

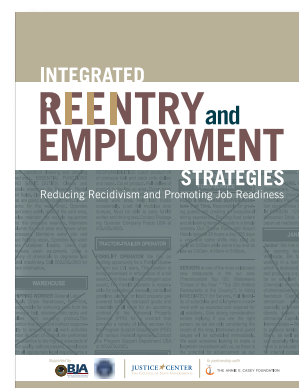
SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED REENTRY PROGRAMS:

Measuring Fidelity to the Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies (IRES) Framework

Employment-focused reentry programs¹ are often uniquely positioned to reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes for people returning to communities after incarceration. However, few programs have been able to achieve success in both areas partially due to the fact that many of them focus solely on job attainment. While employment is crucial for successful reentry, simply placing someone in a job is not an ultimate solution for reducing recidivism or improving long-term job retention.

Various studies suggest that to improve employment and recidivism outcomes for people reentering communities after incarceration, employment-focused reentry service providers should work to address people's antisocial attitudes and beliefs associated with crime, many of which also impact a person's ability to succeed in the workplace.² At the same time, not everyone reentering the community needs the same types of services; people who are at a higher risk of reoffending require cognitive-behavioral interventions to address the thought patterns that lead to criminal activity, while those services can be detrimental to people who are at a lower risk of reoffending.³ Employment-focused reentry programs that are achieving positive outcomes have moved beyond solely providing job-placement services and are focusing on providing opportunities to build employability skills such as sector-based training, education, credentialing, and subsidized and unsubsidized employment, among other skill-building options, and addressing a person's assessed criminogenic risk and need factors.

In September 2013, The Council of State Governments Justice Center published the [Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness \(IRES\) white paper](#), with support from the U.S. Department of Justice (through the National Reentry Resource Center) and the Annie E. Casey Foundation as well as guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor. The white paper integrates best practices from both the workforce development and corrections fields and offers guidance on how to design employment-focused reentry programs that incorporate risk-need-responsivity (RNR) principles. The white paper also provides a tool (see Figure 1) to help policymakers and practitioners match people to appropriate services and triage limited resources in a way that maximizes their impact on recidivism and employment outcomes.

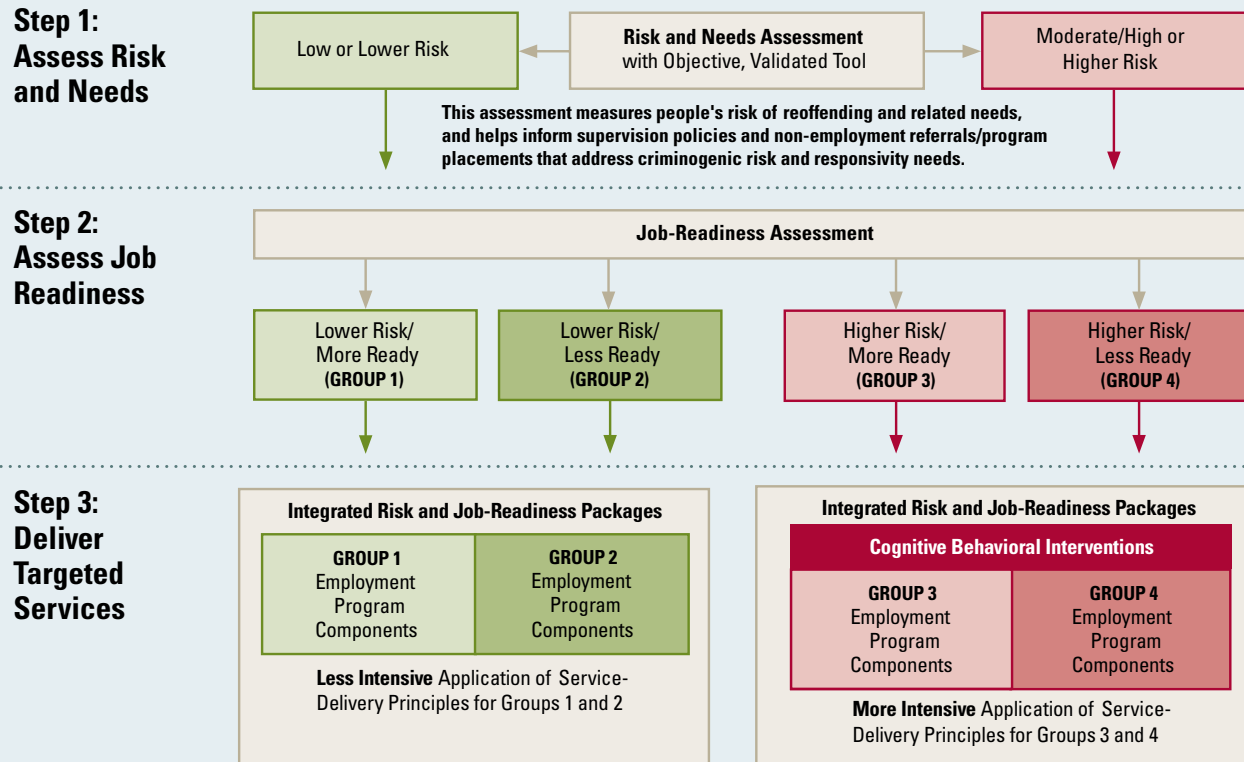


Risk-Need-Responsivity Principles

In recent years, criminal justice and social science researchers have identified specific principles that have been proven effective in reducing recidivism. When implemented correctly and consistently, the RNR principles help administrators and practitioners focus their resources where they will have the greatest impact on reducing recidivism and meeting the needs of people reentering communities from correctional facilities. These principles state the following:

- **Risk Principle.** Match the intensity of a person's interventions to their level of risk for criminal activity. Research shows that prioritizing supervision and services for people assessed as being at a moderate or high risk of committing a future crime can lead to a significant reduction in recidivism among this group. Conversely, intensive interventions for people who are at a low risk of recidivism may actually be harmful and contribute to increasing the person's likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior.⁴
- **Need Principle.** Target criminogenic needs—the factors that contribute to the likelihood of new criminal activity. Research indicates that there are eight criminogenic needs which contribute to an individual's risk of recidivating: (1) antisocial behavior; (2) antisocial personality patterns; (3) antisocial thinking; (4) antisocial associates (5) poor family and marital relationships; (6) substance addiction; (7) low levels of performance and or satisfaction in school and/or work; and (8) unstructured and antisocial leisure time.⁵ Understanding risk of future criminal behavior allows providers to tailor employment services and recidivism-reduction interventions to individual needs. For people with antisocial thinking, behaviors, personality patterns, and peers—the criminogenic risk factors that have the greatest effect on reoffending—cognitive-behavioral interventions may be needed to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and prepare them for the workplace.
- **Responsivity Principle.** Account for a person's individual abilities, learning styles, and motivation as well as his or her cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender characteristics when designing interventions. Learning disabilities and mental or physical illnesses, or substance addictions may also need to be addressed before corrections or employment interventions can be successful.⁶

Figure 1: The Resource-Allocation and Service-Matching Tool



Steps 1 and 2 of the framework informs who practitioners should target with services to address what needs. Step 3 informs what services to provide and how to deliver those services in a way that is responsive to the person's needs.

The following self-assessment is designed to help employment-focused reentry programs gauge their current capacity to provide integrated reentry and employment interventions to reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes. This tool assesses the extent to which programs are adopting promising practices from the workforce development field to improve work outcomes for hard-to-employ populations,⁷ including people returning to communities from incarceration or who are on parole and probation supervision. It also assesses for the program's use of the service-delivery principles that have been shown to reduce recidivism and can be used to build the employability skills of this population.

This self-assessment should be used in conjunction with Section II of the *IREs* white paper. For each program component, select a corresponding statement that most accurately depicts the services or programming provided by your program. There are no right or wrong answers—employment-focused reentry service providers should use this assessment to identify opportunities to build capacity to serve any risk-need groupings desired. If, due to funding streams, programs are unable to offer certain services, they are encouraged to develop partnerships with other entities to offer such services.

B. Timing – Provide services shortly before or at the time of release, or at the start of community supervision, to address participants’ immediate needs, and adapt the services to the person’s changing needs over time.

	A	B	C
Pre-release services aimed at developing a transition plan and engaging the participant in programming	<input type="checkbox"/> No services or engagement in services begin prior to release from incarceration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff inform participants of available services prior to release from incarceration and engagement happens remotely between staff and the person incarcerated (e.g., letter writing, phone calls).	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff visit the correctional facility to engage participants in services and begin actual service delivery prior to release.
Services in the community begin after release to avoid service disruption and to assist with immediate needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Community-based services typically begin three months or longer after release from incarceration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Community-based services typically begin between one and three months after release from incarceration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Community-based services typically begin within one month after release from incarceration.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">TOTAL SCORE: _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is best equipped to serve based on the timing of your first engagement with participants.</p> <p>2 points = timing of services is most appropriate for low-risk participants 3-4 points = timing of services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants 5-6 points = timing of services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

C. Incentives – Increase motivation for positive change and improve job performance with measures such as stipends for maintaining employment and peer-supported recognition for program completion.

	A	B	C
Non-financial incentives such as recognition or awards for programming milestones and completion in the presence of peers	<input type="checkbox"/> No non-financial incentives are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-financial incentives are offered to reward programming completion including employment obtainment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-financial incentives are provided in the presence of peers to reward programming milestones and completion including obtaining and retaining employment.
Financial incentives to increase motivation and involvement in employment services	<input type="checkbox"/> No financial incentives are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial incentives such as support payments for housing, child care, and transportation are offered to those involved in employment services.	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial incentives such as payment for involvement in transitional employment or retention bonuses are given to people that find and maintain traditional unsubsidized employment.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">TOTAL SCORE: _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is best equipped to serve based on the incentives offered to participants.</p> <p>2-3 points = incentives for services is most appropriate for low-risk participants 4-5 points = incentives for services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants 6 points = incentives for services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

D.Coordination – Collaboration with corrections, workforce development, and reentry professionals as well as other service providers to ensure that interventions are provided in a way that supports recidivism-reduction and employment goals.

	A	B	C
Coordination with community supervision or corrections for transition and/or reentry planning, as well as information sharing between relevant agencies	<input type="checkbox"/> No coordination between agencies takes place to establish transition and/or reentry planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Information sharing is a one-time task or only occurs in one direction, as opposed to ongoing mutual communication.	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular two-way communication is conducted in a way that fosters coordination and collaboration.
Communication with family or community supports for reentry and/or transition planning purposes	<input type="checkbox"/> No communication takes place with family members or community supports.	<input type="checkbox"/> Reactive communication takes place with family members or community supports (i.e., family reaches out to program staff regarding coordinating services).	<input type="checkbox"/> Proactive communication takes place with family members or other supportive people (i.e., program staff reaches out to family regarding coordinating services), and they are active participants in the reentry and/or transition process.
Case conferencing to coordinate intervention timing and prioritize criminogenic needs and responsivity factors	<input type="checkbox"/> No case conferencing is conducted within the program between different service providers or between the program staff and external service providers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal case conferencing is conducted within the program between different service providers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal case conferencing is conducted within the program between different service providers, and external case conferencing is conducted with external service providers.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">TOTAL SCORE: _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is best equipped to serve based on the level of coordination that takes place between your staff and other supports to plan for a person’s reentry.</p> <p>3-4 points = coordination of services is most appropriate for low-risk participants</p> <p>5-7 points = coordination of services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants</p> <p>8-9 points = coordination of services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

E. Structured Time – Organize people’s time with effective programming and positive activities to minimize opportunities for criminal actions and time with antisocial peers.

	A	B	C
Structured programming in planned, prosocial activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Between one and three hours per week of structured programming is available. If more hours of structured programming are available, participation is voluntary.	<input type="checkbox"/> Between four and six hours per week of structured programming is available, and participation is required.	<input type="checkbox"/> More than six hours per week of structured programming is available, and participation is required.
Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programming to provide structured programming	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programs are not available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programs are offered and span between 1 and 20 hours per week.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programs are offered and span between 20 and 40 hours per week.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">TOTAL SCORE: _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is most appropriate to serve based on the amount of structured time available to participants. 2 points = structured time of services is most appropriate for low-risk participants 3-4 points = structured time of services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants 5-6 points = structured time of services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

This self-assessment provides a platform to discuss your program’s capacity to provide employment services that increase public safety by incorporating recidivism reduction strategies for people returning to the community from incarceration or who are on parole or probation supervision. The results are not a reflection of your program’s quality, but provide guidance on which risk-need group(s) your program is currently best equipped to serve based on the IRES framework. To provide services appropriate for higher risk groups, it is suggested that programs identify strategies to provide interventions in Section II Column C or develop formal partnerships (MOUs/MOAs) with agencies that provide those services.

For more information on implementing the IRES framework, visit <https://csjusticecenter.org/nrrc/reducing-recidivism-and-increasing-job-readiness/>.

Endnotes

1. This assessment tool focuses primarily on community-based programs/providers that offer employment services to the reentry population. For the purposes of this document, the term “employment-focused reentry service programs/providers” is sometimes used as shorthand to describe this group.
2. Edward J. Latessa, “Why Work is Important and How to Improve the Effectiveness of Correctional Reentry Programs That Target Employment,” *Criminology and Public Policy* 11, no. 1 (2012): 87–91.
3. Ibid.
4. Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Edward J. Latessa, and Alexander M. Holsinger, “The Risk Principle in Action: What Have We Learned from 13,676 Offenders and 97 Corrections Programs?” *Crime and Delinquency* 52, no. 1 (January 2006): 77–93; See discussion in Clement, Schwarzfeld, and Thompson, *The National Summit on Justice Reinvestment and Public Safety: Addressing Recidivism, Crime, and Corrections Spending*.
5. James Bonta and Don A. Andrews, *Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment and Rehabilitation* (Ottawa: Public Safety Canada, 2007).
6. Don A. Andrews, Ivan Zinger, Robert D. Hoge, James Bonta, Paul Gendreau, and Francis T. Cullen, “Does Correctional Treatment Work? A Psychologically Informed Meta-Analysis.” *Criminology* 28, no. 3 (1990): 369–404.
7. Characteristics associated with people who are hard to employ include challenges with transportation and housing, education and skill deficits, and health or other needs that impair a person’s ability to attain and retain employment (including responsiveness factors). To learn more about the needs of the “hard to employ” population, view page 19 of the *IRES* white paper.

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