

Final 2-Year (2020 – 2022) Program Evaluation:  
Southern Nevada Reentry Program  
HOPE for Prisoners



Transforming Lives

**2-YEAR EVALUATION OF HOPE FOR PRISONERS (HFP)  
SOUTHERN NEVADA REENTRY PROGRAM**

**A REPORT PREPARED FOR HOPE FOR PRISONERS**

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## INTRODUCTION. SUMMARY OF THE FINAL 2-YEAR EVALUATION

Between 2020 and 2022, HOPE for Prisoners served a total of 649 clients over a two-year evaluation period. Out of these, 245 clients were included in the final evaluation under the DOJ/SCA program, with 24 individuals still completing the 18-month program at the time of reporting (December, 2022). Clients assessed under this grant were predominantly male (76.73%) and identified as White/Caucasian (43.27%) or Black/African American (31.84%). The age range was 19 to 69 years, with an average age of 37.39 years. The vast majority were considered to be moderate- to high-risk and over half had two or more prior convictions.

**Among the evaluated clients over the two-year study, 23.76% were reincarcerated, primarily due to community status revocations (47%) and new charges without conviction (22%).** The majority of those reincarcerated were males (84.48%) and identified as White/Caucasian (36.2%) or Black/African American (34.48%). The ethnic composition showed that 77.59% identified as Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino/a. The age range for reincarcerated clients was 19 to 61 years, with an average age of 34.72 years. Additionally, approximately 20% of all clients reported contact with the justice system, including arrests, parole violations, technical violations, revocation of community status, and new charges.

Overall, the findings highlight the demographics, reincarceration rates, and classification measures among the evaluated clients. They reinforce the significance of addressing technical violations and community status revocations to prevent clients from returning to prison.

A summary of **challenges** over the evaluation period highlights HFP staff and client insights regarding recidivism, pointing to structural barriers, limited access to resources and support systems, and the influence of social and environmental factors. HOPE case managers emphasized the need for a comprehensive understanding of individual circumstances and a holistic approach to address the complexities of reintegration. Challenges with maintaining sobriety and a lack of program participation or motivation were identified as factors hindering client progress and engagement with HOPE's services. Challenges identified also included inactive clients housed at NDOC's Casa Grande Transitional Housing who had limited engagement with HFP due to feeling forced to participate by another correctional entity. Clients enrolled in specialized criminal courts also faced additional court-mandated rules and regulations that affected their participation in HFP. These inactive clients numbered around 25-30 and faced difficulties attending meetings and classes due to transportation and work schedule conflicts. Homelessness and housing instability were also frequently mentioned as significant obstacles for clients, impacting their reentry process and their ability to benefit from the 18-month HFP program.

**Case managers identified several factors contributing to success**, noting that there were varying reasons for their clients' achievements. These factors included completing the 18-month HFP program, maintaining sobriety, participating in career training, rebuilding family relationships, and supporting clients as they take responsibility for their actions. Staying connected with case managers or program staff was emphasized as an important indicator of success, along with having stable housing, employment, and vocational training. Collaborative efforts between HFP and parole officers were recognized as beneficial, with parole officers who actively engaged with the program and referred parolees contributing to client success.

Staff members also highlighted successes related to their holistic approach in supporting clients' reentry journeys. They emphasized understanding clients' immediate, short-term, and long-term needs, as well as assessing their risk levels through the NRAS assessment. Addressing the risk of violations, such as parole violations or community status revocations, and the possibility of justice-impacted events, including encounters with the criminal justice system, were also acknowledged as crucial. By considering and addressing these various aspects, staff members strive to provide comprehensive support and guidance to clients throughout their reentry process.

The **main successes noted by clients** of HOPE for Prisoners can be summarized in four key themes. First, the importance of experiencing a sense of belonging in a broader community was highlighted. Clients appreciated the shared experience and empathetic understanding from HOPE employees who had similar backgrounds. They found value in completing classes, such as financial literacy and moral reconnection therapy (MRT), and having access to mental health and substance abuse therapists provided by HOPE.

Second, the program's case management style was identified as a significant factor contributing to success. Clients expressed gratitude for the caring and supportive approach of HOPE staff, emphasizing the transformative impact of being genuinely cared for. The recognition of personal growth, rebuilding relationships with family, and long-term employment success showcased the positive outcomes of this approach.

Third, the availability of impactful mentors and, fourth, access to classes and trainings in a safe and holistic environment were highlighted. Clients appreciated the mentorship program at HOPE and emphasized the importance of mentors who walked alongside them on their journey. Accessing educational programs and trainings in a nurturing space, separate from the controlled environment of the justice system, allowed clients to learn, grow, and make positive changes without fear of judgment.

Overall, these successes demonstrate the transformative power of HOPE for Prisoners' comprehensive approach, fostering a sense of community, providing supportive case management, and offering opportunities for personal and professional development. Clients' experiences reflect the significance of feeling seen and acknowledged, as well as the positive impact of guidance, support, and a nurturing environment on their journey towards reintegration and success.

In summary, and based on the findings of this 2-year evaluation, recommendations for the HOPE for Prisoners program are offered and include: 1) Resuming regular meetings of the HFP reentry council and the Southern Nevada Reentry Council to review the current status of clients and services, discuss barriers faced by clients and staff, and report ideas for changes; 2) Continuing to work with correctional institutions to provide reentry services to clients, including pre-release enrollments, vocational training, and post-release support; 3) Reviewing and updating administrative forms, including intake forms and risk assessments, to ensure consistency and effective client tracking/support; 4) Exploring and embracing the impact of experience and experiential knowledge on reentry success while also incorporating experiential knowledge into evidence-based practices as a way to empower individuals with lived experience to shape reentry policies and programs; 5) Addressing issues of housing insecurity and homelessness by providing stable housing options that promote well-being and safety and support rehabilitation and reintegration efforts; 6) Collaboration in documenting changes to state-level reentry policies, including recommendations from the reentry council that includes previously incarcerated

individuals. These actions will continue to ensure transparency, encourage evidence-based decision-making from a space of experience, and empower previously incarcerated individuals. By implementing these recommendations, the HOPE for Prisoners program can enhance its effectiveness, promote successful reentry, empower individuals, drive systemic change, and improve outcomes for individuals transitioning back into the community.

## CHAPTER 1. REVIEW OF YEAR 1 (2020 – 2021) EVALUATION

The Second Chance Act of 2007 (H.R. 1593) reauthorized the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to include provisions on improving adult and juvenile reentry programs throughout the United States. Signed into law on April 9, 2008, the Second Chance Act (SCA) served to reform the original Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act via a focus on reducing recidivism, increasing public safety, and assisting states in the areas of reentry planning. Overall, there has been a focus on employment opportunities, housing needs, substance abuse and mental health treatment, as well as family reunification. Since 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives have appropriated \$45 million and the U.S. Senate have appropriated \$20 million towards grants authorized under this Act. Over a two-year period, SCA grants are awarded based on promoting safe and successful reintegration of previously incarcerated persons via providing housing, employment, substance abuse treatment, family programming, personal finance, mentoring, and victim services. As part of the First Step Act, the SCA was reauthorized again in December of 2018.

Since 2008, multiple SCA grants have been awarded to reentry programs across the United States. HOPE For Prisoners (HFP) was a recipient of one of these SCA grants. HOPE for Prisoners is a non-profit organization located in Southern Nevada that provides pre- and post-release reentry services to support previously incarcerated individuals on their reentry journey including an 18-month leadership and mentoring program, case management – assistance with housing and employment, vocational and educational training, professional and social development, family reunification, financial literacy, and a range of therapies available (i.e., personal and group sessions as well as Moral Recognition Therapy). Since HFP has been successful in receiving state and federal funding, the organization is evaluated yearly.

Since receiving a SCA grant, HFP was evaluated during the first (2020 – 2021) and second (2021 – 2022) years of grant funding. Under the SCA grant, HOPE For Prisoners identified high-risk clients released from Clark County Detention Center and Nevada Department of Correctional (NDOC) facilities. Out of this targeted population, during Year 1, there were a total of 140 justice-impacted individuals who participated in the SCA program. Using a mixed methods research design, the Year 1 evaluation included an analysis of client data from intake and follow-up paperwork/case manager's files as well as qualitative data from focus groups with HFP program/case managers. During this first year of SCA funding, and based on an analysis of these data sources, the main goals of evaluating HFP were to determine: 1) rates of recidivism for clients utilizing HFP services and 2) impacts/importance of HFP services available.

Main evaluative findings from Year 1 highlight that, out of the 140 high-risk clients, only 18 (12.9%) recidivated during their time in the HFP program. At the end of Year 1 (July, 2021), only two individuals were incarcerated on new charges (but not convicted), six individuals were reincarcerated due to parole violations, and ten individuals were reincarcerated due to technical violations leading to a loss of community status at Casa Grande – NDOC's community transitional facility.

Moreover, the Year 1 evaluation highlighted several distinct challenges that affected clients' reentry experiences. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic presented unprecedented obstacles for both clients and program/case managers affiliated with HFP. The primary concern revolved around the health and well-being of individuals and their families. Many clients expressed difficulties adapting to the

surge in technology usage, which replaced traditional face-to-face service provision. Consequently, in-person case management, programming, service provisions, and group classes were temporarily halted, eventually transitioning to virtual platforms. In response, HFP program/case managers demonstrated ingenuity and adaptability by swiftly adjusting their approach to deliver services to clients. This entailed a greater reliance on technology, encompassing the development of online portals, training modules, and group classes. Furthermore, the shift to virtual operations by numerous state and federal agencies during the pandemic further complicated matters. These technological limitations hindered clients' ability to access unemployment services and secure government funding throughout this challenging period.

In the face of physical and mental health challenges, the need for rapid problem-solving and adaptability during a pandemic, as well as a heightened reliance on technology to serve clients, HFP employees demonstrated remarkable resilience. Focus groups revealed that they effectively maintained high morale through regular weekly meetings and check-ins with their CEO. These gatherings played a crucial role in addressing individual client issues, ensuring uninterrupted care, and fostering innovative approaches to service delivery amidst the pandemic. Additionally, these meetings served as a means to strengthen the sense of community within HFP and alleviate stress stemming from concerns about funding, job security, and career prospects.

Based on a comprehensive analysis of client and employee data, the Year 1 report concluded with several key recommendations. These administrative, organizational, and client-specific suggestions, informed by best practices, encompassed various areas to enhance the effectiveness of the HOPE for Prisoners program.

Administrative recommendations included revising intake forms to include comprehensive documentation of client abilities, citizenship status, as well as physical and mental healthcare needs. This would provide a more holistic understanding of clients' backgrounds and enable tailored support. It was also recommended to document clients' immediate and long-term needs and goals, emphasizing the creation of case management plans that prioritize addressing immediate needs promptly. This proactive approach would facilitate efficient and targeted assistance. Moreover, it was advised to document clients' housing experiences during every follow-up conversation. This would involve tracking homelessness, housing insecurity, and any changes in their residential or housing status. By consistently monitoring housing situations, the program can better address this critical aspect of clients' reentry journeys. Additionally, implementing bi-monthly check-ins with staff was recommended to ensure consistent and timely entry of case notes. This measure would improve data integrity and enhance communication among team members. Furthermore, it was advised to track clients' interactions with the justice system, including parole violations, arrests, and reincarceration. Additionally, monitoring whether clients are on house arrest with GPS technology would provide valuable insights into their circumstances, allowing for appropriate support and interventions. Lastly, it was recommended to continue the practice of conducting annual internal evaluations to track the program's growth and successes over time. This ongoing assessment would help identify areas of improvement, measure outcomes, and inform future program development strategies.

Organizational recommendations put forth in the Year 1 report emphasized the importance of developing robust community outreach practices and forging partnerships with local and state entities engaged in reentry, housing, and vocational/educational initiatives. Collaborating with such organizations would enable a more comprehensive and holistic approach to client support.

Furthermore, the report stressed the significance of establishing partnerships with probation and parole officers who embrace a holistic training background, rather than solely correctional training. Additionally, it was advised to collaborate with social workers and mental health practitioners to enhance the range of expertise available to HFP clients. Given that many clients have experienced trauma and struggle with addiction, staff trainings on addictions, mental health, and trauma-informed care were strongly recommended to ensure a more informed and sensitive approach to client support. Additionally, at the organizational level, it was suggested to create a calendar of events and services, providing clients with a clear overview of available resources and opportunities. Making classes, trainings, and practitioners consistently and regularly accessible to HFP clients on a weekly or monthly basis would contribute to a more structured and beneficial client experience.

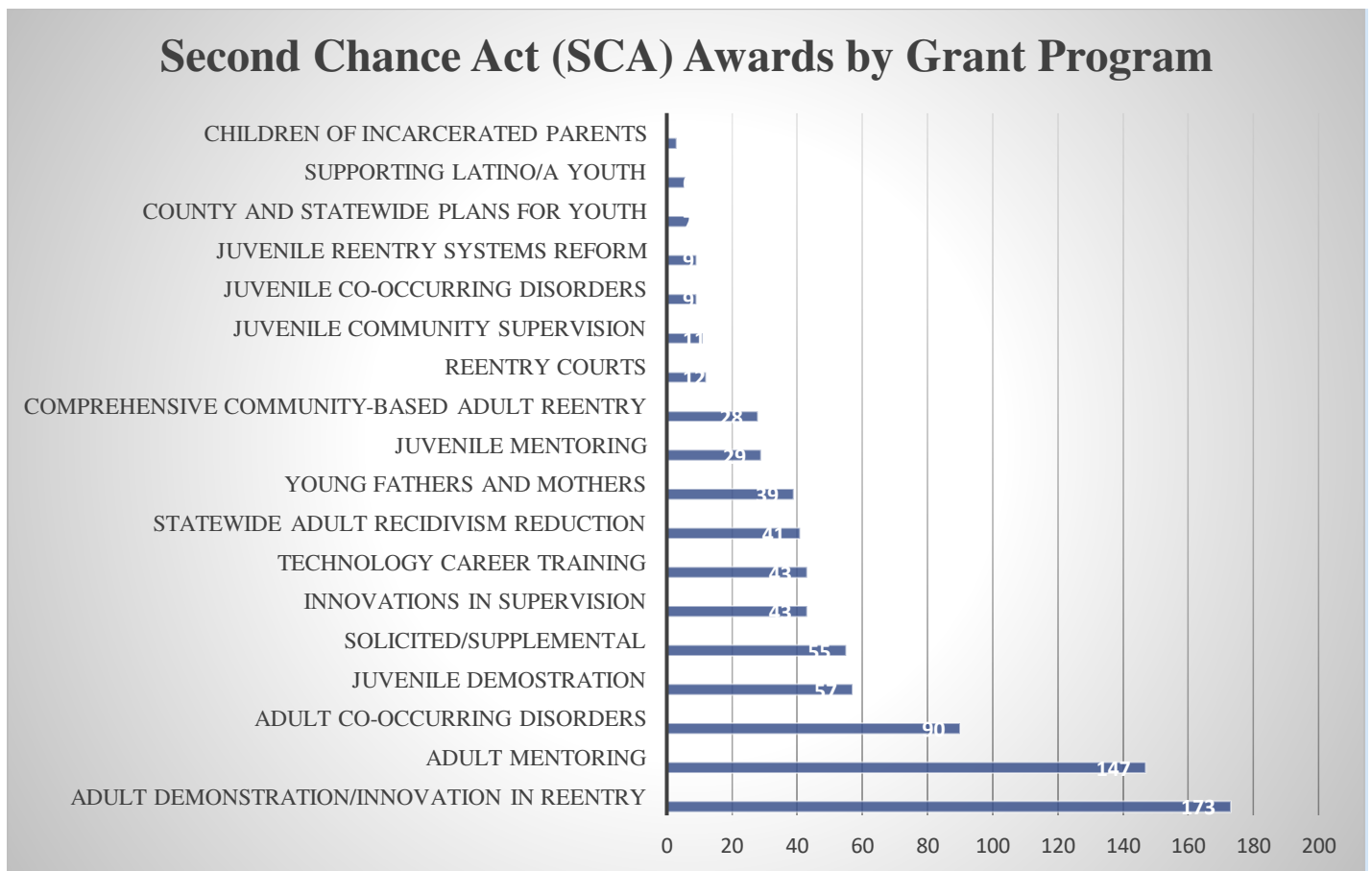
Based on the evaluation of data provided by clients, recommendations also included that HFP continue to use/incorporate their holistic positive language throughout conversations and service provisions with/for clients, focus case management planning on immediate needs articulated by clients (i.e., clothing, housing, employment), continue to provide a positive and safe environment for hope and change, provide a range of trainings and make the schedule consistent, and to create special events/celebrations for clients that complete classes, certificate programs, and the 18-month program. Other recommendations included the continuation of weekly employee meetings, increased community partnerships, and track other reentry organizations receiving SCA awards so that future collaborations/connections across states/the country can occur.

## CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF SECOND CHANCE ACT (SCA) & REENTRY RESEARCH

In April of 2008, and with bipartisan support, the United States Congress passed the Second Chance Act (SCA) of 2007: Community Safety Through Recidivism Prevention (H.R. 1593). This Act authorized a range of federal investment of strategies to reduce recidivism and increase public safety while minimizing the costs associated with state and local correctional budgets. Specifically, SCA funding has been awarded to prisoner reentry programs that address the needs and conditions that pose the highest risks of reoffending as well as to programs that seek to improve correctional and supervision practices aimed at reducing recidivism (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2020).

Since 2009, there has been over 840 SCA grants awarded to local and state governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations from 49 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. The Bar Graph, below, as published within the 2018 SCA Fact Sheet, notes all SCA Awards by Grant Program (see **Bar Graph 1**, below). As of December 2017, the Bureau of Justice Administration notes that there has already been an estimated 164,000 persons participating in these reentry programs.

**Bar Graph 1: Second Chance Act (SCA) Awards by Grant Program**



SCA grants tend to focus on reducing rates of recidivism by funding local/state programs that assist previously incarcerated persons as they return back to society. Even though the focus on reducing rates of recidivism is imperative to grantees, agencies, and organizations receiving any award under an SCA grant, the overarching goals are to help make an individual’s transition from jail or prison safer and more successful (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2022).

Second Chance Act grant programs are all funded and administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office Justice Programs. Under the DOJ, funding is administered and distributed to SCA awardees/programs that assist previously incarcerated individuals with finding and securing employment and housing as well as providing resources for those with substance abuse histories (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2022). After the reauthorization of the SCA in 2018, funding foci included the Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning Program (ARES, 2019). The purpose of the Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning Program is to fund the development of strategic plans that are comprehensive, collaborative, and multisystemic in their approach to increase public safety by reducing recidivism and improving employability in offenders returning to communities from incarceration. These plans should include an assessment of the current system and propose solutions to make assessment-driven referrals to ensure successful transition from correctional facilities to the community.

Recipients of ARES awards use funds to develop programing aimed at reducing recidivism among newly released offenders by addressing education and employment barriers that many individuals face upon release. In particular, awardees must seek to develop a comprehensive Adult Reentry Strategic Plan designed to improve criminal justice system alignment across state and local agencies and that will lead to better long-term outcomes for newly released offenders. The below **Table 1** lists all ARES awardees.

**Table 1: BJA FY 18 Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic (ARES) Planning Program Awardees**

<b>Table 1: BJA FY 18 Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic (ARES) Planning Program Awardees</b>				
<b>Awardee</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date of Award/First Funding Amount</b>	<b>Total Funding to Date</b>
Public Safety and Corrections, Louisiana Department of	Baton Rouge, LA	Adult Reentry and Employment Planning	2018 (\$169,923)	\$1,837,364

Human Services, Vermont Agency of	Waterbury, VT	An Integrated Approach to Employing Reentering Offenders in Vermont	2018 (\$199,160)	\$1,799,277
Corrections, Connecticut Department of	Wethersfield, CT	Connecticut Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning (RESP) Initiative	2018 (\$184,954)	\$2,369,908
Executive Office of the Governor of Delaware	Wilmington, DE	Delaware's Employment Planning Strategy and Training Project	2018 (\$200,000)	\$1,900,000
Corrections, Wisconsin Department of	Madison, WI	Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies in South Central Wisconsin	2018 (\$200,000)	\$1,826,308
Corrections, Iowa Department of	Des Moines, IA	Iowa Reentry and Employment Training Project (IRETP)	2018 (\$200,000)	\$617,430
Texas Department of Criminal Justice	Huntsville, TX	Mapping the Future: A Systems Based Approach to Refining Reentry Planning	2018 (\$152,076)	\$719,118
Corrections, Minnesota Department of	Saint Paul, MN	Minnesota Statewide Initiative to Reduce Recidivism – Employment Matters!	2018 (\$189,909)	\$1,828,696
Corrections, Nevada Department of	Carson City, NV	Nevada's Statewide Employment Strategic Planning Program for Returning Citizens	2018 (\$154,407)	\$1,308,464
Navajo Nation Judicial Branch	Window Rock, AZ	New Path Reentry	2018 (\$200,000)	\$1,100,000
Corrections, Florida Department of	Tallahassee, FL	The P.E.E.R.S Project	2018 (\$195,408)	\$1,890,816

For example, and as noted in the above **Table 1**, in 2019, Nevada received an ARES program funding grant. The focus for this SCA ARES grant is to reduce recidivism by increasing the employability of

previously incarcerated individuals and assessing reentry programs. Only state correctional agencies and State administrative agencies were eligible to receive ARES funding. Grant monies were distributed in FY 2019 and awardees received funding for 36 months. These efforts were designed to support reentry and corrections program activities as well as data collection on recidivism (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2022).<sup>1</sup>

Then, after the funding of the above ARES grants, under the SCA, the Bureau of Justice Administration funded the Correctional Adult Reentry Education, Employment, and Recidivism Reduction Strategies Program (CAREERS, 2020). This Second Chance Act program is designed to help communities establish educational, vocational, and employment training within their correctional systems. The focus for these grants is on addressing employment challenges facing incarcerated youth and adults as they re-enter the workforce. Partnerships can support the establishment/improvement of academic and vocational education programs available in correctional facilities. Entities awarded a CAREERS grant are listed below in **Table 2**.

**Table 2: BJA FY 20 Correctional Adult Reentry Education, Employment, and Recidivism Reduction Strategies (CAREERRS) Program Awardees**

Table 2: BJA FY 20 Correctional Adult Reentry Education, Employment, and Recidivism Reduction Strategies (CAREERRS) Program Awardees				
Awardee	Location	Title	Date of Award/First Funding Amount	Total Funding to Date
Mobile Area Interfaith Conference, INC.	Mobile, AL	Academy for Career Development	2020 (\$897,260)	\$1,794,520
Corrections, Alaska Department of	Douglas, AK	Alaska Department of Corrections Rural Reentry CAREERRS Program	2020 (\$900,000)	\$900,000
Ridge Project, INC.	Mc Clure, OH	Career and Employment Program	2020 (\$900,000)	\$1,800,000
The Cherokee Nation	Tahlequah, OK	Cherokee Nation CAREERRS Program	2020 (\$899,859)	\$1,799,718

<sup>1</sup> Please note that this Nevada ARES grant is not a part of the current SCA HFP grant evaluation; sub-contractors (Troshynski), HFP staff (Willis), and any co-researchers and/or co-authors of this SCA HFP evaluation are not evaluating/part of the evaluation team for the Nevada SCA ARES grant.

Grundy, County of	Altamont, TN	Correctional Career Pathways	2020 (\$588,352)	\$588,352
Gang Alternative, INC.	North Miami, FL	Gang Alternative's (GA's) CAREERRS Program	2020 (\$900,000)	\$1,800,000
Metropolitan Community College	Omaha, NE	Living in Freedom Everyday (LIFE) Program	2020 (\$900,000)	\$900,000
Lorain County Community College District	Elyria, OH	Lorain County CAREERRS	2020 (\$899,508)	\$1,799,016

And then again the following year (FY 2021), SCA grants awarded focused on Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment, and Recovery Programs (AREETR, 2022). Funding under this call provides money to awardees to develop a strategic plan for integrating correctional and employment programming/systems and/or establishing, expanding, and improving treatment for individuals with substance use disorders during incarceration. Overall, the goal for this funding cycle is to focus on previously incarcerated persons experiences with substance use/abuse and to facilitate their successful reintegration. In total, 31 entities were awarded an AREETR grant. Summaries of these awardees can be found at the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA, 2021) website listed in the footnote below.<sup>2</sup>

Again, all of The Second Chance Act's (SCA) grant programs are funded and administered by the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs (OJP). In 2018, HOPE For Prisoners was awarded a Second Chance Act grant from the Department of Justice. Those awardees listed above are used as a direct comparison to the HOPE for Prisoners' Southern Nevada Adult Reentry Program. Based on the information presented within this chapter, connecting with other successful reentry organization across the U.S. could prove to be beneficial. Networking with similarly positioned reentry organizations, to mutually support and discuss what's working well (and what's not) could include successes associated with support at the local, state, and federal level. As part of the research into successful community-based reentry programs, relevant reentry research is reviewed and documented below.

## UNDERSTANDING RECIDIVISM

Depending on the year, research suggests that close to all 2.2 – 2.5 million adult persons and 47,000 youth incarcerated in the U.S. will be released and return back society. Other sources, like The Council of State Governments (CSG, 2016),<sup>3</sup> state that approximately 700,000 individuals from state prisons and 9 million from county jails return home. Yet, they return with complex challenges, immediate and long-

<sup>2</sup> Please see FY 2021 Second Chance Act: Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery Program Awards available here: <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/o-bja-2021-98001>

<sup>3</sup> Please see Justice Center of The Council of State Governments for more information. Available here: <https://csgjusticecenter.org/topics/reentry/>

term needs, and risks that contribute to a higher likelihood of only being re-incarcerated (SCA Fact Sheet, 2018). Understanding experiences and challenges that impact persons' successful reentry journeys - as well as their risk to recidivate - are a necessary component of funded SCA reentry programs.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ, 2018, p. 1) states that, "*Recidivism is measured by the criminal acts that results in re-arrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release*" (as quoted in Buckley, 2021, p. 2). A prior comprehensive study on recidivism in more than 40 states found that close to half (more than 4 in 10) of previously incarcerated persons released from state prisons were reincarcerated within 3 years of their release date (Pew Center on the States, 2011). Unfortunately, other federal evaluations have documented similar trends. For example, several Bureau of Justice Statistics reports on recidivism found that, just within just six months of release from state prisons, over a quarter of individuals were rearrested (BSJ, 2014, 2018). As time post-incarceration increases, so do rates of reincarceration. For example, research notes that, within three years of release, 68% of previously incarcerated persons were re-arrested and, within six years of release, 79% were re-arrested (see Buckley, 2021, p. 3 – 5).

Within the state of Nevada, recidivism is defined and measured as a new commitment to prison after incarceration; mere arrests are not considered a part of this definition. Unlike the national definition, the state recognizes that not all recidivism events/outcomes suggest a relapse into criminal activities. In fact, the definition expands a step further by measuring the adjudication of the arrest. The state's definition of recidivism considers the outcome of the arrest and not just the arrest itself. Recidivism events exclude probation incidents, misdemeanor arrests, arrests not leading to a conviction, and technical parole violations (Willis, 2023).

Recent research has documented the important relationship between reentry programming (i.e., providing services, resources, and case planning) and recidivism (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). Reentry programs that help to stabilize the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals and their families also help to lower rates of recidivism, minimize the costs associated with incarceration, and reduce crime rates. Most reentry programs funded under SCA grants support and serve a wide range of persons or individuals with prior justice system involvement. The most common reentry programs funded to date includes substance abuse treatment and counseling services. Studies of these previously funded programs found that post-release aftercare, coupled with housing assistance, were the most likely services to provide favorable reentry program outcomes (see Buckley, 2021; Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Braatz, 2014).

## REENTRY CHALLENGES THAT IMPACT RECIDIVISM

Avenues towards successful reentry include experiences, opportunities, and services that have been documented to reduce rates of recidivism. Challenges to reentry include those obstacles that make previously incarcerated and/or formerly justice involved individuals' return to society difficult and sometimes impossible. Consequences associated with having a criminal background impact individuals from finding and securing employment and affordable housing – these are the most immediate needs noted by formerly incarcerated individuals post-release.

- **Employment:** Employment and having a job that pays a living wage is a conduit that best reduces recidivism (Duwe, 2015). Evidence suggests that financial assistance reduces the likelihood of recidivism but that stable employment and higher living wages are especially critical to successful reentry (Anderson, Nava, & Cortez, 2018; Urban Institute, 2006). Depending on educational status, prior employment history, work experience, and vocational skills, ex-offenders face added challenges in finding, securing, and maintaining employment. Additionally, jobs are limited because many are legally barred from employment within child-related and healthcare industries (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). These realities are compounded with community members' misunderstandings about prisoner reentry and employer's reluctance to hire a formerly incarcerated person (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2004). Results of these experiences equate to joblessness, homelessness, and justice-involved persons experiencing increased feelings of exclusion and isolation. Furthermore, opportunities for pro-social family reunification, continuing education, and pro-social participation in civic life (i.e., voting rights) are also impacted.
- **Housing:** Another positive conduit associated with reducing recidivism is securing affordable housing. Research on housing instability has been shown to support a link between homelessness and recidivism (Lutze, Rosky, & Hamilton, 2014). For previously incarcerated persons, affordable and safe housing options are scarce. Challenges to securing housing include navigating federal mandates (i.e., eligibility requirements) as well as local rules and regulations (i.e., zoning and ordinances). When housing is available, disclosing criminal history on applications impact individuals' chances to rent (Philips & Spencer, 2013). A lack of a consistent rental history, no personal and/or employment references, and securing money to cover security deposits are added challenges. Since parole rules direct ex-convicts not to associate with others that have a criminal record, living with partners, friends, and family members may not be an option.
- **Health Care:** Access to and quality of medical care impact previously incarcerated physical and mental health needs which, in turn, has been shown to impact challenges associated with finding housing and employment, reconnecting with family, and abstaining from substance use (Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008). Compared to the general population, those returning home from incarceration have a higher prevalence of physical and mental health concerns (Marlow, White, & Chelsea, 2010) including higher rates of substance use/abuse (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010). These complex health conditions are difficult to manage when so many are uninsured or lack access to quality healthcare providers. This lack of access contributes to an increased need for emergency health care services in the future (Marlow et al., 2010). Although this is changing, there is less research on the health effects of imprisonment, previously incarcerated persons healthcare needs, and connections to broader health disparities in communities they return.
- **Legal Services:** Access to legal services are a critical conduit associated with an individual's successful reintegration (DOJ, 2013). Legal services: 1) Facilitate court-ordered classes and help individual's obtain certificates of rehabilitation and/or completion of court-ordered classes – documents that help demonstrate to potential employers, landlords, and licensing boards that they successfully completed rehabilitation; 2) Facilitate child support orders and other restitution payments. Oftentimes, child support accumulates during incarceration and leaves previously incarcerated parents with unrealistic payment obligations (Roman & Link, 2015, 2017). Legal

agencies work with judges to modify these payments while helping parents provide for their families; 3) Expunge or correct inaccurate documents so that a criminal record is adequately reflected in official background data. For example, sometimes an arrest does not lead to a conviction or a felony may have been reduced to a misdemeanor. These realities are important to correct in official data sources; 4) Help secure revoked or suspended driver's license – proof of personal identification that is used for transportation, employment, and accessing a variety of benefits and services; 5) Help with improper evictions and gain access to housing (DOJ, 2013).

- **Human Services Needs:** Human services needs include access to agencies that provide immediate assistance with food, clothing, emergency shelter and short-term residential housing, assistance with bills and transportation systems (Anderson, Nava, & Cortez, 2018). These service referrals are critical since, in the period immediately following release, they are the most needed.

Importantly, and related to HOPE For Prisoners, research on reentry programming have been shown to diminish these, and other aforementioned challenges associated with successful reentry. Specifically, access to reentry services has also been shown to also reduce rates of recidivism.

## CHAPTER 3. INCARCERATION & REENTRY IN NEVADA

As noted above, within the United States, every year, approximately 700,000 individuals from state prisons and 9 million from county jails return home (CSG, 2016). In Nevada, 23,000 people are incarcerated in prisons each year and 38,000 are booked into local jails (PPI, 2020). Based on the Fiscal Year 2022 Quarter 1 Statistical Summary available at the Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC, 2022)<sup>4</sup> website, during July – September of 2021, Nevada’s correctional system consisted of 10,554 persons with 9,700 males incarcerated and 854 females incarcerated. The average age for persons incarcerated was 40.32 years old. 41.41% identified as White, 31.56% identified as Black, and 21.97% identified as Hispanic. During the same time frame, the total operating cost per inmate was \$23,929 (Nevada Department of Corrections, 2020). Importantly, people of color are overrepresented in Nevada prisons and jails (PPI, 2020).

Of the approximately 61,000 persons incarcerated in Nevada, close to 6,646 are released from state and federal prisons each year.<sup>5</sup> 79% of these released persons return to Clark County, the county where HOPE For Prisoners is located. Prior criminological scholarship notes that the majority of prisoners released – 68% within three years and 77% within five years - will be reincarcerated for a new crime (BJS, 2017). Within Nevada, closer to 25% of those released return to prison in less than a year (NDOC, 2020).

In addition to an increase rates of incarceration, Nevada has seen an increase in individual time spent behind bars as well as increased rates of recidivism. For example, between 1983 and 2015, the number of people incarcerated in Nevada increased by 391% (Vera Institute of Justice, 2019). Also, since 2008, the length of time individuals spent behind bars expanded by 20% (+ 4.2 months) (The Nevada Advisory Commission on the Administration of Justice, 2019). Nevada’s incarceration rate of 713 per 100,000 is among *one of the highest in the nation*, surpassing the national average of 664 per 100,000 (Prison Policy Initiative, 2021).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, recidivism rates in Nevada have gone up for almost all types of offenses, hovering at 25% annually and closer to 29% for a three-year recidivism rate (The Nevada Advisory Commission on the Administration of Justice, 2019; NDOC, 2020). Given high incarceration and recidivism rates in Nevada, there is a need for effective reentry programs within the state.

Importantly, within Nevada, previously incarcerated persons can be reincarcerated for a new crime, minor offense, technical violation, or parole revocation. Yet, Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) *has only recently started to document and map these avenues to reincarceration*. Documenting – and publicly displaying – imprisonment statuses based on conviction is an important necessary step in understanding incarceration, reentry, and recidivism. **Table 3** below notes most recent imprisonment statuses listed by the NDOC in 2022.

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<sup>4</sup> NDOC Report available here:

[https://doc.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/docnvgov/content/About/Statistics/Quarterly\\_Reports\\_by\\_Fiscal\\_Year/SS.QIFY22.pdf](https://doc.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/docnvgov/content/About/Statistics/Quarterly_Reports_by_Fiscal_Year/SS.QIFY22.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> This figure does not include the 157,000 persons released from jail in Nevada.

<sup>6</sup> Please see “State of Incarceration: The Global Context” (Widra & Herring, 2021) available here:

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2021.html>

**Table 3: Nevada Imprisonment Status (2020) for Incarcerated Persons**

Table 3: Nevada Imprisonment Status (2020) for Incarcerated Persons						
Imprisonment Status	Males	%	Females	%	Total	%
Escape	20	.21	3	.36	23	.22
Interstate Compact	22	.23	4	.47	26	.25
Mandatory Parole Violator	47	.48	4	.47	51	.48
New Confinement	7,661	79.19	571	66.86	8,252	78.19
Other	98	1.01	11	1.29	109	1.03
Parole Violator	669	6.90	68	7.96	737	6.98
Probation Violator	1134	11.69	192	22.48	1,326	12.56
Safekeeper	29	.30	1	.12	30	.28
Totals	9,700	100%	854	100%	10,554	100%

Within the state of the SCA evaluation, Nevada, parole is a conditional early release from jail or prison only after part of a sentence has been served. The rest of the time served is done so outside of jail/prison within the community. There are strict conditions for parole in Nevada. For example, the Parole Board determines whether an individual receives parole and sets the conditions of their release. NRS 231.1215 only provides for the mandatory release of certain persons with a sentence of three years or more. There are some exceptions (e.g., geriatric status). NRS 231.1217 authorizes the Parole Board to impose any reasonable parole conditions including securing and documenting place of residence and employment, refraining from drugs/alcohol, attending meetings, drug testing, avoiding new criminal charges, and avoiding contact with any victim(s). If an individual is suspected of violating the terms of their parole, the Parole Board is the entity that determines whether or not a violation occurred.

- Self-Parole:** Reentry research is vital to understanding the obstacles that previously incarcerated individuals experience during their reentry process. Recent research has focused more on understanding the behaviors of parolees and reactions to these behaviors by correctional institutions (Grattet, & Lin, 2016). Two barriers frequently encountered by the clients of HFP include a new type of parole called “self-parole”, and technical violations of associated with their parole stipulations.

Self-parole is a relatively new term with not a lot of research conducted on the subject. Self-parole is a process within the Nevada correctional system that allows incarcerated individuals to complete the parole process outside of state-mandated NDOC residential and halfway houses. Certain conditions must be met for an individual to select this self-parole option. According to the Nevada Board of Parole Commissioners website, individuals must be able to financially support themselves, secure a residence on their own, and obtain approval from the parole board before being listed as self-parole:

*“Inmates who desire to self-parole must show that they have funds available to them to establish a residence. Most inmates do not self-parole. Having funds available to enable an inmate to self-parole does not guarantee the Board will authorize it. Although an inmate may have the means to self-parole, the Board may require that the parolee participate in a residential treatment program or half-way house program for a specific period of time or until the parolee has demonstrated a willingness to participate in treatment and continue to make positive commitments to change.”* (Nevada Board of Parole Commissioners, 2022)<sup>7</sup>

At this time, there is little research exploring the impacts of self-parole on recidivism rates, changes in inmate populations at correctional institutions, and impacts on previously incarcerated persons. Future research on self-parole could examine which states use this method of parole (and at what rates) including the benefits and disadvantages of doing so. Additionally, future research should examine if self-parole is associated with available housing and transitional housing and whether or not being self-paroled reduces recidivism rates.

- **Technical Violations:** Another common challenge to successful reentry experiences includes technical parole violations. Parole is often the first step after an individual is released from a correctional institution. Remaining in contact with, and being under supervision of correctional entities are some of the first obstacles that previously incarcerated individuals experience once they are released. With parole, individuals are contractually expected to have a sudden behavior change (e.g., not using drugs, not committing new crimes) and often follow strict guidelines associated with their whereabouts namely their place of residence (Morash, Kashu, Smith & Cobbina, 2019). Technical Violations are violations of parole terms and can be drug (even if the drug, like marijuana, is legalized) or nondrug related (e.g., diluted UA). Importantly, these offenses are not labeled as rearrests because they are not considered to be new crimes (Campbell, 2016; Morash et al., 2019; Ostermann, 2015).

Technical violations are associated with increased rates of reincarceration and are often counted as increased rates of recidivism (Ostermann, Hyatt, DeWitt, 2020). There are also gender differences with technical violations and presence within the prison population. Huebner and Pleggenkuhle (2015) found that women were more likely to be recommitted to correctional facilities compared to males on parole, but men were more likely to recidivate sooner than women. Women also make up an increasing proportion of offenders on probation and parole (Morash et al., 2019). Orrick and Morris (2015) found

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<sup>7</sup> Please see NV Parole website at:

[https://parole.nv.gov/FAQs/FAQ\\_answers/Is\\_it\\_true\\_that\\_inmates\\_must\\_have\\_money\\_in\\_their\\_account\\_in\\_order\\_to\\_get\\_a\\_parole\\_/#:~:text=The%20Division%20of%20Parole%20and%20Probation%20will%20investigate,funds%20available%20to%20them%20to%20establish%20a%20residence.](https://parole.nv.gov/FAQs/FAQ_answers/Is_it_true_that_inmates_must_have_money_in_their_account_in_order_to_get_a_parole_/#:~:text=The%20Division%20of%20Parole%20and%20Probation%20will%20investigate,funds%20available%20to%20them%20to%20establish%20a%20residence.)

that males who were readmitted into prison for a technical violation were less likely to engage in prison misconduct. While reentry research has continued to provide valuable information on the experience of those who were previously incarcerated, there is still more research to be done.

*“...So, an allegation of a burglary was made and then they’re charged. They’re housed at CCDC and that triggers a parole violation because there was a charge. But, a lot of times, the charges get dropped. But then, the parole violation has already - you know - been triggered. So they end up in NDOC.”*

In thinking through whether or not recidivism should be based on a new charge or a new conviction, during a focus group conversation with HFP case managers, one program staff member shared a helpful example of a client’s recent experience:

*“I think it should be a new conviction because, a lot of times, the individual is charged for something – let’s say something like a burglary. So, an allegation of a burglary was made and then they’re charged. They’re housed at CCDC and that triggers a parole violation because there was a charge. But, a lot of times, the charges get dropped. But then, the parole violation has already - you know - been triggered. So they end up in NDOC.”*

Overall, all program staff agreed that recidivism should be a new conviction. Either way, tracking of these experiences via arrest, violations, new charges, new convictions, reincarceration, etc., would be useful in broadening our understandings of risk and recidivism.

Future research on reincarceration and recidivism within Nevada should also continue to track these self-parole designations as well as the range of parole and probation technical violations received including differences across demographic populations. Doing so will help us gain a better understanding of recidivism in the state. To quote a NDOC’s report on recidivism (2022, p. 12)<sup>8</sup> as “Time to Failure and Survival Time”, suggests that:

*“Knowing how soon after release from prison the average recidivist is likely to return is fundamental for crafting policies of supervision, programming, and support services in the community. Becoming cognizant of time at risk, what offender groups are at most need of rehabilitation, and the types of support services they need provide for efficient planning and coordination. Knowledge of an offender’s chances of survival at different time periods of release is constructive for the purpose of forecasting corrections caseloads.”*

Currently, it is not fully clear whether or not Nevada’s high rates of recidivism, specifically, are due to persons being charged for a new crime or if they returned to jail/prison because of technical and/or probation/parole violation. Data on rates of recidivism, as well as demographic and criminogenic characteristic associated, are only now being produced and made available to the public.

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<sup>8</sup> NDOC Report entitled, “Nevada Department of Correction, July 2022” available here: <https://doc.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/docnvgov/content/About/Statistics/2018%20Recidivism%20Cohort.pdf>

## NEVADA RISK ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (NRAS)

Actuarial-based assessment instruments adhere to the principles of effective correctional intervention, also known as the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model (see Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990). The Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) was initially validated with research dedicated to Ohio’s justice-involved population (see Latessa et al., 2009; 2010; 2014). Since then, the ORAS has been adopted and validated by other states throughout the country including Indiana, where it was renamed the Indiana Risk Assessment System (see Latessa, Lovins, & Makarios, 2013), Texas, where it was renamed the Texas Risk Assessment System (TRAS) (Criminal Justice Connections, 2015) and Nevada, when it was adopted by the Nevada Department of Corrections – including Nevada Parole and Probation - and renamed the Nevada Risk Assessment System (NRAS).<sup>9</sup>

The NRAS, modeled after the ORAS (see Salisbury, Sundt, & Boppre, 2019) was implemented as a statewide measure to examine the risk and needs of offenders, to improve consistency, and aid in communication across criminal justice agencies. Overall, the noted goal of the NRAS is to predict recidivism at different points including pretrial (e.g., helping judges decide whether or not an individual should be placed on release or pretrial community supervision), community supervision (e.g., helping judges and community corrections to determine the risk of the offender and applicable targeted treatments), institutional intake (e.g., helping correctional officials determine risk of recidivism and treatment options, if available within the institution), and community reentry (Latessa, Lemke, Makarios, Smith, & Lowenkamp, 2010). Based on research completed on the ORAS and the TRAS (Lovins, Latessaa, May, & Lux, 2018), goals include the provision of supervision, resources, and decision-making that help to support an offender while also reducing the likelihood of their recidivism.

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### HOPE FOR PRISONERS UTILIZATION OF NRAS

HOPE for Prisoners has recently adopted and implemented the NRAS to match the state it is currently utilized in. The NRAS includes a total of five assessment instruments:

- 1) The Pretrial Assessment Tool (PAT)
- 2) The Community Supervision Tool (CST)
- 3) The Prison Intake Tool (PIT)
- 4) The Reentry Tool (RT- from a long-term prison sentence of over 4 years)
- 5) The Supplemental Reentry Tool (SRT – from a short-term prison sentence of less than 4 years).

The Prison Intake Tool (PIT) falls under five main domains, with a set number of questions assigned to each domain. A high score indicates a high risk and supervision level. The five domains include:

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<sup>9</sup> A copy of the NRAS is available here:

[http://npp.dps.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/nppdpsnv.gov/content/Forms/NPP%20JSF0005%20\(B\)%20PSIQ\\_1%20NRAS%20Self%20Report.pdf](http://npp.dps.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/nppdpsnv.gov/content/Forms/NPP%20JSF0005%20(B)%20PSIQ_1%20NRAS%20Self%20Report.pdf)

- 1) Criminal History
- 2) Education, Employment, and Financial Situation
- 3) Family and Social Support
- 4) Substance Abuse and Mental Health
- 5) Criminal Attitudes and Behavioral Patterns

It is worthwhile to note that the PIT has been shown to display poor psychometric reliability and validity of the instrument (see Blas Dahir, Lanterman, Kolpakov et al., 2017). This means that the PIT, as an assessment instrument, does not always accurately and dependably measure what it means to measure. This is a significant limitation of the PIT instrument. Simple reorganization, removal and/or addition of items, and re-norming of the tool could possibly improve the predictive validity. Also of concern are instrument administration issues, which impact data quality.

In conjunction with the PIT, HOPE For Prisoners uses the Community Supervision Tool (CST) for all post-release clients. This practice is also consistent with Nevada Parole and Probation. If a client is enrolled with HFP pre-release, NRAS scores are provided to the organization via Nevada Department of Corrections PIT scale. The HFP client's NDOC score is only used when they first start the HFP program while they are incarcerated and enrolled pre-release. When clients are release to the community and are still a client of HFP post-release, they are then scored with the CST. Then, upon completing the HFP program, all clients are then scored with the NRAS. This new score is compared to their initial score pre-release and is used to measure any changes in overall scores and risk levels.

The NRAS validation component of this evaluation found that the Prison Intake Tool (PIT) is able to discriminately predict recidivist and non-recidivist membership using both the overall risk/need categories as well as the overall risk/need raw score. However, the PIT can predict recidivism when using the overall raw score and overall risk categories for females only when technical violators are included in the analyses. When technical violators are excluded from the analysis, the PIT predicts recidivism for males only. Since the sample size of this SCA evaluation is smaller (less than 1000), it does not equate to a desirable number to run analyses; for the female population of the SCA, the sample size is too small to conduct the proper statistical analyses. Therefore, these results are preliminary.

## MORAL RECONATION THERAPY (MRT)

Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) was first developed by Kenneth Robinson, Gregory Little, and their colleagues at the Federal Correctional Institute in Memphis, Tennessee between 1979 and 1983. Reconciliation is a psychological term that refers to the process of making deliberate, conscious moral decisions. Ferguson and Wormith (2012) document that MRT drew inspiration from Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which is the MRT framework of cognitive behaviorism. This theory considers moral development through three main stages. The first is the pre-conventional level, which is common to children. The reasoning level at this stage is judged by the morality of actions and by their consequences. The second level is the conventional level, which is typical in adolescents and adults who judge actions based on society and norms, even when there are no consequences. The final stage is the post-conventional level, which rules that one's own perspective may outweigh society's view and leads to individuals disobeying rules.

These implications from Kohlberg's theory assume that breaking the law is more acceptable in the earlier stages where an individual is more self-centered. For example, research on MRT suggests that, when clients enter treatment with MRT, they have "low self-esteem, inability to delay gratification, relatively strong defense mechanisms, and relatively strong resistance to change and treatment" (Ferguson and Wormith, 2012, p. 1078). As a result, MRT curriculum moves clients from lower, pleasure versus pain moral reasoning, to higher-level social reasoning phases.

Other benefits of MRT include therapy engagement. Clients with moderate or high-level engagement in MRT say that therapy helped with decision-making and communication skills, and, in turn, improved their relationships with others. Interviewed staff participants also described MRT as having a positive impact on several other areas of functioning, including substance use, mental health, employment, and housing (Blonigen, Smith, Javier, Cucciare, Timko, Nevedal, Filice, Rosenthal, & Smelson, 2022; Timko, Midboe, Maisel, Blodgett, Asch, Rosenthal, & Blonigen, 2014). Since so many of the research on MRT includes participants that are White, Male, and Veteran status, these findings have limitations associated with culture, learned behavior, and a lack of comparison data based on gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation and expression (see Ferguson & Wormith, 2013).

Despite these limitations, MRT is still considered to have a success rate high enough that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration granted MRT the Evidence-Based Practice Status (Ferguson & Wormith, 2013). Additionally, MRT is consistent in showing that it is effective in reducing recidivism among clients who have a criminal history. Therefore, overall, Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) is an evidence-based intervention that teaches clients the skills necessary to uncover unhealthy thinking patterns and in turn, develop prosocial, cognitive skills (Little & Robinson, 1988).

Many correctional agencies across different countries implement MRT-based programs as treatment options aimed to decrease recidivism for offenders. In fact, forty-seven correctional facilities across the United States use MRT-based programs (Ferguson & Wormith, 2012). MRT based treatment programs have been shown to be effective with justice-involved populations including adults and youth, leading to a significant reduction in recidivism rates (Blonigen et al., 2021; Cullen & Gendreau, 2010; Ferguson & Wormith, 2013; Little, 2006; Little, Robinson, Burnette, & Swam, 2010; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007).

Correctional facilities that utilize MRT based treatment programs within their curriculum have demonstrated a significantly lower recidivism rate when compared to programs that do not incorporate this approach. For instance, Little (2006) found a 26% recidivism rate among MRT participants when compared to 40% among participants who were not enrolled in an MRT program, over the course of three years. A study recently conducted by Ferguson and Wormith (2013) found that recidivism rates amongst MRT participants was one-third lower than control group participants who were not enrolled/participating in MRT. Given their success in reducing recidivism rates for justice-involved populations, MRT based treatment programs are regarded to be the gold standard in correctional intervention (Blonigen et al., 2021), when they adhere to the principles of cognitive-behavioral therapy.

HOPE for Prisoners has incorporated a Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) model within their programming. Currently, they are using the workbook titled *How to Escape Your Prison: A Moral Reconciliation Therapy Workbook* by Little and Robinson (2006). The authors describe Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) to be “a systematic, cognitive-behavioral, step-by-step treatment strategy designed to enhance self-image, promote growth of a positive, productive identity, and facilitate the development of higher stages of moral reasoning” (Little & Robinson, 2006).

The workbook is structured around 30 chapters and includes a range of topics such as Prison and Unhappiness, The Root of Unhappiness, Inferiority and Non-Existence. Clients are required to complete 12 steps in order to successfully complete the MRT course. Some of the steps involve structured group exercises while others are solo homework assignments. Most of the workbook activities are completed while at home and then, together, clients present in-class during their weekly meetings.

**The 12 steps include:**

1. Pyramid of Life Exercise as participant testimony.
2. Shield and Life Mask Exercise as well as the Life Wheel Exercise and participant testimony.
3. Worries, Wants, and Needs Exercise and program rules acceptance.
4. Things in My Life Exercise and Major Life Categories.
5. Circle of Relationships Exercise, Best of Times/ Worst of Times Exercise, and Important Relationships.
6. 10 Hours of Helping Others (volunteer work), One-on-one discussion, and Trading Places Exercise.
7. One Year to Live Exercise, Five Years to Life Exercise, Ten Years to Life Exercise, and Master Goal Plan.
8. One-Year Action Plan.
9. 10 New Hours of Helping Others, New One-On-One Discussions, and Action Plan Review.
10. Moral Assessment, My 5 Biggest Problem Areas, and Trading Places Exercise.
11. Circle of Relationships Exercise, Best of Times/ Worst of Times Exercise, Assess Important Relationships in My Life, Summary of Things Learned in Steps, and participant testimony
12. New Master Goal Plan.

During the Year 1 evaluation, several treatment group observations were conducted to assess how well HFP MRT sessions adhered to the principles of cognitive-behavioral therapy. For example, the following items were used to assess the strengths of the MRT curriculum:

- Did the session follow a firm, fair, yet carrying approach?
- Did the facilitator model positive behaviors?
- Did the facilitator engage clients in role-playing exercises?
- Did the facilitator target clients' criminogenic needs?
- Did the facilitator use motivational interviewing techniques?

An evaluation of MRT observations found that each HFP MRT session adhered to the above principles and that the session moderator, a HFP program staff trained in MRT, followed “*fair, firm, and*

*consistent*” procedures while also modeling a positive mindset. Motivational language was also incorporated throughout group conversations and, towards the last half hour of the session, the moderator spent one-on-one time with each client to discuss their progress on their steps and how each step is associated with a goal, risk, and need specific to the client (please see Year 1 Evaluation).

Some of the noted benefits of having MRT classes at HFP were that clients were more comfortable working through the steps at HOPE compared to a correctional facilities. For example, clients that were living at a NDOC transitional residence said that they would worry that officers would overhear their conversations and judge them; that it was *“not as comfortable”* to work through the steps with *“correctional officers”* around because they *“don’t want to seem like”* they’re doing something wrong or that they are completing the assignments *“not the right way”*. HFP clients also expressed that they feel like they were being judged by MRT facilitators at these correctional locations because *“their facilitator might say something”* to their probation or parole officer. Several of the male clients also mentioned that they did not want to *“look too weak in front of their officer either”*.

Throughout observations and interviews with clients during Year 2, these sentiments were still salient. Clients enjoy participating in MRT classes at HFP specifically. They do not want to come across as being *“weak”* to several correctional persons they are in regular contact with. When clients participate in MRT classes held at HOPE for prisoners, they continue to acknowledge that they will *“just be honest with”* their program manager. Even during the Year 2 evaluation, clients discussed how the safe and holistic space created and maintained at HOPE For Prisoners helps support their MRT progression.

Since HOPE For Prisoners functions as a holistic and inclusive organization with well-trained staff, therapists, and counselors available, clients are able to process individually and in group settings where, if they *“over-share”* and *“process for longer”*, there are support staff available to them that are not correctional officers and/or employees that will report back to their probation/parole officer.

## CHAPTER 4. EVALUATING HOPE FOR PRISONERS (HFP) REENTRY PROGRAM

HOPE for Prisoners, Inc. (HFP) is a local non-profit organization based in Clark County, Nevada and the grant recipient of a 2018 SCA (FY 2018 – 2022). HFP has been in operation for approximately 12 years and is an established, non-profit organization with demonstrated experience in providing comprehensive, evidence-based reentry services for formerly incarcerated individuals seeking to return to the local community. The Category 1 *project title* for the Second Chance Act (SCA) Grant is entitled, *Southern Nevada Adult Reentry Program* and operates within Las Vegas/Clark County. For this grant/program, *correctional partner agencies* include both State and local correctional facilities/programs.

For example, HOPE For Prisoners stands out from other community-based reentry programs across the U.S. due to its unique 18-month mentoring program as well as its partnership with the local police department (i.e., Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department). Mentors are an important component of HOPE For Prisoners' client successes (Troshynski et al., 2016). Each mentor is screened, interviewed, and participates in one initial training that lasts eight (8) hours. Then, upon completion of their initial training seminar, they also participate in continuous partnership/interaction with a client/mentee during the 18-month mentoring program where they learn about the varied obstacles that clients experience throughout the reintegration process. Each client is paired with a HFP programming staff member and a mentor (or team of mentors) that 'walks' alongside them to help them seek out and secure employment, enroll in educational/training programs, reconnect with family members, and navigate any challenges they might face. Currently, there are over 60 members of the local police department who serve as HFP mentors and are also considered a key component to the program's success.

Since 2017, the Nevada Department of Corrections has been incorporating an empirically validated criminogenic risk and needs assessment tool, namely the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS), renaming it the Nevada Risk Assessment System or Nevada Recidivism Assessment System (NRAS) (see information above, throughout **Chapter 3, above**). Nevada Parole and Probation also utilizes the NRAS and creates "case plans" that are appropriate to each individual's risk/criminogenic needs. Starting in 2020, and before the start of the SCA grant, HOPE For Prisoners incorporated the NRAS as part of their in-take process for all clients. Program staff and HFP employees have been trained to administer and score the NRAS and to "case plan" based on their client's risk/needs.

HOPE For Prisoners has also incorporated other evidence-based interventions into its reentry curriculum, including cognitive-based programming (e.g., Moral Reconciliation Therapy [MRT] Classes) that have been shown to reduce recidivism rates. Similar to Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) staff, HFP program staff have been trained to deliver and facilitate MRT classes to HFP clients. The combination of newly implemented evidence-based assessment, like the Nevada Risk Assessment System (NRAS) and programming, like MRT, highlights continuity with Nevada Department of Corrections and provides a continued focus on comprehensive reentry services for HFP clients.

Additionally, depending on the client's unique risk/needs, HFP continues to offer a range of previously developed and implemented programs including: 1) Pre-Vocational Leadership Workshop (e.g., job readiness, time management, conflict resolution, effective communication); 2) Financial Fitness for Life (e.g., improving your credit, reading financial statements, banking basics); 3) Leadership Training (e.g.,

public speaking, critical thinking); 4) Professional and Personal Development Training (e.g., team building, emotional intelligence, problem solving, anger management and parenting); 5) Technology Training (e.g., beginners guide to IT, Microsoft word and excel). It is important to note that HFP also offers a range of vocational and educational programs. Many of the eligible trainings offered are also offered through Nevada's Workforce Connections and are listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) (please see Workforce Connections website<sup>10</sup>).

## HOPE FOR PRISONERS MISSION, VISION, & GOALS

Extensive research has highlighted the significant impact of language on individuals, populations, and communities. The words we choose to describe them shape our perceptions of past, present, and future events, as well as influence our understanding of their possibilities (Cox, 2020; Tran, Baggio, Dawson, et al., 2018). It is crucial to recognize that the language used to describe previously incarcerated individuals, their life experiences, behaviors, risk factors, and future prospects can profoundly affect their emotional and physical well-being, as well as their access to resources and services.

Notably, the justice-involved individuals benefiting from HFP services are purposefully referred to as "hopefuls" and "clients." This intentional choice reflects a positive and empowering perspective. Within HFP, staff consistently emphasize the importance of meeting these hopefuls where they are at and walking alongside them throughout their reentry journey. This approach recognizes the inherent worth and potential for growth and transformation in every individual, fostering a supportive environment that promotes their well-being and success.

HOPE For Prisoners provides hope to justice-involved individuals through a process of community transformation. As such, their **Mission Statement** reads, "*HOPE for Prisoners is committed to helping men, women and young adults successfully reenter the workforce, their families, and our community.*"<sup>11</sup>

HOPE for Prisoners' **Vision** also emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals which, in turn, helps to create a successful reentry process, "*HOPE for Prisoners works to empower the formerly incarcerated and their families to create a successful future built on strategic leadership and character development. By assisting those fighting for second chances, we strive to serve, build and strengthen our community.*"<sup>12</sup>

The core principle of this non-profit organization is centered around prioritizing the individual's hope and aspirations above their past correctional labels, activities, and conditions. Person-centered language is consistently employed in all social media communications and staff interactions when serving this population. Moreover, HFP ensures that comprehensive and well-rounded services are provided to every individual who seeks assistance through their doors. This holistic approach acknowledges the diverse

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<sup>10</sup> Nevada Workforce Connections Website providing a listing of all eligible training providers is available here: [https://nvworkforceconnections.org/?page\\_id=8914](https://nvworkforceconnections.org/?page_id=8914)

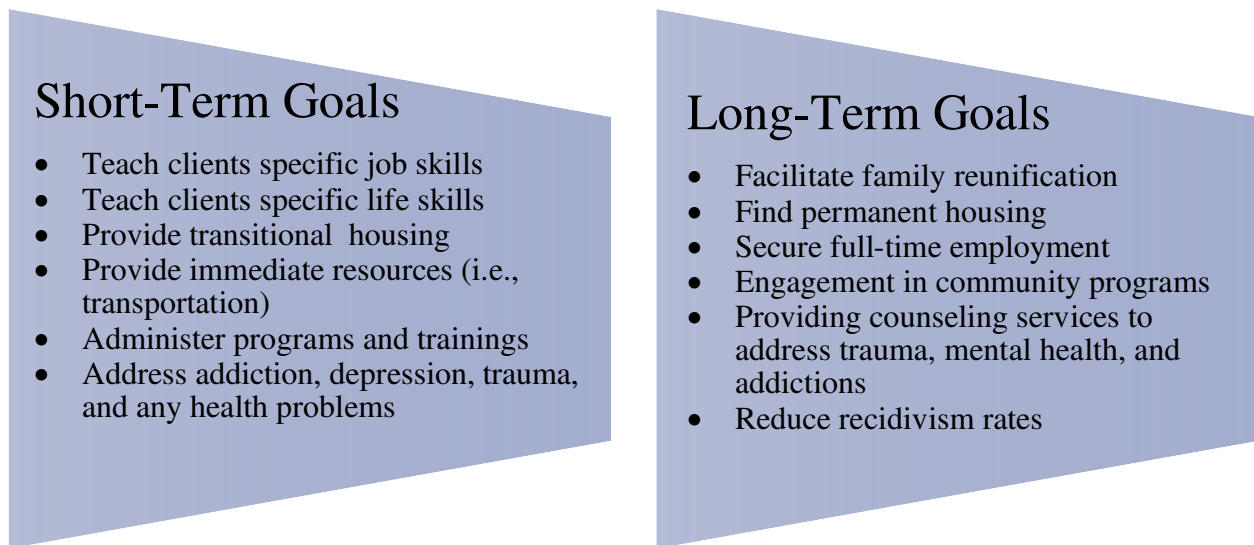
<sup>11</sup> See HFP Website available here: <https://hopeforprisoners.org/our-programs/#:~:text=Mission%20Hope%20for%20Prisoners%20is%20committed%20to%20helping,future%20built%20on%20strategic%20leadership%20and%20character%20development.>

<sup>12</sup> See HFP Website available at above footnote.

needs and aspirations of each person and aims to address them through a comprehensive range of supportive services.

HOPE for Prisoners has developed a set of short- and long-term goals designed to address the unique needs of individuals and monitor the program's progress. The outlined goals, presented in **Image 1**, are as follows:

**Image 1: HFP Short- and Long-Term Goals**



These short- and long-term goals are seamlessly integrated into the implementation of the Second Chance Act Comprehensive Community-Based Adult Reentry Program grant, which was awarded to HOPE for Prisoners in 2019. The programming and evaluation of this grant commenced in 2020. Additionally, **Chapter 5** of the report highlights other goals associated with the SCA program. Considering the reentry and recidivism trends in Nevada, the challenges related to successful prisoner reentry, and the significance of HOPE for Prisoners' short- and long-term goals, they play a crucial role in the achievements of HFP hopefuls. These goals are inherently interconnected with the overall success of HOPE for Prisoners as an organization.

## PURPOSE OF THE SCA/DOJ PROGRAM EVALUATION

The primary objective of the SCA grant is to broaden the scope of HOPE for Prisoners' existing reentry program to cater to the requirements of individuals classified as medium- to high-risk for reoffending. This classification is based on validated criminogenic risk assessments, which provide an accurate evaluation of the likelihood of future criminal behavior. In alignment with evidence-based practices, the grant aims to implement interventions and services that have been proven effective in reducing

recidivism rates. By targeting individuals with a higher risk of reoffending, the grant seeks to enhance the program's impact and contribute to more successful reentry outcomes.

**SCA Grant specific project goals include:**

1. To establish an adult reentry planning council to develop a strategic plan incorporating evidence-based programs, policies, and practices;
2. To plan for second chance reentry services implemented within other law enforcement jurisdictions/ incarceration facilities within Clark County;
3. To provide direct reentry services to 200 medium- to high-risk individuals, aged 18 and over, who were convicted as an adult;
4. To employ a qualified independent evaluator to oversee project data collection, analysis and reporting.

For this SCA grant, **deliverables include:**

1. A project timeline with a planning phase up to 12 months;
2. Submission of a Planning and Implementation Guide;
3. Correctional partner and law enforcement memorandums of understanding;
4. Use of empirically validated risk assessment tools;
5. Use of cognitive based programming;
6. Services for at least 200 reentry clients, aged 18 or older, convicted as an adult, and at medium- to high-risk of reoffending, include those with a history of violent offense convictions;
7. Collaboration with evaluators from the University of Nevada Las Vegas;
8. Use of a documented baseline recidivism rate;
9. A plan to track program participant outcomes for at least 12 months; and
10. Holding quarterly meetings with formal partners to monitor and improve program performance.

Clients receive a range of training and support services, including Financial Management Online Training, which equips them with valuable skills for managing their finances effectively. In addition, staff members undergo comprehensive training and coaching to ensure their proficiency in utilizing cognitive-behavioral interventions. This enables them to provide tailored support to clients based on evidence-based programs and practices. By incorporating these strategies, HOPE for Prisoners aims to enhance the effectiveness of their interventions and promote positive outcomes for their clients.

**Throughout the duration of the SCA Grant/program, priority considerations include:**

1. Providing services for reentry clients with a history of violent offense convictions;
2. Acquiring feedback from victims of crime, individuals who have been incarcerated, and families of those incarcerated;
3. Maintaining/growing on-going relationship with a state reentry task force.

Aligning with the SCA guidelines, reentry organizations that prioritize the integration of a risk assessment process for clients, along with the inclusion of Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) in their reentry planning, were given priority. This emphasis on risk assessment allows for a comprehensive understanding of clients' individual needs and circumstances, enabling tailored support and intervention

strategies. The inclusion of Moral Reconciliation Therapy further enhances the reentry planning process by focusing on addressing moral reasoning and decision-making, promoting positive behavioral changes, and fostering a sense of personal responsibility. By incorporating these elements, reentry organizations aim to maximize the effectiveness of their programs and facilitate successful transitions for individuals reentering society.

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## METHODS OF THE EVALUATION

In light of Nevada's elevated rates of incarceration and recidivism, it becomes crucial to gain insight into the reentry process from the perspectives of those most affected, namely HFP clients and staff. To achieve this, a three-fold approach is recommended.

Firstly, documenting administrative, institutional, organizational, and structural barriers and successes will provide a comprehensive context for understanding the actual risks associated with the experiences of previously incarcerated individuals and their potential for recidivism. This documentation will shed light on the factors that hinder or facilitate successful reentry, allowing for a more informed and targeted approach.

Secondly, qualitative research conducted with individuals navigating the complexities of reentry, exploring their experiences of both successes and challenges, will offer a holistic understanding of life after release from jail or prison. By delving into their narratives, this research will capture the nuanced realities and multifaceted aspects of the reentry journey, providing valuable insights for improving support services.

Lastly, conversations with HFP reentry staff will contribute to filling the gaps in existing research. Gathering narratives and perspectives from these professionals, who work closely with clients and witness their reentry experiences firsthand, will provide unique insights into the challenges and successes encountered throughout the process. Their expertise and on-the-ground observations will help inform program development and refine strategies for enhancing reentry outcomes.

By employing this multi-dimensional approach, a more comprehensive understanding of the reentry process can be obtained, informing evidence-based practices and interventions to address the unique needs and challenges faced by previously incarcerated individuals.

To comprehensively evaluate the SCA program, a mixed-methods approach is adopted, incorporating various research methods and data sources. The evaluation encompasses the following elements:

1. **Analysis of client intake forms:** This involves examining client intake forms, which include information such as NRAS (Needs, Risks, and Responsivity) risk scores at pre- and post-release, demographic data, and case management notes. By tracking clients' progress throughout HFP's 18-month program, including their enrollment and completion of educational/vocational classes, connection with mentors, participation in huddles, and engagement with justice entities, valuable insights can be gained.

2. **Observation of HFP classes:** The evaluation includes direct observation of HFP classes to assess the effectiveness and quality of the educational and vocational components of the program.
3. **Focus groups with HFP program staff/case managers:** Conducting focus groups with HFP program staff and case managers allows for in-depth discussions and the gathering of diverse perspectives on the program's implementation, challenges, and successes.
4. **Interviews with HFP clients:** The evaluation involves conducting interviews with two groups of HFP clients. The first group consists of clients who have successfully completed the 18-month program, providing insights into their experiences, outcomes, and perceptions of the program. The second group comprises clients who were reincarcerated during the 18-month program, offering valuable perspectives on the challenges and factors contributing to their reentry difficulties.
5. Additionally, the evaluation incorporates the **analysis of secondary materials** at the state and federal levels, such as legislative statutes, National Institute of Corrections (NIC) documents, and reentry organizational administrative procedures. These documents provide additional contextual information to inform the evaluation.

The qualitative component of the evaluation serves to address supplemental research questions beyond the reporting requirements of the SCA program to the Department of Justice (DOJ). It offers a deeper understanding of the program's impact, success factors, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. This portion of the 2-year evaluation was guided by the following questions:

- What are some of the similarities and differences associated with HFP hopefuls' reentry experiences?
- Are barriers and challenges to reentry identified in prior research similar at the local research site location? If not, why? If so, under what conditions do these barriers arise?
- What institutional and/or organizational factors influence decisions by hopefuls to seek reentry services?
- What is the impact of these institutional and/or organizational factors on hopefuls' understandings of service provisions, remedies, and rights available to them?
- What role do these experiences play in the development of recidivism and desistance from crime?

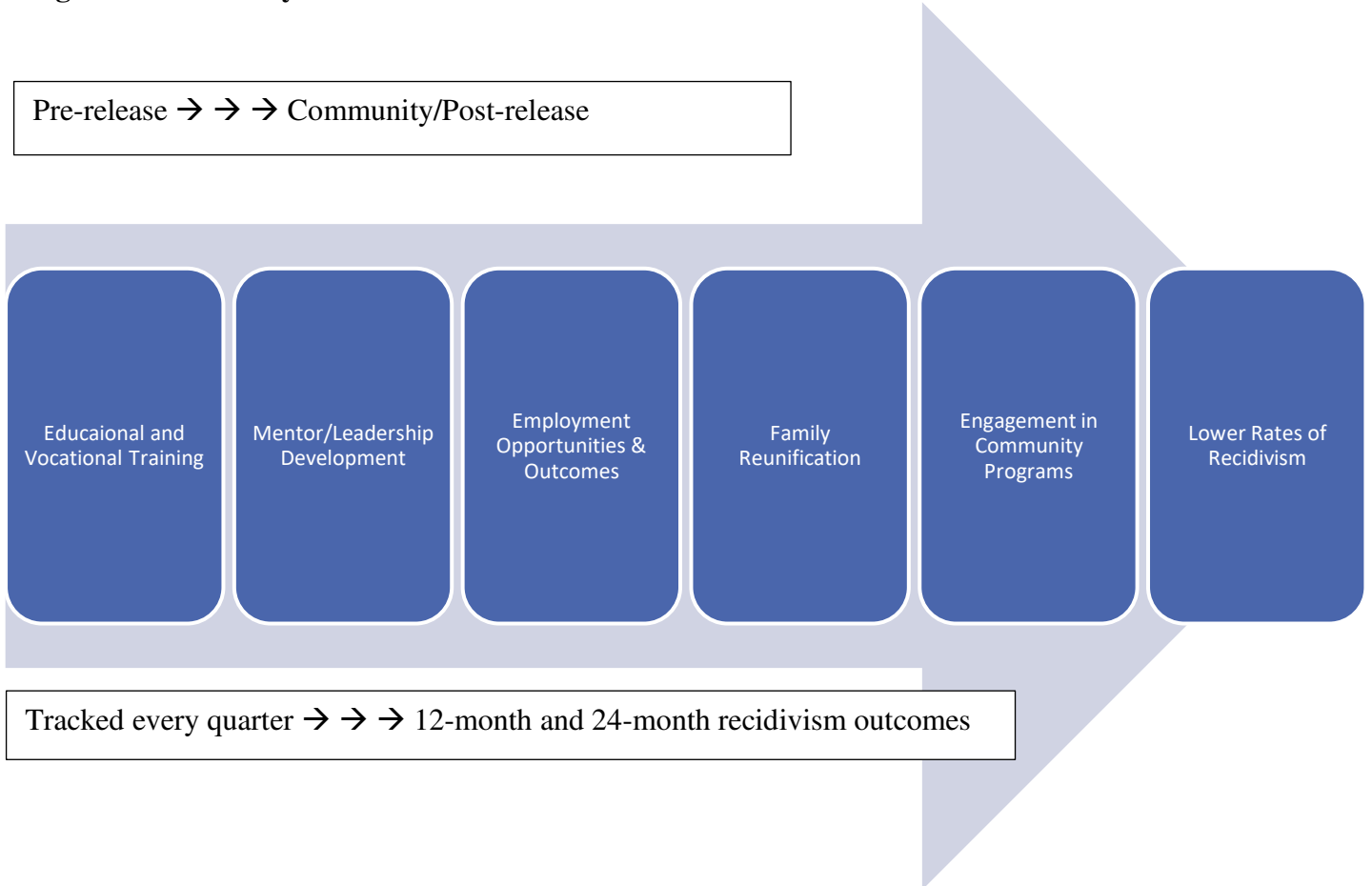
The analysis of various data sources will form the basis for drawing findings and conclusions that are situated within the broader context of ongoing debates surrounding reentry, risk assessment scales, recidivism, reintegration, and desistance from crime. By examining these complex and interconnected topics, the evaluation aims to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the factors that facilitate successful reentry for individuals from diverse backgrounds who are exiting incarcerated settings. Furthermore, this understanding extends to the impact on their families and the broader community. By taking this mixed-method approach, the evaluation seeks to shed light on the multifaceted dynamics of reentry and inform the development of effective strategies and interventions that promote successful reintegration and reduce recidivism rates.

## CHAPTER 5. REPORTED SCA/DOJ GRANT MEASURES

The mixed methods research design employed in this evaluation serves the purpose of achieving three key aims within the reported SCA community measures. These aims are as follows:

1. To provide a comprehensive discussion of the HFP reentry program, which incorporates the utilization of an empirically validated criminogenic risk and needs assessment tool such as the Nevada Risk Assessment System (NRAS). This assessment tool plays a crucial role in informing program planning and tailoring interventions to address the specific risks and needs of clients.
2. To assess program outcomes for HFP clients, examining the impact and effectiveness of the reentry program on various dimensions of clients' lives. This evaluation focuses on outcomes related to recidivism rates, employment and educational attainment, housing stability, and overall well-being and social integration.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of different types of services and reentry initiatives implemented within the program. This analysis seeks to identify which specific interventions and approaches yield the most positive outcomes and contribute to successful reentry experiences.

**Image 2: HFP Reentry Services**



In order to measure the success of the program and outcomes, the following items are considered:

**Recidivism Rates:** Tracking the rate of reoffending among HFP clients post-release, providing insight into the program's effectiveness in reducing recidivism.

**Employment and Educational Attainment:** Assessing clients' progress in securing stable employment or pursuing educational opportunities, indicating their successful reintegration into society.

**Housing Stability:** Monitoring the ability of clients to obtain and maintain stable housing, indicating improved stability and reduced risk of homelessness or housing insecurity.

**Overall Well-being and Social Integration:** Evaluating clients' overall well-being, including mental and physical health, family and social relationships, and community engagement.

By employing these measures of success, the evaluation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact and effectiveness of the HFP reentry program, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-based practices in the field of reentry and promoting successful reintegration for clients.

Again, as a result of the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, HOPE For Prisoners faced challenges in delivering the Second Chance Act Grant awarded in 2018. In the summer of 2021, they requested a no-cost extension for the grant to accommodate the impact of COVID-19 restrictions implemented at the state and federal levels. These restrictions impeded the organization's ability to provide pre- and post-release services to clients as originally planned. To ensure the completion of programmatic components and mitigate the effects of the pandemic, HOPE For Prisoners sought additional time through the no-cost extension. This extension was crucial in allowing the organization to adapt to the challenging circumstances and continue serving their clients effectively.

Throughout the Year 1 evaluation<sup>13</sup>, it was consistently highlighted that from March 2020 to May 2021, there were significant restrictions on institutional access to clients during the pre-release phase. HOPE for Prisoners staff and service providers were prohibited from entering correctional facilities. Additionally, due to various social distancing requirements, clients faced limitations on their participation in HOPE programs. When permitted, participation was subject to social distancing and institutional protocols, resulting in smaller class sizes limited to 10 individuals per cycle. Instead of weekly classes, the schedule was adjusted to hold them every 6 to 8 weeks. Due to COVID-19, some classes were canceled due to facilitator or institution challenges. Furthermore, post-release clients encountered numerous challenges within the community due to ongoing restrictions. These limitations and measures had a notable impact on enrollment numbers and the provision of reentry services.

HOPE for Prisoners program staff demonstrated adaptability and resourcefulness by implementing innovative approaches to ensure continued service provision to clients during this challenging period. They effectively utilized virtual platforms and technology to deliver various services, including case management, life skills classes, vocational training, and counseling. Through these virtual platforms, clients at both the pre- and post-release phases were able to engage in meaningful interactions with

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<sup>13</sup> Available here: <https://hopeforprisoners.org/program-evaluation-southern-nevada-reentry-program/>

mentors, case managers, guest speakers, community partners, and fellow clients. In particular, weekly virtual social group circles, known as "huddles," provided a valuable space for clients to connect, share experiences, and receive support. These virtual offerings served as a vital lifeline, facilitating ongoing engagement and fostering a sense of community among clients, staff, and other supportive individuals.

Since HFP staff were trained on risk and recidivism, understanding NRAS scores, and providing case planning around HFP clients' scores – in addition to clients' immediate needs - streamlining of case management increased as did consistency of care. MRT classes for clients also helped to provide a safe space for reflection, personal growth, and positive dialogue between participants and HFP staff. Additionally, since HFP program staff/case managers started meeting on a weekly basis to discuss clients' needs, successes, and challenges, these conversations were useful in providing well-rounded holistic care and case management. The impact of all of these trainings relate to the overarching goals of the organization in that HFP staff are able to provide for medium- and high-risk participants while they reenter society post-incarceration.

## YEAR 1: FINDINGS & REPORTED MEASURES

As of July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021, a total of 264 intake forms were completed resulting in 140 clients enrolled in the HFP program and evaluated under the SCA grant. At the time of reporting the Year 1 findings, total clients served were 140 with 123 still engaged/active and 17 listed as inactive/no longer engaged in the HFP program. During Year 1, 88% of clients served were still participating in the HFP program.

**Table 4: Year 1 Client Information (N=137)**

Table 4: Year 1 Client Information (N=137)											
Gender		Ethnicity		Age		Homelessness		Juvenile Record		Foster System	
Males	Females	Non-Hispanic Latino/a	Hispanic Latino/a	Range	Average	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
110 (80.3%)	27 (19.7%)	109 (79.6%)	28 (20.4%)	19 - 63	37.77	29 (21.2%)	108 (78.8%)	60 (43.8%)	94 (56.2%)	16 (12%)	121 (88%)

**Table 4** highlights demographic information for an available 137 clients (3 clients had missing demographic information). Overall, HFP clients for Year 1 were primarily non-Hispanic males with

close to 44% having a juvenile delinquency record and 12% had a history of involvement with the foster care system as a juvenile. 21% were homeless.

During the reporting of Year 1 evaluative findings, the alarming statistics revealed that there were 4,586 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within correctional settings, and tragically, there were a total of 54 incarcerated deaths attributed to the virus (The COVID Prison Project, 2021). These figures emphasize the urgency to assess the impact of COVID-19 on clients' reentry journeys. Consequently, a series of COVID-19 related questions were included in HFP intake forms, as well as in focus groups conducted with HFP staff and qualitative interviews conducted with clients. By incorporating these additional inquiries, the evaluation aimed to gain insights into the specific challenges and effects of the pandemic on clients' experiences, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the COVID-19's impact on reentry processes.

Out of the total client sample, only 93 individuals responded to the COVID-19 related questions. When asked if they had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, a minority of clients, specifically 18 men and 2 women (representing less than a quarter of the sample, or 21.5%), affirmed that they had been affected. Further inquiry regarding the type of impact revealed that clients primarily experienced disruption in their employment (12 clients) and health (4 clients) due to the pandemic. The data collected for the Department of Justice participants indicated that the earliest date of displacement was reported as March 16th, 2020, while the most recent was December 28, 2020. Additionally, two clients mentioned that they were currently receiving Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The Year 1 "SCA Community Measures" report was submitted to the Department of Justice (DOJ) on July 30, 2020. This report included information about the use of SCA federal funds as well as:

- 1) **Client/participant characteristic requirements:** The target population for this program includes adult men and women who have been convicted, sentenced, and are currently incarcerated at two specific institutions: the Clark County Detention Center and various Nevada Department of Corrections facilities. These individuals are classified as medium to high risk. The program aims to provide prerelease services to these sentenced individuals before their release into the Clark County communities. Additionally, HOPE for Prisoners extends its post-release reentry services to individuals who have been released from different correctional facilities and are transitioning back into Southern Nevada communities.
- 2) **Criminogenic risk and/or needs assessments used to inform services provided:** As part of the program process, all participants within the Nevada Department of Corrections undergo the administration of the Nevada Risk Assessment (NRAS) tool upon intake. The NRAS scores are then provided to HOPE for Prisoners prior to enrolling individuals into their program. Similarly, for clients who are enrolled post-release within the community, HFP staff also administer the NRAS assessment. Within the scope of the Second Chance Act (SCA), participants are specifically those who have scored medium to high on the NRAS, indicating a higher risk of re-offending. Upon release and during the initial meeting with program staff, participants complete an intake form that includes the NRAS assessment. Additionally, they have the opportunity to identify their range of needs and desired services by checking off relevant options. Participants are then asked to

- specify their top three and biggest current needs. By utilizing the NRAS assessment results and considering clients' self-reported top needs, program staff collaborate with clients to develop individualized plans accordingly. Therefore, the NRAS assessment is incorporated both before the HFP intake process while clients are still incarcerated or in the pre-release phase, as well as during the enrollment phase when clients first meet with their HFP program staff post-release.
- 3) **Numbers of participants** served thus far (N=140) including those that are still engaged/active (N=123) and those that are inactive/no longer engaged (N=17). Thus, at 2021, 88% of DOJ clients served were still participating in the HFP program.
  - 4) **Program provisions** (i.e., inclusion of mentors as well as substance use and mental health counselors) as well as a listing of referrals for collaborative service provision.
  - 5) **Number of participants completing post-release program** requirements at the end of the first year (N=6). Due to COVID-19, this number was low due to the late enrollment start time for many clients.
  - 6) **Facilitation of training to project staff including how training is directly applied to case management:** HOPE staff completed a total of 7 trainings within the reporting period and included Community Health Worker Certification, NRAS training, MRT training, programmatic and staff development training (complete listing of staff trainings noted below).
  - 7) **The purpose and goals of the reentry program:** The overall *purpose* of this funded program is to expand HFPs established reentry program to meet the needs of individuals at medium- to high-risk to reoffend, as determined by validated criminogenic risk assessments (NRAS) and the use of evidence-based interventions and services (MRT). For a listing of SCA **Goals**, please see **Chapter 4** above.

**Deliverables** associated with the funded project are outlined below (see **Chapter 4** for a listing of deliverables):

- **Establishment of a formal definition of recidivism:** Recidivism is measured based on clients' rates of reconviction leading to reincarceration. The baseline recidivism rate for the state of Nevada during Year 1 of the evaluation period was 29%, which served as the baseline rate for comparative analysis. In addition to reconvictions, clients were also tracked for technical violations, reincarcerations, and re-arrests. While these violations were documented and reported, they were not considered part of the recidivism measurements.
- **Number of program participants who have experienced recidivism:** By the end of Year 1 of the SCA evaluation, the majority of clients who returned to an incarcerated setting did so due to parole technical violations and Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) rule violations. Only two individuals (out of the total sample) were reincarcerated on new charges, and they had not yet been convicted but were arrested and reincarcerated. Six individuals were reincarcerated due to parole violations, and ten individuals housed at CASA Grande Transitional Housing were sent back to a higher custody-level institution for rule violations, resulting in a loss of community trustee status. These ten clients continued to receive pre-release services from HFP while incarcerated at NDOC facilities and were considered "active" in the HFP program. **In total, 18 clients (approximately 12.9% of all SCA/DOJ clients) returned to an incarcerated setting during Year 1.**

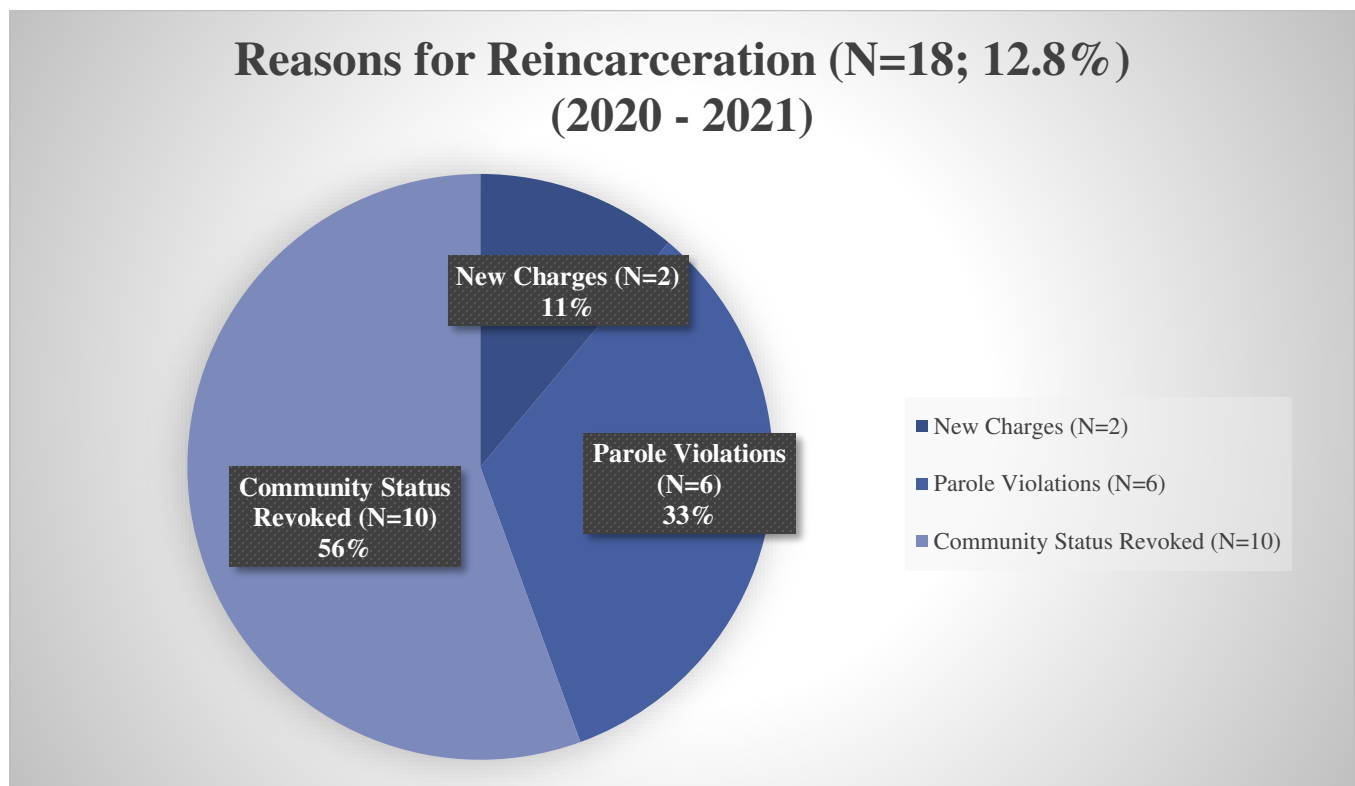
According to HFP's recidivism measurement criteria, at the end of Year 1, only 2 out of 140 SCA/DOJ clients (1.4%) recidivated. These two clients were rearrested on new charges but had no supplemental convictions. Another 16 DOJ clients returned to NDOC facilities for technical and/or rule violations, but they did not have new charges or convictions. These 16 clients represent 11.4% of the clients who experienced recidivism out of the total sample (6 out of 140 clients).

## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FROM YEAR 1 EVALUATION

The following summary includes rates of recidivism as well as rates of client justice system impacted events. These include any time that a HFP client “touched” i.e., had an experience and/or encounter with the justice system. Importantly, since HFP started tracking client experiences with the justice system, this organization is able to capture these moments that could eventually lead to reincarceration.

Overall, by the conclusion of the first year of the evaluation (Year 1: 2020 – 2021), the recidivism rate among the 140 enrolled SCA clients was remarkably low, **with only 1.4% of clients recidivating.**

### Pie Chart 1: Year 1 HFP Client Reasons for Incarceration



Out of the total sample, two individuals (N=2) were reincarcerated on new charges. It is important to note that these two clients were arrested and reincarcerated but not yet convicted. An additional 16 clients from

the Department of Justice (DOJ) group returned to NDOC facilities due to technical and/or rule violations. Specifically, six individuals (N=6) were reincarcerated for parole technical violations, constituting 4.3% of the total sample (6/140). Furthermore, ten individuals (N=10) residing at NDOC's CASA Grande Transitional Housing lost their community trustee status and were subsequently transferred to a higher custody-level institution for rule violations, representing 7.1% of the total sample (10/140). Despite the re-incarceration of these ten clients from CASA Grande, they continued to receive pre-release services from HFP while being incarcerated at NDOC facilities.

In summary, during the first year of the evaluation, a total of 18 clients, approximately 12.9% of all SCA/DOJ clients, returned to an incarcerated setting. This includes individuals who were reincarcerated on new charges, as well as those who experienced parole technical violations or rule violations at CASA Grande Transitional Housing.

Based on the total number of HFP clients enrolled during this Year 1, **58 HFP clients experienced justice system impacted events**, 79% (N=46) were male, while 21% (N=12) were female. In terms of race, 38% (N=22) identified as White/Caucasian, 31% (N=18) as Black/African American, 12% (N=7) as Mixed, 12% (N=7) as Other, 2% (N=1) as Hispanic, and 5% (N=3) as Unknown. Regarding ethnicity, 79% (N=46) identified as Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino/a, while 21% (N=12) identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. The age range of the clients varied from 18 to 63 years old, with an average age of approximately 34 years.

In terms of the Nevada Risk Assessment System (NRAS), 21 clients had missing NRAS scores, leaving 37 clients with recorded scores. Among these clients, scores ranged from 10 to 32, with an average score of 19.7. Regarding NRAS Levels, 14 clients had missing information, while the remaining 44 clients were categorized as follows: 5% (N=2) classified as Low, 41% (N=18) as Moderate, and 55% (N=24) as High.

Among the total of 58 HFP clients who experienced justice system impacted events, recidivism, re-arrest, and reincarceration rates were assessed. The findings are as follows:

- 5% (N=3) had their probation revoked.
- 9% (N=5) had their parole revoked.
- 19% (N=11) were rearrested without receiving a new charge.
- 21% (N=12) were rearrested and charged with a new crime.
- 3% (N=2) were rearrested, charged, and ultimately convicted of a new crime.
- 50% (N=29) had their community status revoked while residing at CASA Grande.

**Please note:** It is important to note that there were some overlaps within these categories: one client who had their community status revoked was later convicted of a new crime, one client who was rearrested without a new charge later had their parole revoked, and two clients who were rearrested and charged with a new crime were later convicted. In total, there were 62 justice system impacted events recorded for the 58 clients assessed. These findings shed light on the various forms of justice system involvement experienced by HFP clients, including probation and parole revocations, rearrests with or without new charges, and community status revocations.

These demographic and assessment data provide insights into the composition of the HFP client population with justice system impacted events. The information highlights the gender distribution, racial and ethnic diversity, age range, and NRAS scores and levels among the evaluated clients.

## YEAR 2: FINDINGS & REPORTED MEASURES

Over the two-year evaluation period, HOPE for Prisoners served a total of 649 clients. Of these, a total of 245 clients were served under the Department of Justice (DOJ) Second Chance Act (SCA) program and were included in the final 2-year evaluation. At the time of reporting (December, 2022), of the 245 DOJ/SCA clients, there were a total of 24 (or 9.8%) individuals that were still completing HFP’s 18-month program. These 24 individuals were included in the final evaluation.

**Table 5: 2-Year Evaluation Client Information**

Table 5: 2-Year Evaluation Client Information (N=245)										
Gender		Race			Age		NRAS		Reincarceration (N = 58)	
Males	Females	White	Black	Other	Range	Average	Range	Average	Males	Females
188 (77%)	57 (23%)	106 (43%)	78 (32%)	61 (25%)	19 - 69	37.39	2 - 40	19.72	49 (84%)	9 (16%)

### HFP DOJ/SCA CLIENTS/HOPEFULS

Among these 245 clients, 76.73% (N=188) were male, while 23.27% (N=57) were female. Most clients identified as either White or Black (see **Table 5**, above). Additional noted racial compositions are as follows:

- White/Caucasian: 43.27% (N=106)
- Black/African American: 31.84% (N=78)
- Mixed: 7.76% (N=19)
- Other: 6.94% (N=17)
- Hispanic: 2.86% (N=7)
- Unknown: 2.04% (N=5)
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 2.04% (N=5)

- Asian: 2.04% (N=5)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native: 0.82% (N=2)

The age range for DOJ clients was 19 to 69 years old, with an average age of 37.39 years and a median age of 36 years.

The NRAS scores were available for only 194 clients, and ranged from 2 to 40, with an average score of 19.72 and a median score of 20. However, 51 clients had missing NRAS scores. This is a limitation of the project and highlights the inconsistency of scoring clients at the pre-release (via NDOC documents) and post-release (via HFP scoring) stage. Thus, among the clients with marked NRAS Levels, 15.51% (N=38) were missing, while the remaining 84.49% (N=207) were classified as follows: 42.86% (N=105) as Moderate, 31.84% (N=78) as High, 9.39% (N=23) as Low, and 0.4% (N=1) as Very High.

These statistics provide an overview of the demographic characteristics of the DOJ clients served by HFP. The data highlight the gender distribution, racial and ethnic diversity, age range, NRAS scores, and NRAS Level classifications among the evaluated clients.

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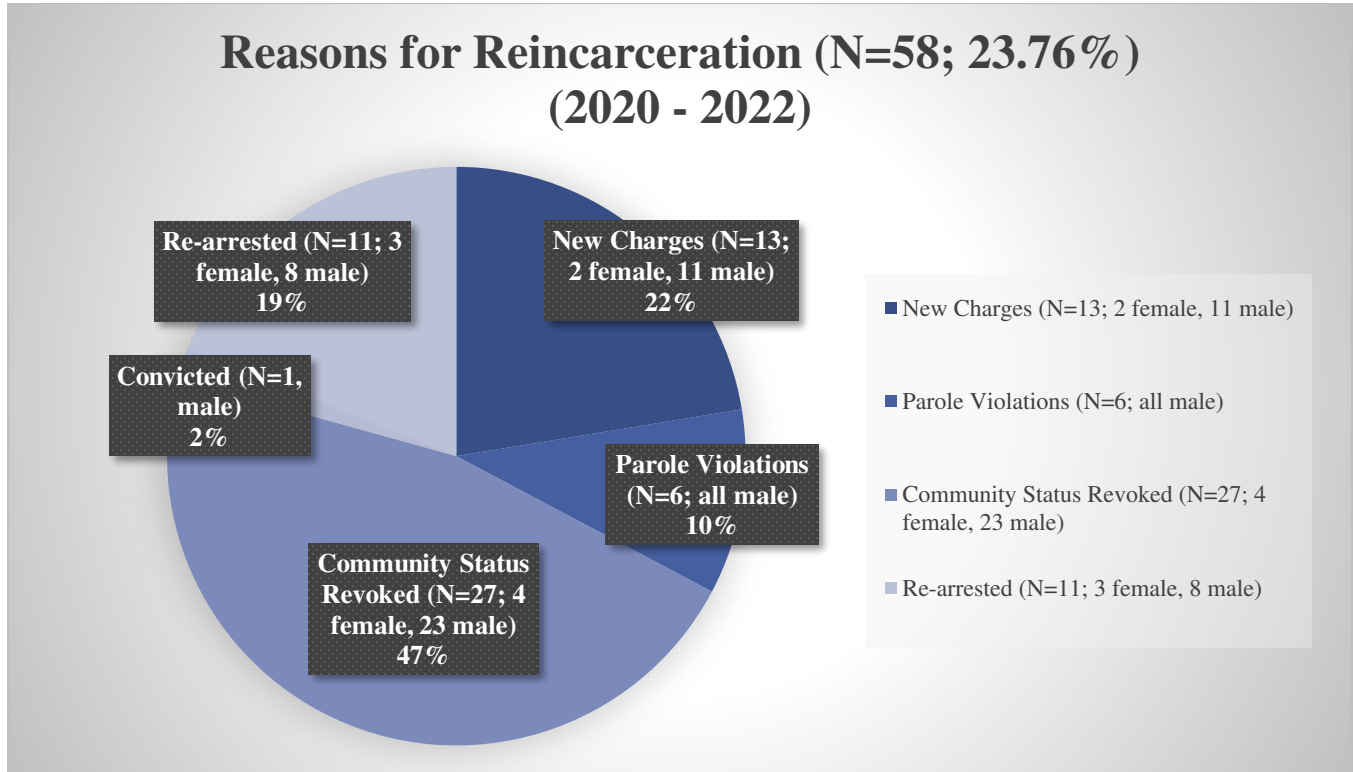
#### CLIENT RECIDIVISM DATA

At the end of the two-year evaluation, in total, 58 hopefuls, or 23.76% of the total 245 DOJ/SCA clients were reincarcerated (See **Pie Chart 2**, below).

Of these, 27 (or 47%) had their community status revoked and were sent back to an incarceration setting; 13 (22%) received a new charge but it was unclear at the time whether or not they were officially convicted of this new charge; 11 (19%) were re-arrested but did not receive a new charge; 6 (10%) received a parole violation; and 1 (2%) was formally convicted of a new charge.

Court and criminal involvement data also included revocation of "*community status*" for individuals that were housed at the Nevada Department of Corrections Transitional Housing (pre-release). These individuals were considered to be "community trustees" and housed under the jurisdiction of the Nevada Department of Corrections. Twenty-five (25) individuals had their status revoked as a result of institutional rule violations. As a result, they were returned to a higher custody-level facility (prison). Since HOPE for Prisoners worked with clients in the institutions (pre-release), staff was able to work with these clients until their release. As a result, clients would often return to the organization for assistance once they were released from any court or criminal justice involvement.

**Pie Chart 2: Final 2-Year Evaluation Client Reasons for Reincarceration**



In terms of gender distribution, for those HFP clients that were reincarcerated, 84.48% (N=49) were males and 15.52% (N=9) were females. When looking at race, 36.2% (N=21) identified as White/Caucasian, 34.48% (N=20) as Black/African American, 10.34% (N=6) as Mixed, 10.34% (N=6) as Other, 5.17% (N=3) as Unknown, and 1.72% (N=1) each as Hispanic and American Indian/Asian Pacific Islander.

Further examining the breakdown by gender, among women, 44.44% (N=4) identified as White/Caucasian, 22.22% (N=2) as Other, 11.11% (N=1) as Black/African American, 11.11% (N=1) as Mixed, and 11.11% (N=1) as Unknown. Among men, 38.78% (N=19) identified as Black/African American, 34.69% (N=17) as White/Caucasian, 10.20% (N=5) as Mixed, 8.16% (N=4) as Other, 4.08% (N=2) as Unknown, and 2.04% (N=1) as American Indian/Asian Pacific Islander.

In terms of ethnicity, 77.59% (N=45) of the clients identified as Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino/a, while 22.41% (N=13) identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. Among women, 88.88% (N=8) identified as Non-Hispanic or Non-Latina, and 11.11% (N=1) identified as Hispanica or Latina. Among men, 75.51% (N=37) identified as Non-Hispanic/Latino, and 24.49% (N=12) identified as Hispanic/Latino.

The age range of the clients returning to incarceration varied from 19 to 61 years old, with an average age of 34.72 years. For women, the age range was narrower, from 27 to 43 years old, with an average

age of 34.22 years. For men, the age range was broader, from 19 to 61 years old, with an average age of 34.81 years.

Regarding the NRAS scores, with 12 missing scores, the remaining 46 clients scored between 11 and 40, with an average score of 20.24. Among women, with 4 missing scores, the remaining 5 clients scored between 22 and 29, with an average score of 24.6. Among men, with 8 missing scores, the remaining 41 clients scored between 11 and 40, with an average score of 19.71.

In terms of NRAS Level classification, with 6 missing marked levels, the remaining 52 clients were classified as 3.85% (N=2) as Low, 40.38% (N=21) as Moderate, and 55.77% (N=29) as High. Among women, with 1 missing level, the remaining 8 clients were classified as 0.00% (N=0) as Low, 37.5% (N=3) as Moderate, and 62.5% (N=5) as High. Among men, with 5 missing levels, the remaining 44 clients were classified as 4.54% (N=2) as Low, 40.90% (N=18) as Moderate, and 54.54% (N=24) as High.

**In sum, similar to reported findings from the Year 1 evaluation (see above), hopefuls returning to prison are doing so primarily because of technical violations and community status revocations which emphasizes several structural/institutional barriers within the criminal justice system.**

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#### SUCCESS STORIES REPORTED TO THE DOJ ON JANUARY 31, 2023

As a part of the reporting measures to the Department of Justice, the following success stories were highlighted:

1. ES was enrolled in HOPE for Prisoners program in February 2021 and was on intensive community supervision. He participated in all required classes and was compliant with all programmatic requirements (HOPE, parole and probation, and court requirements). ES successfully completed the hours recommended for substance use classes, one on one counseling with a HOPE counselor, parenting classes, and 12 steps with Moral Reconciliation Therapy "MRT". With the assistance of HOPE staff ES is enrolled at CSN pursuing an associate degree in drug and alcohol counseling to become a Certified Substance Abuse Counselor. ES continues to be a part of HOPE for Prisoners even after the completion of the program. He attends the Tuesday Huddle Ups and stays in touch with his mentor. ES is currently a mentor providing guidance and support to new HOPE clients. He was able to reestablish a relationship with his family and regained the trust of his children. He has stepped into the role of a parent and is able to provide for his children. ES is currently working as a cook making \$18.00/hour while he finishes school. ES is the epitome of a transformed life transforming lives.
2. JB participated in HOPE for Prisoners pre-release program. He was released to the post-release program where he was required to participate in the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT court) program. JB successfully completed both the MAT & MRT programs. He has been reestablishing his relationship with his family by regularly connecting with his daughter. JB has secured stable housing with his new wife. He is currently employed as an Operator Two – Forklift making \$20 an hour. JB is now financially stable to the point that he was able to

purchase a vehicle. Lastly, he has maintained his sobriety throughout the duration of the program (18 months). At the close of this grant, he still reports being sober.

3. LS completed our leadership workshop in August 2021 while incarcerated. During both pre-and post-release phases, LS maintained contact with his case manager. While incarcerated LS maintained full-time employment. Upon release from CGTH, he transitioned into the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program where he continued to address prior substance abuse challenges. LS successfully completed Moral Reconciliation Therapy as well as life skills classes. Through this SCA grant, HOPE for Prisoners was able to provide vocational training to LS and he obtained his commercial driver's license. LS is now employed full-time and enjoying his new career. He has also gained the skillset needed to assist him in maintaining his sobriety.
4. FH enrolled in the program on 05/21/2021. In the beginning, FH had many challenges including his sobriety and fighting to gain custody of his daughter. During his participation in our program, his case manager worked closely with his probation officer and discussed several strategies to provide FH with the appropriate support to stay on track. The partnership built with his officer was most helpful in assisting FH with his challenges. He has maintained his sobriety, and he and his fiancée (who is also part of our program) have gained custody of their daughter. FH has obtained and maintained full-time employment with an electric company as an auditor, making \$17.50/hr. While in our program FH has completed Parenting, enrolled in MRT, maintained contact with his mentor, and was also provided with individual and couple counseling services. FH is now equipped with the tools and a support system that will aid in his continued success.
5. JP came through our pre-release program in February 2020. Once released, she reunited with her husband and son where family reunification was one of her major goals. JP completed a Life Coach training provided through the SCA grant and is now working with a community organization that focuses on assisting individuals who are experiencing homeless insecurity. She is also currently enrolled in a master's program and is interning at a Methadone clinic, earning her hours to become a Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor/Life Coach. She continues to build her relationships with her family while being involved in her community.

## CHAPTER 6. SURVEYS & FOCUS GROUPS WITH HFP CASE MANAGERS

During the first two years of the SCA evaluation, HFP staff members completed surveys multiple times and participated in several focus groups. While Year 1 findings can be accessed on the HOPE For Prisoners website, the focus here will be on the Year 2 findings. The surveys were designed to gather descriptive information about HFP staff, track the case processing of HFP clients, monitor staff training completion, and identify any notable successes and challenges.

### HFP REENTRY STAFF

For the final 2-Year Evaluation, the same seven (7) HFP program staff persons continued to participate in evaluation surveys and focus groups. Again, the group of HFP staff members assessed in this evaluation consists entirely of females, with ages ranging from 25 to 50 years old, and an average age of 38. Approximately 67% of the program staff are in a long-term relationship or married. In terms of racial and ethnic diversity, three staff identify as White, one as Latina, and three as Black. Additionally, half of the staff possess bilingual abilities, with languages including Spanish, Samoan, and Creole.

Educationally, half of the clients hold graduate degrees, while the other half have completed some college. It is worth noting that half of the staff have a prior history of incarceration or involvement with the justice system. These characteristics provide an overview of the diverse composition of the female staff included in the evaluation, showcasing variations in age, relationship status, racial/ethnic background, language skills, educational attainment, and prior justice system experiences. It is noteworthy that many staff members had prior involvement with HOPE For Prisoners before their employment at the organization. This prior experience may contribute to their understanding of the organization's mission and goals.

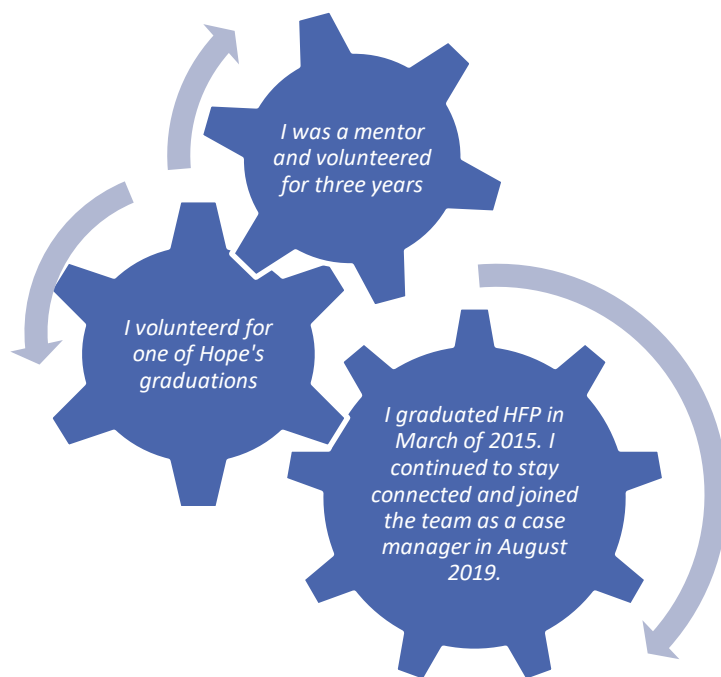
Several HFP staff were trained and served as a mentor and/or volunteer for the program while some were alumni of the program as well. Importantly, HFP staff members surveyed had prior experience with the program as a volunteer (N=5), a mentor (N=4), a teacher/trainer (N=2), and as prior client's that successfully completed the 18-month HFP program (N=2). Overall, these findings provide insights into the demographic and educational profiles of HFP staff members, showcasing their diverse backgrounds and experiences. Such diversity can contribute to the organization's ability to effectively serve a wide range of clients and address their specific needs.

At the end of the two-year evaluation period, when asked how long they have been involved with the HFP program, time ranged between a little over two years to well over 6 years (average = 55 months or around 4 years and 5 months of total involvement). When asked to list how long they have been a program staff member at HOPE For Prisoners, time ranged from a little over two years to four and a half years (average = 35 months or 2 years and 9 months).

Importantly, half of those surveyed acknowledged that their prior involvement with the criminal justice system has shaped the way that they interact with clients and – ultimately – influenced their case

management styles. For example, one expressed “As a [title], I reflect on my experiences and what I needed and implement it into my case management” with clients. Another client noted that her “past experience with the CRJ system” shaped how she case managed and interacted with clients and staff.

**Figure 1: Staff Involvement with HOPE For Prisoners**



Since several staff persons has this experience of “navigating the system pre- and post-release” they mentioned how they had a “better understanding of the challenges, fear, and uncertainty” also experienced by HFP clients. The benefit of this experiential knowledge is something that all HFP staff and clients bring up as a primary reason associated with the organization/client success. Indeed, because of their knowledge, they are “able to problem solve and relate to client challenges differently.”

## HFP STAFF TRAININGS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Over the course of the SCA evaluation period, all staff members were involved in administrative and programmatic training courses. Across all 6 program staff members surveyed, they completed an impressive 111 training seminars and/or certificate courses or an average of 18.5 completed training sessions per staff member over the two-year evaluation period.

For example, between 2020 to 2022, training completed by **all HFP staff** include MRT and NRAS training as well as Workplace Harassment Prevention, Combating Workplace Discrimination, and Harassment and Violence Prevention. Administrative training sessions dedicated to understanding HFP

data reporting systems and technological programs also included an Apricot Training Seminar, a Work Keys Training Seminar, and a Resume Building Seminar to help HFP clients with employment applications. Overall, the types of trainings completed by HFP staff included:

**1) HOPE For Prisoners Specific Trainings:**

- Organizational Safety (i.e., Workplace Harassment & Violence Prevention; Combating Workplace Discrimination; Threat Assessment);
- Programmatic Needs (i.e., Mentor Training; Financial Literacy; Task Management);
- Administrative Support (i.e., Apricot, Work Keys, Resume Building); and
- Leadership Development (Self-Care; Emerging Leaders; Aegis Leadership; Personal Development);

**2) Trainings in Partnership with Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) and Nevada Department of Public Safety (NDPS) Parole and Probation Division (i.e., NDOC and CCDC Volunteer Training) including a focus on SCA Deliverables:**

- Nevada Risk Assessment NRAS Scoring & Assessment – NDPS;
- Moral Reconciliation Therapy MRT Workshop & Facilitation) – NDOC

**3) Trainings in Partnership with Community Health Partners (i.e., Community Health Worker; Mental Health First Aid; Medicaid Awareness; Understanding Homelessness; Substance Use/Abuse; Suicide Prevention);**

**4) Trainings in Partnership with Community Economic Partners: (i.e., WorkForce Connections; Employability and Employment Opportunities; Employ Nevada).**

**Table 5: Additional Trainings/Certificates Completed by HFP Staff**

Table 5: Additional Trainings/Certificates Completed by HFP Staff			
FY 2020 – 2021		FY 2021 - 2022	
Title	Staff Completing	Title	Staff Completing
NRAS Assessment and Scoring	4	Trauma & Self Care Workshop	5
Financial Literacy	4	NDOC Volunteer Training	5
Community Health Worker (CHW)	4	WorkForce Connections Training	5
Mental Health First Aid	4	Employ Nevada	4
Self-Care Webinar	4	Community Health Care Worker	3

Medicaid Awareness	4	CCDC Training	3
NDOC Volunteer Training	3	Mental Health First Aid Training	3
Homelessness and Substance Abuse	2	Threat Awareness	2
Suicide Prevention	2	Foundation for Recovery Program	1
Task Management	2	Emerging Leaders Workshop	1
Substance Abuse Training	1	NRCAN Program	1
Behavioral Health Emergencies	1		
Aegis Leadership Training	1		
Mentor Training	1		
Personal Development	1		

In addition, these trainings and certificate programs completed by all HFP staff persons surveyed, several completed additional classes. These are listed by year and frequency in the **Table 5** above.

## CASELOADS, CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES

For the purpose of the two-year evaluation report, surveys distributed multiple times to HFP staff and case managers also asked how long, in months, they have managed HFP client caseloads for the SCA grant, specifically, and compared to case management of other HFP clients not assigned to the SCA evaluation.

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### YEAR 1 REVIEW

During Year 1, the duration of managing SCA client caseloads varied among the programming staff. One staff member managed DOJ cases for three months, while two staff members managed SCA cases for 20 months. Across the six programming staff evaluated during Year 1, the average length of time working on SCA cases was 10.5 months. In Year 2, the duration of managing SCA client caseloads ranged from one year and three months to three years and three months, with an average length of time of two years and two months.

By the end of the Year 1 evaluation period, the number of active HFP client caseloads per month varied between 33 and 140, with an average of 53. Similarly, **the number of SCA-specific client caseloads per month ranged from 10 to 57, with an average of 25.** Each month, HFP programming staff members were responsible for approximately 123 active SCA client cases, averaging around 25 cases per staff member. Additionally, there were approximately 25 inactive SCA client cases, meaning that these clients had not contacted their HFP programming staff member for over 90 days. It is important to

note that the case managers diligently followed up with these "inactive" clients on a weekly basis. Some HFP clients who were inactive during one month, often due to work-related scheduling conflicts, became active again in the following month. These variations in caseloads highlight the dynamic nature of client engagement and the efforts made by the HFP programming staff to maintain contact and support with clients.

At the end of Year 1, HFP case managers were asked to share the significant challenges faced by their SCA clients. The majority of challenges identified during this period were directly related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clients experienced profound losses, such as the passing of family members, which added to their emotional burdens. Difficulties in accessing HFP's online trainings and programming were also prevalent, as clients struggled with the increased reliance on technology during the pandemic. Unemployment challenges emerged as another common obstacle, exacerbated by the economic impact of the pandemic. Moreover, housing instability was identified as a significant challenge, with case managers noting that finding and securing affordable housing was a primary concern for HFP clients. They recognized that access to stable housing was interconnected with their clients' ability to secure employment, stating, *"Housing and unemployment are both connected."*

The COVID-19 pandemic created a range of hardships for SCA clients, disrupting their lives and impeding their reentry progress. These challenges underscored the importance of addressing housing and unemployment issues as fundamental components of successful reentry efforts. By recognizing and addressing these interconnected challenges, HFP aimed to provide holistic support to their clients, helping them navigate the complexities of post-incarceration life during a particularly challenging time.

During Year 1, staff members at HFP shared their successes and achievements, highlighting the supportive and collaborative environment they fostered. They expressed how they confided in one another, exchanged valuable resources and contact information for various services, and held weekly meetings to discuss challenges and debrief about client issues. When asked about their proudest accomplishments, staff participants emphasized the development of trust among themselves; how they *"learned to trust one another"* and that *"trust continued to increase"* based on the *"sharing of a lot of resources and services"*.

The collective dedication of the programming staff was evident in their commitment to the success of all clients, not just those on their individual caseloads. Recognizing the uncertainties and stresses brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, caseworkers acknowledged that they were all facing similar challenges and *"realized that they were in the same boat"*. The weekly meetings proved to be immensely valuable in providing support and reassurance during these challenging times. The sense of camaraderie and collaboration among staff members contributed to their accomplishments and their ability to effectively serve their clients.

The evaluation for Year 1 highlights the significance of team building and bonding, especially in the context of a pandemic. The weekly meetings served as a platform for problem-solving, exchanging stories about client and administrative challenges, and brainstorming effective strategies to overcome those barriers. All programming staff emphasized the importance of these moments, describing them as *"crucial"* and *"immensely helpful during the pandemic"*. Additionally, HFP leadership was acknowledged as a success during this challenging period. The CEO was commended for being a *"great motivational speaker"* and a *"visionary leader"*, while the program manager consistently demonstrated

*“excellent leadership qualities”*, including *“kindness and understanding”*. The open communication among the entire team was particularly noteworthy, as everyone felt comfortable expressing their feelings, concerns, and stressors. This level of trust and open dialogue fostered a supportive and collaborative work environment, contributing to the team's effectiveness in navigating the difficulties posed by the pandemic.

Despite the numerous challenges posed by the pandemic during the first year of the grant evaluation, HOPE for Prisoners successfully adapted and continued to provide essential services to its clients. The organization demonstrated resilience and innovation in addressing the obstacles encountered. Notably, HOPE for Prisoners established a computer lab within one of the NDOC facilities, enabling clients to access their case managers and receive reentry services remotely. This initiative facilitated ongoing support and communication, bridging the gap created by restricted in-person interactions.

Furthermore, HOPE for Prisoners forged partnerships with various organizations across the broader Las Vegas valley and the state. These collaborations proved invaluable in providing financial assistance and addressing food and housing insecurities, particularly during the peak of the pandemic. The organization's dedication to meeting clients' needs extended beyond the ordinary, as program staff went above and beyond to ensure comprehensive support was provided.

In summary, HOPE for Prisoners navigated the challenges presented by the pandemic through strategic adaptations, including the establishment of a computer lab and fruitful collaborations with community partners. Their commitment to meeting clients' needs and delivering essential services underscores their unwavering dedication to supporting successful reentry, even in the face of unprecedented circumstances.

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## YEAR 2 REVIEW

By the end of the Year 2 evaluation period, the number of active HFP client caseloads per month varied, with case managers handling anywhere from 0 to 61 clients, averaging at 28.6 per case manager. Similarly, the number of active SCA client caseloads per month ranged from 1 to 19, with an average of 10. Since this marked the conclusion of the evaluation period, the total number of active SCA clients managed per month decreased to 40. Correspondingly, the number of inactive SCA clients also diminished, with only 11 listed as "inactive". **Table 6** is a snapshot of cases management at one point in time during the Year 2 evaluation.

In **Table 6**, below, numbers within parentheses (#) were assigned because, at the time of the survey in October 2022, those case managers did not have any SCA clients who had successfully completed the 18-month HFP program. However, by the end of December 2022, these three case managers anticipated that 17, 23, and 26 clients, respectively, would complete the program and graduate. These expected completion rates are indicated within parentheses.

**Table 6: SCA Client Case Management Per HFP Staff**

Table 6: SCA Client Case Management Per HFP Staff					
Total HFP Active	Total SCA Active	SCA Active Per Week/Month	SCA Inactive Per Week/Month	SCA Completed HFP Program (Expected)	SCA Recidivated
42	19	4/19	0/10	(17)	7
1	1	1/1	0/0	6	5
40	15	2.5/5.5	1/5	10	16
0	3	1/3	0/0	(23)	4
61	17	3/17	1/1	(27)	3
Average 144/5 = 28.8	Average 55/5 = 11	Week Average 11.5/5 = 2.3 Month Average 45.5/5 = 9.1	Week Average 2/5 = .4 Month Average 6/5 = 1.2	Average 83/5 = 16.6	Average 35/5 = 7

**NOTED CHALLENGES**

Some of the **challenges** noted during the second year of evaluation included inactive clients that were housed at NDOC’s Casa Grande Transitional Housing. If clients were “*mandated to participate*” in the HFP program, oftentimes they were inactive. Case managers discussed how, for some clients, the feeling of another correctional housing entity forcing them to do something meant that engagement with HFP was minimal. In total, during the 2-year evaluation period, there were only about 25 – 30 inactive clients. These clients were inactive because they secured housing and/or employment and active participation (i.e., attendance at meetings and classes) became difficult because of transportation and work schedule conflicts.

Also, throughout the 2-year evaluation, approximately 45-50 clients (or roughly 18.4% - 20.4% of all DOJ/SCA clients) reported having contact with the justice system, in a myriad ways. This contact included arrests, parole violations, technical violations, revocation of community status (at a NDOC transitional housing facility), and some new charges (i.e., possession of drugs; robbery). Additionally, for some clients that were dual enrolled in specialized criminal courts (i.e., Women In Need of Change

[WIN] Court; Hope Court; Medication Assisted Treatment [MAT] Court; Mental Health Court)<sup>14</sup>, had additional court-mandated rules and regulations that challenged or limited their participation in HFP.

When asked to discuss the reasons associated with client recidivism, staff members provided various insights and perspectives connected to additional **challenges**. They highlighted the significance of structural barriers, such as limited access to resources and support systems, as well as the impact of social and environmental factors. Additionally, they emphasized the need for a comprehensive understanding of individual circumstances and the complexities involved in the process of reintegration. Overall, staff members recognized that recidivism is a multi-faceted issue influenced by a combination of personal, social, and systemic factors, which necessitates a holistic approach to address and mitigate the risk of reoffending.

Case managers provided several instances of clients who faced “*difficulties with maintaining sobriety*” and “*challenges with sobriety*” and these realities significantly affected their engagement with HOPE's program and services. Staff members indicated that clients who were not successful in the program often exhibited a “*lack of program participation*” or a general “*lack of motivation to participate in the program*”. These factors hindered some client’s progress as well as their ability to fully benefit from the program's offerings.

One of the frequently mentioned factors contributing to client failure was their status (i.e., residential, community, general) and risk of/experiencing homelessness. Many clients faced challenges related to finding stable housing, and this instability often had a significant impact on their ability to successfully navigate the reentry process and the 18-month HFP program. In talking about the complexity of helping clients secure and then keep their housing, one case manager coupled housing issues with employment issues and said,

*“There is regular unemployment and then they [state and federal government] brought in pandemic unemployment because people weren’t meeting their quarters. But, the challenge there was that they were asking for so many things. Your documentation. Most clients don’t have a social, don’t have an ID. It became problematic because they were unable to upload those documents so they were being denied services... It didn’t matter how hard we tried. That was the biggest challenges cuz now, especially those who had been working and were doing good, now they are at risk of losing their housing. So, ummm homelessness. Issues with your family. Issues with their PO. They were not able to pay their ummm fees so it just trickles into a whole ball of mess so to speak.”*

The lack of a stable living situation coupled with insecure employment created additional barriers for clients, making it more difficult for them to access the necessary support and resources to reintegrate into society effectively. In general, HOPE clients often have stable housing arrangements through transitional or sober facilities upon their release. However, when they are considered to be “*in the community*,” meaning they are living independently rather than in NDOCTH (Nevada Department of Corrections Transitional Housing), they are, as all case managers mentioned, “*typically on the verge of homelessness*”.

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<sup>14</sup> For a listing of Las Vegas Specialized Courts, please see the City of Las Vegas website available here: <https://www.lasvegasnevada.gov/Government/Municipal-Court/Specialty-Courts>

*“...It didn’t matter how hard we tried. That was the biggest challenges cuz now, especially those who had been working and were doing good, now they are at risk of losing their housing. So, ummm homelessness. Issues with your family. Issues with their PO. They were not able to pay their ummm fees so it just trickles into a whole ball of mess so to speak...”*

Case managers discussed how clients go through various housing situations during the 18-month program, with some “going in and out of homelessness”. One confirmed,

*“I didn’t realize how much stress they go through. My client doesn’t have any food. My client is going to be homeless. My client can’t find a job. And you [pause], we, we’re all just trying to motivate, motivate, motivate... but it’s tough”.*

The journey starts for some clients at the NDOC transitional housing facility or CCDC, while others secure housing in sober living facilities. However, as clients progress and meet the requirements of each living arrangement and their personal client plan, they inevitably face the need to find and secure alternative housing. For instance, when clients residing in sober living facilities successfully maintain sobriety for a specified duration (typically 90 to 120 days, depending on the facility and individual plan), they are obligated to transition out of the facility and find alternative housing. This dynamic highlights the transitional nature of housing for clients and the ongoing challenges they face in securing stable accommodation throughout their reentry process.

When asked about the current homelessness rates among clients, case managers provided varying responses. Some estimated that “at least half” of their caseload was “currently experiencing homelessness”, while others indicated a higher percentage, ranging from 60% to 70%. One staff member even mentioned that “approximately 80 percent” of their clients were homeless. These variations can be attributed to the specific characteristics and backgrounds of the clients they work with, including factors such as histories of violent crimes, sex offenses, or previous experiences living in NDOCTH or private facilities. Clients who have had their community status revoked at NDOC or have previously failed to meet their residential obligations at private facilities face significant challenges in finding and securing housing upon release. These individuals often encounter greater obstacles due to their past experiences, which can make it more difficult for them to access stable housing options in the reentry process.

*“I didn’t realize how much stress they go through. My client doesn’t have any food. My client is going to be homeless. My client can’t find a job. And you, we, we’re, we’re all just trying to motivate, motivate, motivate... but it’s tough.”*

During discussions about the local Department of Corrections Transitional Housing, case managers noted that a significant number of their clients were “sent back to prison from Casa Grande” or that “the federal halfway housing sent them back”. HFP staff shared stories about the difficulties their clients faced at Casa Grande, including challenges with certain staff members and personality conflicts. Another case manager agreed that the majority of her clients who returned to incarceration were also from Casa Grande, and that “clients recidivated because they were not ready to transition back into the community”. This highlights the possibility that clients' return to prison may be linked to their insufficient readiness for community transition and the deficient support they received while residing at NCODTH. While the reasons for client recidivism were “various”, **community status revocation and**

**technical violations emerged as the primary cause for clients return to jail or prison.** These conversations align with the findings from the 2-year evaluation on client recidivism, as detailed in **Chapter 5.**

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#### NOTED SUCCESSES

When reflecting on their own and their clients' **successes**, case managers identified various factors that contributed to success noting that there were “*varying reasons equated to their success*”. These factors included clients completing the 18-month HFP program, maintaining sobriety, participating in career training, rebuilding family relationships, and taking responsibility for their actions. Case managers emphasized the importance of clients “*staying connected with their case managers or program staff*” as a key indicator of success. They also highlighted the significance of clients having stable housing and employment, as well as successfully completing vocational training. Indeed, case managers said that their clients were successful because they “*stayed connected to the program, found employment and/or completed vocational training*”. Furthermore, case managers recognized the positive impact of collaboration between HFP and parole officers who actively engage with the program and refer their parolees for participation. One case manager mentioned that, for clients that “*have a parole officer that works direction with HFP, answers emails from case managers, or those that refer their parolees to the program*” are also successful.

Staff members also highlighted **additional successes** related to their holistic approach to navigating clients' reentry journeys. They emphasized their understanding of: a) clients' immediate, short-term, and long-term needs, b) clients' risk level as assessed by the NRAS (Needs, Risks, and Responsivity Assessment). Additionally, staff members acknowledged the importance of addressing c) clients' chance of “*risk of violations,*” such as parole violations or community status revocations, as well as the possibility of d) clients' experiencing “*justice impacted events,*” which encompass any interactions or encounters with the criminal justice system. By recognizing and addressing these various aspects, staff members aim to provide comprehensive support and guidance to clients throughout their reentry process.

Staff members at HFP have achieved additional successes by adopting a holistic and inclusive approach to understanding and navigating clients' needs throughout different timeframes: immediate, short-term, and long-term (see **Image 3**, below). They consider the clients' risk level and needs as assessed by NRAS, as well as their likelihood of experiencing violations or justice-related events. This comprehensive understanding enables the staff to provide tailored support and interventions to address the various challenges and risks clients may encounter during their reentry journey.

*“If they’re [Parole Officer] going to violate the client for curfew or anything like that. I feel like, instead of putting them [the client] back in prison – or sending them back to the yard or whatever the case may be – it’s a, it’s a, [pause] it should be like a conversation or a warning. Not the yard...”*

**Image 3: HFP Case Managers’ Understandings of Navigating Client Reentry Journeys**



HFP case managers possess valuable insights and understanding when it comes to guiding clients through their reentry journeys. For example, in explaining the tension between recidivism and actual client experiences while returning to society, conversations about this matrix of needs and of risks were common. In talking about this connection, one mentioned:

*“I think it all depends on the PO [Parole Officer] too. You know. If they’re going to violate the client for curfew or anything like that. I feel like, instead of putting them [the client] back in prison – or sending them back to the yard or whatever the case may be – it’s a, it’s a, [pause] it should be like a conversation or a warning. Not the yard. So, yeah, recidivism, to me, for us, is catching a new charge.”*

Additionally, in providing an example of this overlap in client risk to actually recidivate or be reincarcerated, another case manager noted that recidivism should be more about an actual conviction of a new crime and not about a return to prison:

*“I think it should be a new conviction because, a lot of times, the individual is charged for something – let’s say something like a burglary. So, an allegation of a burglary was made and then they’re charged. They’re housed at CCDC [detention] and that triggers a parole violation*

*because there was a charge. But, a lot of times, the charges get dropped. But then, the parole violation has already – you know – been triggered. So they end up going back [to DOC].”*

And lastly, another staff person offered a scenario used to exemplify this navigational matrix:

*“For those that had been working and doing good, now they were at risk of losing their housing. That’s homelessness. Another risk. This creates more issues with their family. Issues with their PO. They were not able to pay their fees. So it just trickled into a whole ball of mess for them.”*

Navigating client needs, risk level, risk of violations, and risk of experiencing a justice system impacted event combine for a very unique case management style rooted in the realities of hopefuls’ experiences where tracking client connections and interactions with the justice system is novel and needed. For all HFP case managers, they sincerely believe that *“everyone is high-risk”* and that there is a need to continue to critically engage in conversations about *“risk”* and what that looks like for their clients.

*“...a lot of times, the charges get dropped. But then, the parole violation has already – you know – been triggered. So they end up going back...”*

Taking a realist approach, HFP staff emphasize the importance of recognizing that every individual entering the reentry process faces the risk of returning to prison. This risk is not solely determined by NRAS risk assessment scores, but rather by the presence of structural barriers and limited access to comprehensive support services. By acknowledging these systemic challenges, HFP staff highlight the need to address the underlying issues that contribute to recidivism. This includes advocating for improved access to vital resources such as housing, employment opportunities, education, and substance use and mental health services. By addressing these structural barriers, HOPE continues to work towards reducing the risk of reoffending and creating a more supportive and inclusive reentry process.

HFP case managers possess a deep understanding of navigating clients' reentry journey. They have extensive knowledge and expertise in supporting individuals as they transition from incarceration to the community. With their experience and training, case managers are well-equipped to guide clients through the challenges and complexities they may encounter during the reentry process. These dedicated professionals understand the unique needs and barriers faced by justice-involved individuals. They are familiar with the range of services and resources available to support successful reintegration, such as housing, employment, education, and mental health services. Case managers are adept at helping clients access these vital resources and develop comprehensive reentry plans tailored to their specific needs.

Furthermore, HFP staff recognize the importance of building strong relationships with clients. They prioritize establishing trust and rapport to create a safe and supportive environment. Through active listening and effective communication, they ensure that clients' voices are heard, their concerns are addressed, and their goals are considered throughout the reentry process.

Additionally, pivoting and collaborating with other entities to ensure client success were primary conversations throughout the 2-year evaluation period. HFP staff also collaborate with a network of community partners and stakeholders to enhance their understanding of available resources and services. This collaborative approach allows them to provide comprehensive support to clients, leveraging community connections and expertise to facilitate a successful transition.

Overall, HFP case managers possess a deep commitment to their clients' well-being and success. Their understanding of the reentry journey, combined with their compassion and dedication, enables them to effectively guide clients through the challenges they may face and empower them to achieve positive outcomes in their lives. These commitments are equally evident when engaging in conversations with HFP clients (see **Chapter 7**).

## CHAPTER 7. INTERVIEWS WITH CLIENTS/HOPEFULS

At the end of the reporting period (January, 2023), 24 hopefuls were interviewed. 20 of these clients were notable “successful” clients that, at the time of the interview, were still participating in HFP’s 18-month program, have been participating for over a year, and remained out of an incarceration setting. For these 20 hopefuls, the average length of time served immediately prior to participating in the 18-month HFP program ranged from 37 days to 72 months, or 6 years. Their age ranged between 21 and 54 with women interviewed being around 36 years old. Men interviewed were slightly older with an average age of 38. Demographic attributes for successful clients interviewed are presented below (see **Table 6**).

**Table 6: Hopefuls Interviewed (N = 20)**

Table 6: Hopefuls Interviewed (N = 20)		
Hopeful Attributes	Number Interviewed	Percentage
Gender	Male (N = 11) Females (N = 9)	55% 45%
Race/Ethnicity	White (N = 12) Black (N = 4) Hispanic, Latino/a (N = 2)	63% 21% 10%
Relationship Status	Married (N = 1, Female) Separated or Divorced (N = 7) Single (N = 12)	5% 35% 60%
Educational Background	Graduate Degree (N = 2) Some College (N = 2) High School Graduate (N = 6) Some High School (N = 10)	10% 10% 30% 50%
Prior Convictions	Two Priors (N = 17) Three or More Priors (N = 10)	85% 50%

Gaining an understanding of recidivism from the perspective of previously incarcerated individuals is essential. Their firsthand experiences shed light on the contrasting narratives that exist surrounding their lives after release from correctional facilities. By examining their unique encounters with success, HOPE can continue to gain insights into the complex dynamics that shape their clients reentry journeys.

It is particularly important to explore the perspectives of participants who have been re-incarcerated. Understanding how they interpret and define a "successful" reentry experience offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities they encounter upon reintegration. By highlighting these realities, we can better grasp the intricacies and multifaceted nature of recidivism, as well as the evolving approaches within prisoner reentry policies and programs.

By examining the narratives and lived experiences of individuals impacted by recidivism, we can identify gaps and areas for improvement in existing reentry initiatives. This knowledge can inform the development of more effective strategies and policies to support successful reintegration and reduce recidivism rates. By acknowledging and addressing the complexities inherent in the process of reentry, we can work towards creating a more inclusive, supportive, and rehabilitative environment for individuals transitioning back into society after incarceration.

## NOTED SUCCESSES

Overall, after talking with 20 hopefuls, the main **successes** noted included the importance of experiencing 1) a sense of belonging in a broader community, 2) case management styles that are understanding and consistent, 3) impactful and available mentors, and 4) classes and trainings in a holistic and “safe” space. These key findings are noted below, with context.

First, in talking about a how a sense of community and a “*space to belong*” all clients interviewed discussed the importance of a “*shared experience*” inclusive of how so many HFP employees also had similar experiential knowledge associated with a conviction history. For example, one client mentioned his successes with “*completing classes*” including MRT, financial literacy, and their positive experience with their mental health therapist provided by HOPE. Importantly, though, this client related his successes to the overall holistic environment created at HOPE:

*“They genuinely want to see us succeed and do better. You know? So, and then you know we see Jon with his story and it’s like, if he can do it, I know I can do it, right? That makes a difference.”*

A strong sense of community and a shared space where individuals feel a sense of belonging can have a profound impact on their journey towards success. Participants in the program express a genuine desire for their peers to succeed and improve their lives. Witnessing the transformative stories of individuals like Jon, who have overcome challenges and achieved positive outcomes, instills a sense of hope and possibility in others. This shared experience creates a supportive and motivational environment where individuals believe in their own potential for success.

Another client discussed how, for her, during the 18-month reentry program, noted successes were being able to be employed in several jobs and finally enrolling in a higher educational degree program. Even though she was coming up on her year mark of sticking with the program, she affirmed a long-term commitment to the organization:

*“Yeah... It’s a positive experience. I’m still with them (HOPE). I graduate soon. May will be a year that I graduate. So I’m almost— not done with them. I’ll forever be with them, you know? I’m committed to my personal obligation.”*

The positive experience of being part of the program extends beyond a specific timeframe. Even as participants approach graduation and complete their formal program, they express a lasting commitment to the organization and the connections they have formed. They acknowledge that their journey is ongoing and that they will forever be connected to the HOPE community. This deep commitment reflects a personal obligation to continue their growth and contribute to the collective progress of others.

The program encompasses various elements that contribute to this positive experience. Participants engage in classes that cover topics such as Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) and financial literacy, which equip them with essential skills and knowledge for personal development. Additionally, mental health and substance use therapy provide crucial support in addressing their emotional well-being. Alongside these interventions, participants also pursue multiple job opportunities and enroll in higher education, demonstrating their dedication to personal and professional growth.

*“Somebody is noticing, that’s where my success is, like wow they’re really paying attention to me, you know, not just looking at my past and saying, ‘This guys an animal,’ but they’re actually seeing that I’m trying, you know? So that’s where my success is.*

The combination of a supportive community, comprehensive classes, mental health support, and tangible opportunities for employment and education creates a holistic and empowering experience for participants. It fosters a sense of hope, resilience, and a belief in one's ability to overcome challenges and thrive.

Second, in talking about how the program in general and the case management style specifically contributed to their success, another client mentioned that *“everyone at HOPE cares for their hopefuls”* and that reality is transformative. He articulated:

*“Somebody is noticing, that’s where my success is, like wow they’re really paying attention to me, you know, not just looking at my past and saying, ‘This guys an animal,’ but they’re actually seeing that I’m trying, you know? So that’s where my success is. Just having people looking at me different. Then, having my PO sit me down, ‘Mr. S, you got a lot going on, but you’re doing it though! You’re handling it.’ You know, they remind me, ‘Don’t worry, things are going to work out.’ ... Most people look at you like you need to be locked up and they treat as such and so therefore, eventually, you’re gonna fall in that category again, you know? So basically, the whole chemistry of what they got going on here is basically success in itself.”*

This client noted his individual successes in rebuilding their relationship with their family, that he was employed for 2 years, received several promotions, and was currently enrolled in college. His plans for the future were to obtain a degree in substance abuse counseling and work with HOPE in the future. This client's individual achievements serve as a powerful testimony to the profound impact of the program on his life, as well as the ripple effects it has had on his family and the potential for future positive impacts on others.

Rebuilding relationships with their family, maintaining employment for an extended period, and receiving promotions demonstrate their personal growth and commitment to a positive path. Their aspirations for the future reflect their gratitude and desire to give back by obtaining a degree in substance abuse counseling and working with HOPE for Prisoners. This client's story exemplifies the transformative power of HOPE's approach and the potential for individuals to thrive when provided with genuine care, support, and opportunities for personal and professional development.

The transformative power of the program and the unique case management approach is evident in the words of several clients who continuously highlight the care and genuine concern shown by everyone at HOPE for Prisoners. Being seen and acknowledged for their efforts rather than being defined solely by their past mistakes has been instrumental in their journey towards success. All clients emphasized the significant impact of having people look at them for who they are in a moment, and not for their conviction history/past, further recognizing their progress and commitments to change. The validation and encouragement received from HFP staff further reinforce hopefuls' beliefs in their ability to overcome challenges and create a better future for themselves.

*“Whatever it is that you need, they’re gonna point you in the right direction and you’re gonna have a support system in place which is the most important thing. Their mentoring program is very key to keeping people on their path.”*

After talking with clients, they mention how many people in society tend to view them/individuals with a criminal history as inherently deserving of incarceration; and how that feeling can sometimes perpetuate a cycle of reoffending – as a *“like, self-fulfilling prophecy that’s really not me”* as one hopeful mentioned. However, at HOPE for Prisoners, a different approach is taken. The entire atmosphere and approach of the program foster an environment conducive to success. This holistic approach, characterized by understanding, support, and belief in the potential of individuals, forms the foundation of the program's chemistry and contributes to its effectiveness as well as to the success of clients.

Third, in talking about the impact of the program, the vast majority of clients interviewed discussed the importance in having access to available mentors that *“walk beside them”* on their journey, coupled with HOPE’s *“amazing mentorship program”*. For example, one client passionately shared their experiences, highlighting how they have encountered many individuals with a similar past and have recommended HOPE as the perfect program for them. This client emphasized the program's ability to provide guidance, support, counseling, and a robust support system to help individuals establish themselves:

*“I’ve ran into so many people, so many people, that have a past, and I tell them about HOPE because – like what’s your record? Here’s the perfect program for you. These people can, you know, get you going, get you established. They’re gonna stand behind you. You’re gonna get counseling. Whatever it is that you need, they’re gonna point you in the right direction and you’re gonna have a support system in place which is the most important thing. Their mentoring program is very key to keeping people on their path.”*

For this client, noted personal successes, for him, included *“learning how to love myself”*, *“learning how to communicate in healthy ways with others”*, and a general feeling of *“being safe again”*. The impact of personally experiencing significant positive growth, learning to love, improve communication

skills, and regain a sense of safety are momentous. The impact of the program's mentorship component resonated deeply with the majority of clients interviewed. All of them praised HOPE's exceptional 18-month mentorship program and continuously emphasized the value of having mentors who understood the nuances of their reentry experience.

Finally, another area of success highlighted by HFP clients revolved around the significance of accessing classes and trainings within a safe and holistic space via HOPE for Prisoners, a space distinct from the controlled environment of the justice system or the department of corrections. In talking about the sensitivity of personal information disclosed during classes and trainings, one client mentioned their experience with HFP classes,

*"MRT, that I wasn't really, I didn't want to do it after I first started [laughing], cause to me it's bringing up a lot of things that are in your past, things that you want to forget, and they make you relive them and talk about it, and deal with them and, I'm on my last step for MRT so I'm almost done with that... the different outcomes to help manage and cope, uhh, some reasons why I do what I do, kind of goes into detail, it's really cool. But's there a lot of writing [laughing]"*

Additionally, this male client proudly shared his personal achievements, stating that he had reached a significant milestone of being "1 year sober." He also mentioned his employment success, having been steadily employed for "3 years with multiple promotions". Furthermore, he highlighted that he successfully completed the program requirements, which allowed him to accomplish significant milestones such as purchasing a car and enrolling in higher education. When asked about his future plans, he expressed his intention to pursue a career in counseling, emphasizing his desire to help individuals facing similar challenges as himself. He expressed his interest in working with HOPE in the future, recognizing the program's impact and wanting to contribute to its mission of empowering others.

All clients emphasized the value of being able to participate in educational programs and training sessions that were tailored to their needs and provided a supportive atmosphere. This alternative environment, provided by HOPE facilitators and staff in an office setting, allowed them to learn and grow without the pressures and restrictions typically associated with correctional settings. By having access to these resources in a more empowering and nurturing space, clients expressed a greater sense of personal development and the ability to make positive changes in their lives without the worry of being judged for their prior experiences, reflection, and progression throughout the program.

## CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

In conclusion, the **successes** documented herein are multifaceted and extend beyond simply reducing recidivism rates. It is crucial to continue documenting and identifying the most effective strategies for successful reentry and to monitor clients' involvement and connections with the justice system. These successes stem from valuable experiential knowledge, collaboration, and support, and they encompass a holistic approach to reentry. Recognizing the persuasive influence and impact of experiential knowledge throughout the reentry process is essential for fostering positive outcomes and guiding individuals on their journey to successful reintegration.

Notably, the **challenges** faced during the reentry process are primarily systemic in nature, highlighting larger institutional crises connected with the economy, education, housing, and justice system. In addition to navigating the correctional/legal system and parole and probation rules and regulations, one of the significant challenges faced by the majority of clients revolves around securing stable housing. Indeed, many clients and all HFP staff members spend a great deal of time navigating the risks and realities of homelessness. Addressing this issue requires a substantial investment of time and effort from staff members, who actively educate themselves on local, state, and federal housing policies while fostering partnerships with other organizations and entities dedicated to addressing housing issues. Sustained collaboration and cooperation are crucial in mitigating the obstacles associated with reentry and creating a more supportive environment for successful transitions.

Engaging in ongoing conversations about the realities of "risk" necessitates a shift towards localized and holistic perspectives that go beyond traditional frameworks. By broadening their understandings and addressing the complexities associated with "risk," HFP staff have developed a more comprehensive reentry case management style. This approach involves considering individual circumstances, contextual factors, and diverse social determinants that influence reentry outcomes. By critically examining and challenging existing notions of "risk," we can all work towards more effective strategies that promote successful reintegration and contribute to safer communities.

## CHAPTER 9. RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON 2-YEAR EVALUATION

Based on the findings of this 2-year evaluation, notes with HFP program manager on January 6, 2023, and follow-up conversations with HFP staff throughout Spring and Summer of 2023, the following recommendations are offered.

**First**, for the next months and moving beyond the second year of the DOJ SCA grant, the following activities are planned.

1. The **HFP reentry council will resume meeting** on a regular basis, approximately 4 times a year. These meetings will review current status of HFP clients/services provided as well as discuss any barriers clients/staff are facing while accessing/delivering services.
2. The newly formed **Southern Nevada Reentry Council will also continue to meet regularly**, approximately 4 times a year. This Council consists of members from a range of diverse experiential backgrounds and includes members of the community (at large), previously incarcerated persons, family members of previously or currently incarcerated persons, staff members of partnering non-profits, NDOC leadership, employees from local law enforcement entities, service providers and legal workers. This Council will report to the Governor and Director of NDOC with ideas about changes moving forward.
3. HFP should **continue to work with correctional institutions** to provide reentry services to clients currently incarcerated. This will include completing enrollments and providing vocational training for clients pre-release as well as providing services to clients post-release.
4. Based on conversations about defining and tracking “risk”, **continue to review research/best practices for “at-risk” scales and evaluations**. For example, the gender responsive risk survey could be incorporated and used for female clients. HFP is also encouraged to create their own risk assessment based on their/clients experiences at the immediate, short- and long-term stages of their reentry journey.
5. Based on conversations about defining and tracking “recidivism”, **continue to review research/best practices for documenting and tracking client’s rates of recidivism and connections to parole and probation violations, technical violations, actual re-offending** (for new and/or similar to prior crime), re-arrest, sentencing, re-conviction, and re-incarceration. HFP is encouraged to continue to track client’s experiences in these areas.
6. Based on a review of all HFP administrative forms, **continue to update and make consistent in-take and other client forms including risk-assessments**. For example, in-take forms and forms completed post-leadership development seminar/graduation should be consistent. Administering risk-assessment scores should also be consistent. These data are transferred to Apricot so having consistent measures/language should be a goal.
7. Based on noted changes in client demographics and circumstances, **update client forms** to include disability status, citizenship status, physical and mental health needs, previous rehabilitation/hospitalization, and other information discussed with case managers and programming staff.
8. The independent evaluator will continue to make site visits, attend reentry council meetings and any other meeting of importance to the ongoing evaluation of HFP services. Focus groups and/or interviews with HFP clients will continue throughout 2023 and will be used for on-going internal assessment of HFP services. These narrative data will continue to be useful in providing context to the successes and barriers clients experience as they return to society post-release.

**Second**, and based on data collected during this 2-Year evaluation, the following recommendations are offered and based on key findings associated with challenges and successes noted herein.

Since “*experience*” and “*experiential knowledge*” is paramount to client reentry success, it is recommended that HFP continue to explore the impact of experience and experiential knowledge on reentry. Continuing to highlight and uplift hopefuls’ experiences is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Informs Evidence-Based Practices:** Experiential knowledge provides valuable insights and perspectives that can inform the development and implementation of evidence-based practices in reentry. By understanding the lived experiences of individuals navigating the reentry process, we can identify effective strategies, interventions, and support systems that address their unique challenges and needs.
2. **Enhances Program Effectiveness:** Incorporating experiential knowledge into reentry programs can enhance their effectiveness. By considering the firsthand experiences of individuals who have gone through the process, we can identify gaps in existing services, identify areas for improvement, and tailor interventions to better meet the needs of clients. This can lead to more comprehensive and impactful reentry programs.
3. **Empowers Individuals:** Recognizing the value of experiential knowledge empowers individuals who have gone through the reentry process. It validates their experiences, expertise, and insights, allowing them to become active participants in shaping reentry policies and programs. Their input can contribute to more client-centered and empowering approaches that promote successful reintegration.
4. **Challenges Stigma and Bias:** Experiential knowledge helps challenge stigmatizing narratives and biases surrounding individuals with justice system involvement. By amplifying the voices and stories of those who have firsthand experience, we can challenge stereotypes, reduce stigma, and promote a more inclusive and understanding society.
5. **Drives Systemic Change:** Exploring the impact of experience and experiential knowledge can drive systemic change within the criminal justice system and reentry practices. It encourages a shift towards more human-centered, trauma-informed, and evidence-based approaches that prioritize rehabilitation, support, and successful community reintegration.

By valuing and exploring the impact of experience and experiential knowledge, HOPE for Prisoners can continue to improve reentry outcomes, empower individuals, challenge biases, and drive meaningful systemic change in the reentry process.

Since all HFP case managers understand that hopefuls “*are usually borderline homeless*”, continuing to address issues and experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness is essential for several reasons:

1. **Stability for Successful Reentry:** Stable housing is a foundational component for successful reentry. Without a safe and stable place to live, individuals face numerous challenges in reintegrating into the community and maintaining positive outcomes. Addressing housing insecurity and homelessness is crucial to provide the necessary foundation for individuals to rebuild their lives and reduce their risk of reoffending.
2. **Promoting Well-being and Safety:** Housing insecurity and homelessness pose significant risks to an individual's well-being and safety. Individuals without stable housing often face exposure

to unsafe environments, increased vulnerability to violence and exploitation, and limited access to essential services and resources. Addressing these issues helps ensure the safety and well-being of individuals as they navigate the reentry process.

3. **Supporting Rehabilitation and Reintegration:** Stable housing plays a critical role in supporting rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. It provides a stable environment where individuals can focus on accessing employment, education, and treatment services necessary for their successful reentry. By addressing housing insecurity and homelessness, case managers can help individuals access the necessary resources to rebuild their lives and become self-sufficient.
4. **Breaking the Cycle of Recidivism:** Housing instability and homelessness are interconnected with the cycle of recidivism. Individuals without stable housing often face challenges in securing employment, accessing support services, and maintaining a sense of stability. This can increase their risk of engaging in criminal activities or violating parole conditions. By addressing these issues, case managers can help break the cycle of recidivism by providing individuals with the necessary support and resources to secure stable housing.
5. **Holistic Approach to Reentry:** Recognizing and addressing housing insecurity and homelessness reflects a holistic approach to reentry. Reentry is a complex process that involves various interconnected factors, including housing, employment, mental health, and social support. By addressing housing issues, case managers can support individuals in multiple areas of their lives, leading to comprehensive and sustainable reintegration.

Addressing issues and experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness is important for promoting successful reentry, ensuring well-being and safety, supporting rehabilitation and reintegration, breaking the cycle of recidivism, and adopting a holistic approach to reentry. By understanding and addressing these challenges, case managers can play a vital role in facilitating positive outcomes for individuals involved in the criminal justice system.

Documenting changes to state-level reentry policies, including recommendations from the reentry council that includes previously incarcerated persons, is important for several reasons:

1. **Transparency and Accountability:** Documenting changes to reentry policies ensures transparency and accountability in the decision-making process. It allows stakeholders, including previously incarcerated individuals, to understand the changes made and the rationale behind them. This documentation helps hold policymakers accountable for their actions and facilitates a more inclusive and participatory approach to policy development.
2. **Evidence-based Decision-Making:** By documenting changes to reentry policies, policymakers and practitioners can assess the effectiveness of different approaches and interventions. This evidence-based approach allows for continuous evaluation and improvement of reentry strategies, leading to more informed decision-making and better outcomes for individuals reentering society.
3. **Learning from Successes and Challenges:** Documenting changes to reentry policies provides an opportunity to learn from both successes and challenges. It allows policymakers and practitioners to identify what has worked well and replicate those successful approaches in other contexts. Additionally, it helps identify areas where improvements are needed and informs future policy revisions to address gaps and challenges.
4. **Empowering Previously Incarcerated Individuals:** Including recommendations from the reentry council, which comprises previously incarcerated individuals, empowers them to have a

direct voice in shaping reentry policies. Their lived experiences and unique perspectives can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced during reentry and the strategies that are most effective in supporting successful reintegration. Documenting and incorporating these recommendations demonstrates a commitment to including their voices in the policy-making process and promoting a more inclusive and equitable reentry system.

5. **Collaboration and Partnership:** Documenting changes to reentry policies and incorporating recommendations from the reentry council fosters collaboration and partnership among various stakeholders. It encourages ongoing dialogue between policymakers, practitioners, and previously incarcerated individuals, fostering a shared understanding of the challenges and solutions in reentry. This collaborative approach leads to more comprehensive and effective policies that address the diverse needs of individuals reentering society.

Documenting changes to state-level reentry policies, including recommendations from the reentry council that includes previously incarcerated persons, promotes transparency, evidence-based decision-making, learning from successes and challenges, empowerment of previously incarcerated individuals, and collaboration among stakeholders. These efforts contribute to the development of more effective and equitable reentry policies and improve outcomes for individuals transitioning back into the community.

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