



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

Characteristics of Prisoner Reentry Programs for Juveniles

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In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 agencies 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. Thirty-seven of these programs specifically target juveniles (the remaining 52 programs include 7 programs serving both adults and juveniles).

In this *Reentry Research in Action* brief, we describe SVORI programs exclusively serving juveniles along various dimensions that characterize their reentry approaches. Findings are based on data gathered from a June 2005 survey of the SVORI program directors.¹

The SVORI multi-site evaluation team provides frequent, brief, and practical information on SVORI programs and interim evaluation findings through our RRIA series of topical briefs. This RRIA focuses on SVORI programs that serve juveniles exclusively, and highlights organizational characteristics, approaches to service coordination, and special service components. This information will be of immediate interest to those practitioners interested in designing similar programs.

The SVORI program solicitation provided only broad programmatic guidelines to the applicants, including requirements for three phases (pre-

release, short-term post-release, and long-term community reintegration), needs assessment, and coordinated case management. As a result, the programs funded under the initiative vary widely in terms of programmatic characteristics and services delivered. Table 1 provides a summary of the key organizational characteristics of the juvenile SVORI programs. Although most SVORI funds were awarded to state juvenile justice or social service agencies, nearly one quarter of post-release phases were run by private agencies through contracts. Only a small minority of the juvenile programs reported starting a new program (22%), and most emphasize the pre- and the post-release phases equally.

Table 1. Characteristics of SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles

Characteristic	Programs	
	n	%
Main Post-release Agency Type		
Government agency	28	75.7%
Private agency	9	24.3%
Primary Use of SVORI Funds		
Starting a new program	8	21.6%
Expanding an existing program	12	32.4%
Filling service gaps	17	45.9%
Phase Emphasis		
Emphasizes either the pre-release phase or the post-release phase	8	21.6%
Emphasizes both phases equally	29	78.4%
Pre-release Geographic Targeting		
All facilities	20	54.1%
Select facilities only	17	45.9%
Post-release Geographic Targeting		
All communities (statewide)	3	8.1%
Select communities only	34	91.9%
Offender Needs Targeting		
General "serious and violent" population	32	86.5%
Subset of offenders with specific service needs	5	13.5%
Service Targeting		
Attempt to provide all needed services for participants	30	81.1%
Focus on a specific type of service or set of services	7	18.9%

Note: Percentages reported in this table are based on the 37 SVORI programs serving juveniles or juveniles and youthful offenders (juveniles sentenced as adults). This analysis does not include any programs serving adults.

Although most of the juvenile program directors reported providing all needed services to participants, a higher proportion of juvenile programs (19%) appear to be targeting a specific set of services than adult programs (11%). This programmatic concentration is not surprising, in that juvenile programs are more likely than adult programs to provide specialized services.

Although post-release geographic coverage was generally targeted (nearly all programs targeted their post-release activities in selected communities), the programs were overwhelmingly inclusive with regard to their target population (with 87% of programs serving the general serious and violent population rather than a subset of offenders with specific needs) and general in their service focus (81% of programs attempt to provide all needed services rather than focusing on a specific subset).

The program directors were asked to rank, among a set of factors, the services that were their top three priorities (see Table

2). The service-need areas most often ranked as the number one priority were family support/unification, community integration, and employment. Among all of the possible services, education services were ranked most frequently in the top three. The concentration on family support/unification, community integration and skills building (employment, vocational, and educational services) seems entirely appropriate given both the nature of the population being served (juveniles) and the overall purpose of SVORI (effecting a successful community transition).

Top service-need areas:

- Family support/unification
- Community integration
- Employment

Table 2. Primary Focus of SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles

Service Type	All Programs				
	Top Rank		Any Rank		Mean
	n	%	n	%	
Family support/unification	10	27.0%	20	54.1%	2.30
Community integration	10	27.0%	21	56.8%	2.19
Employment/vocation	9	24.3%	19	51.4%	2.11
Education/skills building	5	13.5%	22	59.5%	1.91
Substance abuse	2	5.4%	14	37.8%	1.71
Mental health	1	2.7%	10	27.0%	1.70
Other	0	n/a	5	13.5%	1.40
Physical health	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a

Note: This table shows the results of a question asking program directors to rank the top three areas on which they are focusing their programs and services. Results are based on the 37 surveys returned by directors of juvenile programs. “Any Rank” indicates service was included in programs’ list of top three services. “Top Rank” indicates the service was identified as programs’ top priority. “Mean” is the mean rank score for each service type (with “3” ranked highest)—a higher score indicates a larger number of high rankings.

The remaining tables present information on the approaches used to coordinate service delivery (Table 3) and the use of unique program components (Table 4). In some cases, program directors report differences in services and components provided to SVORI participants and “non-SVORI”—defined as individuals comparable to SVORI participants in terms of age, needs, and risk criteria but who are not enrolled in the program.

Table 3 shows that SVORI juvenile programs include a high degree of case management—usually provided by the same case manager or supervising agent both pre- and post-release. Less than a quarter of the programs report providing case management for a higher proportion of SVORI participants than they do for comparable, non-SVORI offenders during the pre-release phase, indicating that case management is a general programmatic approach for these juvenile justice systems and not a new service just for SVORI participants.

One of the cornerstones of the Intensive Aftercare Program model popularized by David Altschuler is the linking of institutional and community corrections through structure, policies, programs, and practices. Several juvenile SVORI programs reflect this model, as exemplified by the SC Department of Juvenile Justice. There, the efforts of reintegration coordinators have made institutions more receptive to having community representatives come into the facility. The facility sets aside days for community service providers to work with juveniles while they are still incarcerated. This has enabled the institution to make direct links to the community.

Table 3. Service Coordination Approaches among SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles

Service Coordination Approach	Programs	
	n	%
Case Management		
Provide pre-release case management	37	100%
SVORI proportion higher than comparison proportion	8	21.6%
Provide post-release case management	36	97.3%
SVORI proportion higher than comparison proportion	12	32.4%
Use same case manager for pre- and post-release	29	78.4%
Use same supervision officer for pre- and post-release	31	83.8%
Continuity of Care	36	97.3%
Wrap-Around Approach	35	94.6%
Community Accountability Panels/Boards	13	35.1%
Use only with SVORI participants pre-release	9	24.3%
Use only with SVORI participants post-release	8	21.6%
Composition of panel/board same for pre- and post-release	8	21.6%
Offender-Specific Reentry Teams	22	59.5%
Use only with SVORI participants pre-release	14	37.8%
Use only with SVORI participants post-release	16	43.2%
Composition of team same for pre- and post-release	8	21.6%
One-Stop Shop	14	37.8%

Note: Percentages reported in this table are based on the 37 SVORI programs serving juveniles or juveniles and youthful offenders (juveniles sentenced as adults). This analysis does not include any programs serving adults.

The programs also report that virtually all SVORI participants receive post-release case management, with about a third of the programs reporting that more SVORI than non-SVORI offenders receive post-release case management. Notably, a majority of programs reported that the same case manager (78%) and supervising officer

Within the juvenile justice arena, continuity of care is considered to be a “best practice.” For SVORI programs, we found that virtually all programs report providing continuity of care, and that the actors (case managers and supervising officers) providing this care are the same both pre- and post-release (78% and 84% respectively). Having the same staff involved with the juvenile prior to and after release ensures that those managing the case are familiar with key aspects of both institutional and community service provision.

(84%) work with SVORI participants both pre- and post-release. This provision of case management by the same individuals pre- and post-release is likely related to the almost universal reporting (97% of programs) of the provision of “continuity of care” (i.e., a model in which a case manager, supervision officer, or service provider is involved with an individual from the pre-release facility to the community).

Another key aspect related to the coordination of services for juvenile SVORI offenders is the use of a “wrap-around approach” that is defined by a broad set of interested agencies developing and delivering a comprehensive, individualized

treatment plan that includes the offenders’ entire social network. Nearly all (95%) programs reported using such an approach that creates a more holistic intervention for the offender. As this approach is considered a “best practice” within the juvenile justice arena because it creates a more holistic intervention for the youth, it is encouraging to see the frequency with which it is reported being used.

Other approaches that can improve service coordination include the use of community accountability panels (used by one-third of programs, with more than half retaining the same board composition for pre- and post-release) and offender-specific reentry teams (used by more than half of the programs, with one-third of those teams comprising the same members pre- and post-release). More than one-third of programs report using a “one-stop shop” within which a variety of treatment providers are available to provide referrals or services to juveniles in a single location in the community.

Table 4 shows other program components reported by program directors. Among these components, programs most often reported using a curriculum-based classroom program prior to release. These activities are not generally specific to SVORI, with three programs reporting activities used only with SVORI participants (although many programs report prioritizing SVORI participants).

Table 4. Program Components Used by SVORI Programs Exclusively Serving Juveniles

Program Components	Programs	
	n	%
Reentry Courts	11	29.7%
Use only with SVORI participants	6	16.2%
Video-Conferencing	14	37.8%
Use only with SVORI participants	4	10.8%
Pre-release Curriculum-Based Programs	36	97.3%
Use only with SVORI participants	3	8.1%
Restorative Justice		
Restitution	29	78.4%
Victim Mediation	10	27.0%
Victim Awareness/education	25	67.6%
Community service	34	91.9%
Community beautification/landscaping	13	35.1%
Special Programs and Activities		
Animal care/training	4	10.8%
Habitat for Humanity	14	37.8%
Weed & Seed	14	37.8%

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A majority of programs also reported using several restorative justice components, including community service, restitution, and victim awareness. About one-third of programs reported using components such as reentry courts, video-conferencing, and various special programs.

This report has shown that, overall, the juvenile SVORI programs are run by government agencies and focus equally on pre- and post-release. They tend to be targeted geographically but inclusive in their population and service focus. Most programs employ a continuity-of-care model that involves staff and community members working with juveniles both before and after release. This approach, combined with the provision of “wrap-around services” reported by most programs, indicates that the SVORI juvenile programs appear to be incorporating “best practices” recommended by the juvenile programmatic field.

Programs overwhelmingly (92%) reported making community service required of juvenile SVORI participants. This service, in concert with the use of community accountability panels, suggests that the juvenile SVORI programs are working to instill a sense of responsibility and reciprocity towards his or her community. This community emphasis is further strengthened by the use of victim awareness and education programs.

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