



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

### Implementation of SVORI Programs

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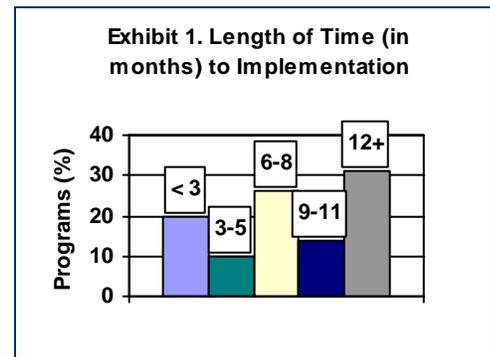
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In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 grantees to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding supports 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute.

In this *Reentry Research in Action* brief, we describe the implementation of SVORI programs, describing the status of the programs and implementation barriers encountered. Findings are based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors.

Grantees funded under the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) were charged with planning, implementing, and developing a sustainability plan for their programs over a 3-year award period. Most grantees received partial funding in the last quarter of 2002 and full spending approval in 2003, though the specific funding schedule varied across sites and some did not receive full approval until early 2004. This report summarizes the SVORI implementation process as of June 2005, based on a survey of the program directors for all 89 SVORI programs.<sup>1</sup>

As of June 2005, three-quarters (74%) of the program directors classified their programs as fully operational. Most program directors indicated that their programs became fully operational in 2003 (46%) or 2004 (43%). Interestingly, 62% of the fully operational programs enrolled their first participants in 2003, suggesting that several programs enrolled participants before being fully operational. Exhibit 1 shows the reported length of time that programs took to get “up and running” once all Federal funds were released, with about one-third taking 12 or more months for implementation. Directors of programs that were not yet fully operational reported that remaining program areas to be implemented included securing the involvement of community, faith-based, and other partnering agencies; hiring staff; identifying eligible participants; and lining up specific services.



Most SVORI programs are quite small, with 38% having enrolled 50 people or less.<sup>2</sup> The enrollment numbers are likely to increase during the remainder of the grant period, however, as more programs become fully implemented and as operational programs continue expanding their programs.

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Programs Encountering Resistance from Types of Key Stakeholders	Programs (%)
Members of the community to which SVORI offenders return	26%
Supervisors at the facilities	20%
Line staff at the facilities	21%
Line officers at the post-release supervision agency	18%
Supervisors at the post-release supervision agency	17%
Top administrators at the facilities	14%
Top administrators at the post-release supervision agency	14%
Some of the SVORI partner agencies in the community	9%

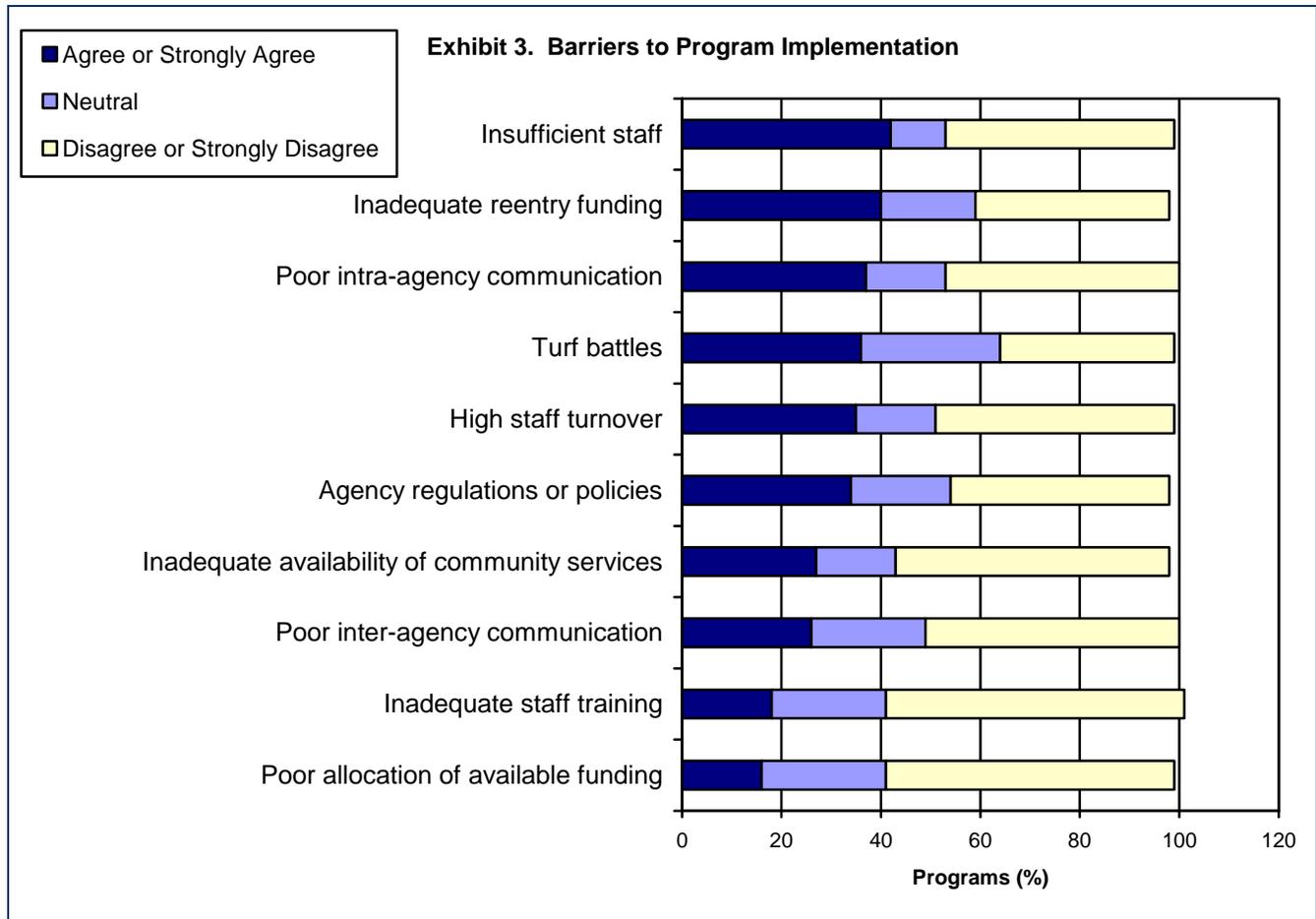
Note: The percentages reflect the proportion of program directors who agreed or strongly agreed they had encountered resistance from key stakeholders.

We asked program directors about a variety of barriers and issues surrounding SVORI program implementation. Exhibit 2 shows that, for the most part, program directors did not report encountering much resistance from key stakeholders. Program directors were more likely to report encountering resistance from community members (26% agreed or strongly agreed) than from facility staff (including line staff, supervisors, and administrators) or staff from the post-release supervision agency. Very few program directors (9%) reported resistance from SVORI partner agencies in the community.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Enrollment and enrollment barriers are discussed in more detail in a companion RRIA on enrollment (forthcoming).

Exhibit 3 presents other reported implementation issues. The most common barriers, reported by more than one-third of the SVORI program directors, included having insufficient staff available, inadequate funding for reentry, poor communication within agencies, turf battles, high staff turnover, and agency regulations that have made it difficult to implement SVORI. It does not appear that funding allocation, staff training, interagency communication, and service availability have been particularly problematic for SVORI programs.



This report has shown that the majority of SVORI programs are fully operational yet small in scope. The programs do not appear to have encountered much resistance from agencies involved in the initiative, though community support has been somewhat problematic, along with the availability of staff and funding for reentry. Sustaining the programs implemented through SVORI after the funding period ends will be challenging to the grantees. Plans for program continuation and sustainability strategies undertaken by SVORI grantees are addressed in detail in a forthcoming RRIA on sustainability.

**Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators**

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