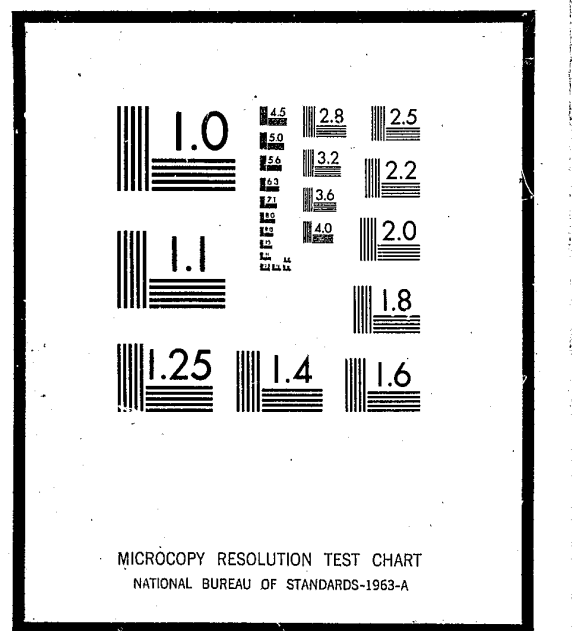


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LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
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Date filmed

8/28/75

014267

TITLE: A STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING POST-RELEASE ADJUSTMENT OF VOCATIONALLY TRAINED OFFENDERS

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INSTITUTION: Texas Department of Corrections
Windham School District

INTRODUCTION

Windham School District was established by the Texas Legislature in 1969 to serve the educational needs of all persons incarcerated in the Texas Department of Corrections.

The Windham Program is unique in that it is the first educational system of such scope to be established within a state-wide prison system. Approximately one-half (8,000) of the total inmate population avail themselves of School District programs.

The Vocational Department offers skill training in 31 different occupational areas. A complete Media Center is also operated, to offer the individual instructor and the students the attendant aids necessary to fulfill their respective functions.

The Reality Adjustment Program (RAP) attempts to prepare the student for his ultimate entry into the world of work. The 18-week session offers realistic approaches to problems which will be encountered by the ex-inmate/student in his search for the success for which he is being trained.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Shortly after its inception in 1969, the Vocational Department of the Windham School District initiated efforts to establish a follow-up process. The January 1, 1972 report by the Windham School District Vocational Department revealed that of the 201 vocational ex-students released from incarceration 145 of these students were listed as being unable to contact. This figure represented 72.13% of those released.

Data in sufficient quantity are not available as a base for decisions regarding changes, redirection, planning, or measurement of the effectiveness of the Program as a treatment adjunct in a correctional milieu.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary goal of this project was to establish a system whereby continuous follow-up information on graduates and

future graduates of the Windham School District Vocational Department would be available for evaluative purposes.

A systematic approach offers a continuous means of obtaining information feedback into the program's procedures as they relate to curriculum redesign, updating and improving teaching methods, and planning for expanded and new programs. It was the purpose of this project to design a methodology of follow-up procedures to comply with the requirements as set forth by the Texas State Plan for the Administration of Vocational Education under the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 which require that schools utilize a long range five-year plan and an annual program plan.

In addition, the project was designed to incorporate in this systematic approach, the development of methods of interviewing ex-students to obtain realistic and valid information to aid program assistance.

The major objectives of this follow-up study were:

1. To develop a comprehensive methodology for data collection in the follow-up study of released offenders.
2. To develop a behavioral interview procedure to obtain valid descriptions of environmental and behavioral events in the absence of the possibility of direct observation.
3. To measure the specific behavioral patterns of the released offender in such areas as employment, social and interpersonal interactions, and possibly, law encounters.
4. To conduct a preliminary investigation of the significance of institutional factors in post-release employment.
5. To establish a basis for the evaluation and validation of intervention and treatment programs including education and vocational training programs and various specialized programs such as the Reality Adjustment Program.
6. To feed information back into and refine Vocational Education programs of Windham School District.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The belief is widely held that correcting educational and vocational deficiencies of the offender in penal institutions is an important move toward rehabilitation. Many penologists now emphasize the purpose of imprisonment as being that of rehabilitation rather than punishment and that training and ed-

ucation are important instruments for rehabilitation.

Vocational training has become a major component of many adult correctional institutions. The rationale guiding the justification for these programs is that successful rehabilitation is to some degree dependent on steadiness and regularity of post-release employment.

In addition, training and skills appear to offer an opportunity for program designers to formulate a curriculum design that aims at impressing upon students the importance of development of proper attitudes and habits of regularity and achievement in work situations. When most offenders enter correctional institutions, they have had little or no training to have resulted in possession of occupational skills. Coupled with this is the fact that few of them have maintained extended work experiences and therefore exhibit less favorable views regarding work.

Too often the releasee who attempts to enter the work force after incarceration is handicapped by his criminal record as well as not possessing a marketable skill to enhance the possibility of his being hired.

However, as reported by Glaser (1964), "the prisoners primary barrier to employment is not his criminal records so frequently as it is his lack of extensive or skilled work experience." Therefore, vocational programs as treatment adjuncts are designed in an attempt to alleviate portions of the disabilities of the ex-offender.

Numerous writers and penal authorities have indicated a need for more precise research in attempts to validate the effectiveness of various types of correctional treatment.

METHODOLOGY

The methods used in this study were: (1) the collection of data on 864 ex-students (released and incarcerated) through the use of behavioral interviews and self-administered questionnaires; (2) conducting computer analyses of these data by analysis of variance, chi-square and z-test of means and proportions to determine the significance of differences between and within treatment groups; and (3) considering all results with a probability of .05 or less as significant.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Statistically significant differences were found between and within the community follow-up treatment groups in demographic, training, institutional and post-release variables. Those who were employed in training related jobs at the time of data collection displayed a higher degree of post-release adjustment coupled with a lower tendency toward recidivism as measured by the behavioral interviews and the Environmental

Deprivation Scale. The training-related group made significantly more money on first and present post-release jobs, saved significantly more money per week, was significantly more supported by the environment in the areas of job participation, debts, and total environmental support than the different-from-training and unemployed groups. These results lead to the conclusion that the emphasis upon placement in training-related jobs is justified and should be increased.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study has demonstrated the need for job placement and development in correctional vocational education. This function can best be performed by those who are most aware of the liabilities and assets peculiar to the vocationally trained offender. The primary objective of vocational training in corrections is not met unless the trainee is ultimately employed in a training related job upon release.

END