



Program Evaluation Summary

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Sheridan Correctional Center Therapeutic Community: Year 2

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After two years of operation, the Sheridan Correctional Center Therapeutic Community continues to successfully treat inmates with substance abuse problems while providing services to increase post-release employability and reduce the risk of re-arrest and re-imprisonment.

By the end of 2005, 918 inmates were housed at the Illinois Department of Corrections' (IDOC) Sheridan Correctional Center, offering one of the largest prison-based therapeutic community programs for substance abusing offenders in the U.S. More than 1,100 of 2,500 offenders admitted have successfully completed the incarceration requirements since the program was launched by Gov. Rod Blagojevich in January 2004.

Ongoing evaluation of the Sheridan Correctional Center's Therapeutic Community program is conducted jointly by Authority and IDOC staff. This Program Evaluation Summary updates an October 2004 evaluation report on the program and includes an overview of the population served, analyses of graduation and removal rates, and an assessment of the post-release success of program graduates in terms of re-arrest, return to prison, and employment.

Overview

Between Jan. 2, 2004 and Dec. 31, 2005, 2,588 inmates sentenced to prison in Illinois met the eligibility requirements for admission to the Sheridan Correctional Center Therapeutic Community. The program serves adult male inmates who are identified as having a substance abuse problem, are projected to serve between six and 24 months, have no serious mental health issues, and are not serving a sentence for murder or criminal sexual assault. The components of the program include: orientation; individual and group substance abuse counseling and treatment; educational and vocational programming; and intensive post-release supervision, clinical case management, and job placement assistance.

A number of outside organizations provide services to Sheridan program participants. The Gateway Foundation provides drug treatment. The Safer Foundation offers employability training and post-release job referrals and placement. Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities-TASC handles pre-Sheridan screening, post-release treatment referrals, and clinical case management. Illinois Valley Community College, the Illinois Manufacturing Foundation, and the National Homebuilders Association provide vocational programming.



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Program Evaluation Summaries are derived from program evaluations funded or conducted by the Authority. The full evaluation reports are available from the Authority.

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Inmate characteristics

Sheridan inmate characteristics are similar to those of all adult male inmates admitted to IDOC (Table 1). Sheridan participants averaged 31.5 years of age. About 65 percent were African American. Most participants were unmarried, but 66 percent had children.

Most participants were convicted of drug law violations or property crimes, such as theft and burglary. About 13 percent were serving a sentence for a violent crime, primarily robbery and assault/battery. On average, Sheridan participants had 17 previous arrests and were sentenced to prison 1.6 times prior to participation. Fifty-nine percent of those admitted had never held a job for more than two years, and 57 percent had not completed high school or earned a GED before sentencing.

In terms of the extent and nature of the participants' substance abuse problem, 32 percent were identified as primarily abusing heroin and cocaine, 24 percent were identified as primarily abusing marijuana, and 21 percent were identified as primarily abusing alcohol. On average, participants had been using their primary substance of abuse for 11 years. Further, 47 percent of those at Sheridan had never previously participated in substance abuse treatment despite their extensive substance abuse histories and frequent processing through the justice system.

A majority of Sheridan admissions during the first two years of operation were sentenced to IDOC from Cook County and the surrounding Collar counties: Lake, McHenry, Kane, DuPage, and Will. Due to the time and additional staff needed to implement the recruitment and screening process at all IDOC Reception and Classification (R&C) centers, Stateville R&C admissions have been the focus of Sheridan recruitment. Since the program's inception, only 17 percent of all Sheridan admissions were from outside of the northern region of Illinois. Graham and Menard R&C centers have recently fully implemented recruitment and screening processes for substance abuse treatment and identification of Sheridan-eligible inmates. This may help boost admissions from central and southern Illinois.

Program progression

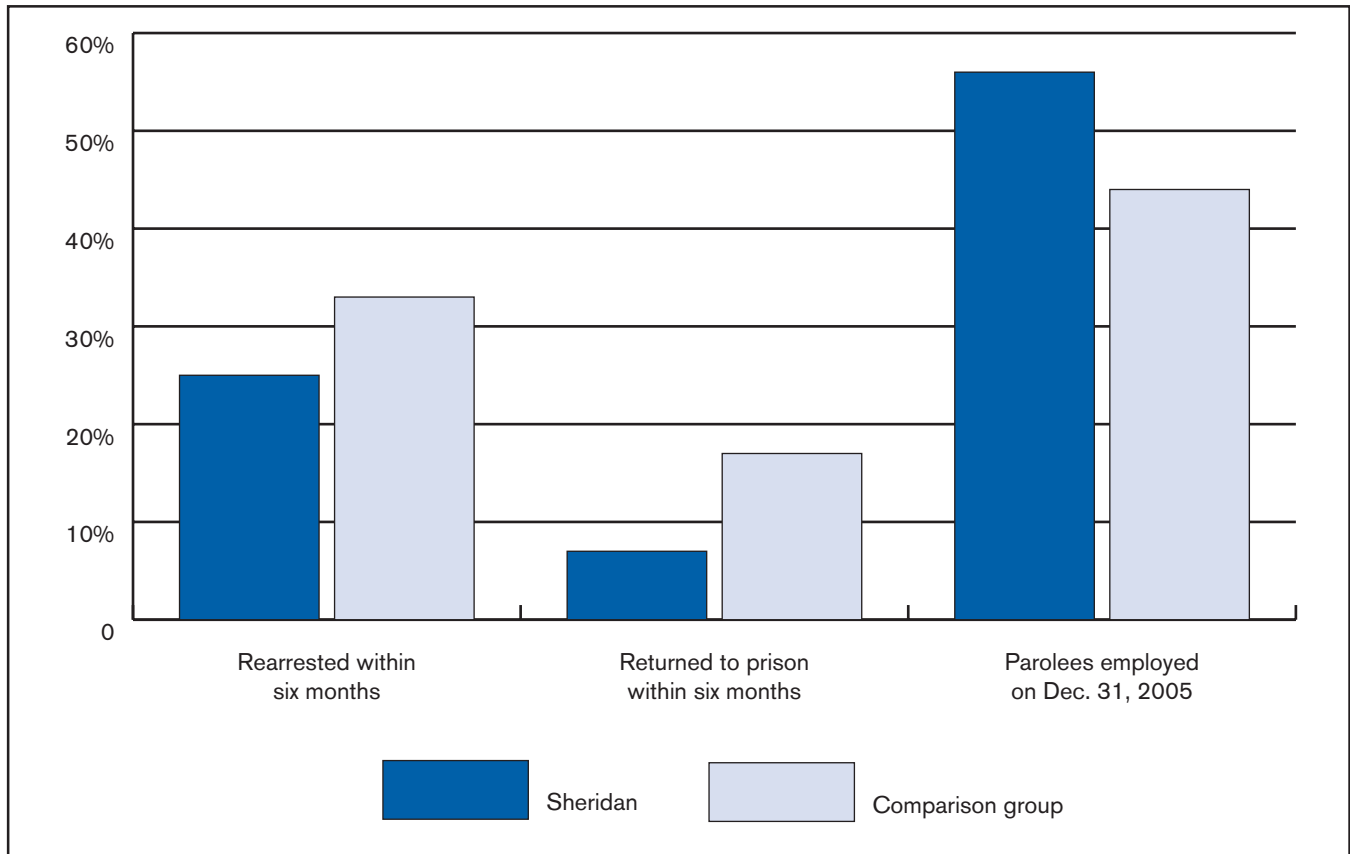
Once an inmate is admitted to Sheridan, he is required to complete one month of orientation about the program and the therapeutic community philosophy. The inmate then enters the treatment phase, during which he undergoes group treatment and individual therapy while participating in various educational and vocational programs.

Table 1
Characteristics of Sheridan admissions
2004-2005

Offender characteristic	Percentage
Age	
Under 21	11.2%
21-30	39.4%
31-40	30.5%
41 and older	18.9%
Race	
African American	64.6%
White	26.9%
Hispanic	8.3%
Other	0.2%
Offense class	
Class X felony conviction	4.1%
Class 1 to 2 felony conviction	58%
Class 3 to 4 felony conviction	37.9%
Offense committed	
Drug law violation	41.8%
Property crime	31.4%
Violent offense	13.4%
Weapon offense	6.4%
DUI	3.4%
Other offenses	3.6%
Prior prison sentences	
None	37%
1 to 2	38.7%
3 or more	24.3%

Participants reside at the Sheridan Correctional Center. If an inmate refuses to participate at any point in the program or violates IDOC or treatment rules, he can be reprimanded, denied good conduct credits, receive an unfavor-

Figure 1
Post-release recidivism and employment rates



able security grade (which limits privileges), or placed in segregation, removed from the program, and transferred to another facility. Thus, one way to gauge program progress and completion is to examine the number of graduates relative to the number of removals.

The program saw 1,166 graduates and 367 removals during the first two years of operation. Inmate characteristics associated with program success included age, sentence length, histories of violence, prior prison stays and eligibility for earned good conduct credit (EGCC).

Older participants were more likely to succeed, as were participants with less extensive arrest histories involving violent crime. Participants with three or more prior arrests for violent crimes were more than twice as likely to be removed for rule violations than were participants with no prior arrests for violent crimes.

Sentence length was inversely related to successful program outcome. The more time participants were sentenced to serve in prison, the less likely they were to successfully complete the prison phase of the treatment program. Also found was that participants who had been in prison two or

more times prior to their Sheridan sentence were 50 percent less likely to be removed for rule violations than those in prison for the first time.

Finally, the examination of factors associated with program completion versus removal revealed that participants who were eligible for earned good conduct credit in addition to traditional day-for-day good conduct credit were more likely to succeed. Nearly 60 percent of those released from Sheridan through December 2005 were eligible for EGCC, which allows for an additional half-day off of their sentence for each day they participate in treatment. Ineligible for EGCC are inmates convicted of crimes subject to truth-in-sentencing laws, those who were incarcerated with IDOC more than twice before, and those who previously received EGCC. Sheridan participants who were ineligible for EGCC were four times more likely to be removed from the program.

Many newly admitted Sheridan inmates interviewed said EGCC was a motivating factor behind program participation. It also appears that the availability of EGCC may translate into a potential area of cost savings. More than 35,700

days of EGCC were awarded to Sheridan graduates during the first two years of operation. This translates to 97 years of reduced prison time among the 1,166 released inmates. Given the annual cost of incarceration per year per inmate of \$21,622, 97 years translates to almost \$2.1 million in incarceration cost savings.

Post-prison recidivism and employment

To gauge the impact the Sheridan program has on subsequent criminal activity and post-prison employment, the evaluation tracked all 721 Sheridan graduates who completed the program through June 2005. A randomly selected group of 1,412 inmates with similar characteristics released from other Illinois prisons during the same time period also were tracked for comparison.

The three specific outcomes examined in this year's evaluation included re-arrest for a new crime, re-imprisonment for a new crime or a parole violation, and post-release employment. These outcomes were examined through December 2005, which allowed for a post-release follow-up period averaging about 11 months.

The evaluation found that those released from Sheridan had a 21 percent lower risk of re-arrest for a new crime relative to the comparison group. At six months following release, 33 percent of those in the comparison group had been re-arrested, compared to 25 percent of those released from Sheridan. Inmates in the program for nine months had a 33 percent lower risk of being rearrested than the comparison group.

An even larger effect was found when prison returns were examined. Inmates released from Sheridan had a 44 percent lower risk of returning to prison than the comparison group. Six months after release, 17 percent of those in the comparison group had been re-incarcerated, compared to 7 percent of those released from Sheridan. Inmates who were exposed to nine or more months of the Sheridan program had a 49 percent lower risk of re-incarceration.

Finally, those released from Sheridan also appeared to have more success in obtaining and maintaining employment. Providing inmates with the skills, knowledge, vocational training, and experience needed to effectively seek employment is part of the institution-based Sheridan program. Participants receive job search assistance upon release.

Of participants released from Sheridan and on parole, 56 percent were employed as of Dec. 31, 2005, while 44 percent were employed among the comparison group. Even more substantial gains were seen in employment among Sheridan releasees who returned to Cook County. Sheridan participants had an employment rate of 48 percent, while the comparison group released to Cook County showed a 33 percent employment rate.

Conclusions

Evaluation of the implementation and impact of the Sheridan Correctional Center Therapeutic Community in its second year confirms that the program is serving a population of inmates who have extensive histories of substance abuse and involvement in the criminal justice system. The evaluation also provides empirical evidence that the program is providing services that reduce the risk of subsequent re-arrest and re-imprisonment. While it may be premature to assess the long-term financial benefits of the Sheridan program, in aggregate, the positive improvements in recidivism and employment coupled with sentence reductions due to earned good conduct credit suggest that the potential exists for significant cost savings.



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The October 2004 Program Evaluation Summary, "*Impetus and implementation of the Sheridan Correctional Center Therapeutic Community*," is available on the Authority website at <http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/ProgEvalSummary/sheridancorrections.pdf>.

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