

The Importance of the Blumstein, Pager, & Decker Studies – Policy and Program Implications

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What The Research Tells Us

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A Quick Recap

The Pager studies show that race may (and is highly likely) to make a bigger difference in employment prospects than merely having a criminal record. Being a minority with a criminal record is especially devastating to ones “employability”.

The Redemption Point study focuses on how to leverage the employability of people with records based on time elapsed since commission of the crime, age when crime was committed, and the nature of crime. The Redemption Point system is premised on the idea that having a criminal record limits employment opportunities, but this can be offset by showing the person with a record is no more or less of a threat than the next person after a period of time.

Bruce Western's Study: Major Life Events

***Caucasian and African American Men Born Between 1965-1969
Experiencing Certain Life Events by 1999 (%)****

	Caucasian Men	African American Men
Marriage	72%	59%
Bachelor's Degree	32%	13%
Military	14%	17%
Imprisonment	3%	22%

* Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 2006.

Harry Holzer's Findings

High rates of incarceration among young black men feed into discriminatory behavior by employers that believe that black job candidates are more likely to have criminal records.

- Employers that conduct background checks are actually more likely to hire black employees.
- Perceived criminality in absence of background checks

There are serious supply and demand barriers facing people with criminal records

- Supply
 - Limited education and cognitive skills
 - Limited work experience
 - Substance abuse and other physical or mental health problems
- Demand
 - High level skills sought by employees
 - Race bias
 - **Traditionally unwilling to consider those with criminal records**

Top 10 Reasons Given for Hiring Safer Clients (Kokopelli)

1. **The offense was a non violent crime (most important)**
2. They have experience in that industry
3. A 3rd party provides full background information*
4. Belief in giving a person a second chance
5. A 3rd party organization is helping/coaching them*
6. Testimonials from other employers
7. They are willing to fill entry-level positions
8. A 3rd party screens and trains them*
9. They are more appreciative of the opportunity
10. Hiring them would be good for the community

** Note that having a third party intermediary can make a significant difference in hiring considerations – this is confirmed in Harry Holzer’s research.*

Reasons for Not Hiring Safer Clients*

1. **Company policy**
2. Economy (either hiring freeze or supply outweighs demand)
3. Insurance concerns (either paying more or having to cover theft)
4. Staff stability (fear of putting staff in harm's way or having them feel unsafe)
5. Already have successful means of hiring staff
6. Bad experience with hiring a person with a criminal record in the past
7. No explanation given
8. Lose business if public finds out
9. Clients tend not to have the amount of experience required
10. They are getting what they deserve

Specific and unique reason provided:

Parole issues – job requires travel

Based on informal opinion poll taken of Safer sector managers, combination of explicitly given reasons and conclusions drawn based on conversations with business owners/hiring managers.

About Safer Foundation

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Our Role

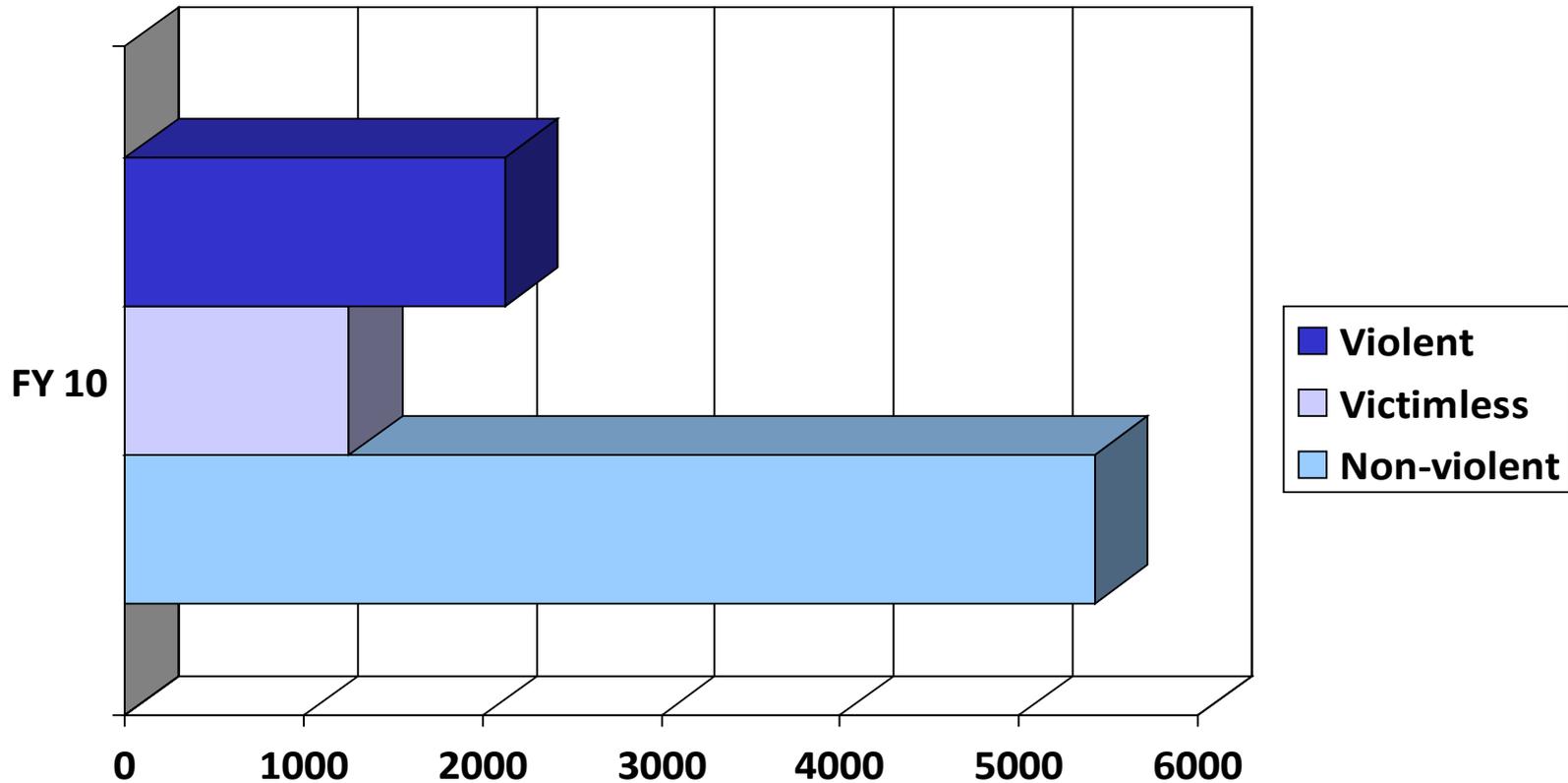
As practitioners, Safer's role is to bridge the research that is out there identifying the relevant issues and what works (in terms of best practices and models) with the needs of our client base.

Our focus is on developing programs that ensure optimal reentry and successful community integration with employment as the cornerstone.

Safer's Typical Client (reflective of demographics of the US prison population)

Minority Male
26 – 35 Years Old
Single
Father
Multiple Convictions
High School Diploma/GED (or less)
Limited Work History
Living Below the Poverty Line

Safer Clients' Nature of Conviction (most recent)



About Safer

A 38-year-old, not-for-profit organization, headquartered in Chicago.

Mission: To reduce recidivism by supporting, through a full spectrum of services, the efforts of people with criminal records to become employed, law-abiding members of the community.

- **19 locations in Illinois and one in Iowa**
- **478 employees on staff (including Pivotal Staffing Agency)**
- **2,700 job starts in FY10**
- **\$30 million budget**

Safer Foundation: An Integrated Strategy

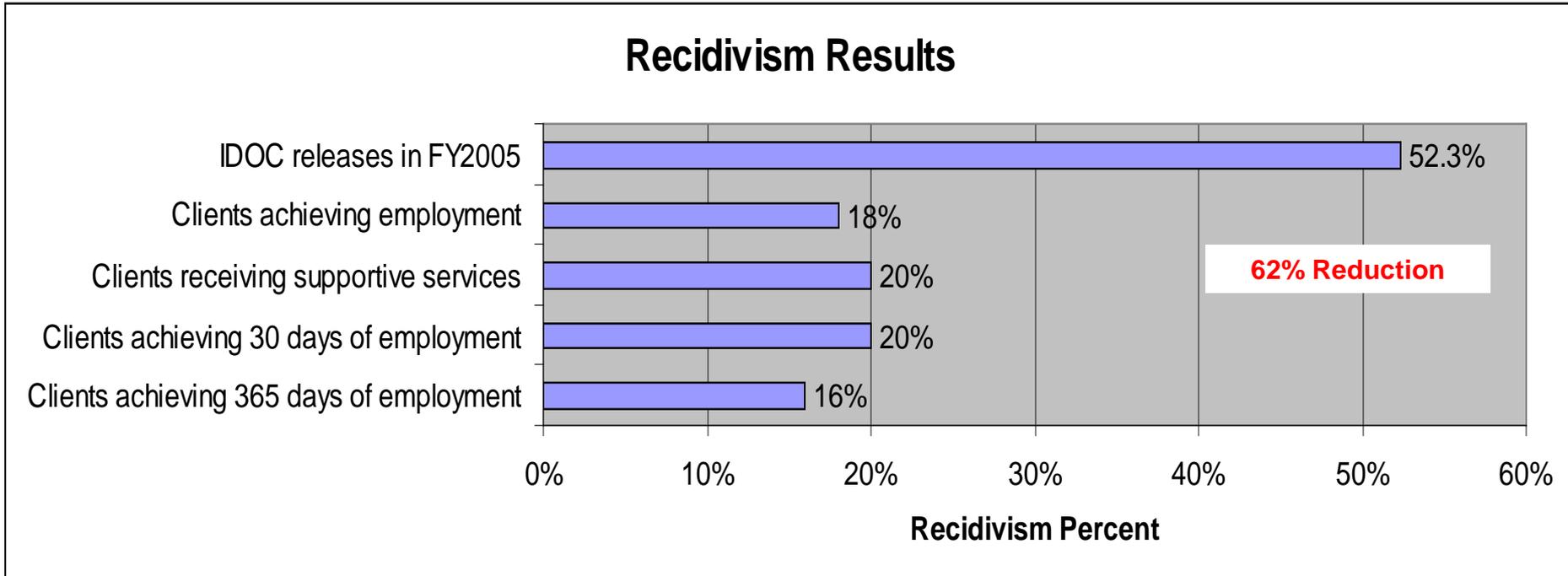


Safer is at the cross-section of four different arenas. Our ability to bring all of the stakeholders to the table is a crucial component to being able to address and counteract some of the major reentry and reintegration challenges.

3-Year Recidivism Results

Services Overall

Recidivism rate for those who were re-incarcerated after services were provided
Safer services were provided for 8,157 individuals in 2005



Policy Implications & What Works

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Safer's Policy Work

Safer bases its interest in and commitment to this area of work on the recognition that a variety of policy and legislative obstacles exist that obstruct the successful return of people with criminal records to their communities. Safer has come to understand that policies such as these may unwittingly encourage recidivism and reduce opportunities for self-sufficiency.



The Illinois Disproportionate Justice Impact Commission

Studied not only the extent of the harm caused to minority communities in Illinois, but also presents recommendations for legislative, policy, and practice changes. **Key recommendations to emerge:**

- ✓ Liability for Improper Use of Arrests Not Resulting in Convictions
- ✓ Automatic Expungement and Sealing
- ✓ Community Enterprise

Key Chicago Hiring Policies

2007 City of Chicago Hiring Standards (Ban/Move the Box)

- Employment policy for individuals who have a criminal conviction record seeks to balance the need to more effectively integrate persons with criminal histories back into society as productive citizens with sound business practices
- Application forms no longer require applicants to disclose convictions
- Criminal conviction history is investigated only after the applicant has been determined to meet eligibility requirements and is actively being considered for hire
- If the investigation reveals a criminal conviction, and the applicant was truthful in responding to the questionnaire, the City will utilize a case-by-case approach based on a number of factors.

2010 Chicago Public School Hiring Standards

- The Illinois School Code prohibits certain people with criminal records from working in public schools
- The Chicago Public Schools created new rules to recognize the Certificate of Good Conduct to waive the employment barrier and give people with records the chance to be hired, but the school board has the final say
- Eligibility Criteria:
 - ✓ conviction must be a misdemeanor or lower grade felony
 - ✓ must be at least seven (7) years old
 - ✓ no subsequent convictions
 - ✓ Certificate of Good Conduct issued by an Illinois court

Illinois Certificates: Relief of Disability and Good Conduct

Enacted in January 2004 with the intent to decrease barriers to employment in 15 licensed/certified occupations, for individuals who have no more than one non-violent felony conviction. Subsequent legislative expansions have increased the number of licensed/certified occupations to 27, for people with no more than two felony convictions.

- ✓ Athletic trainer
- ✓ Barber, cosmetologist, esthetician, and nail technician
- ✓ Professional boxer
- ✓ Certified shorthand reporter
- ✓ Interior designer
- ✓ Professional land surveyor
- ✓ Landscape architect
- ✓ Marriage and family therapist
- ✓ Professional counselor/clinical professional counselor
- ✓ Real estate agent
- ✓ Roofer
- ✓ Animal welfare inspector
- ✓ Boiler and pressure vessel repairer
- ✓ Farm labor contractor
- ✓ Employment agency counselor
- ✓ Professional engineering
- ✓ Electrologist
- ✓ Water well and pump installation contractor
- ✓ Auction License
- ✓ Architecture Practice
- ✓ Dietetic and Nutrition Services
- ✓ Environmental Health Practitioner
- ✓ Funeral Directing and Embalming
- ✓ Land Sales
- ✓ Professional Geology
- ✓ Public Accountant
- ✓ Structural Engineering

Certificates vs. Expungement

Certificates

- ✓ Available for individuals with no more than two non-violent felony convictions
- ✓ Relieves an employer of civil or criminal liability for an act or omission by the person to whom the certificate was issued
- ✓ Whether one is considered sufficiently "rehabilitated" – is a subjective criteria which can create potential problems and an undefined timeline or set of obligations

Expungement

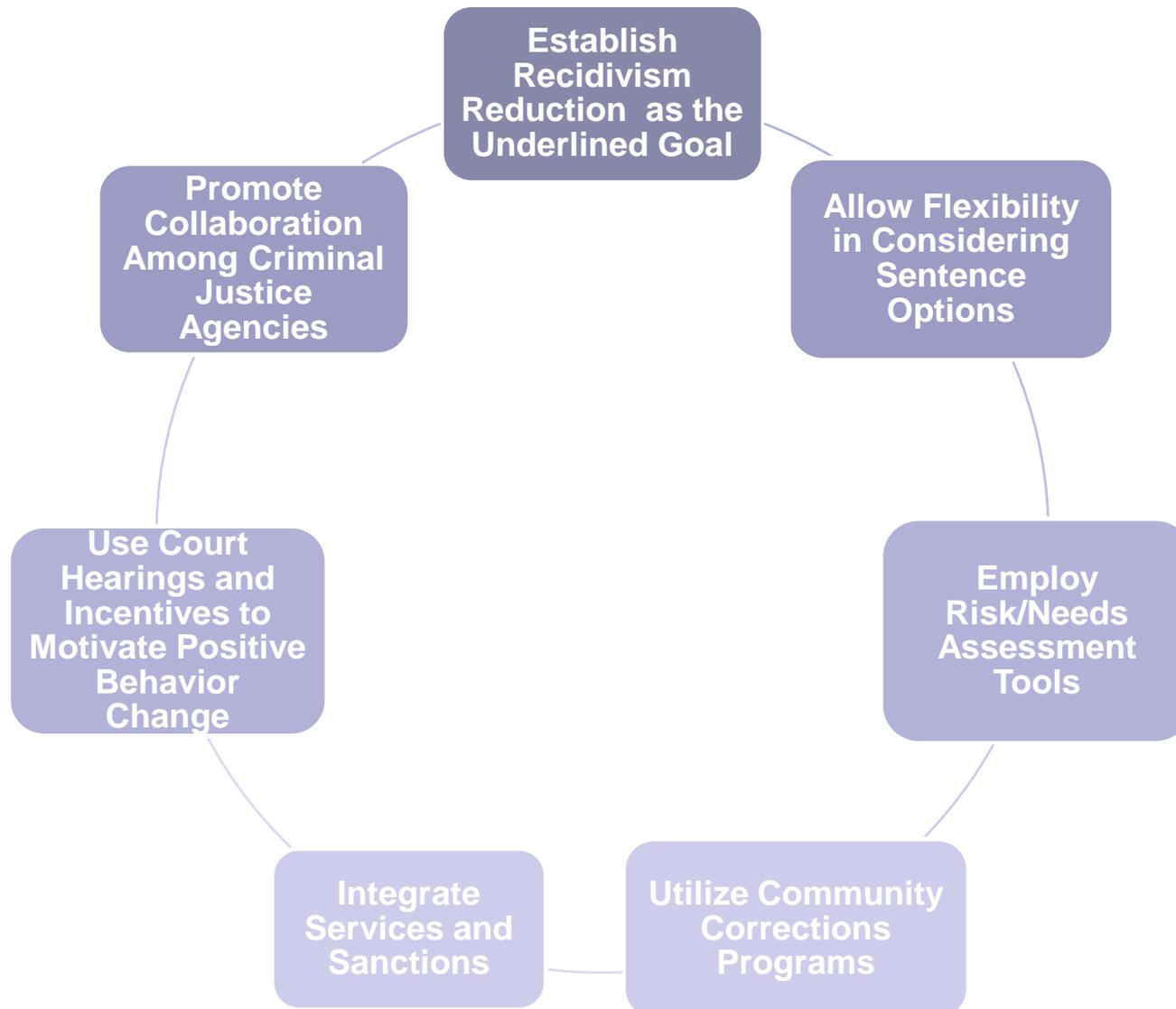
- ✓ Only for those who have never been convicted as an adult in any state
- ✓ There are waiting periods set forth in the statute that must be met; the defined amount of years depends upon the type of crime the person is attempting to expunge
- ✓ Dictated by legislative or statutory guidelines, not judicial discretion which allows the judge to take into account all the facts of the case and make a fully informed decision

Takeaways (Recommendations)

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Diversion Programs Are Key To Successful Reentry



Collaboration Must Occur Between all Government Agencies and Community-Based Organizations

The Expenses associated with incarceration extend beyond the \$25,000 annual expenditure per state prison inmate.

In Eric Cadora's Justice Mapping Project, it was discovered that when accounting for costs of incarceration, public safety and community corrections funding, resulting health and human service costs, etc, states can end up spending millions of dollars just to support one city block annually.

By working together and focusing on high-risk destabilized neighborhoods, government agencies can combine a number of targeted interventions and cut duplicated costs.

Partnerships between government and community-based organizations can also cut costs and allow for tailored intervention strategies and a continuum of care from prison to community.

Appropriate Education and Training of Inmates is Essential

People should be trained for the jobs that are there for them both now and in the future.

There must be more focus on the development of soft skills and life skills which will better position people for better opportunities.

Training should be for job opportunities that allow for livable wage earnings.

Recognize that a number of people incarcerated have mental health issues and learning disabilities and as a result learn and process information differently.

Partnerships with community colleges play a critical role in successful re-entry.

Performance Measures and Indicators of Success Should be Re-evaluated From Top to Bottom

Focused research should be done on how implemented policies on various levels play out in practice.

Rewards and incentives for criminal justice workers should be based around positive outcomes – i.e. successful re-entry, low recidivism rates.

Additional Funding for states and counties for corrections/public safety should be tied to the implementation of DMC reduction and/or re-entry plans and positive results.

Additional Considerations

- ✓ Utilize integrated risk assessment tools from pre-sentencing all the way through release, monitor the development of individuals throughout the process.
- ✓ Do a portfolio of each inmate - implement holistic and comprehensive re-entry plans that are tailored to the needs of the individual.
- ✓ Involve and engage the families of individuals with criminal records and community stakeholders.
- ✓ Do a state by state/county by county cost analysis of the price of implementing re-entry programs versus the repercussions of not implementing such programs.
- ✓ Examine further the role of specialty courts and the pros and cons.

We At Safer Thank You For Your Time And Commitment To This Important Work!

