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National Institute of Justice

**The Development of Metrics to Assess Outcomes  
for the Second Chance Act Grant Program:  
A Response to Title V of the *Second Chance  
Reauthorization Act of 2018***

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**U.S. Department of Justice  
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The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the Office for Victims of Crime; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.

# The Development of Metrics to Assess Outcomes for the Second Chance Act Grant Program: A Response to Title V of the Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2018

## Background

With this memorandum, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) fulfills the legislative mandate specified in Title V, the *Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2018*, Section 507 (d)(1).

On December 21, 2018, the *First Step Act* was passed and included the *Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2018*. Similar to the *Second Chance Act of 2007* (SCA), the 2018 reauthorization aims to improve opportunities for offenders returning to their communities by authorizing the Attorney General to support the provision of funding for adult and juvenile offender demonstration projects at the state, local, and tribal levels.

Since the passage of the SCA in April 2008, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention have awarded more than 840 SCA grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations from 49 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories for reentry programs serving adults and juveniles. Despite these efforts, NIJ-funded randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental evaluations of BJA's adult offender reentry demonstration programs found that the provision of SCA reentry programming did not significantly reduce recidivism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the SCA evaluations, see D'Amico, R., & Kim, H. (2018). *Evaluation of Seven Second Chance Act Adult Demonstration Programs: Impact Findings at 30 Months*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/251702.pdf>; and Lindquist, C., Lattimore, P., Willison, J. B., Steffey, D., Stahl, M. H., Scaggs, S., Welsh-Loveman, J., & Eisenstat, J. (2018). *Cross-Site Evaluation of the Bureau of Justice Assistance FY 2011 Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects: Final Report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/251703.pdf>.

## Title V, Section 507, Mandate for the National Institute of Justice

The SCA aims to enhance public safety by breaking the cycle of criminal recidivism and improving outcomes for people returning from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities. The SCA authorizes the awarding of federal grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide reentry services and programs, including employment and housing assistance, victim support, and substance abuse treatment. Additionally, SCA funds may be used to support general criminal justice system improvements. Since the passage of this important legislation, jurisdictions and local communities around the country have improved their reentry strategies.

Per Title V of the *First Step Act*, NIJ must complete the following mandate by June 21, 2019:

*“Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the National Institute of Justice shall consult with relevant stakeholders and identify outcome measures, including employment, housing, education, and public safety, that are to be achieved by programs authorized under the Second Chance Act grant program and the metrics by which the achievement of such outcomes shall be determined.”*

Title V, Section 507 (d)(1), requires NIJ to engage with relevant stakeholders to develop the metrics included in the current memorandum. A key stakeholder is BJA, a component of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, whose mission is to provide leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities. Within the Office of Justice Programs, BJA awards SCA grants for adults to state and local government agencies, federally recognized Indian tribes, and nonprofit organizations.

Additionally, NIJ conducted outreach and sought input from more than two dozen relevant stakeholders to obtain their feedback on the proposed SCA measures. The stakeholders included researchers and academics with expertise in research and evaluation and specifically those with experience evaluating SCA programs, grantees who have successfully implemented SCA awards, and other relevant experts with knowledge of the SCA. Their feedback will assist BJA in the further development of the SCA metrics.

As required by Section 507 (d)(1), the measures provided in Table 1 are the basis of a performance monitoring system. The specific questions that will be asked to collect these measures and the structure of the questionnaires that will be used in the performance monitoring system are currently under development and will be amended based on stakeholder feedback. As BJA refines the questionnaires, it expects to consult with the Council of State Governments, which leads the National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC), a source of information and guidance in reentry. Funded and administered by BJA, the NRRC delivers training, technical assistance, and individualized and strategic guidance to recipients of SCA grants in order to reduce recidivism and help people succeed in their communities after they return from incarceration. Further, BJA expects that current SCA grantees will provide comments and recommendations to the NRRC about requisite performance metrics and other grant requirements.

The performance monitoring measures included here should not be used to determine the effectiveness of SCA grant programs, nor should they be confused with program “impacts.” Program impacts are assessed by comparing outcomes for program participants with estimates of what the outcomes would have been had those same individuals not participated in the program. Without using a control or comparison group, the primary performance measures, such as recidivism and employment, cannot be used to determine the effectiveness of SCA grant programs with any certainty. However, the collection of these performance measures will lay the foundation for conducting more scientific evaluations of the impact of the SCA grant program in the future. The measures provided here include outcomes related to employment, housing, education, and public safety.

Table 1 includes the outcome measure and performance measures used to assess if a desired objective is being met, and examples of the types of data collected by SCA grantees. The questions and questionnaires used to capture these measures are currently being improved and restructured. Regardless, these key measures are fundamental to the examination of the performance of SCA grant programs and their potential influence on offenders’ reintegration and success as they return to their communities.

The *Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2018* continues to recognize and support the importance of reentry programming and policies in shaping long-term outcomes for offenders and how this links to public safety and overall reductions in criminal behavior. If the performance data reported by the SCA grantees are accurate and can be independently validated, then research agencies like NIJ and other interested parties should be better able to engage in and support rigorous evaluations of reentry programs supported by the SCA in order to better understand what works and who is most likely to reenter successfully.

**Table 1. Metrics and Outcomes for Evaluation of the *Second Chance Act Grant Program***

<b>Outcome Measure</b>	<b>Performance Measures</b>	<b>Examples of Data Grantee Provides</b>
<b>Systems Change</b> <i>Changes made to policies or procedures based on grant activity</i>	Percentage of grantees who changed or implemented evidence-based policies or tools <sup>2</sup>	Types and number of formalized new policies implemented or changed as a result of the SCA grant
	Percentage of grantees who trained their officers and/or service providers on evidence-based practices to accomplish grant goals	Types and number of trainings conducted as a result of the SCA grant
	Percentage of grantees who were provided technical assistance on evidence-based practices by the U.S. Department of Justice	Types and number of technical assistance engagements provided by the U.S. Department of Justice
	Percentage of grantees who utilized information sharing mechanisms with service providers	Types and number of information sharing mechanisms utilized between grantee and partners
<b>Collaborative Structures</b> <i>Partnerships, task forces, and other stakeholders that are involved in grant activity</i>	Percentage of grantees that developed and/or expanded partnerships to increase the capacity of their work and program	Type of current project partners Identification and type of new project partners Specification of partners' roles in grant
	Percentage of grantees who implemented supervision strategies aimed at improving supervision	Utilization of risk assessment and case plan to address supervision needs
		Utilization of risk assessment and case plan to tailor supervision strategies to individual participants
<b>Supervision/ Corrections</b> <i>Strategies aimed at reducing recidivism through targeted supervision</i>	Number and percentage of participants who achieved employment, housing, and education	Number and type of services provided by the grantee agency over the course of the award period
		Number and type of services provided by partner agencies
		Program services (e.g., mental health/illness, substance abuse/use, housing, education, employment) enrollment numbers (e.g., applied, accepted, completed/graduated, revoked)
<b>Services and Treatment Inventory/ Provision</b> <i>Mental health/illness, substance abuse/use, housing, education, and employment</i>	Overall participant enrollment numbers and percentages (e.g., applied, accepted, completed/graduated, revoked) by each of the program services (e.g., mental health/illness, substance abuse/use, housing, education, employment) provided with grant funds	Number of participants that recidivated (e.g., rearrest, commission of a technical violation, reincarceration)
	Average recidivism rate for participants <sup>3</sup>	

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this memorandum, evidence-based policies, tools, or practices are those whose “effectiveness has been demonstrated by causal evidence obtained through high quality outcome evaluations and that have been replicated and evaluated in at least three sites ... [H]igh quality outcome evaluations [are] those using rigorous, randomized controlled trials on programs implemented with fidelity.” For more information, see <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/Glossary.aspx#E>.

<sup>3</sup> These are examples of performance measures that would be used by NIJ to compare the grant-funded participants to comparably situated individuals who did not participate in such programs and activities as a way to examine the impact of the SCA program.