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LUCAS COUNTY TASC RETURNING HOME PROJECT

FY 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lucas County TASC Returning Home program has served families returning to Lucas County since 2006. The LCRH program has served a total of 86 families. Overall the LCRH model targets family connectedness to assist the inmate in returning to the community successfully.

The LCRH program provides family case management, group treatment, and enhanced visitation to the program participants. The program has been using the Strengthening Families curriculum during the enhanced visitation so that all family members can participate in the program. In addition, the program provides Thinking for a Change, as well as, general case management services to the father and his family.

Overall the program had a difficult time keeping family members engaged in the program. Only 18 percent of the participants successfully completed the program while 69 percent were terminated during Phase II.

As for recidivism rates, the program had a significant impact on re-incarceration rates. Only 10 percent of program participants returned to incarceration for any reason while 21 percent of the comparison group returned to ODRC.

The following were offered as recommendations for the LCRH program:

- The program would benefit from examining the impact of Phase II services and either restructure the services being offered or refocus their efforts on Phase I of the program.
- The program would benefit from developing strategies to keep participants engaged in the program. Low completion rates can have a long-term impact on the success of the program.
- The program should continue providing cognitive-behavioral interventions and family programming to the father and their family.
- The program should consider providing a greater density of services to higher risk clients.

Table of Contents

Lucas County TASC Returning Home	5
Program Characteristics	6
Methods.....	7
Treatment Data.....	8
Program and Participant Characteristics.....	9
Short and Long-Term Outcomes	11
Case Plan and Service Delivery	11
Recidivism	13
Findings.....	15
Recommendations.....	16

Lucas County TASC Returning Home

Using information obtained from personal interviews with inmates in 2007, it is estimated that over one-half of all prisoners in the United States have children who are minors. These children of incarcerated parents account for 2.3 percent of U.S. residents under the age of 18. While these parents are incarcerated, the duty of caring for these children is relegated to those in the community. According to these interviews, mothers, grandparents, and community agencies have been greatly burdened with being the caregivers of these children (Glaze, Maruschak, and Sabol, 2008). Due to the pervasiveness of incarcerated parents, the Governor's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives (GOFBCI) began issuing grants to programs that are designed to serve ex-inmates and their families. The GOFBCI started issuing these grants in 2006 and refers to them as Returning Home grants.

Community agencies and faith-based organizations applying for a Returning Home grant were encouraged to submit proposals that demonstrated novel and creative ways to support ex-inmates and their families. The Returning Home Request for Proposal (RFP), however, had one stipulation. Specifically, the RFP stated that the services the agency provided had to fall within the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) guidelines. According to TANF's guidelines, program participants must fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own home or in the homes of relatives
- End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage
- Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies
- Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families

Program Characteristics

The Lucas County TASC Returning Home (TRH) project, which has been in operation since 2006, offers family, group, and case management services to incarcerated fathers who have children under the age of 18. To be considered for participation in the project, the inmate should be moderate to high risk, demonstrate that they are interested in pursuing a relationship with their child, and be returning to Lucas County (or one of several neighboring counties) from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections.

The model used by the TASC Returning Home project consists of three phases. Phase I of the project is delivered while the father is still institutionalized. The purpose of Phase I is to assist incarcerated fathers with their transition back into the community. In order to facilitate a successful transition, TRH provides its participants and their families with case management services, group services, and enhanced visitation. Specifically, participants attend weekly Thinking for a Change groups and the project uses the Strengthening Families curriculum with the participants' families during the enhanced visitation sessions.

In addition, a mentoring program is currently being incorporated into Phase I of the Returning Home project. This component of the project connects interested fathers, who are still incarcerated, with a mentor. By linking the participant with a mentor during Phase I, the mentor-mentee relationship is already cultivated when the inmate is released into the community. This further assists the participants in their transition back into the community.

Phase IIA is delivered after the father has been released from the institution; therefore, the primary goal of this phase is to provide transitional services to the family and the father. In this phase, the program assists families in the development of a standardized case plan.

Although the TASC case plan is initially developed during Phase I, it is the primary focus of Phase IIA. This standardized case plan is used to identify the family's goals and needs. Case managers facilitate the families in meeting their goals and needs by making referrals, addressing areas of need, and addressing any barriers that these families may be facing. One resource that case managers use to aide families during this phase is the community. One example of a community resource that TRH uses is the North Toledo Citizen Circle. This community agency uses a restorative justice model and a support circle comprised of community members in order to help assimilate ex-inmates and their families back into the community.

After the family has made significant progress in reaching their goals, they can be transitioned to Phase IIB. The purpose of this phase is to provide the families with aftercare and long-term social support. In order to better address the long-term needs of its participants, the TASC Returning Home project is in the process of expanding its mentoring program to include Phase IIB.

Methods

Data were collected for this report from two different sources. First, program level data were collected through monthly reports submitted by the program. These data included intake, treatment, and termination data. Second, recidivism data were collected by ODRC. For the purpose of this report recidivism was measured as return to prison for any reason. Twelve and twenty-four month follow-ups were conducted to determine if the program was more effective than a comparison group of similar offenders.

Treatment Data

The second source of data for this report came from the families' case plans and termination summaries. As previously stated, case managers work with the families in order to identify their goals, which are then incorporated into the families' case plans. The family's status on these goals is used to determine if a family successfully completed the program. A termination report, which is prepared by the program and submitted to the University of Cincinnati's Center for Criminal Justice Research, states whether the family successfully or unsuccessfully completed the program.

According to the TRC project, if a family completes 75 percent of their case plan then they are classified as having successfully completed the program. The project subdivides unsuccessful terminations into two types: unsuccessful Phase I and unsuccessful Phase II. Specifically, an unsuccessful Phase I termination is assigned when a family is terminated during Phase I of the program. Reasons for unsuccessful Phase I termination may include non-interest in the program, non-engagement in treatment, or inappropriate institutional behavior. An unsuccessful Phase II termination, which results after the father is released from confinement, results when a participant lacks engagement in the program, fails to progress on his case plan, or engages in criminal behavior.

The second set of data functions as the projects' comparison group. The comparison group is composed of inmates (from throughout the state) that were eligible to participate in the program but were not selected by the TRC. Due to these selected inmates only receiving those services typically offered by the institution, the only thing that differentiates them from the treatment group is the TRC program. This list was obtained from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC).

In addition, the ODRC supplied recidivism data on the treatment and comparison groups. For the purpose of this study, recidivism was measured as return to incarceration for a new crime and return to institution for any reason (new crime or technical violation). Inmates were tracked post-release from the institution as well as from successful completion of the program.

Due to limitations with the sample and the number of participants, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution. Specifically, although the treatment and comparison groups are similar on several relevant factors, they were not randomly selected or assigned to either group. In addition, due to the small number of TRH participants, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the program compared to those that did not receive TRH services.

Program and Participant Characteristics

The TRH program has been providing services to fathers and their families since the summer of 2006. Since its inception, the program has served a total of 363 persons. Specifically they have served 86 fathers and their parenting partners as well as 191 children. As noted in Table 1, TRH has increased its capacity from serving 15 families during FY 2007 to 37 families during FY 2009.

Table 1: Number of Intakes per Fiscal Year

	FY 2007		FY 2008		FY 2009		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Fathers	15	17	34	40	37	43	86
Parenting Partners	15	17	34	40	37	43	86
Children	40	21	65	34	86	45	191
Total	70	19	133	37	160	44	363

Table 2 provides demographic data related to the fathers enrolled in the program. As noted, 53 percent of the fathers participating in the program are African-American. As for age, nearly half of the participants fell between the ages of 26 and 34, while 39 percent were older than 35 and 14 percent were 25 or younger.

Table 2: Demographics

	N	%
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	51	53
Caucasian	37	39
Hispanic	3	3
Other	5	5
Age		
18-25	12	14
26-34	39	47
35 and older	32	39

Table 3 provides a review of the program's termination rate. Overall, 18 percent of the participants were successfully discharged from the program. Moreover, 13 percent had been unsuccessfully terminated during Phase I while 69 percent of the families were unsuccessfully terminated during Phase II of the program. As noted, TRH has had difficulties keeping families engaged in Phase II of the program.

Table 4: Program Completion¹

	N	%
Termination		
Successful Completion	7	18
Unsuccessful Termination Phase I	5	13
Unsuccessful Termination Phase II	27	69
Administrative Termination	6	

Short and Long-Term Outcomes

In order to determine if the Lucas County TASC Returning Home program was successful in meeting the needs of the families enrolled in the program, several intermediate and long-term outcome measures were collected. As noted previously, the primary long-term outcome for the program was measured as new crime, but there were several intermediate outcomes that have been built into the evaluation to determine if the program has met the needs of the family.

Case Plan and Service Delivery

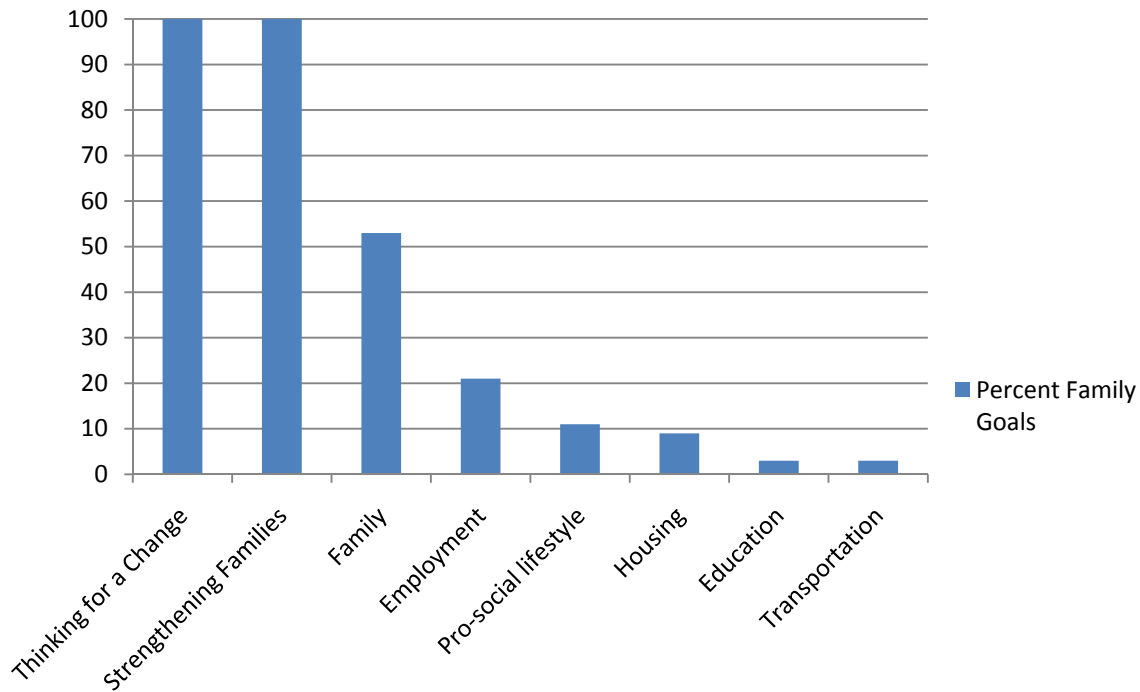
The case plans were collected for each family and the results coded into one of 8 categories. Every participant's case plan included Thinking for a Change and Strengthening Families as a mandatory element of the program. The family goal typically included increasing communication, providing support for family members, and effective parenting skills. Employment goals included job readiness, financial support for employment, and referrals for hard skills training and employment assistance. Education goals included assistance in GED, HS

¹ This includes only persons who were terminated from the program. The program had 45 active participants at the end of February 2009.

Diploma, and post-secondary education. Pro-social lifestyle goals targeted crime-free lifestyles. The program also targeted non-criminogenic needs including housing and transportation.

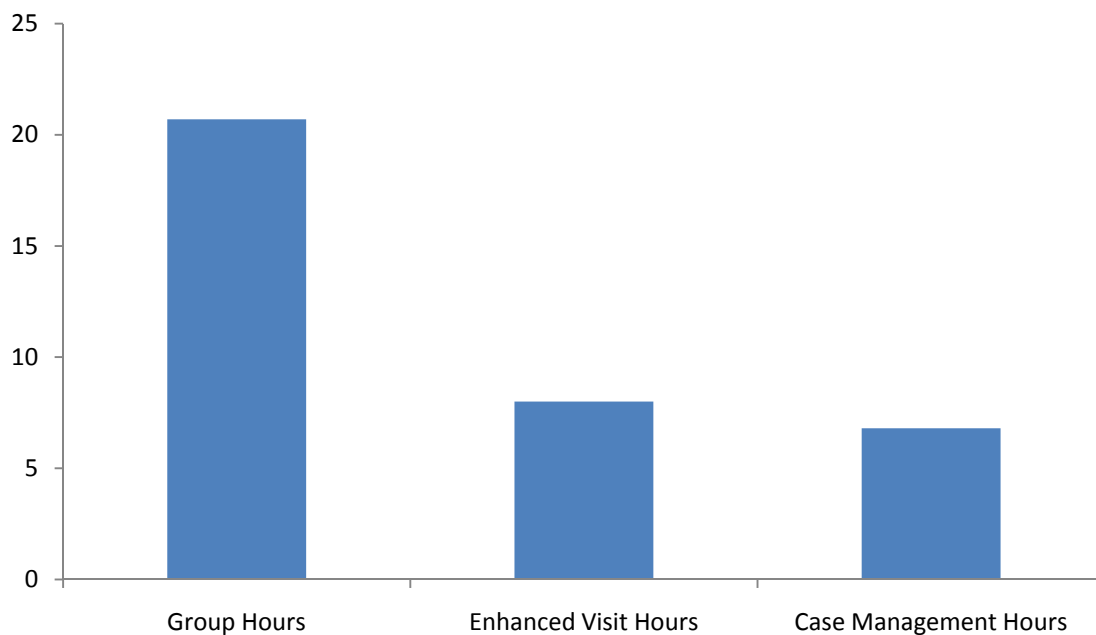
As noted in Figure 1, all of the participants were expected to attend programming. Every participant had Thinking for a Change and Strengthening Families identified on their case plans. In addition to the mandatory programming, 53 percent of the participants had specific family goals identified on their case plans. Moreover, 21 percent of the participants had identified as employment as a major need. Lesser needs included pro-social lifestyles (11%), housing (9%), and education and transportation (3%). As identified in the case plans, TRH specifically targeted antisocial attitudes and pro-social skill development through the delivery of the Thinking for a Change curriculum.

Figure 1: Percentage of fathers working on identified goals



Overall, TRH has served 86 families. Of those families, 11 did not complete Phase I either by administrative or unsuccessful termination. Based on the 75 families who completed at least Phase I, participants of the TRH have received an average of 20.7 hours of group, 6.8 hours of case management, 4 enhanced visits (8 hours), and totaling an average of 35.5 hours of treatment per participant.

Figure 2: Average number of treatment hours per Phase I completer



Recidivism

This section provides an examination of the recidivism rates for the Lucas County TASC Returning Home program. Several caveats to the data should be noted prior to discussing the results. First, administrative terminations were not included in these analyses. Families that were administratively terminated either received few services or were deemed inappropriate for the program. Second, only families that have been terminated from the program (either

successfully or unsuccessfully) have been included in the analyses; therefore any family who was active at the end February 2009 was not included. Third, due to the low numbers enrolled in the program and the short follow-up period, recidivism rates were measured for any participant who met the above criteria despite the length of exposure to the community. Since the longest time period a TRH participant was exposed to the community was 24 months, the follow-up period for the comparison group was limited to 24 months also. Fourth, although the comparison group was comprised of offenders returning from ODRC, it was drawn from a statewide sample that was not specific to Lucas County.

As noted in Table 5, 5 percent of the participants were returned to ODRC for a new crime with another 5 percent returning on a technical violation. Comparatively, 16 percent of the comparison group returned for a new crime within 24 months of release. Based on these results it appears that TASC Returning Home has had a significant impact on recidivism compared to ex-inmates not receiving the program.

Table 5: Recidivism Rates for the TRH Program²

	Return to Incarceration: New Crime	Return to Incarceration: Technical Violation	Return to Incarceration: Any Reason
TASC RH Program	5%*	5%	10%*
Comparison Group	16%	5%	21%

* Significant at $p \geq .05$

² Follow-up period was up to 24 months.

Findings

This report examines the effectiveness of the Lucas County TASC Returning Home project on incarcerated fathers and their families. The TRH program is designed to assist provide services to fathers returning to the community. The TRH program has been in operation for three years and has served 86 families. Some of the major findings:

First, the TRH program has significantly increased the number of inmates served from the first year of the project. Initially, the TRH program served 15 families compared to 34 participants in Fiscal Year 2008 and 37 in Fiscal Year 2009.

Second, the TRH program still has a significantly low successful completion rate. Although slightly higher than the previous report, TRH has still had a difficult time keeping families engaged post-release. The Phase I completion is within an acceptable range (87%) but once the ex-inmate is released the unsuccessful termination rate skyrockets to nearly 70 percent.

Third, the TRH program continues to provide evidence based interventions to inmates and their families during Phase I of the program. The ability of the TRH program to deliver manualized treatment to participants and their families is extremely beneficial. This ensures that participants receive the services and reduces many barriers to delivering the programming post-release.

Fourth, and most importantly, the TRH program has shown a significant impact on recidivism regardless of the offender's type of completion. This is important to note because the TRH program has only had 18 percent of the participants successfully complete the program. Typically a program with a significantly low completion rate would have a significant difference between successful and unsuccessful completions. Interestingly, the Phase II unsuccessful terminations did as well as the successful completers. One explanation may be that the structured

treatment curricula (Thinking for a Change and Strengthening Families) are delivered pre-release to the participants and their families, ensuring that all Phase I completers receive a similar dosage of treatment.

Recommendations

Given the results of these findings several recommendations can be made to address some of the program's limitations:

- The program has a low successful completion rate
 - First, the program should explore the definition of successful completer and how a family is determined to be successful. The program has had a significant impact on recidivism regardless of termination type. This is indicative of a program that may be applying a strict definition of successful completion whereas many of the Phase II terminations do not return to ODRC.
 - Second, the program would benefit from increasing the focus on keeping participants engaged when they transition to the community. Effective programs tend to have completion rates that near 65 percent. It is important that program participants remain engaged to ensure that their needs are met successfully. There are several strategies to keep families engaged including incentivizing participation, structuring Phase II services to reinforce expectations, and building quality relationships with participants while in the facility.
 - Third, the program may want to explore the usefulness of Phase II services. This may result in revamping the services offered to post-release families or restructuring the program to primarily focus on Phase I services.
- The program should continue providing cognitive-behavioral interventions and family programming to the father and their family.

- Preliminary results suggest that the program has an impact on recidivism.
 - The program should continue providing services to offenders and working with them pre-release as well as post-release. It may benefit the program to increase the density of services participants receive while in the institution. This may have impact on two levels. First, evidence suggests that more treatment can have an impact on long term retention. Second, a higher dose of treatment has been found to be effective. The program serves relatively moderate risk offenders which would translate to approximately 100 hours of treatment. Given the limited treatment provided by ODRC, it may be beneficial to increase the dosage of treatment while the participant is incarcerated.