

# THE USE OF CORE CORRECTIONAL PRACTICES IN OFFENDER REENTRY: THE DELIVERY OF TRANSITIONAL SERVICES AND PRISONER PREPAREDNESS FOR RELEASE

West Virginia Offender Reentry Initiative: Report III

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## INTRODUCTION

The substantial increase in incarceration in West Virginia and across the nation over the past two decades has turned the attention of policymakers toward the consequences of releasing large numbers of prisoners back into society. As prison populations continue to rise, more and more offenders are making the transition from prison to the community every day. The U.S. prison population continues to grow at startling rates each year. According to a recent publication released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the number of persons incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails reached a record high of 2,186,230 inmates by midyear 2005 (Harrison and Beck, 2006). This record number of persons in our nation’s prisons and jails has resulted in more prisoners than ever before being released from incarceration. In 2004, 672,202 sentenced inmates were released from state prisons in the U.S., resulting in an increase of 11.1% since 2000 (Harrison and Beck, 2006).

WV has also experienced tremendous growth in the number of inmates confined in state correctional facilities. Between 1995 and 2005, WV had the second fastest growing prison population in the nation. As of December 2005, WV’s correctional population was over two and one-half times its size in 1993 (Lester and Haas, 2006). At the end of 2006, a record 5,312 prisoners comprised WV’s state correctional population. With the ever growing prison population, however, there is increased pressure on the part of prison administrators and parole board members to get offenders out of custody and into the community. As a consequence, this has led to a greater number of

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releases and has further highlighted the need to identify effective reentry strategies and services.

Both parole grant rates and the number of prisoners being released from state prisons in WV have increased in recent years. Between 2004 and 2005, there was a 10.0% increase in the number of cases being granted parole, which was the largest percent increase in parole grant rates since 2000 (Lester and Haas, 2006). The growth in the prison population, coupled with the increase in parole grant rates, has resulted in many more prisoners being released into our communities. In fact, in the first half of this decade the number of prisoners released from WVDOC custody increased by 68.8%, from 1,336 inmates released in 2000 to 2,157 in 2005 (Lester and Haas, 2006).

The sheer number of WV prisoners reentering society has further underscored the need for effective transitional services. Prior research has shown that upon release from prison, these ex-offenders will encounter many barriers to successful reintegration as they try to reenter society. These barriers to reentry can manifest themselves in seemingly basic or practical needs of offenders (e.g., having social security cards reissued, obtaining a driver's license, securing social or veteran benefits, etc.) or more arduous problems associated with mental illness or substance abuse issues. Unfortunately, the extent to which offenders are successful in dealing with these known barriers to reintegration will ultimately determine whether or not they will return to the criminal justice system. As a result, the West Virginia Division of Corrections (WVDOC) developed a comprehensive offender reentry program with the anticipation that it would significantly reduce the number of barriers that offenders will have to face upon release and thereby increase their chances for successful reintegration.

The West Virginia Offender Reentry Initiative (WVORI) is designed to provide a continuum of reentry services to offenders as they transition from prison to the community. Similar to other reentry programs, a key aspect of the WVORI is its focus on providing transitional services to inmates preparing for release. While offender reentry services begin as the inmate is admitted into the institution, this report centers on the community-based transition phase. During the transitional phase of the WVORI, correctional staff work closely with each other and the inmate to provide pre-release services in an effort to prepare the offender for release while identifying available community resources and programs to address the individual offender's needs after release. Thus, a central purpose of the current study is to examine the extent to which these services are reaching a sample of prisoners nearing release.

As part of a broader process evaluation, however, this report is equally interested in examining the *quality* of services that are being provided to inmates. While many researchers rush to examine whether reentry programs will lead to reductions in recidivism, there is also an enduring need to study whether these programs are being delivered in a manner that can be expected to work (i.e., reduce recidivism). Indeed, there is a growing body of research which illustrates that *how* things are done may be as important as *what* is done. In fact, emerging empirical evidence suggests that *how correctional services* are delivered can have a substantive effect on offender outcomes (Leschied, 2000). Accordingly, this report also examines *how* reentry services are being delivered to a sample of soon-to-be-released prisoners.

More specifically, this study assesses whether offender reentry services are being delivered in a manner that is consistent with key core correctional practices that have been identified in research. Andrews and Kiessling (1980) identified five dimensions of effective correctional intervention, also referred to as core correctional practices (CCPs), that when applied properly can enhance the therapeutic potential of correctional interventions and reduce offender recidivism. In essence, CCPs specify the staff characteristics and nature of staff-inmate relationships that have been found to be associated with correctional interventions that have produced the greatest reductions in recidivism (Dowden and Andrews, 2004). Moreover, this study is interested in assessing the relationship between these practices and inmate preparedness for release. It is anticipated that when prisoners receive transitional services, in a manner that is consistent with the use of CCPs they will report being better prepared for life after release.

This report is the third in a series of research publications designed to convey the results of an ongoing process evaluation of the WVORI. As noted in previous reports, the central purpose of the evaluation is to systematically evaluate the WVORI in terms of coverage and delivery. That is, to determine the extent to which the offender reentry initiative is reaching its intended target population and to assess the degree of congruence between the reentry program plan and actual service delivery. To achieve this objective, the current report utilizes inmate survey data to assess the extent to which transitional services are reaching prisoners who are within 90 days of possible release. The delivery of transitional services and the application of CCPs are examined across two types of institutions – state-operated work release centers and general population correctional facilities. Thus, this report

begins with a brief discussion on the use of inmate survey data in the assessment of prison conditions and services.

### The Use of Inmate Surveys to Assess Prison Performance

To achieve the broader goal of the current process evaluation (i.e., to evaluate the implementation of the WVORI in terms of coverage and delivery), we have chosen to use multiple data sources including correctional staff surveys, institutional records, and inmate surveys. For the first two reports, for instance, a staff survey methodology was utilized to examine the attitudes and orientation of staff as well as the application of key components of the WVORI (see Haas, Hamilton, and Hanley, 2005; 2006). Moreover, an upcoming report is designed to use inmate records derived from WVDOC's Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) to explore additional issues related to offender responsivity and the delivery of reentry service delivery. The larger process evaluation uses a combination of approaches and data sources to examine the extent to which the WVORI has been fully implemented in accordance with the Offender Reentry Program Plan developed by the WVDOC.

With that said, the current report uses inmate survey data to assess the extent to which transitional services are reaching inmates. We also explore the relationship between the mechanisms by which transitional services are delivered and inmate preparedness for release. A typical concern for many prison administrators, however, is that inmate responses will exaggerate or misrepresent reality in order to make it appear that prison officials and staff are not doing their jobs. This is also of concern for researchers interested in obtaining an unbiased representation of prison conditions and operational practices in correctional facilities. While this is certainly a legitimate concern for both prison administrators and researchers alike, recent research is beginning to shed light on the reliability and validity of inmate survey data.

First it is important to point out that inmate surveys are commonly used to study a wide range of issues in corrections. These include but are not limited to such topics as the criminal history and other characteristics of inmates (Harlow, 2001; Robinson, Muirhead, and Lefaive, 1997), health and medical conditions of inmates (Bellatty and Grossnickle, 2004; Lariviere and Robinson, 1999); prison adjustment issues of inmates (VanVoorhis, 1994; Warren, Hurt, Loper, and Chauhan, 2004), prison victimization (Edgar, 1998; Maitland, 1996; McCorkle, 1993; O'Donnell, 1998), as well as the prison environment (Gillespie, 2005; Hemmens and Marquart,

#### *Report Highlights...*

*The primary purpose for transitional planning and services is to reduce potential barriers to successful reintegration.*

*During the community-based transition phase, the inmate's assigned case supervisor works in conjunction with the inmate and his/her parole officer to develop transition plans in preparation for release.*

*Service delivery practices should be consistent with the principle of general responsivity.*

*While responsivity factors may not be directly related to recidivism per se, they do embody a number of non-criminogenic needs that may moderate the efficacy of correctional interventions.*

*Emerging empirical evidence suggests that how correctional services are delivered can promote effective outcomes in correctional practice.*

1999; Lutze, 1998; Wright, 1993). Likewise, given the focus on offender reentry in recent years inmate surveys have been used to examine the experiences of inmates prior to and during incarceration as well as their expectations for release (Hamlyn and Lewis, 2000; Niven and Olagundoye, 2002; Visher, La Vigne, and Castro, 2003). However, it is only within the past decade that researchers have turned their attention to the reliability and validity issues that surround the use of inmate surveys.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, it is the topic of public versus private prisons which has been a focus of research in recent years that has generated some data on the use of inmate surveys (Camp, 1999; Camp, Gaes, Klein-Saffran, Daggett, and Saylor, 2002; Logan, 1992). These studies compare private and public facilities on various dimensions related to quality of confinement (e.g., prison security and safety, order, care, activity, justice, conditions, job assignments, and management) and other operational characteristics (e.g., gang activity,

<sup>1</sup> It is also important to note that survey data collected from prisoners have other advantages. They are less costly compared to direct observations or audits and can be administered at multiple institutions in a relatively short period of time.

safety and security, sanitation, and food service delivery). In general, the conclusion drawn from these studies is that *inmate surveys can be effectively used to obtain information about operational differences between prisons*.

For instance, in an analysis of data from the 1997 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), Camp (1999) examined the issues of prison safety, noise, and job assignments. A total of 3,167 male inmates housed in 32 different prisons participated in the study. The primary purpose was to determine whether inmates assessed their conditions of confinement differently and the extent to which the variation in inmate evaluations were due to differences among prisons. Based on the results of this study, Camp (1999) concluded that inmate responses systematically fluctuated at different U.S. federal prisons in a manner that supported the notion that inmate surveys can be reliably used to obtain information about prison conditions across facilities.

In a more recent study utilizing data gathered by the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), Camp and his colleagues (2002) compared one private prison with three public prisons. Hierarchical linear models were used to identify and assess prison performance measures in the areas of safety and security, food delivery services, sanitation, and gang activity. The results uncovered a great deal of agreement between staff and inmate survey responses. According to Camp et al., (2002), the findings strongly suggested that there is merit to using inmates to evaluate conditions at prisons. In fact, the authors concluded that if they had relied solely on correctional staff input, they would not have been able to construct reliable performance measures. As such, an evaluation of prison conditions across institutions would not have been possible. Nonetheless, this study found that inmate and staff evaluations of specific prison conditions (i.e., sanitation in the dining hall and housing units) were highly congruent (Camp et al., 2002).

While these studies do not offer definitive conclusions on the applicability of inmate surveys to all topics, they do suggest that data derived from prisoners may yield useful information on prison conditions. These studies clearly provide evidence that inmate survey data can be used to identify reliable measures that differentiate prison performance. Likewise, these studies illustrate that there is considerable agreement between inmates and correctional staff and their evaluations of specific prison conditions. Camp et al. (2002), for instance, concluded that inmate survey data may deserve better treatment than the distrust they often

receive from prison administrators. The authors note, however, that it is important to identify and develop survey items that are relevant to and appropriate for the sample being studied. Moreover, inmate survey data should never replace operational reviews and audits nor should they become the only source of data used to assess prison performance (Camp et al., 2002).

The prison experience, including the attitudes, values, and behaviors of incarcerated offenders, is shaped in large part by the psycho-social environment within an institution (Goffman, 1967; Clemmer, 1940; Wheeler, 1969). In a recent review of the prison research on the psycho-social environment of prison, Howell (2000: 8) states that, "It includes, but is not exhausted by concepts of prisonization, inmate subculture, staff perceptions of and attitudes towards inmates, staff-prisoner relationships, inmate perceptions of and attitudes towards staff, broader inmate perceptions of the prison environment, [and] organizational definitions of values and roles". Although very little empirical research has investigated the relationship between PSE and recidivism, previous research has demonstrated a relationship between inmate perceptions of PSE and prison adaptation, disciplinary infractions and institutional treatment outcomes (MacKenzie and Goodstein, 1986; Porporino and Zamble, 1984; Toch, 1977; Wooldredge, 1999; Wright, 1993). These findings suggest that the social environment of the prison may ultimately impact an inmate's successful reintegration.

While previous studies on core correctional practice have used observations of staff skills and their interaction with inmates and compared the use of CCPs to offender outcomes, this study used inmate survey responses to measure these essential skills and qualities of correctional staff. Since CCPs are rooted in staff characteristics and the staff-inmate relationship, the use of inmate survey data provides a direct measure of whether these practices are perceived to be operating in the prison environment or correctional setting. Moreover, due to the broad applicability of CCPs to both front-line correctional officers as well as treatment staff, inmates have ample opportunity to evaluate their environment as well as staff characteristics and the quality of interactions they have with staff. Inmate ratings of core correctional practice are valid indicators of correctional staff practices because it is the inmate's *perceptions* that ultimately impact his/her notions of readiness for release. Therefore, it is anticipated that service delivery as measured by indicators of core correctional practice will be positively related to inmates'

expectations upon release and their self-appraised preparedness for release.

It is also important to note that we are examining inmate perceptions related to both core correctional practice *and* expectations and preparedness for release. In the case of core correctional practices, it is argued that the perceptions of inmates can truly matter in terms of their expectations for release and potentially for later recidivism. In other words, it matters little if the effective use of authority is judged by research staff to be present, when it is the inmate's perception that ultimately impacts the measured outcomes. This study examines the extent to which the perceived absence or presence of core correctional practices impacts inmate preparedness for release. Future analyses will assess the relationship between CCPs, inmate expectations for release, and reentry outcomes.

### The Role of Transitional Services in Offender Reentry

Implemented in July 2004, the West Virginia Offender Reentry Initiative (WVORI) was designed to provide a continuum of reentry services to offenders as they transition from prison to the community. Similar to reentry initiatives throughout the country, the WVORI includes an institutional phase, a transition period from the institution to parole services, and a community reintegration phase. Extensive institution-based programs, enhanced relationships between institution staff and parole personnel and strong offender ties with community support systems, characterize these three phases. The primary goal of the WVORI is to develop a case management system that ensures the continuity of services and programming from the time the offender enters secure confinement until the offender is ultimately reintegrated back into the community.

Previous components of a larger process evaluation of the WVORI focused on the institutional phase of the reentry initiative, whereas the current study examines phase II or the transitional phase of the WVORI (See Haas, Hamilton, and Hanley, 2005; 2006). The previous studies examined the attitudes and orientation of correctional staff primarily charged with the day-to-day implementation of the WVORI. The first report examined the pre-implementation attitudes, orientations and support for the WVORI. The second report examined post-implementation attitudes and orientations, support for the WVORI, as well as support and implementation of essential components of the WVORI (i.e., the LSI-R and the prescriptive case management system).

The current study examines the extent to which the transitional services delivered to pre-release inmates are consistent with the WVORI's transitional phase and

the extent to which services are delivered in a manner consistent with evidence-based practices. Additional analysis examines the extent to which inmate perceptions of the quality of service delivery (as measured by the presence of core correctional practice) are related to inmate self-appraisals of preparedness for release.

### Transitional Phase: Ensuring the Continuation of Offender Reentry Services

Phase II of the WVORI focuses on preparing offenders for making the transition from the institutional setting to parole supervision in the community. The primary purpose for transitional planning and services is to reduce potential barriers to successful reintegration. This phase is characterized by increased involvement and cooperation between case supervisors, parole officers and inmates. This increased collaboration is designed to systematically prepare the offender for release while identifying available community resources and programs to address the individual offender's needs. To assist in this process, an assessment of each offender's risk level and specific needs is repeated at this phase.

Phase II provides an array of pre-release services to assist offenders with reentry. These services include reassessment and development of an aftercare plan, an infectious disease course, a parole orientation course, and the scheduling of regular contacts with case managers and parole officers. In addition, this phase serves to link the offender to various community programs such as educational and/or vocational training programs, substance abuse treatment, employment services, and religious or faith-based services. It is anticipated that these pre-release services and transition programs will not only prepare the offender for release but will help to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Phase II begins six months prior to release from the institution, and continues through the offender's parole supervision.

### Pre-parole Services

All WVDOC inmates participate in transitional planning prior to release. The inmate's assigned case supervisor works in conjunction with the inmate and his/her parole officer to develop transition plans in preparation for release. In order to facilitate transition planning, the inmate's individual reentry plan should be updated three months prior to his/her established parole or discharge eligibility date. This update includes such items as: social support systems, continued treatment, housing needs, financial support, employment, transportation, issues regarding court ordered

commitments (i.e. child support, restitution, fines, etc.), and any additional concerns or needs of the offender. Also in preparation for release and reentry planning an inmate should be reassessed for risk utilizing the Level of Service Inventory-Revised: Screening Version (LSI-R: SV). The reassessment results assist the case supervisor and parole officer in identifying areas of need to target for reentry services.

The paroling authority is provided with a progress report of the inmate's activities in the institution and a proposed parole plan (i.e., parole release plan). Release preparation also involves assisting inmates with developing a home plan prior to their parole interview. In fact, a common barrier to successful reentry is the difficulty in finding a suitable place to live (Taxman, Young, and Byrne, 2002; Visser, LaVigne and Castro, 2003). Moreover, many release requirements are now geared toward identifying and restricting the places where sex offenders may live (Petersilia, 2001). While it is primarily the inmate's responsibility to develop a suitable home plan, case managers are expected to work closely with inmates to aid in finding a safe and secure living arrangement that is conducive to living a pro-social life. A copy of the inmate's most recent individual reentry plan, pre-parole report, and a parole release plan are furnished to the parole board prior to an inmate's parole hearing.

In addition, all inmates who are eligible for parole and/or discharge are required to complete a pre-parole orientation course and an infectious disease education course prior to release. Medical and/or mental health advocacy/referrals are supposed to be made on behalf of those inmates with chronic medical or mental health issues prior to their parole or discharge eligibility date.

#### *Aftercare Services*

Traditionally, aftercare has consisted of supervision and services provided by parole officers within the community and generally involved little or no planning. However, with the inception of "re-entry," aftercare planning precedes release and provides some stability to the transitioning inmate. Stability during transition is essential for successful reentry (Taxman et al., 2002). Many offenders have been incarcerated for a number of years and subsequently have limited knowledge of existing community resources and weakened support systems within the community. Therefore, it is important to enhance the stability of transitioning inmates by preparing the inmate for release by linking the him/her to programs and services within the community. As noted previously, the WVORI is designed to provide a continuum of services extending from the institution to the community. Aftercare is also the point where

Figure 1. Summary of Offender Reentry Aftercare Services

- *Information on how to obtain a new/re-issued social security card*
- *Information on how to contact the DMV regarding their driver's license or how to apply for a state issued picture ID card.*
- *Information about whether or not they may qualify for food stamps and/or Social Security benefits.*
- *Assistance in submitting the paperwork for reinstatement of Social Security Income or Social Security Disability Income for potentially eligible inmates.*
- *Enrollment in Job Service website for inmates who made need employment assistance.*
- *Referrals to or follow-up appointments for mental or physical health care (referrals should only be made by qualified mental and physical health care providers).*
- *Information about registration with the Selective Service.*
- *Information on how to obtain an official copy of their birth certificate.*
- *Linkage and referral to educational resources, including providing assistance with completing/submitting the FAFSA for federal and/or state financial aid eligibility.*

advocacy and referral are especially important to the offender. It is the role of the facility-based case supervisor and the parole officer to jointly locate, advocate, and refer inmates to those services and programs as needed. While the responsibility for carrying out the aftercare plan rests on the offender, the primary responsibility of monitoring compliance rests with the parole officer.

Aftercare Plan. The aftercare plan serves as a supplement to the individual reentry program plan. While the individual reentry program plan focuses on the accomplishment of specific goals and objectives,

the aftercare plan is an action guide, with contact information, relating to the program resources outlined. It is a document that offenders can take with them, refer back to, and generally use as a guide. Program resources and services that will be especially beneficial to an offender upon release will be listed, with the appropriate contact information and scheduled appointments, on the aftercare plan, a copy of which is provided to the offender. Aftercare plan post-release follow-up is a function of parole officers. Figure 1 provides a list of the other services to be included as part of the aftercare plan.

Community Contacts/Referrals. Community contacts and referrals should include a minimum of the services identified above as well as any referrals specific to an inmate's individual needs. As noted previously, mental/medical health referrals should be made prior to release. Inmates with mental health or medical needs have been dependent upon the WVDOC for providing this type of necessary care, often for a number of years; thus there is generally heightened concern to connect the inmate with such essential services prior to release. Moreover, nationally the concern regarding mental and medical health care needs has garnered much focus due to the fact that many state legislatures have implemented stricter penalties in this era of "get tough" on crime policies (Petersilia, 2001). The resulting sentences are longer and often determinate in nature in many cases which ultimately means an increasing proportion of the inmate population will require geriatric care prior to release.

Employment for offenders returning to communities is one of the most vital components to successful reentry (Petersilia, 2001; Taxman et al., 2002). The WVORI provides a number of employment services to transitioning inmates. Prior to release case supervisors will assist transitioning inmates with enrolling in the Mid-Atlantic Consortium Center (MACC), a web-based database for employment services in West Virginia. Moreover, transitioning inmates may also be referred to One Stop Centers in their community for employment services. Referrals to One Stop Centers will be documented on the individual reentry program plan and the aftercare plan.

For offenders returning to communities, identification and restoration of drivers' licenses are linchpins to their successful reintegration. Official photo identification is critical to offenders attempting to obtain employment, provide proof of identity to open banking accounts, obtain public assistance, and similar functions. Obtaining drivers' licenses is vital to ensuring that offenders have the means to travel for employment, treatment, and other scheduled appointments. This is particularly

important given the limited access to public transportation services throughout the State. The West Virginia Division of Corrections and the West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles have entered into an interagency agreement to better provide these services to transitioning inmates.

### **The Use of Core Correctional Practices in the Delivery of Offender Reentry Services**

A central focus of the current study is to examine the degree of congruence between the reentry plan and actual service delivery. Previous research has shown that evaluation of correctional programs must measure service delivery in order to draw meaningful conclusions regarding a program's success (e.g., Van Voorhis et al., 1995). Furthermore, it has been noted that treatment failures are often the result of programs that did not occur. That is, a program's design may include effective therapeutic models and methods for appropriately identifying targets; however, if service delivery is ineffective, then treatment outcome may ultimately be compromised. Thus, an important part of the current process evaluation is to measure components of service delivery. Specifically, the current study is designed to measure *what* transitional services were delivered to pre-release inmates *and* the degree to which those services were delivered in a manner consistent with effective service delivery (i.e., *how* services are delivered).

#### *Principles of Effective Intervention*

A growing body of empirical research addressing "what works" in correctional settings, often referred to as the principles of effective intervention, has identified a number of program components likely to have an impact on overall program success. For instance, research has found that correctional programs consistent with the principles of effective intervention are correlated with significantly reduced recidivism rates, with an average reduction of 26% to 30% (Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge, 1990; Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990; Antonowicz and Ross, 1994; Dowden and Andrews, 2004; Lipsey, 1999; Lipsey and Wilson, 1998). Many of the indicators of effective correctional programs can be grouped into the following categories for discussion: effective classification, effective program characteristics, and effective service delivery.

Effective classification. Effective classification requires adherence to the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model through the use of an empirically based risk assessment instrument that demonstrates predictive validity with correctional populations and includes measures of risk, need, and responsivity, for

example the LSI-R or the LS/CMI assessment instruments (Bonta, 2002). The RNR model embodies the three core principles of the principles of effective intervention (i.e., risk, need, and responsivity). The underlying premise of this approach is that the major predictors of criminal behavior can be empirically identified and then targeted for change through correctional interventions (Cullen and Gendreau, 2000). The RNR model essentially specifies the *who*, *what*, and *how* of effective correctional intervention. The risk principle identifies *who* should be targeted for intervention services, the need principle identifies *what* intermediate targets or criminogenic needs should be addressed, and the responsivity principle identifies *how* correctional interventions should be delivered.

The risk principle refers to matching correctional interventions to the level of risk. That is reserving intensive interventions for high-risk offenders and providing limited services to low and moderate risk offenders (Andrews, et al., 1990; Dowden and Andrews, 1999). Appropriate adherence to the risk principle includes the use of empirically validated assessment instruments like the LSI-R. The need principle refers to targeting for change the intermediate targets predictive of crime and recidivism, for example, criminal associates, pro-criminal and anti-conventional attitudes, educational and vocational skill deficits, and substance abuse issues.

The responsivity principle states that styles and modes of treatment service must be matched to the learning style and abilities of the offender (Andrews et al., 1990). The responsivity principle is further specified in terms of general and specific responsivity. The principle of general responsivity refers to employing treatment interventions that are effective with a broad range of offenders, for example, social learning and cognitive-behavioral interventions (Andrews et al., 1990). The principle of specific responsivity recognizes that offenders are not a homogenous group but rather a heterogeneous group exhibiting multiple characteristics that may influence an individual's amenability to treatment, for example, race, gender, ethnicity, intelligence, motivation, or personality characteristics (Andrews et al. 1990; Palmer, 1974). For example, cognitive-behavioral strategies are more effective with offenders with average to high level of intelligence whereas offenders with low intelligence generally respond better to behavioral modification techniques (Fabiano, Porporino, and Robinson, 1991; Van Voorhis, Braswell, and Lester, 1997). Consistent with the principle of specific responsivity, interventions should be matched to these unique characteristics when appropriate.

Effective Program Characteristics. The characteristics associated with effective correctional programs include employing interventions based on an empirically recognized therapeutic model (i.e., cognitive-behavioral and social learning models) and *targeting* criminogenic needs (i.e., dynamic risk factors associated with criminality) for change. In fact, multi-modal interventions (i.e., those employing behavioral, cognitive, and social learning techniques) are recommended in the “what works” literature (Cullen and Gendreau, 2000). Moreover, appropriate adherence to the risk principle requires that correctional interventions be of sufficient duration, length, and intensity. Intensive interventions generally occupy forty to seventy percent of the offender's time and last from three to nine months (Cullen and Gendreau, 2000). In other words, the “intensiveness” of the intervention should be modifiable according to the risk level of the offender. Otherwise, the intervention reflects a “one-size-fits-all” model.

Effective Service Delivery. Service delivery may compromise the effectiveness of any correctional program, so therefore it is important to examine service delivery methods in order to accurately assess the implementation of a correctional program like the WVORI. Often there is a disjuncture between program design and how the program is actually delivered which ultimately impacts program outcomes. Thus, *how* services are delivered is as important to program success as *what* interventions are delivered and to *whom*. Moreover, *how* interventions are delivered may influence an offender's engagement in the treatment intervention (Butler and Bird, 2000; Preston, 2000). For example, if staff practices are perceived as abusive or unfair by an offender this perception will likely promote treatment resistance. Conversely, if staff practices are perceived as fair, respectful, and caring this perception will likely promote positive engagement in treatment.

Generally, service delivery practices should be consistent with the principle of general responsivity. In other words, service delivery should involve those techniques derived from social learning theory and cognitive behavioral theory. Recently, the principle of general responsivity has been expanded to include core correctional practices. As Dowden and Andrews (2004: 204) argue, “this enhancement of the coding of general responsivity (e.g., the way the program is delivered) may shed more light on the rehabilitation literature in terms of ‘what works’.”



## Core Correctional Practices and Effective Service Delivery

The general responsivity principle underscores the importance of *how* treatment should be delivered (Kennedy, 2000). Andrews and Kiessling (1980) identified five dimensions of effective correctional intervention, also referred to as core correctional practices (CCPs), that when utilized may enhance the therapeutic potential of correctional interventions. Consistent with the principle of general responsivity, CCPs are largely based on social learning techniques and cognitive-behavioral techniques, such as role-playing, modeling, graduated practice, and systems of reinforcement. Both therapeutic models have extensive empirical support in the evaluation literature and are recognized as “best practices” in correctional programming (Andrews, 2000; Cullen and Gendreau, 2000; Ross and Fabiano, 1985). The rationale for employing CCPs is that offenders learn “pro-social and anticriminal attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral

patterns from their regular interactions with front-line staff” (Dowden and Andrews, 2004:205). Moreover, an offender is more apt to engage in treatment and treatment is more likely to be effective if a good therapeutic alliance is created, as evidenced by positive relationship factors (Kennedy, 2000).

The dimensions identified by Andrews and Kiessling (1980) were further elaborated by Andrews and Carvell (1998) as core correctional practice and have been expanded into a training curriculum titled “Core Correctional Training” (CCT) (Andrews and Carvell, 1998). In essence, the dimensions of core correctional practice specify the *quality* of staff-inmate interactions and relationships. The quality can be specified in terms of the structuring skills used during interactions with inmates and the dynamics of the relationship or relationship factors. The dimensions include: appropriate use of authority, appropriate modeling and reinforcement, problem solving, effective use of

Table 1. Description of Core Correctional Practices\*

**Appropriate use of authority** may be described as staff adopting a “firm but fair” approach with offenders. Staff are direct and specific concerning their demands and rules are clear. Staff monitor progress and reward compliance with rules, give encouraging messages, and support their words with action. Staff respectfully guide offenders toward compliance and refrain from controlling and shaming disciplinary practices. Staff members keep the focus of the message on the behavior and not the prisoner performing it.

**Appropriate modeling and reinforcement** entails staff engaging in pro-social modeling and role-playing and employing positive reinforcement and effective disapproval techniques when interacting with offenders. Staff consistently demonstrate and reinforce appropriate alternatives to pro-criminal styles of thinking, feeling and acting. Includes structured learning procedures such as the use of role playing/rehearsal, modeling, and providing appropriate feedback on inmate performance.

**Skill-building and problem solving strategies** refer to the use of structured learning and cognitive-behavioral techniques to foster skill development and improve the problem-solving ability of offenders. Staff members seek to identify inmate problems, help inmates generate alternatives, and develop an implementation plan.

**Effective use of community resources**, also referred to as advocacy and brokerage, involves staff connecting the offender to other helping agencies that provide supportive or intervention based services such as substance abuse treatment or employment services.

**Relationship factors** refer to the quality of staff-inmate relationships. Staff relate to offenders in open, genuine, respectful, caring, genuine, and enthusiastic ways. Staff members are empathic, competent and committed to helping the offender.

\*Adapted from Andrews, 2000; Dowden & Andrews, 2004

community resources (advocacy/brokerage), and relationship factors discussed in Table 1.

Given the proliferation of research examining the principles of effective intervention, very little research has focused on the characteristics of effective staff or the best staff practices to use in the delivery of correctional interventions (Dowden and Andrews, 2004). Not surprisingly, though, evidence is emerging that *how* things are done may be as important as *what* is done. In fact, emerging empirical evidence suggests that *how correctional* services are delivered (or effective service delivery) can promote effective outcomes in correctional practice (Leschied, 2000).

Recent meta-analytic<sup>2</sup> research by Dowden and Andrews (2004) compared the recidivism rates of programs that successfully use CCP (the presence of at least three of the five dimensions of CCP) to the recidivism rates of programs that do not evidence the use of CCP (Dowden and Andrews, 2004). This meta-analysis revealed that measures of CCP made independent contributions to enhanced effects of correctional intervention programs. Nearly all of the CCP elements included were associated with significant reductions in recidivism rates, with the exception of appropriate use of authority (Dowden and Andrews, 2004: 212). In other words, “programs that incorporated elements of CCP were associated with substantially higher mean effect sizes than programs that did not” (Dowden and Andrews, 2004: 210). The results of the analysis further suggest that CCP enhances treatment effect within a variety of treatment settings and with a variety of case characteristics (e.g., institutional and community based interventions, male and female offenders, young and adult offenders, etc.). Moreover, the results were particularly strong within programs that were consistent with the principles of risk, need, and responsivity, thereby underscoring the importance of adhering to the RNR model.

Although the results discussed above are promising, there remains a strong need for a systematic examination of responsivity and staff practices in order to facilitate the implementation of programs and enhance effective service delivery (Kennedy, 2000; Ogloff and Davis, 2004). While responsivity factors may not be directly related to recidivism per se (e.g., criminogenic needs), they do embody a number of non-criminogenic needs that may moderate the efficacy of

correctional interventions (Ogloff and Davis, 2004). Therefore, implementation plans for correctional interventions, particularly reentry services, should involve ways to enhance best staff practices through selective recruitment (i.e., targeting for recruitment people who exhibit values consistent human service and rehabilitation), training designed to enhance staff skills, particularly skills related to CCP, and performance monitoring by administrative staff (Leschied, 2000; Tellier and Sellin, 2000).

It should also be noted that Dowden and Andrews (2004: 204) argue that the dimensions of CCP have broad applicability and are relevant to both front-line correctional officers and correctional treatment staff. In fact, CCP may be more relevant to front-line staff given the frequency in which they engage in face-to-face interactions with inmates. Moreover, when front-line staff evidence CCP in their interactions with inmates it provides a continuum of care from the therapeutic engagement to their broader environment within the institution. Such interactions provide a normative framework that promotes the adoption of pro-social attitudes, values, and behaviors for inmates, thus further enhancing the therapeutic potential for positive change.

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<sup>2</sup> A meta-analysis statistically measures the average effect on recidivism that an intervention has across multiple studies and is reported as an *effect-size*. The effect-size is the average difference between the recidivism rate of the treatment and control group.

## DATA AND METHODS

Using data gathered from a sample of soon-to-be-released prisoners, this study examines the extent to which transitional services are being provided to inmates under the WVORI. However, we are not only interested in knowing what transitional services are being offered to prisoners, but how these services are delivered. In particular, we assess the extent to which transitional services are being delivered in a manner that is consistent with effective correctional practice. Finally, this study seeks to better understand the relationship between inmate perceptions of service delivery and their feelings of preparedness for release. It is anticipated that inmates will report being better prepared for release when they perceive the delivery of such services to be in accordance with effective correctional practice. The following research questions guide the analyses for the present study:

1. How does the application of core correctional practices vary across work release centers and general population institutions?
2. To what extent are transitional services being provided to inmates in a manner that is consistent with core correctional practices?
3. What transitional services do inmates report being provided to them as part of the WVORI?
4. How does the delivery of transitional services vary across work release centers and general population institutions?
5. What economic, social, and legal difficulties do inmates expect or anticipate upon release?
6. To what extent do inmates feel prepared for release?
7. Are prisoner perceptions of the use of core correctional practices by staff positively associated with inmate preparedness for release?

### Data Collection

A self-report questionnaire was administered to groups of inmates, ranging from 22 to 34 prisoners per

<sup>3</sup>Only 12 prisoners or 2.4% of the 496 inmates that completed the survey indicated that they needed help in reading or completing the survey. There were no non-English speaking inmates in the population of inmates eligible to participate in the present study.

group, and proctored by the research staff. This method was used in an effort to reduce administration time and costs and because of its successful implementation in previous studies (Steurer, Smith, and Tracy, 2001; Visher, La Vigne, and Castro, 2003). The survey was designed to be easily read and completed by persons with difficulties in reading. The Flesch-Kincaid readability test scored the questionnaire at a sixth-grade reading level. If a prisoner had difficulty reading or completing the survey, it was read to him or her by a person on the research team.<sup>3</sup>

The population for the present study consisted of all inmates within 90 days of possible release from WVDOC custody. WVDOC staff at the central office compiled a list of all inmates with parole eligibility dates within 90 days from the date in which the survey was scheduled to be administered. Each correctional facility was asked to select a staff member (usually a physical education instructor or other staff member serving in a non-custodial capacity) to assist the research team in notifying the inmates that they had been selected for the study. Once a list of soon-to-be-released prisoners were selected for the study, the staff member serving as the single point of contact at the facility distributed basic information about the purpose of the study and the mandatory orientation session. The required orientation session was designed to allow the researchers an opportunity to communicate directly to inmates the purpose of the study, to review the human subjects research protections, and to seek the informed consent of the participants.

**Table 2. Number of Inmate Participants by Correctional Institution (N = 496)**

Correctional Institution	N	%
Mount Olive Correctional Center	26	5.2
Huntington Work Release Center	27	5.4
Ohio County Correctional Center	16	3.2
Northern Correctional Center	30	6.0
Denmar Correctional Center	42	8.5
Charleston Work Release Center	35	7.1
Huttonsville Correctional Center	73	14.7
Beckley Correctional Center	19	3.8
Lakin Correctional Center	58	11.7
Pruntytown Correctional Center	71	14.3
Saint Mary's Correctional Center	99	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 3. Demographic Characteristics (N = 496)**

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Age</b> (Mean= 40.3; SD = 10.7)		
23 to 29	71	14.3
30 to 39	191	38.5
40 to 49	152	30.6
50 to 59	55	11.1
60 and over	27	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Black/African American	47	9.5
White/Caucasian	444	89.5
Other <sup>b</sup>	5	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	398	80.2
Female	98	19.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	243	49.5
Married	84	17.1
Separated/Divorced	149	30.4
Other <sup>c</sup>	15	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Highest grade completed</b>		
Eighth Grade or Less	62	12.5
Ninth Grade	49	9.9
Tenth Grade	66	13.3
Eleventh Grade	83	16.7
Twelfth Grade	204	41.1
Some College	32	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Number of children (under age 18)</b>		
No children	199	40.1
1 child	126	25.4
2 or 3 children	141	28.5
4 or 5 children	25	5.0
6 or more children	5	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total number of children</b>		
No children	157	31.7
1 child	118	23.8
2 to 3 children	170	34.3
4 to 5 children	36	7.2

<sup>a</sup>Percents may not total 100.0 due to rounding.<sup>b</sup>Other race/ethnicity includes American Indian, Alaskan Natives, Hispanic/Latino.<sup>c</sup>Other marital status includes widowed.

On the day of the survey, correctional staff called all of the prisoners selected for the study to the location where the survey would be administered (typically a common area used for visitation or an education classroom). As part of the mandatory orientation session, inmates were given additional information about the nature and purpose of the study, their rights to participate (or not participate without penalty), and were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study. Once the mandatory orientation was complete, persons who attended this session were told they were free to participate or refuse participation.

It is also important to note that inmates who had been placed in administrative segregation units were also eligible to participate in the study if their name appeared on the original list. In those instances, research staff went to the individual cells of the inmates to administer the informed consent procedures and survey. Research staff returned to the cell periodically to inquire whether the inmate needed assistance in completing the survey or had any questions for the researchers. Once the inmate finished completing the survey, the researchers returned to collect the questionnaire and answered any final questions the inmates had for the research staff.

Of the 728 inmates who were originally identified for participation in the study, 664 attended the orientation session. This attrition of inmates from the original list of eligible inmates and those that attended the orientation session was often due to inmates having been transferred or released between the time the list of inmates was pulled and the day we arrived to administer the survey. However, an effort was made to limit the instances in which this occurred by pulling the list as closely as possible to the survey administration date (usually within three days of the administration date). Nevertheless, some inmates were simply missed while others were ill or had other commitments that conflicted with the date and time of survey administration. In the end, attrition rates were rather low for most institutions, ranging between 6.0% and 11.0%. Saint Mary's and Huttonsville Correctional Centers had the highest rates of attrition at 11.1%.

Generally, once prisoners attended the mandatory orientation session and learned about the purpose of the research, most wanted to participate in the study. Although nearly ten percent of inmates were not able to or did not attend the orientation session (664/728 – 1.0 = 8.8%), response rates were calculated based on the total number of inmates originally selected to participate in the study, divided by the number of inmates who actually participated. As noted previously, a total of 728

**Table 4. Legal Characteristics (N = 496)**

<b>Legal Characteristics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Most serious offense</b>		
Violent	347	70.0
Property	108	21.8
Drug	28	5.6
Public Order	13	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Number of present offenses</b>		
1 offense	300	60.5
2 offenses	93	18.8
3 offenses	34	6.9
4 offenses	19	3.8
5 offenses	17	3.4
6 offenses	12	2.4
7 or more offenses	21	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Post-release supervision</b>		
No parole supervision	121	24.4
Parole supervision	291	58.7
Uncertain	84	16.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Current parole violation</b>		
No	378	77.1
Yes	112	22.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup>Percents may not total 100.0 due to rounding.

inmates were originally identified to be eligible for the study (prisoners within 90 days of possible release). As a result, the final response rate for this study was 68.1% (i.e., 496/728).<sup>4</sup> This response rate is equal to, or in some cases substantially higher than, other recent offender reentry studies that sampled soon-to-be-released offenders in other states (for example, see Visher, La Vigne, and Castro, 2003).<sup>5</sup>

Table 2 displays the total number of inmates that agreed to participate in the study. The total sample of inmates is rather representative of the population size for each of the institutions. As shown in Table 1, the correctional centers at Saint Mary's (20.0%), Huttonsville (14.7%), Pruntytown (14.3%), and Lakin (11.7%) contributed the most inmates to the sample

<sup>4</sup> Response rates by institution varied from a low of 45.1% at Huttonsville Correctional Center to a high of 94.6% at the Charleston Work Release Center. Other facilities with high response rates include the Huntington Work Release Center (90.0%) and the Ohio County Correctional Center (88.9%).

and are among the largest facilities in the state in terms of population size. Lakin Correctional Center (LCC) is currently the only all-female prison in the state. In contrast, inmates housed in the two officially designated work release centers in the state (Huntington and Charleston) as well as Beckley Correctional Center (BCC) contributed the fewest number of inmates to the study. Given that BCC is often used as a "step-down" facility, WVDOC central office staff recommended that BCC be grouped as a work release center for fulfilling the purposes of this study. Thus, the 81 inmates held in WR release centers comprised 16.3% of the total study sample.

### Sample Description

The demographic and legal characteristics of the total sample are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. As shown in Table 3, a majority of the sample is comprised of white males between the ages of 30 and 49 years of age. Nearly ninety percent of the sample is comprised of white/Caucasian prisoners (89.5%). Only 1.0% of the sample consists of American Indian, Alaskan native, and Hispanic or Latino inmates. Males account for slightly over eighty percent of the study participants (80.2%).

In addition, most inmates were either single or separated/divorced and had at least one child. Nearly one-half of the study participants were single (49.5%) while thirty percent were either divorced or separated (30.4%). Less than 1 out of every 5 inmates were married at the time of the study (17.1%). Nearly seventy percent of the inmates had at least one child (68.3%). One-third of prisoners had 2 or 3 children (34.3%) while roughly ten percent of the sample had 4 or more children (10.2%). It appears that many of these children were below the age of 18. Of the 496 inmates that comprised the sample, nearly sixty percent had at least one child under the age of 18 (59.9%). Over one-half of the inmates had 1 to 3 children 17 years old or younger (53.9%).

In terms of education, most inmates had not completed 12 years of school. More than fifty percent of prisoners had a 11th grade education or less (52.4%). However, approximately 4 out of every 10 inmates had completed at least the 12th grade (41.1%). Only 6.5% of the survey respondents had attended at least some college.

Table 4 displays the legal characteristics of the

<sup>5</sup> When prisoners that did not attend the mandatory orientation session are excluded, the response rate increases by 6 percentage points to 74.7% (i.e., 496/664).

sample. As shown in Table 4, most prisoners were serving time for a violent offense. In terms of most serious offense, 70.0% of the study participants were serving time for the commission of a violent crime. Roughly two-thirds of inmates were serving time for a single offense (60.5%). A vast majority of inmates were serving time for 3 or fewer current offenses (86.2%).

Overall, most inmates expected to be placed on parole supervision upon release and were not currently serving time for a parole violation. Nearly sixty percent of prisoners indicated that they would be under some kind of parole or community supervision after release from prison (58.7%). Other inmates indicated that they would not be on parole supervision (24.4%) or were uncertain (16.9%). More than seventy-five percent of the study participants were not serving time for a current parole violation (77.1%).

## Measures

This study incorporates multiple measures of core correctional practices. In doing so, this study adheres closely to the five dimensions originally identified by Andrews and Kiessling (1980) and the subordinate categories later proposed by Dowden and Andrews (2004). The five dimensions include: effective use of authority, appropriate modeling and reinforcement, problem-solving, effective use of community resources, and quality of interpersonal relationships. All core correctional practice items were measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree or a frequency scale ranging from never to always. Respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with various statements of how often a particular item occurs within the correctional setting.

Using the individual items, scales were constructed to measure each core correctional practice dimension. Cronbach alpha reliability scores were calculated for each scale. Confirmatory principle component analyses were then conducted to provide additional support for the alpha estimates.<sup>6</sup> Once the final selection process was conducted, the final scales were constructed. All of the CCP scales had alpha reliability scores at acceptable levels (see Table 5).

For virtually all of the CCP scales, higher scores represent greater use of each core correctional practice. In most instances, therefore, high scores on each scale is “positive” because it reflects that correctional staff were seen by prisoners as exhibiting or applying the core correctional practice in the

<sup>6</sup> The principle component analysis utilized a varimax rotation. Eigenvalues were evaluated based on the Kaiser criterion (Kaiser 1960), along with a scree examination.

correctional setting. For the interpersonal domination scale, however, high scores indicate greater levels of interpersonal domination. As a consequence, high scores on this scale run counter to the effective use of authority which encourages correctional staff to respectfully guide prisoners toward compliance.

## *Effective Use of Authority*

Prison Structure. This five-item scale measures the extent to which rules and disciplinary practices are clearly understood by inmates. The construct of “structure” as it relates to the prison environment was first described by Toch (1977) as one of his eight dimensions of the prison environment and later quantified by Wright (1985) in the development of the Prison Environment Inventory (PEI). While the original notion of prison structure was intended to include a wide range of prison services (e.g., showering, recreation, and commissary) as well as the application of rules and punishments, our adaptation of this measure focuses solely on the clarity and directness of staff’s commands and the rules of the institution. Inmates were asked to indicate the frequency a measure occurred (e.g., never to always) in their institution. High scores on this scale indicate that inmates know the rules, what will get them written up by staff, and what will happen if they violate the rules (Cronbach’s alpha = .74).

Interpersonal Domination. According to Andrews and Carvell (1998), the effective use of authority includes staff members keeping the focus of disciplinary messages on the behavior and not the offender performing it. This 7-item scale measures inmates’ perception that the prison environment and their interactions with staff are characterized by control, hostility, shaming, and personal degradation. Similar to prison structure, inmates were asked to indicate the frequency with which a particular event occurs in their institution. One item was adapted from Wright’s (1985) PEI emotional feedback scale to reflect an inmate perception of all staff, not just correctional officers. The remaining six items were developed by the authors. High scores on this scale indicate that inmates perceive staff as being more concerned with controlling inmates rather than helping them (e.g., “Staff give inmates with personal problems a hard time” and “Staff make inmates feel foolish and ashamed”) (Cronbach’s alpha = .88).

Firm but Fair Disciplinary Practices. This five-item scale measures the extent to which inmates believe that staff generally have a firm but fair approach when disciplining inmates or when guiding themselves or other inmates toward compliance. Inmates were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed

with a series of statements. Inmates who believed that staff treated them fairly, treated all inmates in a similar way, and generally were pretty firm-but-fair with inmates have higher scores on this scale (Cronbach's alpha = .79). All items were developed by the authors.

#### *Appropriate Modeling and Reinforcement*

The use of a cognitive-behavioral approach to the delivery of rehabilitation services is a central component of core correctional practices. A cognitive-behavioral approach is oriented toward modeling appropriate behaviors, affording the opportunity for practicing new skills and/or behaviors, and the optimal use of reinforcements.

Use of Role Playing/Rehearsal Techniques. This two-item scale examines the extent to which inmates were given the opportunity to practice the new skills they learned in their programming. Using a 4-point Likert scale, inmates were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with two statements. High scores on this scale indicate that inmates believed that they were given the opportunity to practice new skills and were dealing with problems in the right way in their programs (Cronbach's alpha = .82). Both items were developed by the authors.

Effective Disapproval Techniques. This three-item scale captures the extent to which staff members engaged in effective disapproval techniques such as immediately expressing disapproval of inmate behaviors and encouraging inmates to consider why their behavior was inappropriate. Inmates who reported that staff members tell them why their behavior is wrong and encourage them to think about why their behavior is wrong are represented by higher scores on this scale (Cronbach's alpha = .69). All items were developed by the authors.

Effective Use of Reinforcement. It is often recognized that an appropriate schedule of reinforcement should adhere to the "4-to-1" rule — give at least four positive supportive statements for every punishing one. Hence, it is important for correctional staff to positively reinforce inmates for good behavior. This 4-item scale measures the degree to which inmates perceive that staff members use positive reinforcements. A high score on this scale indicates that inmates feel that staff members tend to praise them when they do things right, tell them when they do well, and recognize their accomplishments (Cronbach's alpha = .84). All items were developed by the authors.

Modeling. Effective modeling occurs when appropriate behaviors are demonstrated in vivid and concrete ways. This three-item scale captures the extent to which inmates believe that staff members

provide a good example of how to live and stay out of trouble. Using a four-point Likert scale, inmates were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. High scores on this scale indicate that inmates feel that staff members are a source of effective modeling (Cronbach's alpha = .78). All items were developed by the authors.

#### *Cognitive Skills Development and Problem-Solving*

Use of Cognitive Skill Development Strategies. Structured learning that results in the building of new skills in problem-solving and other aspects of self-management including cognitive self-change is a central aspect of effective correctional counseling. This five-item scale measures the degree to which inmates were encouraged by staff to reflect on the behaviors that got them into trouble and how to change those behaviors. Inmates who felt that they had been taught how to avoid "thinking errors", consider how their own thoughts and feelings got them into trouble, and how to find new ways of thinking score higher on this scale (Cronbach's alpha = .93). All items were developed by the authors.

Use of Problem-Solving Strategies. Effective problem-solving on the part of correctional staff is characterized by the capacity to identify inmate problems, generate solutions, and assist inmates in the implementation of a plan. This six-item scale captures the extent to which inmates believe that staff members view their problems realistically, have helped them develop a plan for release that can work, and assisted them in putting their plans into action. High scores on this scale indicate a greater use of problem-solving strategies on the part of correctional staff (Cronbach's alpha = .84). All items were developed by the authors.

#### *Effective Use of Community Resources*

Advocacy/Brokerage. The capacity of correctional staff to adequately leverage community resources is a core correctional practice and is of special importance for the successful reintegration of offenders into the community. This nine item scale identifies the extent to which inmates reported that staff members engaged in advocacy and brokerage on their behalf. Such activities include helping inmates find a place to live, gain employment, and obtain public benefits and income assistance upon release. Items extracted from various subscales of Burt, Duke, and Hargreaves' (1998) Program Environment Scale (PES) served as a basis for the formation of this scale. However, original items were modified to better reflect the prison context and additional measures were used to capture relevant aspects to offender reentry programming. High scores on this scale indicate greater levels of advocacy and

**Table 5. Core Correctional Practices Scale Descriptives**

Variables	Mean	Sd	Min	Max	Alpha	N
<b>Effective Use of Authority</b>						
Prison Structure	14.12	3.13	5.00	20.00	.74	476
Interpersonal Domination	17.11	4.64	7.00	28.00	.88	468
Firm-but-Fair Disciplinary Practices	10.14	3.14	5.00	20.00	.79	480
<b>Appropriate Modeling &amp; Reinforcement</b>						
Use of Role Playing/Rehearsal Techniques	4.70	1.73	2.00	8.00	.82	482
Effective Disapproval Techniques	6.28	2.06	3.00	12.00	.69	486
Effective Use of Reinforcements	7.61	2.40	4.00	16.00	.84	483
Modeling	6.10	2.11	3.00	12.00	.78	490
<b>Use of Skill Building and Problem-Solving Strategies</b>						
Use of Cognitive Skill Development Strategies	10.38	4.15	5.00	20.00	.93	478
Use of Problem-Solving Strategies	11.86	3.91	6.00	24.00	.84	471
<b>Effective Use of Community Resources</b>						
Advocacy and/or Brokerage	15.54	5.16	9.00	33.00	.90	471
<b>Quality of Interpersonal Relationships</b>						
Staff Respect Toward Inmates	7.81	2.61	4.00	16.00	.78	488
Staff Cares About Me	11.79	3.82	6.00	24.00	.87	479
Staff Openness	11.36	3.76	6.00	24.00	.86	482
Inmate-Staff Trust	10.84	3.62	6.00	24.00	.83	489
Staff Commitment	10.34	3.03	5.00	20.00	.76	483
Staff Skill Factors	5.78	1.98	3.00	12.00	.79	486

brokerage on the part of correctional staff (Cronbach's alpha = .90).

*Quality of Interpersonal Relationships*

The presence of high-quality interpersonal relationships between staff and inmates is essential for establishing a setting in which other characteristics of effective correctional interventions can take place such as modeling and reinforcements. Such relationships are characterized by openness, respect, and trust. In addition, it is important for staff members to be committed to their work and competent in their respective roles.

Staff Respect toward Inmates. This four-item scale measures the extent to which inmates reported that staff treated them with respect. A majority of the items were adapted from Burt et al. (1998) PES. High scores on

this scale indicate that inmates perceived greater levels of respect on the part of staff (Cronbach's alpha = .78).

Staff Cares about Me. This six-item scale assesses the degree to which the inmates perceive that staff members care about them. High scores on this scale indicate that inmates feel that staff listen to them carefully and are looking out for their best interest. Four of the items were taken from Burt et al. (1998) and two additional items were added by the authors (Cronbach's alpha = .87).

Staff Openness. This six-item scale assesses the extent to which the staff-inmate relationship is characterized by an openness in which the inmate can express his or her opinions, feelings, and experiences. High scores indicate that inmates feel they can talk to staff about what is bothering them, are comfortable in discussing their feelings with staff, view staff as being



### *Report Highlights...*

*The population for the present study consisted of all inmates within 90 days of possible release from WVDOC custody.*

*The final response rate for this study was 68.1%.*

*A majority of the sample is comprised of white males between the ages of 30 and 49.*

*Of the 496 inmates that comprised the sample, nearly sixty percent had at least one child (under the age of 18). Over one-half of the inmates had 1 to 3 children 17 years old or younger.*

*Nearly sixty percent of prisoners indicated that they would be under some kind of parole or community supervision after release from prison (58.7%).*

*In terms of most serious offense, 70.0% of the study participants were serving time for the commission of a violent crime.*

*More than three-quarters of the study participants were not serving time for a current parole violation.*

very accessible and easy to talk to. High scores on this scale indicate a greater degree of openness between staff and inmate (Cronbach's alpha = .86).

**Inmate-Staff Trust.** An important indicator for assessing the quality of relationship conditions is the extent to which trust and confidentiality is present between inmates and staff. This six-item scale measures the level of inmate-staff trust. Four of the items were derived from Burt et al. (1998) PES and two items were developed by the authors. High scores on this scale reflect that inmates feel they can be honest with staff members and can trust staff not to repeat personal aspects of their lives to others (Cronbach's alpha = .83).

**Staff Commitment.** This five-item scale measures the extent to which inmates believe staff members are enthusiastic about and committed to their work. Four of the items were derived from Burt et al. (1998) PES and one item was developed by the authors. High scores indicate that staff are excited about their work

with inmates, enjoy their work, and are interested in working with inmates (Cronbach's alpha = .76).

**Staff Skill Factors.** This three-item scale measures the degree to which staff members use directive and structured forms of communication with inmates. High scores on this scale indicate that inmates believe staff members provide clear instruction, that staff members "really seem to know what they are doing," and are well organized and prepared in carrying out their jobs (Cronbach's alpha = .79). All items were developed by the authors.

Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics for each of the core correctional practice scales. The minimum and maximum possible values for each scale are displayed as well as the mean, standard deviation, and the alpha reliability score. The minimum and maximum values for each scale, in conjunction with the mean, can be used to examine the extent to which inmates perceive the use of core correctional practices on the part of correctional staff and in WVDOC facilities. For instance, the mean can be compared to midpoint on each scale to ascertain whether the mean value is above or below the natural midpoint for each scale. In this way, it is possible to assess the degree to which core correctional practices are viewed as being present in the correctional environment from the perspective of prisoners.

For most of the CCP scales, the mean values are below the midpoint indicating that the distribution is slightly skewed toward lower scores. The mean score on only one scale – prison structure (mean = 14.12) – was found to be above the scale's midpoint. This score suggests that many inmates felt that the prison environment was characterized by structure in that prison rules were clear and inmates knew what would happen to them if they violated the rules. The mean value on the interpersonal domination scale was also high compared to other measures (mean = 17.11). However, high scores on the interpersonal domination scale run counter to the effective use of authority. As a result, a higher score implies that prisoners viewed correctional staff as enforcing institutional rules through the use of controlling and shaming practices.

The mean values on all other CCP scales were lower than might be expected. In particular, the mean score on the advocacy and/or brokerage scale as well as several of the individual scales associated with the quality of interpersonal relationships were found to be lower than anticipated. In the case of the advocacy and/or brokerage scale, the mean value (15.54) was more than five points less than the calculated midpoint on this scale (21.0). As a result, responses on this

scale were skewed in the direction of lower values. This suggests that many inmates did not believe staff members were working toward identifying appropriate referral sources for them after release or speaking on their behalf to community organizations.

Similar to the results on the advocacy and/or brokerage scale, mean scores on many of the interpersonal relationship scales were lower than what might be anticipated. While all of the quality of interpersonal relationship measures had means lower than the midpoint for each scale, mean values were especially low in relation to inmate-staff trust (mean = 10.84), openness (mean = 11.36), and caring (11.79) scales. It appears that many correctional staff may not be developing the quality interpersonal relationships with prisoners that have been found to be most effective in producing behavioral change in offenders.

Lastly, many of the indicators associated with the application of a cognitive-behavioral approach to offender management and treatment are not viewed as being present in the correctional setting by many prisoners. In particular, the mean value for the use of problem-solving strategies (mean = 11.86) is lower than the calculated midpoint on the scale of 15.0. Lower scores on this scale indicate that prisoners were less likely to believe that correctional staff viewed their problems realistically and were helping them to develop and implement their plans for release. Additionally, the mean values for the use of effective disapproval techniques (mean = 6.28) and reinforcements (mean = 7.61) fell slightly below the midpoint for each scale.

### *Transitional Services and Prisoner Expectations for Release*

In addition to assessing the extent to which staff demonstrated core correctional practices in the delivery of services, a series of questions was also designed to measure the delivery of transitional services to inmates as well as inmate expectations and feelings of preparedness for release. These measures are described below.

Transitional Services. This report examines the extent to which transitional services are being offered to prisoners in accordance with the offender reentry program plan developed by WVDOC administrators. The Prisoner Case Management Manual and the Offender Reentry Program Plan as well as discussions with WVDOC offender reentry program developers served as resources for this inquiry.

These two documents outline the pre-parole services, community contact and referral services, and aftercare strategies to be implemented by WVDOC

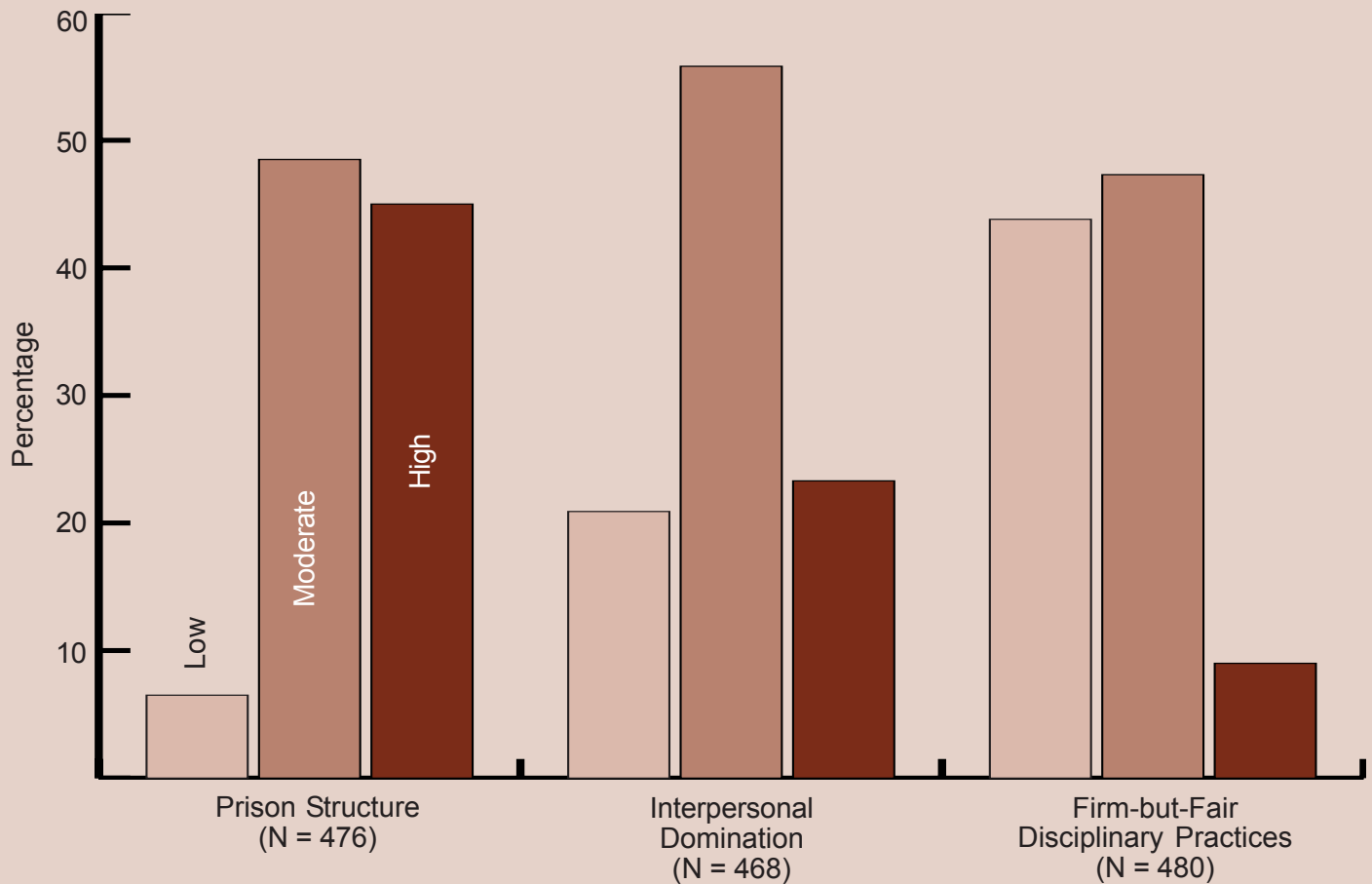
correctional staff and parole officers in an effort to prepare inmates for release. The transitional services assessed in this study include, but are not limited to, assisting soon-to-be-released prisoners with obtaining basic documents (e.g., social security card, driver's licenses or state ID cards, birth certificates, etc.), benefits (e.g., SSI, food stamps, veteran's benefits), and aftercare or community services (e.g., mental health and substance abuse treatment, job and educational training, health care, etc.).

Expectations and Preparedness for Release. The final section of this report examines prisoner expectations and preparedness for release. The purpose is to better understand the potential barriers that prisoners expect to face upon release and the services that many inmates may require as they seek to reintegrate back into their communities. Moreover, we are interested in ascertaining the extent to which the quality of services delivered may impact prisoner's self-appraisals for their preparedness or readiness for release.

The Urban Institute's *Returning Home* multi-state project served as the basis for many of our measures related to prisoner expectations for release (e.g., see Visser, La Vigne, and Castro, 2003). Prisoners are asked to report how "difficult" or "hard" it will be for them to overcome a wide range of potential barriers to successful reintegration. These including finding a job, making enough money to support themselves, securing a place to live, reconnecting with their families and other social supports, and staying out of legal trouble.

Preparedness for release was measured by providing inmates with a series of statements that captured the degree to which they felt ready to overcome many of the potential barriers they might face. Inmates were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement. High scores on the "preparedness for release" scale indicated that inmates believed they were more prepared for the task of reintegrating back into society. The following section begins the presentation of the results.

**Graph 1. Inmate Ratings for the Appropriate Use of Authority by Correctional Staff**



## RESULTS

The presentation of results begins with an examination of the use of correctional practices among correctional staff. Results for the total sample of inmate respondents are presented first. These findings are followed by an examination of the use of CCPs and the extent to which they vary across general population and work release institutions. Prisoner expectations and preparedness are also described. This section concludes with an assessment of the relationship between CCPs and inmate preparedness for release.

### Use of Core Correctional Practices by Correctional Staff for the Total Sample

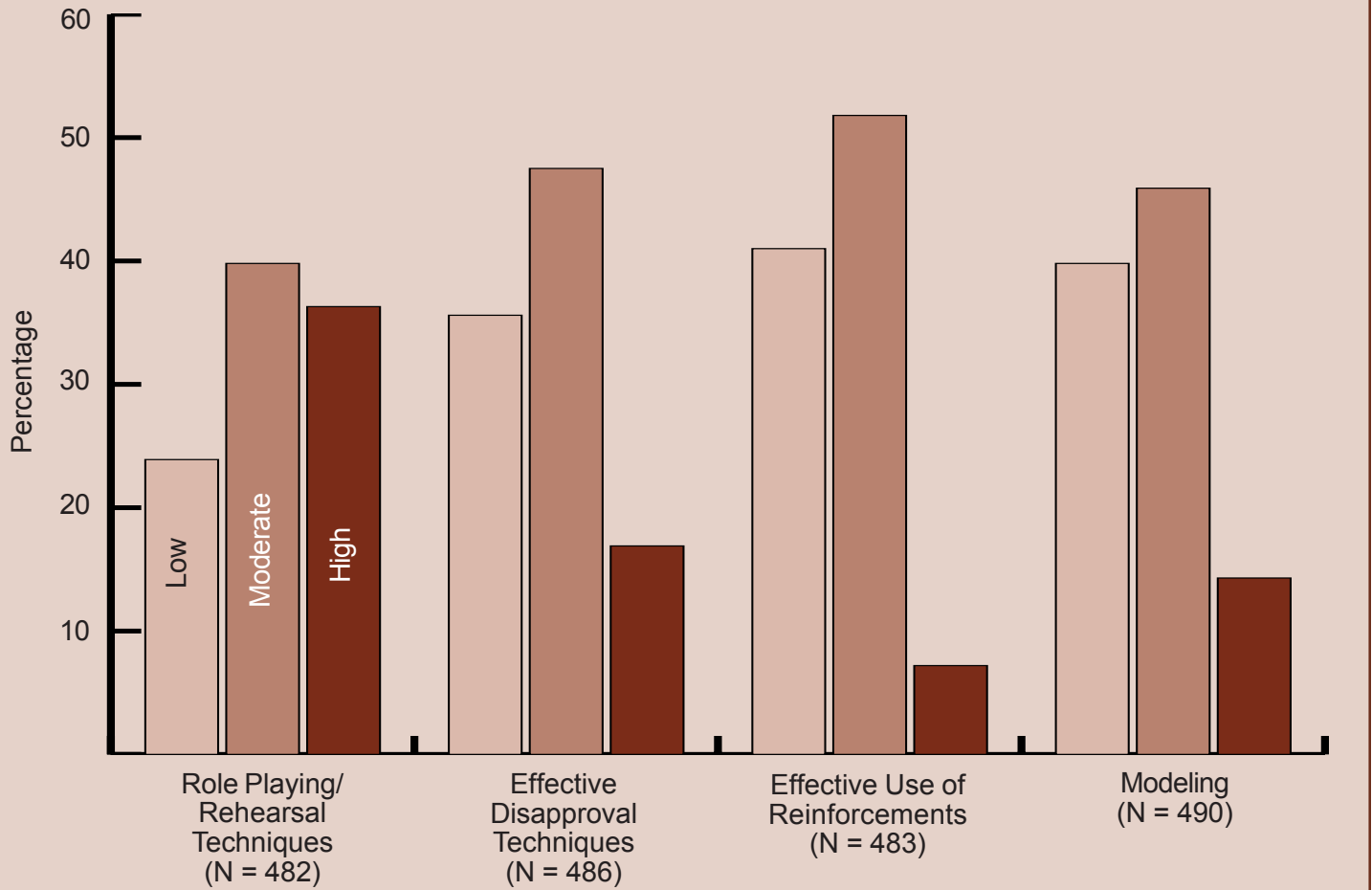
Graph 1 examines the appropriate use of authority among correctional staff. Generally, most inmates reported high levels of prison structure, moderate to high levels of interpersonal domination tactics between staff and inmates, and a rather low use of “firm but fair” disciplinary practices.

In terms of prison structure, it is clear that a vast

majority believe their institution provides a high degree of structure. Hence, most inmates indicate that they know what will happen if they violate the rules, what will get them written up by staff, and feel that the rules are “spelled-out” pretty clearly in their institution. A total of 214 or 45.0% of all inmates reported that there was a high degree of structure at their facility. Less than ten percent of inmates felt that the institution did not provide ample structure (6.5%). As a result, more than ninety percent of prisoners indicated that there was at least a moderate level of structure in their institution (93.5%).

As for the other measures of appropriate authority use, however, it is apparent that many inmates also felt that the prison environment was characterized by control and shaming practices rather than firm-but-fair disciplinary practices. Roughly 1 out of every 5 inmates indicated that their interactions with staff contained a high level of interpersonal domination and hostility (23.3%). Likewise, nearly the same percentage of prisoners indicated low levels of control and shaming in their interactions with prison staff (20.9%). Thus, a vast majority of inmates reported moderate levels of such interactions with staff in their institutions (55.8%).

**Graph 2. Inmate Ratings on the Effective Use of Modeling and Reinforcements by Correctional Staff**



While a large proportion of inmates perceived a high level of prison structure or clear rules, far fewer inmates felt that the rules were carried out on a consistent basis by correctional staff. Many inmates indicated that rules were “carried out unfairly” or that “some inmates are treated more harshly than others for no reason” in their institutions. In fact, over forty percent of inmates indicated that prison staff do not engage in firm-but-fair disciplinary practices (43.8%). Less than ten percent of all inmates reported high levels of such disciplinary practices in their institution (9.0%). Of the 480 respondents, only 43 inmates indicated staff routinely used a firm but fair approach when disciplining inmates or when guiding themselves or other inmates toward compliance.

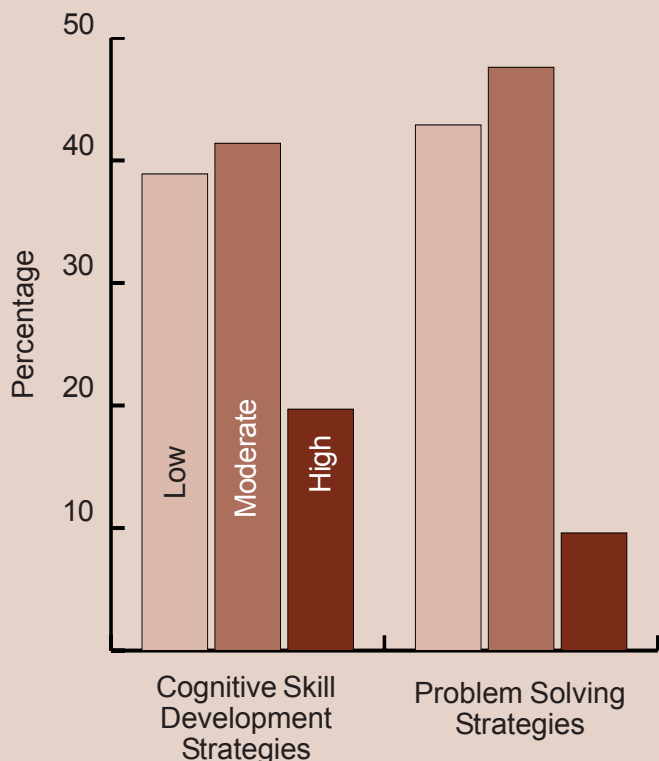
Fundamental principles of a behavioral approach involve the learning of behaviors through observation and intimidation (i.e., modeling), practice (i.e., role-playing rehearsal), and immediate application of costs and rewards (i.e., reinforcements). Given the importance of applying a behavioral approach to influence or change inmate behaviors, Graph 2 illustrates the extent to which inmates perceived the

effective use of modeling and reinforcements by case managers, counselors, and parole officers. Overall, the results suggest that there is variation in the extent to which these behavioral principles are being applied.

Based on the results presented in Graph 2, it appears that many inmates believe they are given the opportunity to practice new behaviors in prison. However, inmates are less likely to feel that appropriate behaviors are demonstrated for them by correctional staff. Moreover, even fewer inmates indicated that reinforcements for their own behaviors were offered by prison staff on a regular basis. For instance, over one-third of inmates indicated a high level of role-playing and/or rehearsal of new behaviors and skills in their prison programs (36.3%). As a result, these inmates tended to strongly agree that they were given the chance to practice dealing with problems the right way and practice the things they had learned in prison programs.

For the other behavioral components, however, fewer inmates agreed that staff effectively modeled appropriate behaviors for them. Only 14.3% of inmates strongly agreed that staff provided a good example of how to live and stay out of trouble. Nearly 4 out of every

**Graph 3. Inmate Ratings for the Use of Cognitive Skill Building and Problem-Solving**



The important skills to be taught to inmates preparing for release include problem-solving and cognitive self-change. Cognitive skill building involves encouraging inmates to reflect on their behaviors and how to change them. Strategies to develop problem-solving skills involve helping inmates identify problems as well as working with inmates to help them evaluate options, or generate alternatives and implement plans to deal with problems.

Graph 3 displays the extent to which inmates perceive the use of cognitive skill building and problem-solving strategies as part of correctional programming. Given that correctional counselors most often directly engage in cognitive skill building exercises, inmates were asked to evaluate the extent to which their counselors encouraged them to think about their behaviors and appropriate skills to avoid thinking errors. The findings in Graph 3 show that less than twenty percent of inmates rated the presence of cognitive skill development strategies on the part of correctional counselors as high (19.7%). On the contrary, nearly 4 out of every 10 inmates rated the use of these techniques as low (38.9%). These results suggest that well over one-third of inmates did not believe that they were encouraged to think about the things that led them to prison and how to change them or taught how to avoid thinking errors.

10 inmates rated the effective use of modeling techniques on the part of correctional staff as low (39.8%).

In the same regard, many inmates indicated that effective reinforcement techniques were not being used on the part of correctional staff. Effective use of reinforcement involves not only the use of reinforcements, but the effective use of disapproval techniques. Inmates were slightly more likely to report the use of effective disapproval techniques on the part of staff compared to reinforcements.

Nearly twenty percent of inmates strongly agreed that staff had engaged in effective disapproval techniques (16.9%). This is compared to only 7.2% of inmates indicating that reinforcements were effectively used by correctional staff. This resulted in 35.6% and 41.0% of inmates indicating a low level of effective disapproval and reinforcement strategies had been used by correctional staff respectively. As a consequence, over forty percent of inmates did not feel that staff rewarded them for good behavior or praised them when they did things right. At the same time, roughly one-third of inmates felt that they were told why their behaviors were wrong and then asked to think about why their behaviors were wrong.

*Report Highlights...*

*Most inmates reported high levels of prison structure, moderate to high levels of interpersonal domination tactics between staff and inmates, and a rather low use of "firm but fair" disciplinary practices.*

*Over one-third of inmates reported a high level of role-playing and/or rehearsal of new behaviors and skills in their prison programs.*

*Over one-third of inmates did not believe that they were encouraged to think about the things that led them to prison and how to change them or taught how to avoid thinking errors.*

*A substantial proportion of inmates did not feel that staff had helped them develop a plan for release that could work, that staff did not view their problems realistically, and they had received little help in putting their plans for release into action.*

**Table 6. Results of Independent Samples T-Tests for the Differences in the Application of Core Correctional Practices Across Institution Type (N = 496)**

Core Correctional Practices Scales	Work Release Inmates			General Population Inmates			t- test
	n	Mean	Sd	n	Mean	Sd	
<b>Effective Use of Authority</b>							
Prison Structure	79	14.73	2.93	397	13.98	3.15	1.958
Interpersonal Domination	79	16.04	4.97	389	17.33	4.54	-2.270*
Firm-but-Fair Disciplinary Practices	80	11.44	2.88	400	9.88	3.12	4.123***
<b>Appropriate Modeling &amp; Reinforcement</b>							
Use of Role Playing/Rehearsal Techniques	81	5.14	1.52	401	4.61	1.76	2.754**
Effective Disapproval Techniques	81	7.19	1.92	405	6.10	2.04	4.433***
Effective Use of Reinforcements	79	8.41	2.56	404	7.45	2.34	3.260***
Modeling	81	7.12	1.92	409	5.90	2.09	4.897***
<b>Use of Skill Building and Problem-Solving Strategies</b>							
Cognitive Skill Development Strategies	81	11.85	3.91	397	10.08	4.14	3.535***
Problem-Solving Strategies	80	13.30	3.61	391	11.57	3.91	3.654***
<b>Effective Use of Community Resources</b>							
Advocacy and/or Brokerage	77	16.75	4.65	394	15.31	5.23	2.450*
<b>Quality of Interpersonal Relationships</b>							
Staff Respect Toward Inmates	80	8.69	2.58	408	7.65	2.58	3.289***
Staff Cares About Me	80	13.73	3.81	399	11.40	3.70	5.094***
Staff Openness	81	12.51	3.72	401	11.13	3.73	3.027**
Inmate-Staff Trust	79	11.95	3.54	410	10.63	3.61	2.983**
Staff Commitment	78	10.92	3.07	405	10.23	3.01	1.857
Staff Skill Factors	81	6.19	2.00	405	5.70	1.97	2.004*

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

The development of inmate problem-solving skills is a core function of case managers and counselors as they prepare inmates for release. However, a rather large proportion of inmates felt that case managers and counselors had not engaged them in such activities. As shown in Graph 3, less than ten percent of all inmates gave a high rating for the application of problem-solving strategies (9.6%). On the contrary, more than forty percent of inmates rated this measure as low (42.9%). Generally, this means that a substantial proportion of inmates did not feel that staff had helped them develop a plan for release that could work, that staff did not view their problems realistically, and they had received little help in putting their plans for release into action.

#### *Application of Core Correctional Practices across Institution Type*

As noted previously, work release centers function very differently than the general population institutions in WV. While there are fewer staff in work release centers compared to the other institutions, staff are much more likely to have the chance to get to know the individual needs of inmates and monitor service delivery. For instance, a single staff member may be responsible for multiple duties such as establishing inmate's parole plans, providing programming, as well as assessing an offender's needs. This can result in more positive one-on-one staff-inmate interactions, thereby impacting the quality of services provided to prisoners preparing for release. As a result, we should

expect to see substantive differences in the quality of services provided to inmates, as measured through core correctional practices.

Table 6 displays the results of the independent samples t-tests for the differences in the use of core correctional practices by institution type. As shown in Table 6, it is rather clear that there were substantive differences in the perceptions of inmates as they relate to the quality of services provided. On every core correctional practice measure, work release centers scored more favorably. In many instances, the differences between work release centers and general population institutions are statistically significant. Simply put, these results suggest that work release centers are more in line with the principles found in core correctional practices.

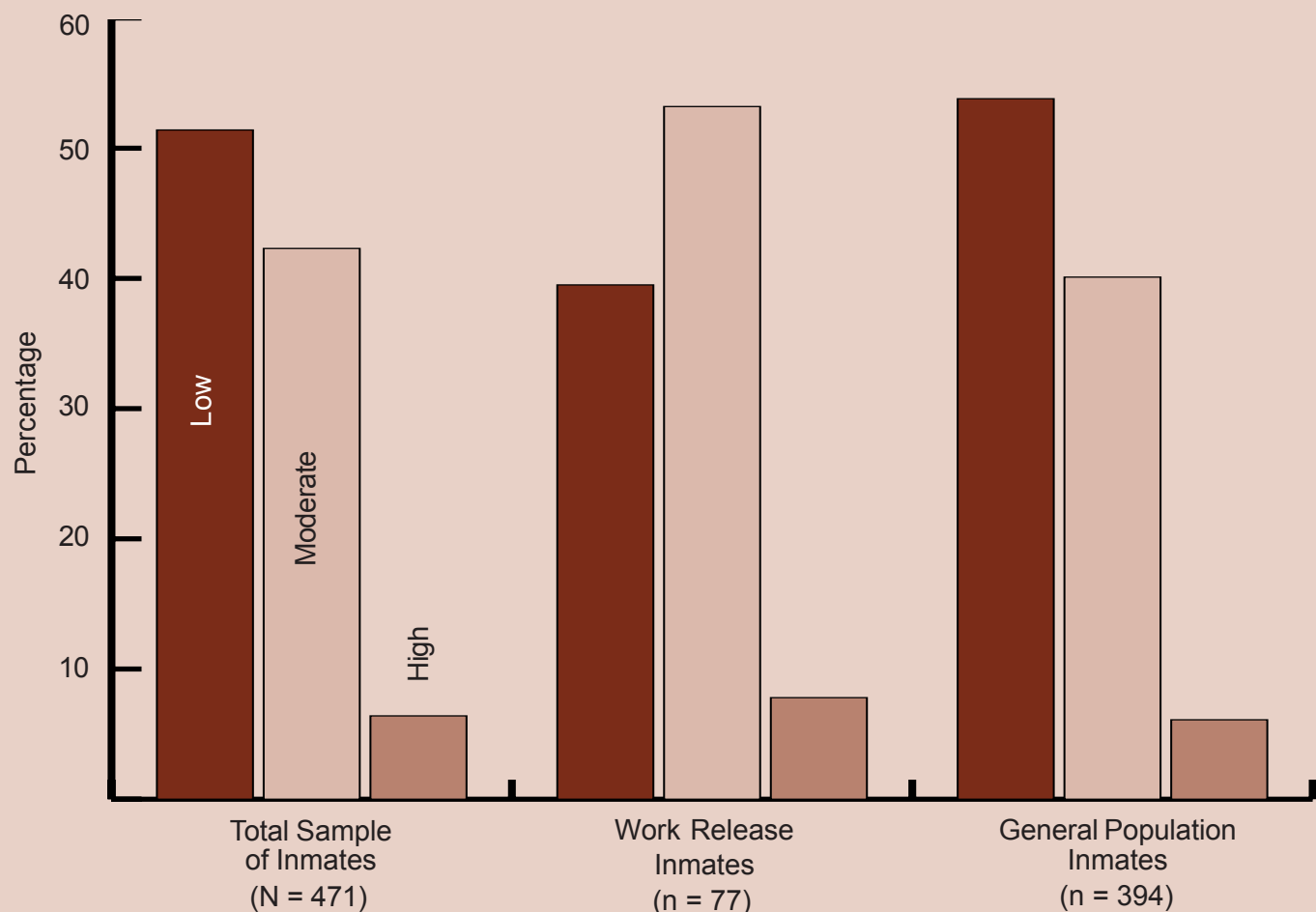
In regards to the effective use of authority, work release centers are rated by inmates as having slightly more structure. Meanwhile, WR center staff are seen

by inmates as being less controlling and/or shaming and more consistent and fair in enforcing facility rules. In fact, inmates rated WR center staff as being significantly less likely to engage in behaviors that were viewed as controlling, hostile, or shaming (t-test = -2.270;  $p < .05$ ). At the same time, WR center staff were significantly more likely to be viewed by inmates as being consistent in their enforcement of facility rules (t-test = 4.123;  $p < .001$ ).

The appropriate use of modeling as well as reinforcement structures also appear to be taking place to a greater extent in WR centers. Significant differences between WR centers and general population institutions were found on every behavioral measure. Inmates were significantly more likely to view WR center staff as providing appropriate models for good behavior (t-test = 4.897;  $p < .001$ ). As a result, inmates in WR centers tended to see staff as providing good examples on how to live and stay out of trouble.

Similarly, WR center staff were significantly more

**Graph 4. Percentage of Inmates Reporting the Effective Use of Community Resources by Institution Type and Total Sample**



likely to be seen by inmates as using effective disapproval (t-test = 4.433;  $p < .001$ ) and reinforcement techniques (t-test = 3.260;  $p < .001$ ). Generally, this suggests that inmates in WR centers tended to view their staff as a source of reinforcement rather than punishment compared to prisoners in general population institutions. Lastly, inmates in WR centers were significantly more likely to indicate that they were given the opportunity to practice new skills they had gained while incarcerated (t-test = 2.754;  $p < .01$ ).

Based on the responses of inmates, both skill building and structured learning activities also tend to be more strongly related to WR centers and their staff. Significant differences were found in the use of both cognitive skill development and problem-solving strategies on the part of WR center counselors and staff. Compared to general population inmates, WR center inmates were significantly more likely to report staff's use of cognitive skill development strategies (t-test = 3.535;  $p < .001$ ). As a result, WR center staff

may be engaging in activities that teach inmates how to avoid thinking errors, reflect on their behavior, and develop strategies to change the behavior that resulted in their being incarcerated.

WR release inmates were also significantly more likely to indicate that staff worked with them to build problem-solving skills. The mean level scores on the use of problem-solving strategies for WR centers was significantly greater than that of general population institutions (t-test = 3.654;  $p < .001$ ). This finding suggests that WR center staff may be able to view inmates' problems more realistically and provide greater assistance in the development of inmate release plans. In essence, inmates in WR centers felt that they could depend on staff to better understand their problems and help them generate solutions.

The effective use of community resources is of particular importance for offender reentry programs such as the WVORI. By leveraging community resources, offender reentry programs (as well as traditional community-based interventions) can better match intervention services to the needs of offenders and reduce many of the barriers inmates encounter when they transition from prison to the community. Advocacy and brokerage activities may involve helping inmates find a job or income assistance, a place to live, as well as any public benefits for which they might be eligible.

Similar to other findings on the use of core correctional practices, the results of the independent samples t-test presented in Table 6 suggests that WR centers may be doing a better job of advocating for inmates nearing release. As shown in Table 6, there is a significant difference in the mean level of advocacy and/or brokerage used on the part of WR center and general population staff according to inmates (t-test = 2.450;  $p < .05$ ). Generally speaking, inmates in WR centers tended to view WR staff as working more to generate referrals and speaking on their behalf to community organizations in an effort to ease their transition to the community.

The relationship between the use of advocacy and/or brokerage on the part of correctional staff across institution type is further examined in Graph 4. First, it is important to point out that it is rather clear that a vast majority of inmates -- regardless of the type of institution -- do not believe staff work to identify referrals or speak on their behalf to community organizations or service providers. As shown in Graph 4, only 6.4% of all inmates rate the effective use of community resources as high on the part of correctional staff. At the same time, over one-half of all inmates did not believe that staff were committed to generating referrals for them

#### *Report Highlights...*

*In terms of service delivery across institution type, it is rather clear that substantive differences in the perceptions of inmates were present. On every core correctional practice measure, WR inmates scored the quality of services more favorably.*

*Inmates in WR centers tended to view WR staff as working more to generate referrals and speaking on their behalf to community organizations in an effort to ease their transition to the community.*

*It is rather clear that a vast majority of inmates — regardless of the type of institution — do not believe staff work to identify referrals or speak on their behalf to community organizations or service providers.*

*Compared to inmates in general population facilities, WR center inmates were significantly more likely to view their staff as a source of reinforcement rather than punishment, report they were given the opportunity to practice new skills, and indicate they could depend on staff to better understand their problems and help them generate solutions.*



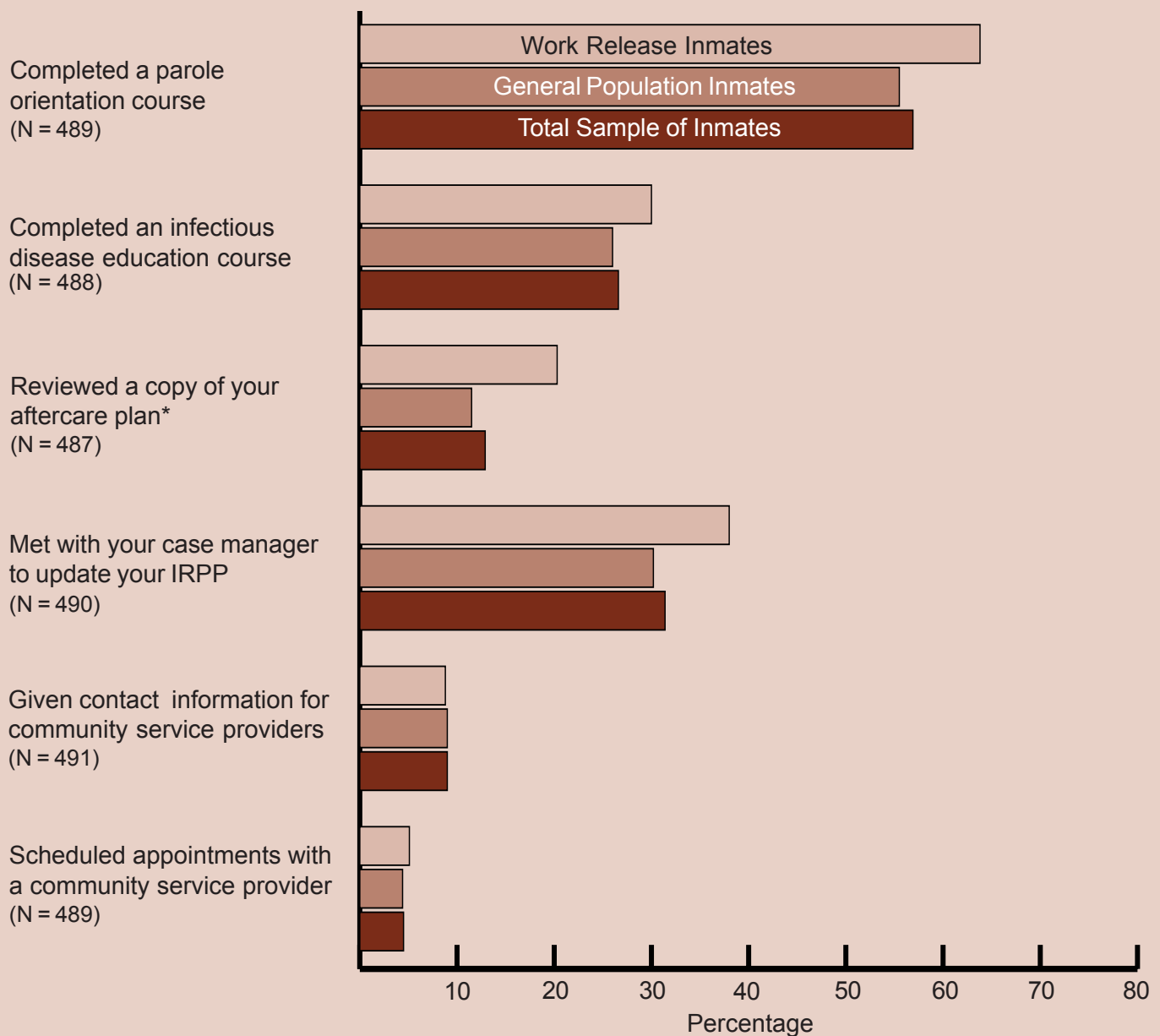
or lobbying community resources to help them transition to the community (51.4%).

On the other hand, inmates in WR release centers had a more favorable view of staff in this regard. Just below forty percent of WR inmates rated staff's efforts to advocate and/or broker on their behalf as low (39.0%), compared to over fifty percent of general population inmates (53.8%). Meanwhile, more than fifty percent of WR inmates reported moderate levels of advocacy/brokerage on the part of correctional staff

(53.2%) compared to only 40.1% of inmates in general population facilities. Similar to the comparison of means, these differences in inmate perceptions of staff's use of advocacy and/or brokerage were statistically significant (chi-square = 5.690;  $p < .05$ ).

Finally, a critical component to the delivery of successful correctional services is the development of high-quality interpersonal relationships. Correctional staff who are successful in producing behavioral change and managing inmate behaviors establish such

**Graph 5. Percentage of Inmates that Received Pre-Release Courses and Services by Institution Type and Total Sample (N = 496)**



\*Pearson Chi-Square 4.482, sig. value .034. The number of cases excluded from the analysis did not exceed 1.8% of the population for any single item.

relationships with the individuals they supervise and treat. Such relationships create the conditions in which modeling and reinforcement can more readily take place. As noted previously, these relationships are characterized by various qualities that include but are not limited to openness, warmth, understanding, respect, enthusiasm, and trust. In addition, staff commitment and skill factors are also associated with effective correctional workers.

Table 6 compares the presence of such relationships across the two types of institutions. Several aspects known to be associated with high quality relationships are examined. Similar to many of the other findings on the application of core correctional practices, inmates tended to view WR center staff as having the qualities consistent with the fostering of effective interpersonal relationships when compared to staff in general population institutions. With the exception of staff commitment, significant differences were found between WR and general population staff on most relationship measures.

While inmates viewed staff as being equally enthusiastic about their jobs and committed to their work across the two institutions, there were significant differences across other relationship factors. Inmates perceived staff in WR centers to be more respectful towards them (t-test = 3.289;  $p < .001$ ) as well as more caring (t-test = 5.094;  $p < .001$ ) and open (t-test = 3.027;  $p < .01$ ). Likewise, WR staff were viewed as being more trustworthy by inmates compared to their counterparts in higher security institutions. A significant difference in the level of inmate-staff trust was found between WR center and general population facilities (t-test = 2.983;  $p < .01$ ).

Finally, inmates housed in WR centers tended to view staff competencies differently than those housed in the more secure general population institutions. WR center inmates saw their staff as being more organized and prepared to carry out their jobs (t-test = 2.004;  $p < .05$ ). While a comparison across institutions suggests that most inmates did not rate staff as “high” on this measure (i.e., only 11.1% of inmates rated staff in either institution high on skill factors), WR center inmates were far less likely to rate their staff as “low” on skill factors. For instance, nearly one-half of inmates in general population institutions rated their staff low on skill factors (45.4%). This is compared to fewer than one-third of inmates in WR centers (27.2%). Hence, a greater proportion of WR center inmates felt that staff were at least moderately organized and prepared when compared to inmate perceptions of staff in higher security facilities.

## The WVORI and the Delivery of Transitional Services

A hallmark of any offender reentry program is its focus on providing services to offenders that can assist them when they transition from the prison to the community environment. Such services are intended to address many of the basic practical needs of offenders prior to their release from the institution in an effort to reduce many of the known barriers to successful reintegration.

In many cases, seemingly practical aspects of life such as having social security cards reissued, obtaining a driver’s license, and securing social security and veteran’s benefits can present themselves as obstacles to offenders as they seek to reenter society. Similarly, many offenders leave institutional confinement with a need to continue mental health and/or drug treatment services as well as educational pursuits. As a result, correctional staff often engage in a series of activities designed to identify the transitional needs of individual offenders in order to provide the appropriate services prior to release.

Using the WVORI design plan and case management protocol developed by WVDOC administrators as a guide, this section of the report examines the extent to which transitional services were provided to inmates. Inmates were asked whether or not they had received a variety of services associated with preparing them for release. The presentation of results begins with an analysis of inmate responses related to pre-release instruction on infectious diseases and parole conditions as well as basic interactions with case managers and community service providers.

### *Report Highlights...*

*Both WR center and general population inmates were equally likely to indicate that they had not completed a parole orientation or infectious disease education course.*

*At the time that the survey was administered (i.e., within 90 days of possible release), only 12.9% of all inmates had reviewed a copy of their aftercare plan.*

*Less than ten percent of all inmates stated that they had been given the contact information of a community services provider (9.0%) and fewer than five percent had actually scheduled an appointment (4.5%). These results did not vary significantly across institution type.*

**Table 7. Crosstabulation for the Delivery of Inmate Transitional Services by Institution Type (N = 496)**

Transitional Services	Work Release Inmates		General Population Inmates		$\chi^2$
	n	%	n	%	
Issuance of social security card (N = 412)					
No	26	33.3	257	62.7	23.980 ***
Yes	35	44.9	94	22.9	
Do not need	17	21.8	59	14.4	
Contact DMV (N = 460)					
No	27	33.8	271	65.9	41.033 ***
Yes	51	63.8	111	27.0	
Do not need	2	2.5	29	7.1	
Apply for state picture ID card (N = 463)					
No	23	28.8	286	69.6	50.245 ***
Yes	51	63.8	103	25.1	
Do not need	6	7.5	22	5.4	
Qualify for food stamps (N = 452)					
No	58	72.5	331	80.5	2.679
Yes	14	17.5	49	11.9	
Do not need	8	10.0	31	7.5	
Qualify for SSI benefits (N = 432)					
No	56	70.0	317	77.1	2.113
Yes	11	13.8	48	11.7	
Do not need	13	16.3	46	11.2	
Qualify for veteran's benefits (N = 347)					
No	48	60.0	270	65.9	7.444 *
Yes	10	12.5	19	4.6	
Do not need	22	27.5	121	29.5	
Discussed submission of FAFSA (N = 453)					
No	53	66.3	324	79.2	9.672 **
Yes	15	18.8	61	14.9	
Do not need	12	15.0	24	5.9	
Began FAFSA (N = 448)					
No	61	76.3	353	86.5	8.442 *
Yes	6	7.5	28	6.9	
Do not need	13	16.3	27	6.6	
Obtained new birth certificate (N = 415)					
No	35	43.8	267	65.0	13.437 ***
Yes	29	36.3	84	20.4	
Do not need	16	20.0	60	14.6	

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

Note: Since these services are not needed for all inmates, the present analysis excludes those inmates who indicated that they "did not need" a specific transitional service.

**Exposure to Aftercare and Individual Reentry Program Plans**

Graph 5 displays the percentage of inmates that stated they had received various pre-release courses

and services. Prior to release, both a parole orientation and infectious disease education course are required to be provided to inmates. These courses are intended to educate inmates on various parole supervision

expectations and requirements and prevent the spread of infectious diseases. According to the results shown in Graph 5, greater than one-half of all inmates indicated that they had completed a parole orientation course (56.9%), while only one-quarter of inmates had completed an infectious disease education course (26.6%). Moreover, these results did not significantly vary by type of institution. That is, both WR center and general population inmates were equally likely to indicate that they had not received these courses.

Similar to providing instructional courses on matters such as parole and infectious diseases, it is required that inmates be periodically given the opportunity to review and update their Individual Reentry Program Plans (IRPP). All incoming inmates are expected to participate in the development of their IRPP as well as review their IRPP with their case manager on at least a biannual basis. Likewise, each paroling or discharging offender is supposed to receive a complete aftercare plan. It is anticipated that the aftercare plan will serve as a supplement to each offender's IRPP.<sup>7</sup>

As shown in Graph 5, however, a vast majority of inmates indicated that they had not received an aftercare plan or met with their case manager to update their IRPP. At the time that the survey was administered (i.e., within 90 days of possible release), only 12.9% of all inmates had reviewed a copy of their aftercare plan. However, WR center inmates were significantly more likely to indicate that they had reviewed a copy of their aftercare plan compared to inmates in the general population. Roughly 2 out of every 10 WR inmates signified that they had reviewed a copy of their aftercare plan (20.3%) compared to 1 out of every 10 general population inmates (11.5%).

A greater proportion of inmates indicated that they had met with their case managers to review or update their IRPPs. However, this proportion was limited to only about one-third of all inmates. Only 31.4% of all inmates indicated that they had met with their case manager to update their IRPP. While a greater percentage of WR center inmates had met with their case managers to update their IRPP (38.0%), it was not enough to be statistically significant from the percentage of general population inmates who also had reviewed their IRPPs (30.2%).

Lastly, Graph 5 shows the percentage of inmates that said they had either been given contact information for a community service provider or had scheduled an

### *Report Highlights...*

*Generally, many inmates had been told by correctional staff how to apply for a state issued picture ID and how to contact the Division of Motor Vehicles regarding a driver's license.*

*A substantial proportion of prisoners had either already had their social security card reissued or were in the process of getting them at the time the survey was administered.*

*WR center inmates were significantly more likely than general population inmates to indicate that they had been told how to contact the DMV regarding a driver's license and that they had been instructed on how to apply for a state issued picture ID card.*

actual appointment with such a provider. It is rather apparent that very few inmates are receiving such services. Less than ten percent of all inmates stated that they had been given the contact information of a community services provider (9.0%) and fewer than five percent had actually scheduled an appointment (4.5%). These results did not vary significantly across institution type. As a result, roughly the same percentage of inmates in WR centers and the general population facilities had received these services.

### *Transitional Services and Prisoner Reentry*

As noted previously, many offenders need assistance in completing basic documents and applications prior to release in order to ease their transition to the community. Table 7 displays the results for the delivery of specific transitional services to inmates by type of institution. Given that some of these services are not necessary for all prisoners, inmates were given the option to indicate that they "do not need" a particular transitional service.

Nonetheless, the findings in Table 7 illustrate that most soon-to-be released prisoners could use many of the transitional services, but generally had not received them. For instance, a large percentage of inmates indicated that they could use help in obtaining and completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid" or FAFSA (approximately 83.0% to 96.0% depending on type of institution). However, only between 6.0% and 16.0% of inmates had either discussed the submission of an FAFSA or begun the

<sup>7</sup> Inmate paroling to a detainer or another sentence are not expected to have an aftercare plan completed. However, aftercare plans are required to be completed on inmates paroling to pending charges.

process of completing the application.

Similar results were found in regards to whether inmates could qualify for food stamps. Roughly 90.0% to 93.0% of inmates responded that they could benefit from a discussion with their case manager or other correctional staff member about the possibility of being eligible for food stamps upon release. Yet, only 12.0%

to 18.0% had actually discussed this topic with a correctional staff person.

The results presented in Table 7 further show that a) some transitional services are provided at a higher rate than others and b) WR center inmates tend to receive these services at a higher rate than inmates in the general population. Generally, many inmates had

**Table 8. Crosstabulation for Community Service Contacts Upon Release by Institution Type (N = 496)**

Community Services	Work Release Inmates		General Population Inmates		$\chi^2$
	n	%	n	%	
<b>Mental Health Treatment (N = 479)</b>					
No	32	40.0	191	47.9	8.919**
Yes	3	3.8	47	11.7	
Do not need	45	56.3	161	40.4	
<b>Drug Treatment (N = 482)</b>					
No	28	35.0	174	43.3	1.999
Yes	28	35.0	117	29.1	
Do not need	24	30.0	111	27.6	
<b>Alcohol Treatment (N = 482)</b>					
No	25	31.3	176	43.8	6.801*
Yes	19	23.8	103	25.6	
Do not need	36	45.0	123	30.6	
<b>Counseling (N = 478)</b>					
No	38	47.5	216	54.2	5.512
Yes	13	16.3	87	21.9	
Do not need	29	36.2	95	23.9	
<b>Education Program (N = 480)</b>					
No	29	36.3	209	52.3	8.243*
Yes	21	26.2	95	23.8	
Do not need	30	37.5	96	24.0	
<b>Job Training Program (N = 480)</b>					
No	34	42.5	220	55.0	7.377*
Yes	14	17.5	79	19.8	
Do not need	32	40.0	101	25.3	
<b>Health Care (N = 480)</b>					
No	41	51.3	234	58.4	2.214
Yes	18	22.5	89	22.3	
Do not need	21	26.3	77	19.3	
<b>Childcare (N = 479)</b>					
No	39	48.7	203	50.9	.524
Yes	7	8.8	42	10.5	
Do not need	34	42.5	154	38.6	

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

been told by correctional staff how to apply for a state issued picture ID and how to contact the Division of Motor Vehicles regarding a driver's license. Likewise, many inmates had either already had their social security card reissued or were in the process of getting them at the time the survey was administered. However, the type of institution in which the inmate was being confined heavily influenced whether or not he or she was likely to have received these services.

Consistent with other findings in this report, a greater proportion of WR center inmates indicated that they had many of these services at a higher rate than their counterparts in general population institutions. For instance, WR center inmates were significantly more likely than general population inmates to indicate that they had been told how to contact the DMV regarding a driver's license (chi-square = 41.033;  $p < .001$ ). Two-thirds of WR center inmates indicated that they had been told how to contact the DMV for a driver's license (63.8%) compared to less than thirty percent of inmates in general population facilities (27.0%).

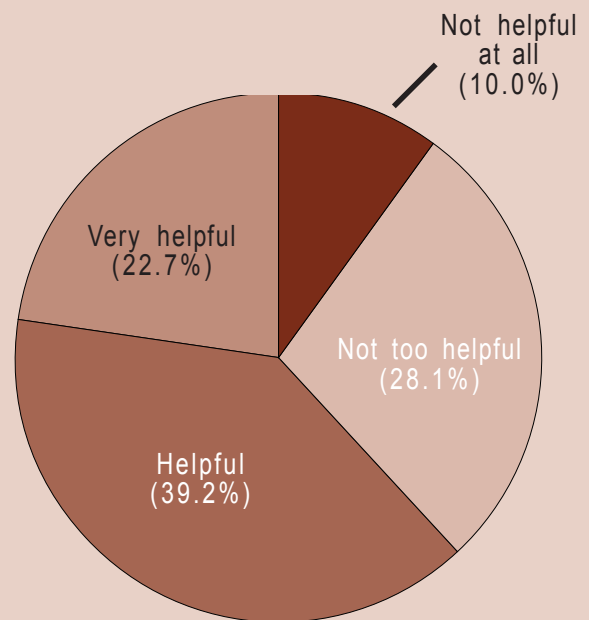
In addition, inmates in WR centers were significantly more likely than general population prisoners to specify that they had been instructed on how to apply for a state issued picture ID card (chi-square = 50.245;  $p < .001$ ). While only one-quarter of general population inmates said they had been told how to apply for state issued picture ID cards (63.8%), two-thirds of WR center inmates had received this service (25.1%). Similar results were also found for the issuance of social security cards and obtaining new birth certificates for inmates. It is interesting to note, however, that general population inmates were much less likely to signify that they needed assistance with a FAFSA. Perhaps these inmates simply do not plan on seeking more education upon release or are aware that they may not be eligible for such benefits under Federal law.

#### *Community Service Contacts Upon Release by Institution Type*

A critical component to successful reentry for many inmates is the continuity of mental health and substance abuse treatment as well as other educational and health care services they received while incarcerated. Table 8 displays the results of a chi-square test for differences in the delivery of community service contacts by institution type. Inmates were asked to indicate whether they had various services and/or treatments "set up so they could receive them after release from prison."

As shown in Table 8, many of the inmates indicated that they "do not need" many of the services in the community. As somewhat anticipated, the findings

**Graph 6. Helpfulness of Parole Officer for Community Transition (N = 291)**



Note: A total of 31 cases contained missing information. Analysis includes only those offenders who anticipate being under parole supervision after release from prison.

further show that WR center inmates may require fewer community services upon release. WR inmates were less likely to report the need for mental health and substance abuse treatment, counseling, education and job training programs, health care, and child care services upon release. In particular, WR inmates were significantly less likely to indicate that they will require mental health (chi-square = 8.919;  $p < .01$ ) and alcohol treatment (chi-square = 6.081;  $p < .05$ ) as well as education (chi-square = 8.243;  $p < .05$ ) and job training services (chi-square = 7.377;  $p < .05$ ).

A majority of WR center inmates said they will not need mental health treatment services upon release (56.3%). This is compared to forty percent of general population inmates (40.4%). In like manner, a greater percentage of WR inmates indicated not needing alcohol treatment once in the community compared to inmates in the general population. Forty-five percent of WR inmates indicated the need for alcohol treatment after release compared to only thirty percent of general population inmates (30.6%).

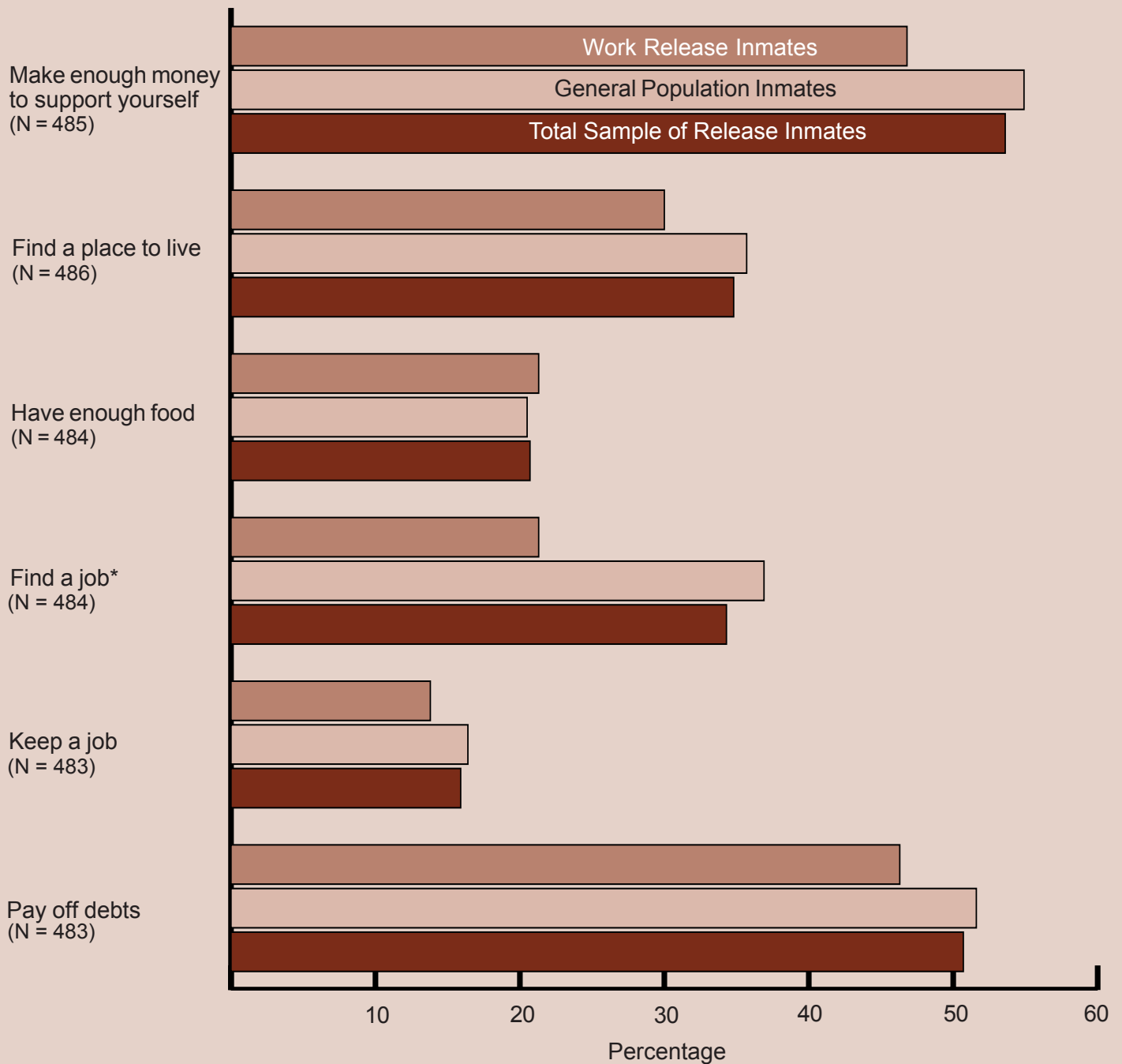
Similar results were found in levels of need for educational and vocational skills training in the community. It appears that WR center inmates may be better prepared to obtain meaningful employment after release. Over one-third of WR inmates indicated

they will not require assistance in furthering their education upon release (37.5%). This is compared to less than one-quarter of general population inmates (24.0%). At the same time, general population inmates appear to be in greater need of job skills training. Only one-quarter of general population inmates signified that they will not need assistance in locating a job training

program after release (25.3%). This is compared to 40.0% of WR inmates. Hence, these findings suggest that WR inmates may be better equipped to find employment once released from incarceration compared to their counterparts in general population facilities.

At the same time, however, these results also

**Graph 7. Percentage of Inmates Reporting Expectations About Economic and Job-Related Difficulties Upon Release by Type of Institution and Total Sample**



\* $\chi^2 = 5.690$ ;  $p < .01$

Table shows the percentage of inmates indicating that it will be at least “somewhat difficult or hard” to complete each economic barrier.

**Table 9. Prisoner Expectations of Substance Abuse and Legal Difficulties after Release**

Substance Abuse	Work Release Inmates		General Population Inmates		Total Sample of Inmates	
	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Not abuse alcohol						
Not hard <sup>a</sup>	62	78.5	293	72.3	355	73.3
Hard	17	21.5	112	27.7	129	26.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Not take illegal drugs						
Not hard	61	76.2	282	69.5	343	70.6
Hard	19	23.8	124	30.5	143	29.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Legal Difficulties</b>						
Stay out of legal trouble						
Not hard	65	81.2	338	83.5	403	83.1
Hard	15	18.8	67	16.5	82	16.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Stay out of prison						
Not hard	67	83.8	340	84.2	407	84.1
Hard	13	16.2	64	15.8	77	15.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup>The “Not Hard” category includes “Not hard at all”, “Not too hard”, and “Somewhat hard”. The “Hard” category includes “Very hard”.

indicate that many inmates who may require such services may not be receiving them. In terms of drug treatment, for instance, approximately one-third of all inmates indicated that they had not been set up to receive treatment upon release. Moreover, it appears that WR and general population inmates were nearly equally likely to need drug treatment in the community but fewer general population inmates were prepared to receive it upon release. Thirty-five percent of WR inmates indicated that they were not set up to receive drug treatment services in the community, compared to slightly below thirty percent of inmates in general population institutions (29.1%).

This also appears to be the case for other service contacts in the community. Similar to the results for drug treatment, roughly one-quarter of all inmates in need of treatment services for alcohol abuse were not set up to receive them upon release. Likewise, one-quarter of all inmates had not been set up to receive further educational training, regardless of the institution type. In addition, slightly less than one-quarter of inmates in need of health care service were not set up to receive them after release from incarceration. In

short, these findings suggest that improvements could be made to better ensure that offenders will continue necessary services and/or treatments once released from confinement.

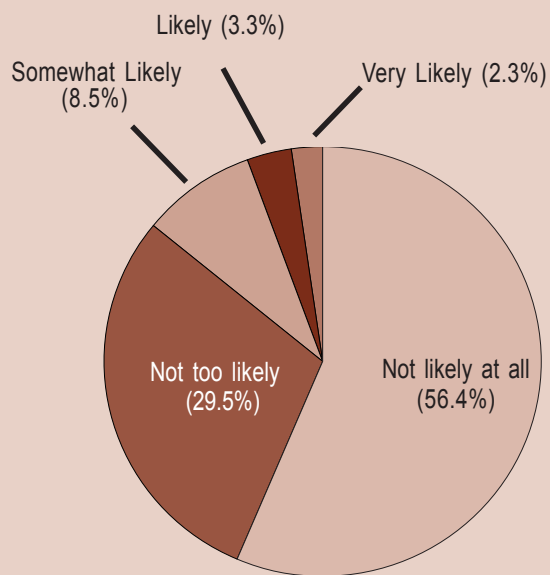
#### Prisoner Attitudes and Expectations for After Release

The final section of this report examines the post-release expectations of prisoners. Previous research tells us that as prisoners begin to reenter the community they can potentially face a wide range of economic, social, and legal difficulties. While most studies have found prisoners to be rather optimistic about the challenges they will face upon release, it is also known that a large percentage of offenders return to prison within three years of release. Thus, the extent to which offenders are successful in dealing with known barriers to reintegration may ultimately determine whether or not they will return to the criminal justice system.

In addition, recent research on former prisoners points to the importance of examining individual attitudes and expectations of life after release. Inmates that have a more positive view of their future may also be less likely to recidivate. Furthermore, by assessing the



**Graph 8. Likelihood of Rearrest (N = 496)**



Note: A total of 12 cases contained missing information.

perceptions of inmates and the difficulties they expect to encounter it may be possible to develop a better understanding of the type of services needed to assist offenders reintegrating back into the community. Thus, this section of the report examines inmate expectations and feelings of preparedness prior to release.

#### *Parole Officers and Prisoner Reintegration*

Parole officers can be very helpful in assisting prisoners as they move from the structure of an institutional environment to the community. In offender reentry programs such as the WVORI, parole officers serve as both protectors of public safety through surveillance and as a source for referrals in an effort to connect prisoners with community resources. As a result, parole officers play a critical role in an offender's success or failure as he/she seeks to reintegrate back into the community. Often many ex-prisoners rely heavily on their parole officers to help them locate and obtain basic transitional services, particularly in the initial months after release.

As a result, it is important to consider the expectations of inmates as they relate to the helpfulness of their parole officers. Graph 6 displays the distribution of prisoner responses to the question: "How helpful do you expect your parole officer to be with your transition back to the community?" Based on the results shown in Graph 6, it is rather apparent that a substantial proportion of prisoners expect that their parole officer will be helpful (39.2%) or very helpful in their transition

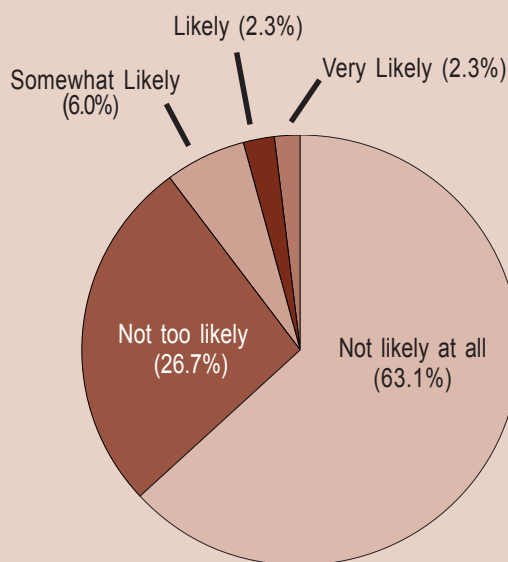
back to the community (22.7%). As a result, nearly two-thirds of all soon-to-be-released prisoners expect their parole officer to assist them as they reintegrate back into society. Only 1 out of every 10 inmates indicated that they expected their parole officer to "not be helpful at all." Hence, these findings underscore the notion that prisoners often rely heavily on parole officers to help them overcome many of the potential barriers they will face after release. This section examines some of the potential economic, social and legal barriers inmates may encounter as they transition back to the community.

#### *Prisoner Expectations of Economic Difficulties*

Inmate expectations for the economic difficulties they expect to face upon release are presented in Graph 7. Displayed is the percentage of inmates indicating that it will be at least "somewhat hard" or "difficult" for them to overcome each economic or job-related obstacle or potential barrier.

The findings clearly illustrate that prisoners anticipate a wide range of economic and job-related difficulties after release. Moreover, many of the factors that are expected to be difficult for prisoners to overcome are similar, regardless of the offender's status (i.e., work release or general population). For instance, more than half of all inmates anticipate a great deal of difficulty in making enough money to support

**Graph 9. Likelihood of Returning to Prison (N = 496)**



Note: A total of 13 cases contained missing information.

themselves (53.6%) and paying off debts (50.7%). Likewise, one-third of all inmates believe it will be at least somewhat hard to find a place to live (34.8%) and to find a job (34.3%).

However, some of the results vary by the type of institution in which the inmate is confined. Generally, inmates in general population institutions appear to anticipate greater difficulties after release. These inmates believe it will be more difficult to make enough money to support themselves, find a place to live, find a job, and pay off debts compared to their WR counterparts. Over one-third of general population inmates believed it will be difficult to find a place to live (35.7%), while more than one-half felt that it would be difficult to pay off debts (51.6%). Roughly sixteen percent of inmates in WR release centers responded that it would be difficult to keep a job or maintain employment (16.4%)

Yet, only the difficulties associated with finding a job after release were statistically significant across type of institution. As somewhat anticipated, prisoners in general population institutions were significantly more likely to anticipate encountering difficulties in finding a job (chi-square = 50.245;  $p < .001$ ). Over one-third of general population inmates expected that it will be difficult to find a job after release. This is compared to only 1 in 10 or 20.3% of WR inmates.

#### *Prisoner Expectations of Future Substance Abuse and Legal Difficulties*

Table 9 displays the distribution of responses for prisoner expectations of substance abuse and legal difficulties after release. For the total sample of prisoners, a greater percentage of inmates felt they may have substantial difficulty in refraining from abusing alcohol or drugs compared to legal problems. Nearly thirty percent of all inmates indicated that they would find it at least somewhat difficult or hard to not abuse alcohol (26.7%) or illegal drugs (29.4%). On the other hand, however, fewer than twenty percent of prisoners believed that it would be hard for them to stay out of legal trouble (16.9%) or prison (15.9%) in the future.

The findings shown in Table 9 further indicate that there is little variation in prisoner expectations across the different institution types on substance abuse and legal issues. While general population inmates were slightly more likely to expect difficulties with the abuse of drugs or alcohol, none of the differences were statistically significant. For instance, 27.7% of general population inmates anticipated some difficulty in refraining from alcohol abuse compared to 21.5% of WR inmates. Similarly, just over thirty percent of inmates in general population institutions indicated that

#### *Report Highlights...*

*WR inmates were less likely to report the need for mental health and substance abuse treatment, counseling, education and job training programs, health care, and child care services upon release.*

*Compared to general population inmates, WR center inmates may be better prepared to obtain meaningful employment after release.*

*WR and general population inmates were nearly equally likely to need drug treatment in the community but fewer general population inmates were prepared to receive it upon release.*

*Roughly one-quarter of all inmates in need of treatment services for alcohol abuse were not set up to receive them upon release.*

it may be difficult to stay away from illegal drugs (30.5%), while roughly one-quarter of WR inmates felt the same way (23.8%)

As for future legal problems, a vast majority of inmates -- regardless of their status as WR or general population inmates -- did not believe it would be difficult to stay out of legal trouble or prison after release. Less than twenty percent of inmates indicated that it would be difficult for them to stay out of legal trouble and prison. Moreover, inmates in WR centers and the general population were equally likely to indicate that they would have few difficulties in this regard.

As shown in Table 9, only 18.8% of work release and 16.5% of general population inmates, respectively, believed it would be difficult for them to stay out of legal trouble once released from prison. As a result, more than eighty percent of prisoners in either type of institution felt that it would not be difficult to stay out of future legal trouble. In like manner, a vast majority of inmates did not believe it would be difficult to stay out of prison. Only 16.2% of WR inmates and 15.8% of prisoners in general population institutions believed it would be at least somewhat difficult for them to stay out of prison.

Finally, prisoners were asked to report the actual likelihood of being arrested for doing something illegal as well as returning to prison in the future. As shown in Graphs 8 and 9, it is rather clear that most inmates believe their chances of being rearrested or returning

to prison in the future are very small. More than one-half of all inmates indicated that it is “not likely at all” that they will be rearrested for doing something illegal in the future (56.4%). Meanwhile, only 14.1% of prisoners felt that it was at least “somewhat likely” they would be arrested in the future.

Similar to rearrest, only a small percentage of inmates felt that it was likely they would return to prison in the future. Just over 1 out of every 10 inmates indicated that it was at least “somewhat likely” they would be incarcerated again in their lifetime (10.6%). As a result, a vast majority of inmates believed that it was either “not too likely” (26.7%) or “not likely at all” (63.1%) that they would return to prison sometime in the future. Based on these results, it appears that most inmates are rather optimistic about their life after prison.

### Prisoner “Preparedness for Release” and the Application of Core Correctional Practices

The following section examines the extent to which prisoners believe they are prepared for release. Inmates were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a series of items that measured key aspects of offenders’ lives related to successful reentry. The items were intended to measure inmate feelings of “preparedness” or “readiness” as it relates to several

known barriers to successful reentry. Such barriers might include getting a job, going back to their families, having social supports, understanding their conditions of parole, and obtaining suitable housing arrangements.

In addition to simply examining inmate self-appraisals of “readiness” or “preparedness” for release, we also conducted a bivariate analysis of the relationship between these self-appraisals and the use of core correctional practices (CCPs). Using the CCP measures examined in the first section of this report, we assessed the degree to which adherence to these practices influence prisoner self-appraisals of readiness or preparedness for release.

It is anticipated that those inmates who indicated, for instance, that correctional staff engaged in the effective use of authority, provided appropriate models, applied proper reinforcement contingencies would be more likely to indicate that they were more prepared for life after release. Such results would provide support for the notion that when services are delivered in a manner that is consistent with the use of CCPs (whether actual or perceived), inmates believe they are better prepared to deal with potential barriers to reintegration and are more optimistic about their chances to successfully reintegrate back into society. We begin by assessing the self-appraisal of inmates in relation to their readiness for release.

**Table 10. Inmate Rating of Preparedness for Release Items (N = 496)**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
<b>Preparedness for release</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
I feel prepared to get a job upon release.	5.8	12.4	36.0	45.8	483
I feel comfortable going back to my family.	4.5	9.1	35.3	51.1	485
I am comfortable with my housing situation upon release.	8.3	12.2	35.4	44.1	483
I know where I’m going to live when I leave here.	6.8	12.0	34.0	47.2	483
I know what is expected of me upon release.	5.4	8.5	42.4	43.8	484
It will be easy to pay my bills after release.	18.2	36.2	27.3	18.2	483
It will be easy to find a good place to live when I leave here.	12.7	16.5	37.5	33.3	480
I have people I can depend on when I am released.	7.2	7.5	34.2	51.1	483

**Table 11. Correlation of Inmate's Perception of CCP with Inmate Prepared for Release**

	Prepared to get a job	Comfortable returning to family	Comfortable with housing situation	I know where I'm going to live	I know what is expected of me	Easy to pay my bills	Easy to find a good place to live	People to depend on	Preparedness for Release Scale
<b>Effective Use of Authority</b>	<b>.140**</b>	<b>.133**</b>	<b>.148**</b>	<b>.079</b>	<b>.185***</b>	<b>.222***</b>	<b>.129**</b>	<b>.115*</b>	<b>.190***</b>
Structure Scale	.134**	.170***	.138**	.092*	.189***	.189***	.128**	.081	.183**
Interpersonal Domination Scale	-.082	-.079	-.080	-.024	-.116*	-.148**	-.085	-.079	-.116*
Firm But Fair Discipline Scale	.115*	.077	.139**	.078	.133**	.204***	.108*	.106*	.156***
<b>Appropriate Modeling &amp; Reinforcement</b>	<b>.188***</b>	<b>.125**</b>	<b>.149**</b>	<b>.075</b>	<b>.117*</b>	<b>.234***</b>	<b>.152***</b>	<b>.118*</b>	<b>.188***</b>
Role Playing/Rehearsal Scale	.321***	.234***	.266***	.205***	.233***	.255***	.244***	.250***	.322***
Effective Disapproval Scale	.154***	.091*	.124**	.061	.127**	.180***	.103*	.058	.145**
Effective Reinforcement Scale	.071	.016	.052	.011	.009	.159***	.071	.047	.074
Modeling Scale	.134**	.142**	.112*	.042	.125**	.218***	.132**	.124**	.165***
<b>Use of Skill Building and Problem-Solving Strategies</b>	<b>.255***</b>	<b>.181***</b>	<b>.210***</b>	<b>.153***</b>	<b>.203***</b>	<b>.243***</b>	<b>.215***</b>	<b>.178***</b>	<b>.262***</b>
Cognitive Skills Development Scale	.261***	.173***	.212***	.162***	.187***	.224***	.222***	.228***	.268***
Problem Solving Scale	.215***	.154***	.176***	.117*	.175***	.235***	.185***	.106*	.220***
<b>Effective Use of Community Resources</b>	<b>.129**</b>	<b>.063</b>	<b>.143**</b>	<b>.075</b>	<b>.122**</b>	<b>.264***</b>	<b>.159***</b>	<b>.057</b>	<b>.166***</b>
Advocacy or Brokerage Scale	.129**	.063	.143**	.075	.122**	.264***	.159***	.057	.166***
<b>Quality of Interpersonal Relationships</b>	<b>.108*</b>	<b>.112*</b>	<b>.140*</b>	<b>.103*</b>	<b>.124**</b>	<b>.232***</b>	<b>.143**</b>	<b>.121*</b>	<b>.177***</b>
Respect Scale	.123**	.077	.117*	.074	.129**	.153***	.114*	.114*	.146***
Staff Cares About Me	.141**	.091*	.144**	.111*	.097*	.237***	.149***	.131**	.180***
Openness Scale	.128**	.126**	.135**	.139**	.117*	.223***	.143**	.131**	.183***
Trust Scale	.076	.071	.099*	.074	.131**	.206***	.111*	.062	.137**
Staff Commitment Scale	.120**	.116*	.112*	.083	.120**	.201***	.108*	.114*	.157***
Staff Competency Scale	.081	.121**	.108*	.040	.096*	.175***	.116*	.099*	.135**

\* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### *Prisoner Self-Appraisals of “Preparedness for Release”*

Table 10 displays the distribution of inmates’ ratings of their preparedness for release. As noted before, previous studies have found that most prisoners are optimistic about their lives after release and being able to stay out of the criminal justice system. Our results are consistent with the findings from many previous studies.

As shown in Table 10, a large majority of inmates indicated that they felt prepared for release. Despite the fact that our previous results denoted that some inmates had not received many of the transitional services, most inmates felt rather prepared for release. More than eighty percent of prisoners agreed (36.0%) or strongly agreed (45.8%) that they felt “prepared to get a job upon release.” However, it is interesting that far fewer inmates felt that it would “be easy to pay [their] bills after release.” Only 45.5% of all prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that they would have few problems paying their bills after release. Thus, it is clear that many inmates are concerned about being able to support themselves after release. This suggests that while many inmates feel that they can find employment upon release, they are less confident that they will find a job that pays enough for them to keep out of financial trouble.

Similar results were found in relation to securing suitable housing or living arrangements after release. While approximately 8 out of every 10 prisoners indicated that they were “comfortable with [their] housing situation” (79.5%) or “know where [they] are going to live when [they] leave [prison]” (81.2%), a slightly smaller percentage of inmates believed it would be “easy to find a good place to live when [they] leave [prison]” (70.8%). Though many inmates feel good about their prospects for finding appropriate living arrangements, these results also indicate that roughly twenty percent of prisoners do not feel comfortable about their housing situation and nearly one-third do not believe it will be easy to find a good place to live.

The availability of social supports is another important factor for determining whether offenders will be successful at reintegrating back into society. In many instances, having an adequate degree of social supports can insulate prisoners from the impact of other potential barriers to reintegration. For instance, the presence of social supports may provide the ex-offender with something to fall back on if they run into financial difficulties or need a place to live. Social supports may come in the form of family or friends who will assist the

ex-offenders as they seek to transition from prison to the community.

The results presented in Table 10 illustrate that most prisoners are optimistic about the presence of social supports upon release. For instance, more than eighty percent of prisoners reported that they felt “comfortable going back to [their] family” after release (86.4%). In like manner, nearly the same percentage of inmates indicated that they had “people [they] can depend on when they are released” (85.3%). Hence, it appears that a majority of prisoners expect to have a good system of social supports as they make the transition from the prison to the community.

Lastly, it is essential for inmates to be cognizant of the behavioral expectations placed on them by their parole officers and others after they are released from prison. Therefore, inmates are required to develop an aftercare plan with their case managers and to participate in a parole orientation course prior to release under the WVORI. These efforts are designed to provide prisoners with clear information on the expectations placed on them prior to their release.

Based on the findings presented in Table 10, more than eighty-five percent of inmates agreed or strongly agreed that they “[knew] what [was] expected of [them] upon release” (86.2%). However, these results are in contrast to some of the results presented earlier. For instance, only forty percent of all prisoners had completed a parole orientation course (43.1%) and 12.9% had reviewed a copy of their aftercare plan at the time the survey was administered. Nevertheless,

#### *Report Highlights...*

*Nearly two-thirds of prisoners expect their parole officer to assist them as they reintegrate back into society. Only 1 out of every 10 inmates indicated that they expected their parole officer to “not be helpful at all.”*

*Many inmates anticipate it will be difficult for them to make enough money to support themselves, pay off debts, find a place to live, and to find a job.*

*Inmates in general population institutions believe it will be more difficult for them to make enough money to support themselves, find a place to live, find a job, and pay off debts compared to their WR counterparts.*

a vast majority of inmates appear to know what is expected of them after release.

#### *WVORI Service Delivery through Core Correctional Practices and Inmates' "Preparedness for Release"*

The bivariate results between core correctional practices and prisoner evaluations of preparedness or readiness for release are presented in Table 11. The results are presented for both the individual indicators of CCP and composite measures. Composite measures were constructed for each of the major CCP domains (e.g., effective use of authority, appropriate modeling and reinforcement, quality of interpersonal relationships, etc.). Likewise, a "preparedness for release" scale was developed using the individual indicators listed in Table 10.

As shown in Table 11, all of the CCP composite measures and most of the individual indicators were significantly correlated with prisoner self-appraisals of preparedness for release. In addition, all of the items varied in the expected direction. That is, for all of the composite measures and individual indicators (with the exception of interpersonal domination) the use of CCPs was significantly and positively related to inmate preparedness for release. Therefore, as inmate perception of proper service delivery increased, so did their belief that they were prepared for release. Hence, it can be argued that inmate readiness for release is significantly impacted by whether or not they perceive that their services were delivered in a manner that was consistent with CCPs.

For every CCP composite measure, a strong and positive correlation between the use of CCPs and inmate preparedness for release was found. While all of the CCP composite measures were statistically significant, the use of skill building and problem solving strategies was the strongest (Pearson's  $R = .262$ ;  $p < .001$ ). These findings suggest that when cognitive skill development and problem-solving strategies are used by counselors and other correctional staff to teach offenders new ways of thinking and resolving problems, prisoners felt they were better prepared for release.

The individual indicators that make up this composite measure were also some of the strongest and most consistent correlates across all of the items that comprise the preparedness for release scale. For instance, the use of cognitive skills development strategies was significantly correlated with being prepared to get a job upon release (.261), being confident it will be easy for them to pay their bills (.224), finding a good place to live (.222), and having people they can depend upon after release (.228). These findings illustrate that when inmates are taught how to avoid "thinking errors," how to reflect on their own

#### *Report Highlights...*

*All of the CCP composite measures and most of the individual indicators were significantly correlated with prisoner self-appraisals of preparedness for release. In addition, all of the items varied in the expected direction.*

*As inmate perception of proper service delivery increased, so did the belief that they were prepared for release.*

*When inmates indicated that they were taught how to avoid "thinking errors," how to reflect on their own behaviors and how to change them, they are much more likely feel that they have been prepared for release.*

*Inmates that reported correctional staff helped them in developing problem-solving skills were also more likely to indicate that they were prepared for release.*

*The more inmates indicated that they had been given the opportunity to practice dealing with their problems in the right way, the more prepared they felt they were for life after prison.*

*As the quality of the inmate-staff relationship increased (e.g., more respectful, open, trusting, and caring), prisoners were more likely to indicate that they were prepared for making the transition back to the community.*

*Prisoners that indicated staff were engaged in helping them find a job, a place to live, and linking them to community services were significantly more likely to indicate they were prepared for release.*

behaviors and how to change them, they are much more likely to feel that they have been prepared for release.

Likewise, inmates who indicated that correctional staff helped them in developing problem-solving skills were also more likely to indicate that they were prepared for release. For multiple indicators of preparedness, as correctional staff's use of problem-solving techniques increased, so did inmates' confidence that

they were ready for release. High scores on the use of problem-solving strategies was significantly correlated with a prisoners' belief that it would be easy for him/her to pay their bills (.238), find a place to live (.185), and obtain a job after release (.215). Therefore, inmates who worked with staff that viewed their problems realistically and at the same time helped them develop and place their plans for release into action, were significantly more likely to indicate that they were prepared for release.

In terms of the effective use of authority, inmates who felt that the rules of the institution were enforced fairly for all inmates and that staff did not interact with prisoners in a hostile or demeaning way were significantly more likely to say they were prepared for release (Pearson's  $R = .190$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Higher scores on prison structure were significantly correlated with inmates' readiness for release (.183). As a result, inmates who felt that the rules of the institution were clear were also significantly more likely to indicate that they knew what was expected of them upon release (.189), that it would be easy for them to pay their bills (.189), and they felt comfortable going back to their families (.170).

In addition, inmates' overall preparedness for release was also inversely related with the use of interpersonal domination on the part of correctional staff (-.116). However, only two individual indicators of an inmate's readiness for release were significantly related to the use of interpersonal domination on the part of staff. In particular, high scores on the interpersonal domination scale were associated with inmates being less confident in their ability to pay their bills upon release (-.148) or to know what was expected of them upon release (-.116). In contrast, inmates who felt that correctional staff used a firm but fair approach to disciplinary practices were significantly more likely to be ready for release (.156). A firm but fair approach to disciplinary practices on the part of correctional staff was significantly correlated with prisoners reporting that it would be easy for them to pay their bills (.204), that they were comfortable with their living situation (.139), and that they knew what was expected of them upon release (.133).

Similar to the effective use of authority, these results also show the importance of correctional staff using appropriate modeling and reinforcements in the correctional setting. There was a strong positive and significant relationship between the presence of appropriate models and the use of reinforcements by correctional staff and inmates' readiness for release (Pearson's  $R = .188$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This finding, along with the significant relationship between the use of skill

building strategies, provides strong support to the general responsivity principle and the use of cognitive behavioral models in treatment programming. All of the individual indicators for this construct, with the exception of the use of positive reinforcements, were significantly related to inmate preparedness for release.

In particular, there was an especially strong relationship between the use of role-playing/rehearsal techniques on the part of staff and inmates' preparedness for release. In fact, compared to all other CCP indicators, the use of role-playing and rehearsal techniques was the strongest correlate of inmate preparedness for release (.322). The more inmates indicated that they had been given the opportunity to practice dealing with their problems in the right way, the more prepared they felt they were for life after prison.

Significant relationships were also found for the presence of modeling (.165) as well as the effective use of disapproval techniques (.145). In terms of modeling, inmates who indicated that correctional staff provided a good example of how to live and stay out of trouble were significantly more likely to indicate it would be easy for them to pay their bills after release (.218), felt comfortable about going back to their families (.142), and indicated that they were prepared to get a job upon release (.134). Moreover, inmates who indicated that staff engaged in effective disapproval techniques were also significantly more likely to be prepared for release (Pearson's  $R = .145$ ;  $.01$ ). In particular, these inmates were significantly more likely to indicate that they were prepared to get a job (.154) after release and it would be easy for them to pay their bills after release (.180).

Quality of inmate-staff interpersonal relationships was also a significant correlate of inmates' self-appraisal of preparedness for release (Pearson's  $R = .177$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Simply put, as the relationship between staff and prisoners become more respectful, open, trusting, and caring, inmates were more likely to indicate that they were prepared for making the transition back to the community. The strongest correlations for the interpersonal relationship variables were found between the staff openness (.183) and staff cares about me scales (.180) and the preparedness for release scale. Essentially, inmate-staff relationships that were deemed to be caring and open appear to have been more effective at preparing inmates for release. Nevertheless, relationships characterized by mutual respect and trust were also strongly related to inmate preparedness for release. Both were significantly related to inmates' preparedness for release at the .001 probability level.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In like manner, prisoner perceptions of the competence and commitment of correctional staff also appears to be associated with inmate preparedness for release. As inmates' perceptions of staff commitment and competence increased, so did their confidence that they were prepared to reenter society. Strong positive correlations were found between staff commitment (.157) and skill factors (.135) and the inmate preparedness for release scale.

Finally, the effective use of community resources was found to be a significant factor impacting the degree to which inmates felt they were prepared for reentry (Pearson's  $R = .166$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Inmates who felt that staff were engaged in helping them find a job, a place to live, and linking them to community services were significantly more likely to indicate they were prepared for release. Prisoners were significantly more likely to indicate it would be easy for them to pay their bills after release (.264) as well as find a place to live (.159). Likewise, these inmates were more likely to report that they were comfortable with their housing situation (.143), prepared to get a job upon release (.129), and know what was expected of them upon release (.122). Thus, when correctional staff were seen by inmates as seeking to identify appropriate sources of referral for them and speaking on their behalf to community organizations, prisoners tended to feel more prepared for release.

The West Virginia Offender Reentry Initiative (WVORI) was developed and implemented based on the recognition that more prisoners than ever before are being released from our state prisons. As a consequence of the continuous growth in the prison population, there have been record highs in the number of prisoners being released from WVDOC custody in recent years. In 2005, more prisoners were released from WV correctional facilities than in any previous year. A total of 2,154 prisoners were released from WVDOC custody in 2005, up 10.4% from 1,953 inmates in 2004. Unfortunately, this is a pattern that has been present since 2000. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of prisoners released from WVDOC custody increased by 68.8%, from 1,336 inmates released in 2000 to 2,157 in 2005 (Lester and Haas, 2006).

This sustained growth in the number of prisoners being released from WV prisons has accentuated the need for comprehensive reentry programming. Accordingly, the WVORI was established in mid-2004 in an effort to provide a continuum of reentry services to offenders as they transitioned from prison to the community. The primary goal of the WVORI is to put into practice a case management system that would ensure the continuity of services and programming for offenders from the time they enter the system until they are ultimately reintegrated back into the community. A central component of this continuum of services, however, is its emphasis on providing transitional services to prisoners nearing release.

The community-based transition phase, or Phase II of the WVORI, begins six months prior to release from the institution and continues through the offender's parole supervision. During this phase, offenders are given an array of transitional services that includes the reassessment and development of an aftercare plan, an infectious disease course, a parole orientation course, and the scheduling of regular contacts with case managers and parole officers. In addition, this phase serves to link the offender to various community programs such as educational and or vocational training programs, substance abuse treatment, employment services, and religious or faith-based services. It is anticipated that these services will reduce many of the barriers to successful reentry that prisoners are likely to encounter after release and that they will ultimately lessen the likelihood that the offender will return to the system.

Consistent with the primary objectives of the larger process evaluation, this report focused on the extent to



which these transitional services were being provided to prisoners nearing release. However, we were not only interested in knowing whether the services had been provided, but also whether they were being delivered in an effective manner. This is because recent research tells us that *how* services are delivered is as important to program success as *what* interventions are delivered and to *whom* (Butler and Bird, 2000; Butler and Bird, 2000; Preston, 2000; Leschied, 2000). While many researchers rush to study offender outcomes (i.e., recidivism), there remains a need to better understand how interventions and services are being applied and whether they are being delivered in a manner that would suggest they should work. Indeed, recent outcome studies on offender reentry programs have underscored the importance of proper implementation for obtaining reductions in recidivism (e.g., Wilson and Davis, 2006).

To assess the quality of reentry services delivered to prisoners we turned to the empirical literature on effective correctional interventions. This research identifies core correctional practices that have been shown to result in greater reductions in recidivism. Originally identified by Andrews and Kiessling (1980), CCPs specify the staff characteristics and nature of staff-inmate relationships that have been found to enhance the therapeutic potential of correctional interventions. This study utilized these core correctional practices as a framework for studying the quality of reentry services delivered to prisoners.

While most studies on CCP have used observations of staff skills and their interaction with inmates and compared the relative presence of CCPs to offender outcomes, this study used inmate survey responses to measure these essential skills and qualities of correctional staff. This is in light of recent research that provides evidence that inmate survey data can be effectively used to obtain information about operational differences between prisons, including staff-inmate interactions (Camp, 1999; Camp, Gaes, Klein-Saffran, Daggett, and Saylor, 2002). Since CCPs are rooted in staff characteristics and the staff-inmate relationship, the use of inmate survey data provides a direct measure of whether these practices are perceived to be operating in the prison environment or correctional setting. Moreover, due to the broad applicability of CCP to both front-line correctional officers as well as treatment staff, inmates have ample opportunity to evaluate their environment as well as staff characteristics and the quality of interactions they have with staff.

Based on this approach, this study yielded considerable information on the extent to which transitional services were being provided to prisoners

and the role of CCP in the delivery of these services. Generally, the results of this study suggest that the WVORI could benefit from greater adherence to CCP. It appears that the application of CCP is not as widely spread as one might hope, at least from the perspectives of inmates. For example, while prisoners reported that they were often given the opportunity to practice new behaviors in prison, many did not feel that appropriate behaviors were demonstrated for them by correctional staff nor that reinforcements were provided by prison staff on a regular basis. Likewise, many inmates did not feel that correctional staff engaged in an effective use of community resources by offering advocacy or brokerage on their behalf or carried out problem-solving activities with them. Hence, a substantial proportion of inmates felt that staff had not adequately helped them to develop a plan for release that could work, did not view their problems realistically, and that they had been given little assistance in putting their plans for release into action from correction staff.

Another pattern that emerged from these data is that while there was a high level of structure in the correctional facilities according to inmates, the quality of interpersonal relationships between staff and inmates was poor. It is clear that a vast majority of prisoners felt that their institution provided a high degree of prison structure. Most inmates indicated that they knew what would happen to them if they violated the rules, what would get them written up by staff, and felt that the rules were clearly “spelled-out” in their institutions. However,

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it is apparent that many inmates also felt that prison staff used control and shaming practices rather than firm but fair disciplinary practices to gain compliance of inmates. In like manner, it appears that many correctional staff had not developed the high quality interpersonal relationships associated with the successful delivery of correctional services. In particular, staff-inmate relationships were not characterized as caring, open, and trusting by many prisoners.

On the other hand, a chief focus of this study was to compare the quality of staff-inmate relationships and the delivery of transitional services across different types of facilities, namely work release centers and general population institutions. As one might suspect, there are substantial differences in the way work release centers and general population institutions function in WV. Because there are fewer staff in work release centers, staff members are often assigned multiple responsibilities that may allow them to develop more positive one-on-one relationships with individual inmates. As a result, they may have more opportunities to assess the individual needs of an offender and monitor the offender's progress in his/her reentry plans. Be that as it may, the results of this study provide strong evidence that work release centers are more in-line with evidence-based principles and that they may be offering more intensive transitional services to prisoners nearing release.

On every measure of CCP and transitional services, the performance of work release centers was equal to or better than that of general population institutions. In most instances, the differences between work release centers and general population institutions were statistically significant. Generally speaking, inmates in WR centers tended to view WR staff as working more to generate referrals and speaking on their behalf to community organizations. Thus, staff members in WR centers were seen by inmates as doing a better job of advocating for inmates nearing release. Inmates also tended to view WR center staff as having the qualities consistent with the fostering of effective interpersonal relationships compared to staff in general population institutions. With the exception of staff commitment, significant differences were found between WR and general population staff on all relationship measures. WR center staff were seen by inmates as being less controlling and/or shaming and more consistent and fair in enforcing facility rules. WR center staff members were viewed as providing good examples on how to live and stay out of trouble.

In addition to fostering effective relationships, inmates in WR centers reported that pre-release and

transitional services were being offered to them at greater levels compared to prisoners in general population institutions. While inmates in the two types of institutions were equally likely to report having completed the parole orientation and infectious disease education courses and reviewed their individual reentry program plans (IRPP), there were significant differences on most other service-oriented measures. Just over one-half of all inmates indicated that they had completed a parole orientation course (56.9%) while only one-quarter of inmates had completed an infectious disease education course (26.6%). Likewise, only one-third of all inmates indicated that they had met with their case manager to update their IRPP. Less than ten percent of all inmates stated that they had been given the contact information for community services providers and fewer than five percent had actually scheduled an appointment. None of these results varied significantly across institutions.

Notwithstanding the similarities above, WR center inmates were significantly more likely than their counterparts in general population institutions to report having received many pre-release and transitional services.<sup>8</sup> Although a vast majority of all inmates reported that they had not reviewed their aftercare plan WR center inmates were significantly more likely to have received this service. Roughly twenty percent of WR inmates had reviewed a copy of their aftercare plan compared to only 11.5% of general population inmates. Similarly, WR center inmates were also more likely to indicate that they had been told how to contact the DMV regarding a driver's license and that they had been instructed on how to apply for a state issued picture ID card. While only one-quarter of general population inmates said they had been told how to apply for state issued picture ID card (25.1%), two-thirds of WR center inmates had received this service (63.8%). Similar results were also found for the issuance of social security cards and obtaining new birth certificates for inmates. These results suggest that WVDOC administrators should consider expanding the use of WR centers as "step-down" units for offenders nearing

<sup>8</sup> The results of this study are based on responses of inmates that were within 90 days of possible release. Given the amount of time between the date of the survey administration and when some offenders were ultimately expected to be released, it is more than likely that we did not capture all of the transitional services provided to inmates before their release. In some instances, prisoners may have been provided additional services after the data was gathered. Thus, the results presented in this report should only be interpreted as close approximations of the level of transitional planning occurring in the institutions.

### *Report Highlights...*

*On every measure of CCP and transitional services, the performance of work release centers was equal to or better than that of general population institutions.*

*Reentry program planners should continue to focus their efforts on assisting offenders in finding stable employment upon release.*

*WVDOC should focus more attention on the characteristics of staff and the specific techniques staff members utilize to deliver reentry services.*

release. Greater use of WR centers as step-down units or the development of lower security institutions may bring WV correctional facilities more in-line with CCPs and, thereby, improve the delivery of reentry services.

This report also sheds light on the barriers that prisoners in WV correctional facilities believe they will face upon release. The ability to pay off debt, make enough money to live, and find a job were all significant concerns for these prisoners. Moreover, many of the factors that prisoners felt would be difficult to overcome were similar, regardless of the offender's status (i.e., work release or general population). For instance, more than half of all inmates anticipated a great deal of difficulty in making enough money to support themselves (53.6%) and paying off debts (50.7%). Likewise, one-third of all inmates believed it would be at least somewhat hard to find a place to live (34.8%) and to find a job (34.3%). As expected, however, inmates in general population institutions expected to encounter more difficulties compared to WR inmates after release. General population inmates believed it would be more difficult for them to make enough money to support themselves, find a place to live, find a job, and pay off debts. For instance, over one-third of general population inmates believed it would be difficult to find a place to live (35.7%), while more than one-half felt that it would be difficult to pay off debts (51.6%). Only about sixteen percent of work release inmates responded that it would be difficult to keep a job or maintain employment (16.4%).

These results imply that reentry program planners should continue to focus their efforts on assisting offenders in finding stable employment upon release. Current efforts are underway to further strengthen the ties between institutional case managers and

community employment organizations (e.g., WorkForce WV Career Centers). Based on the results of this study, these services are likely to be needed and should be disproportionately targeted to general population inmates that will not step down to a WR center prior to release. As noted previously, inmates in general population institutions were significantly more likely to expect that they would encounter difficulties in finding a job, suggesting a greater need for employment services.

Finally, our results indicated that when prisoners receive transitional services in a manner that is consistent with the use of CCP, they report being better prepared for life after release. As inmate perception of proper service delivery increased, so did the belief that they were prepared for release. This lends support for the notion that adhering to CCPs within the context of offender reentry will better prepare inmates for release. This link between CCPs and preparedness for release is important because recent research has pointed to the significance of individual attitudes and expectations of life after release and future outcomes (Maruna, 2001). In a qualitative analysis of the life narratives of ex-prisoners, Maruna (2001) discovered that compared to persisting offenders, desisting men and women held dramatically more positive expectations about their future and stronger senses of control over their own lives. He concluded that prisoners who expressed a more positive outlook about their future may be less likely to recidivate, while prisoners who expressed a less positive outlook should be more likely to recidivate.

Based on these results, WVDOC administrators should work to find ways to enhance offender expectations and preparedness for release. Given that this study found that staff adherence to CCPs was strongly and significantly related to inmate feelings of preparedness for release, WVDOC should focus more attention on the characteristics of staff and the specific techniques staff members utilize to deliver reentry services. Staff characteristics and training in core skills should be addressed to ensure the maximum therapeutic impact of the WVORI. Greater attention to staff issues in the future and how transitional services are delivered may better prepare more prisoners for release and ultimately reduce the likelihood of future recidivism for many of these inmates.

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