



The Multi-site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

Faith-Based Involvement: Findings from the SVORI Multi-site Evaluation

By Christine Lindquist and Susan Brumbaugh, *RTI International*

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In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 state agencies to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding is supporting 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute.

In this *Reentry Research in Action* brief, we provide information on the involvement of faith-based organizations in SVORI programs. Findings are based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors.

One of the community partnerships suggested by the Federal partners in the funding solicitation for sites was with the faith-based community. In conceptualizing and implementing their reentry programs, many of the 89 SVORI programs¹ have developed strong collaborations with local faith-based agencies, including both individual faith-based organizations and umbrella groups representing numerous faith-based organizations in the community.

The table below reports the number and percentage of SVORI programs that reported the provision of specific services to SVORI participants by faith-based organizations both prior to and after release.

Number and Percentage of Programs Reporting the Provision of Services by Faith-Based Organizations Pre- and Post-Release

Service	Programs Offering Pre-Release		Programs Offering Post-Release	
	n	%	n	%
One-on-one mentoring	38	42.20%	48	53.30%
Housing placements or referrals	20	22.20%	38	42.20%
AA/NA	17	18.90%	36	40.00%
Counseling sessions	17	18.90%	32	35.60%
Peer support groups	17	18.90%	30	33.30%
Financial support/emergency assistance	16	17.80%	41	45.60%
Family reunification	16	17.80%	31	34.40%
Employment referrals/job placement	12	13.30%	27	30.00%
Parenting skills development	12	13.30%	34	37.80%
Anger management/violence counseling	12	13.30%	26	28.90%
Comprehensive drug treatment	11	12.20%	20	22.20%
Life skills training	10	11.10%	29	32.20%
Assistance obtaining benefits and completing applications	9	10.00%	16	17.80%
Treatment/release plan	8	8.90%	15	16.70%
Family counseling	8	8.90%	28	31.10%
Resume and interviewing skills development	7	7.80%	22	22.40%
Cognitive skills development/behavioral programming	7	7.80%	20	22.20%
Assistance obtaining identification	7	7.80%	25	27.80%
Domestic violence services	7	7.80%	21	23.30%
Education/GED/tutoring/literacy	6	6.70%	17	18.90%
Mental health services	5	5.60%	13	14.40%
Needs assessment	4	4.40%	10	11.10%
Risk assessment	3	3.30%	5	6.00%
Vocational training	3	3.30%	16	17.80%
Medical services	2	2.20%	13	14.40%
Legal assistance	1	1.10%	5	5.60%
Dental services	0		6	6.70%
Transportation	n/a		28	31.10%

¹ The 69 SVORI grantees are operating a total of 89 distinct programs. The multi-site evaluation describes characteristics at the program level rather than the grantee level.

Faith-based organizations tend to be more involved in service provision to SVORI participants after release than prior to release. The services most frequently delivered by faith-based organizations are one-on-one mentoring (provided to SVORI participants after release by faith-based organizations in over half of the SVORI programs), financial support/emergency assistance, and housing placements or referrals.

Services most frequently delivered by faith-based organizations:

- One-on-one mentoring
- Financial support/emergency assistance
- Housing placement/referrals

Other roles for faith-based organizations in SVORI include providing guidance to the program through participation in the program's steering committee, serving as community advocates for SVORI, or being involved in unique program components. For example, of the SVORI programs with Community Accountability Panels, 27% have representatives from faith-based organizations on these panels. Of those that utilize offender-specific reentry teams, 39% include faith-based representatives on the teams. In some programs, faith-based organizations are extensively involved in day-to-day service coordination. Case management is provided by faith-based organizations prior to release in 13 programs (14.6%) and post-release in 16 programs (18.0%).

Through interviews and site visits conducted by multi-site evaluation staff, it is evident that several of the programs have emphasized the value of involving faith-based organizations in their SVORI programs, particularly in the final phase of reentry, during which formal supervision ends and the responsibility for successful reintegration shifts to the community. A detailed example of faith-based involvement in one of the SVORI programs, the Michigan adult program, is provided in the box below (this information was originally published in the *National Portrait of SVORI*, which is available at www.svori-evaluation.org).

The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Michigan SVORI Program

The *Michigan Department of Corrections* reentry program is supported by the strong involvement of a local faith-based organization, Wings of Faith. This organization provides case management for all reentry clients. As program participants enter the pre-release facility in which they receive reentry programming, they are assigned to a Wings of Faith case manager. During the months prior to release, these case managers go into the participating facilities to conduct needs assessments and begin addressing barriers to success. After release, they continue to work closely with the parole officer assigned to participants. Although some agencies require that a service referral come from a parole officer, the Wings of Faith case managers provide the majority of service referrals (as well as needs assessments) for program participants. A notable feature of the program is that Wings of Faith and the parole officer are co-located in a one-stop center (The Samaritan Center) that also houses numerous local nonprofit service providers, facilitating more immediate access to services. Wings of Faith also does much of the public relations work and marketing for the program, which has helped promote community support.

Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators

Pamela K. Lattimore, Ph.D.

RTI International
Center for Crime, Violence, and Justice Research
3040 Cornwallis Road
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
Phone: 803-754-5965
Fax: 919-485-7700

Christy A. Visher, Ph.D.

Urban Institute
Justice Policy Center
2100 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
Phone: 202-261-5593
Fax: 202-659-8985



www.svori-evaluation.org

