



Job Training and other Factors Affecting Employment: A Preliminary Assessment of Texas ReEntry Services

by

Johnny Nhan, PhD & Jason Clark-Miller, PhD
Department of Criminal Justice
Texas Christian University
2855 Main Dr.
Fort Worth, TX 76129
(817) 257-5846
Email: j.nhan@tcu.edu
j.clarkmiller@tcu.edu
Website: cj.tcu.edu

Johnny Nhan and Jason Clark-Miller are assistant professors at Texas Christian University's Department of Criminal Justice.

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Texas ReEntry Services
3001 Race St.
Fort Worth, TX 76111
Txrs.org

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Report Summary

This preliminary report evaluates Texas ReEntry Services (TXRS) using statistical data collected by the TXRS staff from the calendar years 2008 to 2010. The purpose of the present analysis is to examine the characteristics of TXRS clients and determine the extent to which TXRS services have a positive impact on employment outcomes, which in turn should reduce the likelihood of recidivism. These relationships described in this document are limited to those we considered both statistically and substantively significant.

Among the initial findings that are considered significant are the following:

- *Marriage is a significant predictor of employment. A larger percentage of individuals who are employed are married versus non-married individuals.*
- *There is a large positive correlation between education and employment. More educated individuals have lower unemployment rates, particularly significant differences between individuals who did not complete high school and individuals with some college.*
- *Individuals who regularly use drugs have a significantly lower employment rate than those who do not use drugs. Marijuana use, other single drugs, and multiple drugs were found to be significant.*
- *There were significant differences in employment rates with individuals reported to have chronic health problems.*

The data shows similar findings with regards to completion of Job Readiness Training (JRT):

- *Marriage is a significant predictor of JRT completion. A larger percentage of married individuals have complete JRT compared with non-married individuals.*
- *Chronic health issues also significantly affected the completion of JRT.*
- *There is a large positive correlation between education and JRT completion rates. More educated individuals have higher completion rates, particularly significant differences between individuals who did not complete high school and individuals with some college.*
- *Individuals who regularly use drugs have a significantly lower JRT completion rates than those who do not use drugs. Marijuana use, other single drugs, and multiple drugs were found to be significant.*
- *JRT completion was found to be a significant factor in employment.*

A Note on Methodology

This research analyzes 2008-2010 data collected by the TXRS staff. All new clients are given initial screening questionnaires in order for TXRS employees assess the needs of each individual. These questions range from current housing status to specific types of drug addiction. The center then uses this information to create an individualized plan (Intensive Case Management) for each client, targeting specific areas of need. The ultimate goal of the TXRS is to reduce recidivism through ameliorating major categories of need and finding employment for each individual. TXRS services include helping clients obtain official documents, such as state IDs, providing literacy and GED classes, HIV testing and other medical services, housing support, and mental health services.

Employment is the primary area of focus. The TXRS offers a comprehensive job readiness and life skills program (JRT) that is designed to prepare individuals for the employment process as well as pair individuals with prospective employers who are willing to hire ex-offenders. Data is recorded by the TXRS throughout the JRT process and follow-up contacts are made by TXRS counselors with individuals who have completed the training for several months. This data includes time and place employed, nature of the work, and other general information. No data is collected for individuals who reoffend and are reincarcerated, and only limited information is available for those that dropout of the program or inquire about the program but choose not to participate.

We use 2009 as the base year for analysis. Detailed data collection began in 2008; however, 2008 data is considered incomplete due to the lack of information about end-of-year 2007 clients that found employment 2008. 2010 data was used to complete the 2009 end-of-year clients who may have obtained employment, creating a complete dataset for the 2009 calendar year. A total population of 2,501 clients was assessed. Incomplete data was omitted from each variable. Variables were then coded, collapsed, and clustered for analysis.

Data was analyzed using the Statistic Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Variables were cross tabulated to assess the relationships among variables at a *bivariate* level (such as, the relationship between employment and gender). Tests of significance are not included in this report but will be made available when data analysis is completed for peer-review publication.

Background Literature

Recent state and federal fiscal constraints have drawn considerable attention to cost-saving measures in corrections. One particular area of concern is habitual criminality as reflected by generally high recidivism rates. A recent Pew report found that despite record spending on corrections (\$52 billion annually), national recidivism rates have remained high, averaging over 40%, with Texas at 31.9% and California at 57.8% (Pew, 2011). High recidivism rates have undermined a sense of justice and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, which is often described as a “revolving-door.” Consequently, governmental agencies and policymakers have taken a renewed interest in empirical research that examines the effectiveness of programs targeting recidivism, which in the 1970s were controversially (and wrongly) dismissed as being largely ineffective (Martinson, 1974).

Criminologists have since examined prisoner reentry and reintegration by using more focused assessments of rehabilitation programs in the past few decades. More sophisticated statistical measures have been employed to examine the long term effectiveness of rehabilitation programs that have found very significant and positive effects (Gendreau & Ross, 1987; Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). In addition, variables affecting reentry and recidivism have been identified and tested in the past few decades.

Employment is a key factor to successful prisoner reentry. Ross and Richards (2003) identified employment as one of three primary needs for ex-offenders to successfully reintegrate into society. Petersilia (2003: 112) explains, “Employment helps ex-prisoners be productive, take care of their families, develop valuable life skills, and strengthen their self-esteem and social connectedness.” Petersilia’s claim is backed by long term empirical evidence. Lipsey’s (1995) meta study of 400 empirical research studies on the treatment of juvenile delinquency found that the number one factor in reoffending is employment.

The profile of a typical ex-offender shows many characteristics that adversely affect employability. Bloom (2006) notes that a large proportion of ex-inmates possess inadequate education and work experience that negatively affect their prospects of employment particularly in tight labor markets. Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2002) cite characteristics such as low education levels and inadequate work experience, substance abuse and mental health issues, poor living environments with limited opportunities, and a lack of motivation (Petersilia, 2003).

Pivotal transitional periods immediately after release are pivotal in determining whether ex-prisoners successfully reintegrate or recidivate. It is common for ex-prisoners to find themselves worse off after release, often having little education, suffering from mental conditions and illness, addictions, marital strain, stigma, and other impediments that make success reentry difficult (Petersilia, 2003). Examining transitional organizations, such as the TXRS, is crucial to finding long-term solutions to recidivism.

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Detailed Findings

Marriage was found to be a significant factor on employment. A larger percentage of individuals who are employed also tend to be married (19.5%) versus unemployed individuals (11.3%).

There is a large positive correlation between education and employment. More educated individuals have lower unemployment rates, particularly significant differences between individuals who did not complete high school (16.4% employment) and individuals with some college (27.3% employment).

Individuals who regularly use drugs have a significantly lower employment rate than those who do not use drugs. Marijuana use, other single drugs, and multiple drugs were found to be significant.

There were significant differences in employment rates with individuals reported to have chronic health problems.

Table 1

Differences in Employment amongst TXRS Client Characteristics in Percentages

Variable	Unemployed	n	Employed	n
Marriage				
Married	11.3	245	19.5	25
Divorced/separated	24.0	523	25.8	33
Never married	67.4	1407	54.7	70
Education				
No high school	26.6	577	16.4	21
High School	24.0	521	25.0	32
GED	31.1	675	30.5	39
Some College	18.0	391	27.3	35
Drug use				
No drugs	38.8	853	73.4	221
Alcohol only	1.7	37	1.7	5
Marijuana	17.0	374	5.3	16
Other single drug	17.7	389	10.0	30
Multiple drugs	24.8	545	9.6	29
Health				
Chronic health issues	24.8			
No chronic health	9.3			

Preliminary Conclusions

Initial findings suggests TXRS services, particularly Job Readiness Training (JRT) has substantial impact on employment. Of those the TXRS staff tracked in 2009, 25.9% of individuals who contact TXRS completed the JRT program. Of those individuals who completed the JRT program, approximately 80% found employment. This number is considerably higher when compared to the total population of unemployed individuals with no JRT recorded by the TXRS staff. Unfortunately, the follow-up information recorded for those individuals is incomplete so a direct comparison cannot be made; however, research suggests the unaided parolee *unemployment* rates can be as high as 80% (Alarid & Del Carmen, 2011). While unidentified confounding variables may be at play, the current data suggests the holistic approach by the TXRS is an effective means in reintegrating ex-offenders back into the community.

Completion of job readiness training was found to be affected by the same variables as employment. While the data was not discussed in the body of this report, drug use, chronic health issues, and low education were negatively correlated with JRT completion rates.

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Appendix





