

FINAL REPORT
Reading to Reduce Recidivism

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Criminal Justice Policy Council

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An Evaluation
of the
READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM PROGRAM

Final Report

to

Texas Department of Commerce

January 1992

Criminal Justice Policy Council

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ACQUISITIONS

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This evaluation report would not have been possible without the help of the many individuals of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Institutional Division, Windham School System, and Pardons and Paroles Division. In particular we would like to express our thanks to the administrative staff at the Windham School System, Dr. Chris Tracy and Dr. Cheryl Johnson. The 3R teachers and counselors provided support for the research and did an admirable job administering the program. The 3R Administrative Counselor, Mr. Gregory Shipp, did an excellent job organizing a complex program.

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Finally, the teachers, counselors, and parole officers gave much time and extra effort to this program, and should be commended for their work.

The 3R evaluation team wishes the best of luck to all offenders who participated in this program.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developing programs and policies to improve the education levels of felony offenders is critical to rehabilitative efforts, especially given evidence indicating that lack of education and problem-solving skills can contribute to criminal behavior. Consider the following estimates presented by the U.S. Department of Education (1992) and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice:

Nationwide,

- 13% of American adults are illiterate;

Yet, considering only offenders,

- 60% of America's prison inmates are illiterate; and,
- 85% of juvenile offenders have problems reading (KET, 1991).

In Texas,

- 16% of adults are illiterate, making Texas rank number one in terms of illiteracy rate with 3 other states and the District of Columbia;
- 68% of prison inmates do not have a high school diploma or GED;
- 67% and 68% of the inmates released to parole in 1989 and 1990 (respectively) lacked a high school diploma or GED;
- 44% of the felons on probation do not have a high school diploma or GED.

These percentages represent approximately 130,000 offenders in need of an education in Texas. These offenders pose a substantial risk to recidivate, considering:

- Nationwide, parolees who have not completed high school have higher rates of rearrest, reconviction, and return to prison than high school graduates (Beck & Shipley, 1987; 1989).
- A recent Texas study showed that 37% of parolees who lacked a high school education returned to prison; compared to 24% of those who had a high school diploma or G.E.D. (Eisenberg, 1988).

From this need the Reading to Reduce Recidivism (hereafter referred to as 3R) program was developed in 1989. The Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division; Texas Department of Commerce; Texas Education Agency; and Texas Department of Criminal Justice worked together to develop and implement the 3R program. The program was designed to address the educational needs of offenders by providing G.E.D. preparatory, language, mathematical and life skills curricula delivered via a computer assisted system.

Too often, achievement gains made by offenders in prison education programs are lost upon release to the community. The original intent of the 3R program, and the main emphasis, was to provide continual

educational service to the offender in prison and on parole, even though offenders could start and complete the program while in prison. Later (in September of 1990), procedures were amended to allow offenders to begin the program in the community.

The 3R program combined competency based, individualized instruction with the "open-entry/open-exit" feature provided by computer software. The program planners intended to take advantage of this feature by providing for the program's continuation in the community. The technology and information transfer capabilities of computer-assisted instruction (CAI) were intended to allow easy transfer of work in progress from prison to the community setting (and vice versa). In this way, the problem of the short time served in the institution due to early release was addressed through continuity of treatment and flexible service delivery.

The 3R program ended August 31, 1991, after more than 19 months of operation. The last offenders were placed into the program in early July of 1991. Termination of the pilot program resulted from a combination of factors, namely: too few offenders served; complex interagency interactions; and lack of a cohesive planning structure to oversee the program's implementation.

The Criminal Justice Policy Council was contracted to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the 3R program. The Criminal Justice Policy Council (CJPC) is a

state agency created in 1983 by the 68th Legislature to determine the long range needs of the criminal justice system. The role of the CJPC has been refined and expanded in the eight years since its creation to include strategic planning and empirical evaluations of programs and policies affecting the criminal justice system in Texas. Following are the major points derived from the process and outcome evaluation of the Reading to Reduce Recidivism program.

- * *Placement of too few and the wrong type of offenders effectively nullified any program successes.*
- The identification and selection procedures used to place eligible offenders in the institutional component of the program did not maximize the number of offenders placed. Of 540 potentially eligible inmates during the 18 months the program lasted, only 196 were placed (36%). The institutional program operated at an average capacity of 73%, and cost an average of \$3,106 per offender. Given that capital outlay accounted for approximately 30% of the total program costs for the program's duration, serving more offenders would have reduced the cost per offender substantially.
- Program administrators failed to establish procedures during the diagnostic/classification process for early identification of eligible inmates. As a result, the targeted offenders - "high recidivism/low safety" risk

offenders who had short sentences for property or drug crimes - were not placed into the program. The offenders with shorter sentences for property or drug crimes comprise the highest proportion of prison admissions, and would benefit most from the intervention provided by the 3R program. These offenders could begin the program in the prison and quickly parole to the community component. However, the inmates who were placed in the program had a median sentence of 15 years, and many were serving time for violent offenses (40%). Approximately 22% of the inmates placed in the program were serving time for an aggravated offense, and therefore serving at least two (calendar) years in prison.

* *Direct placement of parolees in the community component of the program increased participation by 34%. Direct placement of parolees also increased the number of GED certificates awarded by 53%. However, the low motivation of eligible offenders to participate in the program was a problem affecting placements.*

- The failure to maximize institutional placements, both in terms of numbers of offenders placed and type of offenders placed (those with a short time to parole), slowed the implementation of the community component of 3R. Therefore the program was expanded to allow direct placement of parolees and probationers into the community

component. The field placement procedures resulted in 72 successful placements in more than 10 program months, even though up to 1,354 parolees and 8,745 probationers could have been eligible for the program.

- A key reason for the inability to place offenders was the competing demands placed on offenders while under supervision. Many offenders have several conditions on their parole plan, including supervision level, substance abuse or mental health treatment, employment, and other requirements and restrictions. Therefore, competing demands were critical factors affecting the motivation to participate in the program. Of 164 referrals to the community component of the 3R program, 45.7% were "no-shows", and another 10.4% were ineligible based on the established JTPA eligibility criteria (usually income).
- In spite of the difficulty in motivating offenders to participate in the community, the community component of 3R was more successful in securing G.E.D. certificates than the institutional component. Of the total number of participants in the community, 29.2% received a G.E.D. compared to 24.4% of those who were correctly placed in the institution and received their G.E.D. while in prison or upon transitioning to the community (20.4% received the G.E.D. in the institution and 4% in the community).

- * *The administrative and operational structure of the 3R program was ineffective in program implementation.*
- The administrative structure of the 3R program consisted of a council of managerial level staff members from the agencies involved in the 3R program: Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division (CJD); Texas Department of Commerce; Texas Education Agency; and Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Institutional Division, Pardons and Paroles Division, and Windham School System. The task of the council was to plan much of the program, guide it through the implementation phase, and coordinate expansion of the program. However, although the 3R Council operated well as a planning body, it was not successful in impacting critical implementation issues since there was no manager or director for the program with the authority to direct all components of the program. The lack of a designated manager of the program paralyzed many of the staff members who attempted to work through problems among themselves but were thwarted within their own agency's hierarchy, or within the management structure of the program. Moreover, the design of the 3R Council did not provide an infrastructure for the administration of the program to continue given changes in leadership.
- The ineffectiveness of the 3R Council for monitoring implementation was also affected by the flow of information between the structure and management of the agencies involved. Electronic transfer of information (via modem) never occurred, so student status and progress reports were transferred from the institution to the community by mail or telefax. Often, the institutional 3R classroom teachers and counselors would discover that a participant had paroled when the community teachers requested the offender's information. In the community component, on the other hand, there was more effective communication. The 3R counselors and teachers submitted monthly progress reports to the parole officers, documenting the attendance, progress, and any special needs of the participants.
- * *Computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and the transitional methodology of the 3R program appeared to be an effective treatment delivery option for offenders, and may be effective in reducing recidivism.*
- In spite of the problems in the implementation of the program at the institution, the transitional methodology that was the rationale for the program seemed to have worked. Approximately 73% of the participants who paroled to Bexar County while still enrolled in the program without a G.E.D. attended 3R in the community. This percentage is high, compared to 15-20% attendance for parolees in other programs. Of this group of transitional participants, 18% received a G.E.D. and 27% remained in the program when it was terminated.

- Computer-assisted instruction proved an effective method to deliver education to the adult offender. Based on the institutional 3R offenders retesting pass rate (41%); the percentage of GED certificates earned overall (23%); the number of participants who continued 3R in the community (73%); and offender responses to questions pertaining to CAI, a general conclusion would be that CAI was an effective method to achieve the educational goal of the program. Offenders reported that it was easier to concentrate when they were at their own work-station completing lessons at their own pace; and many offenders noted that repetition helped them learn, especially math lessons.
- Only preliminary information is available to determine the impact of the program on recidivism. Due to the

problems in implementing the program, and selecting and placing offenders, there were difficulties in selecting comparable samples. Still, preliminary reports of the number incarcerated show some promise in terms of recidivism of successful participants. Only 5% of the transitional offenders who actively participated in the program had returned to prison or jail after a median time on parole of 14 months, compared to 45% of the 3R institutional participants who paroled from the program but did not participate in the community. None of the field participants who received a G.E.D. or participated until program termination had returned to prison or jail after a median of 18 months on parole, compared to 9% of the field control group and 19% of the field participants who were dropped from the program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS

The Reading to Reduce Recidivism program was a highly innovative education program that made use of technology offered by computer-assisted instruction to provide continual service to offenders, regardless of sanction. Prison crowding and increasing probation and parole caseloads demand that treatment programs be developed within the "continuum of sanctions." The lessons from the 3R program can help in the process of developing new, innovative, and successful treatment programs. Some of the recommendations to consider in future program development are listed below.

- * *The primary focus in the successful implementation of a program should be the following:*
 - *Definition of the population to be targeted;*
 - *Identification and development of selection, assessment, and placement procedures. For institutional programs this includes procedures for immediate identification of offenders (during the diagnostic process).*
 - *Monitoring of placement of targeted offenders and overall numbers of offenders placed;*
 - *Monitoring of characteristics of population placed, to adapt goals or re-target offenders to be placed.*
- * *Implementation of multi-agency programs requires a strong "council", with a legislative or executive mandate, to enable cohesive program planning. The council must:*
 - *Provide unique solutions to problems, combining each members (and agencies) specific expertise;*
 - *Communicate problems and successes to policy makers to allow program continuation and expansion.*
- * *A multi-agency council usually cannot function with direct authority and responsibility for program operation or implementation. Therefore, the following positions are essential:*
 - *The position of program coordinator/director, with clear authority and accountability for the program, is imperative to working through many day to day implementation problems.*
 - *Within each agency, a coordinator/contact person with some authority to respond to problems from the agency perspective should be designated.*
- * *Future policies should be derived from the information obtained from program evaluation, giving agencies the mandate to make necessary changes and successfully develop innovative correctional treatment.*

- * *Interactive "action" evaluation should be an integral part of every new program.*
- *Documentation of the processes and procedures of implementation will benefit planning and development of other correctional programs.*
- *Operational research will allow a program's procedures to be amended as problems are identified.*
- *Outcome research will provide information as to the relative costs and benefits of a program, for informed policy decisions.*

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Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

Crowded prisons, expanding prison populations, and large numbers of recidivists are serious problems for nearly every state in the nation, and Texas is no exception. Increasingly, probation sanctions and early release from prison have been used to alleviate crowded conditions. These measures, however, have not been implemented in conjunction with rehabilitation programs. Lack of programming necessary to reduce recidivism has decreased the effectiveness of community alternatives as measures to divert offenders from prison (Lemov, 1991; Petersilia, Turner, Kahan, & Peterson, 1985). To increase the effectiveness of alternate sanctions as measures of diversion from prison, policies and programs need to be developed that could reduce the recidivism potential of offenders released from prison or probation supervision.

Research shows programs that "work" in terms of rehabilitating offenders include one or more of the following components: anti-criminal modeling; reinforcement for successful performance; enforced contingencies for good (and bad) behaviors; use and development of thinking and problem-solving skills; and use of the community and its resources to integrate offenders into the mainstream (Andrews & Kiessling, 1980; Gendreau & Ross, 1987).

Education is key to many of these components. Education is the means for improving employment opportunities, social mobility, culturally valued ideals, and problem-solving skills. The need for an education is increasingly important: our society is dependent upon technology, with computer and basic literacy¹ skills necessary for employment in industries as diverse as fast-food service, warehousing, retail sales, and trucking (Dees, 1990; McDaniel, 1990).

Developing programs and policies to improve the education levels of felony offenders is critical to rehabilitative efforts, especially given evidence indicating that lack of education and problem-solving skills can contribute to criminal behavior. Consider the following estimates presented by the U.S. Department of Education (1992) and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice:

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- 13% of American adults are illiterate²;

Yet, considering only offenders,

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- 68% of prison inmates do not have a high school diploma or G.E.D.
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- 44% of the felons on probation do not have a high school diploma or G.E.D.

These percentages represent approximately 130,000 offenders in need of an education in Texas. These offenders pose a substantial risk to recidivate, considering:

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The program was designed to address the educational needs of offenders by providing G.E.D. preparatory, language, mathematical and life skills curricula delivered via a computer assisted system.

Too often, achievement gains made by offenders in prison education programs are lost upon release to the community. The original intent of the 3R program, and the main emphasis, was to provide continual educational service to the offender in prison and on parole, even though offenders could start and complete the program while in prison. Later (in September of 1990), procedures were amended to allow offenders to begin the program in the community (while on parole³).

The 3R program combined competency based, individualized instruction with the "open-entry/open-exit" feature provided by computer software. The program planners intended to take advantage of this feature by providing for the program's continuation in the community. The technology and information transfer capabilities of computer-assisted instruction (CAI) were intended to allow easy transfer of work in progress from prison to the community setting (and vice versa). In this way, the problem of the short time served in the institution due to early release was addressed through continuity of treatment and flexible service delivery.

The 3R program ended August 31, 1991, after more than 19 months of operation. The total capital outlay and

operational costs for the program were approximately \$1,315,783. The program served 196 offenders in the institution; 72 offenders in the community (only); and 44 offenders in both the institution and the community, for a total cost per offender of \$4200⁴. This cost per offender could have been substantially reduced by serving more offenders, especially in the community. The last offenders were placed into the program in early July of 1991. Termination of the pilot program resulted from a combination of factors, namely: too few offenders served; complex interagency interactions; and lack of a cohesive planning structure to oversee the program's implementation.

Presented in this report is the evaluation of the 3R program. In spite of the termination of the 3R program, the program

evaluation is essential. In fact, the factors contributing to termination of the 3R program make the evaluation all the more critical. As correctional treatment programs are developed in an effort to rehabilitate offenders and reduce prison populations, sound program implementation is essential to success in meeting these goals. Program evaluations focusing on the processes and pitfalls of implementation can provide information necessary for current and future programs to succeed. Therefore the evaluation of the 3R program is especially timely in light of the impending implementation of a variety of prison and community-based drug treatment initiatives for offenders and the implementation of community-based offender initiatives in education and training.

Notes: Chapter 1

¹ According to the U.S. Department of Education, literacy is defined in relation to the demand of the society in which a particular individual must function. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), adopted the following definition of literacy: using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential. An early "guideline" for defining illiteracy resulted from a 5 year study of adult functional competencies at the University of Texas. The National Adult Performance Level (APL) study found the following skills to be necessary to functional literacy: communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening); computation; problem solving; and interpersonal relations. Functional literacy is the ability of an adult to apply these skills to major areas which are important to adult success. The National Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73) was signed into law on July 25, 1991. This act included the following definition of literacy: "An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential." (U.S. Department of Education, 1992)

² The Census bureau estimate for the nation's illiteracy rate is 5% based on the 1980 census data and a definition of illiteracy as: "someone unable to read or write English at all." In 1982, an English Language Proficiency Study (ELPS) was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ELPS produced an illiteracy estimate of 13% of the nation's adults, based on 1980 census data. The U.S. Department of Education predicts that data from the 1990 census will indicate a much higher illiteracy rate for the nation's adults.

³ The amended procedures also included direct referral of probationers. However, the probation office in Bexar County was in the process of implementing an education program for offenders with an EA of 6.0 or below. Therefore, less emphasis was placed on probation, and only 2 probationers were referred. These probationers were not included in the analyses.

⁴ This is based on a total of 312 offenders served, which includes 196 in the prison, 44 in both prison and community, and 72 in the community only. The 44 "transitional" offenders were in effect double counted for this calculation.

Chapter Two

EVALUATION OF READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM

The Criminal Justice Policy Council was contracted to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the 3R program. The Criminal Justice Policy Council (CJPC) is a state agency created in 1983 by the 68th Legislature to determine the long range needs of the criminal justice system. The role of the CJPC has been refined and expanded in the eight years since its creation to include strategic planning and empirical evaluations of programs and policies affecting the criminal justice system in Texas.

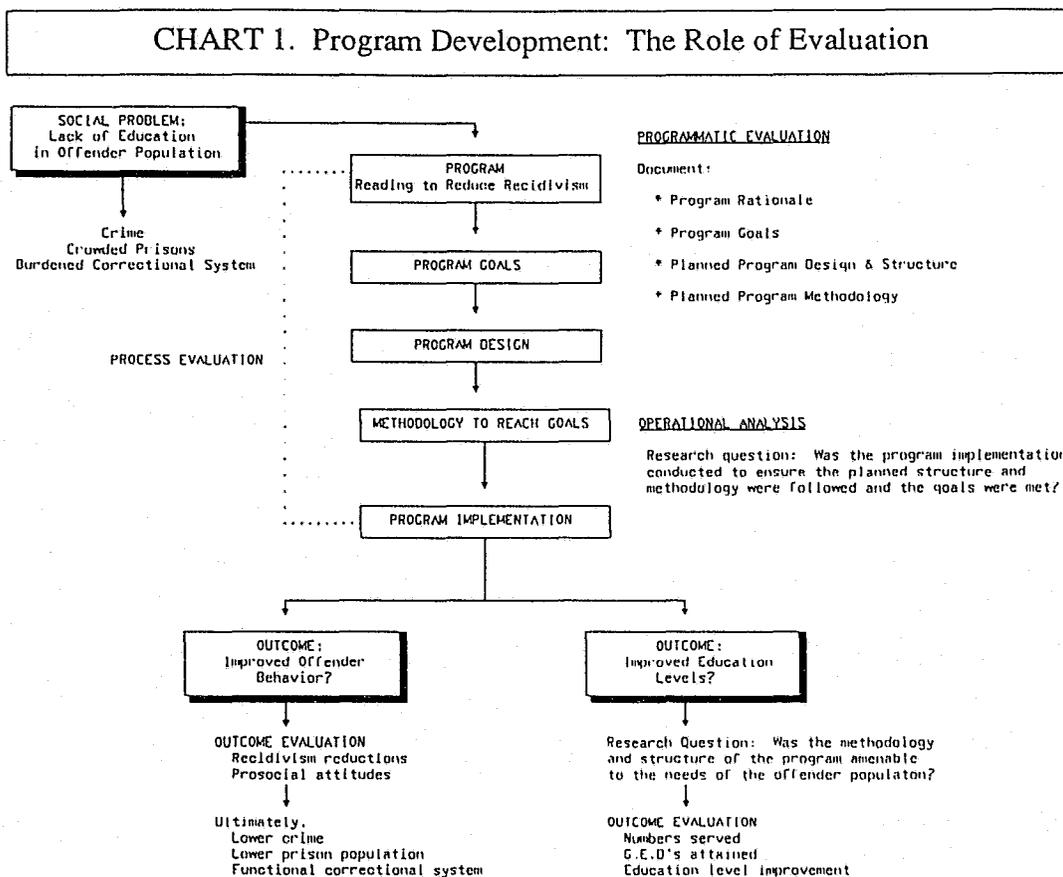
A primary focus of the CJPC is multi-level program evaluation, including both program-specific analysis (local level) to be used by managers and practitioners, and policy level analysis of long term program impact on recidivism, prison population, and social cost/benefit. Evaluation of any type of social program is important for a number of reasons:

- To assist in the development and implementation of workable procedures for a program (local level);
 - To provide empirically sound, objective information about the costs and benefits of a program (local/policy level);
- and ultimately,
- To contribute to the body of knowledge specific to the area, as well as social intervention in general (policy level).

Evaluation is complex and has many stages. Often, the focus is primarily on the bottom line - in this case whether education can reduce recidivism. This is difficult to determine, especially in a "real-world" setting. But by documenting the structure and methodology of the program, using well-matched groups to compare offender outcomes, and establishing the baseline risks and needs of participating offenders, inferences can be made regarding the success of education, and the 3R program, in reducing recidivism.

Perhaps the most important component to any evaluation is not determining the success or failure of the program outcome, but explicating the steps taken to achieve the outcome. Typically, a social program is developed in response (as a "solution") to an identified problem or problems. This development usually requires cooperation between agencies at each step, presenting many obstacles to the ultimate success of a program. The task of the evaluators is to identify the steps of program development and implementation, and to pinpoint the reasons for program success and/or failure.

This report presents the evaluation of the Reading to Reduce Recidivism program. Chart One graphically depicts the steps to program development, and the role of the evaluation in each part.



As is diagrammed, many steps are necessary to reach the outcome, which in turn is largely dependent on successful completion of these steps. Examination of the steps involved in program development and implementation comprises the process component of the evaluation. The purpose of the process evaluation is to document the goals, assumptions and development of the program (programmatic analysis), and the implementation procedures and day to day operations that ultimately determine the outcome of the program (operational analysis). Examination of the outcome of the program comprises the final stage of the

evaluation, performed only after the program as implemented is delineated.

The evaluation of the Reading to Reduce Recidivism program is presented in this document. Chapter 3 contains the background for the program, including the challenges of offender education resulting from the criminal justice system and offender population. The 3R program development, rationale, goals, and targeted population follow in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the population targeted for the program and procedures for selecting and placing inmates and parolees into the 3R program, as well as an overview of the characteristics of the population of

offenders participating in the program. Chapter 6, the operational process component of the evaluation, includes a discussion of the issues of implementation and operation of the program. Chapter 7 follows with examination of the implementation of the program's methodology. Chapter 8 provides the conclusion to the evaluation with a discussion of the successes and failures of the program, especially in terms of implementation.

Since the beginning of the evaluation, the CJPC presented numerous progress reports and a Management Information Report to the Texas Department of Commerce. The quarterly progress reports covered the tasks accomplished for the evaluation project, and later included the program progress (as the program was implemented). The Management Information Report, *Reading to Reduce Recidivism: Formal Selection Procedures*,

was oriented toward providing an early warning to program administrators of potential implementation problems. This report was presented to the Texas Department of Commerce, and members of the 3R Council in September of 1990. Included in the report were recommendations for alternate placement procedures, based on the analysis of program placement for the first eight months. Other related reports have been presented at three national and two state conferences.

Given that the 3R program is no longer operating, any further specific program recommendations would be inappropriate. However, recommendations for future programs operating within the criminal justice system will be included in the operational analysis, based on the knowledge and experience gleaned from the 3R program evaluation.

Summary of Evaluation Plan: Reading to Reduce Recidivism

PROCESS EVALUATION

Programmatic Analysis

Background, Development, & Methodology

Operational Analysis

Was the implementation conducted to ensure the planned structure and methodology were followed and the goals were met?

Implementation:

- Site Selection
- Target Population
- Offender Placement
- Agency responsibilities
- Inter/Intra-agency communication

Methodology Analysis

Was the methodology and structure of the program implemented as designed?

Methodology:

- Program Structure
- Class Structure
- Curriculum

OUTCOME EVALUATION

Experimental Design

3R Participant Groups
Comparison Group

Offender Comparisons

- (1) Program completion and G.E.D. success
3R Participants
- (2) Preliminary outcome measures (initial return to prison)
3R Participants
Comparison

Chapter Three

PROBLEM STATEMENT

3.1 THE NEED FOR NEW EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The projected longitudinal dropout rate for students in grades 7 through 12 in Texas is 27%, based on 1989-1990 school year data (TEA, 1991). In other words, if we follow a group of students as they progress from grade 7 to grade 12, approximately 27% of the group would "drop out" along the way. When examined by race and ethnicity, 36% of Hispanic students and 34% of Black students are projected to drop out prior to completing 12th grade; whereas 19% of White students will drop out. Students who drop-out are clearly in danger of developing a criminal lifestyle, considering that the proportion of high school dropouts among the prison population in Texas is much higher than the general population.

Among male prison inmates, approximately 52% of White inmates; 62% of Black inmates; and 72% of Hispanic inmates have not completed high school. Research shows that many students who drop out of school do so as a result of risk factors, such as drug use or school behavior problems, which may ultimately lead to criminal involvement (Illinois CJIA, 1991).

Five year projections of the longitudinal drop-out rate show the problem worsening slightly, given no action to reduce the rate (TEA, 1991). An increasing or steady drop-

out rate will place continual pressure on an already overburdened correctional system.

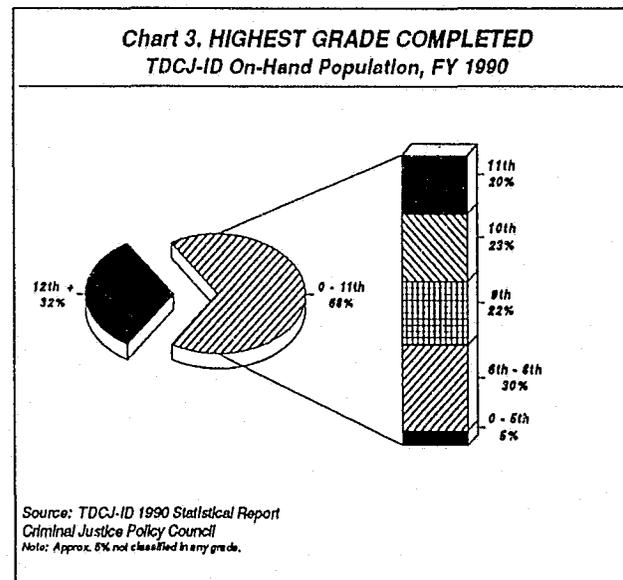
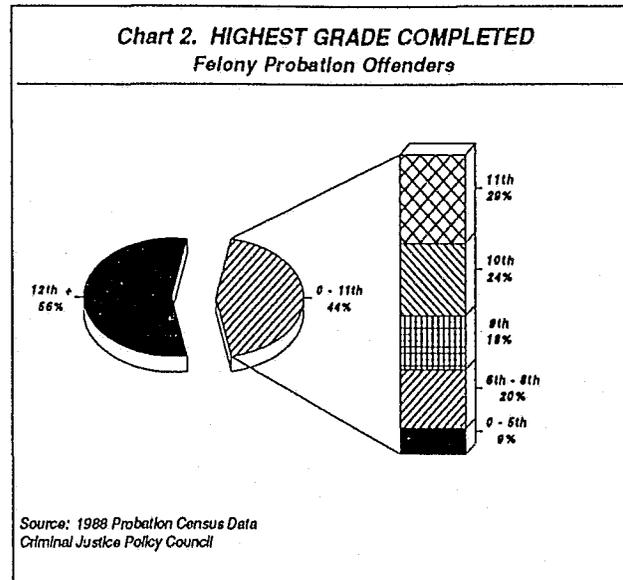
The correctional system in Texas, as in other states, has been in "crisis" since the late 1970's. In the 1980's, a combination of poor treatment and rehabilitative services for institutionalized offenders and crowded conditions resulted in federal court intervention in the Texas prison system. Since that time prison capacity has been closely regulated. The increasing use of probation and parole to alleviate prison crowding has created a large population of offenders being supervised in the community. Texas currently has over 230,000 felony offenders under state supervision, approximately 180,000 of whom are supervised in the community.

Developing correctional treatment programs and services that are successful in rehabilitating offenders is key to reducing crowding in a cost-effective manner compatible with public safety. Maximizing the number of offenders participating in these programs is critical, given growing prison populations, jail backlogs, and increasing pressure from youthful and drug offenders. Programs consistently identified as successful in rehabilitating offenders emphasize community reintegration; pro-social behaviors; and problem-solving skills

(Andrews and Kiessling, 1980; Gendreau & Ross, 1987).

Education is central to these components, and is a primary ingredient of many treatment programs (i.e. drug abuse education). Education is the means for improving employment opportunities and conveying culturally valued ideals. Lack of education could limit or completely hinder the benefits of treatment and rehabilitation programs, since these programs require problem-solving, reasoning, and judgement.

Additionally, research indicates that offenders with a high school diploma or G.E.D. fare better under parole supervision than those without a diploma or certificate (Beck & Shipley, 1987; 1989; Eisenberg, 1988). Charts 2 and 3 show the highest grade completed for offenders under felony probation supervision in 1988 and on-hand



prison inmates in 1990. As the charts show, 44% of the probationers lacked a high school diploma or G.E.D., compared to 68% of the prison inmates. Since revocations of probation constitute approximately 33% of annual prison admissions, one assumption would be that those felony probationers with a diploma fare better under supervision than those lacking a high school education.

These statistics reveal a definite need to develop programs for school age at-risk

students at the front end and for adult offenders who have gone "beyond-risk" and manifested criminal behavior patterns. This chapter presents a discussion of the challenges inherent in providing educational services to adults in a correctional setting. The Reading to Reduce Recidivism program was developed to meet some of the challenges discussed here.

3.2 THE CHALLENGE OF CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

Many challenges and obstacles exist when creating education treatment programs for offenders. Developing programs for adult offenders requires consideration of both the impact on service delivery of the criminal justice setting and the characteristics of the offender population. Consider that the primary purpose and overriding priority of the criminal justice system is to protect the public and sanction offenders. Educators argue that the custodial function of a prison creates a climate antagonistic to stimulating adult learning (see Bell, et.al., 1979; Goldin & Thomas, 1984; Horvath, 1982). Many items consistently identified as problematic in the correctional education literature involve issues indigenous to the correctional environment, such as conflict between administrators and treatment providers; low funding and scheduling priority of education programs (resource competition); and attitudes, both of staff and inmates, that devalue education programs (Goldin & Thomas, 1984; Horvath, 1982).

Within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the Windham School District provides vocational, adult literacy, G.E.D. preparatory, and English as a second language among the education programs for prison inmates. However, officials with the school district are vocal about the need to provide transitional community education

services to offenders. Most offenders spend very little time in prison, making significant progress toward their education difficult to achieve. This difficulty can lead to feelings of frustration on the part of educators and offenders.

The population of adult offenders also poses significant problems for education programs. Education of adults presents unique problems for educators. For example, participation in education programs in the community is low for most adults, because they perceive education as irrelevant to their primary and individualized interests in getting a job and having enough money to live (Johnston, 1987). Additionally, adults lacking a high school diploma may experience fear of failure and embarrassment at their situation. Regardless of the particular reason or reasons, nonparticipation in education programs and classes is a significant problem for adult educators.

The problems of educating adults are compounded for adult criminal offenders. The lifestyle adopted by most offenders is not conducive to the effort-reward mentality needed to perceive treatment programs, especially education, as valuable. Most offenders pattern their lives based on a history of failures. Chart 4 summarizes the challenges posed in educating adult offenders. To address these challenges, the

Reading to Reduce Recidivism program was developed in 1989. The programmatic component of the process evaluation,

including program rationale, goals, and chronology of development, follows in Chapter 4.

Chart 4. SUMMARY:
The Challenges of Correctional Education

<u>Correctional Setting</u>	<u>Population</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Security priority• Custodial function• Resource competition• Pervasive attitudes• System fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lifestyle• Responsibilities• Fear/Embarrassment• Past failures• Criminal record

Chapter Four

THE READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM PROGRAM

4.1 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

4.1.1 Program Rationale

Faced with prison crowding, growing parole and probation populations, increasing numbers of recidivists, and lack of state funds, planners with the Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division, and Texas Department of Commerce developed the Reading to Reduce Recidivism Program in 1989. The program was financed with federal funds from the Department of Labor, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The impetus for the program came from a recognized need to address the prison crowding crisis through treatment programs aimed at reducing the potential for recidivism in offenders. The problems created by crowding were believed to exacerbate the recidivist cycle fueling prison population growth. Education was seen as key to breaking the cycle. Yet the challenges faced in implementing an education program in a correctional setting discussed in Chapter 3 needed to be addressed. Planners with the two agencies discussed the development of an educational program that would allow the learning experiences developed in prison to be transferred to the community with the greatest possible ease to the offender and overburdened prison and parole personnel.

By meeting the objective of continuing treatment, the program could possibly overcome some challenges imposed by the correctional setting, namely, too little time for treatment and the resultant frustration due to lack of continuity throughout the system. Later the program was expanded to facilitate the same integration of educational services for offenders on probation or parole.

4.1.2 Program Goals

Early on, planners with the Governor's Office and Department of Commerce decided to involve the resources and skills of representatives from other state agencies needed to provide comprehensive services to offenders. The 3R program was planned and developed by the Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division and the Texas Department of Commerce, through the cooperation of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, (Institutional Division, Windham School System, and Pardons and Paroles Division¹), and the Texas Education Agency. Representatives from each agency worked together to choose the software and service delivery system for the computer-assisted instruction; to develop criteria for selection into the pilot program; and to

determine implementation procedures. Representatives from each agency comprised a "Reading to Reduce Recidivism Council" that was to oversee the implementation and expansion of the program. The Criminal Justice Policy Council was chosen by the 3R Council and Texas Department of Commerce to conduct the program evaluation and assist the planners during the implementation process.

All 3R Council members agreed upon the basic program rationale:

- * Education can reduce the recidivism potential of offenders;
- * Computer-assisted instruction is an effective means of delivering education to offenders, given system and population constraints.

The goals of the program, as conceived by the planners, differed based on primary responsibility and interest of each staff member, but never conflicted. The stated program goals were:

- Positively impact the recidivism of offenders who participate in the program. This goal was to be met by:
 - Providing an educational credential for offenders (G.E.D. certificate);
 - Improving educational level, and problem-solving skills of offenders; and,
 - Coordinating delivery of services to offenders as they make the transition from the institutionalized arm of the correctional system to "free world" supervision.

Along these lines, some broad goals were to:

- Develop the mechanism to achieve consistent information transfer and to provide effective service delivery between each component of the correctional system (probation, prison, parole).
- Bring together the resources and commitments of various agencies in cooperation and shared commitment - a unified focus that forms the basis for future cooperative efforts.

Additionally, some long-term social benefits derived from meeting the above goals include:

- Reduced costs for reincarceration;
- Reduced intangible costs to victims;
- Increased literacy rates;
- Reduced social welfare costs;
- Increased tax base by increasing incomes for successful participants;
- Provision of role models for peers, other offenders, and families of the participants;

4.1.3 Program Structure

The structure of the 3R program was designed for offenders to begin the program while in prison, and continue in the community as they parole. The Wynne and Clemens Units of the Institutional Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice were selected as the two institutional sites, and a computer classroom was installed in each unit. Each classroom had 19 work

stations, 1 teacher station, and a main file server. While in the institution, offenders would receive intense exposure: 3 hours a day, 5 days a week of class. Two groups of students participated in each unit, for a maximum program capacity of 76 - 80 inmates.

Inmates could complete the program and receive a G.E.D. while still in prison, but the original intent was for offenders who had relatively little incarceration time remaining to be placed in the program, and paroled to the community component.

San Antonio (Bexar county) was selected for the community component of the program. Similar computer classrooms were installed at two sites in San Antonio, each in close proximity to a district parole office. In September of 1990, the program was expanded so that probationers² and parolees who had not begun the program in prison were referred to the community sites as well. In the community, the class schedule was flexible and offenders could use the site at any open hours after a schedule was developed between the site's counselor, the offender's parole officer, and the offender. The community sites were originally scheduled to be open 60 hours/week (Monday - Thursday, 9am - 9pm; Friday 9am - 5pm; Saturday 9 - noon) to allow students ample opportunity to attend. Funding for transportation and G.E.D. testing fees was provided. Additionally, all offenders who obtained a G.E.D. in the community received a stipend

of \$200. Planners decided to offer the \$200 stipend to offenders who obtained a G.E.D. in prison after 30 days of community participation³.

4.1.4 Program Methodology

One tenet of the 3R program was that the use of computer-assisted instruction (CAI) was more amenable to the offender population than the traditional pedagogical teaching method. CAI was seen by program planners as enabling offenders to be served with the same curriculum and programs regardless of setting. Information transfer from prison to community could be done by modem, rather than complex, time consuming, and often ineffective paper transfer. CAI was also seen as one answer to many of the issues and problems related to educating adults. CAI offers benefits to both the educator and the learner if properly implemented. CAI is flexible, allowing learners to work at their own pace within their own schedule, on tasks designed to meet their specific needs and abilities. This, in effect, frees the teacher to devote more time as needed to each student. The computer may also be very effective as an instructional tool. Some experts argue that a computer forces the student to think because it will not think for the student; consequently the student must use a higher order of thinking skills (Sieland-Bucy, 1988).

The hypothesis for the 3R program was that CAI would be an effective teaching tool

for offenders because it will encourage them to discover, use, and improve personal skills. Moreover, a computer-assisted classroom does not diminish the importance of traditional one-to-one instruction. In fact, the use of computer technology allows each student to receive individual attention from the instructor without interrupting the entire class. All teachers hired to work in the 3R program were certified by the Texas Education Agency and had extensive experience working with adults. Most of the teachers had worked with adult offenders.

Software Selection. The software used in the program was selected following a detailed review of computer-assisted instructional programs marketed for adults. A committee comprised of expert staff from the participating agencies reviewed the programs, based on specifications decided beforehand (See Appendix C). Several sites with established CAI classrooms were visited in order to gather information about user-friendliness, student and teacher adaptation, technical support, and integration into other curricula. Based on these visits, vendor presentations, and field testing, the Josten's Prescription Learning System was chosen as best meeting specifications. Later modifications of the Jostens system resulted in the INVEST software, an upgrade of the Prescription Learning System focused totally on the needs of adult learners. The Josten's INVEST system has since been installed in classrooms throughout the TDCJ-ID

Windham School System. The software is also being used in a computer laboratory for probationers in Houston and in several other correctional agencies throughout the nation.

Curriculum. The selected software program was specifically designed and written for adults who have not acquired necessary basic skills. The program has three levels of learning: the literacy tier (grade equivalency 1.0 - 4.0); the adult basic education tier (4.0 - 8.0); and the G.E.D. tier. Students can enter the program at any level. Each tier covers reading and vocabulary building, language experience, and writing skills, and mathematical and computational skills. The program also contains a life skills component and specific G.E.D. instruction. These components are well integrated so the information and skills learned in one lesson or area can be used in another. The computer lessons are delivered in small sequential steps using multisensory presentations (sound, graphics, and repetition) and focus on topics of adult concern and interest.

The literacy tier incorporates instruction for the nonreading or limited-reading adult. The primary focus at this level is on expressing ideas on paper and acquiring basic word recognition skills rather than studying rules of grammar and punctuation. The exercises involve word recognition and word meaning. Students learn a core vocabulary that will be used throughout the program.

The adult basic education tier has essentially the same basic components as the literacy tier, but with a wider variety of topics covered in greater depth. Critical thinking is emphasized through an approach which integrates the areas covered. Students are taught a variety of other skills such as referencing, using the library, using graphic resources, and developing personal learning and reading strategies.

The G.E.D. tier is designed for persons who read at least at an eighth grade level. There are four major areas of concentration: reading/comprehension; language/writing skills; mathematics/problem solving; and an emphasis on specific G.E.D. preparation.

Testing and Placement. As offenders entered the 3R program, they were tested in order to be placed in the appropriate level of instruction. The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) was administered as a

baseline measure of educational achievement prior to beginning the program. Once in the program, participants were given the Basic Skills Inventory (BSI), a placement tool integrated in the computer software. The BSI determined proficiency levels in mathematics and reading. The BSI took approximately 60 minutes of computer time to place students in appropriate starting levels. Final placement was made by the teacher, based on test results and assessments of students' skills.

Progress was measured by tests after each lesson. Pre-G.E.D. tests were administered to measure progress and readiness to take the G.E.D. test. Additionally, instructors monitored students' work on the computer through reports generated by the system indicating level of learning, mastery of subjects, and problem areas.

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Program Summary

RATIONALE

- * *Education can reduce the recidivism potential of offenders*
- * *Computer-assisted instruction is an effective means of delivering education to offenders, given system and population constraints*

GOALS

- Positively impact the recidivism of offenders who participate in the program, by:
 - Providing an educational credential for offenders (G.E.D.);
 - Improving educational level, and problem-solving skills of offenders;
 - Coordinating delivery of services to offenders as they make the transition from prison to the community.
- Develop the mechanism to achieve consistent information transfer and provide effective service delivery between each component of the correctional system (probation, prison, parole).
- Bring together the resources and commitments of various agencies in cooperation and shared commitment - a unified focus that forms the basis for future cooperative efforts.
- Ultimately reduce costs and enhance benefits to society and victims.

DESIGN

- Institution: 3 hrs/day, 5 days/week
Transition to community
- Community: Flexible hours, transportation, G.E.D. fees provided

METHODOLOGY

- Curriculum delivery via computer-assisted instruction.
- Integrated curriculum components, focusing on reading, vocabulary building, language experience, writing skills, and mathematics.
- Testing for appropriate placement, progress, and G.E.D. readiness

Notes: Chapter 4

¹ When the 3R program began, the TDCJ - Institutional Division and the Pardons and Paroles Division were two separate agencies: Texas Department of Corrections and Board of Pardons and Paroles. The two agencies, along with the Texas Adult Probation Commission, merged in January 1990 to create the Texas Department of Criminal Justice - Institutional, Pardons and Paroles, and Community Justice Assistance Divisions.

² Only 2 probationers were referred to the program, both received a G.E.D.

³ The \$200.00 stipend given to offenders in the community was intended as an incentive for offenders to complete the program. The stipend was not given in the institution since the incentive for participation was not necessary. Additionally, giving an incentive bonus to only one group of offenders could have caused resentment among other inmates. Planners worried that inmates would delay or purposely fail the G.E.D. exam in order to obtain the incentive in the community. Therefore, the community incentive was not mentioned to offenders in prison, and it was decided to allow offenders who completed a G.E.D. in prison an opportunity to receive the incentive bonus if they participated in life skills for 30 days in the community. Six offenders participated in life skills after receiving a G.E.D. in the institution, and all received the stipend.

Chapter Five

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM PROGRAM POPULATION

5.1 SELECTION PROCEDURES

5.1.1 Inmates Targeted

The 3R pilot program targeted only a portion of the potentially eligible offenders in the criminal justice system. This was done to test the efficacy of the program and work through any implementation problems prior to recommending expansion. A second phase of the program was later implemented targeting probationers and parolees who did not participate in the program while in prison.

The criteria imposed for selecting inmates to participate in the first phase of the pilot program were: 1) parole plan to Bexar county (or small neighboring counties Guadalupe or Comal); 2) Educational Achievement score (EA) greater than or equal to 6.0; and 3) Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) eligible. Each criterion is discussed in detail below. An estimate in the reduction in the targeted population due to the adopted criteria is also presented.

5.1.2 Institutional Selection Criteria

- Parole plan to Bexar County - Since the pilot program was located in Bexar county, inmates participating in the program needed to have a proposed¹ (preferably verified²) parole plan to Bexar county. Approximately 4.4% of the admissions to TDCJ in 1990 were from the San Antonio MSA.

- Educational Achievement Score (EA) greater than or equal to 6.0³ - This criteria was based on the goal of providing education services to offenders who may not otherwise benefit from these services. Offenders under supervision of the state who have an EA below 6.0 are required to participate in an education program. Approximately 58% of the offenders admitted to TDCJ-ID have an EA of 6.0 or above.
- Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) eligible - The funding source for the 3R program was JTPA, and eligibility requirements are established by the U.S. Department of Labor. These requirements are that the recipient be a U.S. citizen, registered for the draft if applicable, and economically disadvantaged. Additionally, the offender must agree to participate. Most offenders (approximately 97%) met the criteria for JTPA eligibility by virtue of their unemployment while incarcerated.

Within the criteria for selection into the 3R program there were institutional constraints that affected selection. These "default" criteria are inherent in the operational structure of the correctional system. The major default criteria are listed below⁴.

- 3R units were for males only. The 3R program criteria did not exclude females (who participated in the field).

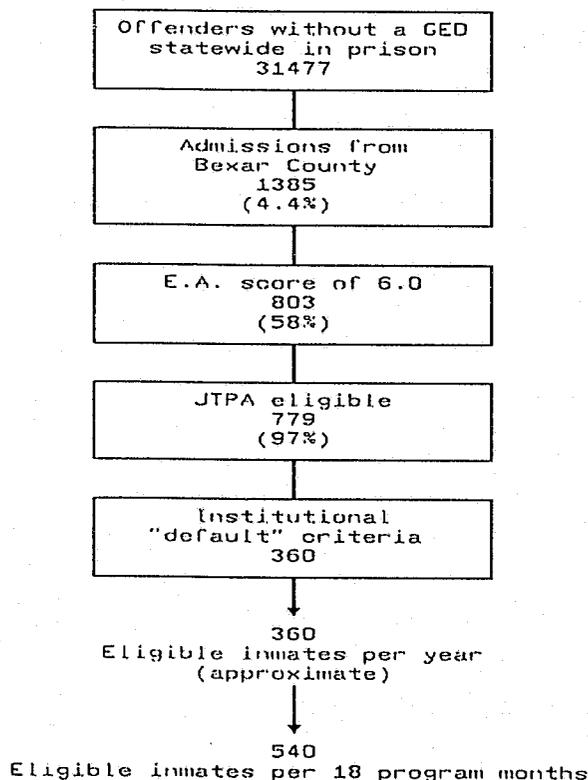
Approximately 92.% of the TDCJ-ID admissions in FY 1990 were males.

- Classification status of inmates. Classification is important in terms of public safety, inmate safety, and management and staffing of the units. When a request for transfer is made, the classification committee must approve transfer based primarily upon the custody classification of the inmate, and other issues such as gang affiliation, physical and/or mental problems, and availability of appropriate housing. Custody level is related to disciplinary history and institutional performance, so the more severe the classification, the less likely an inmate will be transferred. In the first 4 months of operation, the majority of inmates requested for transfer (57%) to 3R were denied due to custody and management

considerations. However, as the program progressed, fewer inmates were denied transfer.

In order to determine any long term positive impact of this program on variables such as recidivism and educational attainment, there must be sufficient numbers of offenders served. Indeed the need for education services was one reason the Bexar county area was chosen as the pilot site. Chart 5 summarizes the number of offenders targeted, after considering the impact of each specific and default criterion. The success of the selection procedures used to place inmates into the 3R program will be evaluated in Chapter 6.

Chart 5. Inmates Targeted by the Pilot Reading to Reduce Recidivism Program.



5.1.3 Field Offenders Targeted

The original intent of the program was for offenders to participate while on parole as a continuation of the program from the prison component. Planners anticipated that the program would eventually expand to allow participation of probationers and parolees who did not begin in prison. The programmatic expansion occurred in September of 1990, due to the need to capture enough participants in the community component of the program.

The basic criteria for participation were the same as those for institutional 3R, except the custody and housing requirements did not pertain in the community (this allowed participation by females). Additionally, many parolees and/or probationers did not have a current EA score, so the EA grade equivalent was assessed by the officer based on self reports from the offenders. Offenders were tested upon entry into the program.

Charts 6 and 7 provide a breakdown of the potentially eligible probationers and parolees from the Bexar county area, based on estimates of education levels. *These estimates do not consider the percentage of offenders ineligible based on JTPA criteria or competing supervision requirements⁵.*

As shown in Chart 6, approximately 3,848 probationers from Bexar County are in need of a diploma⁶, 1700 of whom were added to the probation caseload in FY 1990. Chart 7 shows approximately 1,354 parolees⁷ are in need of a diploma, 934 of

whom were released in FY 1990. The subset of new additions is presented since supervision requirements change after offenders have been on parole or probation for six months. Offenders who have been added to the caseload within the year may be easier to place in the program than offenders who have been under supervision for a longer period of time⁸.

Chart 6. Probationers Targeted by 3R

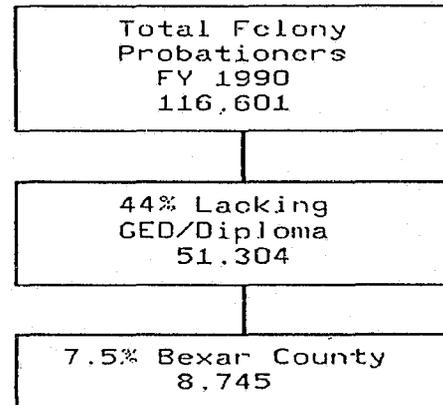
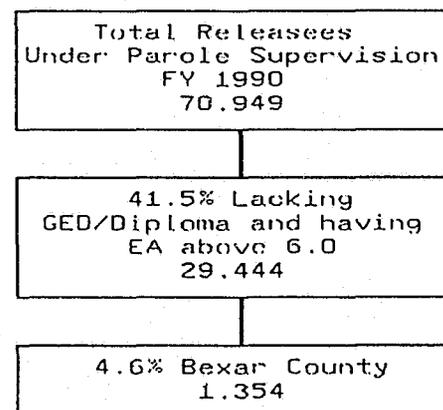


Chart 7. Parolees Targeted by 3R



5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAM POPULATION

5.2.1 Overview

The analyses below demonstrate the challenges that the 3R population of offenders presents to adult educators, particularly through their:

- Lifestyle
- Past Failures
- Criminal Record

Data for the analyses were obtained from extensive self-report questionnaires administered confidentially to 3R participants; and from criminal history record information of all offenders who participated in the 3R program.

A total of 281 offenders participated in 3R: 209 in prison, 44 of whom continued on parole; and 72 on parole only. The majority of the participants were male (97%) and Hispanic (69%). Blacks composed 22% of the participants, and 9% were White.

The median Intelligence Quotient (IQ) for 3R offenders was 92, and the highest grade completed was 9th grade. The median age of the 3R participants was 26. These statistics are comparable to the general TDCJ-ID population.

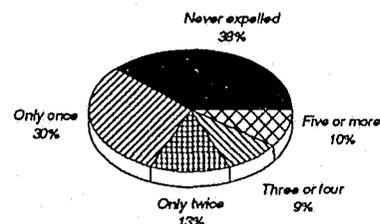
5.2.2 Lifestyle

The lifestyle adopted by most offenders is not conducive to the effort-reward mentality needed to perceive education, as valuable.

School Behavior. An exhaustive study recently conducted in Illinois on education

and crime noted that many students who ultimately drop out of school pose significant behavior problems for teachers and administrators prior to dropping out (ICJIA, 1991). In Texas, 49% of the students who gave a reason for dropping out in the 1989-1990 school year did so due to poor attendance (42%), expulsion (6%) or drug use (1%) (TEA, 1991). As Chart 8 shows, the percentage of 3R participants who were suspended from school is high (62%), with a majority of those offenders suspended at least twice, usually for fighting. Additionally, most offenders (60%) reported having poor or irregular attendance when they were in school.

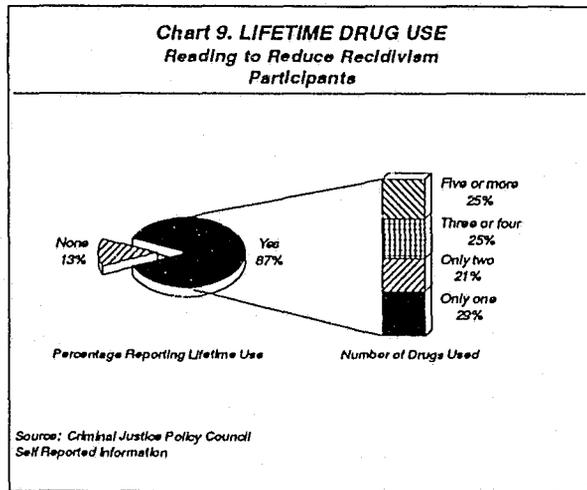
Chart 8. SCHOOL EXPULSIONS
Reading to Reduce Recidivism
Participants



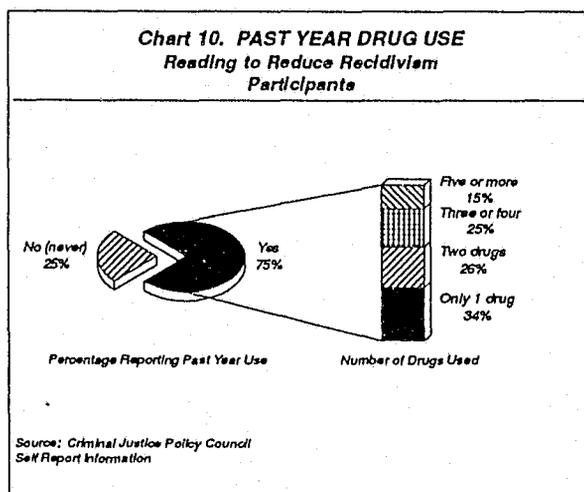
Source: Criminal Justice Policy Council
Self Report Information

In addition to poor school behavior, offenders report a lifestyle of significant drug use. Charts 9 and 10 show the lifetime and recent drug use of 3R participants. Overall, 87% of the participants reported

using drugs at some point in their life, 50% of whom used at least three different drugs.

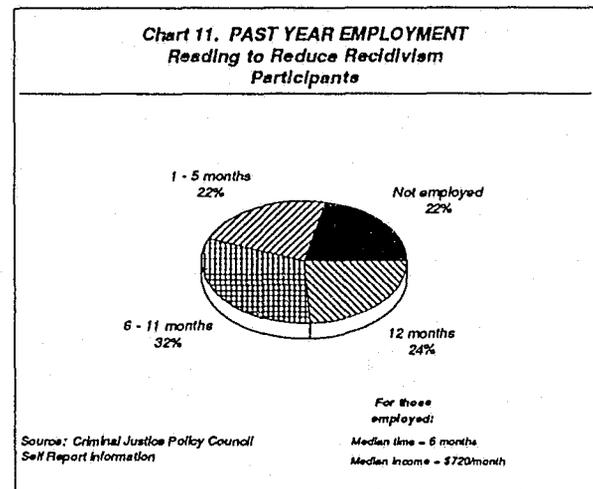


In the year prior to incarceration, 75% of the participants reported using drugs, 40% of whom used at least three different drugs. Additionally 62% of those offenders using drugs within the past year had used drugs within 24 hours prior to crime commission (45% of the total sample of 3R participants).

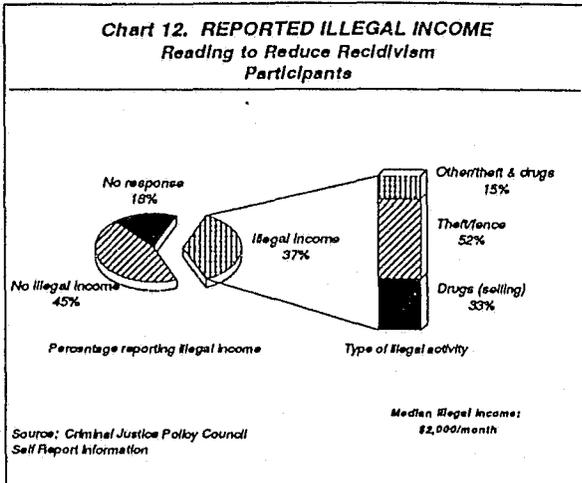


Employment History. The most startling statistics concern these offenders'

reports on their employment and income. As shown in Chart 11, only 24% of the 3R participants were employed full time during the past year prior to their incarceration; with 32% employed for 6 to 11 months; 22% employed for less than 6 months; and 22% totally unemployed. Those employed earned, on the median, \$720.⁰⁰ per month; and those employed for the full year prior to incarceration earned \$802.⁰⁰/month, on the median.



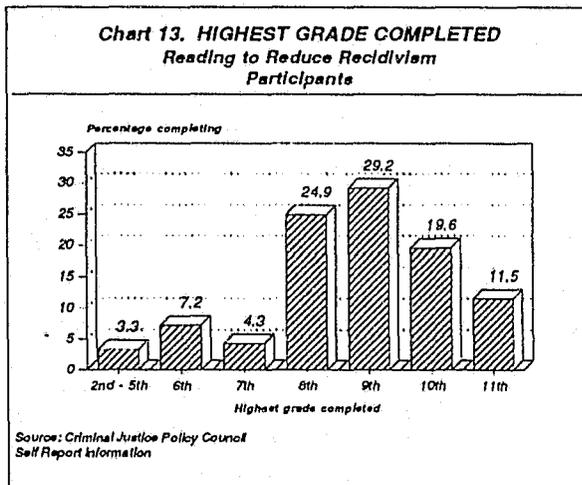
Many offenders (37%) admitted having income from illegal activities (see Chart 12). The most common activities were theft and fencing of stolen goods, followed by selling drugs. Offenders earned an average of \$2000 monthly from illegal sources. A recent survey conducted by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse corroborated this finding, with 37% of inmates surveyed reporting illegal incomes of \$1600/month or more (Fredlund, Spence, Maxwell, & Kavinsky, 1990).



5.2.3 Past School Failures

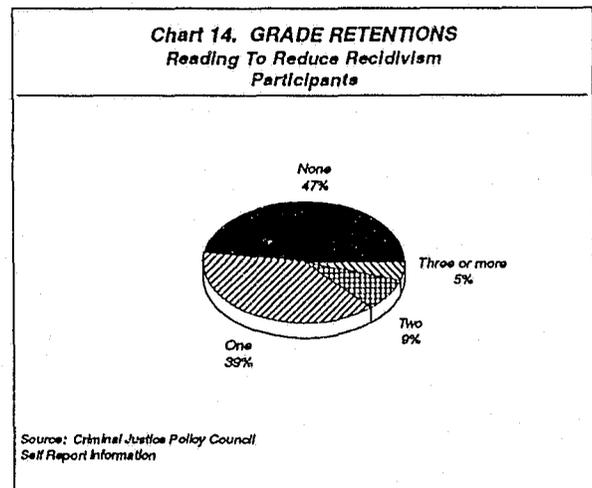
The majority of adult offenders have failed to gain the knowledge, attitudes, and values education is expected to impart.

Self-reported information collected from all participants who began the program while in prison shows that the majority of participants, approximately 70%, completed at best the 9th grade (See Chart 13).



Approximately half of the offenders cited the need to support themselves or their family as their primary reason for dropping out of school: very few reported dropping out because they were bored or didn't care about school. In all likelihood, the need to support themselves or others has not diminished, and in fact may have worsened in adulthood.

School retentions for 3R offenders were very high. As shown in Chart 14, 53% had failed at least one grade, with 5% failing three or more grades.



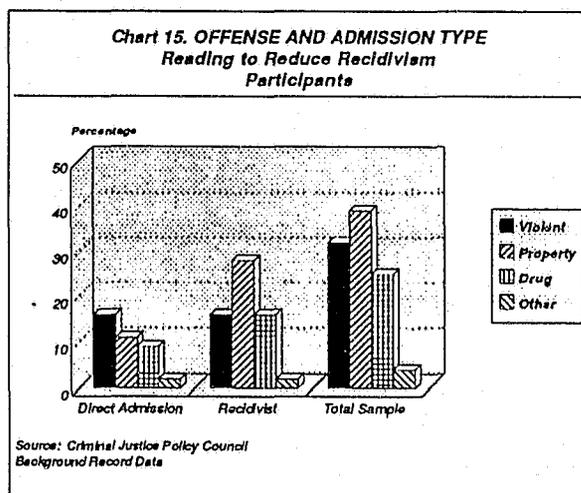
5.2.4 Criminal Record

Texas currently has over 20,000 felony offenders under state supervision, approximately 180,000 of whom are supervised in the community.

Instant Offense and TDCJ-ID Admission. Examination of the type of crime committed by the 3R participants (institutional and field) shows that 39% of the offenders were serving time for a

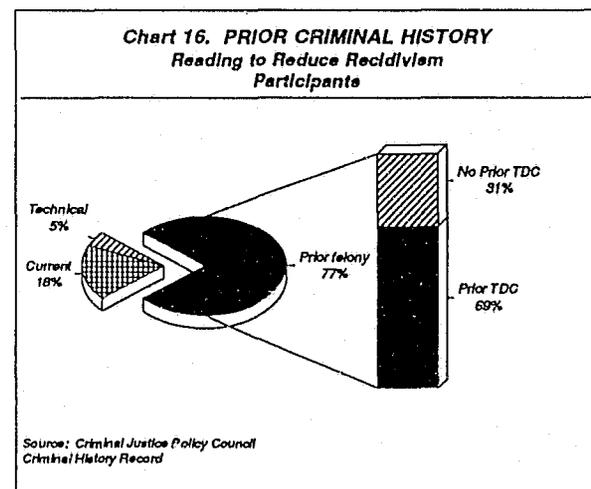
property offense, followed by 32% serving time for a violent offense and 25% for a drug offense.

Chart 15 shows the breakdown for offense category by type of admission. Direct admissions accounted for 38% of the participant admissions, typically for more violent crimes and more crimes carrying mandatory calendar time requirements due to the aggravating nature of the crime (i.e. "3G"); whereas recidivists had a higher proportion of property offenses. Recidivists were considered offenders under probation or parole supervision at the time they were sentenced for the current offense. Of the 62% of offenders who were recidivists, 61% were returning to TDCJ-ID as parole violators; 39% entering as probation revocations. Approximately 71% of the offenders admitted for violations of probation were revoked due to commission of a new crime; 91% of the parole violators were returned for a new crime.



A large majority of 3R participants were serving time in TDCJ-ID for multiple offenses (71%). Of those with multiple offenses, 47% were sentenced for more than one case during their last sentencing event. Of this group of offenders with multiple "instant" offenses, 85% had multiple offenses that were part of separate criminal episodes. In other words, they committed crimes at different points in time, but all were sentenced in one event⁹.

Prior Criminal History. Approximately 77% of the 3R participants had received a felony conviction prior to the conviction for which they were currently placed in prison (See Chart 16). Of this group, 69% had at least one prior prison stay. A small percentage (5%) had no prior felony conviction but were placed in TDCJ-ID as a result of a technical probation violation.



Self-reported information collected from the 3R participants revealed extensive criminal backgrounds for the majority of

offenders: 22% reported committing¹⁰ at least 50 drug related crimes; and 23% reported committing at least 10 property crimes. The reported age of first arrest was

16 (median), and 48% reported a juvenile conviction, with 22% having served time in a juvenile correctional facility.

SUMMARY: Characteristics of Program Population

PARTICIPANTS

Institution: 209 Placed; 196 Eligible
Community: 72 Placed

Ethnicity/Race: 69% Hispanic; 22% Black; 9% White

Median IQ: 92 Median Age: 26

LIFESTYLE

- 62% reported at least one suspension from school
- 60% reported poor or irregular school attendance
- 87% reported using drugs at some point in their lifetime
- 75% reported using drugs within the past year prior to incarceration; 62% of whom used within 24 hours of crime commission
- 37% reported illegal income, averaging \$500 weekly

PAST FAILURES

- A large majority of the 3R participants (70%) completed at best the 9th grade
- 53% of the participants failed at least one grade

CRIMINAL RECORD

- The majority of 3R participants (62%) entered prison as probation or parole revocations
- 77% had a prior felony record; 69% of whom had served time in prison

Notes: Chapter 5

¹ A proposed parole plan is developed when an inmate is within three years of parole eligibility. For the proposed plan, an inmate states his/her proposed living arrangements upon parole, including where and with whom he will reside.

² Verified parole plan - When an inmate is within one year of release, parole officers in the area he/she has chosen to reside verify the parole plan. Interviews with friends or relatives are conducted, and the inmate's residence plan is confirmed. If a relative with whom the offender wants to reside disagrees, an alternative plan is formed.

³ Educational Achievement can be determined through several tests measuring progress. The Test of Adult Basic Education was used for this program (and is the instrument used for JTPA programs and by TDCJ-ID). A score of 6.0 or above is the grade equivalent score, meaning the student places at or above the 6th grade level. The grade equivalent score is determined from the interval level scale score.

⁴ The institutional placement procedures and default criteria are discussed fully in the Management Information Report: Formal Selection Procedures published by the CJPC in September of 1990.

⁵ Competing supervision requirements (drug treatment, employment) often significantly reduce the number of probationers /parolees who can be "reasonably expected" to participate.

⁶ No estimate for EA level is available for probationers. Based on the differences in high school education between the probationers and parolees a larger proportion of probationers than parolees should have an EA above 6.0. Approximately 61% of parolees have an EA of 6.0 or above (TDCJ-ID, 1991).

⁷ Includes parole releasees, parole-in-absentia, and mandatory supervision releasees.

⁸ Offenders who have been under supervision successfully for longer than one year may be on an annual report status, and therefore not as easy to place in an education program.

⁹ Separate criminal episodes are those criminal offenses committed on different days, or, if on the same day, at different addresses and at times distinctly different and unrelated to each other. For example, if an offender commits a robbery at a convenience store, and in the process robs two customers (in addition to the store cash register) this offender would most likely be charged with 3 counts of robbery, but have committed these crimes in only one criminal episode. In contrast, if an offender robs three separate convenience stores on the same day, he or she may be charged with 3 counts of robbery, but each count stems from a different criminal episode. This distinction can be important in terms of severity of criminal conduct, and sentencing decisions.

¹⁰ Offenders were asked how many crimes they had committed as an adult - including any for which they were not arrested - to the best of their recollection.

Chapter Six

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM: Analysis of Program Implementation and Operation

Was the program implementation conducted to ensure the planned structure and methodology were followed and the goals were met?

6.1 SITE SELECTION

6.1.1 Institution

The institutions selected to house the computer classrooms of the 3R program were the Wynne Unit and the Clemens Unit. The Wynne Unit is a 2,300 bed farming and industrial unit housing all custody levels, located in Huntsville. The Clemens Unit is a 825 bed farming unit housing all custody levels, located in Brazoria county, (South of Houston). The primary reasons these units were chosen were:

- Location: The administrative offices of Windham School System are located on the Wynne Farm Unit. It was thought that housing the pilot program on this unit would make it accessible to administrative staff, allowing easier problem solving as the need arose.
- Population: The Clemens Unit is located in the southern region, and many inmates from southern areas (such as Bexar county) are classified to those units. Additionally, many units with offenders who seemingly met the criteria established for 3R (discussed in Chapter 2) were participating in other programs, such as an employment services program, Project RIO. It was thought that units without a large number of offenders participating in other programs would be the best place to implement a pilot program.

- Custody: Both units house all custody levels; therefore serving more offenders.

The criteria used to determine which units should house the program were sound. In the case of a pilot program it is especially important that administrative staff be available to solve problems that arise in implementation, and that the program effects not be "diluted" by inmates participation in other programs.

However, there were two unit specific issues that proved problematic for the placement of inmates into the 3R program at the Wynne or Clemens unit. One issue involves composition of the population placed on the unit; the second involves the function of the units. These unit specific issues are not unique to only the Wynne and Clemens Units.

- Population: One aspect of the population of the units resulted in denial of transfer requests for the Clemens unit. This unit was chosen partly because a large number of inmates from the South Texas region are placed in that unit. Large numbers of inmates from the same geographic region increases the

probability of gang activity in the unit (and thus some inmates were denied transfer). This was the case in several instances at the Clemens Unit, but overall was not a significant problem.

Another aspect of the population involved inmates declining to participate, based on two factors.

- 1) In several cases inmates who had agreed to participate and were subsequently transferred to the Clemens Unit declined to participate after arrival. In these cases, it is believed that these inmates interacted with their hometown peer group members who devalued the program.
 - 2) Many inmates, especially from the Hilltop and Beto II units (both relatively small, minimum/medium custody units) did not want to transfer to the Wynne Unit, a larger unit with a reputation of having more "hardened" offenders.
- Type of unit: Both Clemens and Wynne are large farming units, and inmates may be required to work on the farm, or at the Wynne Unit in a textile, metal, or other labor-intensive factory. A number of inmates who originally agreed to participate in the program subsequently chose not to because they preferred the work situation at their unit.

6.1.2 Community

San Antonio (Bexar county) was selected as the site for the follow-up (transitional services) component of the 3R program. Two private vendors in San Antonio were chosen to deliver the educational services - Bexar County Opportunities and Industrialization Center (BCOIC) and Project Ser. Both sites were

located close to district parole offices. The reasons Bexar county was chosen were:

- Need for services: Bexar county sends approximately 4 to 5% of the inmates admitted to TDCJ-ID every year, receiving the same number of parolees (approximately) in return. In addition, while the drop-out rate for Bexar county is equivalent to the state total at 27.4%, its largest school district, the San Antonio Independent School District, has one of the highest drop-out rates in Texas, at 45.9%. The drop-out rate for all school districts in Bexar county ranges from 6.99% to 47.5%.
- Proximity to Austin: As with the institutional choice of the Wynne Unit, it was thought that the San Antonio area would be more accessible to program planners from Austin.
- Cooperative parole office: Parole administrators in Region III (San Antonio and surrounding counties) encourage new programs and provide the environment necessary to adapt and make changes in a pilot project.

The private vendors, BCOIC and Project Ser, were chosen by staff from the Service Delivery Area administrative office (City of San Antonio, Department of Economic and Employability Development or COSA/DEED). These vendors were chosen based on:

- Location: Both vendors were in close proximity to the two parole offices in San Antonio. It was believed that this would provide easy access to the program for parolees.
- Experience: Both vendors had extensive experience with hard to serve clients, including offenders. Additionally, it was required that both

vendors hire teachers who were TEA certified to work with adults.

Selection of Bexar County as the pilot site for the 3R program resulted in a higher proportion of offenders of Hispanic origin participating in the program than is found in the general prison population (69% vs. 22%). The disproportionate representation of Hispanics is correlated with the need for services discussed above, as Hispanics have one of the highest school dropout rates of any racial/ethnic group in the state of Texas. Several ways that this disproportion might affect success are:

- While offenders participating in this program have an educational achievement level of 6.0 and are "functionally literate", approximately half report learning English as a second language (Spanish was the primary language). In comparison, only 28% of

a random sample of offenders participating in Windham education programs¹ learned English as a second language.

- Inhalant use is disproportionately high among poor Hispanics. Twenty-six percent of the 3R participants reported having used inhalants at some point in their lives; 7% at a level significant enough to result in severe brain damage (100 times or more). In contrast, only 10% of the comparison sample of Windham School students had used inhalants; 1% had used inhalants 100 times or more.

The possibility of intervening factors such as those discussed above were taken into account in the design of this evaluation. For this reason, offenders participating in 3R are compared to a group of similar offenders from the San Antonio area on outcome measures.

6.2 TARGETING THE POPULATION

6.2.1 Institutional Placement Procedures

One important criterion that rehabilitation and treatment programs must meet if recidivism, and ultimately crowding, are to be reduced, is serving large numbers of offenders. The Reading to Reduce Recidivism program served 209 offenders in the institution over a period of 18 months (mid January 1990 to mid July 1991, since the program ended in August of 1991), and 281 offenders total.

In order to effectively serve the eligible offenders, procedures had to identify eligible offenders and expedite transfer to a 3R unit. Several approaches were originally tried to identify eligible inmates in the institution². The first approach tried was to identify eligible offenders based on a verified parole plan to Bexar county. This approach proved unsuccessful because most offenders had paroled by the time the entire eligibility process was completed and transfer to a 3R unit was approved.

To counter this problem, the approach was modified by the 3R Administrative Counselor by using only a proposed parole plan to Bexar (or surrounding) counties as the initial screening criterion, and in conjunction, recruiting inmates directly from the units. This selection procedure involves the following steps:

Step 1. Inmates with a proposed or verified parole plan to Bexar County were identified. List of inmates with these plans were compiled in two separate offices: the Regional Parole Selection Section Offices of the TDCJ-ID (proposed plans) and the PPD, Region III, San Antonio Parole Supervisor's Office (verified plans).

Step 2. Notification of eligible inmates was forwarded to the office of the 3R Counselor, TDCJ-ID Windham School System (WSS). After the 3R Counselor received the lists of inmates, the next step involved checking whether they had a high school diploma or G.E.D., and if their EA score was 6.0 or above.

Step 3. At this point, all inmates who were identified as eligible were requested for transfer to either Wynne Unit or Clemens Unit. This request was made through the office of the Vice Chairman of the State Classification Committee. Inmates were checked for possible gang membership, disciplinary status, whether they had identified enemies on the unit, and the availability of proper housing and custody.

Prior to transfer to a 3R unit, if time was available, an inmate was screened by a WSS or 3R Counselor. The 3R program was explained to the inmate, and his consent

to participate was solicited. At the same time, the inmate was queried to ascertain JTPA eligibility.

In addition to the procedure described above, inmates were recruited directly from each unit. A brochure was developed by the 3R Administrative Counselor describing the program in detail. This brochure was sent to all units and distributed to inmates. Windham School System counselors also distributed this brochure and questionnaires to inmates during orientation or group counseling sessions. Inmates were requested to complete the questionnaire covering basic eligibility criteria, and return it to the Administrative Counselor via truck mail.

Number Placed. The total number of offenders who were placed into the program in the institution through these combined procedures, 209, is summarized by quarter in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the identification and selection procedures did not result in placement of adequate numbers of offenders. The program continued over 18 months in the institution (mid January 1990 to the end of August 1991), and in that time operated above 90% capacity during only three months, averaging 73% capacity. *Given sufficient time and number of offenders in need of an education, the placement of so few offenders must be attributed to poor selection techniques.*

Table 1. Quarterly Placement and Removal of Institutional 3R Participants
January 1990 to August 1991

Month/ Quarter	Number Placed	Number Removed	Number Ineligible	Net	% of Capacity
1/90-3/90	66	7	1	58	76.32%
4/90-6/90	37	17	1	77	101.32%
7/90-9/90	15	23	1	68	89.47%
10/90-12/90	31	30	2	67	88.16%
1/91-3/91	19	29	5	52	68.42%
4/90-6/91	34	30	3	53	69.74%
July-91	7	9	0	51	67.11%
Aug-91	0	51	0	0	0.00%
Total	209	196	13		

Capacity = 76 (This is only the capacity with each student having a dedicated computer)

Efficiency of Placement. In terms of efficiency of placement, Table 1 shows the number of offenders placed into 3R who were enrolled and began the program in prison; but were dropped due to ineligibility (13 inmates; 6.2% overall). This occurred partly due to offenders being deemed JTPA ineligible after placement (5), or discovery that an offender had already received a G.E.D. (8). Given the difficulty in ascertaining whether an offender has a G.E.D. (several of the eight offenders who had received G.E.D. certificates did so in the 1970's), and the detail required for certifying JTPA eligibility, this percentage is reasonable. The total number of inmates correctly placed into the 3R program in the institution was 196.

Additionally, 14 offenders, once placed, paroled to a county other than Bexar, and thus could not participate in the community portion of 3R. Nine of these offenders had a

change in parole plan after placement, a hazard of choosing offenders with only a proposed, rather than verified parole plan.

A total of 24 offenders with parole plans to Tarrant or El Paso Counties were placed into the 3R program, based on the expectation that community programs would begin in those counties. Only 5 of these offenders paroled prior to August 31, 1991, so this was essentially not a problem.

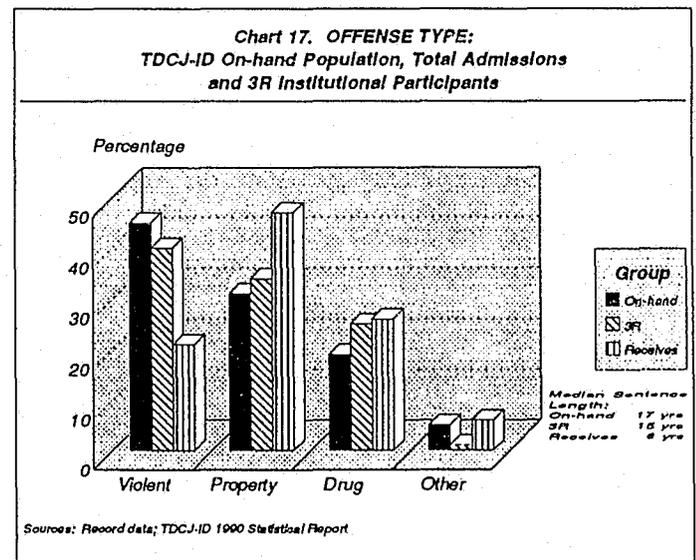
Type of Offenders Placed. The median sentence length for institutional 3R participants was 15 years, (including four life sentences). This partially explains the failure to place adequate numbers of inmates into the program: the selection procedures did not maximize the largest group of potential participants, inmates serving 5 years or less (See Appendix D). Inmates serving 5 years or less paroled before they could be placed in the program. The selection procedures failed to maximize

inmates serving 5 years or less even after selection requirements were relaxed to a proposed (rather than verified) parole plan to Bexar county. Identification and selection needed to occur early in the diagnostic process to maximize the targeted population.

Failure to maximize the targeted offenders affected the number of inmates placed and the type of inmates placed. Examination of the admission characteristics of 3R participants revealed a pattern similar to the on-hand³ population of TDCJ-ID inmates: admission for primarily violent, property, and drug offenses (see Chart 17), and a median sentence length (15 yrs) comparable to the on-hand population, (17 yrs) (TDCJ-ID, 1991). The admission characteristics of institutional 3R participants are in contrast to the admission offense patterns for all offenders received in prison in 1990. Property offenses are the most frequent admissions offense for the total prison receives, and the median sentence length is 6 years. Therefore, the 3R program did not meet the goal of serving those offenders who spent little time in prison and needed a program that continued in the community.

Recently, many researchers and policy makers have emphasized the need to target programs to offenders who can be served in the community without substantial risk to public safety (Petersilia, Turner, Kahan, & Peterson, 1985). These offenders are primarily serving short sentences for

property or drug crimes, and have served time in a penitentiary only once before (if at all). Ultimately, these "low safety risk" offenders have a high risk to recidivate (based on type of crime, i.e. property or drug), given no intervention. *Intervention was one goal of the 3R program:* providing offenders serving relatively short sentences for property or drug crimes with an educational credential and benefits to reduce their recidivism potential, and ultimately reduce recidivism. *This outcome cannot be measured, since the goal of serving these offenders was never met.*



Management Information Report:
Formal Selection Procedures. One planner, early in the development of the 3R program, expressed the fear that program outcome would be distorted by lack of sufficient numbers of offenders needed to accurately determine outcome. The Criminal Justice Policy Council presented to the Department

of Commerce and 3R Council a Management Information Report in September of 1990, detailing the problem of inadequate placement of offenders and recommending changes in the placement procedures. A meeting with members of the 3R Council, including staff from the Governor's Office, CJD, TDCJ-ID Windham School and Classification, was conducted to discuss the problem and consider alternate selection procedures. A selection plan was proposed and decided upon, but never implemented. The alternate procedure focused on early identification of eligible inmates, during the diagnostic/classification process. In this way, more offenders who served short stays could be placed into the program.

This procedure would have required close cooperation between several departments within the Institutional Division of TDCJ to collect and share the information necessary for early identification: Classification, Windham Schools, and Data Processing. The level of cooperation needed to implement the alternate procedure never materialized because WSS never approached the data processing division to begin the process. Implementation of this procedure for early identification of inmates eligible for a program would have been beneficial to the system as a whole, not just the 3R program. *Since this procedure was never implemented, maximization of the targeted population was never achieved by this program.*

6.2.2 Field Placement Procedures

Insufficient numbers of 3R participants in the institution resulted in a very slow start for the community component of 3R. Therefore, the 3R Council decided in the summer of 1990 to allow direct placement of parolees and probationers into the community component. The first referrals began participation in September of 1990.

Offenders who had a requirement for adult basic education or who were interested in earning a G.E.D. were referred by their parole officer to the community site. However, many offenders have several conditions on their parole plan, including supervision level, drug/alcohol or mental health treatment, employment, and other requirements and restrictions. Prior to referring an offender, the conditions were reviewed in order to determine if participation was a reasonable expectation, given all other parole requirements. This determination was made by the parole officer, based on his or her judgement of the offender's needs and capabilities. The parole officers and supervisors in the San Antonio area estimate that roughly 10% of new parolees are capable of meeting all their requirements and participating in an education program upon their release. This is equivalent to approximately 94 parolees per year in the San Antonio area (934 new parolees were added in FY 1990).

When a determination was made that a parolee could participate and needed the

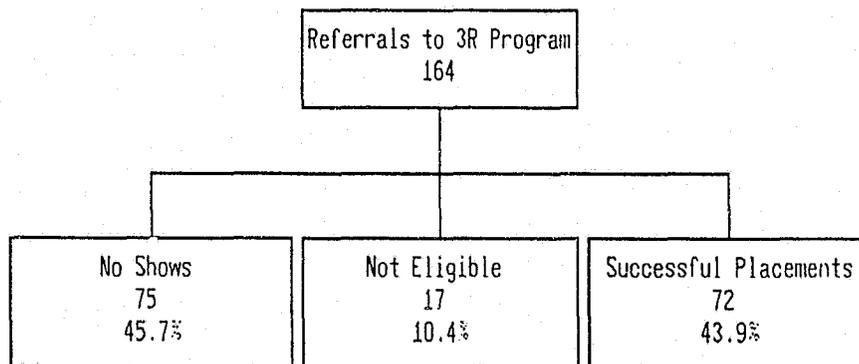
services, the parole officer completed a referral form that was distributed to the 3R site, the district and regional parole offices, and the CJPC. To assure the highest possible placement, the parole supervisors developed a follow-up system to determine the number of referrals⁴. They charged each unit supervisor with a referral quota for the month, and encouraged parole officers to refer participants. There are 10 units in the San Antonio parole offices, and each unit was expected to produce 3 referrals a month. A tracking chart showing number of referrals and their source was maintained and reviewed monthly.

Each field referral was assessed by the 3R staff before entering the program. Parolees had to meet the eligibility requirements: EA approximately 6.0 or above; JTPA eligibility requirements; and lack of a high school diploma or G.E.D.

Chart 18 shows the number of parolees referred to and successfully placed in the

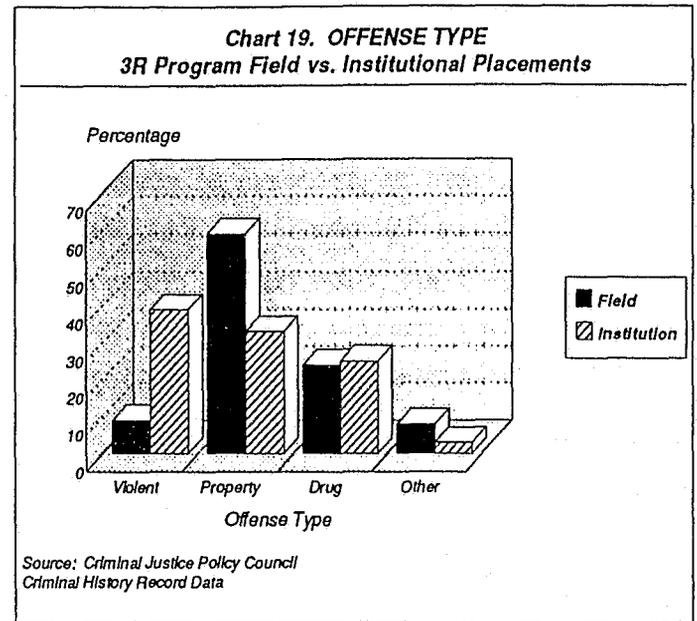
program. Direct placement of parolees increased the number of participants by 34%. Placement of parolees has different constraints than placement of inmates. The principal limiting factor for inmate placement was time - placing the inmate before he paroled. The predominant limiting factor in the field was the motivation of the parolee to participate. Also, a much larger percentage of parolees were ineligible based on the JTPA eligibility criteria. JTPA eligibility is a problem for parolees and probationers across the state. Consistently, offenders are barred from participating in programs based on factors such as household income or worse, failure to provide necessary documentation (often because it is lost). In many cases, adult offenders live with other adult relatives, resulting in a household income that is falsely inflated, and technically too high by JTPA standards.

Chart 18. Reading to Reduce Recidivism Program
Community Placement



The parole offices did not meet the quotas (3 referrals/unit/month) established as guidelines for referring parolees to the program. However, this was due in large part to the criteria of "reasonable expectation" to participate. New parolees face many needs: drug treatment; employment; interpersonal relationships; then education. After the program had ended, the parole team reported that the feedback provided on the number of referrals would have forced a change in the procedures. The focus had been on referring new parolees. They suggested future procedures concentrate on parolees who had been in the community for 6 months or more, and were successfully adjusting. Perhaps these offenders (with a lower risk to recidivate after 1 year on parole) would realize greater improvements in educational achievement and use the benefits of education to attain goals.

Type of Offenders Placed. Placement of parolees directly from the field did change the composition of the type of offenders placed in the 3R program. For example, the median sentence length for participants placed in the field was 7 years, as compared to 15 years for institutional participants. Chart 19 shows the comparisons between field placements and institutional placements in terms of offense of record.



As shown, the most common type of offenses for field placements were property (59%); followed by drug offenses (24%) and violent offenses (9%). In contrast, the majority of institutional placements were serving time for violent offenses, followed by property, then drug offenses.

The type of offenders placed into the program in the field were very different than those placed in the institution. The goal of the program was to provide less violent, less experienced offenders (as exemplified by the field placements) who would serve little time in the prison, with a program that could begin in prison and continue in the community. Instead, two very distinct and dissimilar groups of offenders were served in the program: violent, experienced offenders similar to the on-hand population were served in the institution; and property and drug offenders with less experience

("high recidivism / low safety" risk) were served in the parole component.

Probation placement. The 3R program was open to placement of probationers as well as parolees in the community component. However, the probation office in San Antonio was in the process of implementing a computer lab for offenders

with less than a sixth grade EA at the same time the 3R program was being implemented. Therefore, less emphasis was placed on 3R, and only two probationers were referred. Both offenders were female, and both received a G.E.D. through the 3R program.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

6.3.1 Administrative Structure

The administrative structure of the 3R program consisted of a council of managerial level staff members from the agencies involved in the 3R program: Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division; Texas Department of Commerce; Texas Education Agency; and Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Institutional Division (Windham School District) and Pardons and Paroles Division. The "3R Council" was chaired by the representative from the Governor's office. The task of the council was to plan much of the program, guide it through the implementation phase, and coordinate expansion of the program. The council made decisions regarding software programs (see Chapter 2), vendor selection, site selection, program staff needed, and minimum qualifications for staff members. Various members of the council assisted the Department of Commerce in negotiating contracts, based on their particular expertise.

The 3R council met often in the planning stages of the program. After the program started, the council met less frequently. The last council meeting occurred in October of 1990, to discuss problems uncovered in the placement of inmates into the program. A change in employment for the chair of the 3R council in October of 1990, and election of a new governor in November of 1990, effectively dissolved the 3R council.

One charge of the council was to guide the program through initial implementation and expansion in the second program year to one or more community sites. The council met several times in the spring and summer of 1990 to plan expansion to Tarrant (Ft. Worth) and El Paso counties. Due to time constraints, contractual problems, and changes in Department of Commerce personnel and gubernatorial administration, this expansion never occurred.

6.3.2 Program Staff

The Reading to Reduce Recidivism program originally had a total of 15 funded full-time positions: 6 teachers; 4 teacher aides; and 5 counselors. In September of 1990 a clerk was hired, bringing the total to 16 full-time positions, in addition to the administrative support and processing functions performed by staff from the participating agencies.

The classrooms in the Wynne and Clemens Units each had a teacher, teacher aide, and counselor staffing the program. In addition, a counselor was housed at the Windham School District administrative offices, as was the clerk. Each classroom in the community had two teachers, a teacher aide, and a counselor on site.

Teaching Staff. The importance of the teacher in a computer-assisted classroom setting was emphasized in chapter four. In practice, each teacher employed a slightly different style of instructing with computers, and working with adult students. Some teachers spent more time instructing students individually, while others let the students use the computer with assistance as needed. For instance, the teacher working in the Wynne Unit reported that he varied the time spent on the computer based on individual student needs, and especially attention spans. No teacher turnover occurred in the institution, but each community site experienced turnover: one due to resignation and one to termination. The teacher aide positions also experienced

turnover, and remained unfilled at two sites for several months.

Counseling Staff. The 3R counselors were responsible for the majority of the administrative tasks for the program. The counselors provided orientation, placed the students in the 3R program, completed the initial JTPA applications, and provided guidance. They were instrumental in the data collection efforts for the evaluation, since they administered several questionnaires for the evaluation both in prison and in the community.

In the community, the counselor's job required more attention since offenders had to function and cope outside the prison environment. Support and guidance was based on the individual needs of the offenders. Counselors had access to information regarding offender needs through a referral form (see Appendix E) completed on each participant by his or her parole officer, indicating specific problem areas. The counselors also arranged transportation when necessary, developed individualized schedules, assisted with student testing, and assisted participants in job search efforts.

The 3R counselors in the community had the additional responsibility of completing all the JTPA eligibility certification for parolees. This task was aided by the parole officers, who assisted the offenders in compiling required documentation (such as a birth certificate,

social security number, and selective service number if male).

The 3R counselor housed at the Windham administrative offices performed a different function from those at each program site. This counselor, the administrative counselor, was responsible for several critical tasks, including: (1) locating, identifying, certifying (JTPA), and coordinating placement of offenders into the program in the institution; (2) maintaining enrollment in the institution; (3) notifying parole staff members of an offender's placement (4) transferring student records to the community 3R sites; and (5) maintaining monthly and weekly reports for the program and for the evaluation team. These duties required the administrative counselor to be in contact with numerous staff members from TDCJ and other agencies, including program administrators. In September of 1990, a clerk was hired to assist the Administrative Counselor in these tasks.

6.3.3 Agency Responsibilities

In addition to the specific staff positions funded by the 3R program, many staff members from TDCJ-ID and PPD provided operational support. Staff members from the Institutional Division included the Vice Chair of the State Classification Committee, who was responsible for approving all transfers of 3R participants to the Wynne or Clemens Units; and staff from the Regional Parole Selection Section of the Classification department, who were

responsible for providing lists of offenders with proposed parole plans to Bexar county. These staff members provided input to the 3R council and 3R administrative counselor on the procedures for placement and selection into the program. Administrators from TDCJ-ID Windham School System (WSS) provided oversight for the program in the institution. The WSS administrators contributed significantly to the development of the program through the 3R Council.

Staff at both offices of the San Antonio Pardons and Paroles regional headquarters assumed 3R related responsibilities in conjunction with their regular workload. The regional supervisor, parole supervisors, unit supervisors and parole officers all played a role in the planning and implementation of community 3R. One parole officer from each office carried the majority of the participants who paroled from 3R on their caseloads. When the program was expanded to include parole referrals, however, the participant remained with his or her original parole officer.

The regional supervisor provided overall support and input on programmatic issues. Parole supervisors oversaw the 3R program functions within their offices and monitored staff to ensure consistency of program related operations. Parole supervisors were the liaisons between the administrative counselor, the research team, and their staff. The parole supervisors provided support for the placement and selection of inmate participants, compiling

lists of offenders with verified parole plans to the San Antonio area for the 3R administrative counselor at Windham. The supervisors tracked new participants using monthly reports generated by the administrative counselor and coordinated data collection efforts within their offices.

The unit supervisors monitored the designated 3R parole officers and all the parole officers with a 3R participant on their caseload. The parole officers were charged with maintaining a rapport with the 3R program, making lab visits, and completing all 3R paperwork. They were active participants in the program and provided counseling and support services in order to encourage and increase participation. All parole officers in the San Antonio region were responsible for referral of parolees to the program. All staff members also worked with the research team to develop data collection instruments used for the evaluation.

The "council" of planners and mid-level managers from participating agencies was key to getting a complex program such as 3R in operation. One tenet of program management in a bureaucratic system is that all responsible parties have a roughly equivalent stake in the decisions. The 3R council allowed this, and functioned successfully by using the combined knowledge and expertise of the individual members to problem-solve before actual implementation. However, as the program

was implemented several problems with the management structure became apparent:

1. *Lack of a designated "manager" of the program paralyzed many of the staff members who attempted to work through problems among themselves but were thwarted within their own agency's hierarchy, or within the management structure of the program.*

Case in point: The formal selection procedures used to place inmates into the 3R program. The 3R administrative counselor worked to change the selection procedures, attempting to recruit as many participants as possible. Every decision and idea that could have produced more participants required approval and cooperation of staff members in other departments within TDCJ. The alternate selection procedure discussed and agreed upon by the 3R council is one example of a procedure which required cooperation of staff from several departments in TDCJ-ID, and never occurred.

Case in point: General administration of the 3R program. One aspect of the 3R program considered very negative by the WSS administrators and staff was the amount of paperwork required for a JTPA funded program, and the lack of support from the funding agency (Texas Department of Commerce). On several occasions the 3R administrative counselor was given different, and opposing, instructions on procedures and documentation needed to verify JTPA eligibility.

Both examples demonstrate the need for a designated program coordinator or manager, who has the authority to make program decisions, and mediate any difficulties and problems with miscommunication, or "turf battles" which

will occur in a program involving numerous agencies and departments.

- The design of the 3R Council did not provide an infrastructure for the administration of the program to continue given changes in leadership.* In addition to the lack of a designated "coordinator" or director, the leadership of the Council could not withstand changes. Additionally, the structure of the Council was ineffective in pushing for necessary program changes, such as the alternate selection procedures suggested for placing inmates into the 3R program. The change in the gubernatorial administration, and the departure of the chair of the 3R council, left the program floundering until it ended. The chair of the council, with the power of the Office of the Governor, had been able to finalize decisions and work with each agency to ensure cooperation. Without an infrastructure to support necessary changes within the Council, and without a program manager or a leader, there

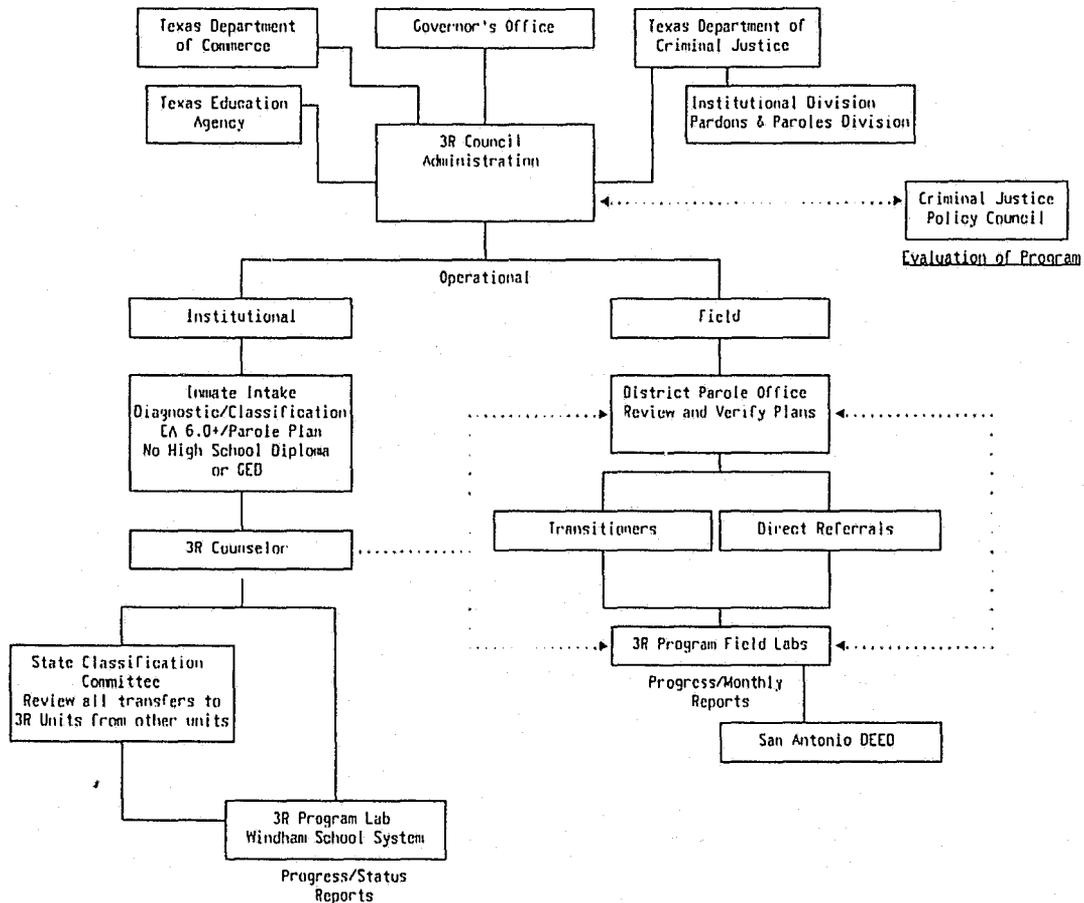
was no push to keep the program alive nor anyone to make decisions regarding the program. The other members of the 3R council were mid-level managers who could not generate the support needed to keep the program operating and did not feel authorized to make program decisions. In effect, a disincentive to keep the program going was created, since there was no longer a push from the Governor's Office, and continuation of the program required large amounts of time and effort on the part of the council members and agencies involved in the program. The only real support to keep the program alive came from the TDCJ-Pardons and Paroles Division, the parole supervision section headquarters (Austin) and the regional office in San Antonio. The PPD supporters were enthusiastic about the program not only because of its success in terms of parolees attendance and G.E.D. completion (discussed later in this chapter), but also because there are so few programs strictly for parolees.

6.4 COORDINATION, COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION FLOW

Chart 20 details the number of agencies involved in the implementation of the 3R program. The number of separate agencies involved, combined with the complexity of the criminal justice system, required that effective, efficient communication among and within the various agencies be established and maintained. The evaluation

component added a strand to the communication lines necessary for gathering programmatic information. The nature of working with the offender population, whether in the institution or on parole, meant frequent changes affecting offender status in the program.

Chart 20. Reading to Reduce Recidivism Information Flow



As Chart 20 demonstrates, the information flow for the 3R program is quite complex. Many of the problems detailed in the previous sections - selection and placement of inmates; lack of support for the program; and lack of a coordinator for the program - can be understood when noting the lack of feedback between the administration and operation of the program.

Case in point: Placement of substantial numbers of inmates paroling to Tarrant or El Paso counties to the 3R program. Poor communication between program

administration and program staff resulted in the placement of 24 inmates in the program who were paroling to Tarrant or El Paso counties, in anticipation of those communities receiving funding for 3R classrooms. This was caused, in large part, by poor communication among the members of the 3R council, and the disintegration of the council in wake of the departure of the chair and the change in gubernatorial administration.

The program was designed anticipating feedback between staff and council, since there were council representatives from each

participating agency. However, the structure and management of the agencies involved effectively discouraged open communication and feedback.

Case in point: Inmate transfer to the 3R program. In the first four months of the 3R program approximately 57% of the inmates requested for transfer were denied. The 3R Administrative Counselor was reluctant to discuss this problem with the staff member responsible for approving program transfers, the Vice Chair of the State Classification Committee. **The reason:** Established bureaucratic hierarchy. Fortunately, the SCC Vice Chair initiated communication with the 3R Administrative Counselor. **The result:** Fewer denials based on better screening procedures prior to requesting transfer.

Case in point: Inmate record transfer. Originally, inmate records from 3R prison participation were sent to the 3R Administrative Counselor from the units, from there the records were sent to parole administrators in Austin, who forwarded these to the San Antonio parole office; and to the City of San Antonio Department of Economic and Employability Development, where the records were forwarded to the community sites. Needless to say, the sites often had an offender in class for several weeks before his records were

received. This procedure was later changed, so that the 3R Administrative Counselor communicated directly with the local parole office and the local sites.

Effective and efficient communication and information flow developed in the community, between the parole offices and the field sites. Each parole office in San Antonio had an orientation for the 3R classroom staff, discussing the role of the parole officer, and the needs and characteristics of parolees. Parole officers completed a referral form for each 3R participant, whether a new referral to 3R, or an institutional 3R participant continuing in the community. In turn, the 3R counselors and teachers submitted monthly progress reports to the parole officers, documenting the attendance, progress, and any special needs of the participants.

The communication and information flow from the institution to the community eventually improved. However, direct transfer of progress and student status reports remained slow, due to failure of the use of electronic transfer, discussed below.

6.5 USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

A tenet of the 3R program was that the use of computer-assisted instruction would provide a means of instructing adult offenders, and also a means of tracking the progress of these offenders regardless of setting. All information about an offender's

original assessment, progress, and test scores could be stored in a management system accessible only to staff members. Members of the 3R council were able to provide input as to the design of the management system, since the Josten's

INVEST software package was in final stages of development as the program was beginning (See Appendix F for demographic information included in management tracking system).

For the information transfer to occur as planned, modem lines had to be installed at all the sites. A modem line requires a separate, dedicated telephone line, which was problematic in the prisons, where security needs dictate that all telephone lines go through the central switchboard. In the event that security is compromised in the prison, a dedicated line would allow management no control over the telephone line. Procedures were followed to obtain approval for these lines, and approval was granted.

However, the electronic transfer of information via modem never occurred. The reason: Josten's INVEST software did not have the technology to utilize the modem until the program was nearing completion⁵. The information transfer capabilities were, in fact, one factor in choosing the Josten's software package. The Josten's Corporation supplied all sites with fax machines to allow information transfer, until the technical problems with modem transfer could be resolved. However, it was not practical to send all the management system information via telefax. *Therefore, the goal of electronic information transfer promised by the use of computer assisted instruction was never realized.*

SUMMARY: READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Program Implementation and Operation

Implementation and Operation. Was the program implementation conducted to ensure the planned structure and methodology were followed and the goals were met?

- The institutional placement procedures failed to maximize the targeted population of non-violent offenders with limited criminal experience who would serve a short time in prison, resulting in:
 - Low numbers of eligible participants placed in the institution in general (196 in more than 19 program months)
 - Low numbers of offenders paroling from the program in the institution to participate in the community
 - An institutional participant population similar to on-hand inmates: primarily violent, experienced offenders, with a higher proportion of 3G offenders (22%) and longer sentences (median 15 years)
- The field placement procedures resulted in 72 successful placements in more than 10 program months
 - Field participants (direct placements) were serving sentences for property (59%) and drug (24%) offenses, and had a median sentence length of 7 years.
- The management structure of the 3R Council allowed initial program complexities to be solved through interactive use of agency resources; however, lack of a designated manager or director paralyzed the program during implementation
 - Complex information flow was often hampered by institutionalized communication patterns among and between agencies
 - Change in gubernatorial administration resulted in a loss of authority for the 3R Council
- The electronic information transfer promised by the use of CAI was never realized due to technical software problems

Notes: Chapter 6

¹ A random sample of approximately 200 offenders participating in Windham School basic education and G.E.D. preparatory programs were tested and interviewed for a related project. This sample of inmates met all the requirements for 3R participation except the parole plan to Bexar County.

² See CJPC, Management Information Report: Formal Selection Procedures, Sept. 1990.

³ The on-hand population is comprised of all offenders serving time in TDCJ-ID. The on-hand population, therefore, is disproportionately composed of offenders serving longer sentences, and more violent offenders. For more information see: Fabelo, T. (1988). *The hardening of the prison population under the custody of the Texas Department of Corrections. Research Analysis Number 1*. Criminal Justice Policy Council: Austin, Texas.

⁴ The follow-up system was devised solely to monitor referrals made by each parole unit, to determine the appropriate number of referrals for each unit. The initial guideline was set at 3 referrals per unit each month. This was to be reviewed after approximately one year; however, this follow-up never occurred due to program end.

⁵ The technology is now in place to allow modem transfer.

Chapter Seven

EVALUATION OF PROGRAM METHODOLOGY

Methodology. Was the methodology and structure of the program implemented as designed?

7.1 PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The 3R program was designed to ease the transition from prison to community for offenders by providing continuing educational services. The result of system fragmentation and crowding was often a lack of time for offenders to complete an education program. As originally planned, the program was to have an institutional component and a community component, to be filled solely by offenders who paroled after participating in the institution. Computer-assisted technology was to be the means for providing transitional services. Program planners hypothesized that the combination of intensive exposure to the 3R program in the institution; inherent novelty of computer-based learning; and ease of information transfer provided by the established communication lines would enhance the interest and motivation of the offenders, ultimately increasing participation on parole.

When the program ended in August of 1991, there were 43 participants remaining in the program in the institution. A number of these participants were interviewed, and all expressed disappointment over the

program termination. The inmates felt that the 3R program was helpful to them, although some felt that their time was wasted without being able to complete the program. In the words of one institutional participant,

"I think if y'all want people to learn there should be more 3R program."

Participation by inmates paroling to the community and offenders' responses to questions posed regarding the components of the program can be reviewed as an indication of the effectiveness of the program methodology. The offenders' responses are taken from questionnaires administered to most of the offenders who completed the program, and many who remained in the program until it ended.

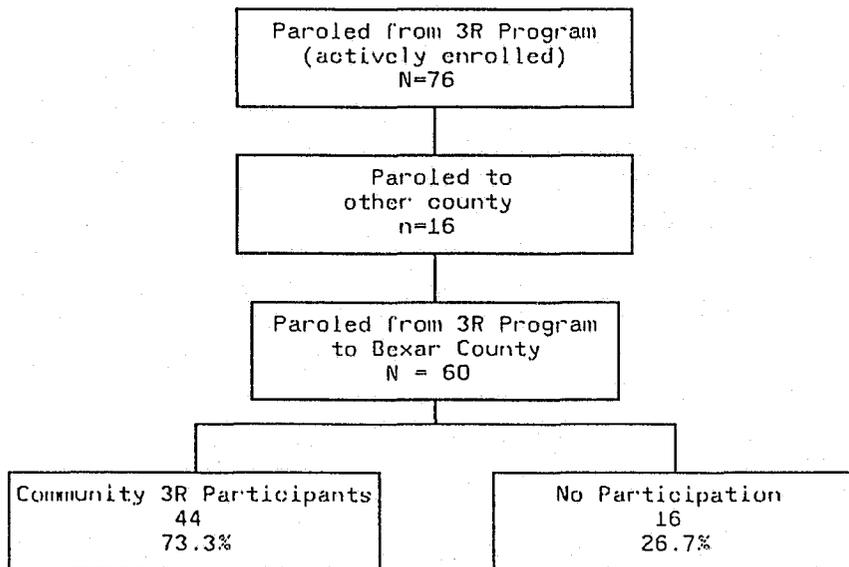
However, those participants who did parole from the program were enthusiastic about the continuation of the program in the community. Institutional participants who paroled and participated in 3R (transitioners) were asked specifically about problems with transitioning, such as obstacles to

enrollment in the community. One of the principal obstacles to attendance was the need to find a job and work. Many of the participants were required to attend substance abuse programs; therefore lack of time and a low priority for education was a problem for many participants.

The numbers bear out both the severe lack of participants paroling from the program and the positive response to the transitional services provided by the program for those who did parole. Chart 21 diagrams the flow of the institutional 3R participants. As is shown, only 76 paroled from the program in more than 19 program

months. Note that 16 offenders (21% of the total paroled) could not participate due to paroling to a different county. Approximately 73% of the 60 participants who paroled from the program without a G.E.D. attended 3R in the community. This percentage is high, compared to program attendance of 15 - 20% of parolees (Eisenberg, 1991). A high participation rate could be an indication of the success of the program in enhancing the motivation and interest of offenders. These offenders spent a median of 5.5 months in the program in prison, compared to 4 months for those who did not participate while on parole.

Chart 21. Reading to Reduce Recidivism
Transitional Component: Participation of Parolees



7.2 CLASS STRUCTURE

The 3R classes in the institution met Monday through Friday for 3 hours each day. A class was held in the morning and the afternoon, each class having a maximum capacity of 19 students. This structure differs from Windham School System in two ways. (1) WSS students who have an E.A. of 6.0 or above often have scheduled class only one day/week, rather than five. (2) There is only one computer classroom in each unit; therefore, WSS students work at the computer only once weekly or twice monthly, depending on the schedule.

The schedule for the 3R students did provide "intensive exposure" to the program. However, there are two important points that should be noted regarding class structure.

1. The 3 hour class time in reality ranges from 2.25 to 2.75 hours. While the class schedule is technically three hours, operation within a prison may cut down on that time. Inmates may be held back for count, or be delayed in arriving at class from a work assignment.
2. Not all time in class is "computer time." The amount of time an offender might spend on the computer varied according to the teacher's assessment of the student's needs attention span. Teachers working with the 3R program, as well as other Windham School District teachers, reported that working only at the computer for long periods of time becomes boring for offenders. When offenders use a computer once a week or less, they are not as proficient, and thus spend considerable time learning and relearning the computer. WSS teachers reported that inmates who participate in the regular adult basic

education program become frustrated working with computers as a result of the lack of proficiency. The 3R teachers note that CAI seems most effective when used interactively in a teaching setting.

Several inmates who requested to drop from the program reported doing so because the class schedule (5 days/week) was too intense. These inmates were aware that most inmates with an E.A. of 6.0 or above attended classes only one day a week. However, only a few inmates complained about the intense class schedule. Most inmates who complained initially ultimately enjoyed the unique nature of the computer-assisted instruction and later did not mind the class schedule.

The "classes" in the community were structured around the offender. While the original intention was for the classrooms to remain open 60 hours per week, this was not practical, nor cost effective, given the small number of participants. The classrooms were open every day until approximately 4 p.m.; and late on Tuesday and Wednesday nights (until 8 or 9 p.m.). If a student wanted to come in on a Saturday, he or she could notify the teachers and arrangements would be made to open the classrooms. Inconvenient class times are a significant problem for many offender education programs in the community, so every effort was made to allow offenders ample time to continue their education.

7.3 CURRICULUM

The curriculum used in the 3R program was essentially the same as that delivered to all adult inmates preparing for a G.E.D. in Windham School District - except it is delivered via computer. The curriculum (described in chapter two) covers basic skills, including language experience and life skills, and contains a specific G.E.D. preparatory component. One criteria considered when choosing software was the applicability of the lessons and topics to adult concerns and interests. Specifically the curriculum (and software): should not patronize or "talk down" to adult offenders; should prepare them for the G.E.D. examination; and should help them develop (with the teacher's assistance) thinking and problem-solving skills.

The basic curriculum has been used by WSS for a number of years, with changes and updates as needed. The software program was carefully chosen to reflect the adult education curriculum, and the 3R teachers were very pleased with the program. The majority of the participants who completed the program reported that they found the specific G.E.D. preparatory component to be the most useful to them. Several also commented on the mathematics component, noting that it was helpful after years of frustration with math. The number of G.E.D. certificates obtained suggests that it is an effective curriculum. However, of the 10 institutional participants who

requested to drop out of the program, several considered the curriculum "too easy" or "geared for younger inmates."

The true test of the curriculum is in what the offenders are learning - whether just to pass a G.E.D. exam, or skills that will enable them to continually improve and ultimately not recidivate. Reduction in recidivism will be discussed in the outcome component. Most offenders who completed the program reported that what they learned most was there were more opportunities for them since they had completed 3R. A number of offenders reported that they learned to communicate better, and many wrote that they learned to believe in themselves and to set and reach goals.

For all the apparent benefits of CAI, it could only be effective if offenders could adapt to learning from a computer. For instance, something seemingly mundane such as typing ability, or fear of the computer as an "advanced" tool, or even the lack of personal interaction could result in extreme frustration for the offender. Offenders were asked specifically about the computer-assisted component of the program. The majority of offenders who completed the program reported that the thing they liked most about the 3R program was learning how to use a computer or learning their lessons on a computer. In fact, of the 10 inmates who dropped out of the program (by request) while in prison,

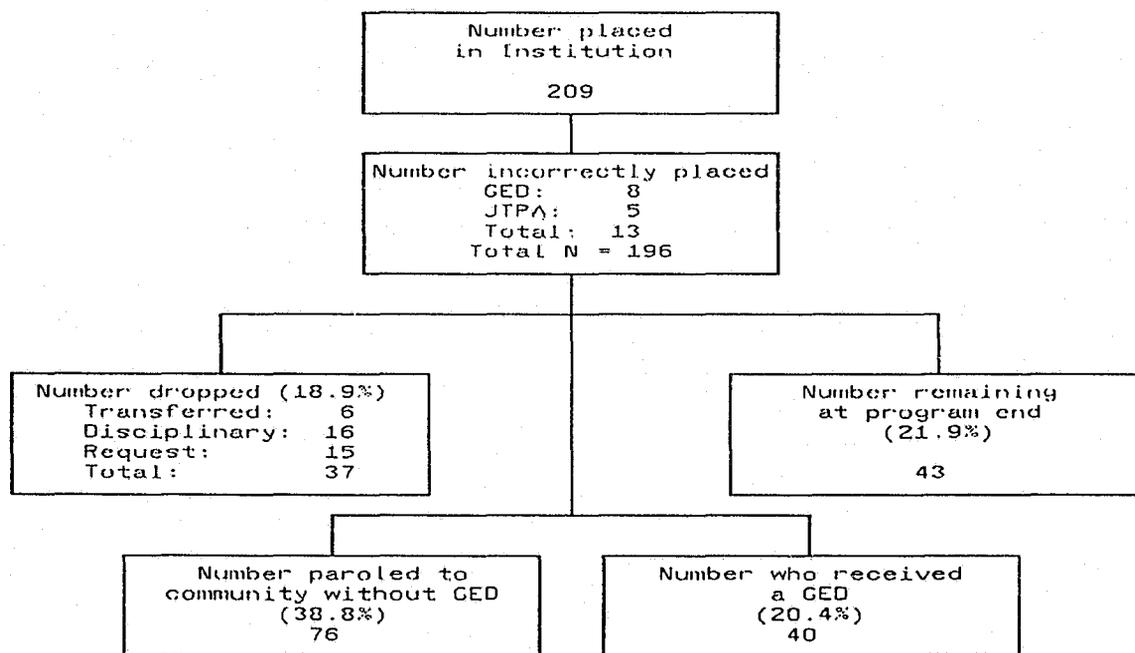
only one reported having any problems using the computer. The others enjoyed

using the computer, and felt they had benefitted from their lessons.

7.4 PROGRAM COMPLETION AND G.E.D. SUCCESS

(1) Institutional Component

Chart 22. Reading to Reduce Recidivism Institutional Participants



G.E.D. Success. Chart 22 above details the outcome for the inmates placed into the institutional component of the 3R program. A total of 40 offenders received a G.E.D. while participating in the institution, 19% of those placed in the institution. When considering the inmates correctly placed in the program, (removing the JTPA ineligible inmates, and those with a G.E.D.) almost 21% of the inmates participating in the institutional component of 3R received a

G.E.D.¹ The average time spent in the program for those inmates who received a G.E.D. was approximately 6.4 months. This was longer than the average time spent in the program by either those inmates who paroled while still enrolled (4.8 months) or those remaining in the program on August 31, 1991 (3.5 months).

The G.E.D. pass rate, defined as the percentage of offenders taking the G.E.D. who pass the exam, was 36% for

institutional 3R participants in FY 1991. The G.E.D. pass rate for all offenders participating in WSS programs in FY 1991 was 43% (WSS, 1992). Comparisons for those offenders taking the G.E.D. exam for the first time show substantial differences: 49% of the WSS inmates taking the G.E.D. for the first time passed the exam, compared to 28% of the institutional 3R participants. However, 36% of the WSS inmates who were retaking the G.E.D. exam passed, compared to 41% of the 3R inmates. The G.E.D. testing policy of the WSS is that offenders are tested when they reach the EA grade equivalent of 7.0. This cutoff point is actually very low to ensure a high passing rate. However, WSS administrators believe that offenders should be tested as soon as possible to maximize numbers of offenders receiving a G.E.D.² Many offenders in the 3R program or in the regular WSS programs took the exam before receiving any significant education (if any). A higher retesting passing rate by the 3R participants, especially given their low first testing passing rate, could be an indication that they are learning via this mode of instructional delivery. Since these offenders are otherwise hard to serve, perhaps such students adapt well to this mode of instructional delivery.

Dropped from Program. A total of 37 offenders were dropped from the 3R program in the institution. Of those, 6 were dropped due to transfer to another unit

(reason for transfer unknown), and 16 were dropped for disciplinary reasons (one inmate managed to enter the fileserver). Also, 15 participants dropped on their own request and interviews were conducted in order to determine the reasons for their decision. The schedule was a problem for several participants who felt that class 5 days a week was excessive and preferred attending either once a week, or having shorter class periods. As noted earlier, the intensity of the program (5 days/week, 3hrs/day) was much higher than is typical for inmates with an EA above 6.0. A few participants disagreed with the teachers policies, and one felt that the curricula needed to be more advanced. The reasons cited are common in any classroom situation especially one geared toward adults.

Remaining in Program. A total of 43 inmates were enrolled in the 3R program when funding for the program ended in August of 1991. Interviews were conducted on several of the remaining participants, and all expressed disappointment at the program's end; some asked whether it was still possible to attend in the community.

Paroled to Community. There were 76 offenders who paroled prior to receiving a G.E.D. Of these, 14 paroled to places other than Bexar County, and could not participate in the 3R program, and one went to a pre-parole facility. A total of 61 paroled to Bexar County. The outcome for these "transitional" offenders is discussed below.

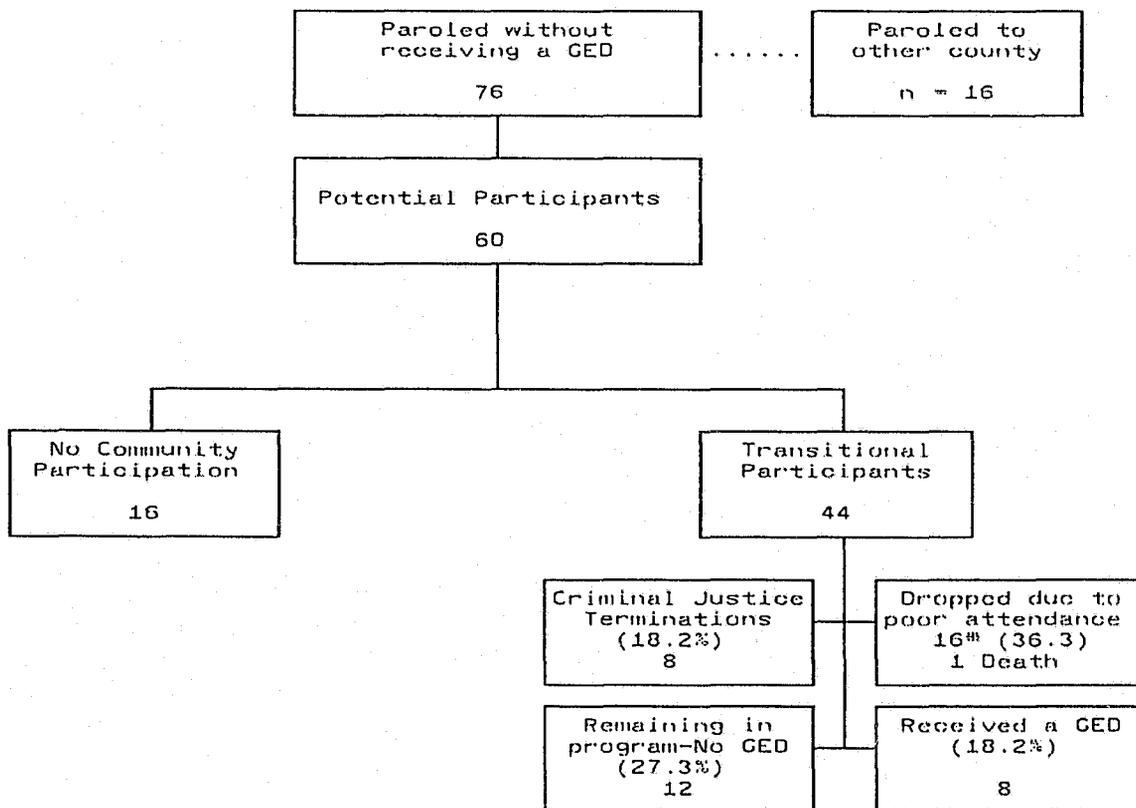
(2) Transitional Component

Chart 23 details the outcomes for offenders who paroled from the institutional component of the 3R program. A total of 6 inmates who paroled with a G.E.D. (of 16 who paroled with a G.E.D. prior to August 31, 1991) participated in the community component of the program (for "life skills" training).

Participation. A total of 44 of the 60 participants who paroled from Bexar County while still enrolled in the 3R program participated in the community component. Of these participants, 8 received a G.E.D.,

and 12 were actively participating in the program when it ended. Fully one-third of the 60 institutional participants who paroled to Bexar county successfully completed the program or were continuing participation when the program ended (August 31, 1991). The percentage of participants is high for parolees, considering information obtained from participation patterns for a drug treatment program for parolees, where only 18% of the total referrals completed the admissions process and participated in the program (Eisenberg, 1991).

Chart 23. Reading to Reduce Recidivism Transitional Participants



G.E.D. Success. For those offenders who received a G.E.D. in the community, 37.5% had passed a portion of the exam while in the institution. The median EA level of these offenders (tested upon admission into the community component) was 7.05. The total time spent in the program averaged approximately 11.7 months, with approximately 5 months in the institution and 7 months in the community.

Non-Participants. A total of 32 of the offenders who paroled while currently enrolled in the 3R program did not participate in the community. As noted earlier, 14 of these paroled to a county other

than Bexar, and thus could not participate; one was transferred to a pre-parole facility; and one had written permission not to participate (he was employed in two jobs).

To assess possible reasons for non-participation, several variables were examined for the "no-shows" including prior drug use, prior employment, and illegal income. The only meaningful difference found between "no-shows" and those who participated was that "no-shows" were slightly older (median age 29) than those successfully transitioned (median age 26). Only 16 offenders were "no-shows".

(3) Community Component

Chart 24. Reading to Reduce Recidivism Community Participants

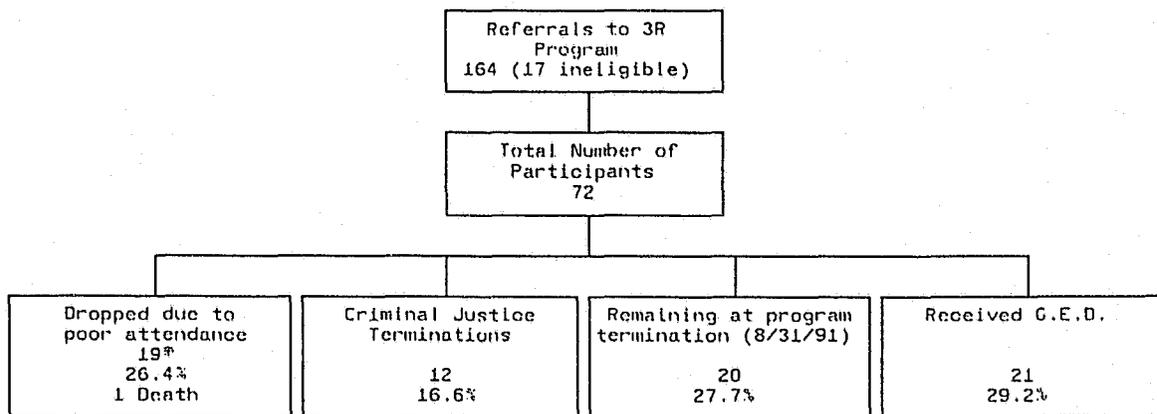


Chart 24 shows the outcome for the parolees directly referred to the 3R program. As shown, 72 (44%) of the referrals completed the admissions process and attended the program. Again, this

participation is higher than that of referrals to a drug treatment program for parolees in Houston, at 18% of the total referrals (Eisenberg, 1991)

A total of 21, or 29.2% of those directly referred, received a G.E.D. To determine how well the program met the goal of G.E.D. attainment, 3R field participants should be compared to a similar group of offenders participating in an education program. However, at the time the 3R program began, *no formal education program existed for parolees in the community*³. Therefore, the program for field referrals was very successful in meeting the goal of G.E.D. attainment, since almost 30% of the participants received a G.E.D.

The median Educational Achievement grade equivalent level (as measured by the *Test of Adult Basic Education TABE*) for parolees receiving a G.E.D. was 8.6 when they began the program. On the whole, offenders receiving a G.E.D. spent three months in the program prior to successfully receiving a G.E.D. The amount of time spent in the program prior to receiving a G.E.D. was significantly related to initial EA, with those inmates with a higher grade equivalent taking less time to receive a G.E.D. than those beginning the program with lower grade equivalent scores. The offenders remaining in the program at

termination had, on the median, been in the program 6 months and had an initial EA of 6.4 (which was higher than those who had a criminal justice termination or were dropped from the program). Given the time these offenders had remained in the program, and their initial EA level, an appropriate conclusion would be that most of them would have continued the program and received a G.E.D.

The initial EA level was significantly related to the type of program termination (terminations include successful GED; drop-out; or remaining in program). Those offenders who received a G.E.D. had significantly higher EA scores (8.7) than either the group remaining in the program (6.4) or those who dropped (5.9) or had a criminal justice termination (6.0) ($F_{(2,52)} = 10.84, p = .0001$). This finding may have programmatic implications in the type of attention students need from the teacher in a computer-assisted classroom. Since it was the "worse" students who dropped from the program, perhaps these students needed more attention from the teachers, and the better students could work more at their own pace.

SUMMARY: READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Analysis of Program Methodology

Was the methodology and structure of the program implemented as designed?

- The original program structure emphasizing the transitional element was hampered by the type of offenders placed into the program in prison: primarily violent; experienced offenders serving long sentences (median 15 years)
 - Those offenders who paroled from the program had high participation rates (58%) and were enthusiastic about continuing the program while on parole

Was the methodology and structure of the program amenable to the needs of the offenders?

This question is answered by the number of offenders who successfully completed the program, or continued participation in the program after parole.

Table 2. Participation in Reading to Reduce Recidivism: Summary

	Institutional	Transitional	Community
Total N	196	76	72
# Remaining	43	12	20
# Dropped/ Removed	37	56 (32 no participation)	31
G.E.D. certificates	40	8	21

PROGRAM GOALS

- * To provide an educational credential for offenders (i.e. a G.E.D. certificate)
 - 69 offenders earned a G.E.D., 26% of those correctly placed in the 3R program
 - 40 in the institution
 - 8 "transitional" participants
 - 21 community participants
- * To coordinate delivery of services to offenders as they make the transition from prison to the community
 - 44 offenders (58% of those paroled; 73% of those paroled to Bexar County) were successfully transitioned to the community component of 3R, and 8 earned a G.E.D.
 - Electronic transfer of information never occurred as planned, which hampered the functioning of the 3R Administrative Counselor, parole staff, and community 3R staff. These staff members had to communicate via facsimile, telephone, and mail to ensure adequate transitional services.

Notes: Chapter 7

¹ It is difficult to compare this number with any overall G.E.D. certificate completion for the Windham School System, due to the unique nature of the 3R inmates: primarily Hispanic; similar to on-hand inmates (high recidivism/high safety risk); E.A. greater than/equal to 6.0. A total of 2,761 students earned a G.E.D. at Windham School System in the 1989-1990 school year. A total of 32,031 participants were served in the various WSS academic programs including phases I, II, and III of basic education programs.

² This testing policy was developed to maximize the numbers of offenders receiving a G.E.D., since many offenders spend very little time in prison, and few community programs exist to enable offenders to receive a G.E.D.

³ Currently, the TDCJ-Pardons and Paroles Division, in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency, is formalizing education program delivery in several community sites. However, this requires much cooperation since funds for education programs are limited to current state and federal funds for adult education in Texas. A "memorandum of understanding" between TEA and TDCJ was recently developed and approved, formalizing the cooperative effort to provide continuing education for parole releasees.

Chapter 8

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM PROGRAM EVALUATION

Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND PRELIMINARY OUTCOME

- *The targeted population was not maximized in the institutional component*

- Of approximately 540 potentially eligible offenders, 196 were placed in the institutional component in more than 18 program months.
- The program in the institution operated above 90% of capacity during only 3 months, averaging 73% capacity.

One goal of the 3R program was to provide intervention for "high recidivism/low safety" risk offenders serving short sentences for property or drug crimes, by introducing the program in prison and quickly transitioning the offenders to the community component. This goal was never met. The offenders placed in the 3R program in prison have the following characteristics:

- 40% admitted for a violent offense;
- 22% admitted for a "3G" offense;
- Median sentence of 15 years, including 4 life sentences;
- 73% had a prior prison stay.

- *The targeted population was somewhat achieved in community*

- There were 164 referrals in 10 program months, of which 72 were successful program placements.

- 46% "no-shows" indicates motivation of parolees was a barrier to participation.
- The "hierarchy" of offender needs often results in secondary status for education (following drug treatment/employment).

In the community the type of offenders placed were:

- "High recidivism/low safety" risk offenders.
- 59% admitted for a property offense;
- 24% admitted for a drug offense;
- 9% admitted for a violent offense - 0 aggravated ("3G");
- 33% had a prior prison stay.

- *The 3R program had an ineffective administrative structure.*

- Lack of a designated "manager" of the program paralyzed many of the staff members who attempted to work through problems among themselves but were thwarted within their own agency's hierarchy, or within the management structure of the program.
- The design of the 3R council did not provide an infrastructure allowing continuation given changes in leadership.

- *The program was plagued by poor communication and information flow.*
 - The structure and management of the agencies involved in 3R effectively discouraged open communication and feedback:
 - Many communication problems could have been thwarted by an effective program manager.
 - The notable exception to the poor communication and feedback occurred in the community component of 3R between the parole offices and the program sites.
 - The goal of electronic transfer of information was never realized, due to technical and developmental difficulties.
- *The institutional 3R participants adjusted well to the use of computer-assisted instruction.*
 - Forty-one percent of the 3R participants "retaking" the G.E.D. exam passed the exam, compared with 36% of general Windham School participants, indicating that the program positively impacted otherwise hard-to-serve clients.
 - The majority of offenders who completed the program reported that they most liked learning how to use a computer or learning their lessons on a computer.
- *The "transitional" component of the program was successful in terms of motivating offenders to participate by providing continual education services.*
 - Seventy-three percent of the offenders who paroled to Bexar County from institutional 3R participated in the community portion of the program.
 - Eighteen percent of the offenders who participated in community 3R as "transitioners" successfully received a G.E.D. (13% of all who paroled from institutional 3R).
 - Twenty-seven percent of the offenders who participated in community 3R as "transitioners" continued participation until 3R terminated (20% of all who paroled from institutional 3R).
- *The community component of the program was highly successful in terms of continued participation and G.E.D. attainment of parolees placed in the program.*
 - Twenty-nine percent of the parolees placed in the program received a G.E.D.
 - Twenty-eight percent of the parolees placed in the program continued participation until the program terminated.
- *The results of the program outcome are distorted by offender placement*
 - Placement of so few offenders disallows definitive statements regarding success in reducing recidivism.
 - Placement of "high recidivism/high safety" risk offenders in the institution effectively prohibits comparisons between field and institutional offenders.
- *There are some promising preliminary results from transitional and field offenders.*
 - Among the institutional 3R participants who paroled to Bexar County prior to August 1991, only 1 (5%) of the offenders who continued participation in the community had returned to prison or jail, compared with 34% of the

3R institutional participants who paroled from the program but did not participate in the community (See Appendix A). These offenders had spent, on the median, 14 months on parole.

- None of the field participants who either received a G.E.D. or remained in the program until 3R

terminated had returned to prison or jail as of January 1992. These offenders had spent, on the median, 18 months on parole.

In contrast, 9% of the field control group offenders and 19% of the field participants who were dropped from the program had returned to prison or jail.

8.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS

The Reading to Reduce Recidivism program was a highly innovative education program that made use of technology offered by computer-assisted instruction to provide continual service to offenders, regardless of sanction. Prison crowding and increasing probation and parole caseloads demand that treatment programs be developed within the "continuum of sanctions." The lessons from the 3R program can help in the process of developing new, innovative, and successful treatment programs. Some of the recommendations to consider in future program development are listed below.

- * *The primary focus in the successful implementation of a program should be the following:*
 - *Definition of the population to be targeted;*
 - *Identification and development of selection, assessment, and placement procedures. For institutional programs this includes procedures for immediate identification of offenders (during the diagnostic process).*
 - *Monitoring of placement of targeted offenders and overall numbers of offenders placed;*
 - *Monitoring of characteristics of population placed, to adapt goals or re-target offenders to be placed.*
- * *Implementation of multi-agency programs requires a strong "council", with a legislative or executive mandate, to enable cohesive program planning. The council must:*
 - *Provide unique solutions to problems, combining each members (and agencies) specific expertise;*
 - *Communicate problems and successes to policy makers to allow program continuation and expansion.*
- * *A multi-agency council usually cannot function with direct authority and responsibility for program operation or implementation. Therefore, the following positions are essential:*
 - *The position of program coordinator/director, with clear authority and accountability for the program, is imperative to working through many day to day implementation problems.*
 - *Within each agency, a coordinator/contact person with some authority to respond to problems from the agency perspective should be designated.*

- * *Future policies should be derived from the information obtained from program evaluation, giving agencies the mandate to make necessary changes and successfully develop innovative correctional treatment.*
- * *Interactive "action" evaluation should be an integral part of every new program.*
 - *Documentation of the processes and procedures of implementation will benefit planning and development of other correctional programs.*
 - *Operational research will allow a program's procedures to be amended as problems are identified.*
 - *Outcome research will provide information as to the relative costs and benefits of a program, for informed policy decisions.*

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Appendix A

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM OUTCOME EVALUATION:
Preliminary Offender Comparisons

The 3R evaluation report has detailed the program outcome in terms of methodology, specifically: "How well did the program methodology meet the needs of offenders?" However, this is only one element of the outcome evaluation. Long-term evaluation of the program outcome must focus on the analysis of program effect on constructive activities, community integration, and ultimately recidivism. For the long-term outcome, the task of the evaluation team is to present as much information regarding success (or non-success) as possible to policy makers, who have the responsibility for allocating scarce resources in the best manner possible. For instance, if a program results in no significant reductions in recidivism, but there are substantial improvements in lifestyle, employment, and social adjustment for those offenders who complete a program, is it successful? This is a decision to be weighed and debated by policy makers.

The focus of this appendix is the preliminary results of the outcome in terms of criminal justice variables. Two important points should be noted.

- (1) The program that is ultimately being evaluated is the program-as-implemented, not the program that was originally planned. As originally planned, the 3R program would provide a mechanism (via computer-assisted instruction) for offenders who served a short time in prison to continue the program in the community. As discussed in Chapter 6 the institutional placement procedures failed to maximize the offenders participating in the program; and those offenders placed in the institution were primarily violent offenders serving sentences of 15 years (median). Therefore, the effect of the transitional element on criminal justice outcome - considered key to reducing recidivism of participants - cannot be evaluated, since the transitional component was essentially not implemented (only 76 offenders paroled from the program in more than 19 months).
- (2) The results presented in this appendix are primarily descriptive and preliminary. Data collection, including monthly parole progress reports, continued through December 31, 1991. After that time, parolee progress is being tracked every six months. Continued tracking of offenders will allow more time for parole success to be determined. A final analysis of outcome in terms of criminal justice and constructive social variables (such as employment) can be prepared at a later date.

OFFENDER COMPARISONS

To draw conclusions about the efficacy of the Reading to Reduce Recidivism program in improving involvement in constructive activities and reducing recidivism, participants must be compared with offenders who are as similar as possible on variables related to parole success. To obtain the most reliable samples for comparing program success, eligible participants would be randomly assigned to the treatment program (3R) or to a control group. For both ethical and practical reasons, this is often not possible in a correctional setting. In this case, the problem of selecting and placing adequate numbers of offenders in the program (discussed in the operational analysis) prohibited use of random assignment of offenders to treatment and control groups. However, offenders who were not placed in the program due to inefficient placement procedures were followed as a comparison sample. The samples to be compared for the outcome evaluation of the 3R program are discussed below.

SamplesReading to Reduce Recidivism

Participants. The 3R sample consists of all inmates and parolees who enrolled in 3R either in the institution or in the community. Chapter 5 detailed the specific characteristics of the population in terms of lifestyle, background, and criminal history.

There were a total of 281 offenders enrolled in 3R: 209 in the institution (13 of whom were later dropped as ineligible) and 72 in the community only. As noted in Chapter 6, the instant offense, admissions characteristics, and criminal experience of field participants differed considerably from institutional participants.

A total of 58% (44) of the 76 institutional 3R participants who paroled prior to August 31, 1991 participated in the 3R program in the community. The offenders who participated in the program in the institution and on parole are the "transitioners", and will be considered separately at times in the analyses. For purposes of the offender comparisons, the 3R participants will be compared to the comparison group, as well as among themselves, grouped as:

- Institutional participants, N=196 (eligible offenders);
 - Transitional participants, a subset of the institutional participants who participated in prison and in the community, N = 44; and,
- Field participants (direct parole referrals), N=72.

Comparison Group. The comparison group sample consists of offenders who met all the criteria for participation in the 3R program, but were not placed in the program. A large number of these inmates

paroled prior to being placed in the program, in the early months of the program when the community component was filled solely by participants who paroled from the institutional program. A small number of the comparison group members (20) were interviewed in the prison, with questions similar to those asked 3R participants. These inmates did not participate in 3R because they did not wish to transfer to the Wynne or Clemens Unit. They did, however, express interest in the program, and would have participated in their own or a different unit.

The following series of tables and charts shows the differences and similarities of the 3R offenders, categorized as institutional (transitioners) and field participants, and the comparison sample on variables related to possible parole success.

As shown in Table 3, the majority of offenders in all groups are Hispanic, and the median age and IQ are similar. However, the field 3R participants had a mean IQ

significantly lower than the other groups members (Mean IQ = 84; $F_{2,357}=5.4335$, $p = .005$), and the comparison group offenders are significantly older than the other group members (Mean Age = 30; $F_{2,355}=6.63$, $p = .002$).

Chart 25 shows the admissions offenses for the institutional and field 3R participants, and the comparison group of offenders. As discussed in Chapter 4, substantial differences exist between the 3R institutional and field offenders placed in the program in terms of offense of record. The comparison group of offenders is somewhat similar to both groups in terms of offense of record. As with the field participants, the most frequent type of offenses committed by comparison group offenders were property related (40%) followed by drug (34%) then violent (22%). While the order is similar to the field participants, more comparison group offenders committed violent offenses than 3R field participants (22% vs 9%).

Table 3. Demographic Comparisons: 3R Institutional (Transitional), 3R Field Participants and Comparison Offenders

N=	Institutional 196	(Transitioners) (44)	Field 72	Comparison (112)
Hispanic	67%	(77.5%)	76%	64%
Black	24%	(20%)	15%	19%
White	9%	(2.5%)	9%	17%
Median IQ	94	(92)	86 ^a	96.5
Median Age	26	(26)	23	29.8 ^a

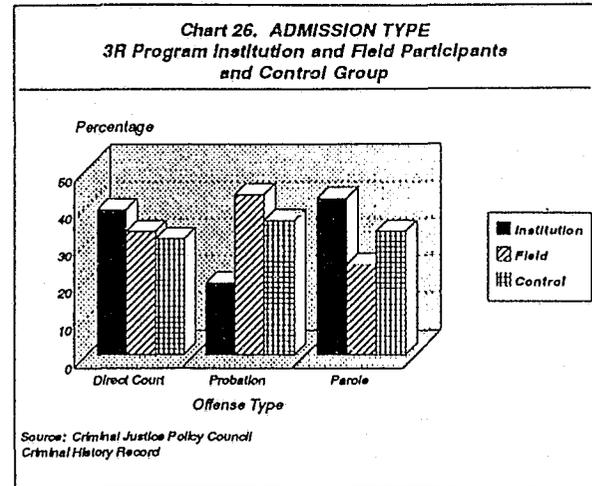
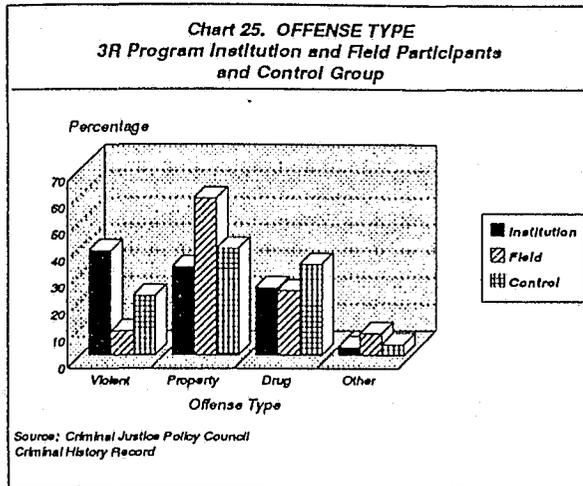


Chart 26 shows the type of admission for 3R participants and comparison group offenders. Both the comparison and the field 3R groups have a much higher proportion of offenders admitted for probation revocations than the institutional 3R participants. The differences between the institutional 3R participants and the field participants and comparison group are highlighted in Table 4.

The sentence length for institutional participants is significantly longer than the sentence lengths of the field 3R or comparison offenders ($F_{2,364} = 19.21, p=.0001$). A much larger proportion of the institutional 3R participants had a prior felony record and had served a prison sentence than the field and comparison offenders.

Table 4. Offense and Criminal History Comparisons: 3R Institutional (Transitional), 3R Field Participants, and Comparison Offenders

N=	Institutional 196	(Transitioners) (44)	Field 72	Comparison (112)
Sentence Length	15 yrs ^a	(15 yrs)	7 yrs	10 yrs
Prior Felony Record %	80%	(88%)	67%	65%
Prior Prison Stay %	(73%)* 59% of total	(86%)* (68%) of total	(50%)* 33% of total	(64%)* 42% of total

The differences between the institutional 3R participants, field participants, and comparison group underscore the ramifications of failing to maximize the targeted population of selection procedures. Therefore, any discussions of the outcome of the program in terms of reducing recidivism or increasing constructive activities must begin with the premise that the majority of 3R participants (73%) were in effect very similar to on-hand inmates: primarily violent, experienced offenders who were serving, on the median, 15 year sentences. Comparisons of program success cannot be made between the institutional and community groups, based on the significant

differences between these groups. In fact, the 3R institutional participants are difficult to compare to any group, since they have an EA higher than most regular WSS participants, and are concentrated in one geographic area. The primary comparisons, then, for later program outcome, will focus on the field and comparison offenders, and among the sub-groups of the institutional participants (i.e. those who received a G.E.D. vs. those who terminated prior to receiving a G.E.D.). Offenders will be compared on variables such as employment and mean earnings (while on parole); and criminal justice variables such as arrest, conviction, and return to prison.

PRELIMINARY OUTCOME TABLES: RETURN TO PRISON MEASURES

Table 5. Transitional 3R Participants

Type of Termination:	Institutional Participation Only	Community Participants
<u>Total N</u>	40 (excluding 16 paroled to other counties)	20
<u># returned to prison</u>	15	1
<u># incarcerated/ or county jail</u>	3	0
Total	18 (45%)	1 (5%)

Preliminary outcome measures for the 76 transitioners show that offenders in this group had spent, on the median, 14 months on parole. The breakdown of preliminary outcome for transitional participants is shown in Table 5. The transitioners are grouped based on the type of 3R program termination: institutional participation only (which includes 24 offenders who began participation in the community, but dropped), and community transitional participants, which includes those offenders who continued participation in the community until the program ended or they received a G.E.D.

The preliminary recidivism statistics for the transitional offenders shows that 45% of the offenders (from Bexar County) who effectively participated in 3R in the institution only¹ have returned to prison or

jail. Conversely, only 5% (only 1) of the successful participants (completed a G.E.D. or remained in the program until program end) have returned to prison or jail. Examination of the criminal history characteristics of these groups revealed no significant differences which would account for recidivism differences². However, the reason many of the offenders who were terminated from the program was because they had been re-arrested and returned to jail or prison. It may be that the successful participants are a "self-selected" group of offenders who have the motivation to change aspects of their lives, such as education and criminal behavior. From the policy perspective, however, it makes sense to provide these offenders with assistance in changing their behaviors - perhaps with programs similar to the 3R program.

Table 6. Field 3R Participants

Type of Termination:	Drops/ Termination	Remaining 8/31/91	Successful G.E.D.
Total N	31	20	21
<u># returned to prison</u>	3	0	0
<u># incarcerated/ or county jail</u>	3	0	0

Examination of the preliminary recidivism statistics for the field 3R participants shows promising results. None of the offenders who successfully received a G.E.D. or remained in the program until August 31, 1991 have returned to prison or jail, as of January 27, 1992. All these offenders have been on parole for an

average of 18 months. There are no significant differences between the field participants (grouped by type of termination) on any criminal history or demographic variables. Again, self-selection may be a factor in the offenders' participation and success on parole.

SUMMARY: READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Offender Comparisons

Samples

Institutional 3R Participants, N=196 eligible

Transitional Participants (Institutional and Field), N=76 paroled; N=44 participants

Field 3R Participants, N=72

Comparison Sample of Offenders, N=112

- The samples are similar on most demographic variables: mostly Hispanic; median IQ ranging from 86 to 97; and median age ranging from 23-30.
 - Field participants have a mean IQ lower than other groups (mean = 84).
 - Comparison offenders have a higher mean age than other groups (mean=30).
- The sample of institutional participants is very different from the field and comparison offenders in terms of admission type, sentence, criminal history, and offense of record.
 - Institutional 3R participants most frequently committed violent offenses (40%), followed by property offenses (32%) and drug offenses (25%).
 - Field 3R participants most frequently committed property offenses (59%), followed by drug (24%) and violent offenses (9%).
 - Comparison group offenders most frequently committed property offenses (40%), followed by drug (34%) and violent offenses (22%).
 - Both field 3R participants and comparison group offenders had higher proportions of admissions for probation revocations (43% and 36% respectively) than institutional 3R participants (19%).

	Median Sentence Length	Prior Prison Stay (%)
Institutional 3R:	15 Yrs	59%
Field 3R:	7 Yrs	33%
Comparison:	10 Yrs	42%

Preliminary Outcome

- Definitive conclusions regarding recidivism of program participants will be difficult to determine given the small number of participants.
- Early results show some promise:
 - 5% of the successful transitional participants (received G.E.D. or remained in program until 8/31/91) returned to prison.
 - None of the successful field participants have returned to prison or jail, after over 18 months on parole (on average).

Notes: Appendix A

- ¹ Some of these institutional participants enrolled in the 3R program in the community, but did not participate for any significant length of time.
- ² Interestingly, however, of the 8 offenders who received a GED, 3 were under age 21 and 5 were over the age of 30.

Appendix B

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Program Costs

<u>Institution</u>		
Total Cost (9/89-8/91)	\$	608,773.00
Capital outlay (hardware/software)	\$	190,108.00
<u>Community</u>		
Total Cost (9/89-8/91)	\$	707,010.00
Capital outlay (hardware/software)	\$	200,000.00 (estimated)
<u>Overall Program Costs</u>		
Total Cost	\$	1,315,783.00
Capital outlay (est.)	\$	390,000.00

Appendix C
READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Software Selection Criteria

Software Packages: _____

I. Software Considerations

CATEGORY Rating
 Curriculum: (0-6)

1. Compatible with Curricula that is specifically for adult learners	
1.a. Appropriateness of repetition/guided practice.	
1.b. Whole language arts/process writing component.	
1.c. Appropriate graphics and menus	
1.d. On-line help	
1.e. Appropriate reinforcement	
2. G.E.D preparation oriented (primary)	
3. Functional component, I.E. life skills (secondary)	
4. Individualization: improve cognitive capability; capable of meeting needs of student with differing learning styles; alternative delivery.	
5. Sound capability (voiced).	
6. Third party software	
7. Curriculum on-line (i.e. not solely floppies)	
8. Open Entry/Open Exit Continuum	
9. Modularity: several discrete modules per content area. (i.e. 1-3.9, 4-8.9, 9-GED)	
10. Software Characteristics:	
a. '88 or later	
b. multiple lessons	

c. capability of customizing reports	
11. Replacement and Ongoing upgrades of software as developed.	

Management:

1. Internal recording of student's performance data -- monitor, track, and report.	
2. Diagnostic and prescriptive capabilities -- process skills and information (individual)	
2.a. On Screen	
2.b. Hard Copy	
3. Transmitting capability --fileserver to fileserver.	
4. Will give individual and aggregate data.	

II. Hardware Considerations

CATEGORY

Responsive
(Y/N)

1. Workstation/Hardware compatible with RFP specs.	
2. Fileserver with networking compatible with RFP specs.	
3. Modem capability and adaptability.	
4. Furniture as required in RFP.	
5. Other Hardware as specified in RFP (printer, tape back-up, etc.)	

III. Technical Support

CATEGORY

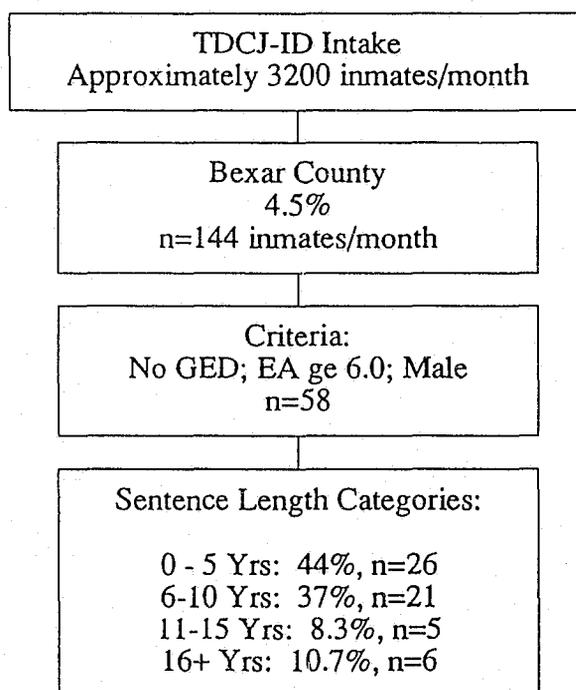
Responsive
(Y/N)

1. Adequate operator training	
1.a. initial by October 1, 1990	
1.b. follow-up twice a month for every month	
2. Repair/replacement contract options.	
3. Maximum downtime guaranteed. Hot line & 5 day turn around	
4. On-Site Support	

Appendix D

**READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Targeted Offender Group**

The following estimates are based on data from the TDCJ-ID FY 1990 Statistical Report. These estimates were originally prepared for a 3R Council meeting following publication of the Management Information Report: Formal Selection Procedures.



Note that the majority of the inmates fall in the categories of 0-5 yrs and 6-10 yrs (81%). Since the institutional 3R inmates had a median sentence length of 15 yrs, obviously the selection procedures did not maximize placement from the inmates with sentences of less than 10 years (the overwhelming majority of inmates).

Appendix E

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Referral Form

Name: _____

Address: _____ Tel# _____

TDCJ-ID# _____

Soc. Sec.# _____

Release Date: _____

Discharge Date: _____

Risk Level: _____

Needs Level _____

Supervision Level: intensive medium minimum

Special Parole Conditions:

- | | |
|----------|--------------------|
| 1) _____ | Referred To: _____ |
| 2) _____ | Referred To: _____ |
| 3) _____ | Referred To: _____ |
| 4) _____ | Referred To: _____ |
| 5) _____ | Referred To: _____ |
| 6) _____ | Referred To: _____ |
| 7) _____ | Referred To: _____ |

Amount of Restitution Required: _____

Is this client experiencing problems with:

drug dependency? yes no

 Is he in an outpatient treatment program? yes no

alcohol dependency? yes no

 Is he in an outpatient treatment program? yes no

employment/job skills? (describe) _____

education? (describe) _____

family? (describe) _____

instant offense? (describe) _____

assaultiveness? yes no

.. other? (describe) _____

Please list what you consider to be the four major problem areas for this client:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

District Office: _____ Supervising Officer _____

Appendix F

READING TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM
Management Software: Demographic Information

Reports Prescription Trouble Information Curriculum Utilities

Edit Student Information

Selection Criterion

No selection criterion specified.

Client First Name :	Client Middle Initial :
Client Address :	
Client City :	State :
Client Telephone Number :	Zip :
Gender :	Race :
	Date of Birth :
3R Begin Date :	TDCJID Number :
Initial EA Level :	Social Security Number :
Date GED Awarded :	FBI Number :
Date Terminated :	DPS Number :
	BPP Number :
Parole Officer Last Name :	
Parole Officer First Name :	
Parole Officer Telephone Number :	

F1-Help F2-Edit

IMS v1.0