

Arizona – NCJRP Phase III Formative Evaluation Template

1. Introduction

The Arizona National Criminal Justice Reform Project (hereafter, Arizona NCJRP) Team is submitting this document to provide an overview of the formative evaluation work that was conducted with Phase III funding. The Arizona NCJRP Team includes the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (Andrew LeFevre, Josh Cutler, Jillian Ware, Dr. Jaimie Jeffords); the Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry (Karen Helman, Dr. Michael Dolny); the Arizona Department of Economic Security (Timothy Tucker, Michael Moss); and the Center for Correctional Solutions (Dr. Kevin Wright, Dr. Jacob Young).

2. Background

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, with the guidance of the NCJRP technical assistance team, established the Second Chance Centers in a statewide effort to reduce recidivism and improve reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals across the state. Three Second Chance Centers were established (two for male inmates, one for female). The goal of these centers is to identify which key services can be provided that afford criminal justice involved individuals the best chance at reintegrating back into society and lessen the likelihood that they will recidivate. Specifically, these centers are designed to give medium-to-high-risk inmates an eight-week, intensive program focusing on skills to help them secure a job, find housing, and be ready to access those services available to help them reintegrate and be successful in society. The formative evaluation work was conducted at the Lewis Second Chance Center, one of the two male facilities.

The technical assistance provided by the NCJRP national partners in Phases I and II enabled Arizona to develop a blueprint for criminal justice reform in our state. This ultimately set the initial foundation for implementation and formative evaluation work conducted in Phase III.

As Arizona continues to implement its coordinated, cross-agency plan to enhance and grow the reentry initiative as part of our NCJRP work, it has become increasingly apparent that there is a need for a centralized coordinator to help manage the growing number of agency projects attached to this initiative. To this end, the Arizona NCJRP Core Team requested funding to cover 60 percent of an FTE to serve as a State Agency Coordinator for the NCJRP reentry initiative. The funding was approved, and the Arizona NCJRP Core Team hired Josh Cutler, a Policy Associate with the Criminal Justice Commission to help ensure that resources and work identified by the Core Team are appropriately aligned with Arizona's reentry initiative goals and objectives and that timely reporting of data and metrics is accomplished to facilitate project evaluation.

We have already established a functioning Evaluation Sub-Team focused on data and evaluation issues as part of our reform efforts. This team is composed of members from the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission's Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), Arizona State University, the Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry, and data and IT experts from various state agencies.

3. Policy, Practice, or Program Implementation Timeline

The Second Chance Centers were suspended in March 2020 due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 within the facilities. As of June 2021, the Centers remain closed for traditional Center programming. This significantly shifted the timeline and feasibility of planned formative evaluation procedures (e.g., interviewing Center participants). In response to this, the Arizona NCJRP Team developed as contingency plan and relied on secondary data and interviews with program stakeholders to conduct formative evaluation work in a safe and virtual space. The sections below summarize our collaborative efforts (see mentioned documents for full overview of results).

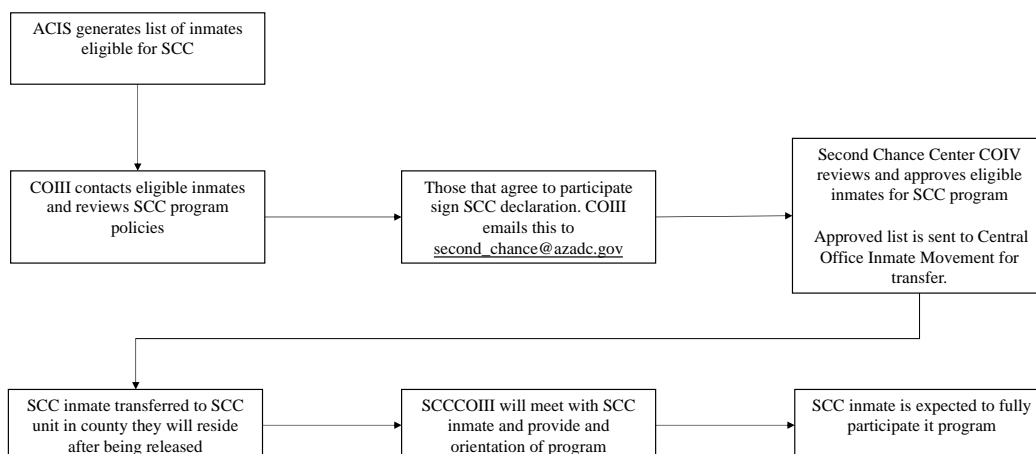
4. Formative Evaluation

a. Strategy and Methods

Before outlining the framework for assessing the fidelity of the Second Chance Center, it is important to briefly describe the logic model and approach of the program. This logic model help informs future aspects of the formative evaluation work that will follow.

Recall that the goal of the Center is to prepare participants for employment upon release by targeting the delivery of services during the last 60 days prior to a participant’s release from prison (see Figure 1). The Department of Economic Security (DES) has full-time staff at the Center to assist in this preparation by facilitating a required 8-week activity cycle focused heavily on preparing for the job market. DES provides training in job searching, writing resumes, interview skills, and properly disclosing their criminal history. ADCRR provides additional classes that are largely voluntary. These voluntary classes include in life-skills, money management, substance abuse, anger management, trade skills, reconnecting with family members, and computer skills. Participants are also provided assistance for housing, food stamps, obtaining a driver’s license and health insurance.

Figure 1. Participant Flow into Centers



i. Fidelity Assessment Framework

The first component of the fidelity assessment framework included thorough gap analysis of the existing data infrastructure of the ADCRR Lewis Second Chance Center. This analysis entailed “taking stock” of what administrative data is currently collected by ADCRR and the DES for the Second Chance Center and what information is needed, but not currently gathered, and how the collection of such data could be formally instituted for the outcome evaluation that is to come. Prior to the conclusion of the gap analysis, we knew very little about what type of data collection are formally instituted by ADCRR and DES that may be harnessed for assessment and evaluation. To this end, we viewed the gap analysis as a critical prerequisite for understanding the implementation fidelity and overall effectiveness of the Second Chance Center.

The gap analysis (see attachment) was structured as a process flow. This began by first examining the data collection and gaps in three sequential intervals: prior to entering the center, while an individual is at the center, and after the individual leaves the center. In the analysis, we identified gaps as well as offered solutions that later became the two succeeding parts of the formative evaluation work.

The second component of the completed formative evaluation work included an analysis of the eligibility and selection criteria for entrance into the Center. This included brief quantitative analysis of who is participating in Lewis Second Chance Center. Specifically, included examining the risk scores and custody levels of those who participated in the Second Chance Center.

Results of the eligibility and selection criteria evaluation (see attachment) showed that all Center participants were either minimum or medium custody but that the average risk score of participants declined over time. That is, while all Center participants met the custody-level required for participation, the average community and violence risk score of participants declined as Center activities continued.

ii. Techniques and Tools

The gap analysis was the first step in the formative evaluation of the Second Chance Centers and included talking with ADCRR and DES (i.e., staff involved with the Center) to discuss what information is currently being gathered by the Second Chance Center on the experience and outcomes of its participants. We then made recommendations for improving and refining data collection in order to have all the necessary data to measure the implementation fidelity and impact of the Lewis Second Chance Center.

Guided by the gap analysis, we then analyzed the administrative data collected by the ADCRR on who is participating in the Center. This helped us begin to understand whether the target population of high-risk to offend individuals are being effectively funneled in the program.

iii. *Performance Indicators and Measures*

The primary performance indicators and measures used in the formative evaluation were custody level and community and violent risk scores for the analysis on selection and eligibility criteria.

iv. *Data Sources*

Administrative data collected by ADCRR and DES were used.

v. *Reporting Procedures*

The research team at the Center for Correctional Solutions will provide brief monthly reports on the implementation and fidelity assessment outlined in this document via email to ensure that NCJRP receives up to date progress reports and feedback. The research team will also provide NCJRP with detailed quarterly reports.

vi. *Capabilities and Competencies*

1. *Resources*

The Center for Correctional Solutions at Arizona State University will be conducting the research for the formative evaluation. The research team includes Director Kevin Wright and Associate Director Jacob Young, who will oversee all research arms of the project.

2. *Roles and Responsibilities*

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission: As the State Administering Agency for Arizona, the Commission serves as one of the lead agencies on the Arizona NCJRP team.

Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry: As the state agency responsible for running the second chance centers, they will provide data and access to the centers to facilitate the evaluation activities as outlined. The Department also serves as one of the Arizona NCJRP lead agencies.

Center for Correctional Solutions: The research team will collect, analyze, and share research findings with project partners and relevant parties.

National Governors Association/National Criminal Justice Association: These two organizations will provide technical assistance to the Arizona NCJRP team.

3. *Key Participants*

Arizona Criminal Justice Commission:

Andrew LeFevre, Executive Director serves as co-chair of the Arizona NCJRP team. In addition, NCJRP Phase III funding is being used to a project coordinator at ACJC, **Joshua Cutler**, who is responsible for coordinating team meetings and information gathering to further the project objectives. Phase III funding will also cover time for ACJC's Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center Director, **Jillian Ware**, and Director of Research, **Dr. Jaimie Jeffords**, to assist with the activities of ASU as needed.

Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry:

Karen Hellman, Assistant Director for Inmate Programs and Reentry serves as the co-chair of the Arizona NCJRP team and as the primary point of contact with the Department. In addition, **Dr. Michael Dolny**, from the Department’s research unit will provide data as required to complete the evaluation.

Center for Correctional Solutions: The Center has extensive research experience in the correctional system, with a heavy focus on how the delivery of programs and policies can be improved for both inmates and staff. **Dr. Wright** has collaborated with state agencies on a number of projects, including as Principal Investigator of a project examining the impact of restrictive housing on the mental health of officers and people who are incarcerated, as well as other projects relating to programming for security group threat members and motivational interviewing training for correctional officers. **Dr. Young** has served as a co-investigator on two government-funded grants related to prison: “The Prison Inmates Networks Study (PINS)” and “Network Mechanisms in a Prison-Based Therapeutic Community,” and is an expert in rigorous research methodologies and advanced statistics.

b. Data Infrastructure Development

i. *Data Required*

All appropriate and available administrative data that is currently collected by ADCRR and DES regarding the Second Chance Centers was leveraged to support formative evaluation work.

ii. *Current State Data Collection*

Research partners, including ADCRR, met and agreed upon the data collection plan above.

iii. *Data Infrastructure Gaps and Challenges*

While we knew that detailed administrative data regarding some components about the Second Chance Centers is largely absent (see 4.a.i, for example), we did not know the full extent of the data infrastructure gaps until the gap analysis was completed. We view these gaps as potential areas for improvement in the data collection infrastructure of the Lewis Second Chance Center. These gaps are outlined in detail in the gap analysis document (see attachment).

The circumstances surrounding COVID-19 prevented additional data collection for this project (e.g., interviews with participants).

iv. *Solutions*

Though the circumstances surrounding limited data collection ability due to COVID-19 cannot necessarily be mitigated, the findings from the gap analysis helped illuminate potential areas for improvement for future formative assessments.

Some potential solutions that were identified include randomizing participation into the Center; creating an assessment tool that measures what participants should be learning from each activity cycle; collecting information on participant experiences within the Center; and collecting additional data on criminal justice contact after release (e.g., arrest and reconviction).

- v. *Management Plan and Capabilities and Competencies*
See Key Participants above

c. Evaluability Assessment

The Arizona NCJRP Team remains committed to objective evaluation as part of the overall reform structure and through this formative work, sought to create a requisite foundational and detailed plan that will allow us to execute rigorous outcome evaluations that will ultimately help us better understand and improve the impact of the Centers.