The following criteria, while not considered essential, will be helpful in facilitating the development and implementation of the field test.

- Preference will be given to sites whose offender population is drawn from correctional facilities that have established procedures for minimizing delays in releasing inmates eligible for parole.
- Preference will be given to sites which are part of a state-wide comprehensive offender employment system.

SOURCE MATERIAL FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR EX-OFFENDERS TEST DESIGN

The following National Institute of Justice studies were used as references in establishing the required elements in the test programs:

- Employment Services for Ex-Offenders: Program Models, by Cicero Wilson and Kenneth J. Lenihan. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, forthcoming.
- "The Transition From Prison to Employment: An Assessment of Community-Based Assistance Programs--National Evaluation Program Phase I Report," by Mary A. Toborg, Lawrence J. Center, Raymond H. Milkman, and Dennis W. Davis, Washington, D.C., 1977. (Also available on loan from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Box 6000, Rockville, Maryland 20850.)
- Job Training and Placement for Offenders and Ex-Offenders, by Phyllis Groom McCreary and John M. McCreary. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April 1975. (Also available on loan from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service.)
- "Economic Factors in Crime and Delinquency: A Critical Review of the Empirical Evidence," by Robert Gillespie, 1975. Reproduced in U.S. Congress, House, Unemployment and Crime. Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Crime of the Committee on the Judiciary, 95th Congress, 1st and 2nd sess. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978. (Also available on loan from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service.)
- "Employment and Crime Project: A Research Design," by the Vera Institute of Justice. (Background paper), New York, January 1979.
- Linkages Between Employment and Crime: A Qualitative Study of Riker's Releases, by Michelle Sviridoff and James Thompson. Forthcoming.

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- The Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders: Problems and Prospects. Lee Sechrest, Susan O. White, and Elizabeth D. Brown, eds. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1979. (Available from Office of Publications, National Academy of Sciences, 2100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 700, Washington, D.C., 20418.)

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