OCTOBER 2019

INTEGRATED REENTRY & EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

Pilot Project Process Evaluation Report

CSG Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

the NATIONAL REENTRY RESOURCE CENTER

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Acknowledgments

The Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies (IRES) Pilot Project Process Evaluation was made possible through the collaborative efforts of reentry practitioners, correctional leaders, policymakers, and others over the course of more than three years. Though many individuals—too numerous to list—contributed invaluable time and expertise to the report, it would not have been possible without the support of the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). In particular, we thank BJA Associate Deputy Director Ruby Qazilbash and Policy Advisor Andre Bethea for their leadership.

We extend special thanks to our expert partners, including the National Institute of Corrections and the National Transitional Jobs Network at Heartland Alliance, for providing technical assistance to the IRES pilot sites throughout this project. Special thanks are also due to pilot project staff, community partners, and program participants from Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, and Palm Beach County, Florida.

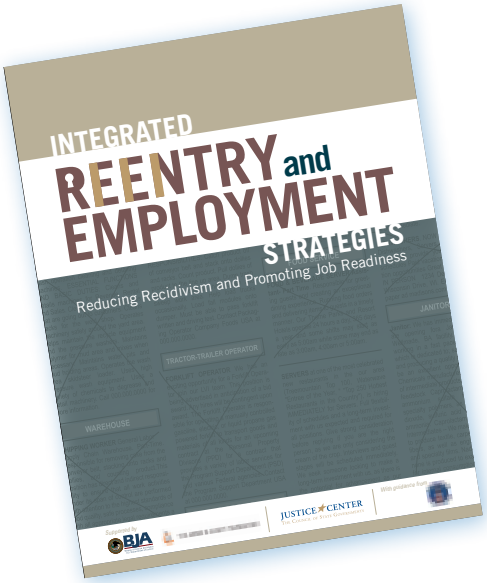
The IRES pilot project as a whole is a result of the tirelessly cheerful dedication of CSG Justice Center Project Manager Erica Nelson and Policy Analyst Greg Halls, Senior Research Associate Jessica Gonzales-Bricker, Corrections & Reentry Division Director Dr. Nicole Jarrett, and Director Megan Quattlebaum. This report would not have been possible without them. The CSG Justice Center's Communications team is also due thanks for their work developing, editing, and promoting the materials, namely Carla Sinclair, Emily Morgan, Leslie Griffin, and Ju Young Lee.

This report builds on the foundational work done by BJA, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Labor in collaboration with expert leaders in the field, which resulted in the *Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness* white paper.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-MU-BX-K011 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Executive Summary

For the 95 percent of people in state prisons who will eventually be released,[1] finding employment plays a critical role in preventing recidivism. That said, it is not strictly employment services that can make the difference between successful reentry and recidivating; ensuring people who are returning to their communities from prison or jail have the resources to not only find but retain jobs is also key. However, many communities do not have sufficient resources for corrections, reentry, and workforce development practitioners to provide everyone leaving prisons or jails with the services they need to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and increase their level of job readiness. Some jurisdictions have made significant progress in implementing both recidivism-reduction and employment strategies, but these efforts often occur on parallel tracks with limited coordination between the relevant agencies.



The Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies (IRES) Pilot Project was developed by The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center in 2013 to test innovative approaches outlined in the *Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness* white paper. The white paper outlines a framework that integrates best practices from both the workforce development and corrections systems to reduce recidivism and increase job readiness for people returning to communities after incarceration. The white paper also offers guidance on how to design employment-focused reentry programs that incorporate risk-need-responsivity (RNR) principles into service delivery; it also provides a tool to help policymakers and practitioners match people to appropriate services that have the maximum impact on recidivism and employment outcomes.

The IRES framework operates under the theory that recidivism and employment outcomes will improve if resources are applied based on the RNR principles on a systemwide scale. In particular, the framework emphasizes that connecting a person to the right combination of services and appropriate level of intensity during various points in reentry planning can reduce his or her chance of recidivating. These resources refocus a person's time and efforts on prosocial activities, making the person less likely to engage in riskier behaviors and to associate with people who do. To test this framework, the pilot project focused on people returning from prison or jail to Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, and Palm Beach County, Florida, who were assessed as being at a moderate to high risk of reoffending and as having varying levels of employability. Between October 2017 and March 2018, 521 people were assessed for participation in the pilot project.[2]

The CSG Justice Center, which administers the National Reentry Resource Center, provided technical assistance and led a process evaluation of the project. During the process evaluation, CSG Justice Center staff collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data from each pilot site to determine the extent to which the sites were able to operationalize the IRES framework with fidelity.

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1. "Reentry Trends In The U.S.," Bureau of Justice Statistics, accessed September 5, 2019, https://www.bjs.gov/content/reentry/reentry.cfm
2. The CSG Justice Center data analysis of Wisconsin DOC release data and Palm Beach's RENEW database.

RISK-NEED-RESPONSIVITY PRINCIPLES

Addressing the risks and needs of people returning from incarceration with the appropriate level of targeted resources is a major component of successful reentry. The RNR principles help administrators and practitioners utilize assessments to focus these limited resources where they will have the greatest impact on recidivism. The **RISK PRINCIPLE** matches the intensity of a person's intervention with his or her assessed level of risk for criminal activity; the **NEED PRINCIPLE** targets the factors that contribute to the likelihood of new criminal activity such as substance addiction or antisocial behavior; and the **RESPONSIVITY PRINCIPLE** accounts for each person's individual learning style, abilities, motivations, culture, and demographics.

THE GOAL OF THE PROCESS EVALUATION FOR THE IRES PILOT PROJECT IS THREEFOLD:

1. To determine whether the pilot sites implemented the resource allocation and service matching tool described in the framework;
2. To determine whether a coordinated process existed between the corrections and workforce development systems; and
3. To provide recommendations on how existing resources and new procedures can be used to promote the IRES framework among all the relevant partners on a systemswide scale.

KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation's results suggest that the pilot sites experienced challenges and successes that aligned with the four main areas that CSG Justice Center staff identified as fundamental to implementing a collaborative and coordinated approach to reentry planning: leadership commitment, timely use of assessments, detailed process analysis, capacity to meet the population needs, and data tracking. In general, the pilot sites were successful in ensuring the resource-allocation and service-matching tool was used after release, but they needed to improve their efforts in assessing levels of job readiness and providing the appropriate employment-related services before release. To expand their implementation on a systemswide scale, both sites will need to refine their coordination and information-sharing agreements across the corrections and workforce development systems and engage executive leadership to increase service capacity capabilities for reentry and employment programming before and after release. In addition to these changes needed regarding policies and practices that stem from the framework, the pilot sites also need to address the challenges that result from a lack of motivation[3] among participants; results from the process evaluation suggest that a participant's motivation is an external factor that contributes to engagement in services. To mitigate this challenge, program coordinators and community-based providers expressed that extending ownership of reentry planning to participants and incorporating the use of reentry-focused coordinators before and after release has been effective.

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3. Participant motivation, which was not a part of the initial outline for the pilot project, was a concept that was observed in both pilot sites. It refers to the participant's personal sense of commitment to the terms of the program.

Introduction

Employment often plays a crucial role in reducing recidivism for people leaving incarceration, but many communities do not have the resources to provide reentry and workforce development services for every person leaving prison or jail. To address this challenge, staff from The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center collaborated with expert practitioners and researchers to develop the *Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies* white paper, which outlines a framework to help corrections, reentry, and workforce development policymakers, administrators, and practitioners collectively determine whether resources are focused on the right people, using the right interventions, at the right time in the reentry process. The framework aims to reduce recidivism and increase job readiness for people returning from incarceration as well as to identify successful strategies for integrating best and promising practices in corrections and workforce development systems.

To do this, the IRES white paper introduces the resource-allocation and service-matching tool, which uses the results of a validated risk-need assessment tool and job readiness assessments or screenings to provide targeted interventions based on a person's risk to reoffend and level of job readiness. The IRES Pilot Project was designed by the CSG Justice Center in 2013 to test the innovative, evidence-based practices outlined in the white paper. The work was conducted with the leadership and support of a public-private partnership involving the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration.

The three-year pilot project, which began in 2015, took place in two sites: one in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, and the other in Palm Beach County, Florida. The pilot project was designed to assess the capacity of corrections, workforce development, and employment-focused reentry agencies to provide services in accordance with the evidence-based practices outlined in the framework; bring leaders across corrections and workforce development systems together to strengthen jurisdiction service delivery and employment capacity and coordination; and, ultimately, ensure that people leaving prison or jail are connected to the most effective combination of reentry and employment services after release.

The first year of the pilot project informed a CSG Justice Center data analysis of case management systems on the risk to reoffend and job-readiness needs of the people returning to both counties after incarceration. It also helped staff foster a better understanding of the landscape of employment-focused reentry agencies and an increased knowledge of the mechanisms for connecting people to appropriate employment services upon release from prison or jail. The information taken from the analysis was used to develop recommendations for each site[4] to help them implement a systematic approach to matching people leaving incarceration to a network of services based on their assessed risk to reoffend and level of job readiness.

The three-year pilot project, which began in 2015, took place in two sites: one in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, and the other in Palm Beach County, Florida.

4. The recommendations can be viewed in the executive summaries available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/the-integrated-reentry-and-employment-strategies-pilot-project/.

After the first year of the pilot project, CSG Justice Center staff discovered that there were four questions that communities needed to address while implementing a collaborative and coordinated approach to reentry planning. These questions, detailed in The Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies Pilot Project: Four Questions Communities Should Consider When Implementing a Collaborative Approach *(Four Questions)*, informed discussion points that can be used to facilitate conversations with key stakeholders about their community's ability to integrate the efforts of the criminal justice and workforce development systems. The questions are also designed to help communities determine what reentry and employment services are available to meet the needs of people returning after incarceration. These questions include:

1. Is our leadership committed to a collaborative approach?

Are state and local policymakers and key stakeholders from the criminal justice and workforce development systems fully invested in reducing recidivism and increasing the job readiness of people returning to the community after incarceration? This includes engaging the people responsible for reallocating resources and funding to improve outcomes—these leaders must be able to work together to brainstorm solutions to challenges identified when coordinating services.

2. Do we conduct timely risk and needs assessments and job-readiness screenings?

Is a risk and needs assessment conducted for everyone admitted to prison or jail, so correctional programming can be targeted accordingly? Are job-readiness screenings conducted before release to inform referrals to community-based employment programming?

3. Have we conducted a comprehensive process analysis and inventory of employment services that are provided pre- and post-release?

Is there a detailed process analysis of how a person moves through the correctional system—from admission to the facility through enrollment in community-based programming upon release—and how is assessment information considered when making program referrals? Is there an understanding of the community-based service providers' capacity to meet the employment and reentry needs of people returning from incarceration?

4. Do we have a coordinated process for making service referrals and tracking data?

Who is responsible for coordinating the process for making service referrals and tracking data, as well as an ongoing process for evaluating community-based reentry services?

During the second year of the pilot project, CSG Justice Center staff worked with a team of expert partners, including the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) and the National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN) at Heartland Alliance, to provide technical assistance (TA). NTJN delivered training and targeted technical assistance to both sites on developing transitional jobs programs for people assessed at a higher risk of recidivating. The NIC TA included a three-day training on effective approaches to ensuring people with criminal records retained employment. For continued support, CSG Justice Center staff worked with both sites to develop and implement work plans to address the recommendations shared after the first year of the project. In year three, CSG Justice Center staff conducted a process evaluation that aimed to assess and understand how the pilot sites implemented the framework in their jurisdiction. This report details the findings gathered during the process evaluation.

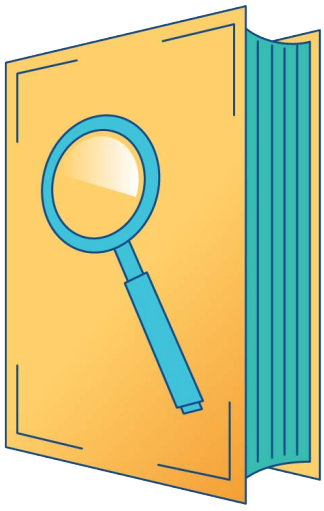
PROCESS EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the IRES Pilot Project Process Evaluation were to assess the pilot sites' ability to integrate the efforts of corrections and workforce development systems, identify areas that needed improvement, and determine strategies and best practices to address these gaps.

Both sites plan to use findings from the process evaluation to expand the use of the IRES framework in their respective jurisdictions as well as use the recommendations from this report to improve cross-systems coordination. The lessons learned in both sites can support other jurisdictions in planning and coordinating reentry and employment services on a county and/or state level.

Methods

After the end of the study period, which spanned October 2017 to March 2018, CSG Justice Center staff conducted a mixed-method process evaluation that involved collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. A quantitative analysis of participant case files allowed research staff to determine whether people were provided with accurate programming based on their assessed risk, needs, and level of job readiness. This approach was paired with qualitative data, such as document review; surveys administered to staff conducting risk, need, and job-readiness assessments; and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with correctional staff, community-based providers, and program participants. This qualitative data provided research staff with lessons learned and recommendations for promoting cross-systems collaboration among corrections, workforce agencies, and community-based providers. When combined, the quantitative and qualitative data provided a holistic understanding of how IRES was implemented in each pilot site.



Quantitative Data

DATA COLLECTION

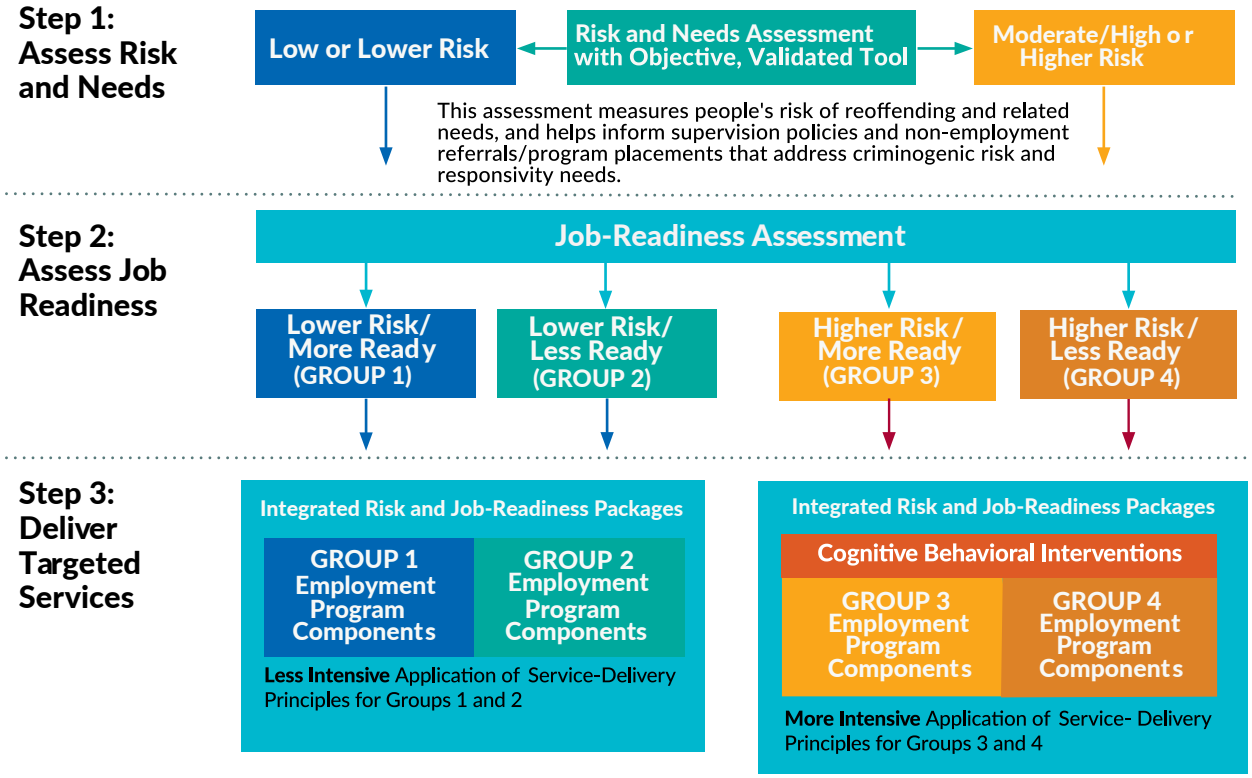
In Milwaukee County, Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WI DOC) staff provided CSG Justice Center research staff with data extracts from two of its databases, the Wisconsin Integrated Corrections System (WICS) and the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS). Using WICS, research staff received admission, release, offense, and demographic information for all people released from WI DOC prisons during the study period. From the COMPAS—which is both a case management system and a validated, evidence-based assessment used to determine a person's criminogenic risk and needs—research staff received assessment information for people released from WI DOC prisons. The Workforce Development Board in Milwaukee County, Employ Milwaukee, also provided research staff with a data extract generated from a web-based performance management system, Efforts-to-Outcomes (ETO). Employ Milwaukee staff used ETO to collect metrics and analyze participant progress toward training and employment goals; through these analyses, research staff received information regarding intake, referrals to educational and employment programming, and certificate completions.

In Palm Beach County, the Palm Beach County Public Safety Department (PBC Public Safety Department) provided research staff with a data extract from their web-based case management system, Reentry Network (RENEW), which includes demographic characteristics about participants and results from the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), among other assessment results. RENEW uses evidence-based tools to create individualized transition plans for people returning to the county from Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) prisons, including Sago Palm Re-Entry Center (Sago Palm), and the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) jails.

DATA ANALYSIS

Research staff examined risk, needs, and job-readiness assessment data from both sites to categorize people according to the Resource-Allocation and Service Matching Tool (Figure 1) presented in the IRES white paper. The tool sorts people into four groups, which align with RNR principles: lower risk/less ready, lower risk/more ready, higher risk/less ready, and higher risk/more ready, with "higher risk" defined as people who are assessed as being at a moderate to high risk of reoffending and "more ready" defined as more ready for employment. Each group can be assigned to a combination of employment programming and service delivery strategies that are tailored to their risk for criminal activity and are complemented by correctional treatment interventions such as substance addiction treatment, education services, or cognitive behavioral interventions (CBI). Some people returning to the community after incarceration require intensive service and programming to reduce their risk of reoffending, while others perform better with less intensive interventions. Because the tool groups people first by risk and then by job readiness and directs them to the appropriate services and programs, resources are focused where they can be most effective.

Figure 1: The Resource-allocation and Service-matching tool



Qualitative Data

DATA COLLECTION

In March 2018, research staff worked with pilot project staff from each site to develop a flowchart (see appendices 1, 3, 4, and 5) detailing how the IRES framework process functioned in their respective counties. Each flowchart provided research staff with an understanding of the site's IRES implementation process and provided guidance for the development of focus groups and interview discussion guides, as well as highlighted gaps in resources and services. Participants were given consent forms and agreed to participate in evaluation activities prior to the start of the evaluation.

While on location at both sites, research staff convened focus groups and interviews with leadership, correctional staff, community-based providers, and both pre- and post-release program participants. To ensure consistency in the type of data collected, at least two research staff members were present for all the interviews and focus groups and used the same discussion guides to gather feedback on the implementation of the framework. Research staff also administered surveys to the correctional staff and community-based service providers who conducted risk, need, and job-readiness assessments to gauge their level of comfort with administering the assessments. Lastly, research staff reviewed the sites' referral protocols and standard operating reentry procedures to ensure consistency with the IRES framework.

DATA ANALYSIS

All focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed to eliminate note-taking errors. Research staff reviewed the transcriptions, wrote brief summaries, and used a directed content analysis[5] approach to sort the information obtained into four categories. The information was coded based on the categories described in the *Four Questions* document:

Is our leadership committed to a collaborative approach?

Do we conduct timely risk and needs assessments and job-readiness screenings?

Have we conducted a comprehensive process analysis and inventory of employment services that are provided before and after release?

Do we have a coordinated process for making service referrals and tracking data?

The researchers also added an "other" category to account for observations that did not fit under the original questions laid out in the document. This includes the idea of participant motivation. Though not one of the initial considerations, after the various focus groups and interviews, research staff concluded that the concept of participant motivation should be taken into account when implementing the IRES framework. Participant motivation refers to the participant's personal sense of commitment to the terms of the program; it arose in almost every focus group/interview across both sites.

To ensure accurate and consistent categorization, one research staffer sorted the summaries first and found information that could be grouped under the four questions. Afterward, another research staffer also went through the information and reconciled any differences in observation between the two. As a team, research staff reviewed the data, identified strengths and weaknesses, and developed recommendations. After discussing and agreeing on the findings, research staff gave both pilot sites the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft of the findings before dissemination to the field.

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5. A directed content analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial "codes," or groupings of content. This is followed by a summative content analysis, which involves the counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content found in the data, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY, WI

IRES Implementation At-A-Glance

The pilot project in Milwaukee County was led by the WI DOC and workforce development board, Employ Milwaukee. Employ Milwaukee took the role of lead coordinating agency in charge of making employment-related referrals. WI DOC is made up of four primary divisions: Division of Adult Institutions (DAI), Division of Community Corrections (DCC), Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC), and Division of Management Services (DMS). For the purposes of the IRES pilot project, WI DOC focused on the DAI and the DCC. The DAI oversees 36 adult correctional facilities and three bureaus, including the bureaus of Health Services, Offender Classification and Movement, and Correctional Enterprises. The DAI supervises more than 20,000 people who have been sentenced by a court to a term of incarceration or reincarceration due to revocation of their community supervision placement.[6] The DCC is charged with supervising more than 68,000[7] people placed by the courts on probation, parole, or extended supervision in the community. In addition to supervision, probation and parole agents also provide investigative services to the courts, the DAI, and the parole commission to aid in sentencing and community reentry planning.

The site was chosen because of its strong network of community-based providers and long-term use of a criminogenic risk and need assessment. This pilot site focused on four WI DOC facilities that released the largest number of people returning to Milwaukee County on post-release supervision–Fox Lake Correctional Institution (FLCI), Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility (MSDF), Oakhill Correctional Institution (OCI), and Racine Correctional Institution (RCI).

The Milwaukee County IRES framework implementation plan included an assessment of participants for criminogenic risk and needs upon intake to WI DOC facilities and again six to nine months before release. Pre-release programming and/or services were provided to participants based on their assessed level of risk to reoffend and identified needs. During that time, DCC supervision agents referred participants to Employ Milwaukee staff to conduct a job-readiness assessment before release that would guide post-release individualized employment reentry plans. After release, Employ Milwaukee provided and referred clients to employment-related services, while DCC supervision agents referred clients to other reentry programs and services based on their assessed levels of risk and identified needs.

Quantitative Findings

Research staff analyzed data on the people released from WI DOC facilities between October 2017 and March 2018 to examine how they were flowing through the IRES process. During that time period, 4,528 people in total were released from WI DOC facilities, 1,334 of whom were released to Milwaukee County. Of those 1,334 people, 562 were released from the four facilities involved in the pilot project—this was the initial participant group before it was narrowed down. Sixty-two percent (346) of the people released to Milwaukee County from these four facilities were released to supervision, extended supervision, or mandatory release;[8] this population became the focus of the pilot project.

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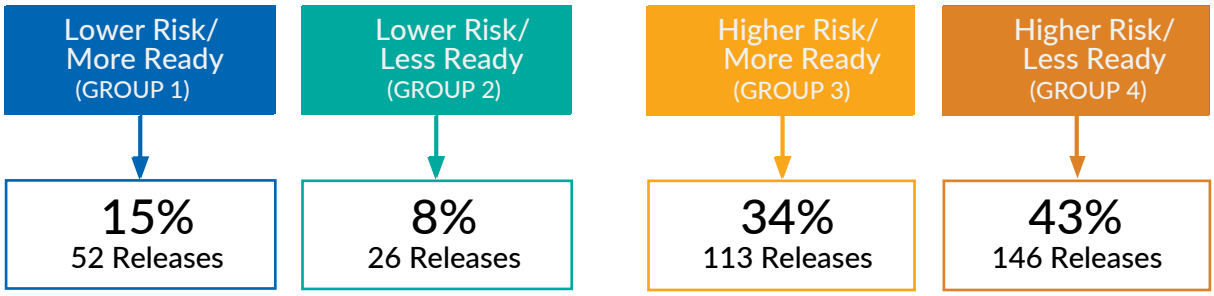
6. "Division of Adult Institutions," Wisconsin Department of Corrections, accessed on February 11, 2019, https://doc.wi.gov/Pages/AboutDOC/AdultInstitutions.aspx.
7. "Division of Community Corrections," Wisconsin Department of Corrections, accessed on February 11, 2019, https://doc.wi.gov/Pages/AboutDOC/CommunityCorrections/Default.aspx
8. The CSG Justice Center data analysis of Wisconsin DOC release data.

Figure 2. Risk/Job-Readiness Breakdown of People Released from FLCI, MSDF, OCI, and RCI, October 2017–March 2018



* Nine people did not have assessment information Released N = 346, Assessed for Risk and Job Readiness N = 337

In this six-month time period, 75 percent (259) of the people released onto supervision from the four facilities were assessed as being at a moderate or high risk to reoffend.[9] Figure 2 details the breakdown of job readiness and risk of recidivism for people released onto supervision in the study period.

Nineteen percent of people released onto WI DOC supervision in general during the study period were enrolled in cognitive programming before release. Another 8 percent of people released onto WI DOC supervision in general during this time were enrolled in vocational programming before release. Almost half of the people who enrolled in either type of programming voluntarily enrolled in Employ Milwaukee's services, which included referrals to employment and education programming.[10]

Qualitative Findings

Is our leadership committed to a collaborative approach?

Executive Leadership Involvement

The composition of both the executive steering committee and the steering committee of the pilot project were especially key to the IRES framework implementation in Milwaukee County. Steering committee members specifically noted the advantage of having initial commitment from key stakeholders who made up the executive steering committee, which included the lieutenant governor, a member of the Wisconsin State Senate, the mayor of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee County Executive, the WI DOC secretary, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development secretary, and other legislators. One steering committee member expressed that "the level of executive commitment helped to lend credibility to the project and aided in advocating for state funding."[11]

"The level of executive commitment helped to lend credibility to the project and aided in advocating for state funding."

For a complete participant list of Milwaukee County IRES executive leadership, see Appendix 2.

9. WI DOC staff utilized the COMPAS assessment total score to determine the risk level of each client.

10. The CSG Justice Center data analysis of Wisconsin DOC release data and Employ Milwaukee's ETO database.

11. WI IRES Steering Committee Members in discussion with the authors.

Designated Project Coordinator

Because of the large scope of the Milwaukee County IRES pilot project, WI DOC and community-based provider supervisors recognized that all staff involved needed to receive targeted messaging about the IRES framework and implementation plans. The steering committee developed the role of DAI site coordinators to oversee the implementation of the project in each facility. DAI staff members emphasized that a site coordinator is necessary to coordinate with social workers, contracted employees, and eligible program participants in each of the facilities. However, research staff learned that the site coordinators could have benefitted from additional guidance from the steering committee in order to effectively implement the strategies outlined in the project. Steering committee members also expressed that the pilot would have benefited from a full-time, systemswide project coordinator dedicated to implementing IRES, messaging the framework, and working with DCC supervisors and DAI site coordinators to strengthen the overall implementation of IRES throughout WI DOC.

Representative Planning Team

The planning teams—which included the executive and regular steering committee—involved in the pilot project were created to represent diverse perspectives from across the corrections, reentry, and workforce development systems. Members expressed that they had commitment from the workforce board to participate in the representative planning team, but were struggling to get commitment from engaged employers. Currently, there are many jobs in the Milwaukee community that are available for people returning from incarceration; steering committee members mentioned that they should identify employers with the potential to hire this population and invite them to participate in the representative planning team. Involving more employers would show the employers how to engage the reentry population as potential employees, which would subsequently fill employment vacancies, and would allow them to provide guidance on the necessary skills and certifications needed to obtain and retain employment in their specific sectors.

Do we conduct timely risk and needs assessments and job-readiness screenings?

Validated Risk and Needs Assessments

Due to the role of risk, needs, and job-readiness assessments in informing reentry case plans, the use of these tools at intake and near release is vital to the implementation of the IRES framework. WI DOC uses these tools to prioritize programming for moderate- to higher-risk people. During intake, WI DAI staff use a COMPAS assessment and security risk level assessments to place clients in the most appropriate facility. WI DAI staff are also required to conduct a reentry-focused COMPAS assessment six to nine months before release for people who have been in the facilities for more than a year. However, due to service capacity, many DAI social workers are unable to complete the reentry-focused COMPAS assessment within this time frame and have to rely on the initial COMPAS results from intake to determine programming. Some facilities may have dedicated social workers focused on reentry planning efforts, but according to DAI staff, a large number of people come into DAI facilities with short sentences and cannot be assessed before release. During the study period, the median length of stay for people leaving the four participating WI DAI facilities and reentering Milwaukee County was 11 months.[12] In cases where the social workers were unable to perform the reentry-focused COMPAS assessment six to nine months before release, DCC agents were required to conduct a community-focused COMPAS assessment after release.

12. The CSG Justice Center data analysis of WI DOC release data.

WI DOC and Employ Milwaukee staff collectively identified that, for some people with limited criminal histories and multiple criminogenic needs, the COMPAS reassessment recommended a level of supervision that was more or less intensive than the one that staff thought was appropriate. This led DCC agents to seek supervisory approval to modify a person's supervision level at their discretion. Despite this, the majority of staff shared that the COMPAS tool has been helpful in case planning, provided the agent is skilled in effectively conducting one-on-one interactions with their supervisees and interpreting the reassessment results.

Systemwide Definition of Job Readiness and the Use of Job-Readiness Assessments

Milwaukee County does not have a systemwide definition of job readiness; however, WI DOC built the resource allocation and service-matching tool into their employment standards, which provides guidance and direction to staff on how and when to refer and enroll people in pre-release employment related-programs. WI DOC staff do not currently conduct a separate job-readiness assessment at any point during a person's incarceration; they instead rely on the employment-related COMPAS results to inform employment-related programming.

Employ Milwaukee conducts the Online Work Readiness Assessment (OWRA) as its job-readiness tool 30 days before release to guide post-release employment-related case planning. Employ Milwaukee staff expressed that the OWRA is effective at identifying many of the employment barriers that case managers need to work on with clients. The OWRA tool is used to assess personal strengths and identify barriers to certain work activities by asking questions related to financial management, employment history, criminal record history, education, housing, behavioral health, substance use, trauma, and other factors. Because of these wide-ranging questions on the assessment, pilot site staff mentioned that many clients who came to Employ Milwaukee to focus on employment were confused and uncomfortable. As a workaround, staff said they gauged their clients' level of comfort during the assessment and changed the conversation to focus on employment-related items when needed, asking the more uncomfortable questions after they developed a better rapport with the client over time. The use of such workarounds prompted one staff member to question why they were not using a different tool that was mostly geared toward employment.

MAKING EMPLOYMENT A PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATION

Prior to 2017, WI DOC had five primary treatment program areas: cognitive behavioral; anger management; domestic violence; substance abuse; and sex offender treatment. However, while implementing the IRES framework, Wisconsin's representative planning team recognized the need to develop Statewide Employment Standards for the WI DOC that align with evidence-based and best practices for reducing recidivism while improving the job readiness of their correctional population.

In February 2017, WI DOC established employment as a sixth primary treatment program area. The goal of this new program area is to increase the effectiveness and consistency of service delivery throughout WI DOC regarding employment services and identify subordinate goals, objectives, and outcomes to form the basis of a policy and procedure guide. It also aims to guide curriculum development and implementation as well as incorporate criminogenic risks and needs into treatment plans, among other things.

Mechanisms for Information Sharing

WI DOC operates 19 adult institutions, 14 adult correctional centers, and 150 parole and probation offices/satellite offices. Communicating among the many stakeholders in their correctional system can be a challenge, but staff across WI DOC divisions (i.e., within DAI and DCC) have access to WICS and the COMPAS tool. The use of the WICS and COMPAS databases has been essential to the implementation of IRES in the county.

However, research staff learned that the exchange of information within WI DOC divisions could have been improved. While DAI social workers and DCC agents are trained on how to utilize WICS and the COMPAS assessment, research staff found that DAI social workers tend to spend more time entering and gathering information with WICS, while DCC agents are more likely to conduct case management using COMPAS. This made information inconsistent across these platforms. As a WI DOC staff member explained, "there isn't much guidance around what DCC needs from the social workers. The social workers try to put notes in COMPAS but aren't sure on what DCC [agents] would like to see."[13] Other WI DOC staff members expressed that the social workers and DCC agents have somewhat unique roles and responsibilities and therefore require specific information to carry out their duties. To this end, WI DOC staff shared that there may have been some missed opportunities for collaboration during the reentry planning process.

Employ Milwaukee staff use the OWRA tool and ETO for information collection and storing. Staff members expressed that ETO is a useful database because they can easily adapt to the changing environment of reentry funding and reentry service providers, especially when accounting for various funding streams and external support. Employ Milwaukee also has access to the WICS database and said that the database has been very helpful in developing case plans. Unfortunately, Employ Milwaukee staff do not have access to the COMPAS tool and are required to ask for a generated report, which may not include DAI/DCC case management notes, something that can be useful in developing case plans. Through these various information sources, Employ Milwaukee staff develop "self-sufficiency" plans for each of their clients that are shared via email with the DCC agents. There have been some miscommunications regarding the use of the self-sufficiency plans, such as who is responsible for the plan's implementation; overall, WI DOC and Employ Milwaukee staff reported that they need to reevaluate the use of different databases and their procedures related to information sharing to improve case planning.

Have we conducted a comprehensive process analysis and inventory of employment services provided before and after release?

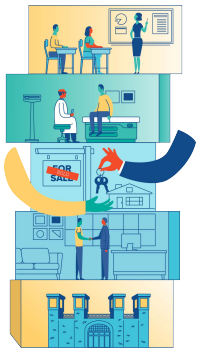
Detailed Process Analysis

During the planning and implementation phases of the pilot project, research staff conducted a process analysis to determine how clients would move through the system while following the IRES framework. Shortly after the site visit, research staff developed an individualized flowchart (see Appendix 1) to depict this process and the use of risk/need and job-readiness assessments in Milwaukee County. Conducting this system mapping exercise was challenging, but it helped research and IRES implementation staff understand various processes and identify gaps and needs in services, information sharing, and coordination.

13. WI DOC staff in discussion with the authors.

Evidence-Based Services

Research staff determined that Milwaukee County offered a full range of evidence-based employment services but, due to the service capacity issues before release and the challenges coordinating these services after release, people who need services do not always have access to them. The county offers the following employment-related services to the reentry population before and after release:



- Identification services (e.g., driver's license, identification cards, social security cards)
- Transportation and work supplies (e.g., clothing such as uniforms, boots, and hard hats)
- Thinking for a Change (T4C)
- Windows to Work programming
- Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Offenders Seeking Employment (CBI-EMP)
- Making it Work programming
- Vocational and educational programming
- Work assignments
- On-the-job training/paid-experience programming
- Case management services

Service Capacity

WI DAI social workers and contracted employees are required to provide intensive services and programming to people who are assessed as being at a moderate to high risk of reoffending. Seventy-five percent of the people returning to Milwaukee County from the four facilities in this pilot study were assessed as being at a moderate to high risk of reoffending.[14] However, due to service capacity and staff turnover, many people were sent to an institution that did not have the programming they needed and were often released without accessing services. While people are placed on waiting lists and enrolled in programming based on their release date, only 33 of the 146 higher-risk/less job-ready people (22 percent) were able to receive cognitive behavioral programming before release.[15] Social workers expressed that "it's discouraging" to the participants when they're referred to receive these services and programs "because a lot of times they are motivated to do the programs, but they're never offered it."[16] It is important to note that DCC contracts for cognitive behavioral programming for people on community supervision who are assessed as needing it.

Social workers from the four facilities also explained that internal communication issues affected the start of new program groups. T4C is offered at all four pilot facilities and groups can serve between 8 and 18 people, while CBI-EMP is offered at three of the four pilot facilities and provides programming to 8 to 15 people at a time. For both programs, staff vacancies affected the number of groups that could receive services in 2017. DAI has trained more service providers to lead both program groups and instructed DAI social workers not to place people in concurrent programs to allow for a greater number of people to access programs at one time. However, since the social workers have access to a participant's release date but not the person's program enrollment data, program lists may overlap and participants can be placed in multiple groups with similar curriculums. This may result in some programs having unnecessarily reduced capacities. To this end, staff indicated that updating WICS to track program enrollment in CBI-EMP would help DAI social workers to better coordinate services. In addition, interviewees from all the organizations involved in the pilot also emphasized the need to fund more pre-release job-readiness and cognitive behavioral programming to increase employment retention after release.

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14. The CSG Justice Center data analysis of WI DOC release and COMPAS data

15. Ibid.

16. Wisconsin Department of Corrections staff in discussion with the authors.

"There seems to be an unwillingness to collaborate because everyone is fighting for their own piece of the pie, to secure their own funding to do their own thing, rather than looking at the larger picture which is really about providing services, not about having individual agencies."

Identifying Existing Services in the Community

The landscape of reentry service providers in Milwaukee County is robust and has expanded to include even more providers in recent years. When asked about the reentry landscape, community-based providers in the focus group expressed that the Milwaukee County community is equipped to meet the employment needs of people returning from incarceration due to an unusually large number of nonprofit community-based providers delivering reentry and other services across the county.

Despite this comprehensive landscape, or possibly because of it, providers and IRES implementation staff also noted that reentry efforts by competing community-based organizations lack coordination, which can lead to gaps in and duplication of services. Further, research staff discovered that many community-based providers are more equipped to serve a lower-risk population than moderate- to high-risk populations. Contributing to this gap in services, as one community-based provider put it, is that "there seems to be an unwillingness to collaborate because everyone is fighting for their own piece of the pie, to secure their own funding to do their own thing, rather than looking at the larger picture which is really about providing services, not about having individual agencies."[17]

17. Wisconsin community-based providers in discussion with the authors.

Do we have a coordinated process for making service referrals and tracking data?

Lead Coordinating Agency

Employ Milwaukee and DCC staff worked together to lead coordination efforts and promote employment-specific service referrals to the pilot project. These efforts included regular project team meetings, joint presentations to DCC agents and supervisors, and electronic communications disseminated to WI DOC staff to ensure familiarity with the referral process. WI DAI staff believed that it made the most sense for DCC to lead these undertakings, given that DCC agents are the ones monitoring the activities and progress after a person is referred to Employ Milwaukee and/or other community-based providers. These community-based providers, in turn, inform DCC agents of updates and normally work with DCC agents to develop and monitor case plans. Alternatively, there was consensus among Employ Milwaukee and DCC staff that Employ Milwaukee is in the best position to coordinate employment-specific services and referrals. DCC and Employ Milwaukee noted that the agencies can continue to develop better partnerships for tracking and managing all referrals to maximize cooperation and avoid duplication of efforts.

Ongoing Evaluation of Community-Based Reentry Services

Focus group participants in Milwaukee County stated that the IRES pilot project could have benefitted from more coordination and collaboration among the various community-based providers. There was no database or list that detailed the various community-based providers, the range of services they offered, the target population they served, or the client outcomes. Also, while targeted TA was offered by NTJN to support IRES framework implementation, only three out of six qualifying community-based providers in Milwaukee County accepted support. NTJN's report details that these agencies needed only minimal adjustments to effectively serve people assessed as higher risk and less ready. Community-based providers recognized that because there were so many similar services, it would be helpful "to measure whether or not they're doing what they do well or not. That way you can point people in the right direction."[18]

Coordinated Transition Planning and Tracking Referrals and Services

As noted in the Mechanisms for Information Sharing section, there were miscommunications regarding COMPAS data between DCC and DAI. When clients are released into the community, research staff noted that some DCC agents complete the COMPAS assessment for a second time to ensure that a client's past criminal history information is correctly recorded and the results of the tool are accurate. This is perceived to be beneficial in that it helps DCC agents know the extent to which clients made progress toward addressing their criminogenic needs through access to programming in DAI, and if more programming is needed, even if the participant had already completed said programming.

There were also information-sharing setbacks between DCC and Employ Milwaukee that ultimately affected transition planning efforts. The WICS system was used to generate a list of individuals who were within three to six months of their release date. DCC agents received the list and made referrals to Employ Milwaukee, who then worked to connect with clients 30 days before their release. DCC agents and Employ Milwaukee staff used Excel spreadsheets to keep track of referrals. However, Employ Milwaukee staff mentioned that

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18. Wisconsin community-based providers staff in discussion with the authors.

this method had drawbacks: when the spreadsheet—which was supposed to have a fixed number of clients—was circulated between the two agencies, it often included additional people, making it difficult to keep track of clients. This was due to the adjustment of clients' release dates based on newly applied sentence credits, among other factors. Staff eventually realized that they were missing the 30-day mark for certain clients and were not able to reach them before release. This issue caused DCC agents and Employ Milwaukee to potentially miss opportunities to connect people returning from prison with appropriate post-release services in a timely manner. Because of this delay in meeting with participants and completing the OWRA assessment before release, Employ Milwaukee staff were not always able to send the individualized self-sufficiency plans they developed for their clients to agents in advance of the person's return to the community.

For the clients with whom they were able to connect, Employ Milwaukee staff developed and shared the self-sufficiency plans with the DCC agents. Employ Milwaukee staff expressed a belief that the agents were not able to use or understand the information contained in the plans that they developed, as the agents were focused on other requirements related to their clients. As an alternative approach, Employ Milwaukee staff began to include selected case notes and important points in the body of emails that they sent to the agents, instead of sending the complete self-sufficiency plans, so agents would be more likely to read the information.

Participant Motivation

Engaging Participants in Their Reentry

The steering committee members noticed that there was not as much program engagement and participation as anticipated from clients before and after release. During separate focus groups with DAI staff and program participants, research staff summarized four primary reasons that could explain the levels of disengagement before release:

1. Program participants do not completely trust the COMPAS tool that is used to determine programming. Participants from three of the four facilities said DAI staff should explain the purpose and the results of the COMPAS to participants. The COMPAS assessment is intended to guide DAI staff in providing the most appropriate programming, but leaves program participants feeling as if they are placed in programs without any explanation.

2. Because participants sometimes enroll in services to earn transfer to a minimum-level facility, some participants report that they are enrolled in programs with peers who are not truly engaged in the curriculum. These participants report that this hinders their ability to gain all the benefits of programming.

3. Program participants who have been sentenced for long periods of time are not given the option to participate in programming until six to nine months before release. DAI staff mentioned that many people become disengaged because they've been waiting so long to receive programming that they've become exclusively focused on release planning.

4. Some of the program participants have been previously incarcerated or have been on probation or parole supervision in the past; when they realize that DAI staff are placing them in programming they have already received, they opt out.

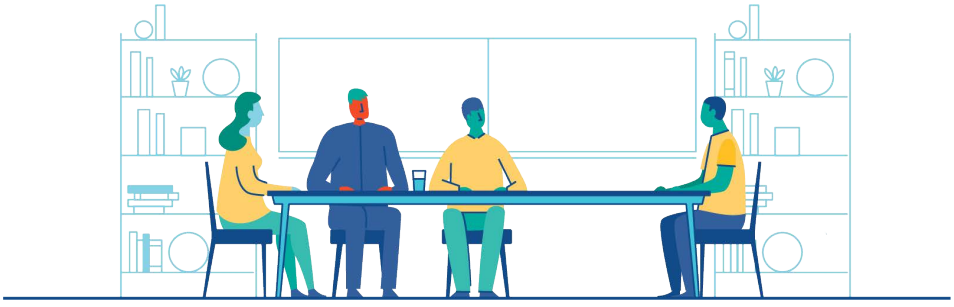
After release, Employ Milwaukee provides monetary incentives to people who participate and complete programming designed with two goals in mind: (1) to promote job readiness and (2) to find and retain employment. However, few participants are taking advantage of the incentive. During focus groups with Employ Milwuakee, community-based providers and DAI social workers, research staff concluded that four primary reasons explain the levels of disengagement after release:

1. WI DOC and community-based providers recognize that there needs to be better marketing and messaging of the IRES framework to the necessary stakeholders involved. Many of the program participants and DAI staff are unaware of Employ Milwaukee's presence and purpose along the reentry continuum.

2. Due to the information-sharing issues between Employ Milwaukee and DCC, Employ Milwaukee may miss opportunities to meet clients before release. The pre-release meeting between community-based providers and program participants is crucial to building rapport and trust; it can also be a springboard for collaborative case management between community-based providers and DCC agents. Without these meetings, people are being released without knowing about Employ Milwaukee's existence in the community.

3. Community-based providers explained that when participants are released to Milwaukee County, they "are pulled in many different directions in terms of community-based programs."[19] Staff also mentioned that participating in voluntary programming is a huge burden on clients because the majority of them have case managers at different agencies across the county to report to in addition to their probation or parole agent.

4. Wisconsin's unemployment rate is at a record low of 2.8 percent,[20] meaning that there are many vacant jobs in the county that are available for people returning from incarceration. When people are released from correctional facilities, they are mostly focused on getting a job to pay for their immediate needs, such as living expenses, supervision fees, child support, and court obligations, including fines and restitution. There is often a belief among clients that if court obligations are not paid, they face the possibility of returning to prison, which leads to disinterest in programming to help with job retention in lieu of strictly seeking immediate employment.



19. Wisconsin community-based provider staff in discussion with the authors.

20. "Economy at a Glance Wisconsin" United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Accessed June 25, 2018. https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.wi.htm.

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL

IRES Implementation At-A-Glance

The pilot project in Palm Beach County, Florida, was a county effort led by the Palm Beach County (PBC) Public Safety Department in partnership with the Criminal Justice Commission, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO), community-based providers, and the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC). The FDC is the third-largest prison system in the country, with more than 97,000 people in its 148 facilities; these facilities include correctional institutions, reentry centers, work camps, and release centers.[21] The PBSO operates two facilities with an average daily population of 1,981 people.[22]

The site was chosen because of the PBC Public Safety Department's leadership, an impressive case management system, and the county's partnership with Sago Palm Reentry Center (Sago Palm), a reentry-focused FDC facility that specifically serves people returning to Palm Beach County and the surrounding areas. People in other FDC facilities are transferred to Sago Palm within three years of their release, where they are assessed for their criminogenic risk and needs and enrolled in correctional interventions, including job-readiness programming. They also receive social, housing, financial, medical, and other services designed to ease their transition home. Similarly, people are assessed for their criminogenic risk and needs at the PBSO jails, but due to service capacity issues, participants aren't enrolled in employment-related programming. The pilot site focused on the pre-release procedures at Sago Palm and the PBSO jails.

This pilot site also focused on post-release programs and services offered by community-based providers in Palm Beach County for people released from all FDC facilities, including Sago Palm and the PBSO jails. The PBC Public Safety Department provides risk screening for people returning to the county from FDC facilities and manages a database that merges community-based provider records with some correctional programming information from all the facilities involved.

Quantitative Findings

Initially, PBC Public Safety Department and research staff anticipated that the county would serve 300 people per year through the pilot project. Research staff analyzed client engagement and enrollment records from the Reentry Network (RENEW) database for the participants who were released from all FDC prisons and PBSO jails to Palm Beach County between October 1, 2017 and March 31, 2018. During that period, the PBC Public Safety Department contacted more than 500 people regarding participation in post-release services. Ultimately, 175 people enrolled in the pilot project, with most participants enrolling after release from an FDC facility. Sixty-eight of these people enrolled in the PBC Public Safety Department services after release from Sago Palm, and an additional 67 people enrolled in services after release from the other FDC facilities. Forty people enrolled upon release from the PBSO jails.[23]

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21. Florida Department of Corrections, Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2016-2017 (Florida Department of Corrections, 2017), accessed on February 11, 2019, http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/1617/FDC_AR2016-17.pdf

22. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, Commission on Accreditation for Corrections Standards Compliance Reaccreditation Audit: Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (American Correctional Association, 2017), http://www.pbso.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ACA-Final-Report-2017.pdf.

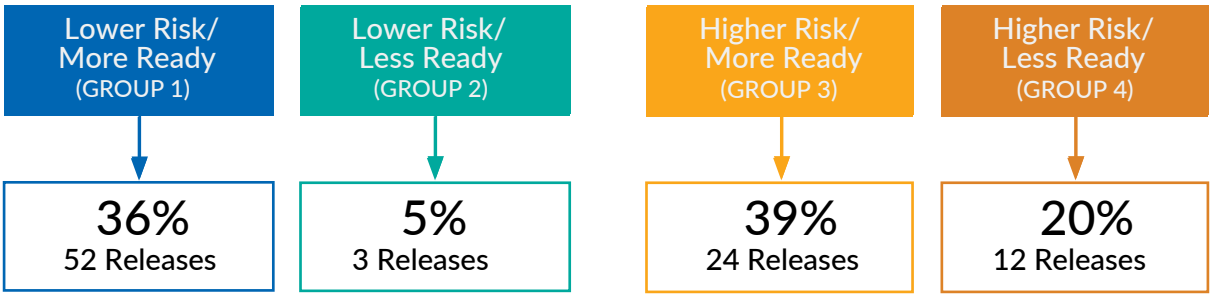
23. The CSG Justice Center data analysis of Palm Beach County's RENEW database.

Job-readiness scores were missing for 65 percent of the people who enrolled in programming. The missing data can be attributed to delayed data entry and the site's implementation of a new job-readiness checklist during the pilot project that was not completed for every participant. Since the evaluation period, Palm Beach County has been working to improve the job-readiness assessment and enter data in a timely way. Figure 3 details the breakdown of job readiness and risk of recidivism for people released onto supervision in the study period.

In addition to tracking assessments, the PBC Public Safety Department tracked job-readiness programming referrals from community-based providers and the programming that was eventually completed by participants. Thirteen percent (23 individuals) enrolled in PBC Public Safety Department services were assessed as needing job-readiness programming, 18 percent (31) listed job-readiness programming as a goal, and another 8 percent (12) of participants completed job-readiness classes during the study period.[24]

Figure 3. Risk/Job-Readiness Breakdown of People Returning to Palm Beach County

October 2017–March 2018



* Job-readiness assessment results are not available for 114 participants. Enrolled N=175, Assessed for Risk and Job-Readiness N=61

Qualitative Findings

Is our leadership committed to a collaborative approach?

Executive Leadership Involvement

Palm Beach County IRES pilot project was led by the PBC Public Safety Department and the Regional and State Transitional Offender Re-Entry (RESTORE) Initiative, which was created by the partnership between Palm Beach County and FDC.[25] While staff interviewed said there was some buy-in from executive leadership, they also reported that leadership could have been more proactive in championing these integrated reentry and employment services, and that "there needs to be better messaging about the RESTORE Initiative in the FDC facilities."[26] For Palm Beach County to increase the communication and marketing of IRES and the RESTORE Initiative to FDC classification officers, probation/parole officers, and program participants, they need to have the involvement of FDC executive leadership.

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24. Ibid.

25. For a complete participant list of Palm Beach County IRES Leadership, see Appendix 6.

26. RESTORE staff members in discussion with the authors

"Project leadership, both at the county and among the provider organizations, is enthusiastically committed to the project mission. Many of the other project strengths may be attributed to strong project leadership, such as partner cooperativeness, shared data, and new funding streams."

Designated Project Coordinator

A full-time staff member was not dedicated to the implementation of the IRES framework in Palm Beach County overall, but there were designated program coordinators at Sago Palm and the PBSO jails. The program coordinators were in charge of conducting assessments, developing reentry plans, and/or facilitating job-readiness and CBI-EMP programming. The program coordinators also marketed the IRES framework to program participants and facilitated referrals to community-based providers that offered programs in the facilities before release. Both the program coordinators and community-based providers attended the monthly RESTORE meetings and were informed about the IRES framework, which helped increase communication and coordination. Community-based providers explained that they have great working relationships with the program coordinators because these coordinators help set up client meetings and can provide valuable information on clients.

Representative Planning Team and Commitment to Vision, Mission, and Goals

The representative planning team included the PBC Public Safety Department and RESTORE staff. Members of this core planning team expressed that the majority of the community-based reentry service providers had been working together to address reentry efforts on a countywide scale. As a part of their TA, NTJN stated that Palm Beach County's "project leadership, both at the county and among the provider organizations, is enthusiastically committed to the project mission. Many of the other project strengths may be attributed to strong project leadership, such as partner cooperativeness, shared data, and new funding streams."[27] FDC leaders echoed the sentiments expressed by NTJN, noting that they commend Palm Beach County for having a highly organized and collaborative reentry effort.

Do we conduct timely risk and needs assessments and job-readiness screenings?

Validated Risk and Needs Assessments

Sago Palm RESTORE staff and the community-based providers involved in the IRES pilot project conduct the LSI-R before and/or after release. Staff explained that the LSI-R has been helpful in developing case plans but that the questions, which often delve deep into a client's background, can lead to the client's confusion and frustration because of their wide range of topics. When framing the intake as a conversation instead of a formal assessment, the facilitators are able to solicit an accurate response and, once completed, staff members explain the results to the client to increase participation motivation and engagement.

27. Heartland Alliance National Initiatives, National Transitional Jobs Network IRES Project Recommendations.

PBSO jail program coordinators and the PBC Public Safety Department conduct the LSI-R Proxy tool before release either in person or through letters, and some of the community-based providers also conduct the LSI-R Proxy after release. The LSI-R Proxy, shorter than the LSI-R, is a three-item scaled instrument used to identify people who are at a risk to recidivate that focuses on the person's age at first arrest, number of prior arrests, and current age. Palm Beach County has also incorporated questions about housing, family ties, past programming/training (e.g., GED classes, forklift training, job-readiness programs), and interests in certain areas. In addition to the LSI-R Proxy, the PBSO jail program coordinators also conduct a Palm Beach County Sherriff's Office Needs Assessments (PBSO Needs Assessment) to gain a holistic understanding of their clients' needs before release. The PBSO Needs Assessment includes questions related to criminal history, employment, homelessness, family, need-based assistance, and identification needs (such as whether they need a social security card, driver's license, or identification). The program coordinators use this information to begin providing services that can be completed before release.

PBSO program coordinators administering the LSI-R Proxy noticed discrepancies in the scores of people with limited criminal histories. One staff member mentioned that they often have to make judgment calls because they know that certain participants should be referred to receive services when their LSI-R Proxy score says otherwise. Staff began to consider certain participants assessed as low-risk by the LSI-R proxy as moderate to high risk so they could receive services. For example, according to the LSI-R Proxy, older individuals are mostly considered lower risk and are essentially screened out of receiving what would be, if not for their age and limited criminal history, the most appropriate services for their score. Another staff member mentioned that people may not qualify for services through the assessment, but after staff interact with the client and learn his or her unique circumstances, they realize the person should be receiving them. Staff mentioned that the LSI-R Proxy has been helpful in case planning, but to what degree depends on the discretion of the person reviewing the score.

Systemwide Definition of Job Readiness and the Use of Job-Readiness Assessments

The core planning team developed a systemwide definition of job readiness that is based on a newly created checklist. Team members also explained that the group reviewed different job-readiness assessments throughout the pilot project and couldn't find a validated assessment that met their needs; however, the community-based providers are all currently using a locally developed employment/job-readiness screening. Community-based providers explained that using the employment/job-readiness screenings in conjunction with the LSI-R, the LSI-R Proxy, and conversations with clients has helped them develop individualized case plans.

Mechanisms for Information Sharing

Through RESTORE, reentry planning procedures and information were standardized and shared across the many organizations involved along the county's continuum of reentry services. To improve case planning, the RENEW case management system was developed to ensure that risk and criminogenic needs are known, identified, and addressed, which, in turn, can lower risk and reduce recidivism and victimization. The PBC Public Safety Department, Sago Palm, PBSO jails, community-based providers, and employment service providers such as the American Job Center, CareerSource, all have access to the RENEW database and can review individual client information. Community-based providers who are referred clients via RENEW can review the participants' programming completed before release, previously identified risk and needs, interests in programming/training, and additional referrals for services.

After an assessment of the reentry initiative, technical assistance staff at NTJN remarked that "Palm Beach County's reentry data system is an asset to the IRES project, particularly in that participant data

can be shared across provider partners. This kind of data system accessibility for community-based employment program providers is rather unusual and gives Palm Beach County a great advantage with regard to coordinated service delivery."[28] Because of these procedures in place, core planning team members expressed that they have not encountered barriers to information sharing.

"Palm Beach County's reentry data system is an asset to the IRES project, particularly in that participant data can be shared across provider partners. This kind of data system accessibility for community-based employment program providers is rather unusual and gives Palm Beach County a great advantage with regard to coordinated service delivery."

Have we conducted a comprehensive process analysis and inventory of employment services provided before and after release?

Detailed Process Analysis

During the planning phase of the pilot project, Palm Beach County and research staff conducted a process analysis to determine how clients move through the system and developed recommendations for implementing the IRES framework. After the implementation phase, a process evaluation was conducted, which research staff used to develop an individualized flowchart[29] for each releasing facility to track the movement of people and the timely use of risk, needs, and job-readiness assessments in Palm Beach County. This was used to assess each facility's adherence to the framework and to understand various processes and identify gaps and needs in services, information sharing, and coordination.

Evidence-Based Services

Research staff determined that while Palm Beach County offered a full range of evidence-based employment services after release, the pilot site should work on offering pre-release services for people returning to the community from PBSO jails and FDC facilities in order to facilitate a smooth transition. Sago Palm, however, does provide numerous employment-focused reentry services before release.

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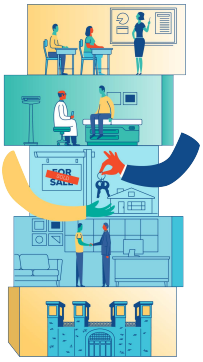
28. Heartland Alliance National Initiatives, National Transitional Jobs Network IRES Project Recommendations.

29. The flowcharts for the Palm Beach County IRES pilot project can be found in appendices 3–5.

Palm Beach County offers the following programs before and/or after release:



- Identification services (e.g., driver's license, identification, social security cards)
- Transportation and work supplies (e.g., clothing such as uniforms, boots, and hard hats)
- Job-readiness courses
- Thinking for a Change (T4C)
- Apprenticeships (e.g., culinary, clerical, janitorial, retail)
- Vocational programming (e.g., commercial driver's license, forklift certification)
- Financial education
- Mentoring
- Case management services
- Connections to housing

Service Capacity

People incarcerated in PBSO jails are given shorter sentences than those at FDC prisons and are eligible to participate in the full range of programs and services offered, including behavioral health and educational programming. However, program coordinators report that there are service capacity issues with providing reentry and employment services in these jails, and research staff learned that it can be difficult to provide programming and services because a sentenced person's release date can change at any point in time. To address this issue, PBSO staff supervisors said that they need better coordination and tracking to ensure that people can receive reentry services before reentering the community.

Given Sago Palm's reentry-focused programming structure, people are required to complete some type of programming offered on-site, giving it an increased capacity in comparison to PBSO jails, which do not have such a structure. In addition to the other services provided at Sago Palm, people who agree to complete the LSI-R and participate in the RESTORE Initiative receive T4C programming and a job-readiness class. Program participants did mention that the facility needs more teachers, increased program capacity, new programming opportunities, and job fairs.

Because the IRES pilot project in Palm Beach County mostly focused on post-release programs and services for people returning from FDC facilities and PBSO jails, research staff did not ask questions about pre-release programs and services offered at these facilities. After focus groups with the core planning team and community-based providers, research staff learned that the pilot site could benefit from FDC leadership and county officials allocating funding for transition planning and providing reentry and employment programs and services before release.

Identifying Existing Services in the Community

Palm Beach County benefits from a robust network of employment-focused reentry providers collaboratively working to foster successful transitions to the community. Under the RESTORE Initiative, three community-based providers—The Lord's Place, Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, and The Re-Entry Center—receive participant referrals from the PBC Public Safety Department staff, Sago Palm RESTORE staff, and PBSO jail program coordinators based on where the participant lives after release. People who were homeless prior to incarceration or do not have a home to return to are automatically referred to one of the three agencies. These agencies conduct assessments, develop individualized reentry plans, provide reentry services, and make referrals to other organizations in the community that can better address the individualized needs of each client. PBSO jail program coordinators noted that there has been greater collaboration with the community-based providers since the beginning of the pilot project.

Do we have a coordinated process for making service referrals and tracking data?

Lead Coordinating Agency

The structure of the Palm Beach County pilot project is county focused, with county-level public safety staff, community-based providers, and the county workforce board providing leadership. Over the past few years, the PBC Public Safety Department took the lead coordinating role, making the department integral to generating funding and maintaining the RESTORE Initiative, which continues to grow as more stakeholders and reentry providers are invited.

Ongoing Evaluation of Community-Based Reentry Services

In NTJN's report on Palm Beach County, evaluators detailed that the reentry initiative benefited from local leadership and commitment from project partners, as well as from a strong foundation of community-based reentry services with expertise in areas including social well-being and CBI. NTJN advised Palm Beach County to continue ongoing evaluations of community-based reentry services and to acquire funding, staff training, and partnerships with local employers to implement a transitional jobs component at the scale and scope needed to be fully effective.

Coordinated Transition Planning and Tracking Referrals and Services

When meeting clients before release, program coordinators at the PBSO jails and Sago Palm conduct the full LSI-R or the LSI-R Proxy assessment, convene a discussion about the client's needs, start the paperwork for needed identification materials, discuss the options available in the community, and make the appropriate referrals to community-based providers. Program coordinators mentioned that they have an "excellent relationship"[30] with the community-based providers that come on-site, which has helped to develop rapport and increase participant motivation among clients. Due to short lengths of stay at PBSO jails and the limited service capacity of PBSO program coordinators and community-based providers to deliver programming before release, the reentry services they provide are limited to case planning. After release, community-based providers have limited resources to conduct extensive outreach, therefore, participation in programming as part of the RESTORE Initiative is voluntary. Community-based providers leave it up to the individual to contact them after release and believe that clients who make the effort to engage in post-release services are most successful (for more on this, see the "Participant Motivation" section below).

> *"The way the system is designed, clients give up."*

30. PBSO program coordinators in discussion with the authors.

When participants contact the community-based providers after release, they are asked to complete the full intake. During intake, the LSI-R results are reviewed for clients who were released from Sago Palm and administered to the clients who were released from other FDC facilities and PBSO jails. The community-based providers review the notes they have from the pre-release visit, if applicable, and make recommendations for programming and services based on the assessment results, client conversations, and the information provided in RENEW. These providers described the navigation of the reentry landscape as a strenuous and frustrating process, explaining that when people are released, they have to be kept engaged with programming even if it means having the staff drive them to their appointments, because "the way the system is designed, clients give up."[31] To mitigate this confusion, program coordinators guide clients through the process, an effort that does not go unnoticed. Post-release participants spoke highly of their experiences, one participant going so far as to mention that the coordinators' guidance "just opened up the doors to a million little things" while another participant explained that "they've been really helpful. Anything I can think about I need help with, they're doing it."[32]

Participant Motivation

Engaging Participants in Their Reentry

The influence of a participant's sense of motivation on the success of their reentry process came up in conversations with community-based providers and program participants. After conducting the LSI-R/ LSI-R Proxy with clients, program coordinators reported providing them with a detailed explanation of the results and the reasoning behind referrals to the programs that are available. The program coordinators did this to make sure that the participants comprehend why they are receiving the programming and services, ensuring that ". . .the [clients] understand the next steps and small goals,"[33] which is crucial to increasing motivation to participate in programming before and after release.

At Sago Palm, RESTORE Initiative participants voluntarily receiving programming spoke highly of the program coordinators and the programs offered. Research staff concluded that the rapport created between the program coordinators and participants has helped motivate participants to partake in pre-release programming. In fact, the majority of the program participants that research staff interviewed at Sago Palm completed most, if not all, of the programs and services offered.

Under the RESTORE Initiative, community-based providers go to Sago Palm and the PBSO jails before release to meet regularly with participants until their release. During the pre-release meetings, the providers discuss programming completed before release, explain the RESTORE Initiative and services offered after release, identify areas of expressed need, and begin family reunification services, all of which are updated in the RENEW database. After reentering the community, it is completely up to the program participants to connect with the community-based provider to continue planning and to receive services. Some participants may fail to make the connection after release, but program coordinators and community-based providers expressed that the "success is when the providers come in and begin to develop the rapport before an individual is released" because "when they are released, they have all the trust and faith in you and you have to deliver."[34] In all, RESTORE participants reported that they felt more confident and ready for the next steps in reentry after participating in programming before and after release, making them more motivated.

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31. RESTORE staff in discussion with the authors.

32. Palm Beach County program participants in discussion with the authors.

33. PBSO program coordinators in discussion with the authors.

34. RESTORE staff in discussion with the authors.

Recommendations

Research staff provided recommendations to both the Milwaukee County and Palm Beach County pilot sites on how existing resources can be better utilized to promote RNR principles on a systemwide scale. These recommendations can be applied as both sites plan to expand the IRES framework in their respective jurisdictions and improve the fidelity of the IRES framework within their county's continuum of reentry services. During the pilot project, representatives from each site met to discuss lessons learned from implementation; they should continue to exchange information and learn from each other's successes.

1. SCREENING, JOB-READINESS ASSESSMENTS, AND INFORMATION SHARING

Frontline staff in both pilot sites noted that the current risks and needs screening and assessment tools are helpful in gathering information about participants and developing individualized reentry plans. However, each site experienced issues with certain domains and some of the scores rendered. As a result, frontline staff began overriding the scores in hopes that clients would receive the most accurate programs and services. Research staff recommend that both sites normalize the assessment to their population and conduct refresher trainings on the tools to provide more guidance on using their own judgment when overriding results and making referrals to programs.

Both pilot sites used a job-readiness assessment or screening to guide program referrals after release; however, research staff recommended that they begin assessing job readiness and employment interests before release. If done appropriately, frontline staff would be able to increase participant motivation by enrolling people in programs of their interest and eliminate the need for extensive job-readiness programming after release.

Milwaukee County had issues with information sharing, perhaps due to the use of different databases and miscommunication related to information needed to inform case planning. In order to address information-sharing issues, research staff recommended that pilot project staff work together to combine, add, or remove certain databases and review each organization's need for information to streamline and strengthen their reentry planning efforts. Research staff also recommend that the community-based organizations and community corrections agencies conduct collaborative case-planning meetings. Research staff recommended that Milwaukee County and other areas struggling to establish better information-sharing procedures, explore creating databases like RENEW in Palm Beach County, as this reentry data system was an asset to the county's IRES project, particularly because participant data can be shared across provider partners. This kind of data system accessibility for community-based employment program providers gives Palm Beach County a great advantage in coordinated service delivery.

2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMITMENT TO VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS

Milwaukee County struggled to engage employers and build a coordinated community-based provider network, while Palm Beach County struggled to involve FDC leadership. Research staff recommended that the pilot project staff in both pilot sites educate state policymakers and necessary stakeholders on the impact of collaborative reentry planning and the benefits of incorporating RNR principles into their reentry and employment programming. In Milwaukee County, the inclusion of state policymakers and WI DOC leadership in steering committees helped implementation staff advocate for reentry-focused funding.

However, Milwaukee County should develop a comprehensive database or list of community-based reentry and employment providers similar to Palm Beach's RESTORE Initiative. This database could be used as a starting point for developing a collaborative network of community-based providers engaged in offering coordinated services to people returning to Milwaukee County.

3. SERVICE CAPACITY, TRACKING PROGRESS, AND ONGOING EVALUATION OF SERVICES

Both pilot sites effectively provided services after release, but due to service capacity issues in Wisconsin DAI facilities and the PBSO jails, many clients were released from incarceration without receiving reentry and employment services and programming. Community-based providers and program participants in both sites recommended that the DOCs begin to outsource job-readiness preparation to local employers hiring people who have criminal records and local workforce boards. Research staff also recommended that both sites outsource their delivery of CBI and other reentry services and programming to community-based providers. If done correctly and with adherence to best practices, the DOCs would be able to relieve program coordinators and social workers of many of the program responsibilities, leaving them with more time to focus on case management and reentry planning.

Research staff recommended that the lead coordinating agencies in both sites begin to discuss discrepancies in baseline data collection and tracking procedures. This will help both sites accurately assess issues and adjust their procedures accordingly. In addition, both sites should develop or enhance service contracts with community-based providers to reflect the delivery of evidence based principles and promising practices before and after release. Similar to NTJN's evaluation of services, the sites should also develop an ongoing evaluation of community-based reentry programs and their fidelity to evidence-based programming, coordinating transition planning, and tracking referrals and outcomes. This will help the sites to identify which community-based reentry programs are best equipped to serve the population and areas for improvement in their programming to better address gaps in systemswide service delivery.

4. PARTICIPANT MOTIVATION

Milwaukee County faced participant motivation issues regarding active engagement and program completion before and after release. To remedy this, research staff recommended that DAI social workers and DCC agents begin to inform program participants about screening and assessment results and have the clients take a proactive role in the reentry planning process. In addition, Employ Milwaukee should look into increasing their presence in the facilities and the different community supervision offices to establish rapport with clients. Much of the success within Palm Beach County stemmed from the community-based providers' presence in the facilities before release.

Palm Beach County did not face significant participant motivation issues, but similar to Milwaukee County, the program participants had a certain level of disengagement in connecting to services after release. A portion of the post-release population in both sites faced the threat of returning to incarceration because of probation/parole violations and the failure to pay fines. Community-based providers and program participants from both sites recommended that the DOCs and probation/parole agencies offer non-monetary incentives, such as a hold on fines and fees, for clients who are actively engaged in programming.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY, WI

Next Steps

Increasing collaboration amongst employment-focused reentry providers in the community was the Milwaukee County pilot site's greatest takeaway. Doing so would ensure that there is sufficient capacity to match clients with services tailored to their criminogenic risk-needs and employment readiness. Through partnerships such as Milwaukee Reentry Network and Milwaukee Re-entry Alliance, WI DOC and Employ Milwaukee intend to continue initiatives that bring together key stakeholders to build service capacity and develop a more coordinated reentry system in the Milwaukee community.

WI DOC has extensive plans to integrate the concepts and strategies learned through the IRES project into its standard business processes. WI DOC has integrated the IRES framework into its employment program standards, which were created to increase the effectiveness and consistency of employment-related program service delivery throughout the department. Division-specific implementation teams are now working throughout WI DOC to define business processes related to these standards.

DCC is continuing its partnership with Employ Milwaukee to support people returning to the community, and plans to strengthen the referral and pre-release engagement process so that people are identified and receive services prior to release. In addition, Employ Milwaukee staff have begun to convene collaborative case planning meetings with participants and agents to increase engagement, offer a more integrated approach to reentry planning, and detect issues early on.

The IRES framework has been applied to several other initiatives throughout Milwaukee County, including the Milwaukee County House of Corrections Pilot, which was funded through DOJ. As part of this pilot, formalized relationships were developed with key agencies to facilitate a cohesive referral and service delivery process for participants before and after release to ensure a smooth transition back to the community. Services include the administration of robust cognitive behavioral programming and job readiness services before release, followed by supportive case management after release. With funding from Second Chance Act 2016 Innovations in Reentry Initiative (IRI), similar services coupled with trauma-informed care will be provided to high risk, less job-ready people incarcerated in WI DOC and returning to Center Street Corridor, an area of Milwaukee plagued by gun violence.

Finally, WI DOC was recently awarded the Second Chance Act 2018 Adult Reentry and Employment Strategic Planning Grant Program grant to develop integrated reentry and employment strategies for people who are returning from incarceration to south central Wisconsin. The goal of the project is to develop a strategic plan for integrating best practices from the corrections and workforce development systems to build capacity and/or establish new employment programs aimed at reducing recidivism and increasing employment outcome.

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL

Next Steps

The IRES pilot project in Palm Beach County revealed that, in order to increase the employability of the higher risk and less job-ready population, more intensive skills-building opportunities were needed. Lead stakeholders in the IRES pilot project believe that adding transitional jobs that involve programming that addresses criminogenic behavior, such as CBI, to existing services would accomplish this. In September 2017, Palm Beach County was awarded the Second Chance Act 2017 IRI grant, which will fund these transitional jobs and cognitive behavioral programming as well as other supportive services to people assessed as higher risk and less job-ready at three community reentry agencies.

County leaders have also shown interest in developing a formalized referral process between agencies in order to provide more robust services to program participants. This would include strengthening their existing partnership with the local American Job Center, CareerSource, to ensure participants have access to training, education, and subsidized and unsubsidized employment opportunities.

If the transitional jobs program is successful and the county is able to secure funds to continue the program after the IRI grant period has ended, the agencies hope to refer clients to partner agencies effectively so participants are able to select a transitional job that aligns with a career path of their interest. The Palm Beach County pilot site reported that the need for increased collaboration and referral between agencies to provide more wraparound services was one of the greatest takeaways from the pilot project, and that they aim to continue to build on and improve this area of their reentry landscape.

Glossary of Terms

MILWAUKEE COUNTY, WI

Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions tool (COMPAS) – A validated, evidence-based assessment and case management tool used for determining an individual's criminogenic risks and needs to inform case planning.

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Offenders Seeking Employment (CBI-EMP) – A program designed for people in the criminal justice system who have a moderate to high need in the area of employment. The curriculum integrates cognitive behavioral interventions with more traditional employment approaches. The program teaches individuals how to identify and manage risk situations related to obtaining and maintaining employment.

Efforts-to-Outcomes Software (ETO) – A web-based performance management system that can be configured to collect metrics that analyze information related to participant progress toward training and employment goals, staff performance, the quality of service delivery, employer relationship management, agency performance toward contracts, and the overall community impact realized from the investments in workforce development.

Employ Milwaukee – The workforce development board in Milwaukee County and the lead coordinating agency for the county's IRES pilot project for employment-related referrals.

Online Work Readiness Assessment Tool (OWRA) – A web-based tool that offers an innovative approach to creating a plan for clients that summarizes their strengths and barriers; it also makes recommendations on placement into work activities and supports.

Thinking for a Change (T4C) – An integrated, cognitive behavioral change program for people in the criminal justice system that includes cognitive restructuring and the development of social and problem-solving skills.

Windows to Work – A program offered before and after release that provides participants with training in core curriculum content areas designed to address criminogenic needs that can lead to recidivism, including: employment, education, anti-social cognition, anti-social personality, and anti-social companions.

Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WI DOC) – An administrative department in the executive branch of Wisconsin responsible for the state's corrections system, including state prisons.

Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Division of Adult Institutions (DAI) – DAI supervises more than 20,000 people who have been sentenced by a court to a term of incarceration or reincarceration due to revocation of their community supervision placement. The division oversees 36 adult correctional facilities and three bureaus.

Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Division of Community Corrections (DCC) – DCC is charged with supervising more than 68,000 people placed by the courts on probation, parole, or extended supervision in the community.

Wisconsin Integrated Corrections System (WICS) – A consolidated, integrated Oracle database used to manage information relative to WI DOC's population.

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL

Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) – The third-largest state prison system in the country, with approximately 96,000 people incarcerated and nearly 167,000 people on active community supervision (probation).

Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R) – A validated risk/need assessment tool that identifies risk factors in a person's life and predicts his or her risk of recidivism. It is a 54-item instrument that assesses the person across 10 domains known to be related to the likelihood of reoffending. Addressing these domains and need areas through prison rehabilitative interventions can ultimately reduce a person's probability of reincarceration. LSI-R assessments are completed by trained assessors who conduct interviews with people who are incarcerated or on community supervision and verify the information through external sources, when possible.

Level of Service Inventory – Revised Proxy (LSI-R Proxy) – Shorter than the LSI-R, the LSI-R Proxy is a three-item scaled instrument used to prescreen people for their risk to reoffend. The LSI-R Proxy focuses on the age at first arrest, number of prior arrests, and current age of the person.

Palm Beach County Public Safety Department (PBC Public Safety Department) – The department provides assistance and programs to both the justice system and the citizens of Palm Beach County.

Palm Beach County Public Safety Department's Reentry Network (RENEW) – A case management system developed to ensure that a person's criminogenic risk and assoicated needs are identified and addressed in an effort to lower risk and reduce recidivism and victimization.

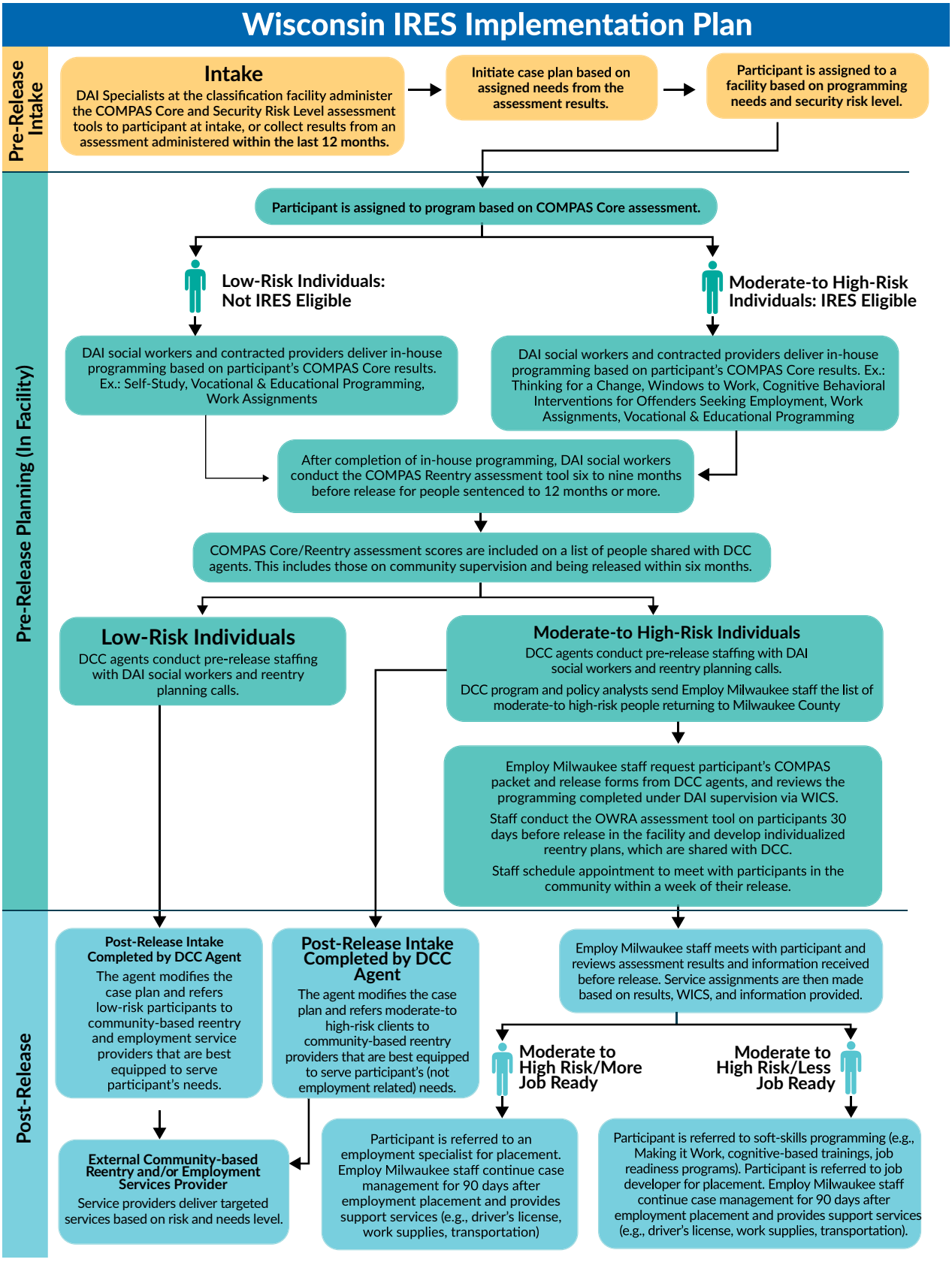
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office Jails (PBSO Jails) – The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office provides a safe, secure environment for staff and people who are incarcerated by ensuring that order is maintained within facilities at all times. The office operates and manages people in custody in the Main and West jails.

Regional and State Transitional Offender Re-Entry Initiative (RESTORE) – A Department of Justice-funded reentry program delivered through a partnership between Palm Beach County and the FDC. All programming begins at the Sago Palm Reentry Center.

Sago Palm Reentry Center (Sago Palm) – A 384-bed FDC facility located in Pahokee, Florida, that opened in October 2010 as the second reentry prison in Florida dedicated to preparing incarcerated people for their transition back into society. The center delivers pre-release services that assist in transition planning.

Thinking for a Change (T4C) – An integrated, cognitive behavioral change program for people in the justice system that includes cognitive restructuring and the development of social and problem-solving skills.

Appendix 1: Milwaukee County IRES Implementation Flowchart



Appendix 2: Milwaukee County Executive Leadership and Representative Planning Team Involvement

EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

- Meets two times per year
- Champions the work broadly within the county and state

- Wisconsin, Office of the Lieutenant Governor
- Wisconsin State Senate, District 4
- Wisconsin State Legislature, District 13
- County of Milwaukee
- City of Milwaukee
- Wisconsin Department of Corrections
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

FULL STEERING COMMITTEE

- Meets quarterly
- All members of the core planning team are part of the full steering committee
- Review TA recommendations and make decisions as to how the TA plan will work

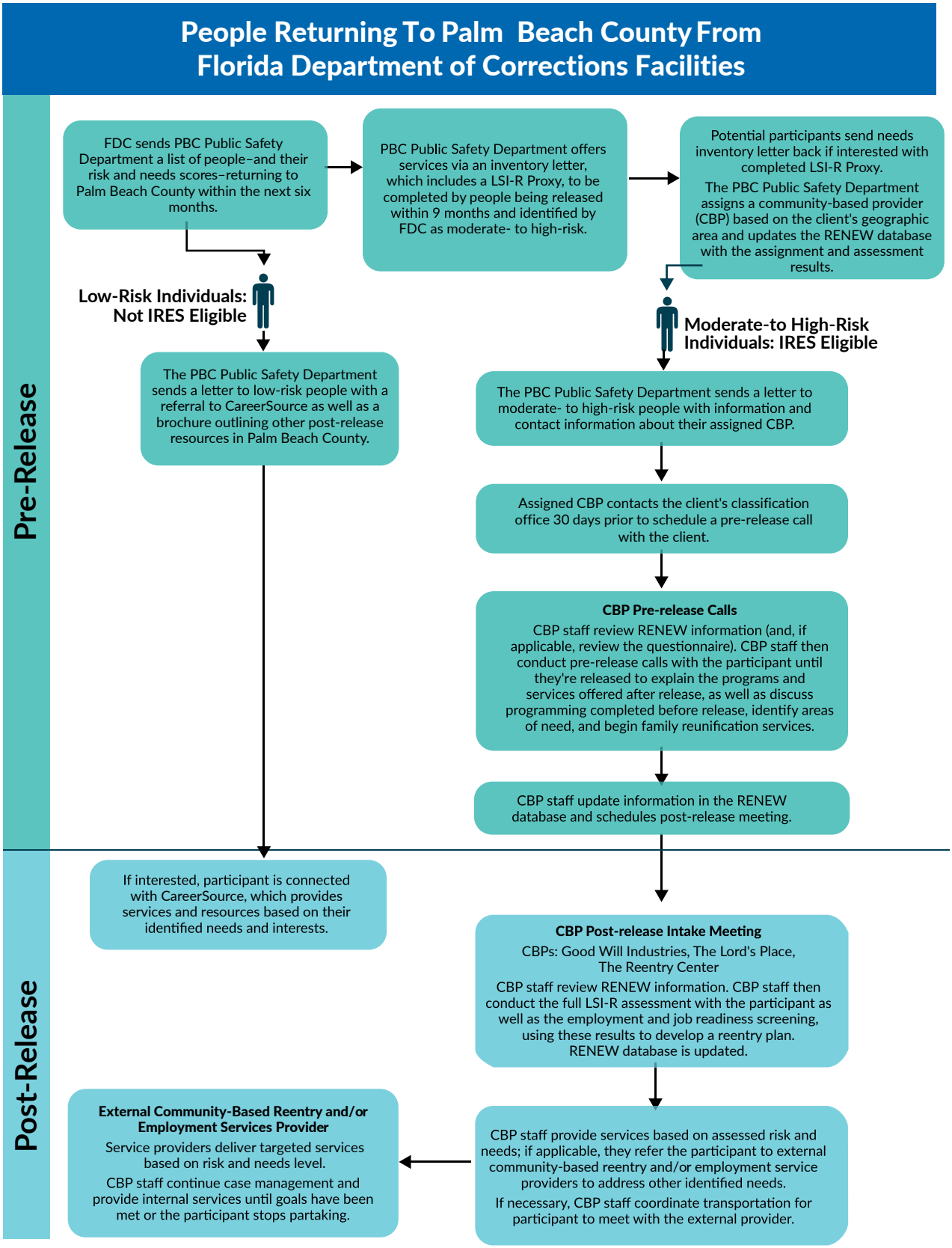
- Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Division of Community Corrections
- Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Division of Adult Institutions
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development
- Project RETURN
- Wisconsin Community Services
- Center for Self-Sufficiency
- UMOS
- Association of General Contractors of Greater Milwaukee
- Gorman & Company, Inc.
- WRTP/BIG STEP (Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership / Building Industry Group, Skilled Trades Employment Program)
- Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC)
- US Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office

CORE PLANNING TEAM

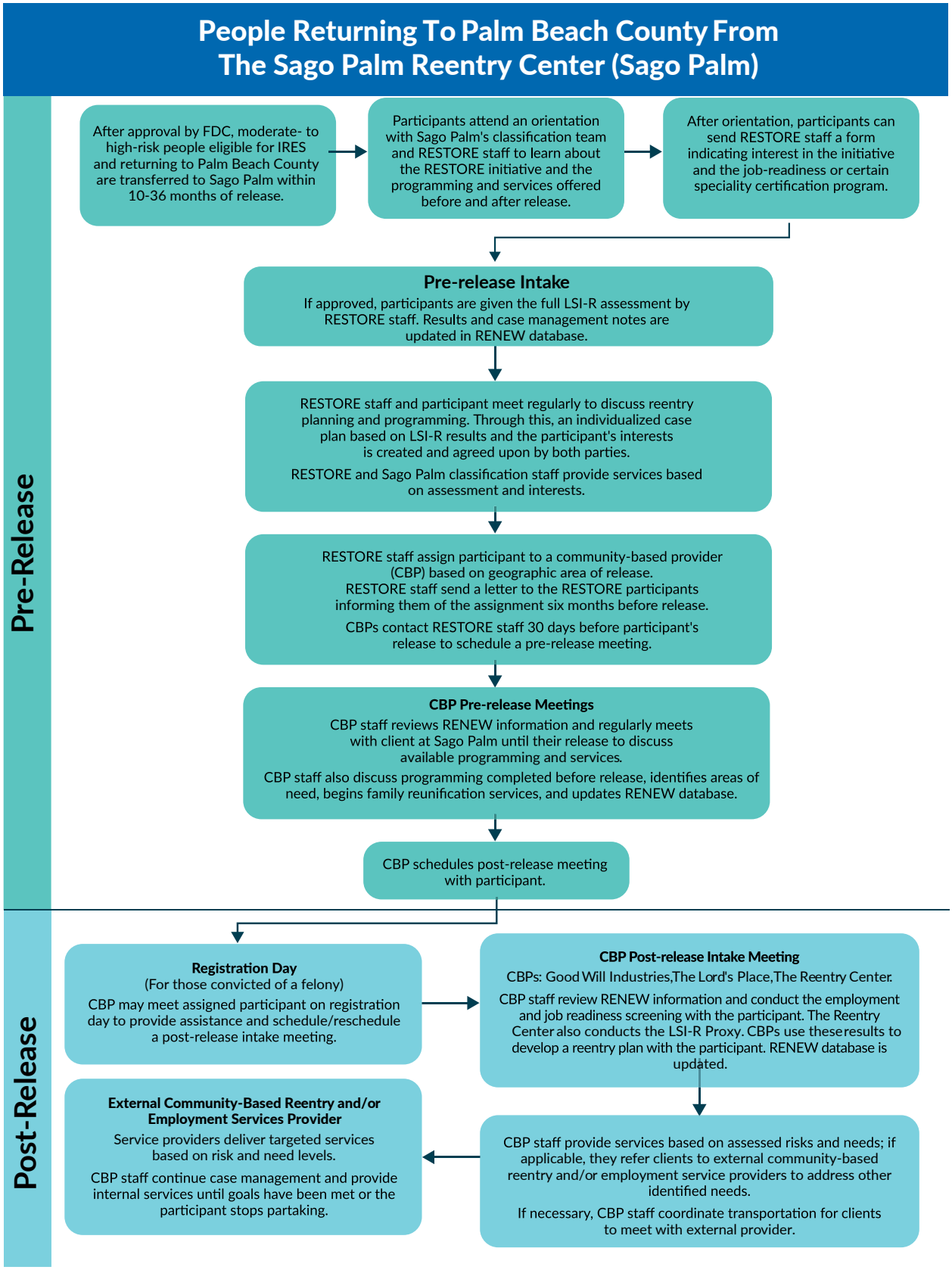
- Meets monthly
- All members are part of the full steering committee (which meets quarterly)
- Responsible for deliverables and keeping subcommittees on track

- Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Office of the Secretary-Reentry Unit
- Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Office of Program Services
- Wisconsin Department of Corrections, Division of Community Corrections
- Center for Self-Sufficiency
- Employ Milwaukee
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

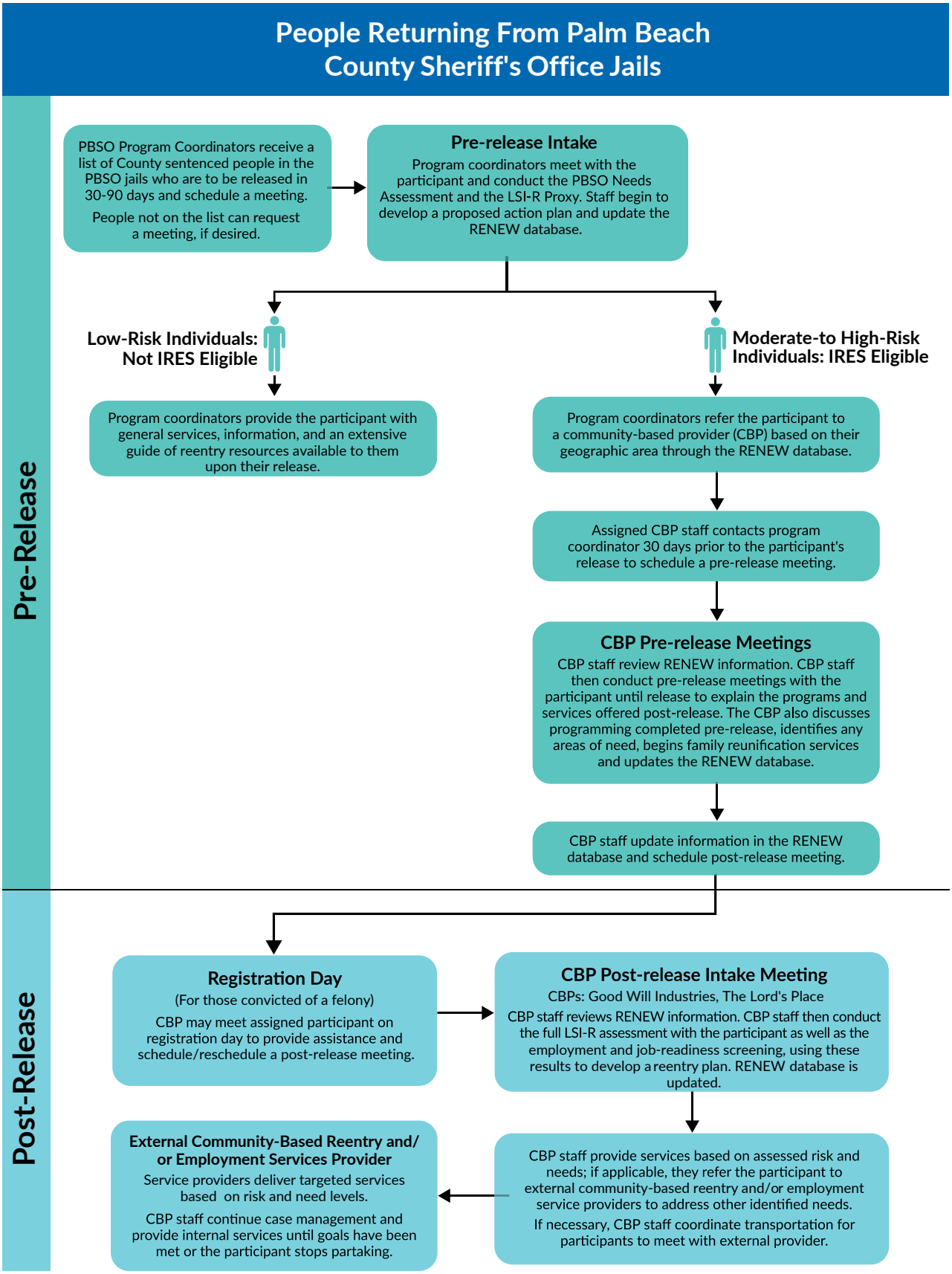
Appendix 3: Palm Beach County IRES Implementation Flowchart



Appendix 4: Palm Beach County IRES Implementation Flowchart



Appendix 5: Palm Beach County IRES Implementation Flowchart



Appendix 6: Palm Beach County Executive Leadership and Representative Planning Team Involvement

EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

- Meets two times per year
- Champions the work broadly within the county and state

- Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)
- City of West Palm Beach
- City of Boynton Beach
- Town of Highland Beach
- Florida Department of Corrections (FDC)
- FL DOC Community Corrections
- Palm Beach County Sherriff's Office (PBSO)
- Palm Beach County Office of the Public Defender
- Florida House of Representatives, Districts 87 and 88
- The Florida Senate, District 27
- The Business Development Board
- CareerSource Palm Beach County

FULL STEERING COMMITTEE

- Meets quarterly
- All members of the core planning team are part of the full steering committee

- Palm Beach County Criminal Justice Commission
- City of West Palm Beach Commission
- City of Pahokee Commission
- Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
- Palm Beach County Department of Public Safety
- Palm Beach County League of Cities, Inc.
- CareerSource Palm Beach County
- Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
- The Lord's Place
- The Re-Entry Center
- Convergence & Associates Consulting
- Economic Council of Palm Beach County

CORE PLANNING TEAM

- Meets monthly
- All members are part of the full steering committee (which meets quarterly)
- Responsible for deliverables and keeping subcommittees on track

- Palm Beach County Department of Public Safety
- Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
- Palm Beach County Office of the Public Defender
- CareerSource Palm Beach County
- The Lord's Place
- Gulfstream Goodwill Industries
- The Re-Entry Center