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# FY 2011 Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects Evaluability Assessment

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EA researchers used the information generated from the above activities to (1) document and describe program operations and implementation issues; (2) assess program stability and maturity; (3) gauge compliance with the SCA model; (4) document program logic and case flow; (5) determine the extent to which viable comparison groups could be established; (6) identify extant data sources to support evaluation; and (7) develop evaluation recommendations. Nine site-specific evaluability assessment reports were compiled drawing on data collected from the above activities.<sup>4</sup> In formulating evaluation recommendations, EA researchers considered not only program maturity, stability, and capacity, but also those dimensions of the program likely to be of interest to the broader field and to yield actionable information. The latter was consistent with NIJ's objective to conduct some level of evaluation in each site.

## **Findings**

Findings from the evaluability assessment, including cross-cutting themes and issues affecting site implementation as well as future evaluation activities, are discussed in the following sections.

### *Implementation*

With the exception of the Ohio and Missouri sites, the SCA programs examined under the EA were fully operational and largely mirrored what had been proposed. Furthermore, operations were stable and well-defined. Adherence to eligibility criteria and program procedures was generally high. The EA sites generally reported few barriers to implementation. Delayed start-up and lower-than-anticipated case flow were the most prevalent obstacles, followed by conflicting or unclear policies pertaining to the use of grant funds specifically, the provision of participant incentives and basic necessities. Staff turnover affected some sites more than others (Ohio and Missouri). In general, the incremental nature of grant funding—sites reportedly had to re-compete for funds annually—added both uncertainty and an administrative burden that affected program implementation and operations, and hampered long-term planning. Despite these challenges, there is a strong commitment to the SCA concept of serving offenders in each of these sites. Several sites evidenced that commitment to the SCA concept through sustainability planning, designed to ensure continuation of reentry operations after the grant concludes in September 2013.

### *Program Logic and Operations*

Each site's program strategy, while different, reflected the key elements of the SCA Prisoner Reentry Initiative Logic Model with respect to its overarching project goals, design, operations, and implementation. Designed to meet the multiple challenges facing former inmates upon their return to the community, all of the SCA programs provided an array of pre- and post-release services, although some programs clearly used the grant to establish or enhance its approach to one component or the other. Risk and needs assessments, transition case planning, case management, and family involvement are key elements of grantees' SCA projects. The sites varied significantly with respect to target population, case flow, eligibility criteria, referral sources and mechanism, and configuration and duration of reentry services. Each site employs a collaborative strategy to address the challenges faced by their respective target populations. Each

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<sup>4</sup> The EA team compiled a brief summary memorandum describing the Johnson County (KS) Reentry Project for NIJ and BJA.











