**The National Criminal Justice Reform Project: Arizona Team**

**Final Report December 2021**

**Introduction and Revisiting Phases I & II**

Most individuals who are incarcerated eventually return to the community.1 What is more, eighteen percent will return to prison within the first six months of their release.2 Though the recidivism rate for individuals released from state prison in Arizona is lower than the national average, recidivism reduction has been a priority for the State under the leadership of Governor Doug Ducey.

When the National Criminal Justice Reform Project (NCJRP) was initiated in 2016, the Ducey administration had already focused the State’s attention on recidivism reduction. Working collaboratively with the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCRR), formerly the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC), the Department of Economic Security (DES) and other agencies, three Second Chance Centers were established within the state prison system in March 2017. The Centers help inmates prepare for release and successful community reintegration by providing an eight-week, intensive program experience focused on skill-building to secure meaningful work, housing, and access to other support services in the community. Entry into a Second Chance Center occurs at most 90 days prior to release and medium-to-high-risk inmates are the primary target population for program participation.

Since the Second Chance Centers were newly established when the possibility of NCJRP participation emerged, Arizona applied for and was accepted for reentry reform technical assistance under the project. During Phases I and II of the project, the AZ team, lead by the Governor’s Criminal Justice Policy Advisor (CJPA) and the State Administrative Agency (SAA) director, worked collaboratively with the NCJRP technical assistance team to engage in a strategic planning process that identified reentry reform goals and gaps in the state’s reentry process that needed to be addressed. The planning process was instrumental in establishing the operational infrastructure needed to further develop the Second Chance Centers and more broadly support effective reentry reform. NCJRP technical assistance focused on the operations of the center at Lewis Complex, Eagle Point and the state’s reentry policies and procedures more broadly with the goal of transitioning to formative and summative (outcome) evaluation work in Phases III and IV of the project, respectively.

**Description of the Second Chance Center at Lewis Complex, Eagle Point**

The primary goal of the Second Chance Center at Lewis is to prepare inmates for successful reentry into the community by delivering an array of employment preparation and other services immediately prior to a participant’s release from prison. 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 individuals released from prison for the job market. DES provides training on job searching, writing resumes, interviewing with a prospective employer, and properly disclosing criminal history information. ADCRR staff deliver classes on life-skills, money management, substance abuse, anger management, reconnecting with family members, and various trade and computer skills, though participation in these classes is voluntary. Participants are also assisted with efforts to obtain housing, food stamps, a driver’s license, and health insurance. While the Second Chance Center at Lewis offers inmates a variety of programming, the Lewis center was conceptualized as a single reentry reform program for NCJRP purposes, and it was the intended focus of formative and outcome evaluation work under Phases III and IV of NCJRP.

In the remainder of this final report, we discuss the work accomplished by the Arizona team during Phase III of NCJRP. We begin by briefly describing the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on original Phase III project plans. We then describe the data gap analysis that was carried out and the resulting recommendations for bridging data infrastructure holes. This is followed by a description of a retrospective program eligibility and selection analysis carried out as part of the originally planned formative evaluation. We conclude with a brief discussion of how Phase III work performed to date will be used to improve the operations and outcomes of the Second Chance Centers and Arizona’s reentry reform efforts more broadly in the future.

While some members of the Arizona team have changed over the life of the NCJRP, the core leadership of the Governor’s office, the Governor’s CJPA and the SAA director remained intact, as did the state’s partnership with researchers at ASU. At the time this final report was developed, key members of the Arizona team included:

* **Andrew LeFevre**, Executive Director of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission and co-chair of the Arizona NCJRP team.
* **Megan Fitzgerald, Criminal Justice Policy Advisor for Governor Doug Ducey**
* **Joshua Cutler**, Arizona Criminal Justice Commission Policy Associate.
* **Karen Hellman**, Assistant Director for Inmate Programs and Reentry, ADCRR.
* **Dr. Michael Dolny**, Research Manager, ADCRR.
* **Dr. Kevin Wright**, Director, Center for Correctional Solutions, ASU.
* **Dr. JacobYoung**, Associate Director, Center for Correctional Solutions, ASU.

**Initial Phase III Plans and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

During the initial months of Phase III in late 2019 and early 2020, the Arizona team worked collaboratively with the NCJRP TTA team to develop plans for 1) assessing and improving the data infrastructure needed to support reentry reform; and 2) a formative evaluation of Second Chance Center operations at Lewis. Both were aimed at better positioning Lewis for rigorous outcome evaluation in Phase IV of the NCJRP. The emergence of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, however, impacted the ability to carry out formative evaluation work as planned, as operations at the Lewis Center were formally suspended in March 2020 due to the pandemic. As a result, the on-site observation of operations at Lewis by ASU evaluators as well as interviews with participants and staff as originally proposed were no longer possible. This situation remained in effect throughout 2020 and 2021. In response, the evaluation team developed and carried out a contingency plan for limited formative evaluation work focused on a retrospective analysis of secondary data and virtual interviews conducted with select program stakeholders. This work was carried out to describe the eligibility criteria for participation into the center and gain insight on how closely the characteristics of Lewis participants aligned with program eligibility criteria. It also shed light on additional data needed to support more comprehensive assessment and monitoring of program targeting.

Despite the myriad work restrictions in place due to COVID, the ASU evaluation team also was able to conduct a formal data gap analysis as originally planned.

**Data Gap Analysis Summary**

Conducting a data gap analysis was viewed as a critical for understanding whether a sufficient data infrastructure for formative and summative evaluation is in place. Prior to conducting the gap analysis, the Arizona team knew very little about the scope of data collection and the type of data being collected by ADCRR and DES relevant to Lewis Second Chance Center processes and outcomes.

The data gap analysis had two primary goals: 1) take stock of what data were being collected by the ADCRR and the DES about Second Chance Center participants as gleaned from team meetings and review of the Second Chance Center Lewis program description and 2) identify what additional data and information would need to be collected to assess program fidelity, various in-program outcomes, and various post-program, post-release outcomes

Using a Second Chance Center process flowchart, the graphic below summarizes the data gaps identified in the analysis, and the potential solutions the Arizona team identified for bridging those gaps. As can be seen in the graphic, the gaps primarily center around data collection concerning the programs offered at the Second Chance Center and the experiences of participants who spend time in the center.

As depicted in Figure 1, data gaps were identified, and potential solutions recommended at the pre-Second Chance Center entry, program participation and post-release stages of the reentry process. Key data gaps included:

* A lack of data that indicates why an individual declined to participate in the Second Chance Center.
* A lack of data on inmate needs and other characteristics, including data that could be used to determine whether program participants who engage in more programming are fundamentally different from those who engage in less programming
* The lack of adequate data to measure the fidelity of program delivery at the Second Chance Centers, as well as whether program participation aligns with identified inmate needs.
* A lack of data on program participation/performance beyond a measure of program completion, and a lack of data on expected program and post-release outcomes apart from recidivism.



*Potential Solutions*

The findings from the gap analysis shed light on fundamental data collection needs that must be addressed if the Second Chance Centers are to achieve full, high-fidelity implementation and rigorous outcome evaluation is to be carried out in in a comprehensive and valid manner. The potential solutions recommended for bridging the identified data gaps centered on the following critical areas. First, the development of tools for measuring the fidelity of programs delivered in the Second Chance Centers and their alignment with inmate needs. Second, the development of data that will shed light on the characteristics of program participants beyond demographics and risk or custody level. Third, the development of data that would shed light on participant and staff experiences within the Center. And finally, the development of in-program and post-release outcome measures beyond recidivism. Developing logic models and/or theories of change that specify the expected outcomes for various programming is likely a prerequisite for much of this work. A recommendation for random assignment to Center participation also was offered to eliminate potential self-selection bias in any future assessment of program outcomes, although implementing random assignment may be extremely difficult to accommodate with the Second Chance Centers for numerous reasons, including reticence to withhold potentially beneficial programming from a subset of inmates who are eligible for program participation.

**Eligibility and Selection Criteria Analysis Summary**

As previously mentioned, the suspension of operations at the Second Chance Centers, including Lewis, due to COVID-19 had a detrimental impact on the formative evaluation work originally planned for Phase III. Denied the opportunity to spend time on-site at Lewis and engage in primary data collection, the ASU evaluation team conducted a retrospective analysis of secondary data on the characteristics of

24,407 individuals that were released from the ADCRR between October 1st, 2017 and September 20th, 2019. Virtual interviews were also conducted with select program stakeholders to provide insight on program eligibility criteria and the program participation selection process as well as context for the analytical findings. While the analysis was intended to provide ADCRR with a basic profile of Second Chance Center participants while also delving into how closely the characteristics of participants aligned with program participation eligibility criteria, information was only available on the individual’s custody level, community risk general score, and community risk violence score at the time of the analysis. This severely limited the team’s ability to comprehensively assess whether the characteristics of program participants matched the program’s eligibility criteria, or the overarching goal of serving medium- and high-risk inmates.

In addition to serving as the primary formative evaluation activity undertaken during Phase III due to the ongoing suspension operations at Lewis and the other two Second Chance Centers, the eligibility and selection analysis complimented the evaluation team’s data gap analysis in that it helped to identify and array of additional data needed to more comprehensively measure and monitor the extent to which Second Chance Center participants meet the established program eligibility and target population parameters.

The established eligibility criteria for selection into a Second Chance Center are as follows:

1. Inmate is approximately 80 days from release, and no more than 90 days away from release.
2. Minimum and medium custody inmates (who are eligible for an override to minimum).
3. Housed in General Population.
4. No felony detainers or felony holds.
5. Not assigned to a fire Crew, Treatment counseling program, ACI or career and technology education program.
6. No pending disciplinary violations.

It also is important to note that while not explicitly mentioned in the criteria above, an overarching goal of the Second Chance Centers and reentry reform more generally is to focus resources on individuals who are medium to high risk for recidivism.

In summary, the analysis found that all Lewis participants in the study population were either minimum or medium custody, which aligns with established program eligibility criteria. Additionally, no changes in the distribution of custody levels among inmates entering the program were found across quarterly observation periods for the two years that served as the focus of the analysis. While time to release upon program entry was not included in the analysis because relevant data were not available, risk score data was examined to shed light on the risk levels of program participants and whether they changed over time. Center participants had an average community risk general score of 8.50, with scores ranging from 2 to 14. Center participants had an average community risk violence score of 6.38, with scores ranging from 1-12. Average scores for both the community risk general score and the community risk violence score declined over time. Unfortunately, the data made available for the analysis did not specify whether an inmate was classified as high, medium or low risk, and cut points in risk score data that could be used to specify risk level also were not available. Information specifying a program participant’s overall risk level for recidivism or violence is sorely needed to assess adherence to the risk principle of effective correctional intervention and the overarching program goal of serving high- and medium-risk inmates. Several additional data needs related to Second Chance Center eligibility criteria are summarized below:

1. *Custody override eligibility.* Data is needed on the custody override eligibility of medium custody inmates.
2. *Housed in general population.* Data is needed on where individuals are housed in ADCRR.
3. *Felony detainers or felony holds.* Data is needed on current felony detainers or holds.
4. *Assigned to Fire Crew, Treatment counseling program, ACI or career and technology education program.* Data is needed on whether an individual is assigned to Fire Crew, Treatment counseling program, ACI or a career or technology program.
5. *Current or pending disciplinary violations.* Data is needed on whether a disciplinary violation is current or pending.

**Moving Forward**

Whilethe Arizona team remains committed to objective evaluation as part of the State’s focus on recidivism reduction and reentry reform, Arizona does not intend to pursue an outcome evaluation of the Lewis Second Chance Center or new technical assistance under Phase IV of NCJRP. Rather, the State intends to build upon the reentry reform foundation established in Phases I through III of the project to improve Second Chance Center operations once they resume, and expand reentry reform to county jails with state funding. Continued enhancement of the state’s data infrastructure to support implementation fidelity and outcome evaluation will be key to success, and the state’s accomplishments under NCJRP have and will continue to be built upon to achieve data infrastructure improvement as well reentry strategy goals.

The planning and reentry reform operational infrastructure implemented at the state level under NCJRP will serve as a model for the development and expansion of jail-based reentry support programs in 2022 and beyond. And perhaps more importantly, the data gap analysis and formative evaluation work carried out under NCJRP is currently being used by ADCRR to reassess Second Chance Center operations and data collection so they can be enhanced once operations resume. Gaps in the Center’s theory of action (e.g., ensuring that programs/courses are aligned with participants needs) and data collection activities are being addressed as a direct result of analytical findings produced under NCJRP. The work carried out under NCJRP under Phases I through III will continue to help the ADCRR and DES better understand and improve the operations and outcomes of the Second Chance Centers for years to come, and it will serve as a blueprint for future reentry reform efforts and evaluations in the state of Arizona.

1Pratt, T. (2019). Addicted to Incarceration. Sage.

2Wright, K. (2018). Re-Entry and Recidivism. Prepared for Arizona Town Hall.