



## The Multi-site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative

### Evaluation Design Overview

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In 2003, the US DOJ, DOL, ED, DHUD, and DHHS funded 69 grantees to implement reentry programs for prisoners. The SVORI funding supports 89 programs nationwide that are currently being evaluated by RTI International and the Urban Institute.

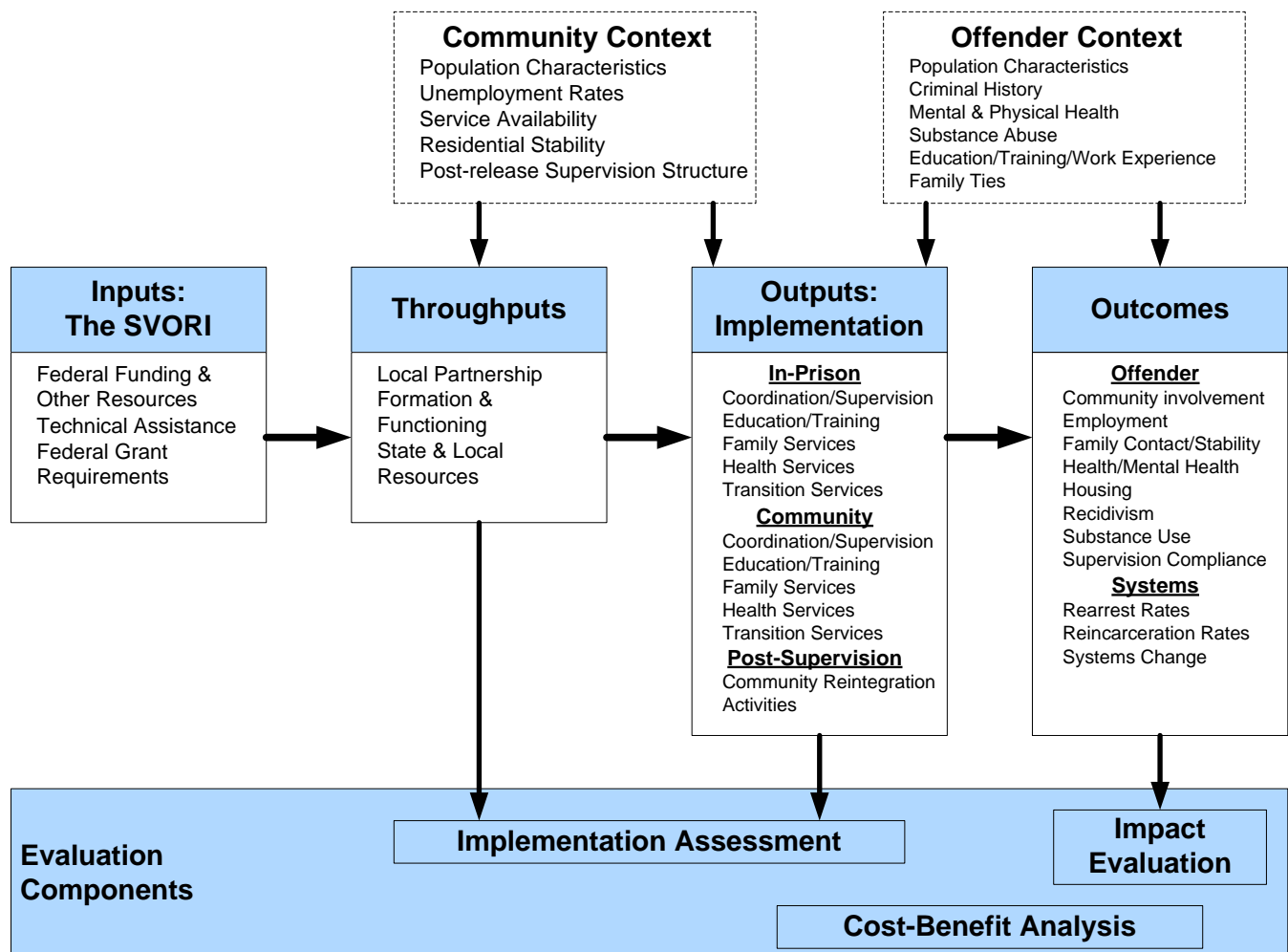
The Multi-Site Evaluation team provides frequent, brief, and practical information on SVORI programs and interim evaluation findings through our *Reentry Research in Action* (RRIA) series of topical briefs. In this brief, we describe the SVORI Multi-Site Evaluation.

The SVORI multi-site evaluation began in May 2004, after the completion of a one-year evaluation design and planning period. The programmatic intervention logic model, which forms the foundation for the evaluation framework, is shown in Figure 1.

The model begins by first isolating the key factors necessary to implement SVORI in each site: SVORI funding, technical assistance (TA) and requirements (*inputs*). These, in combination with local resources in the sites (*throughputs*), yield a set of services and programming (*outputs*) that is expected to improve

both the *outcomes* for SVORI participants and the *coordination* among the state and local systems that provide these services. Community and individual participant characteristics influence these throughputs, outputs, and outcomes.

**Figure 1. SVORI Logic Model and Evaluation Framework**



The SVORI evaluation’s goal is to determine whether the selected programs have accomplished the overall goal of the Initiative—increasing public safety by reducing recidivism among the populations served by the program—and determine the relative costs and benefits of the program. The evaluation has been designed to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent did SVORI lead to more coordinated and integrated services among partner agencies?
- To what extent did SVORI participants receive more individualized and comprehensive services than comparable, non-SVORI offenders?
- To what extent did reentry participants demonstrate better recidivism, employment, health, and personal functioning outcomes than comparable, non-SVORI offenders?
- To what extent did the benefits derived from SVORI programming exceed the costs?

To address these questions, the SVORI evaluation includes an implementation assessment, an impact evaluation, and a cost-benefit component.

### Implementation Assessment

The implementation assessment is characterizing all 89 SVORI programs (69 grantees) and addresses the extent to which these programs increase access to services and promote systems change. The primary source of data for the implementation assessment is three surveys of the SVORI program directors. These surveys are mailed to the program directors. Completed surveys are reviewed by the evaluation team and a follow-up telephone conversation is conducted with each program director to review the completed instrument and clarify ambiguous responses.

The SVORI programs are not based on a single program model. The implementation assessment component is identifying the program characteristics and components implemented by each site.

Data from these surveys characterize the individual programs, providing information on the target population(s), program elements, timing of programs and services, agencies participating in SVORI, and degree of coordination among agencies. The first round of data was collected in the fall of 2003 and was used to produce the *National Portrait of SVORI*. A second survey was sent to the program directors in early 2005, and has been used to develop a variety of *Reentry Research in Action* topical briefs. A third survey will be sent in mid-2006 and will focus on issues related to sustainability, ways in which SVORI activities were successful, and lessons learned.

In addition to the program director surveys, which generate descriptive data for all 89 SVORI programs, two rounds of site visits have been conducted with the subset of 16 programs included in the impact evaluation (described below). The impact site visits generate detailed information from a variety of key stakeholders involved in SVORI (including line staff, supervisors, and top administrators from the pre- and post-release supervision agencies, service provider agencies, and other key partners), enabling the evaluation team to characterize in detail program implementation, inter-agency collaboration, and sustainability. A third site visit will be conducted during the summer and fall of 2006.

### Impact Evaluation

The impact evaluation will assess offender outcomes along three dimensions:

**Self Sufficiency**

- Employment
- Housing
- Family
- Community involvement

**Health**

- Substance use
- Physical health
- Mental health

**Criminality**

- Supervision compliance
- Recidivism (re-offending, rearrest, reincarceration)

The impact evaluation will assess the effectiveness of SVORI by comparing key outcomes for those who participate in SVORI programming with comparable individuals not participating in SVORI. This evaluation component is based on a longitudinal study of adult male, adult female, and juvenile male returning prisoners in a subset of sites. The data collection consists of four in-person interviews (1 month prior to release and 3, 9, and 15 months following release) and two drug tests with offenders. In addition, the impact evaluation will use administrative data from state correctional agencies and law enforcement to examine rearrest and reincarceration outcomes.

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Sixteen programs in 14 states are included in the impact evaluation. Six criteria were used to select sites for inclusion in the impact evaluation: (1) the program has clearly defined elements and goals; (2) the program is fully implemented; (3) the program target population is accessible and of sufficient size; (4) an appropriate comparison population is available and accessible for inclusion in the study; (5) administrative data are of good quality and available for the evaluation; and (6) the program is amenable and able to participate in the evaluation.

The final set of “impact sites” shown in Table 1 includes a set of programs that are diverse in approach and geographically distributed. The adult sites are in states that, at yearend 2003, incarcerated 20% of all adult state prisoners and supervised 25% of all adult state parolees in the U.S.

**Table 1. SVORI Impact Evaluation Sites**

State	Grantee	Focus of Impact Evaluation
CO	Colorado Department of Corrections	Juveniles
FL	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice	Juveniles (Dade County)
IA	Iowa Department of Corrections	Adults
IN	Indiana Department of Corrections	Adults
KS	Kansas Department of Corrections	Adults
KS	Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority	Juveniles
ME	Maine Department of Corrections	Adults
MD	Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services	Adults
MO	Missouri Department of Corrections	Adults
NV	Nevada Department of Corrections	Adults
OH	Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections	Adults
OK	Oklahoma Department of Corrections	Adults
PA	Pennsylvania Department of Corrections	Adults
SC	South Carolina Department of Corrections	Adults
SC	South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice	Juveniles
WA	Washington State Department of Corrections	Adults (King and Pierce Counties)

A site-specific study design was developed for each impact site. The design uses random assignment in two sites. In the remaining sites, comparison groups were developed by isolating the criteria that local site staff use to identify individuals eligible for enrollment in their SVORI program (these include factors such as age, criminal history, risk level, post-release supervision, transfer to pre-release facilities, or county of release). Where possible, the comparison subjects came from the same pre-release facilities and were returning to the same post-release geographical areas as the SVORI participants. In some instances, comparison offenders were identified as those who met all eligibility criteria except pre- or post-release geographical parameters. When this occurred, we then selected offenders from pre-release facilities that were comparable to facilities in which SVORI was available or offenders from “SVORI” facilities that were returning to a different but similar geographical area. Eligible respondents (both SVORI and comparison) were identified on a monthly basis during a 17-month baseline interviewing period (July 2004 through November 2005).

Preliminary analyses of data from 1500 baseline interviews identified few differences between the SVORI and comparison groups. We are beginning to examine the final baseline data now to identify any differences between the groups, overall and at the site level. Our analytic approach to the outcome analyses will include methods designed to control for differences between groups.

No compensation was provided for the baseline interviews (refusal rates were 8%). For interviews conducted in the community, respondents are paid \$35 for the 3-month interview and \$40 for the 9-month interview. At the fifteen-month interview, respondents are paid \$50 plus an additional \$50 if they have completed all four interviews. An additional compensation of \$15 is provided if the respondent agreed to an oral swab drug test.

**Baseline interviews** were conducted from July 2005 through November 2005 in about 150 prisons and juvenile detention facilities across the country. The interviews were conducted in private settings by experienced RTI field interviewers using computer assisted personal interviewing. Baseline interviews were conducted approximately one month prior to release and were designed to obtain data on the respondents' experiences and services received since admission to prison, as well as to document the respondents' post-release plans.

**Follow-up interviews** are conducted at three, nine, and fifteen months following release. The follow-up interviews are conducted in the community or, for those reincarcerated, in prison or jail (if possible). The interviews last approximately 1.5 hours and cover topics such as housing, employment, education, family, peer relationships, community involvement, physical and mental health, substance use, crime and delinquency, supervision, service needs, and service receipt. Oral swab drug tests are conducted in conjunction with the 3- and 15-month interviews.

Analysis plans take into account the quasi-experimental nature of the design (in all but the two random assignment sites). Because the SVORI and comparison groups are not randomly selected in all sites, the analyses will address the issue of selection bias. Our primary strategies for handling selection bias will be the use of propensity models and fixed-effects models that will take advantage of our longitudinal design. Analyses of the interview, oral swab drug test, and administrative data will focus on differences in intermediate and long-term outcomes between SVORI and comparison offenders. In addition to individual-level factors, we will include programmatic dimensions and other site-level factors that might affect the release context in our analytic models.

### Economic Component

The economic analysis is intended to determine the return on the SVORI investment, and will include both a cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis. A subset of the impact sites has been selected to study the relative costs and benefits of SVORI. This component will compare the total costs of providing services and programming to SVORI participants with the costs of providing services to the comparison subjects.

The cost-benefit/cost-effectiveness component includes the following subset of impact programs:

- Florida Juvenile Program
- Iowa Adult Program
- Maryland Adult Program
- Ohio Adult Program
- Pennsylvania Adult Program
- South Carolina Adult and Juvenile Programs

### Evaluation Timeline

The final round of program director surveys will be conducted in the spring of 2006 and will focus on sustainability. Findings from these surveys are posted periodically to <[www.svori-evaluation.org](http://www.svori-evaluation.org)>.

Baseline interviewing has been completed; we are continuing the follow-up interviews. The three-month interview data collection will be completed in May 2006. The nine-month interviews will be conducted through December 2006, and the fifteen-month interviews will be completed in April 2007. Initial results based on data from the three-month follow-up offender interviews will be available in late 2006.

#### Multi-site Evaluation of SVORI Principal Investigators

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