

Community Reentry Following Prison: A Process Evaluation of the Accelerated Community Entry Program

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AS THE FIELD OF corrections struggles to meet the demands of the burgeoning population of incarcerated offenders, there is also an increasing demand from the public and within the profession to address the needs of these offenders as they are released from the prison system. With more than two million people incarcerated in state and federal prisons (Kelly & Stemen, 2005), there is a clear and substantial need to address reentry concerns amongst this population, since nearly all of these offenders will eventually release into the community. Kelly and Stemen (2005) cite that nearly five million people are currently participating in some type of supervised release program in the United States. Despite the fact that nearly 60 percent of offenders successfully complete supervision without any technical violations (Taxman, 2002), the struggles of the remaining 40 percent of offenders have an undoubted impact on law enforcement resources and public safety. Given that one third of admissions into prisons annually consist of parole and supervised release violators (Taxman, 2002), it is essential to explore creative techniques to make the supervised release period as effective as possible in accomplishing its mission.

State Parole and Federal Supervised Release

Supervised release is a sentence to a term of community supervision to follow a period of imprisonment (*The Supervision of Federal Offenders, Monograph 109, 2005*). Unlike parole, which has been abolished in the federal justice system, supervised release is not a form of early release from prison, but rather a separate sentence imposed in addition to the sentence of imprisonment. Supervised release replaced the parole system in the federal courts. Parole, which is still utilized in state justice systems, is defined in Attorney General Opinion 96029 (1996) as a conditional release from prison which does not set aside a prisoner's sentence, and which is subject to revocation. A parolee is a convicted criminal who has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment and who has been allowed to serve a portion of that term outside prison walls. For the purpose of this paper the term supervision will be used when discussing all forms of post-release offender management. According to Taxman (2002), the theoretical mission underlying the supervision of offenders exiting prison is to use the period of supervision as a time to engage the offender in the process of change. Supervision officers can assist the offender in developing an understanding of his or her behavior in order to enhance commitment to behavioral changes.

Consequently, in order to achieve this mission a variety of techniques have been employed in

recent decades by community corrections offices at the local, state, and federal levels. Many of these techniques attempt to increase control and reduce recidivism by establishing conditions of parole or supervised release that have corresponding consequences for violation. Increasing the number of contacts between officers and offenders is used as a method for monitoring the imposed conditions. Examples of these techniques include day reporting centers, boot camps, intensive supervision, and reducing officer caseloads (Taxman, 2002). Despite the inherent logic of strategies seeking to increase contacts between the officer and offender, there is little evidence to support the effectiveness of these approaches. Instead, evidence tells us that these strategies are no more effective than traditional supervision strategies at reducing recidivism. In contrast, the relationship between the officer and the offender has been highlighted as a crucial factor in establishing offender compliance and eventual success within the parole, probation, or federal supervised release structure (Taxman, 2002). Taxman (2002) also tells us that supervision success is enhanced through frequent risk assessments of offenders. By assessing risk on a regular basis, the officer can gauge offender progress and determine which offenders are viable candidates for more intensive programming. It has been shown that high-risk offenders make more progress in intensive programming than lower-risk offenders (Taxman, 2002). Through risk assessment, it is possible to target the offenders who will best be served through intensive programming in order to maximize the investment.

Drug Courts and Reentry Courts

The Accelerated Community Entry (ACE) program in the Western District of Michigan, which the authors examine in this paper, was modeled after the reentry court structure. The ACE program has utilized the reentry court model in order to provide more structure to offenders reintegrating into the community, and reentry courts are modeled after the drug court structure. Drug courts are defined by Huddleston et al. (2005) as:

...a specialized court docket designed to handle cases involving nonviolent, substance abusing offenders. The intention of these courts is to increase the offenders' likelihood of successful rehabilitation through a comprehensive, judicially supervised program of community supervision, mandatory drug testing, treatment services, and immediate sanctions and incentives (p. 10).

Reentry Courts are a variation of drug courts that use the typical drug court model to facilitate reintegration of offenders into the community upon their release from correctional facilities. These courts also provide ancillary services that are needed to assist the participant in reentry into his or her community (Huddleston et al., 2005). The first drug court was developed in Miami, Florida in 1989 in response to the crack cocaine epidemic (Huddleston et al., 2005). By 2004 there were 1,621 drug courts operating in the United States and more than 70,000 drug court clients being served through this forum (Huddleston et al., 2005).

According to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP, 1997) the following are some of the key components to any successful drug or reentry court model:

- Integration of alcohol and other drug treatment services with justice system case processing.
- Use of a non-adversarial approach where prosecution and defense counsel promote public safety while they also protect the due process rights of the participant.
- Monitoring of substance abstinence by frequent alcohol and drug testing.
- Employment of a coordinated strategy that governs the drug court's responses to participant compliance.
- Ongoing interaction with the court.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of program goals to gauge effectiveness.
- Implementation of interdisciplinary education that promotes effective drug or reentry court planning, implementation, and operations.
- Partnerships among courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations to generate local support that enhances effectiveness.

As these components indicate, drug and reentry court models operate on the premise that

collaboration amongst community partners is needed to support offender stability and change. According to Huddleston et al. (2005), simple control and punishment approaches have been shown to be ineffective at reducing recidivism. Supplementing therapeutic interventions, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, with usual control and punishment tactics is more useful across the board (Taxman, 2002). Through agency collaboration, the drug or reentry court model allows the court to implement swift, consistent, and behaviorally relevant consequences for probation or supervised release violations. These consequences can be therapeutic and can target the thinking errors that led to the behavioral violation. Further, Lindquist, Hardison, & Lattimore (2003) tell us that informal controls, such as family, peers, and community, have been shown to be more effective at influencing long-term change in offenders than the court or the probation officer. Engaging communities that are significantly impacted by reentry may allow for resources to be leveraged there in order to deliver well-integrated services to the offender (Lindquist et al., 2003).

In addition to collaboration and use of informal controls, Taxman (2002) also recommends that treatment efforts and interventions be at least 18 months in duration to truly reinforce the change process. Prochaska and DiClemente's (1986) stages-of-change model supports this lengthy intervention period. Their non-linear model addresses readiness to change by acknowledging stages such as pre-contemplation, contemplation, action planning, maintenance, and relapse. Each of these stages targets an individual's acknowledgement of the problem he or she is facing and the factors that he or she believes must be altered in order to create better outcomes for his or her future. Many offenders do not enter a treatment facility, drug court program, or reentry court program recognizing the changes that could be made to allow the individual to avoid future legal issues or personal obstacles. It often takes a substantial amount of time for an offender to adopt the plans for change that are created by the legal system or treatment provider. Failure to account for the lengthy nature of the change process will result in a failure to recognize the factors inhibiting immediate compliance with supervision expectations or drug and reentry court procedures.

The structure described above has been effective in reducing recidivism and supporting offender change. Research completed by Huddleston et al. (2005) indicated that recidivism rates for state-level drug court participants in 2003 were as low as 16.4 percent nationally one year after graduation. This is substantial when compared to the 38 percent recidivism rate of non-drug court participants (Kelly and Stemen, 2005). Drug courts are said to reduce recidivism by 15-20 percent when participants are compared to their peers not participating in drug courts (Marlowe, Heck, Huddleston, & Casebolt, 2006). In general, Marlowe, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2003) tell us that drug courts outperform virtually all other recidivism reduction strategies that have been attempted with drug-involved offenders. It is essential to note, however, that high-risk offenders performed substantially better on supervised release when required to attend frequent hearings before a judge, (Marlowe, Festinger, and Lee, 2004). This indicates that reentry court models may be well suited to high-risk offenders during their transition from prison into their communities.

The transition from prison to community is an especially critical time for offenders. Travis (2003) explains that nearly 30 percent of released prisoners are rearrested within the first six months after leaving prison. The cumulative total rises to 44 percent after one year and nearly 60 percent within two years. These early months following release are critical to ensuring the safety of the public as well as the success of the releasing offender. Travis (2003) questions the current practice of allowing offenders to fend for themselves during this crucial time. He suggests that community corrections offices realign goals to address early risk factors such as: lack of transportation to their community immediately following release from prison; lack of safe housing; lack of access to treatment and structured programming; and lack of positive peers that encourage pro-social norms. He discussed that current practice often places offenders in environments where they are tempted to use drugs and engage in illegal activity for lack of better options. If parole and supervised release officers assisted offenders by providing intensive programming to address these needs during the first month following release, they might be able to prevent rearrests during that time and beyond. One method for establishing intensive

programming that meets these expansive needs is reentry court participation immediately following release from a correctional institution.

The Accelerated Community Entry Program (ACE)

The United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office in the Western District of Michigan established ACE in October 2005. The goal of this program is to increase the opportunity for success by significantly addressing the criminogenic factors related to recidivism in offenders releasing from prison to Berrien County in the western district of Michigan. Berrien County, Michigan was identified as a location that presented significant challenges to returning prisoners with regards to employment and prosocial peer groups. The creators of the ACE program identified criminogenic factors as follows according to Gendreau and Andrews (1990):

- history of anti-social behavior
- anti-social personality
- anti-social attitudes and values
- criminally deviant peers
- substance abuse
- dysfunctional family relationships

One approach adopted by ACE creators is that regular contact with the judge is instrumental in bringing about change. Through frequent court appearances the court is better able to address the criminogenic factors that often lead to relapse into drug use and recidivism.

ACE is based on the reentry court model and the creators established a set of policies for the implementation and management of the program. These policies are detailed as follows:

Identifying Participants

The United States Probation Officer identifies offenders who are releasing to Berrien County, Michigan and calculates the Risk Prediction Index (RPI) score (as developed by the Federal Judicial Center) to determine if it falls between six and nine, which is the highest range one can score.

Orienting Participants to ACE

The U.S. probation officer will meet with a potential participant while he or she is in the pre-release halfway house setting in order to orient that person to potential benefits of the ACE program prior to release from the halfway house. Program acknowledgment paperwork (participatory contract) will be given to the potential participant at that meeting for him or her to review.

While attending the first ACE hearing, the participant will be introduced to the ACE Team, review the program acknowledgment, and sign the program acknowledgment. This form explicitly defines the conditions of supervision for the participant while participating in the ACE program. It also states potential sanctions and rewards for program violation or compliance and delineates expectations for program completion. If an offender refuses to sign the acknowledgment then he or she must appear before the judge to explain his or her decision. The judge is the only team member who can rule that a participant is excused from ACE participation.

Intensive Reentry Team Roles

The ACE team is made up of court personnel, government, defense counsel, and treatment providers.

The judge is the convener of the team and makes final decisions on rewards and sanctions in response to offender behavior.

The U.S. probation officer provides information regarding the conduct of the participant as well as recommendations for rewards and sanctions as aligned with the mission of the ACE program. The U.S. probation officer also encourages the attendance of family, employers, and significant others at court hearings.

Treatment providers contribute information and recommendations regarding the substance abuse and/or mental health treatment of the participant, whereas halfway house case managers provide information regarding the conduct of the participant and recommendations regarding placement at halfway house.

Government counsel assures that proper court procedures are maintained and assists in the presentation of evidence to the court when necessary. Further, government counsel notifies victims of hearings as required by the *Justice for All Act*. In contrast, defense counsel assures that participants' rights are protected, represents participants effectively during modification or revocation hearings, and provides recommendations to the court to align with the mission of the ACE program and the best interests of the participant.

Monthly Hearings

Monthly hearings take place in the Berrien County Courthouse. In attendance at each hearing are members of the ACE Team, the participant, and any members of the participant's support system, such as employers, family, significant others, clergy, and others.

The judge calls individual participants to the front of the court and asks them to introduce support people accompanying them. The judge then reviews the individual's progress. This includes a review by the U.S. probation officer of the participant's status and progress in the program over the course of the previous month. Remarks on the offender's progress can come from the ACE Team and the participant's support people. After this review the judge provides necessary rewards or sanctions, and the goals to be addressed prior to the next hearing are set forth. A signed copy of the monthly report is distributed. This process is repeated for each offender.

Violation Reporting

Violations can be reported orally in court if the violation is minor in nature. Examples of minor violations include: missing a treatment appointment, failure to report information to the U.S. probation officer, and other minor technical violations. More serious violations may be addressed in court prior to the ACE hearing if there is a significant danger to the community as a result of the offender's behavior. Results of all hearings taking place outside ACE hearings will be announced at the next monthly hearing for ACE regardless of whether the violating participant is in attendance.

Sanctions for serious violations can range from modification of supervised release conditions to revocation and imposition of a new term of supervised release following a term of imprisonment. Halfway house sanctions should be imposed as quickly as possible after the hearing that determined the sanction. A participant cannot fail out of the ACE program. If supervision is revoked, the participant must return to ACE and begin anew following incarceration.

Program Completion

Upon accumulating 12 monthly rewards the participant is eligible to graduate. A graduation ceremony is held during the monthly hearing, and the court awards a certificate of completion to the participant. Following the final monthly hearing, the participant is transferred to traditional supervised release for an additional 12 months. Should this period of time be satisfactorily completed, a request for early termination of supervision is made by the probation officer.

The amount of reduction in supervised release time will vary based on the participant's original sentence. Violations that occur while under traditional supervision will usually result in the forfeit of early termination afforded through ACE. Revocations at any point in the supervised

release term result in imprisonment and the expectation that the offender will begin anew the 12 months of intensive ACE participation upon completion of imprisonment.

Evaluation

The policies, as they are written here, were intended to provide structure and direction to the ACE program. However, in order to examine the outcomes of the ACE program in terms of effectiveness, it is essential to examine the methods through which the program was implemented in a practical sense. Dehar, Casswell, and Duignan (1993) assert that there is often a naiveté that program plans match actual program operation, despite the fact that there is often substantial slippage from the original program model when one examines the actual program process. Although measuring outcomes is necessary, knowing the method of implementation that actually occurred gives far more insight into the tactics that influenced the outcomes measured. In order to gain these broader insights into the ACE program, a process evaluation was performed by surveying and interviewing offenders who participated in ACE as well as professionals and individuals from the offenders' support systems. A process evaluation, as defined by Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (1985) is a comparison of program plans to actual operations as a means to monitor the degree to which a program is implemented as planned. Specific functions of the process evaluation are as follows:

- Measures the extent to which a program reaches the population targeted.
- Monitors the program dose, specifically the delivery or participation in program activities that actually takes place.
- Monitors the organizational context or situational variability within which the program is implemented.
- Measures the extent to which the program and its services are implemented to achieve the specified goals of the program.
- Identifies the cost of program implementation. (Dehar et al., 1993)

Measuring and monitoring these components of a program's process enhances the utility of outcome measurements. It also demonstrates the relevance of a specific program to its field of practice. Marlowe et al. (2006) encourages deeper research into drug courts specifically because the drug and reentry court movement has been stalled due to skepticism associated with limited evaluation of drug court initiatives. Marlowe et al. (2006) asserts that drug court research to this point has been simplistic and monolithic, focusing mainly on program outcomes, specifically rearrest rates, instead of examining procedures and alternative outcome measures. The research described here attempts to gain insight into procedures so that the effectiveness of the program can be measured through a wider lens.

Process Evaluation

In the spring of 2006, these processes and procedures for the Accelerated Community Entry (ACE) program were evaluated. Face-to-face interviews and surveys were administered to with participating offenders, and participating court personnel also completed surveys. Survey and interview questions inquired as to whether intended program policies were adhered to during the implementation of ACE in its first 12 months. The sample size available for this evaluation was small, with just six of eleven offenders participating and five of six professionals participating in the evaluation. Despite the limited sample size, results demonstrated that offenders and professionals perceived the process used in the implementation of ACE to match the intended procedures of the program. Specifically, protocols related to community participation, substance abuse issues, rewards and consequences, and professional team members' roles were adhered to as expected by the creators of the program. There was also a sense amongst professional respondents that additional research would be useful, after more time has passed, to examine the impact of consequences that were utilized in response to violation behaviors.

Many of the theoretical goals set forth by the creators of ACE were seemingly achieved during the initial stage of programming. For instance, it was a significant goal of the program that the Berrien County community become more involved in the transitional process for federal

offenders returning home from prison. Examining the responses to survey questions regarding support systems tells us that five of six participants had family or other supportive individuals accompany them to ACE hearings. Subjects reported that support system participation at hearings occurred anywhere from three to twelve times during the twelve-month period studied. This indicates that there was ongoing engagement by the community, families, and close friends immediately impacted by ex-offenders returning home from prison. Further, professional respondents indicated on open-ended questions that they were pleasantly surprised by the community response to and support of the ACE program. Specifically, one respondent indicated an initial concern that the community would be too focused on outcomes rather than acknowledging the need for support systems to be developed to enhance transitional functioning. This respondent expressed surprise and satisfaction with the manner in which the community engaged in ACE. Finally, speakers from the community frequented ACE hearings and offered insight into many different aspects of the transitional process. Although responses regarding the helpfulness of these speakers were somewhat varied, more than half of respondents specified that the participation of community speakers provided useful information and a sense of support during initial participation in the ACE program.

Another theoretical goal that was seemingly achieved during the initial stages of ACE relates to the usefulness of simple rewards and consequences. ACE rewarded participants by providing encouragement and support as a primary means for establishing minimum behavioral requirements. The program included no financial or material rewards. Instead, simple rewards like applause, certificates, and opportunities to report successes to peers and the court were paired with the eventual prospect of reduced length of the supervised release sentence to provide incentive for program compliance. Although two of six participants indicated that material rewards would have also been gratifying, and nearly all subjects indicated significant value in early termination from supervision as an eventual reward of the program, all but one subject specified that the camaraderie amongst participants and the court was a very effective reward. The opportunity to share success and experience positive interactions within the courtroom proved to be encouraging and validating to participants of ACE.

On the other hand, a theme of opposition to authority was present throughout many of the discussions with participants. Many individuals mentioned a history of struggling to conform to rules and expectations. Several participants willingly acknowledged the impact that opposing authority and typical social norms has had on their lives, focusing on the discomfort associated with interacting with authority figures. The creators of ACE had a strong desire to reframe participants' experiences with the court in order to provide positive interactions to counter memories of negative experiences. Although participants desired to avoid this apparently inevitable discomfort associated with court hearings, the discomfort seems to have created an external motivator to avoid the negative feedback of the court. Strategies used during monthly hearings, such as publicly acknowledging personal issues or mistakes, seem to have provided incentive for participants to avoid the embarrassment provoked by disclosing mistakes.

Employment was another primary theme observed throughout the data collected from both samples. It is important to acknowledge the impact that employment status has on individuals as they transition from prison, in order to appreciate the impact of underemployment in communities where disproportionate numbers of felons reside, such as Berrien County in the Western District of Michigan. Johnson (2007) discusses the value of educational attainment and employment status in his examination of offender recidivism. During the five-year period studied by Johnson (2007), offenders who had attained at least a high-school diploma when they began supervision were more likely to be employed at the start and the end of supervision than offenders who had achieved less than a high-school diploma. This is relevant because more than nine of ten employed offenders successfully completed post-conviction supervision. Shockingly, however, unemployed offenders' supervision is revoked seven times more often than supervision of their employed peers (Johnson, 2007). There is a sense amongst the ACE subjects participating in this research that more leg work can be done by the court and the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office to increase community awareness about the specific employment needs and barriers of felons participating in the ACE program. As these individuals struggle to

become employed, it is clear from Johnson's (2007) research that employment is likely a key factor contributing to offenders' success or failure during the transitional period.

Surprisingly it seems that substance abuse is a peripheral issue for most of the subjects who participated in this initial ACE program. As was mentioned previously, the USDJ (2006) has characterized federal offenders differently from state-level offenders, stating that higher-risk federal offenders tend to engage in criminal behavior in order to profit or gain power as opposed to state-level offenders who are more likely to engage in criminal activity as a means to fuel their addiction to illicit substances. With this characterization in mind, it is possible that these subjects' federal-offender status can explain their seemingly limited concern for addiction-related issues. Although two respondents reported providing a positive urinalysis while participating in ACE, it seems that at least four subjects were willingly abstaining from drug use. Further, the three individuals who participated in treatment to address historical issues with substance abuse or dependency seemed to value the services and the opportunity to gain insight into the thinking and behavioral errors that contributed to substance dependency concerns.

Finally, professional subjects acknowledged the ACE experience as one that has given them greater insight into the difficulties associated with transitioning from prison. The issue of one's felon-status and the variety of barriers that prohibit a fluid transition from prison to community were made clearer to everyone involved in the program, according to one professional respondent. As was mentioned previously, many professionals who participated in the program have experienced ACE as a positive opportunity to engage in the transitional process beyond basic supervisory or punitive functions. There is a sense among professional respondents that ACE has provided an opportunity to contribute to the transitional process in a manner that enhances the offender experience and provides for assistance and support during a difficult time in the lives of the people they serve.

Although useful information was gleaned from this research effort, there were limitations that, if addressed, could provide more thorough and representative data of the ACE program experience.

First, the population from which data could be obtained for this process evaluation was quite small. At the time of the study 12 subjects had participated in the ACE program since it was launched in October 2005. Further, one of the possible 12 subjects is currently incarcerated, prohibiting his involvement in the study. The sample size of the ACE planning team members was also small, as only six individuals have consistently engaged in the professional roles affiliated with ACE. As a result, it was not possible to eliminate the impact of small sample size in order to generalize the results to the remaining participants. In addition to the small population, there was also a low response rate amongst the participant data set. Just over half of possible participants (six of eleven participants) in the research opted to complete the interview and survey. One possible outcome of small sample size is that trends identified by subjects do not manifest as strongly as they might with more subjects reporting their experiences. This is particularly relevant as one considers the traits that may encourage one to participate in research rather than decline participation. For instance, the individuals who chose to offer their feedback about ACE may have experienced the program more positively or negatively than their peers who chose not to offer their feedback. Without a broader perspective from all participants it is difficult to predict factors that might have been important to these non-participating individuals. It is also important to consider the traits that differentiate the 11 participants available for research sampling from the 1 participant incarcerated due to revocation in response to behavioral violations. The reasons that this individual failed to thrive in the ACE program at the outset were not assessed through this research design, and as such cannot be reported here.

Another possible weakness of the study is the survey tools used to gather data from participants. Both the participant survey and the professional survey have not been proven reliable at measuring the data being sought. Since both surveys were created specifically for the purpose of completing the process evaluation of ACE, and as such have not been tested extensively across multiple samples, one cannot assume that the questions reliably elicit the data being sought. Further testing and use of the surveys would be helpful to establish the usefulness of the data obtained. This would allow for the data to be extrapolated further than the survey currently

allows.

Recommendations

Despite the limitations listed here, noteworthy themes were uncovered through data analysis. These themes indicate areas where the ACE program has excelled as well as areas where the program could improve. Some areas to consider for possible improvement are indicated below.

Many of the ACE participants focused significantly on employment. As has been discussed previously, more intensive efforts to locate employers willing to work with ACE participants could enhance the utility of the program and increase success rates for participating offenders. Achieving increased access to employment would likely require face-to-face conversations with potential employers as an opportunity to describe ACE to the employer and develop an ongoing relationship that allows future ACE participants to access interviews and possible employment. Cultivating employment resources could also be an area of focus when developing programs similar to ACE in other districts.

Although just one individual surveyed raised the following issue, it is worth raising again here in order to address variations in the individual offender's responses to required participation in ACE. This particular subject feels that the program moves too quickly and he or she may not be able to complete the goals within the time allotted as a means to accomplish successful completion of the initial 12-month participation. The pressure that this individual feels may not require the actual structure of the program to be changed. However, it could require that special attention be paid to evaluating participants' stress management skills in order to develop goals appropriate to their level of functioning. If goals are created that do not account for stress management deficits, it may be more difficult for the goals to be accomplished in a timely and successful manner. Goals that account for stress management deficits may focus on the smaller steps that assist the participant in achieving the ultimate goal, allowing for gradually increasing complexity in the types of goals set. Although many participants described the current technique for goal setting as providing attainable and manageable monthly goals, it may be necessary to simplify the steps even further for participants struggling to address more complex issues related to their transition.

As with the last issue discussed, just one professional respondent raised the following issue. However, it stood out as potentially useful information for the purpose of a process evaluation. This ACE team member expressed concern over the use of halfway house placement as a sanction. Although this individual is unsure why this pattern is developing, he or she observed that individuals who are sanctioned to the halfway house tend to struggle in the program after they are placed there. Specifically, this individual is observing a correlation between this sanction and the eventual revocation of supervised release. Although it is difficult to know whether residential placement somehow contributes to a revocation outcome or if the individual sanctioned to the halfway house would have been revoked eventually despite receiving this sanction, it is worth monitoring this trend. If the trend continues or there are ongoing issues with this sanction it may be useful for ACE personnel and other districts implementing programs modeled after the ACE structure to consider alternative means of sanctioning substantial behavioral violations.

Despite the issues discussed here, there was a strong consensus amongst participants and professional team members that the ACE program is effectively running as it was planned. Participants expressed positive feelings towards their experiences in ACE and some even stated that ACE is, in fact, a good program. Over time it will be necessary to continue assessing the usefulness and functioning of ACE in order to ensure that it remains aligned with its original theoretical goals as well as the goals and principles that develop over the course of its implementation. Furthermore, an outcome evaluation that examines the success rates of ACE participants compared to traditional probationers should be done in order to gain greater insight into the usefulness of this program.

[back to top](#)

[References](#) | [Endnotes](#)

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Community Reentry Following Prison: A Process Evaluation of the Accelerated Community Entry Program

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