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FY 2011 Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects: Evaluability Assessment Overview of the Johnson County (KS) Reentry Project

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Evaluability Assessment of the FY2011 Bureau of Justice Assistance Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects

Johnson County (KS) Reentry Project

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Glossary of Terms

BJA—Bureau of Justice Assistance
CJAC—Criminal Justice Advisory Council
DOC—Department of Corrections
EA—Evaluability Assessment
FACT—Forensic Assertive Community Treatment
JCRP—Johnson County Reentry Project
LSI-R—Level of Service Inventory–Revised
NCIC—National Crime Information Center
NIJ—National Institute of Justice
PICT—Personal Inventory of Criminal Thinking
RAP—Reentry Admissions Panel
RTI—RTI International
SCA—Second Chance Act
TTA—Training and Technical Assistance
UI—Urban Institute

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Johnson County (KS) Reentry Project

Evaluability Assessment Summary

In 2008, the Second Chance Act (SCA): Community Safety Through Recidivism Prevention was signed into law with the goal of increasing reentry programming for offenders released from state prisons and local jails. Programs funded through Title I of the SCA must create strategic, sustainable plans to facilitate the successful reentry of individuals leaving incarceration facilities. Other key requirements include collaboration among state and local criminal justice and social service systems (e.g., health, housing, child services, education, substance abuse and mental health treatment, victim services, and employment services) and data collection to measure specified performance outcomes (i.e., those related to recidivism and service provision). Further, the SCA states that program reentry plans should incorporate input from local nonprofit organizations, crime victims, and offenders' families. It also requires that grantee programs create reentry task forces—comprised of relevant agencies, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and community members—to use existing resources, collect data, and determine best practices for addressing the needs of the target population.

Consistent with the objectives of the Second Chance Act, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) funded 22 adult offender reentry demonstration grants in FY 2011. Eight FY 2011 SCA projects¹ were selected by BJA for this evaluability assessment (EA). These projects target adult offenders under state or local custody (and about to return to the community) for comprehensive reentry programming and services designed to promote successful reintegration and reduce recidivism. Intended to proactively address the multiple challenges facing former prisoners upon their return to the community, the grants may be used to provide an array of pre-and post-release services, including education and literacy programs, job placement, housing services, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. Risk and needs assessments, transition case planning, case management, and family involvement are key elements of grantees' SCA projects. The goals of the SCA projects are to measurably (1) increase reentry programming for returning prisoners and their families, (2) reduce recidivism and criminal involvement among program participants by 50 percent over five years, (3) reduce violations among program participants, and (4) improve reintegration outcomes, including reducing substance abuse and increasing employment and housing stability. (See Appendix A for the initiative's SCA logic model.)

Evaluability Assessment Objectives and Activities

Evaluability assessment is crucial in determining if a project is a candidate for meaningful evaluation (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer 2004). At minimum, an evaluable program must have

¹ Boston Reentry Initiative (MA); Hudson County (NJ) Community Reintegration Project; Johnson County (KS) Reentry Project; Minnesota DOC Revocation Reduction Demonstration; Missouri DOC Second Chance in Action Initiative; New Haven (CT) Reentry Initiative; Ohio DOC Healthy Environments, Loving Parents (HELP) Initiative; and Solano County (CA) Women's Reentry Achievement (WRAP). In March 2013, the EA study expanded to include two additional FY 2011 sites: the Beaver County (PA) ChancesR program and Palm Beach County (FL) RESTORE Initiative.

well-defined program goals, target populations, and eligibility criteria, as well as reliable and accessible performance data, and a defensible counterfactual (Barnow and The Lewin Group 1997). The current EA study, conducted by the Urban Institute (UI) in partnership with RTI International, is designed to determine what level of future evaluation activity is supportable in each of the eight² SCA sites and to identify the most appropriate research design and methods for each site. While most EAs seek to determine whether a program is evaluable, the EA study's funder, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), is interested in some level of evaluation in *all* eight adult SCA sites; therefore, EA data collection must support more nuanced evaluation recommendations than "Evaluate: Yes or No." Specifically, the EA aims to answer two questions: Is the program evaluable? And if so, how, and at what level of effort?³ Design options must address both the recommended level *and* type of evaluation, including the suggested mix of process, outcome, impact, and cost analyses.

The following criteria (Barnow and The Lewin Group 1997; Wholey et al. 2004) guided EA work in the eight SCA sites.

1. **Measurable outcomes.** Program goals must be clearly stated, consistently understood by staff and partner agencies, and translatable into measurable results.
2. **Defined program components and their hypothesized relationship to outcomes.** An underlying theoretical model and logic model must indicate how program components, both in-facility and community-based elements, contribute to outcomes.
3. **Case flow and attrition.** How clients enter the program, as well as when, how, and why they discharge (either successfully or unsuccessfully) from the program must be documented to inform sample size estimates, comparison group construction, and evaluation recruitment timelines.
4. **Precise target population and eligibility criteria.** The EA must document how eligible participants are defined in each SCA site and how closely projects and their partners adhere to delineated eligibility criteria, including when and why sites deviate from established parameters. Eligibility criteria must be well-defined and consistently applied to minimize selection bias that might arise from arbitrary enrollment rules.
5. **Intake procedures.** Related to items 3 and 4, it will be critical to map how potential participants are identified and referred to the program, including the point at which this referral occurs; this will have implications for planning random assignment procedures (i.e., what point in program operations should random assignment occur) should the program warrant such rigor and for identifying appropriate comparison subjects if quasi-experimental alternative designs are necessary.
6. **Ability to collect and maintain data.** An accurate management information system that includes data needed for the evaluation must be available. For impact evaluations, comparable data must exist (or be possible to create during the evaluation timeframe) for

² Eight sites were selected by BJA and NIJ for study, however, one site (Johnson County, KS) declined further participation in the grant program after the EA study began. In March 2013, NIJ and BJA, in conjunction with the EA, identified two additional sites—Beaver County (PA) and Palm Beach County (FL)—for the EA. Ultimately, the EA study conducted site visits to nine projects and compiled nine site-specific EA reports. A brief memorandum describing the Johnson County program was also compiled.

³ If the program is not evaluable, we will indicate what would be required to bring it in line with evaluation requirements.

both treatment and comparison group subjects; site support for primary data collection must be evident.

7. **Presence of a clear counterfactual.** Impact evaluation designs also must consider appropriate comparison or control groups. Clearly documenting the services that are available to such individuals is therefore critical.

Likewise, the EA examined whether the program was mature and stable enough to warrant evaluation (Zedlewski and Murphy 2006); core program elements must be sufficiently fixed (static) to allow for meaningful evaluation.

The forthcoming Evaluation of the FY 2011 BJA SCA Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Project, which also will be conducted by RTI and UI, entails a research design (subject to revisions based on the Evaluability Assessment of the sites selected by BJA and NIJ for further study) that envisions (1) process/implementation evaluation in all eight sites, (2) recidivism outcome (treatment group only) or impact evaluation (treatment and comparison groups) based on administrative records (secondary data) of arrest and incarceration, (3) more intensive impact evaluation that collects primary data (three waves of interviews) for both treatment and comparison groups, and, where feasible, uses random assignment to construct treatment and control groups, and (4) two different levels of cost analysis (cost studies 1 and 2), in which the sites selected for the intensive impact evaluation would also participate in a more intensive cost study given the ability to use the primary interview data to generate more information about benefits other than recidivism outcomes.

Cognizant of this design,⁴ EA data collection activities consisted of

- **Review of program materials and documents**, including program and partner materials such as blank intake and assessment forms, orientation materials, program handbooks, redacted transition case plans, annual reports, and program logic models to document operations.
- **Analysis of BJA aggregate performance data** including process measures, recidivism outcomes, and other reintegration indicators that may underscore program performance.
- **Pre-visit phone interviews** with SCA coordinators and project directors in each site were conducted to outline EA objectives and obtain updated project information.
- **Site visits and semi-structured interviews** with policy-level stakeholders and program staff and partners to assess capacity and readiness for evaluation across multiple EA domains and to collect supplemental information on training and technical assistance (TTA) needs. Specifically, interviews with individual stakeholders at the policy level within the criminal justice system tracked the SCA initiative's efforts, evolution, and adaptation over the earlier funding period, and the impact of the grant on cross-systems coordination, collaboration, and data exchange, as well as changes in policies and procedures. Semi-structured interviews with program and partner staff documented

⁴ UI and RTI partnered on both the EA work (Focus Area 1 of the evaluation solicitation) and the full evaluation (Focus Area 2), and proposed to use the same teams for both evaluation projects to facilitate critical efficiencies (knowledge, resources, execution, celerity) while building a solid knowledge base of the sites and their capacity for evaluation to the benefit of Focus Area 2 work.

screening, assessment, case planning, transition planning, case flow, business-as-usual, and other critical program operations. Additional site visit activities included:

- **Review of program case files and administrative records** to determine data quality, verify the scope and content of client-level data routinely collected, and generate case flow and sample size estimates.
- **Direct observation of program operations to determine logistics** that may inform subject recruitment and enrollment procedures for the full evaluation.

While site visits were conducted to all of the other sites selected for the EA, the EA team's February 6–8 site visit to Johnson County was canceled on February 5 after consultation with NIJ. The cancellation followed correspondence from the site to BJA in which the lead agency respectfully declined further participation beyond March 31, 2013. As documented previously for NIJ, Johnson County reported applying for and being denied year 3 SCA funding and, in an attempt to sustain critical elements of the program, local stakeholders negotiated the transfer of program oversight from the Sheriff (the fiduciary agent for SCA) to the county's Department of Corrections (DOC). Although the site reported that funding from SCA would cease at the end of March 2013, early discussions with Johnson County suggested the Johnson County Reentry Project (JCRP) could be a viable evaluation site. For this reason, NIJ requested that the EA team work to document those aspects of the Johnson County program designated to continue going forward, as well as to compile case flow and enrollment estimates in the event additional SCA funding could be provided. EA researchers conducted an additional telephone interview with a key site stakeholder on February 11, 2013, with these goals in mind. In the interim, however, it was determined that additional SCA funding could not be provided to the new lead agency under which the Johnson County Reentry Project would operate—making outreach to additional Johnson County stakeholders to document operations both unnecessary and inadvisable.

The summary below represents the EA team's best understanding of the JCRP at the end of February 2013, both the program as it functioned when EA work began in November 2012 and what was proposed as of February 2013. It addresses the four issue areas identified by BJA: (1) the site's current sample, (2) compliance with the EA visit, (3) conformity to the SCA model, and (4) any other information that could be provided in advance of the site-specific EA reports. This summary is submitted in lieu of an EA report.

Current and Projected Sample Size

A total of 52 participants had been served by the program as of February 4, 2013, with the first client entering the program in February 2011. The JCRP targets inmates sentenced to the county jail for a period of 90 to 20 days, who are free of detainees, and who score as moderate to high risk (score of 15–37) on the Level of Services Inventory–Revised (LSI-R); eligible inmates may also evidence mental health needs. Initial case flow estimates, which anticipated serving 50 clients per year, were not realized, partly due to a decline in jail population, jail construction, and reticence by the program's Reentry Admissions Panel (RAP).

The definition of served indicates that the participant completed the first 30 days of cognitive group-based education and made it to the work release component of the program. As of February 4, 2013, 14 participants were active, five participants were enrolled in work release, five participants had recidivated, and 25 had successfully completed the program. Successfully

completed is used when a participant completes the work release (90 days) component of the program and is released into the community. These participants are kept on a list for potential community-based services for 60 to 90 days post release.

In an average month, the JCRP reportedly staffed approximately 5 to 6 new cases, which would have equated to enrolling 60 to 70 cases per year. Due to funding uncertainty, the program paused recruitment of new cases in October and November 2012, and again in February 2013 as stakeholders engaged in sustainability planning. The program planned to resume staffing cases in March 2013 once plans for the program's continuation had been solidified.

Compliance with the Evaluability Assessment Process

Although the EA visit was ultimately canceled, Johnson County stakeholders actively engaged in EA site visit planning and preparations and were enthusiastic about the possibility of additional evaluation. Those stakeholders with whom the EA team engaged in site visit planning were forthcoming and candid about program challenges and successes, and readily shared materials (e.g., descriptions of services, aggregate numbers on program participants, etc.). Stakeholders provided us with a solid history of the program, including their candid experiences under SCA, lessons learned, and challenges experienced.

Compliance/Fidelity to the SCA Model

The JCRP appears to largely reflect the key elements of the SCA Prisoner Reentry Initiative Logic Model, although staff noted several departures from the program's original structure. Additional modifications were anticipated with the imminent transfer of program oversight from the Sheriff to the county's DOC, as discussed later in this section.

Inputs

The Johnson County Reentry Task Force provides guidance and oversight to the JCRP; the county's Criminal Justice Advisory Council (CJAC), composed of criminal justice and community leaders, focuses on policy-level issues. The CJAC established the Reentry Task Force in 2009. The JCRP's core partners included the Sheriff, District Attorney, courts, county DOC, and several community-based providers such as the Regional Alcohol and Drug Assessment Center, Addiction and Prevention Services, the state's workforce partnership, and Friends of Recovery among others.

As noted above, the JCRP targets inmates sentenced to between 90 and 120 days in the county jail and who are assessed as moderate to high risk on the LSI-R (Level of Service Inventory–Revised). Originally, the program recruited inmates with a 120-day minimum sentence and an LSI-R score not greater than 35. Within the first year of implementation, the program changed its recruitment criteria to include inmates with a 90-day sentence and an LSI-R score of 37 or less. Once identified, the program's RAP vetted and selected the participants.

Activities

As initially conceived, the JCRP consisted of three phases: phase 1 includes assessment and assistance with obtaining proper identification (driver's license, etc.), referral to the cognitive behavior group "Interactive Journaling," substance abuse assessment and mental health services as needed and work with the Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) team; during

phase 2, JCRP participants transition from the jail to the county Department of Correction's work release program at the Adult Residential Center where they complete the remainder of their sentence; and phase 3 involves post-release case management with the FACT team for up to 120 days. The JCRP operations largely followed this model during the SCA grant period.

Upon entry into the JCRP, participants complete 100–150 hours of cognitive group-based work in the first 30 days of their 90- to 120-day sentence; the curriculum was developed by researchers at the University of Cincinnati (Lowenkamp) and centers on the completion of four workbooks, of which the first two are completed while in custody. After completing the cognitive work, the participants are moved to the county's DOC work release program for the remainder of their sentence. During this transition and while on work release, the FACT team provides case management services to the JCRP participants. The FACT team included staff with expertise in mental health, substance abuse, corrections, and education/employment issues. Once JCRP participants complete the remainder of their sentence, the FACT team no longer works with the participants in a structured manner, although participants can voluntarily keep in contact with their case managers.

Another key facet of the JCRP: participants journal and complete a personal inventory of criminal thinking (PICT) at the beginning and end of their sentence. The PICT is a new addition to the program so that JCRP staff and stakeholders, in partnership with a local evaluator (a researcher at the University of Missouri–Kansas City), can measure change in the participants' criminal thinking over the course of program participation.

Outcomes and Evaluation

As discussed above, the Johnson County Reentry Program is working with faculty at the University of Missouri–Kansas City to assemble data for the grant's reporting requirements and to assess the program's strategy specific to the cognitive component. The JCRP also tracks participant program outcomes as well as criminal justice outcomes at the local and national level; the latter relies on data from the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC). To our knowledge, Johnson County is one of only two SCA EA sites to access NCIC data to track offender outcomes.

Data

In the early 1990s, Johnson County invested in an integrated criminal justice information system (referred to locally as JIMS) and information technology department that supports analysis and reporting. JIMS houses data from the Sheriff, District Attorney and district courts. JCRP administrators also enter data in JIMS and therefore, can track participant service usage and dosage (particularly cognitive programming), as well as access case notes and review participant goals relative to programming and progress.

JIMS generates a unique identifier for program participants; the criminal file number is the unique identifier that follows offenders. In addition to program information, demographic information and criminal history data, including booking and final disposition, can be queried and aggregated. Program administrators plan to continue to use JIMS to monitor participant performance. Reports can be generated easily, often within a few hours of receipt of a request. Additionally, JIMS can be easily augmented to accommodate new queries or reporting

requirements. Data reports and other documentation suggest Johnson County has good data and the analytic infrastructure to support evaluation.

Funding

SCA Year 2 funding expired March 31, 2013. The JCRP reported that they did not receive SCA Year 3 funding. As a result, the program suffered almost immediate staff turnover and interruptions to operations (i.e., program recruitment was paused in October and November 2012 and again in February 2013). However, there is a strong commitment to the JCRP among many stakeholders and as a result, the site has been engaged in sustainability planning efforts since October 2012, as documented in prior correspondence including the study's monthly and semiannual progress reports.

Sustainability measures involve the transfer of program oversight from the Sheriff to the county DOC so that two of the three core staff positions can be retained; this also would allow intensive case management and the cognitive work at the center of the reentry initiative to continue. Johnson County stakeholders also anticipate expanding the use of work release via new sentencing practices under Phase 2 of their Justice Reinvestment work. This will allow JCRP to reserve and use 10 beds (an increase from the current 5 to 7 beds) in the county DOC's work release unit.

Transfer of JCRP oversight to the county DOC will involve some changes to program operations. While the anticipated target population under the DOC's leadership will be very similar to the SCA grant, the RAP will be eliminated. This development is expected to result in greater adherence to/use of LSI-R scores to select program participants and may result in better flow into the program. Additionally, the two staff members that are expected to be retained as the program goes forward will work with participants to provide some case management and cognitive education. The staff at the county DOC's Adult Residential Center, where work release is housed, will provide other components such as substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and other services. The difference in services will be the level of case management, which will decrease due to the limited number of staff available to work intensively with participants. These developments, coupled with the uncertainty of future funding, preclude the formation of meaningful recommendations for further evaluation.

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Appendix A.

Second Chance Act Logic Model

Second Chance Act Prisoner Reentry Initiative Logic Model

Goal(s): *Increase Public Safety and Reduce Recidivism by 50 percent over 5 years*

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	OUTCOME MEASURES	LONG TERM OUTCOMES/IMPACT*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support of the Chief Executive officer of the state, unit of local government, territory, or Indian Tribe ■ Extensive description of the role of state corrections departments, community corrections agencies, juvenile justice systems, and/or local jail systems – that will ensure successful reentry ■ Extensive evidence of collaboration with state and local government agencies, as well as stakeholder groups. ■ Analysis plan for: statutory, regulatory, rules-based, and practice-based hurdles to reintegration of offenders ■ Target Population (TP): High-Risk Offenders ■ Risk and Needs Assessments ■ Reentry Task Force membership ■ 5-year Reentry Strategic Plan ◇ Plan to follow and track TP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and coordinate a Reentry Task Force ■ Administer validated assessment tools to assess the risk factors and needs of returning inmates ■ Establish pre-release planning procedures ■ Provide offenders with educational, literacy, and vocational services ■ Provide substance abuse, mental health, and health treatment and services ■ Provide coordinated supervision and comprehensive services for offenders upon release from prison or jail ■ Connect inmates with their children and families ■ Provide victim appropriate services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A reduction in recidivism rates for the target population ■ Reduction in crime ■ Increased employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new offenders added to the TP this quarter Total number of TP in the initiative Number of TP released this quarter Total number of TP released since the beginning of the initiative Number of TP resentenced to prison with a new conviction this quarter Total Number of TP resentenced to prison with a new conviction since the beginning of the initiative Total number of crimes reported during this quarter Total population for the area that the TP is returning to (i.e., statewide, county, city, neighborhood) Number of TP who found employment this quarter Total Number of TP who are employed Number of TP who have enrolled in an educational program this quarter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increase public safety ■ Reduce Recidivism by 50 percent over 5 years

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Sustainability Plan ◇ Plan to collect and provide data for performance measures ■ Pre- and post-release programming ■ Mentors ■ Provide a 50 percent match [only 25 percent can be in-kind] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deliver continuous and appropriate drug treatment, medical care, job training and placement, educational services, and housing opportunities ■ Examine ways to pool resources and funding streams to promote lower recidivism rates ■ Collect and provide data to meet performance measurement requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased education opportunities ■ Reduction in violations of conditions of supervised release ■ Increased payment of child support ■ Increased housing opportunities ■ Increased participation in substance abuse services ■ Increased participation in mental health services 	<p>Total number of TP who are currently enrolled in an educational program</p> <p>Number of TP who have violated the conditions of their release this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have violated the conditions of their release</p> <p>Total number of TP that are required to pay child support</p> <p>Number of TP who paid their child support this quarter</p> <p>Number of target population who found housing this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have housing</p> <p>Number of TP who were assessed as needing substance abuse services this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have been assessed as needing substance abuse services</p> <p>Number of TP who enrolled in a substance abuse program this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP enrolled in a substance abuse program</p> <p>Number of TP who were assessed as needing mental health services this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP who have been assessed as needing mental health services</p> <p>Number of TP who enrolled in a mental health program this quarter</p> <p>Total number of TP enrolled in a mental health program</p>	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Reduction in drug abuse■ Reduction in alcohol abuse	<p>Total number of TP re-assessed regarding substance use during the reporting period</p> <p>Total number of TP re-assessed as having <i>reduced</i> their substance use during this reporting period</p> <p>Total number of TP re-assessed regarding alcohol use during the reporting period</p> <p>Total number of TP re-assessed as having <i>reduced</i> their alcohol use during this reporting period</p>	
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