

Final Report on the Serious Offender Accountability Restoration (SOAR) Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the prison population has expanded dramatically since the 1970s, so has the number of offenders released from prison. The growing number of prisoners returning home, coupled with evidence indicating that roughly two-thirds recidivate within three years, led to increased recognition that offender reentry is one of the most pressing issues facing criminal justice today. Emerging from this wellspring of concern was the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI), a large-scale program providing \$100 million in funding to community-level reentry projects across the country. Created in 2003 by the Departments of Justice, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services, SVORI has served 69 grantees at 89 different sites in the United States.

In 2003, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) was selected as one of the 69 grantees and was awarded a \$2 million grant to implement the Serious Offender Accountability Restoration (SOAR) project in Hennepin County. Put into operation in July 2003 by the DOC, Hennepin County, and selected community service providers (RESOURCE, Federal F.O.R.U.M., and BIHA), Project SOAR was designed to be a multi-faceted intervention that addressed the major challenges associated with prisoner reentry, particularly offenders' employment, housing, and chemical and mental health needs. The target population consisted of offenders incarcerated in a Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF) between the ages of 16 and 34 who were returning to Hennepin County following their release from prison. During the three years Project SOAR was in operation, a total of 240 offenders (208 adults and 32 juveniles) participated in the program.

This report presents the findings from both a process and outcome evaluation of Project SOAR. The DOC contracted with the Council on Crime and Justice (CCJ) to conduct the process evaluation, which examined how well the actual implementation of Project SOAR compared with its original design. In addition, to gain a more detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Project SOAR, the CCJ interviewed 98 program participants, 45 social support individuals, 37 stakeholders, and 12 core partners. The outcome evaluation, on the other hand, which was conducted by the DOC, examined whether Project SOAR had an impact on recidivism. An experimental design was used to compare rates of recidivism, which was defined as a felony reconviction and as a reincarceration for a new crime, between SOAR participants and a control group of offenders who did not participate in SOAR.

Process Evaluation Main Findings

Proposed vs. Actual Implementation

- The actual implementation of Project SOAR differed from the original design in several significant ways.

- Although faith-based services and Circles of Support (i.e., restorative justice services) were originally conceived as playing a major part in Project SOAR, neither one was fully implemented.
- Contrary to the proposed design, chemical dependency and mental health services were not provided until six months before the end of the project. Even when these services were available, the findings suggest that few participants took advantage of them.

Core Partner Interviews

- There were five main partners in the implementation of Project SOAR: the DOC, Hennepin County, RESOURCE, Federal F.O.R.U.M., and BIHA.
- Results from the interviews suggest there was tension among the three community partners, due primarily to the lack of clearly-defined roles and responsibilities.
- The core partners interviewed believed that SOAR's main weaknesses were a lack of leadership, accountability, and coordination between the agencies involved.
- The core partners viewed the community resource coordinators (CRCs) as one of the main strengths of SOAR.

Stakeholder Interviews

- Stakeholders consisted of individuals who were involved with Project SOAR, including institutional caseworkers, supervision agents, and direct service providers.
- Stakeholders reported that both the quantity and quality of services provided varied significantly among the CRCs.
- The results suggest that communication between CRCs and supervision agents was often strained, particularly with respect to prerelease plans for offenders.
- The stakeholders interviewed identified a number of weaknesses. In general, they believed that: (1) SOAR did not begin early enough in the institution (i.e., 6 months prior to release instead of 3 or 4 months), (2) SOAR was unable to meet offender's long-term employment and housing needs, (3) services were inconsistently provided to offenders, (4) there was an overall lack of communication, and (5) SOAR's abrupt end had an adverse impact on offenders.
- SOAR's strengths, according to the stakeholders interviewed, were that it was a comprehensive, multi-faceted intervention; it provided for offender's basic needs; it had a positive initial impact in helping alleviate offender's stress; and it put participants in contact with individuals who could relate to their experiences.

Social Support Interviews

- Social support individuals consisted of friends and family members of the participants who were interviewed by the CCJ.
- The vast majority of social support individuals interviewed were associated with SOAR offenders who were not reincarcerated at the time of the interview. Few of the reincarcerated SOAR offenders could identify social support individuals who could be interviewed.

- The weaknesses identified by the social support individuals related primarily to SOAR's perceived inability to help offenders regarding long-term housing and employment opportunities.
- Less than half of the social support individuals were able to discuss SOAR's strengths, which included mentoring, guidance, and the provision of material needs.

Participant Interviews

- Because offenders who participated in SOAR were often difficult to locate, 68 (69 percent) of the 98 participants interviewed were either in jail or prison (either for a technical violation or a new crime) at the time of the interview.
- The 72-hour plan set up for offenders immediately following their release was viewed positively by most participants.
- Offenders' perceptions of SOAR varied significantly on the basis of the CRC assigned to them.
- Although few of the offenders received services pertaining to faith-based support, Circles of Support, and mentoring, the majority found them very helpful.
- Offenders in the community at the time of the interview, as opposed to in jail or prison, were more likely to have received faith-based support and assistance in obtaining a GED.
- Offenders found that the provision of basic needs, housing, and employment assistance to be the most helpful aspects of SOAR.
- Few of the offenders could identify any weaknesses with SOAR. Of those that did, however, they usually mentioned the abrupt end of the project, inconsistencies among CRCs, and the lack of assistance in locating educational opportunities.

Outcome Evaluation Main Findings

- Both the SOAR (N = 208) and control (N = 121) groups consisted mainly of African American males who were in their 20s at the time of release.
- Despite the random assignment of offenders into experimental and control groups, SOAR participants had significantly greater criminal histories than offenders in the control group.
- The average follow-up period was 23 months, with a minimum of 8 months and a maximum of 36.
- SOAR participants had higher recidivism rates than the control group:
 - 26 percent were reconvicted of a felony compared to 20 percent in the control group.
 - 18 percent were reincarcerated for a new crime compared to 13 percent in the control group.
- Results from the statistical analyses reveal, however, that the difference in recidivism rates between the SOAR and control groups was not statistically significant.

- The higher recidivism rates for SOAR offenders are likely due to the fact that they were more likely to have a prior felony conviction, which was a significant predictor of both types of recidivism (reconvictions and reincarcerations).

Recommendations

The findings from the process and outcome evaluations yielded the following recommendations:

1. *Create long-term employment and housing opportunities:* Future reentry efforts should emphasize not only short-term transitional needs, but also long-term employment and housing opportunities, particularly in the areas of independent living skills training, job skills training (including trade skills and formal education), and the formation of a community housing partnership in order to provide suitable housing with permanency options.
2. *Extend the Length of Reentry Interventions:* To maximize the benefits that might be derived from a reentry program, the intervention should begin at least six months prior to an offender's release and continue for at least the same amount of time, but preferably longer (e.g., 12 months), after his or her release from prison. Extending the duration of the program is consistent not only with the literature regarding effective prisoner reentry, but also with the concept of providing a continuum of care for offenders as they transition from the institution to the community.
3. *Expand Social Support Involvement:* Given the apparent importance of social support individuals in helping offenders make a successful transition, future reentry efforts should focus on identifying and strengthening offenders' ties to social support individuals prior to their release from prison.
4. *Implement Clear Communication Expectations:* Considering the lack of clear understanding of SOAR by nearly everyone involved in the project, future reentry efforts should concentrate on the dissemination of pertinent information to all interested parties, including core partners, stakeholders, participants, and their social support individuals.
5. *Provide Leadership:* To foster greater accountability and direction, future reentry programs should designate an individual responsible for the overall operations of the project.
6. *Develop Clear Expectations for Roles and Responsibilities:* To clarify responsibilities and expected outcomes, formal contracts should be developed with all service providers.
7. *Develop Service Protocols:* Reentry leadership should develop procedures that create a more uniform distribution of services and resources for offenders.

8. *Increased Rigor of Program Evaluations:* Evaluations of reentry programs should measure and more closely examine the type and extent of services actually provided to offenders in order to clarify the impact on recidivism.

BACKGROUND

With over one million Americans incarcerated in federal and state prisons, the growth of the inmate population in the United States has reached staggering proportions. State prison populations alone have almost doubled since 1990 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003). In addition to the costs associated with managing this growing number of inmates, the reality is that more than half a million are released into the community each year (Travis, 2000). In fact, an average of 1,700 prisoners was released from federal or state prisons daily during 2002 (Urban Institute, 2004). Parole populations also grew at a significant rate during this period, as nearly 80 percent of inmates are released to some form of parole supervision (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003).

In light of the growing number of inmates reentering the community, the successful transition from prison to community is of critical importance to this country. Recent national studies indicate that over half of those released will be reincarcerated within three years (Urban Institute, 2004). With these factors in mind, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs developed the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) in collaboration with the Departments of Justice, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services. Designed to be a comprehensive effort that focuses on serious, high-risk adult and juvenile offender populations, SVORI has provided funding to develop, implement, enhance, and evaluate reentry strategies that will increase public safety by reducing the extent to which offenders return to crime. Overall, SVORI has provided roughly \$100 million in funding to 69 grantees at 89 sites across the country (Department of Justice, 2002).

Minnesota has long had one of the lowest incarceration rates (per 100,000 residents) in the country. In 2004, for example, Minnesota's incarceration rate was 171, well below the national average of 486. Like the rest of the nation, however, the state has seen its prison population increase dramatically over the last several decades. Indeed, the size of the prison population more than quadrupled over the last 25 years. Since 1989, it has grown by 189 percent, which exceeds the 134 percent growth in the state and federal prison population nationally (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2006). Further, the most recent data suggest that Minnesota's prison population has continued to climb. During calendar year 2004, Minnesota had the nation's highest percentage increase at 11.4 percent, eclipsing Idaho's rate of 11.1 percent (Harrison and Beck, 2005).

As the number of offenders entering Minnesota's correctional facilities has increased, so has the number of inmates getting released from these facilities. In an effort to address the rising number of inmate releasees needing successful reintegration into the community, the DOC designed a reentry initiative and was later selected as one of the 69 SVORI grantees. The DOC was awarded a \$2 million grant to implement the Serious Offender Accountability Restoration (SOAR) project.

Project SOAR was intended to provide intensive services to high-risk adult and juvenile offenders leaving Minnesota correctional facilities with an emphasis on seamless and

comprehensive treatment, intensive case management, and the involvement of local communities. The project targeted offenders returning to Hennepin County between the ages of 16 and 34 who faced multiple challenges to community reentry, reintegration, and self-sufficiency. Specific programming was to be developed in cooperation with corrections professionals, community service providers, community and family members, and victim advocates.

Project SOAR included three phases: *Institutional* (assessment, prioritized treatment, trade preparation, and life skills training); *Reentry Preparation* (strength-based case planning and restorative community circles); and *Community-Based Services* (intensive housing assistance, community resource development, and service coordination). Reentry preparation and community-based services were to be provided to participants via county purchase-of-service agreements developed and administered by the Hennepin County Department of Training & Employment Assistance.

The goal of Project SOAR was to assist offenders in becoming productive, responsible, and law-abiding citizens, primarily through:

- ♦ Obtaining and retaining long-term employment;
- ♦ Maintaining stable residence;
- ♦ Successfully addressing substance abuse issues and mental health needs;
- ♦ Establishing a meaningful and supportive role in the community.

This report evaluates Project SOAR by examining how it was implemented and whether it had an impact on offender recidivism and includes the process evaluation completed by the Council on Crime and Justice (CCJ). To place this evaluation within a broader context, the following section reviews the prisoner reentry literature. Next, the findings are presented for the process part of the evaluation, which analyzed the extent to which the actual implementation of the project adhered to the proposed design. Moreover, the process evaluation contains the results from interviews with those who were involved in Project SOAR—core partners, stakeholders, participants, and their social support individuals. The findings are then presented for the outcome evaluation, which examined whether Project SOAR significantly lowered recidivism among program participants. The final section of this report summarizes the results from the evaluation and concludes by offering a number of recommendations for future reentry efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW¹

A variety of programs has been developed across the country to assist offenders with transitioning back into the community. These programs have sought to reduce recidivism and the rising cost of reimprisonment. In evaluating the effectiveness of reentry programs, it is important to look at what has been tried, what has worked, and the driving philosophies behind these programs. This literature review examines the need for reentry programs, compares theories behind these programs in the United States and Canada, and profiles four specific programs that have been implemented and evaluated.

According to the literature, it is important for prisoner reentry programs to extend beyond programming to become an integral part of the overall philosophy of the justice system. A successful program starts shortly after sentencing and continues well after the release of a prisoner, encompasses all activities associated with an individual offender, and has an underlying philosophy that extends into all of those collaterally affected by crime. As Travis and Visser (2003) write,

“Certainly, the pathways of re-entry can be influenced by such factors as the prisoner’s participation in drug treatment, literacy classes, religious organization, or prison industries, but re-entry is not a result of program participation...in other words, every aspect of correctional operations and programs conceivably (and in some ways, accurately) affect the prospects of offender re-entry” (p. 2).

This suggests that a reentry program is not simply a collection of classes or services offered, but is a vast network of correctional and community resources offered to inmates prior to, and extending well beyond, release.

There is an abundance of research outlining services that should be included in prisoner reentry programs. The trend within this research suggests that successful reentry programs address basic survival needs, such as housing and employment. A California study reported that in 1997, 10 percent of the state’s parolees were homeless and an estimated 30-50 percent of parolees in urban areas (e.g., Los Angeles and San Francisco) were homeless (California Department of Corrections 1997). Furthermore, it has been shown that former prisoners who are able to obtain employment are more likely to have successful outcomes after release (Visser and Travis 2003). According to Uggen (2000), life courses such as employment may be “turning points” in the lives of offenders. It was found that “offenders who are provided even marginal employment opportunities are less likely to reoffend than those not provided such opportunities” (p. 542). Although employment is shown to be an important step in successful reintegration, the vast majority of inmates leave prison without a job and little direction on how to obtain one (Nelson and Trone 2000). Therefore, an important aspect of prisoner reentry programs is the process of assisting offenders in addressing their employment and housing needs in order to reduce recidivism.

¹ Project SOAR Literature Review compiled by the CCJ as a part of the process evaluation

Furthermore, MacKenzie and Hickman (1998) analyzed 12 rehabilitative programs offered by the State of Washington and found these additional program components to be effective in reducing recidivism:

- In-prison therapeutic communities with follow-up community treatment;
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (moral reasoning and development);
- Non-prison based sex offender treatment programs;
- Vocational education programs;
- Multi-component correctional industry programs (e.g., inmate work programs that promote work ethics); and
- Community employment programs.

While MacKenzie and Hickman are unsure about the effectiveness of some programs (e.g., life skills training programs, in-prison work programs, and halfway houses with enhanced services) due to the lack of clear evidence, they do report that increased referral, monitoring, and management in the community are ineffective at reducing recidivism. Contrary to MacKenzie and Hickman's findings, several prisoner reentry programs use referral and extensive management and show success at reducing recidivism (e.g., Project RIO and the Southside Day Reporting Center).

Other research has sought to determine the effectiveness of individual factors. Using program evaluations between 1975 and 2001, Seiter and Kadela (2003) found that programs which reduced recidivism include vocational training and work release programs, halfway houses, and drug treatment programs (intensive supervision plus aftercare). Overall, certain aspects of reentry programming, such as employment and housing services, are widely considered to be helpful, yet much debate exists concerning other facets of programming.

While the nature of reentry programming in the United States has focused on sociological factors, Canadian agencies are generally more inclined to use a psychological approach to curtail recidivism rates. For instance, Andrews et al. (1990) found that when the following principles were followed and appropriate interventions delivered, the result was a 30 percent reduction in recidivism:

- Treatment services should be behavioral in nature, interventions should employ the cognitive behavioral and social learning techniques of modeling, role playing, reinforcement, extinction, resource provision, verbal suggestions, and cognitive restructuring;
- Reinforcements in the program should be largely positive, not negative;
- Services should be intensive, lasting 3 to 12 months (depending on need) and occupying 40 to 70 percent of the offender's time during the course of the program;
- Treatment interventions should be used primarily with higher-risk offenders, targeting their criminogenic needs (dynamic risk factors for change). Less hardened or lower-risk offenders do not require intervention and may be made more criminogenic by intrusive interventions;

- The most effective strategy for discerning offender risk level is to rely not on clinical judgments but on actuarial-based assessment instruments, such as the Level of Service Inventory (LSI);
- Conducting interventions in the community, as opposed to an institutional setting, will increase treatment effectiveness;
- In terms of staffing, there is a need to match styles and modes of treatment service to the learning styles of the offender (specific responsivity). Depending on the offender's characteristics (e.g., intelligence, levels of anxiety), he or she may have different learning styles and, thus, respond more readily to some techniques than others.

Petersilia (2004) discusses both the United States and the Canadian approaches, and concludes that a combination of the two philosophies would create prisoner reentry programs that, "took place mostly in the community (as opposed to institutional settings); were intensive (at least six months long); focused on high-risk individuals; used cognitive-behavior treatment techniques; and matched therapist and program to specific learning styles and characteristics of individual offenders." Petersilia notes that individuals would also receive vocational and employment-enhancing opportunities (Petersilia 2004).

Reentry Program Profiles

It is important to evaluate prisoner reentry programs in order for the criminal justice community to be able to consistently create programs that significantly decrease recidivism. However, there is a lack of credible program evaluations. Sieter and Kadela (2003) searched published and unpublished reentry literature between 1975 and 2001. In these 25 years, when there were hundreds of implemented programs (i.e., work release, halfway houses, and job training), only nine credible evaluations were found (Sieter and Kadela 2003). Therefore, it is important for researchers and the criminal justice system to implement prisoner reentry programs with future evaluation and comparison components included. It is only with this crucial step that policy makers and practitioners can determine the effectiveness of reentry programs and contribute to the successful decline of recidivism in the United States.

While many reentry programs have been implemented within the United States, four specific programs are profiled below. The first three programs have been shown to be successful at reducing recidivism while the last was surprisingly unsuccessful. These four programs were chosen because of their inherent differences from one another. Project Rio is a massive statewide effort; the Baton Rouge Post Release Skills Program was on a much smaller scale and was terminated after a year (similar to Project SOAR); the Chicago Day Reporting Center is a mandatory program with high levels of monitoring; and, finally, Project Greenlight was a short-term, low-cost intervention strategy that was unsuccessful at reducing recidivism.

Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders)

Project RIO is a state-funded and locally-controlled effort that was first implemented in 1985 to reduce recidivism among offenders in Texas. Upon entry into a correctional institution, inmates are provided with a brochure describing Project RIO and its benefits. Programs within the institution (e.g., vocational and technical training) require participants to officially enroll in the project. If inmates choose not to participate in the program, they are encouraged to enroll at a later date if they become interested (Allender 2004).

Project RIO's services are available to offenders well before their projected release dates. Adult offenders under 35 years of age are offered services 36 months prior to their projected release date while older offenders are offered services 18 months prior. It should be noted that Project RIO deals with juveniles as well. Prior to release, RIO promotes vocational and academic preparation, refers participants to correctional unit work assignments, creates reentry plans, offers life and cognitive skills training, and assists participants in obtaining the necessary documents needed for employment (Finn 1998).

The goal of Project RIO is to provide employment as quickly as possible. If participants require more services to compete in the labor market, they are referred to various government-funded programs. Program officials also provide assistance in obtaining community services, medical care, housing, and other needed resources. Staff members monitor the performance and behavior of the individual in order to curtail problems before they reached criminal status (Allender 2004).

It should be noted that Project RIO is an extensive program with more than 100 staff members in 62 offices spread throughout every county in Texas. Additionally, RIO provides services to nearly 16,000 parolees annually (Finn 1998). While it may not be feasible to implement a program to the same degree as RIO, its concept of providing assistance early in prison and creating a goal of employment has been shown to be effective. In 1992, Texas A&M University evaluated Project RIO and found participants fared better (i.e., experienced lower rates of recidivism) than those who did not participate. In fact, 48 percent of violent offender participants reoffended while the percentage of recidivism for those who did not participate was 57 percent. The differences between the average-risk offenders who participated and those who did not were 30 and 32 percent, respectively, and for the low-risk offenders, 16 versus 19 percent (Allender 2004).

Although Project RIO is an extensive program, it shows an important similarity with Project SOAR. Project SOAR began its services during participants' incarceration and offered comprehensive services, exhibiting similarities with RIO's early in-prison intervention.

Baton Rouge Post Release Skills Program (PRSP)

In Baton Rouge, the Louisiana Department of Corrections and the Behavioral Institute Incorporated (BI) teamed up to design a prisoner reentry program. According to an

evaluation by BI (2003), PRSP addressed the post-release cognitive behavior of parolees, provided substance abuse monitoring and treatment, and maintained behavioral accountability. Additionally, PRSP gave participants access to basic education (GED, Computer Learning Lab), substance abuse treatment, cognitive restructuring of criminal thoughts, career planning (including job skills, job search and retention classes), family-oriented classes, drug testing, electronic monitoring, and case management. The program also set up a “one-stop shop” for parolees in response to transportation difficulties and time availability issues. PRSP served 305 parolees, and it generally took participants between 8-9 months to complete the requirements for successful reentry. After one year of operation, PRSP ceased operations due to lack of funding.

The program’s success was measured according to the recidivism rates of those who either completed or almost completed the PRSP program requirements (N=37). The overall recidivism rate of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections in 2002 and 2003 was 30.9 and 14.4 percent (2004). Compared to these numbers, the total number of PRSP completers’ recidivism rate was 8 percent (BI Inc. 2003). This shows a decrease in the recidivism rates of PRSP “graduates.” Furthermore, researchers estimate that if the PRSP had continued operations (with 200 graduates), the total cost savings to Louisiana would have been \$1,158,200. This suggests that not only can programs reduce recidivism, but that this reduction, when applied to a cost/benefit analysis, would provide significant financial savings.

Caution must be taken regarding the accuracy of the recidivism rate reduction shown by PRSP since it was implemented for only one year and the graduate population was so small. This may also prove to be similar to Project SOAR in that measuring a program’s effectiveness is difficult when it is operational for a short period of time.

Southside Day Reporting Center Reentry Program (DRC)

In 1998, the Illinois Department of Corrections opened a new program for high-risk parolees in Chicago, called the Southside Day Reporting Center Re-entry Program (DRC). According to the Behavioral Institute Incorporated (BI) (2006), parolees assigned to the DRC must report within 24 hours of release from prison. Participants start at the most intensive level of supervision and work their way to the least intensive fourth level by showing successful completion of various goals. Parolees undergo an extensive assessment upon release to determine the level of supervision, treatment, and educational plans necessary.

Among the programs offered are substance abuse education, cognitive thinking, employment skills training, and parenting/family reintegration support groups. The DRC also helps parolees connect to community-based service providers in order to meet requirements for their individual plans. The DRC has shown through its internal evaluation that their program reduces recidivism among participants. Thirty-five percent of the parolees admitted to the program were reincarcerated compared to 52 percent in the control group (BI Inc. 2006). While some reentry programs aimed at reducing recidivism are offered on a volunteer basis (similar to Project SOAR), the DRC is made mandatory to selected individuals.

Project Greenlight

While Project Rio, PRSP, and DRC show a decline in the recidivism rate, Project Greenlight, a 60-day prison-based, reentry program for men, has become notorious to the criminal justice community for what not to do. According to Brown and Campbell (2005), Project Greenlight was designed to be as affordable and comprehensive as possible. The program included job training, substance abuse prevention, practical skills, cognitive skills, family reunification, homelessness prevention, and a release plan created jointly by program staff and inmates. Brown and Campbell (2005) reported that Vera Institute researchers found “arrest rates among Greenlight’s 348 participants were significantly higher than those of two different comparison groups” (p. 1). Furthermore, a review by the U.S. Justice Department confirmed that neither research design nor execution could account for the disappointing results (Brown and Campbell, 2005).

While this program raises many unanswered questions concerning the higher recidivism rate exhibited by participants, strong cautions are raised regarding the implementation of a *short-term* institutional-based program. It is apparent that other programs, such as Project Rio, create closer bonds within the community. In addition, Project Greenlight was supposed to be a very affordable program. However, cost/benefit analyses have shown that although programs may be costly, the reduced recidivism may result in cost savings. The major lesson learned from Project Greenlight is “that trying to save money by compacting re-entry programming into a shorter time frame may be counterproductive...a small dose of re-entry programming may be worse than no programming at all” (Brown and Campbell, 2005).

Conclusion

The three successful programs mentioned above—Project Rio, PRSP, and the DRC—have several traits in common. First, they are very intense long-term programs (as long as nine months) compared to the unsuccessful Project Greenlight, which lasts for only 60 days. In addition, these programs focused on cognitive thinking, basic survival needs, and community interactions (similar to SOAR). Although Project Greenlight focused a *short* time on cognitive thinking and basic survival needs, the program did not include community involvement, as it took place in a prison.

In general, more evaluations of programming should be done in order to accurately assess what combination of programming is the most effective. In order to show the diversity of available programming, four very different programs were discussed, each program offering services in education, housing, employment, and cognitive behavioral management. Other more unique techniques included early in-prison interventions, mandatory participation, vocational training, release planning, family-oriented programming, and substance abuse classes. With the prison population increasing steadily, it is imperative to develop effective prisoner reentry programs to reduce recidivism. This reduction will not only create safer communities, but it has also been shown that these programs lower public expenditures by effectively decreasing recidivism.

PROCESS EVALUATION

In March 2005, the DOC contracted with the CCJ to conduct a process evaluation of Project SOAR. The process evaluation included a comparison of the proposed and actual implementation as well as interviews and surveys with core partners, key stakeholders, program participants, and social support individuals. A discussion of the methodology used to carry out the process evaluation is provided below (see Appendix A for a more detailed discussion). The results of the proposed versus actual implementation comparison is presented first, followed by the findings from the interviews with the four main groups involved with SOAR—core partners, key stakeholders, program participants, and social support individuals.

Methods

The evaluation team interviewed four main groups to evaluate the effectiveness of SOAR programming, organizational structure, staff, and provider relationships. These groups include: core partners, stakeholders, participants, and family/friends of participants (i.e., social support individuals).

Survey Development

The initial surveys (for SOAR and social support participants) were created based on the proposed design for the SOAR Project. Because, however, the actual implementation of the project differed in some ways from the proposal, the DOC collaborated with the CCJ revising the survey to assess relevant information.

Interviews

Separate processes were used for interviewing the four groups as follows:

Core Partners: Twelve interviews were completed with representatives from SOAR partner agencies. This included staff members from the DOC, Hennepin County, RESOURCE, Federal F.O.R.U.M., BIHA, and one private psychologist. The evaluation team interviewed five of the 12 staff members twice. The first set of interviews (seven total) occurred during the beginning of the SOAR evaluation. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the organizational structure, original design, and actual implementation of the project.

The second set of interviews (five total) were more exploratory in nature with the purpose being to get staff members' thoughts and impressions of the SOAR project. Interviews were comprised of open-ended questions that allowed for a conversational flow. Interviewees discussed their roles and responsibilities held on the project, as well as provided suggestions for improving the project. Interviews were generally informal, although the evaluation team formed individualized survey guides based on the stakeholders' role with SOAR.

The evaluation team also observed a few bi-monthly partner meetings. The evaluation team observed interactions, discussion topics, and outcomes of the meetings. After attending the meetings, the team would individually write field notes on their observations from the meeting and write down any questions they had that would be used as either a survey or interview question. The partner meetings were analyzed to examine the effectiveness of the meetings, as well as to examine interactions between attendees. Unfortunately, as the evaluation was beginning, SOAR ended. Consequently, only a few partnership meetings were attended.

Stakeholders: Stakeholders include social service agencies and other professionals involved with the SOAR Project and participants. The DOC initially provided the evaluation team with a list of potential interviewees. These individuals were contacted to be interviewed for the study, and were also asked to provide contact information for any other individuals they thought should be included in the evaluation as stakeholders.

Thirty-seven stakeholder surveys were completed. Most interviews were conducted over the telephone and generally lasted 45 minutes. The interviews were exploratory in nature, with topics often introduced by the respondents that went beyond the set survey questions.

SOAR Participants: Locating participants for interviews proved to be difficult. Throughout the course of this evaluation, there were several efforts made to obtain participants' contact information. In total, 240 individuals participated in SOAR over the three-year implementation and, at the time of first contact for this study, the majority of participants were no longer involved with SOAR.

Several different methods were used to locate SOAR participants. In August 2005, the process evaluation team obtained the most recent contact information from RESOURCE and the DOC. At this time, the process evaluation team also met with the Community Resource Developer (CRD) to determine the best way to gain updated information on participants. It was determined that we could obtain contact information from CRCs. Unfortunately, however, SOAR's funding had ended around this time, and CRCs were no longer employed at RESOURCE.

The database used by CRCs to keep participant contact information was of limited help, however, as the information was entered into the database once they agreed to participate in SOAR, often while they were still incarcerated. Therefore, contact information in the database either included their prison address or an address where they were no longer residing, as address changes were generally not made in the database. The contact information that was received from RESOURCE included addresses but not telephone numbers.

The process evaluation team sent a letter to each participant for whom an address was available (138 participants), explaining the purpose of the evaluation, confidentiality considerations, and a request to interview them. The letter also indicated that they would be compensated for their time, and provided a telephone number for them to schedule an

interview. Over half of the letters were returned because the participant was no longer at the address. Five participants called to schedule interviews.

In September of 2005, the process evaluation team received updated information from the DOC indicating which SOAR participants were incarcerated in a DOC facility at that time, as well as information on DOC agents who may be supervising SOAR participants. The evaluation team also met with Federal F.O.R.U.M. to request current contact information, but they were unable to provide any at that time. A second round of letters was sent to the participants for whom updated contact information was obtained. Again, many of these letters were returned. Additional efforts were made to locate SOAR participants, including contacting community agencies and requesting contact information from the Hennepin County TEAMS data system.

In November 2005, the process evaluation team received an updated list of SOAR participants who had supervising agents. At that time, 59 SOAR participants were no longer on any kind of correctional supervision. Of those who were still under supervision, their agent was contacted in an effort to get current contact information on the participant. The evaluation team also contacted RESOURCE, Federal F.O.R.U.M., and BIHA staff to obtain updated participant contact information and phone numbers. Some of the community organizations stated they did not feel comfortable releasing participant contact information as they reported this might violate clients' trust. Several did, however, agree to send their own letter to the participants on behalf of the process evaluation team. In addition, Federal F.O.R.U.M and BIHA agreed to distribute similar letters.

In regard to SOAR participants' telephone numbers, a list was generated from Hennepin County TEAMS data. Approximately 137 of those numbers were disconnected or no longer valid for the participant. Internet searches were also conducted.

Additional recruitment efforts involved placing flyers at local businesses and community organizations explaining the purpose of the interviews, ensuring confidentiality, and detailing compensation for completed interviews. Specifically, fliers were distributed at Cub Foods, Rainbow Foods, Urban League in North Minneapolis, Sabathani Community Center, and Ramsey and Hennepin County Courts.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with SOAR participants at a location both the participant and interviewer reported most comfortable. If interviews were conducted in a participant's home, two interviewers would attend for safety precautions. Approximately 100 survey questions were administered, most of which were multiple-choice questions. (See Appendix B for the participant survey.) Upon completion of the interview, the participant received a \$25 cash stipend. Twenty-two interviews were conducted in the community, while 68 were conducted in correctional facilities with participants who were incarcerated at the time of the study. Due to DOC policy, participants who completed an interview at a facility did not receive a \$25 cash stipend.

Social Support Individuals: Following the completion of participant interviews, SOAR offenders were asked if they had any family or friends who were involved in their reentry and knew about their participation in SOAR. In particular, they were asked if they had family or friends that may have participated in Circles of Support or any other aspect of SOAR during the participants' transition from prison back into the community. Many of the participants reported that they did not. Thirty-seven participants provided names for family and friends to contact. The evaluation team also asked BIHA staff for referrals to family and friends that participated in Circles of Support but did not receive any information.

Forty-five Social Support interviews were completed. The interviews were conducted wherever the interviewee and interviewer were most comfortable, which was often in the individuals' homes. After the interview was complete, the interviewee received a \$20 cash stipend.

Implementation Analysis

The following description compares the conceptual design set out in the grant proposal submitted in May 2002 (and the Modified Work Plan approved in October of that same year) to the actual implementation of the project based on interviews with partners and stakeholders.

Proposed Implementation

The goal of Project SOAR was to assist offenders in becoming productive, responsible, and law-abiding citizens through: (1) obtaining and retaining long-term employment, (2) maintaining stable residence, (3) successfully addressing substance abuse issues and mental health needs, and (4) establishing a meaningful and supportive role in the community. To meet these goals, partnerships were to be formed with various system and community organizations to provide a comprehensive set of pre- and post-release services.

Originally, three counties (Hennepin, Ramsey, and St. Louis) were to participate in SOAR with \$3 million of funding for a two-year period. This changed to having one county participate, Hennepin County, with the dollar amount being the same but over a three-year period. In the summer of 2002, the DOC hired a Director of Project SOAR to manage all of the components of the project. This position was not described in the grant proposal.

Proposed Phases of the Project

As proposed, participants were to meet four criteria in order to be involved in SOAR. First, participants had to have multiple challenges, such as chemical or substance abuse, serious mental health issues, conviction for a sex offense, or be developmentally disabled. Second, the participant had to score high on the risk assessment scales (LSI-R, YLSI, or the MNSOST-R). Third, they had to be released to Hennepin County. Fourth, they had to be between the ages of 16 and 34.

The original proposal was broken down into three phases. Phase I and Phase II were to take place when the participants were still incarcerated, while Phase III was to begin as each participant was released to the community.

Phase I included assessments and programming recommendations. During this time, participants were to be given various assessments, including the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R; a tool used to predict the risk of recidivism), as well as assessments that determined chemical dependency, mental health, and educational levels. The assessment process was to begin when inmates arrived at the MCF-St. Cloud (the intake facility for all arriving inmates). The assessment process was to last for approximately three weeks. Afterward, the participants were to be transferred to an appropriate facility where their needs could best be met but would also still be close to the participant's family and their community. The intent was to have the participant's family and community serve a significant role both before and after release.

Once at their designated facility, participants were to attend a week of orientation and their first program review team (PRT) meeting. The PRT was supposed to involve the offender, his/her case manager, and other case management staff. The participant was to have at least three PRT meetings through the course of incarceration with the final meeting being 90 days before their release. In the final PRT meeting, the participant's reentry plan was to be formalized with housing, employment, and other basic needs fully addressed.

SOAR participants were to receive "priority" access to treatment services. This meant that they would receive priority for chemical and/or mental health treatment over other inmates not in SOAR. During this time, participants were also to begin receiving employment preparation services, which were to include vocational training, apprenticeship training, and opportunities to attend facility job fairs and workforce development referrals. Also, case managers were to "seek to establish therapeutic relationships with community service providers." This was to occur while the participant was still incarcerated. The hope was that these relationships and services would continue upon the participant's release to the community.

Phase II was to start 90 days prior to a participant's release from prison. At this point, community specific planning was to begin. A CRC would begin working with the participant. The CRC was to be notified by the institutional caseworker that the SOAR participant was nearing release. Next, the CRC was supposed to review the participant's case file, and then "access the release plan requirements as defined by PRT meetings, the most recent LSI-R score, and the checklist of all services recommended to be completed by the offender while incarcerated." The CRC would also develop a detailed case plan for the first 72 hours of the offender's release (which is considered a critical time period during reentry). The intent was to prepare the participant for returning to the community by addressing employment, housing, and aftercare treatment needs, as well as medical, life skills, education, and community needs. During this phase, it was also intended that the institutional case manager would work with the offender, the offender's family, a

community reentry coordinator, the offender's probation officer, and any victims (when appropriate) to develop a reentry case plan.

Phase III was intended to start when the offender was released to the community. A CRC would work with each SOAR participant to help with re-orientation in the community, as well as provide case management. The CRC was to be non-correctional based, providing a "non-justice system perspective." The intent was to hire four CRCs. One CRC would be assigned to caseloads involving 16-19 year-olds exclusively. CRC caseloads were to be limited to no more than 25 individuals. CRC duties and responsibilities were to include: assisting in the transition of offenders from prison to the community, monitoring their progress, and providing case management. Lastly, CRCs would provide job training, manage the Flex Fund allocations for the participants, maintain an electronic alert system, and approve data privacy releases. The electronic alert system includes a database that was to be used for data networking and data sharing. Those working with the participant, including family members, would be able to use the database to view the progress of the participant.

The CRCs were to assist the participants with their adherence to the case plans completed in Phases I and II. According to the Modified Work Plan, the CRC and supervised release agent were to share responsibilities concerning the participant. The Modified Work Plan states:

"The CRC will have the lead on employment and service provisions. The supervised release agent will be responsible for sanctions. All decisions are made in a team process with all of the other members."

A CRD was also to be hired. The CRD was to coordinate and build the community's capacity to receive offenders and serve as the link between the offender and community. The CRD was also to serve as the link between the offender and the community, specifically through referrals to community supportive resources and services. The services were to be offered primarily through faith-based providers, community circles, and mentorships. In sum, the CRD was to be the point person for participants in terms of accessing support services and creating networks of support.

Circles of Support, a community-driven support group that was to be individually designed for each inmate, were to begin 90 days before the participant was released from prison and continue in the community after their release. Circles of Support were based on a restorative justice model. The participant and CRD would determine who was to be included in the Circle. Depending on the participant's needs, it was envisioned that family members, community members, mentors, police officers, victims, and supervision agents would be involved.

Faith-based organizations were to also work with participants starting at the end of Phase II and then begin to increase their role in Phase III. Religious congregations, particularly African American congregations, were to assist participants in the community, provide

training, and offer Discover Support Groups, which were designed to help those seeking economic self-sufficiency by moving from welfare to work.

In Phase III, law enforcement was to have a large role. The CRD was to work with the CRCs to help identify law enforcement personnel that could help support and assist the participant in returning to the community. As outlined in the Modified Work Plan, the CRC was to work with law enforcement to:

“provide location mapping and geographic information systems to identify ‘hot spots’ for community organization and Circles of Support/accountability efforts, ‘hot book’ reviews of releases by police, probation, and re-entry staff, electronic network data sharing on offenders, participation in Circles of Support, and accountability, assistance to offenders in reorienting back to their neighborhoods, and a linkage between the re-entry program to existing police partnerships.”

As envisioned, law enforcement’s main role was to establish relationships with the participants and provide support for SOAR participants and their families.

Service linkages were to provide participants with referrals to a network of services. By having these linkages, there would be a number of ways participants could access job training, employment opportunities housing, education, and life skill development. Access to chemical dependency and mental health programming was also intended to be part of the service linkages. Several different outpatient and inpatient chemical dependency treatment centers were to be used in order to provide treatment to those participants who needed it. Mental health services included access to medication and counseling, as well as sex offender programming.

A Flex Fund was to be created. It was to be managed by the CRCs with individual participant need determining how the Flex Fund was used. Generally speaking, the Flex Fund was to provide such things as cash for bus passes, gift certificates for groceries, and money to buy new clothing for job interviews.

Actual Implementation

In March of 2003, Hennepin County began the selection process for a vendor to provide employment training and other services (i.e., faith-based services, chemical health, mental health, etc.). According to interviews with various persons involved in the planning of Project SOAR, the original intent was to find a community-based, nonprofit agency that had a faith-based focus. While several agencies applied, RESOURCE was chosen as the fiscal agent with additional responsibilities including the provision of employment referrals and, toward the end of the project, some mental health assessments to participants. It was unclear in the original proposal whether it was intended to have a community agency be the fiscal agent.

Contrary to the original proposal, the LSI-R and other risk assessments were used inconsistently to identify participants. As a result, it was decided that the LSI-R would

not be used at all. It was also decided that sex offenders would not be allowed to participate. One respondent stated:

“We excluded sex offenders in part because the amount of expertise required on the community’s part would be maybe too unrealistic in the light of the fact this was a private project in particular. So we decide not [to include] sex offenders.”

Criteria to identify participants changed over time. The three constant criteria were that participants had to be released to Hennepin County, their scheduled release date had to precede the end date of the project, and they had to be between the ages of 16 and 34. Among this group of inmates, Project SOAR participants were randomly selected. One respondent stated:

“We at first wanted the LSI scores to make sure that they had a certain risk level and that was never able to actually happen so [the] LSI has never been used. So, really what it came down to is [if you] were going back to Hennepin County and you were not a sex offender, [that is] kind of how it shook out.”

Assessments to determine chemical dependencies were used insofar as *all* offenders coming into the prison system were given a CD screening and assessment. This was done within the first 90 days of their arrival, and the results of the assessment determined their programming. Although this screening was not unique to SOAR participants, it is unclear if SOAR participants were actually given priority treatment in the prisons. In the original proposal, SOAR participants were to be transferred to a facility that met their programming needs and was close to their family and community. It was decided early on that all SOAR participants would be transferred to the MCF-Faribault, with the exception of women and juveniles. A stakeholder describes how this came about:

“One of the things that we talked about was having the ability to have them [participants] come out [of] one or two [facilities] so that we weren’t running everywhere....we wanted to utilize Lino [Lakes] because Lino [Lakes] accepted the greatest variety of offenders and it was the closest to the metropolitan area and there’re some interesting things that we could do if it was located there, that was not the facility they [the DOC] wanted us [to use]. They wanted us at Faribault to increase the amount of programming at Faribault, so we attempted to use Faribault.”

The selection of the MCF-Faribault, however, presented several challenges. Participants did not want to be transferred to a more distant facility. If they were transferred to the MCF-Faribault, it would be difficult for their families to visit and would cost the inmate more money to call family and friends, as it would be a long-distance call. Transferring inmates to the MCF-Faribault also presented challenges to those working in the DOC. The MCF-Faribault is a medium-level prison with a minimum-level security component. Some SOAR participants did not meet the criteria for placement at this facility. According to many of the stakeholders interviewed, moving participants to the MCF-Faribault “never really got off the ground.” In the end, SOAR participants were located at

multiple adult correctional facilities in Minnesota. Additionally, females were at the MCF-Shakopee and juveniles were at the MCF-Red Wing.

The PRT meetings did occur but not in the way that was originally proposed. The offenders, the institutional case manager, and other institutional case management staff were supposed to have at least three PRT meetings, with the last one occurring at least 90 days prior to release. One DOC administrator states how the change in PRT format impacted SOAR:

“The institution changed the process. Um, I think it had to do with cost savings and time and all kinds of other stuff but there was no longer a formalized date and time when each institution held their program review team hearings. It became real informal. It would be that I walked in today, said... ‘it’s Tuesday we got, Lee’s getting out, you know, bang I’ll call program review and we’ll bring people in’ ...and we won’t even, the CRCs would never know about it so that was a glitch within the system.”

Initially in Phase II, the CRC started working with the participant 90 days prior to the participant’s release. However, the CRCs reported that this was not a sufficient amount of time, so they began working with the participants 120 days before their release. The CRCs began by conducting an informal assessment to determine the participant’s needs, as well as offering an explanation of the components of SOAR. After the initial assessment, the CRC would then work with the participant in order to develop a short- and long-term case management plan for post release. The CRC also developed a detailed 72-hour plan for the time immediately following the participant’s release. One CRC described how the process worked:

“The CRC would do the case plan, and we’d sit down and we’d [say], ‘okay what do you want to do with your life, [where] do you want to be at, 90 days from here, where are we going to be at in 180 days from here, or where would you want to be at 6 months and 3 years’ and so on and we did the case plan and once the case plan was developed, we’d actually go and develop what we call a 72-hour plan.”

The CRCs also brought employment referrals and assisted participants in job training skills. CRCs were hired by RESOURCE and were non-correctional based as intended. Most CRCs developed reentry case plans with the participants. However, according to many interviewees, few CRCs involved institutional case managers, families, or supervision agents.

Phase III was implemented in an inconsistent manner. Some project components proposed in the grant were implemented fully, while others were not. Other components, such as the faith-based piece, were added to the original design. As outlined in the grant proposal, community agencies were to begin working with participants in Phase II (90 days before release) and continue into Phase III. In actuality, after the CRC’s first meeting with the participant, other community organizations came to the prison to work with a participant. RESOURCE partnered with Federal F.O.R.U.M. to provide the faith-

based component. Federal F.O.R.U.M. created Community Resource Specialists (CRS), who were volunteers that provided workshops and information to participants on such things as anger management or education. The CRSs were added to the implementation; they were not originally planned in the proposal. In addition to the CRSs, Federal F.O.R.U.M. provided different types of mentors, including spiritual mentors, community social mentors, community business mentors, academic mentors, employment mentors, entrepreneurship mentors, chemical health mentors, and creative art/design mentors.

Participants could choose through Federal F.O.R.U.M. which type of mentor they wanted. Depending on what mentor the participant chose, they would bring materials related to that topic. Limited faith-based services continued once the participant was released.

Faith-based services were never fully implemented for several reasons. First, the CRSs had trouble gaining access into the prisons. Some prisons reported that access for CRSs should be limited to the same level as that allowed for volunteers. Other prisons took the position that CRSs should be given the same level of access as other DOC contracted vendors. One person from the DOC described how they felt:

“In my mind the community people who are doing the work need to have the same level of access because those are the folks who are going to truly impact recidivism and we need to allow them the access as early on in the process as possible and as much as we can possibly afford, not negating security, but I think sometimes we get caught up in security in our business and we need to keep in the good programming is good security and that the two go hand in hand.”

It was eventually decided that CRSs would have the same amount of access as other vendors but would first need to attend extensive academy training. Since CRSs were volunteers from the community, it was difficult for them to take three weeks off to attend this training. One person states the difficulty that was presented:

“It became an issue of folks not wanting to be able, not wanting to give up money to go to training, and so that’s where it came down to the rubber meeting the road.”

A second difficulty was that some faith and community organizations reported that the CRCs did not refer participants to them. After the initial assessment, CRCs were to pass the participants on to Federal F.O.R.U.M., so that they could meet and provide services to them if the participant wanted. This did not occur on a consistent basis. One interviewee stated:

“CRCs had to take on all of this and after awhile their caseloads was so huge, you got 30-40 people on your caseload, you can’t handle all of them and they’re coming out...who’s out here in the community with these guys when they are here...no one! Why? Cause you [CRCs] didn’t bring enough community people in.”

Thirdly, a faith-based provider list was developed, but it was limited to congregations in North Minneapolis and was infrequently utilized. The grant stated there would be a variety of faiths involved in providing services, yet in the actual implementation the Christian faith was the only one involved. Many participants opted not to participate as a result. The Discover Support Groups were never developed or implemented.

Early on it was determined that Federal F.O.R.U.M. would manage the Circles of Support in Phases II and III. However, about halfway into the Project, BIHA became a partner and conducted Circles of Support. Under a contract with RESOURCE, BIHA provided training for Circles of Support as well as leading the circles. According to BIHA staff, it took nearly six to eight months just to “get things in place and get things going.”

While it was intended that all participants would participate in Circles of Support, not everyone participated, regardless of whether they were in prison or in the community. Many logistical difficulties (as discussed above) contributed to the lack of participation. A BIHA staff member went into the prisons to inform and recruit Circle participants. Often, participants would indicate they were interested in participating in Circles, but when BIHA tried to contact the participant’s family to get them involved in the circle, the family did not know anything about the Circles and were hesitant to participate. Additionally, several participants scheduled a Circle but did not show up. One staff member states:

“We had a hard time... getting clients to even show up for Circle. We would set them up; I can’t tell you how many of them we set up and how many people didn’t come. I can’t tell you how many people who got trained and we couldn’t get the Circles going.”

This presented a problem, as volunteers who were trained to lead Circles dropped out. One BIHA staff member stated:

“We lost all of [the] people we trained simply because we couldn’t get stuff going fast enough for them.”

However, despite these challenges, there was a period of about three months when BIHA had a steady schedule of Circles. A BIHA staff member reported:

“And then we got so many going at one point that started scheduling some afternoons and some mornings for people who had those kind of schedules where they could do that. So we were literally at one point, at the highest point of doing it, we were doing it five days a week but sometimes we have them two in a day.”

Some CRCs worked with the participants to find long-term employment, housing, and address other needs, while other CRCs did not. In the original design, it was thought that the caseloads for CRCs would be limited to 25 cases and, for the most part, CRCs stayed

within this limitation. One DOC stakeholder states how their caseloads increased slightly towards the end:

“We were designed to have no more than 25 active people on a caseload. Um, we tried to stay close to that as we can um, I think probably here towards the end because we’ve had a number of folks, because of release dates changing and things that all of a sudden people are getting out and I know that there was one time I think we probably hit 30 per caseload.”

The Electronic Alert Network was never implemented. In fact, several partner agencies and stakeholders were unclear whether it was even developed. From various interviews, it is clear that the data collection and data sharing that was to occur between CRCs, partners, and stakeholders never occurred. As one person stated:

“I knew that it was around data collection and data sharing but in an evaluation capacity. It [the Electronic Alert Network] was mostly for sharing between organizations working with the offender and I have no idea and I don’t think it ever really got off the ground so that actually part of my evaluation was to talk about, you know to ask, to try to what was happening with that because I don’t think it ever moved...”

Another person notes the following observations about the Electronic Alert Network:

“Unfortunately it really wasn’t used. What happened all the CRCs were on it, um I had access to it...State of Minnesota Department of Corrections and Hennepin County had access to it, um, what initially we wanted the faith-based piece to have their mentors or they had CRSs to utilize that and even though we got people signed up they never did and it was talked about and talked about and talked about to the point where it just dropped because nobody was utilizing it so it’s a wonderful system and it would work really well if somebody utilized it but it just never happened.”

A CRD was hired as intended; however, the CRD’s roles and responsibilities were different than what was actually proposed. The CRD, in the actual implementation, was essentially the lead CRC who ended up supervising the other CRCs. The CRD had a caseload similar to other CRCs, but was considered the point person among the different agencies.

Contrary to the original design, law enforcement’s role in Project SOAR was minimal and had become non-existent toward the end of the project. Many were unclear as to why law enforcement did not become involved. One interviewee stated:

“One of the things I do recall is the whole idea of law enforcement stopping and meeting with the offender and just checking in on him was the game plan.... to get law enforcement more involved in both support...I don’t even know what the issue was, issues of attitude or a little confusion or what. That just didn’t pan out.”

Another person described why the Minneapolis Police Department was never involved:

“If we had sub-contracts with the Minneapolis Police Department which we never did, it was a piece that we never could seem to get implemented, we had a contract go up and then the MPD didn’t follow through with it.”

Service linkages were another area that lacked full implementation. Many interviewees noted that only a few services were used, and these services were used over and over again. For example, Tree Trust served as the primary employment placement for SOAR participants. In the original design, however, multiple agencies were to help participants find employment.

Chemical dependency and mental health treatment did not occur until approximately six months before the project’s funding ended. Even then, many participants declined to participate in counseling or receive treatment. A psychologist, who was contracted through RESOURCE to provide services to SOAR participants, reported that while assessments were completed on several participants, only about five or six continued with counseling after the assessment. The psychologist did not use a formalized instrument (i.e., LSI-R) to assess the participants. Rather, a set of newly-created questions was used. The questions were the same for each participant. After the initial assessment, if the participants wanted to seek further services, they needed to set up an appointment themselves. Again, chemical health and mental health services did not become a real focus until the project neared completion. As a result, these services were seldom part of a participant’s reentry plan. It was also noted during the partners’ meetings that therapy needed to be addressed and become more of a focus after incarceration.

The Flex Fund was created. The criteria for using the Flex Fund were applied on an individual basis, consistent with the proposed design. In general, the Flex Fund included cash and gift cards (to Target, Cub Foods, and others). CRCs often accompanied participants while shopping for professional clothing and other personal needs.

Summary

According to partners and stakeholders, SOAR provided a multi-faceted intervention for participants. However, four specific services were seen as having been minimally implemented: faith-based services, Circles of Support, stable housing, and long-term employment opportunities. Although faith-based services and Circles were implemented, they were not consistently provided to everyone participating in the project. This was reportedly due to lack of communication between CRCs and CRSs, difficulties in accessing inmates, and providers’ lack of knowledge concerning this aspect of SOAR.

Interview Results

Core Partners

Twice a month, organizations involved in SOAR met to discuss issues, successes, and concerns that they were experiencing with regard to the project. At the outset of the project, the meetings were a time for sharing and networking, as well as a time to gain consensus on important decisions that needed to be made. Some stakeholders also participated in the meetings, but this section will focus on the partner's perspectives of these meetings.

At these meetings, the partners discussed current issues that each organization or person was having, as well as individual cases of SOAR participants. When discussing individual participant's cases, the meeting attendees would determine which resources were needed for the participant, and which organizations could provide the needed resources. Members would also update others on progress made and/or challenges faced. If there was a particularly challenging problem, the meeting would be used to brainstorm solutions. Toward the end of project, the meetings were ultimately used as a soundboard to voice concerns about the project.

From direct observation, many topics were discussed at each meeting, yet there was no formal meeting agenda. Whatever issues people brought were discussed. According to interviews with partners and through direct observation, the meetings tended to be disorganized, which caused frustration for many. Towards the end of the project, tensions between agencies began to rise and eventually caused a noticeable rift between some organizations.

Partner's Perspectives on the Strengths of Project SOAR

Many agencies saw the CRCs as the primary strength of Project SOAR. They reported CRCs were dedicated to the participants and were committed to helping them. Many liked the idea of having someone connected to resources in the participant's community providing a bridge back to the community.

Partners' Perspectives on the Weaknesses of Project SOAR

One central and substantial concern expressed by partners was the lack of clarity around partner responsibilities and accountability. It was unclear who the overall director or ultimate decision-maker was, and any documentation to this end was unavailable. Contributing to the confusion about roles and responsibilities was the high level of staff turnover. This occurred at both the administrative and direct service levels.

Another major concern or weakness of the project was that the agencies did not work well together as a team in terms of communicating with, and supporting, each other. Finally, partners expressed especially strong negative feelings concerning the way the project ended, which likely impacted their overall conclusions about SOAR.

Stakeholders

Key stakeholders were interviewed in order to assess organizational dynamics and examine their thoughts on participant needs and challenges. Overall, 37 interviews were conducted. This sample is composed of professionals who have everyday experience with this population and are familiar with the transitioning experience. The majority of those interviewed considered themselves as having provided SOAR participants with direct services (n=20). In contrast, DOC supervisory and probation agents considered their role with SOAR as “other” simply because they were associated with the project merely through their supervision of clients assigned to SOAR. Of those interviewees who were direct services providers, the majority were involved with employment, educational, and basic needs. Only a few stakeholders provided services related to chemical health issues, mental health issues, spirituality, and restorative justice. Approximately 49 percent of the sample was involved with SOAR for three or more years and 68 percent for two or more years.

Service Assessment

Stakeholders were asked to assess the helpfulness of various SOAR services in addition to outlining strengths and weaknesses of the project. It is important to note that a few stakeholders did not have adequate exposure to all of the services reviewed in this interview, limiting their ability to provide meaningful feedback. Therefore, results may not be based on all 37 who were interviewed, but may instead represent a smaller sub-sample. For instance, some community providers were unable to comment on pre-release services as they worked with participants after their incarceration and were, for the most part, unaware of these services.

Pre-Release Services

A large percentage of the sample was familiar enough with pre-release services to provide feedback. Overall, a majority viewed the services positively with nearly 54 percent reporting services were very to somewhat helpful (See Table 1).

Table 1. Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding Pre-Release Services

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Pre-Release Services	32.1% (n=9)	21.4% (n=6)	25.0% (n=7)	14.2% (n=4)	7.1% (n=2)	28

When asked to discuss the strengths of pre-release services, many stakeholders reported that having CRCs meet the participant *during* their incarceration was beneficial in that it encouraged offenders to plan ahead and created momentum for change to occur upon release. CRCs and CRSs were positively regarded and were seen as sincere, supportive, and motivated. The fact that CRCs often picked participants up from prison on their day of release was repeatedly mentioned in a positive manner.

In general, pre-release plans were regarded positively. Many stakeholders reported that CRCs were able to immediately help clients learn how to navigate information systems to find appropriate services and referrals. Interviewees mentioned the positive effects of addressing housing, employment, spirituality, and other issues as a unique and entirely necessary aspect of SOAR pre-release plans. This multi-faceted planning was also seen to alleviate the emotional stresses and self-doubt with which many inmates struggle. In essence, the process of developing a formal plan was seen as giving assurance to participants that the transition experience could go smoothly.

Some weaknesses that were repeatedly discussed involved strained communication between providers and a lack of consistency in services. In particular, DOC supervision agents wanted to be informed of the details of pre-release plans and reported that communication between themselves and CRCs was extremely difficult. In particular, many agents reported that pre-release plans conflicted with participants' terms of release (this was especially true for those released to intensive supervision). Agents reported feeling as if they often had to do "damage control" in that they would have to alter the pre-release plan to adequately accommodate the given participant's terms of release. Similarly, other stakeholders, such as representatives from community organizations, reported that CRCs provided participants with false hope and empty promises that they were not always able to deliver. Other stakeholders reported that CRCs inconsistently provided services.

Housing Assistance

Many stakeholders reported that housing was the number one dilemma faced by participants. While the efforts made to place participants in housing were viewed positively, it appears that the type of housing available was not seen to facilitate a healthy and productive lifestyle. Therefore, results indicate varied responses to housing services (See Table 2).

Table 2. Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding Housing Assistance

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Housing Services	28.0% (n=7)	20.0% (n=5)	28.0% (n=7)	8.0% (n=2)	16.0% (n=4)	25

The advocacy component of housing assistance was identified as a key strength. In particular, stakeholders discussed the importance of having CRCs talk to landlords in order to advocate for their client's placement.

Employment Assistance

Another major concern among stakeholders was assisting participants in securing employment. Just over half of the stakeholders found the SOAR Project's employment assistance to be helpful (See Table 3).

Table 3. Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding Employment Assistance

How Helpful was...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Employment Assistance	30.7% (n=8)	23.0% (n=6)	19.2% (n=5)	7.6% (n=2)	19.2% (n=5)	26

Many stakeholders liked one particular program, where participants worked full days Tuesday through Friday, but were available to explore other resources and opportunities on Mondays. The strategic use of Mondays as an opportunity to further investigate long-term employment options, refine one's resume, and work on overall professional appearance was seen as helpful.

Major concerns were brought up when discussing the long-term effects of employment assistance. Although stakeholders reported that SOAR's immediate responses to unemployment (namely placement at Tree Trust) were commendable, they expressed concern about the long-term affects of SOAR services. As one interviewee explained, the project initially set participants up for success, but then participants were "left hanging—the program was almost set up to keep them poor." Another stakeholder referred to SOAR's employment assistance as "a double-edge sword" in that participants were initially provided housing and a job, yet the assistance ended after eight weeks and they were often left with no job prospects and rent to pay.

Faith-Based Support

Only 10 of the 37 stakeholders interviewed stated they were familiar enough with faith-based support to comment on it (See Table 4). However, a clear majority of those familiar with the services ranked the faith-based support as very (30 percent) to somewhat helpful (50 percent).

Table 4. Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding Faith-Based Support

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Faith Services	30.0% (n=3)	50.0% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	20.0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	10

The major strength of faith-based support identified by the stakeholders was the overall concept of the long-term involvement of community members, coupled with spiritual guidance and support. Responding stakeholders considered these services to provide participants with much-needed emotional support.

However, the concept of faith-based support was not viewed as having been fully implemented. Stakeholders reported that few faith assessments were actually provided.

Circles of Support

Few stakeholders were aware of, or involved with, Circles of Support. Those who were, however, tended to report being very impressed with its ability to empower participants

and improve relations between community residents and offenders. Ninety-two percent of responding stakeholders viewed these services as very to somewhat helpful (See Table 5). This approval rating is notably higher than any other service.

Table 5. Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding Circles of Support

How Helpful was...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Circles of Support	76.9% (n=10)	15.4% (n=2)	7.6% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	13

Perceived Participant Improvement

Of the 37 stakeholders interviewed, 27 were able to compare SOAR participant improvement with that of the general population of offenders. Approximately 51 percent reported that SOAR participants fared better (30 percent remarked “same” and 19 percent were unsure). This indicates that while stakeholders were able to identify areas for improvement, they nonetheless reported that the services provided by SOAR had a positive influence on participants.

Overall Social Services

Stakeholders were asked to rank individual services provided by SOAR in terms of their helpfulness and were encouraged to comment on any factors influencing their decision (See Table 6). Overall, material needs, housing assistance, and initial employment preparation were the most highly-rated services provided by SOAR. These data mirror the findings discussed above. Areas of service that were ranked as unhelpful included securing employment beyond Tree Trust and addressing educational needs. Many stakeholders were unaware of any attempts to address child support or family issues specifically, except through Circles of Support. It was also found that most stakeholders reported that participants were receiving identification cards from prison facilities upon release. Therefore, this service was not seen as necessary, since it was merely overlapping existing efforts. This was also verified by the participant data, as most interviewees reported that they had already received identification from their institutional case worker.

It should be noted that stakeholders often commented that their responses varied across services, which is due, in part, to inconsistencies in assistance provided by different CRCs. They reported that the above quantitative rankings would be very different if results were in some way separated out by CRC. In short, some CRCs were reported to have been outstanding in providing multi-faceted and individualized services, whereas others were viewed as being unprofessional and “all talk.”

Table 6. Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding Overall Social Services

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Material Needs	39.2% (n=11)	32.1% (n=9)	14.2% (n=4)	10.7% (n=3)	3.5% (n=1)	28
Drivers License & Other Identification	24.0% (n=6)	40.0% (n=10)	16.0% (n=4)	8.0% (n=2)	12.0% (n=3)	25
Medical Assistance	22.7% (n=5)	9.0% (n=2)	31.8% (n=7)	18.2% (n=4)	18.2% (n=4)	22
Child Support Issues	12.5% (n=2)	43.7% (n=7)	12.5% (n=2)	18.7% (n=3)	12.5% (n=2)	16
Employment Preparation	24.1% (n=7)	27.5% (n=8)	20.6% (n=6)	17.2% (n=5)	10.3% (n=3)	29
Securing Employment (Beyond Tree Trust)	11.1% (n=3)	11.1% (n=3)	18.5% (n=5)	25.9% (n=7)	33.3% (n=9)	27
Educational Needs	11.5% (n=3)	30.7% (n=8)	23.0% (n=6)	26.9% (n=7)	7.6% (n=2)	26
Housing Assistance	29.1% (n=7)	20.8% (n=5)	20.8% (n=5)	16.6% (n=4)	12.5% (n=3)	24
Connecting to Other Social Services	20.8% (n=5)	45.8% (n=11)	20.8% (n=5)	8.3% (n=2)	4.1% (n=1)	24
Support for Family Issues	17.3% (n=4)	34.7% (n=8)	34.7% (n=8)	0% (n=0)	13.0% (n=3)	23
Increasing Network of Support	18.5% (n=5)	33.3% (n=9)	25.9% (n=7)	18.5% (n=5)	3.7% (n=1)	27
Overall: Column Totals	21.4% (n=58)	29.5% (n=80)	21.7% (n=59)	15.5% (n=42)	11.8% (n=32)	271

Organizational Assessment

Partner Meetings

Survey findings regarding the bi-weekly partner meetings are varied. It appears the majority of those interviewed found the meetings to be neither helpful nor unhelpful. As discussed throughout the above sections, communication between partner agencies and providers was reportedly strained and often riddled with conflict.

Table 7. Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding Partner Meetings

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Partner Meetings	7.1% (n=1)	28.5% (n=4)	35.7% (n=5)	0% (n=0)	28.5% (n=4)	14

Certain strengths of these meetings were identified by stakeholders. In particular, they reported that these meetings were beneficial in terms of meeting everyone involved and educating each other on their role in the project. Many stakeholders reported that this was a key opportunity for them to learn about how SOAR was intended to function. From their perspective, this was necessary as the logistics of SOAR's implementation were often unclear. In some cases, interviewees also reported that these meetings provided everyone with an opportunity to problem solve and discuss current struggles. In particular, stakeholders reported that this was a time to collaborate on cases in order to prevent repeat services and "yanking [participants] in two directions" due to miscommunication.

However, according to many of those interviewed, these strengths appeared to have dissolved throughout the course of SOAR. Supervision agents reported that they felt unwelcome and conflicts with CRCs grew to become unmanageable. Instead of team building and consulting over participants, topics reportedly shifted to "squabbles over funding." As one stakeholder stated, the meetings "always turned to hostility and even yelling." Stakeholders reported this change was, in part, due to the lack of set agendas and discussion topics. It is important to note, however, that stakeholders reported these meetings had a lot of potential in terms of making SOAR more streamlined and less "fragmented."

Analysis based on Stakeholder Role

The data were further examined in order to assess whether results varied depending on the role of the stakeholder (CRC, CRS, Community Organization Representative, Institutional Caseworker, or intensive supervised release [ISR] Agent). Overall, results were consistent among the groups, although one pattern was evident. It appears that supervision agents reported that they were encouraged by the services SOAR provided, yet their responses may have been affected by the apparent lack of communication with CRCs. In particular, there were multiple complaints that CRCs were uncooperative when participants violated their terms of release. Officers and agents reported that CRCs failed to report violations that occurred in their presence (including substance violations and socializing with known offenders). Additionally, officers reported that CRCs aided participants in avoiding contact with law enforcement agencies after violations occurred. One supervision agent argued that this was an issue of public safety and must be taken seriously by everyone involved. These conflicts, therefore, may have served to alter supervision agents' overall perceptions of SOAR services.

It is important to note that responses concerning partner meetings were comparable between the different groups within this sample, as no one seemed particularly satisfied with these meetings. Supervision agents reported that meetings could have been more

beneficial had they focused on collaboratively working on cases. Similarly, CRSs reported the meetings were informative but hindered by conflict. Community organizations wanted more representation at these meetings and reported that they would have benefited from being included in decision making. CRCs reported that the lack of a clear agenda made the meetings “a complete waste of time.” Institutional caseworkers never attended these meetings.

Other Points of Discussion

The following discussion relates to two concerns that were discussed frequently by stakeholders and may be helpful to consider. First, it was suggested that programming with this population should begin earlier during participants’ incarceration. One interviewee, in particular, discussed the need to begin early interventions, arguing that it is unreasonable to expect someone to change (and smoothly transition into the community) because of a few meeting with CRCs. This interviewee suggested that CRCs begin interventions and implement prison programming six months prior to release in order to give these offenders more comprehensive pre-release services (this notion is also discussed in the literature review).

Secondly, the abrupt termination of Project SOAR, coupled with the way it was conveyed to participants, was discussed as having been “unprofessional,” “deplorable” and “devastating.” As one stakeholder described, “SOAR just became another person to walk away from these clients – without warning.” Similarly, supervision agents mentioned that they were left to explain to clients that services were no longer available to them, and that they could no longer find employment at Tree Trust. Supervision agents resented having been placed in this position and reported that SOAR should have been held more accountable in terms of personally notifying participants of the lack of funding beforehand, with the hopes of giving everyone involved time to prepare. This experience may have affected stakeholder responses throughout the interviews.

Stakeholders Perspectives on the Strengths and Weaknesses of Project SOAR

As presented above, many stakeholders were able to provide helpful, articulate, and specific feedback—suggesting that they were especially cognizant of the struggles faced by participants. In fact, stakeholders’ comments often mirrored participants’ concerns (as presented later). At the close of the interview, stakeholders were asked to discuss the overall strengths and weaknesses of SOAR. Following is a general summary of these strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths

Stakeholders discussed that they took great relief from knowing that there was a team of organizations working together to help this population. Other strengths can be broken down into four general themes: (1) the concept of SOAR as multifaceted and hands-on, (2) the positive initial impact on participants in term of alleviating stresses, (3) the personable staff who could relate to participants experiences, and (4) the provision of basic needs.

The concept of SOAR was not only identified as a primary strength, but was also continually reported to be the single most unique aspect of the project. The multi-faceted, all-encompassing nature of services that were provided was seen to be extremely beneficial for participants. In other words, the diversity of interventions and partnerships that were made available to participants was seen as collectively addressing the root causes of criminal behavior rather than merely discouraging recidivism. Additionally, the extended timeline of service interventions, beginning during a participant's incarceration and lasting throughout the transition experience, was seen to provide much-needed structure and continued encouragement.

These services were reported to have alleviated the initial strains and stresses of transitioning. In particular, stakeholders reported that participants benefited from a smoother transition as basic housing and employment needs were met. For instance, the immediate job placement at Tree Trust was seen to give participants a sense of self-dignity. This formation of self-dignity was seen by stakeholders as having positively influenced many other aspects of participants' lives (i.e., it provided a foundation on which change could occur and had a rippling effect).

Furthermore, although CRCs were seen as inconsistently providing service, they were nonetheless viewed as passionate individuals whose primary strength was their ability to empathize with participants. Both CRCs and CRSs were reported by supervision agents as having been hands-on and available to participants. As one stakeholder commented, they were "not a bunch of stuffy guys with degrees" but rather were very approachable.

Finally, the provision of basic material needs, including housing and employment, was seen to be very beneficial. In particular, tangible services, such as food cards, clothing, hygiene products, and transportation, were seen to be very helpful. That basic needs were also provided in a less bureaucratic fashion, as SOAR didn't require paper work and formal requests for services, was highly commended. In essence, SOAR was seen as an accessible program, as it was a sort of one-stop shop where needs could be addressed immediately and informally.

Weaknesses

From the perspective of the stakeholders, the primary weakness of SOAR was its short-term nature. Many reported that SOAR was excellent in providing short-term interventions, such as addressing material needs, yet was unable to fully implement solutions that address long-term needs, such as education, employment, and independent living skills. Other weaknesses can be broken down into four general themes: (1) quality of housing and lack of long-term employment, (2) lack of consistency in services, (3) over-extension of CRCs, and (4) internal conflicts and lack of communication.

Housing was reportedly located in areas that encouraged further involvement in criminal activities and was unfit for families. Furthermore, while services addressing short-term employment were commended, the lack of long-term employment opportunities was seen as a fundamental weakness of SOAR as the positive effects of SOAR diminished over time due to participant unemployment. In other words, participants initially did very

well, as they had housing and employment, yet when the employment ended they were faced with paying rent without job prospects.

Lack of consistency in the provision of services was continually brought up by stakeholders, as well as participants and social support individuals. CRCs were reported to have provided some participants with a plethora of resources, while others received little to no aid. This skewed distribution of resources caused great frustration on the part of service providers (and participants themselves as discussed later). Stakeholders reported that some sort of protocol regarding the disbursement of resources should have been developed and enforced in order to reduce these inconsistencies. Many stakeholders reported that inconsistencies in services were, in part, due to the overextension of CRCs. Interviewees reported that caseloads were such that they limited the ability of CRCs to effectively serve everyone in a personable, individualized, and fair manner. (It is important to note that CRC caseloads were reported to have been within the range outlined in the grant proposal. Therefore, as it was reported that CRCs were overextended, the proposed caseload may have been set too high in the original design.)

Lastly, the lack of communication between service providers seemed to hinder the project's effectiveness. As one stakeholder stated, there was "no cohesiveness or unity" between all involved in SOAR. Many stakeholders desired to be more informed of SOAR services and opportunities. It appears that there was a great need to clarify the professional role of everyone involved in order for individuals to respectfully work with one another collaboratively. It is important to note that many stakeholders reported that SOAR did not have the opportunity to be fully implemented as it was only operational for a short time. Stakeholders reported that, if SOAR had continued, many of these problems would have naturally worked out and long-term results would have become evident.

Participants

Of the 240 SOAR participants, 98 were interviewed. Ninety-four percent of the sample was male. The sample was predominantly African American (75 percent), with 17 percent identifying themselves as Caucasian and 9 percent as American Indian. Twenty-seven of the 98 participants were employed at the time of the interview, 17 full-time and 10 part-time. The type of work reported by these participants was generally entry level and involved manual labor (such as construction, painting, deliveries, and roofing).

A large percentage of the sample reported being single, divorced, or separated (72 percent). Approximately 60 percent were parents, with 30 percent of them living with their children at the time of the interview and 73 percent reporting that they spoke to their children over the phone at least once a week. Reported number of children per parent ranged from one to ten, with the mean number of children being 1.79. Twenty-five percent of these children were under the age of three. Seventy-three percent of parents reported that they were in some way financially responsible for their children.

Nearly 100 percent of participants interviewed reported that they attended an orientation session for SOAR during their incarceration, with nearly 87 percent reporting that they understood what was involved with Project SOAR “very well” to “pretty well.” Participants’ ratings of SOAR project services follow.

Reentry Planning

Seventy-nine participants reported that a reentry plan had been developed during their incarceration (81 percent). A clear majority reported that they were involved in the development of their plan (85 percent), along with their CRC (90 percent). Institutional case managers were often not involved with the process as only 35 percent of the participants reported that they were present during the development of the participant’s release plan. Thirty-five percent also reported that “other” individuals assisted them in this process. These individuals were generally CRSs, family members, and DOC supervising officers. Table 8 shows an outline of the services included in the sample pre-release plans.

Table 8. Participant Perceptions Regarding Pre-Release Plan Services

What was included in your release plan?	Yes	No	Unsure
Mental Health Services	19.8%	79.0%	1.2%
Chemical Health Services	51.9%	48.1%	0%
Support Groups	70.4%	27.2%	2.5%
Circle of Support	60.5%	35.8%	3.7%
Parenting Classes	37.0%	61.7%	1.2%
Employment Training	82.7%	17.3%	0%
Other	26.9%	66.7%	6.4%

Because mental health assessments were not provided until the last few months of SOAR, the low number of mental health services reported was expected. Chemical health services were reported by half the participants as part of their pre-release plan in the form of referrals to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or other specialized organizations. Support groups, both in general and in circles, were part of the participants’ plans in a majority of the cases. Of those participants who reportedly had children, approximately 50 percent reported that parenting classes were part of their pre-release plan. Employment training appears to have been the most consistent service included in pre-release plans; however, many interviewees referenced Tree Trust when answering this question, indicating that other job skills training or education may not have been frequently included within the plan. “Other” services generally consisted of more personal goals, such as exercise, education, and living in a positive environment.

Table 9. Participant Perceptions of Reentry Plan

My reentry plan...?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Fit My Specific Needs	36.3%	50.0%	10.0%	3.8%
I Had A Say in Making It	46.3%	42.5%	5.0%	6.3%
I Understood My Re-entry Plan	58.8%	38.8%	2.5%	0%

The majority of participants reported that they were sufficiently involved in the process, understood the details of their plan, and that the plan provided stability, support, and was particularly helpful in addressing immediate material needs (see Table 9). Furthermore, when asked to comment on their plans, only one individual gave negative feedback, which was related to his plan being rejected by his ISR agent because it violated the terms of his release.

72- Hour Plan

Sixty-nine participants (70 percent) reported that their CRC helped them develop a 72-hour plan in addition to their more general reentry plan (as discussed above). Below are the various goals and resources included in 72-hour plans (See Table 10).

Table 10. Participant Perceptions Regarding 72-Hour Plan

What was included in your 72-hour plan?	Yes	No	Unsure
Getting Identification	68.2%	31.8%	0%
Acquiring Medical Care	58.2%	40.3%	1.5%
Meeting with Parole Officer	82.1%	17.9%	0%
Finding Housing	70.1%	29.9%	0%
Other	50.8%	44.6%	4.6%

Meeting with supervision agents and finding housing appeared to be the most frequently included facet of these plans, according to participants. Medical care was also included, although many participants did not seem to know exactly what this involved. While many participants would say that getting identification was included in their plan, they would often preface this by mentioning that it was provided by correctional facility caseworkers at the time of their release (this was also mentioned by stakeholders). Other services mentioned generally included assistance with material needs (specifically hygienic), employment leads, and getting in touch with an AA sponsor.

Again, participants seemed pleased with this service, as shown below in Table 11. The majority reported that they had a say in developing their 72-hour plan, understood it, and reported that it addressed their needs.

Table 11. Participant Satisfaction with 72-Hour Plan

My 72-hour plan...?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Fit My Specific Needs	60.0%	36.9%	1.5%	1.5%
I Had a Say in Making My Plan	56.9%	36.9%	4.6%	1.5%
I Understood My Plan	67.7%	32.3%	0%	0%
My Plan was Helpful	64.2%	23.9%	7.5%	4.5%

For those few participants who did *not* find the 72-hour plan helpful, a series of questions was asked in order to assess if their CRC actually attempted to provide these services. In general, it appears that these participants reported the plan itself was helpful but that CRCs were not there to help follow through with it. For instance, 74 percent reported that their CRC did not help them get a medical card. Similarly, 71 percent reported that their CRC did not help them find housing, and 45 percent reported that their CRC did not help them meet with their supervision agent for the first time. While this sample is small, these concerns are still of value as they support stakeholder claims of inconsistency in services provided by CRCs.

Circles of Support

As expected per interviews with social support and stakeholders, only 50 percent of the participants reported having been informed of Circles of Support. In total, 23 participants attended circles (23 percent). When those who had been informed of circles, but did not attend, were asked why they did not go to these meetings, most replied that they did not have the time or were on ISR, which limited their activities. Of those who attended Circles, the number of meetings attended ranged from 1 to 15 with a mean of approximately 5. This indicates that while few attended Circles, those who did were satisfied enough to attend multiple times.

Table 12. Group Composition of Circles of Support

Who was involved in your Circles group?	Yes	No	Unsure
Family Member	60.9%	39.1%	0%
Friends	43.5%	56.5%	0%
Parole Officer/Probation	22.7%	72.7%	4.5%
Police Officer	0%	100.0%	0%
Court Official	4.5%	95.5%	0%
CRC	87.0%	13.0%	0%
Church Member	65.2%	34.8%	0%
Mentor	39.1%	56.5%	4.3%
Community Representatives	56.5%	43.5%	0%
Other Participants	8.7%	87.0%	4.3%

Participants who attended circles reported that family members, CRCs, and church members were most commonly in attendance (as shown above in Table 12). It is interesting that no one reported having had a police officer in attendance, although it is important to note that this was not necessarily a primary goal of Circles. Participants found the group process very helpful, as shown below in Table 13.

Table 13. Participant Perceptions Regarding Circles of Support

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Circles of Support	65.2% (n=15)	17.4% (n=4)	8.7% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	8.7% (n=2)	23

Interviewees were asked to identify what was most helpful about Circles. The most common theme presented was that someone was there to listen to and support them. As one interviewee stated, “They let me know that I was not alone and gave me encouragement, because at times I felt like giving up.” Other participants credited Circles for having helped keep them sober. When asked what was least helpful, 13 interviewees stated “nothing.” The others remarked it was intimidating at first, especially since their supervision agents were attending. However, this was the only concern raised by participants.

Religious/Faith-Based Support

Similar to Circles of Support, faith-based services did not impact a large percentage of the participants but were nonetheless viewed positively among those who used this type of service. Approximately 33 percent of the sample reported having been informed of faith-based services. Only 15 percent actually attended any faith-based activities. Again, participants who were informed of faith-based activities but did *not* attend reported that they were either too busy or were hindered by being on ISR. Those who did attend participated anywhere from 1 to 12 times, averaging 5 times per person. The majority of

interviewees reported that these services were very to somewhat helpful (as shown below in Table 14).

Table 14. Participant Satisfaction with Faith-Based Services

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Faith-Based Services	66.7% (n=10)	20.0% (n=3)	13.3% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	15

When asked what was most helpful, interviewees talked of the support, guidance, enlightenment, and spiritual knowledge they received. When asked what was unhelpful, eight participants stated “nothing.” Others reported that there could have been more resources made available, and the meetings could have been more accessible in terms of scheduling.

Mentoring

Approximately 55 percent of the participants were asked if they wanted a mentor, yet only 23 percent actually met with one. Participants who were informed of mentorships, but did not use this service, reported that they did not need a mentor. Of those who had a mentor, approximately 44 percent reported that their mentor was from a religious organization. Participants met with their mentor anywhere from 1 to 40 times, averaging 11 times per person. This rate of attendance is significantly higher than that for Circles of Support and faith-based services. Additionally, almost 70 percent of the participants using a mentor reported that they planned on remaining in touch after their involvement with SOAR ended. As shown below in Tables 15 and 16, participants reported that they developed a good relationship with their mentors, and their mentors were helpful in the transition experience.

Table 15. Participant Perceptions Regarding Relationships with Mentors

How would you rate...?	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsure	Total
Your Relationship with Your Mentor	64.0% (n=16)	16.0% (n=4)	8.0% (n=2)	4.0% (n=1)	8.0% (n=2)	25

Table 16. Participant Satisfaction with Mentor Services

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Mentors in Helping you Return from Prison	65.2% (n=15)	30.4% (n=7)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	4.3% (n=1)	23

This pattern is similar to that exhibited in Circles of Support and faith-based services: while few participants were actually involved, those who were involved reported very positive feedback.

Assessment of Support Networks within the Community

Participants were asked to report on the number of individuals who supported them throughout their transitioning experience. Results were extremely varied. It appears that participants typically either had numerous individuals supporting them or no one supporting them. In fact, this line of questioning was rather sensitive for some participants, as it sometimes reminded them of the lack of support that they had.

Table 17. Participant Support Assessment

Who Supported You in Your Return from Prison?	Yes	No	If Yes, Range & Average
Family	86.5% (n=77)	13.5% (n=12)	Range = 1-100 Average = 8.4
Friends	72.2% (n=65)	27.8% (n=25)	Range = 1-60 Average =5.8
Social Service Professionals	28.1% (n=25)	70.8% (n=63)	Range = 1-10 Average =2.5
Church/Faith Members	36.7% (n=33)	62.2% (n=56)	Range = 1-200 Average =14.5
Neighbors	20.0% (n=18)	77.8% (n=70)	Range = 1-10 Average =4.0
Employer/Coworker	36.7% (n=33)	61.1% (n=55)	Range = 1-17 Average =4.18
Others	24.7% (n=21)	75.3% (n=64)	Range = 1-3 Average =2

Reported above in Table 17 are totals for different types of social support that these participants received. In general, it appears that family and friends were most likely to support these participants, whereas neighbors were the least likely to be involved in the transitioning experience of an offender. The “other” category generally comprised fiancés, landlords, and treatment program sponsors.

Ranges and averages are also reported for the number of people within each category; however, these numbers must be reviewed with caution as some individuals reported rather extreme figures. For instance, one interviewee reported that 200 church members supported him during his transition. This figure most likely represents the total number of congregants at his church. It is interesting that few reported receiving support from social service professionals (other than SOAR), and those who did reported lower numbers than other social support categories (i.e., 1-10 versus 1-60 for friends). These numbers demonstrate the importance of SOAR, as these participants otherwise engaged few professionals for support. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify how many supportive people they had gained as a result of being involved with SOAR. Ten percent replied that they had gained no one while the rest reported anywhere from 1-30, with the average being 4.6. This indicates that support went beyond CRCs and extended to other individuals.

The importance of social support is clearly demonstrated when examining participants’ ability to locate housing and employment. As shown below in Figure 1, those

participants who had greater social support were more likely to report that finding housing was “very easy” (when compared to those with few or no social support). For instance, of those participants who had no social support, 0 percent reported that housing was “very easy” to locate. In contrast, over 80 percent of those with at least 16 social support individuals reported that housing was “very easy” to locate. This pattern was also evident when examining participants’ ability to find employment.

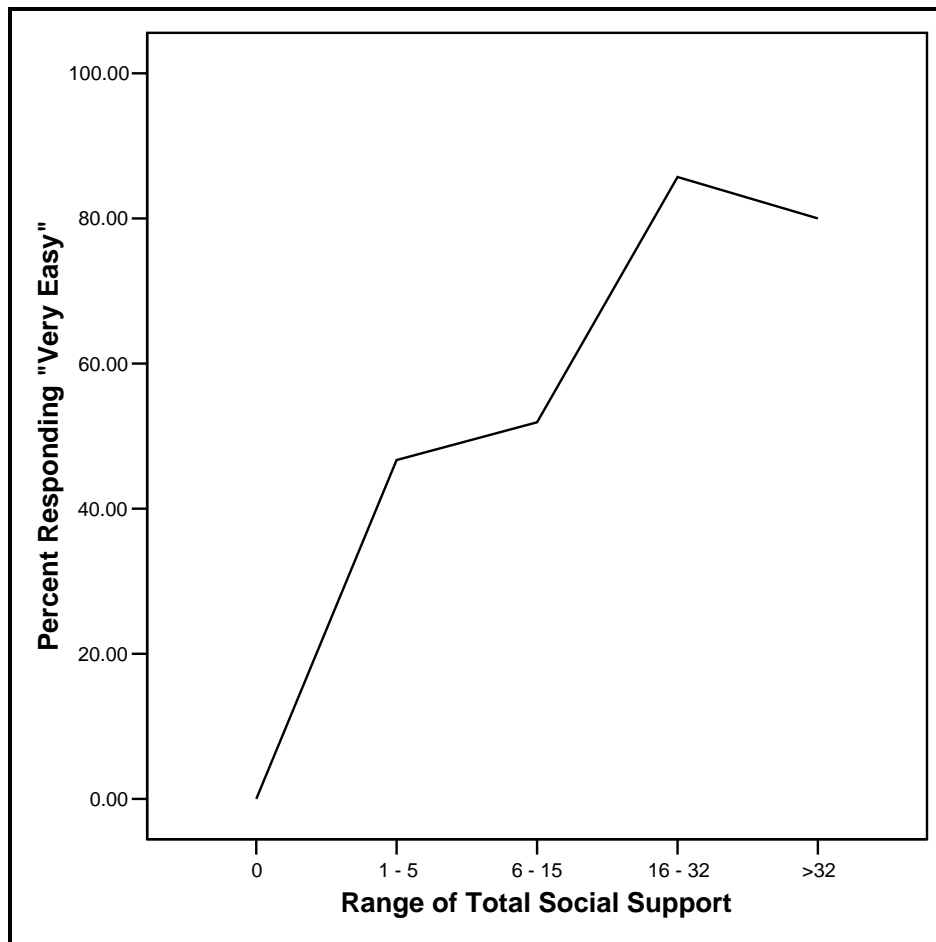


Figure 1. Ease of Finding Housing

Housing

Many participants reported that housing was “very” to “somewhat easy” to find after imprisonment (72 percent). This appears partially due to family support, as many simply stayed with parents or siblings immediately after release. In addition, SOAR was reported as having been helpful in finding temporary housing.

Table 18. Participant Perceptions of Housing Services

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Housing Services	50.0% (n=43)	14.0% (n=12)	24.4% (n=21)	0% (n=0)	11.6% (n=10)	86

Sixty-four percent found these services to be very to somewhat helpful, while 25 percent found them to be neither helpful nor unhelpful (see Table 18). This varied response may be due to inconsistent CRC practices and/or poor quality of housing. In particular, many participants reported that the location of the housing that they were afforded was not conducive to rehabilitation. As one participant commented, “This was exactly where I *didn’t* want to be,” as it was near old friends who encouraged his criminal lifestyle.

Table 19. Participant Perceptions of Housing Conditions

How well...?	Very Well	Pretty Well	Somewhat Well	Not at All	Total
Does Your Home Meet Your Needs	59.0% (n=49)	22.9% (n=19)	10.8% (n=9)	7.2% (n=6)	83
Do You Think You Can Maintain Housing after SOAR	57.1% (n=48)	22.6% (n=19)	6.0% (n=5)	14.3% (n=12)	84

Despite these concerns, 79 percent reported that they could maintain their housing after SOAR (see Table 19). However, this number is most likely an *over*-representation as many participants prefaced their answer with “If I had a job.” This suggests that participants may have actually been unsure of their ability to maintain housing in the long term.

Participants were asked where and with whom they lived during the time of the interview. Of those who were not reincarcerated at the time of the interview, the majority were located in Minneapolis in either single or multi-unit homes. Only two interviewees reported that they lived in a shelter (2 percent). In general, these participants reported having lived with family (20 percent), spouses/partners (23 percent), and other (48 percent). “Other” generally constituted living alone, with children, or they were reincarcerated.

Education

The majority of the sample reported their highest level of educational attainment was high school/GED (51 percent), which 78 percent achieved prior to their involvement with SOAR. Of those who had not already obtained their GED, SOAR assisted 38 percent in getting a GED (8 of 21). Of the remaining participants, 24 percent reported they had attended some college or trade school and 1 percent had finished a four-year degree. Twenty-three participants attended educational support groups (23 percent) through the project (see Table 20). These participants attended anywhere from 1 to 16 groups, averaging 3.5 per person.

Table 20. Participant Perceptions of Educational Groups

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Educational Support Groups	56.5% (n=13)	30.4% (n=7)	8.7% (n=2)	4.3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	23

Participants reported that the most helpful aspects of these educational support groups were that they gained marketable job skills, such as writing, reading, and computer proficiencies. In addition, a few participants discussed that someone helped them locate financial aid and schools that accepted offenders. In contrast, participants also reported that the job skill training was not diverse or comprehensive. In addition, a few mentioned that they would have been more motivated had these groups counted toward some kind of school credit.

Employment Assistance

A majority of the participants reported having received employment assistance while involved with SOAR, particularly from CRCs, CRSs, and Tree Trust (as shown below in Table 21). It is important to note that when participants indicated they received “employment training” or “other,” they were generally referring to Tree Trust.

Table 21. Participant Perceptions Regarding Employment Assistance

Did anyone from SOAR help you with...?	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Employment Search	85.4% (n=76)	13.5% (n=12)	1.1% (n=1)	89
Resume and Application Preparation	67.4% (n=60)	29.2% (n=26)	3.4% (n=3)	89
Employment Training	59.6% (n=53)	34.8% (n=31)	5.6% (n=5)	89
Reference for a Potential Employer	58.4% (n=52)	37.1% (n=33)	4.5% (n=4)	89
Contact a Potential Employer on Your Behalf	51.7% (n=46)	43.8% (n=39)	4.5% (n=4)	89
Other	25.3% (n=22)	67.8% (n=59)	6.9% (n=6)	87

RESOURCE employment support groups were attended by 24 percent of the participants interviewed. These interviewees attended anywhere from 1 to 10 meetings, averaging 3.5 meetings per person. A clear majority of the sample reported that these meetings were very helpful (63 percent). When asked what was most helpful, participants commonly mentioned that they were able to network for job opportunities and refine their interviewing skills. A few interviewees also mentioned that they were taught how to

appropriately explain their criminal record so as to reassure potential employers of their capabilities and changed way of life. In contrast, participants reported that too few computers were available so there was often a wait. Aside from this concern, participants did not identify any other unhelpful aspects of the employment support groups.

As mentioned above, many of the participants interviewed went to work for Tree Trust immediately after their release (53 percent). This service was seen to be extremely helpful in alleviating the initial stress of reentry (See Table 22). However, when participants were asked if SOAR was helpful in obtaining long-term employment, nearly 20 percent reported that SOAR services were “very unhelpful” (four times larger than the disapproval rating for Tree Trust).

Table 22. Participant Satisfaction with Employment Services

How Helpful was...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Tree Trust in Helping You Get More Employment Skills	58.3% (n=28)	25.0% (n=12)	10.4% (n=5)	2.1% (n=1)	4.2% (n=2)	48
SOAR in Helping You Find Long-term Employment	39.1% (n=18)	17.4% (n=8)	17.4% (n=8)	6.5% (n=3)	19.6% (n=9)	46
SOAR in Helping You Get More Employment Skills	37.8% (n=31)	30.5% (n=25)	14.6% (n=12)	4.9% (n=4)	12.2% (n=10)	82

It is also interesting to note that Tree Trust was seen to be more helpful in providing employment skills than Project SOAR as a whole (58 versus 38 percent, respectively, identified as “very helpful”). This is, perhaps, to be expected, as Tree Trust was the primary employment agency used by SOAR participants.

Flex Fund Assistance

Approximately 67 percent of the participants had been informed of the Flex Fund, of whom 60 percent used the fund. Participants reported using the funding for various needs including housing, food, clothing, and transportation. In general, participants seemed appreciative of the fund and reported having used it to further employment opportunities.

Chemical Dependency Programming

Whereas 22 percent of the participants reported they needed help with alcohol and drug issues during their involvement with SOAR, a large proportion of the sample indicated they were referred to specific drug and alcohol programs. Alcoholism seems to have been prevalent, as 41 percent were referred to AA/NA groups. Similarly, a substantial number of participants were referred to outpatient or inpatient treatments (17 and 20 percent, respectively). This gap—between those who identified that they needed help

and those who were referred to programming—suggests that participants may have had more substance abuse problems than they were willing to report. In fact, as shown below in Table 23, only 21 participants commented on the helpfulness of SOAR regarding chemical dependency issues. Of those who did, most reported that SOAR services were very to somewhat helpful.

Table 23. Participant Satisfaction with Chemical Dependency Assistance

How Helpful was...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Assistance Regarding Chemical Dependency	52.4% (n=11)	33.3% (n=7)	9.5% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	4.8% (n=1)	21

Mental Health Programming

Similar to chemical dependency, few participants reported that they needed help with mental health issues and were uncomfortable discussing this topic. In fact, when interviewers began asking participants about mental health issues, interviewees would frequently make comments such as “I’m not crazy—I don’t need to answer these questions.”

Table 24. Participant Satisfaction with Mental Health Assistance

How Helpful was...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Total
Assistance Regarding Mental Health	22.2% (n=2)	44.4% (n=4)	11.1% (n=1)	11.1% (n=1)	11.1% (n=1)	9

Eighty percent reported that they had not been encouraged to seek mental health services and only 9 participants (9 percent) reported that they indicated they needed them. These 9 individuals were referred to programming by family members, CRCs, and supervision agents. Most of these individuals were recommended to attend individual counseling, family therapy, group therapy, anger management classes, and medication screening. However, only 3 individuals were referred to domestic violence programming. Six of the nine reported that SOAR was helpful in this area (See Table 24 above).

Basic Needs

The helpfulness of basic services provided by SOAR, as rated by the participants interviewed, is very similar to stakeholder results. For instance, material needs (such as food, clothing, and bus passes) were seen to be very helpful. In contrast, a smaller percentage of participants was aware of child support assistance and, of those that were, 21 percent found it was very unhelpful (see Table 25).

Table 25. Participant Satisfaction with Basic Needs Assistance

How Helpful was SOAR in...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	NA	Total
Material Needs	72.9% (n=62)	11.8% (n=10)	2.4% (n=2)	1.2% (n=1)	5.9% (n=5)	5.9% (n=5)	85
Identification Cards	44.9% (n=35)	19.2% (n=15)	10.3% (n=8)	0% (n=0)	15.4% (n=12)	10.3% (n=8)	78
Medical Assistance	40.3% (n=31)	19.5% (n=15)	5.2% (n=4)	3.9% (n=3)	19.5% (n=15)	11.7% (n=9)	77
Child Support	25.4% (n=16)	12.7% (n=8)	7.9% (n=5)	3.2% (n=2)	20.6% (n=13)	30.2% (n=19)	63

It is important to note that while participants did not seem to find child support assistance to be accessible or helpful, a few individuals reported that CRCs were helpful in child custody debates. In fact, one CRC was reported by three different participants as having been extremely helpful as he/she had testified in court for the participant's right to dual custody.

Community Reentry Coordinators

During incarceration, most participants met personally with their CRCs weekly, and some participants were contacted by their CRCs over the telephone (25 percent). After release, most participants reported meeting with their CRC once a week, in addition to weekly phone calls (54 and 60 percent, respectively). In general, participants reported being satisfied with their CRC (See Table 26). A clear majority strongly agreed that their CRC worked hard to get to know them, was dependable, straightforward, and understanding. However, fewer participants responded positively when asked if their CRC made getting in touch with other social services easier. This was the only category that did not clearly exhibit a positive response.

Similarly, when asked how they would rate their overall relationship with their CRC, almost 80 percent responded "very good" to "good." When asked to comment on their responses to questions concerning CRCs, general strengths and weakness appeared thematically. Participants talked of the personal support that their CRC provided and their "down to earth" nature. Weaknesses involved inconsistencies in services, as similarly reported by stakeholders, and difficulties getting a hold of CRCs.

Table 26. Participant Perceptions of CRCs

Your CRC...?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure	Total
Worked hard to get to know you prior to release	53.1% (n=51)	30.2% (n=29)	10.4% (n=10)	4.2% (n=4)	2.0% (n=2)	96
Contacted you when they said they would	57.4% (n=54)	28.7% (n=27)	5.3% (n=5)	7.4% (n=7)	1.1% (n=1)	94
Was able to answer your questions	55.9% (n=52)	32.3% (n=30)	3.2% (n=3)	4.3% (n=4)	4.3% (n=4)	93
Was clear about what was expected of you	55.9% (n=52)	34.4% (n=32)	3.2% (n=3)	3.2% (n=3)	3.2% (n=3)	93
Was clear what their responsibilities toward you were	58.5% (n=55)	31.9% (n=30)	6.4% (n=6)	2.1% (n=2)	1.1% (n=1)	94
Was helpful in your transition back into the community	51.6% (n=47)	26.4% (n=24)	6.6% (n=6)	7.7% (n=7)	7.7% (n=7)	91
Made getting in touch with social services easier	35.9% (n=33)	23.9% (n=22)	10.9% (n=10)	10.9% (n=10)	18.5% (n=17)	92
Listened to you	66.0% (n=62)	23.4% (n=22)	4.3% (n=4)	5.3% (n=5)	1.1% (n=1)	94
Understood your needs	60.6% (n=57)	21.3% (n=20)	8.5% (n=8)	7.4% (n=7)	2.1% (n=2)	94
You trust your CRC	49.5% (n=46)	32.3% (n=30)	6.5% (n=6)	7.5% (n=7)	4.3% (n=4)	93

Participant Analysis Based on CRC

Based on participant and stakeholder claims of different CRCs having been inconsistent in providing and allocating services, participant responses were separately analyzed based on their given CRC. Overall, it appears that CRC assignment greatly influenced both their satisfaction with the program and their access to services/resources.

Table 27. Participant Assessments of CRCs

When Asked...	Your CRC worked hard to get to know you prior to release?	Your CRC was able to answer your questions?	Your CRC was helpful in your transition back into the community?	You trusted your CRC?	How would you rate your relationship with your CRC?	Did you and your CRC develop a 72-hour plan?
Lowest Ranked CRC	76.5% agreed	75.0% agreed	64.7% agreed	76.5% agreed	68.8% good	64.7% yes
Highest Ranked CRC	100.0% agreed	94.4% agreed	94.4% agreed	94.4% agreed	94.4% good	83.3% yes

Table 27 presents the overall range of satisfaction with CRCs. As shown above, the same CRC consistently ranked lowest while another CRC was consistently ranked highest. In fact, the difference between participant assessments regarding these two CRCs was generally between 20-30 percent. This pattern is further evident when examining participant access to services and resources (See Table 28 below). We again see that there was a broad range of satisfaction. Whereas one CRC was consistently viewed the least helpful, another was consistently seen to be the most helpful. Although a certain degree of variation is expected simply because of personality differences and types of clients, the large and consistent variation as exhibited by this sample is notable in that it significantly affected participant experience with SOAR.

Table 28. Participant Service Assessment

When Asked...	How helpful was SOAR in helping you find employment after Tree Trust?	How helpful was SOAR in helping you get more employment skills?	Did anyone from SOAR help you with an employment search?	Did anyone from SOAR help you with your resume and/or application?	How helpful has SOAR been in helping with material needs?	How helpful has SOAR been in addressing issues of child support?
Lowest Ranked CRC	42.9% helpful	57.1 % helpful	75.0% yes	68.8% yes	75.0% helpful	28.6% helpful
Highest Ranked CRC	60.0% helpful	83.3% helpful	100.0% yes	83.3% yes	94.1% helpful	57.1% helpful

Analysis Based on Gender

A total of five female SOAR participants completed interviews. In general, women's responses were very similar to the males (see Table 29). Furthermore, there was uniformity in their responses, as all women responded similarly when compared to one another.

Table 29. Female Participant Assessment of CRCs

Your CRC...?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Understood Your Needs	40.0% (n=2)	60.0% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
Contacted You When They Said They Would	60.0% (n=3)	40.0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
Listened To You	40.0% (n=2)	60.0% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)

The majority of women did not meet with Federal F.O.R.U.M. or BIHA prior to their release. Only one of the female participants interviewed met with Federal F.O.R.U.M. after release. None of these females ever met with a mentor. Interpretation of these results should be made cautiously, however, as this is a small sub-sample. All of the women reported having support systems to help during their transitioning experience upon their release.

Reincarcerated Interviews versus Community Interviews

It is important to compare the responses of those interviewees who were reincarcerated at the time of the interview to those who had not reoffended and remained in the community. As shown in Table 30 below, it appears that reincarcerated individuals utilized some services offered by SOAR nearly as frequently as the other interviewees. For instance, there is only a small gap between the two populations when examining reentry plans, 72-hour plans, and attendance at Circles of Support.

Table 30. Participant Involvement in Services

SOAR Service	Community	Reincarcerated	Difference
Developed a Reentry Plan	86.7%	84.1%	2.6
Developed a 72-Hour Plan	76.7%	73.0%	3.7
Attended Circles of Support	36.8%	35.3%	1.5
Attended Faith-Based Support	60.0%	30.8%	28.2
Had a Mentor	50.0%	34.9%	15.1
Received help in obtaining a GED	100.0%	44.4%	55.6
Attended Educational Workshops	39.3%	22.8%	16.5
Attended Employment Support Groups	36.7%	22.4%	14.3
Worked for Tree Trust	56.7%	50.8%	5.9

However, a larger disparity in involvement is evident in faith-based services, mentors, receiving help with obtaining a GED, attendance at educational workshops, and

attendance at employment support groups. Overall, the reincarcerated interviewees were less likely to have utilized these services.

When ranking the helpfulness of the services offered, responses were very similar, with the reincarcerated participants ranking some services more positively than did those who were still in the community (See Table 31).

Table 31. Helpfulness of Services

Service	Community	Reincarcerated	Difference
Reentry Plan	80.8% positive	88.9% positive	-8.1
72-Hour Plan	87.0% helpful	88.6% helpful	-1.6
Circles of Support	80.0% helpful	84.6% helpful	-4.6
Faith-Based Support	83.3% helpful	88.9% helpful	-5.6
Mentor	88.9% helpful	100.0% helpful	-11.1
Educational Workshops	90.9% helpful	83.3% helpful	7.6
Employment Support Groups	90.9% helpful	84.6% helpful	6.3
Tree Trust	78.9% helpful	86.2% helpful	-7.3

It appears that reincarcerated individuals may have been reflecting on what opportunities existed for them when they were involved in SOAR, as they were now facing reentry without these services. Incarcerated interviewees often took ownership of their behavior, explaining that SOAR was an excellent resource and very helpful, but prefacing these comments with “I just screwed up.” As one incarcerated interviewee states, “They covered everything; [I] just chose to go astray and messed up.”

It also appears that reincarcerated participants reported having slightly less social support than the overall sample (See Table 32). This finding coincides with the social support interviews, as only five of the 45 interviewees were associated with a reincarcerated individual. This suggests that those participants, who went on to reoffend, had fewer social support individuals helping them through the transition experience (as they were unable to identify anyone for the evaluation team to interview).

Table 32. Social Support by Interview Incarceration Status

Support Group	Community	Reincarcerated	Difference
Family	92.9%	83.6%	9.3
Friends	79.3%	68.9%	10.4
Social Service Professionals	31.0%	26.7%	4.3
Church Members	43.3%	33.3%	10.0
Neighbors	23.3%	18.3%	5
Employers/Coworkers	36.7%	36.7%	0
Other	17.2%	28.6%	-11.3

The only social group where incarcerated individuals *more* frequently reported support (when compared to community interviews) was “other.” When asked to elaborate on this, incarcerated interviewees often identified girlfriends and roommates.

Overall Satisfaction with SOAR

As reported by participants, it appears that services provided by SOAR were seen to be helpful. Overall, it appears that SOAR helped participants form a more positive view of themselves (77 percent), increased their involvement in the community (64 percent), empowered them to be more financially independent (70 percent), and avoid illegal activities (71 percent) (see Table 33). On the other hand, a large percentage of the sample reported that SOAR did not help them form a better relationship with their family, supervision agent, or friends (35, 31, and 43 percent, respectively).

Table 33. Participant Overall Satisfaction with SOAR

Has SOAR helped you...?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure	Total
Form a better relationship with your family	27.7% (n=26)	26.6% (n=25)	22.3% (n=21)	12.8% (n=12)	10.6% (n=10)	94
Form a better relationship with your parole officer	35.5% (n=33)	24.7% (n=23)	22.6% (n=21)	8.6% (n=8)	8.6% (n=8)	93
Form a better relationship with your friends	12.8% (n=12)	27.7% (n=26)	30.9% (n=29)	11.7% (n=11)	17.0% (n=16)	94
Form a more positive view of yourself	44.1% (n=41)	33.3% (n=31)	10.8% (n=10)	7.5% (n=7)	4.3% (n=4)	93
Be more involved in the community	27.7% (n=26)	36.2% (n=34)	19.1% (n=18)	8.5% (n=8)	8.5% (n=8)	94
Be more able to financially support yourself	31.2% (n=29)	38.7% (n=36)	12.9% (n=12)	9.7% (n=9)	7.5% (n=7)	93
Get better job skills	35.1% (n=33)	26.6% (n=25)	18.1% (n=17)	9.6% (n=9)	10.6% (n=10)	94
Get more education	25.5% (n=24)	24.5% (n=23)	24.5% (n=23)	9.6% (n=9)	16.0% (n=15)	94
Helped you avoid illegal activities	51.6% (n=48)	19.4% (n=18)	12.9% (n=12)	8.6% (n=8)	7.5% (n=7)	93

Overall Strengths and Weaknesses of Project SOAR

At the close of the interview, all participants were asked to identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of SOAR. Below are the most commonly discussed topics.

Strengths

Almost all of those interviewed were willing to comment on the strengths of Project SOAR. The most common response, when asked about the strengths of SOAR, was “Everything – they helped me a lot.” More specifically, participants reported that the provision of basic needs, housing, and employment immediately after release was extremely helpful. Interviewees often reported that CRCs and other providers kept them “occupied and involved in positive things.” They commonly reported that they found stability in their lives, which they had never experienced before. In particular, participants were thankful for the help they received in navigating through resources and various employment agencies. Overall, participants reported they received much-needed support from SOAR, both emotionally and materially. As one interviewee stated, “They helped me find a better person within myself.”

Weaknesses

Only 18 participants provided a comment on the weaknesses of SOAR. These responses were extremely varied; however, three very general patterns emerged. First, some interviewees reported that the primary weakness was the abrupt ending of the project. Second, others reported that more educational opportunities could have been offered. Third, participants again addressed inconsistencies in CRCs. In fact, many participants stated that the CRC ranked least positively was the most unhelpful aspect of SOAR. When asked what services could have made SOAR more positively influential, responses were generally clustered around increased education opportunities, diverse religious support, and child custody/support issues.

Social Support Individuals

Interviews were conducted with various friends and family members of the participants who were interviewed. These individuals were identified by the participants themselves as having been sufficiently involved with Project SOAR to provide constructive feedback. Overall, 45 interviews were conducted. These individuals varied in terms of their relationship to the participant and exposure to Project SOAR. A majority of the interviews were completed with “other” family members, including participants’ in-laws, nephews/nieces, and uncles/aunts.

These interviews were primarily used to assess participant improvement and examine the effectiveness of Circles of Support. In addition, social support interviews were unique in that they provided the evaluation team with an outsider’s perspective to Project SOAR, as they did not participate in services provided by the project other than Circles of Support, nor were they professionally invested in SOAR.

It is important to consider the way in which this sample was identified. As participants of Project SOAR identified those supportive individuals who could provide meaningful feedback, this sample is not representative of the overall social support population. As discussed throughout this section, the involvement of family members in SOAR was not as extensive as originally intended. Therefore, many participants were not able to identify anyone who could provide feedback on SOAR. In fact, only 37 of the 98 participants interviewed were able to identify a social support individual for the evaluation team to interview. This is a finding in itself, as it suggests that family inclusion in SOAR programming was not as extensive as planned. Thus, the sample interviewed was *more* involved with Project SOAR than the overall population of supportive friends and family. Furthermore, 40 of the 45 interviewees were associated with SOAR participants who were *not* reincarcerated at the time of the interview. This figure suggests two things: (1) participants who remained in the community may have been more likely to have social support individuals involved in their reentry, and (2) these social support individuals may have been more likely to be involved in SOAR services and programming. These findings are supported by the fact that so few reincarcerated participants could identify any social support individuals for the evaluation team to interview.

Extent of Involvement with SOAR

Of those social support individuals who were identified by participants to interview, it appears that there was limited involvement in, or exposure to, Project SOAR. For example, when asked if the participant was still involved in SOAR, approximately 27 percent replied that they did not know. This indicates that while these individuals may have been close to the given participant, they were not fully aware of the participant's involvement in SOAR. This is interesting, as these individuals were specifically identified due to their knowledge of SOAR, indicating that either Project SOAR was minimally inclusive of social support individuals and/or participants did not often disclose details of their involvement with SOAR to their friends and family.

Furthermore, when asked who the participant's CRC was, only 11 of the 45 were able to provide a name (25 percent). However, of those 11, six had been personally contacted by a CRC. In general, it appeared that CRCs contacted them in order to encourage them to support a given participant and inform them of the issues with which the participant was currently struggling. It is important to note, however, that of these six individuals, none reported having been informed of Circles of Support, suggesting that CRCs may not have prioritized this program.

Circles of Support

Of those interviewed, seven social support individuals remembered having been asked to participate in Circles of Support. In total, four of the forty-five actually attended circles (9 percent). These individuals reported attending anywhere from one to ten meetings (average of five). They appeared to be satisfied with the group, as three ranked it as "very helpful" while the other ranked it as "somewhat helpful." When asked what was most helpful about circles, one respondent stated that everybody pulled together to support the participant and helped them focus. Another stated that circles had specifically helped the participant's relationship with her daughter and provided her with companionship. On the other hand, two of the four identified the need for increased community member participation in circles. The other two individuals reported that circles needed to be implemented for a longer period of time in order to fully support the given participant.

Contact with Project SOAR

As expected from the above findings, it appears that social support individuals had little contact with SOAR staff. For instance, only 27 percent of those interviewed reported that they had been contacted by anyone from SOAR (this includes representatives from BIHA, RESOURCE, Federal F.O.R.U.M., CRCs and mentors). When asked why they had been contacted by SOAR staff, most individuals indicated they had received a progress report on the given participant and were encouraged to provide further support. Eighty-two percent of those interviewed had never contacted any staff members on their own initiative. Of those who initiated contact with a staff person, the majority reported the conversation was helpful. These findings indicate that while contact between SOAR staff and social support individuals was minimal, when it did occur it was found to be helpful.

Helpfulness of SOAR Services

When asked to rank the helpfulness of various services provided by SOAR, responses varied greatly. As shown in Table 34, there seems to be a rather dichotomous response to SOAR services. It appears that social support individuals largely identified SOAR services as either “very helpful” or “very unhelpful” and tended to avoid any neutral rankings.

Table 34. Social Support Individual Satisfaction with SOAR Services

How Helpful were...?	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Unsure / NA
CRCs	27.3% (n=12)	27.3% (n=12)	11.1% (n=5)	6.6% (n=3)	20.0% (n=9)	8.8% (n=4)
Employment Preparation	17.7% (n=8)	35.5% (n=16)	4.4% (n=2)	6.6% (n=3)	31.1% (n=14)	4.4% (n=2)
Long-term Employment	17.7 % (n=8)	20.0% (n=9)	15.5% (n=7)	6.6% (n=3)	28.8% (n=13)	11.1% (n=5)
Educational Needs	13.3% (n=6)	28.8% (n=13)	15.5% (n=7)	4.4% (n=2)	28.8% (n=13)	8.8% (n=4)
Finding Housing	13.3% (n=6)	11.1% (n=5)	22.2% (n=10)	8.8% (n=4)	33.3% (n=15)	11.1% (n=5)
Preparing Material Needs	24.4% (n=11)	33.3% (n=15)	0% (n=0)	4.4% (n=2)	24.4% (n=11)	13.3% (n=6)
Connecting to Social Services	28.8% (n=13)	20.0% (n=9)	2.2% (n=1)	2.2% (n=1)	26.6% (n=12)	20.0% (n=9)
Support for Family Issues	26.6% (n=12)	15.5% (n=7)	13.3% (n=6)	0% (n=0)	31.1% (n=14)	13.3% (n=6)
Increasing Network of Support	24.4% (n=11)	20.0% (n=9)	4.4% (n=2)	4.4% (n=2)	31.1% (n=14)	15.5% (n=7)
Easing Transition in Community	28.8% (n=13)	20.0% (n=9)	11.1% (n=5)	13.3% (n=6)	24.4% (n=11)	2.2% (n=1)
Overall: Column Totals	20.3% (n=100)	26.8% (n=132)	9.1% (n=45)	5.2% (n=26)	28.4% (n=140)	9.9% (n=49)

For instance, when social support individuals were asked to rank how helpful SOAR was in easing the participant’s transition back into the community, 30 percent responded “very helpful” while a comparable 25 percent responded “very unhelpful.”

This dichotomous pattern is present throughout nine of the ten service rankings. The exception to this pattern is interviewees’ responses to housing. In this case, a more clearly identifiable majority responded that SOAR was “very unhelpful” in locating housing that met a given participant’s needs. Furthermore, this dichotomy cannot be explained by separately examining the responses of those few interviewees who were

associated with a reincarcerated individual. In fact, these five social support interviewees tended to all rank services positively. Therefore, the dichotomy occurs between those 40 interviewees who were associated with participants still in the community.

Perceived Participant Improvement

Interviewees were asked to assess any improvements made by the participant during involvement in Project SOAR. While social support individuals were able to identify many faults with SOAR programming, they nonetheless reported that improvements were made for all aspects of personal growth included in the questioning (See Table 35, majority ranking highlighted). Forty-five percent reported that participants improved “a lot” in terms of abstaining from drug and alcohol use. This improvement has implications for reducing recidivism in that chemical use has been found to significantly increase reoffense rates. Interviewees reported similar improvements in participant’s ability to stay out of trouble.

Table 35. Social Support Individual Perceived Participant Improvement

How Much Did They Improve In...?	A Lot	A Little	Not At All	Not Applicable	Unsure
Employment	24.4% (n=11)	42.2% (n=19)	24.4% (n=11)	2.2% (n=1)	6.6% (n=3)
Staying out of Trouble	46.6% (n=21)	22.2% (n=10)	17.7% (n=8)	6.6% (n=3)	6.6% (n=3)
Handling Personal Relationships	31.1% (n=14)	33.3% (n=15)	26.6% (n=12)	2.2% (n=1)	6.6% (n=3)
Meeting Basic Needs	35.5% (n=16)	35.5% (n=16)	20.0% (n=9)	2.2% (n=1)	6.6% (n=3)
Making Appropriate Decisions	44.4% (n=20)	24.4% (n=11)	17.7% (n=8)	2.2% (n=1)	9.1% (n=5)
Involvement in the Community	26.6% (n=12)	40.0% (n=18)	22.2% (n=10)	4.4% (n=2)	6.6% (n=3)
Abstaining from Alcohol or Drug Use	44.4% (n=20)	22.2% (n=10)	11.1% (n=5)	8.8% (n=4)	11.4% (n=6)

These figures indicate that while services provided to participants were not uniformly identified as helpful, behavioral improvements were still believed to have occurred. It is important to note that the five interviewees who were associated with a reincarcerated individual also reported significant improvement in participants. For instance, when asked how much the participant had improved in terms of avoiding illegal activities, three interviewees reported “a lot” while two reported “a little.” These responses are comparable to the overall sample of social support individuals.

Upon close examination of the overall sample, however, many interviewees reported that improvements were not necessarily the result of involvement in SOAR. As one spouse remarked, “All the areas of improvement were accomplished from [participant’s name] own efforts and not a result of participation in Project SOAR.” This type of response was

typical. In particular, many interviewees highlighted the importance of family support rather than formal services.

Analysis Based on Relationship with Participant

When responses were separated based on the interviewees' relationship to SOAR participants, there were no apparent differences between results.

Strengths of Project SOAR

Only 21 of the 45 interviewed were open to discussing the strengths of the program. The remainder merely wanted to skip the question or replied that nothing was helpful. When asked what aspects of SOAR were most helpful for participants, the services mentioned were mentoring/guidance, provisions for material needs, support from Federal F.O.R.U.M., and families.

Weaknesses of Project SOAR

General feedback on how to improve SOAR noted that the concept of the project was wonderful, but the implementation hindered its full potential. Many reported that there needed to be increased diversity in interventions. For instance, Tree Trust alone was not seen as enough, as many reported that there should be additional employment options that included long-term opportunities.

Housing was also brought up often. For some, finding adequate housing was a challenge, whereas others reported it was maintaining, rather than finding, housing that was the problem. The struggles faced by participants in terms of housing appear to be multi-faceted and individualized, suggesting the need for housing status assessments in order to focus CRC efforts on the specific challenges faced by the individual client.

OUTCOME EVALUATION

The preceding sections examined not only the extent to which the implementation of SOAR adhered to the original design, but also the perceptions of those who were involved in the project—core partners, stakeholders, participants, and social support individuals. In this section, the report evaluates the impact of SOAR on the extent to which offenders recidivated. Recidivism is often considered the gold standard in determining the efficacy of a criminal justice program. As such, judgments about the effectiveness of a program are frequently based on whether participation in the program reduces offenders' likelihood of reoffending.

Widely regarded as the most rigorous and effective method for program evaluations, the experimental design is based on the idea that causality can be determined by comparing the outcomes (in this case, recidivism) of two groups of offenders who are essentially the same except that one group participates in the program (the experimental group) while the other (the control group) does not. Equivalence between the experimental and control groups is best achieved by randomly assigning offenders from a relatively identical group of offenders into one of the two groups. Therefore, if offenders from the experimental group reoffend at a significantly lower rate than a control group of similar offenders, it might be reasonable to conclude, then, that the program significantly reduces recidivism.

Methods

The present study used an experimental design to compare the recidivism rates of SOAR participants with a control group of offenders. In June 2003, DOC staff began randomly assigning eligible offenders into either the experimental group (i.e., SOAR participation) or the control group (i.e., no participation). Program eligibility was determined on the basis of four broad criteria: scheduled release date, age, sentencing county, and offense type. More specifically, offenders were considered eligible if they were between the ages of 16 and 34, had a Hennepin County commitment, were not incarcerated for a sex offense, and were scheduled to be released prior to the end of the project (June 30, 2005).

Overall, there were 128 offenders assigned to the control group, seven of whom were juveniles, and 347 assigned to the SOAR group, 32 of whom were juveniles. When offenders were assigned to the control group, they were sent a letter advising them that, although eligible, they would not be participating in SOAR. When offenders were assigned to SOAR, however, they were approached in the correctional facility by the CRC coordinator and asked about their willingness to participate in the program. Most of the offenders accepted the offer to participate, but there were 67 (19 percent of those offered) who refused. Of the offenders who accepted the offer to participate in SOAR, there were 40 who were later found ineligible for the program prior to their release from prison because they had an INS detainer, had a previous sex crime conviction, or later decided not to return to Hennepin County. As a result, there were 208 adult and 32 juvenile offenders who participated in SOAR.

Although the evaluation was set up to be a randomized experimental design, the process of assigning offenders to either the control or SOAR group was not random throughout the entire project. Beginning in July 2004, 13 months after the inception of the assignment process, all remaining eligible offenders were assigned to the SOAR group. The decision to halt the random assignment process and place all remaining eligible offenders in the SOAR group was due to an unanticipated deficit in the number of willing and eligible offenders who were returning to Hennepin County. Assigning all eligible offenders to the SOAR group from July 2004-March 2005 (the last month offenders were assigned to the SOAR group) increased the total number of offenders who participated in the program; in fact, the total number of participants was consistent with the target population of 225 offenders. However, because offender assignments were not random for the final nine months of the assignment process, it will be necessary to use a multivariate statistical technique in the recidivism analyses in order to statistically control for observed differences between the two groups.

Although there were 39 eligible juvenile offenders (32 in the SOAR group and seven in the control group), these offenders were not included in the outcome analyses presented later for several reasons. First, as indicated by the process evaluation, there were a number of problems in the way SOAR was implemented. These problems were arguably more severe for the juvenile offenders as there were some who never had the opportunity to fully participate in the program. Second, and more important, there is a lack of valid and reliable arrest and conviction data on juvenile offenders. Although the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) maintains a juvenile offender database, many offenses are not recorded because the BCA frequently does not receive fingerprints (which are necessary in order to achieve a biometric match) for juveniles.

This evaluation therefore compares the recidivism rates of the 208 adult offenders in the SOAR group with the 121 adult offenders in the control group. The 67 offenders who refused to participate were also included in a separate analysis in order to determine whether they differed significantly from the offenders in the other two groups, especially the SOAR group. The 40 offenders who were later found to be ineligible were not included in the analyses, however, because the reasons they were removed from the study [e.g., Immigration and Naturalized Services (INS) detainer, prior sex offense, not returning to Hennepin County, etc.] would have precluded their assignment to the SOAR group.

In the present study, recidivism was measured two different ways; first, as a felony reconviction and, second, as a reincarceration for a new offense. Conviction and incarceration data were collected on offenders through June 30, 2006. Data on convictions were obtained electronically from the BCA, whereas incarceration data were derived from the DOC's Correctional Operations Management System (COMS) database. The main limitation with using these data is that they measure only convictions and incarcerations that took place in the State of Minnesota. Because neither measure includes convictions or incarcerations occurring in other states, the findings presented

later likely underestimate the true reconviction and reincarceration rates for the offenders examined here.

The at-risk period for all 396 offenders began when they were first released from prison following their assignment into either the SOAR or Control groups. For the offenders who recidivated, their at-risk period ended when they were first reconvicted of a felony or were first reincarcerated for a new offense prior to July 1, 2006. For the offenders who did not recidivate, their at-risk period concluded on June 30, 2006.

As shown in Table 36, the average follow-up period for all 396 offenders was 23 months. Although the vast majority of offenders had at least 12 months to reoffend, there were a few offenders who were released from prison after June 30, 2005; as a result, the minimum follow-up period was 8 months for the Control group, 10 months for SOAR, and 11 months for the Refusal group. The maximum follow-up period, on the other hand, was 36 months for the Control group and 34 months for both SOAR and the Refusal groups.

Table 36. Length of Follow-Up Period by Program Participation

Group	Minimum (Months)	Average (Months)	Maximum (Months)
SOAR	10.0	20.1	33.7
Control	8.2	23.7	36.4
Refuse	10.7	26.3	34.0
Overall	8.2	22.8	36.4

To accurately measure the amount of time that all offenders were actually at risk to reoffend, it was necessary to deduct the amount of time they spent in prison as supervised release violators from their total at-risk period or “street time.” Failure to deduct time spent in prison as a supervised release violator would artificially increase the length of the at-risk periods for these offenders. Therefore, the time that an offender spent in prison as a supervised release violator was subtracted from his/her “street” time (i.e., at-risk period), but only if it preceded a reconviction or reincarceration for a new offense or if the offender did not recidivate. In other words, the time an offender spent in prison as a supervised release violator was not deducted from his/her “street” time if it followed a reconviction or reincarceration for a new offense; i.e., a recidivism-qualifying event.

A conviction and/or incarceration was considered a recidivism event only if it pertained to an offense that had taken place following release. For example, a handful of offenders returned to prison for a “new” offense that had been committed prior to the beginning of their previous prison term; e.g., an offender who was incarcerated from 2003 to 2004 (the beginning of his at-risk period) returns to prison in 2005 for an offense he committed in 2002. In these instances, the offenses were not considered recidivism events, but the time that offenders served in prison was deducted from their at-risk period.

This study provides two different measures of SOAR participation. The first measure distinguishes between offenders who entered SOAR (i.e., the experimental group) and those who did not (i.e., the control group). For this dichotomous variable, CIP

participation was coded as “1” while the Control group was coded as “0.” The second measure, on the other hand, divides SOAR participation into three discrete categories: SOAR participants, the Control group, and those who refused to participate in SOAR. For this measure, three dichotomous dummy variables were created: SOAR group (1 = SOAR offenders, 0 = offenders assigned to the Control group or who refused to participate), Control group (1 = Control group, 0 = SOAR or Refusal group), and Refusal group (1 = Refusal group, 0 = SOAR or Control group). The Control group variable serves as the reference in the statistical analyses.

In the statistical analyses presented later, the dependent variable is whether an offender recidivates (felony reconviction or reincarceration for a new offense) at any point from the time of release through June 30, 2006. The principal variable of interest, meanwhile, is program participation because the central purpose of the outcome evaluation is to determine whether SOAR significantly lowers the recidivism rates of its participants. The control variables included in the statistical model should therefore consist of those that might theoretically have an impact on whether an offender recidivates and, thus, might be considered a rival causal factor.

The following lists the independent variables used in this study and describes how they were created:

Offender Sex: dichotomized as male (1) or female (0).

Offender Race: dichotomized as white (1) or minority (0).

Age at Release: the age of the offender in years at the time of release based on the date of birth and release date.

Offense Type: four dichotomous dummy variables were created to quantify offense type; i.e., the governing offense at the time of release. The four variables were person offense (1 = person offense, 0 = non-person offense); property offense (1 = property offense, 0 = non-property offense); drug offense (1 = drug offense, 0 = non-drug offense); and other offense (1 = other offense, 0 = non-other offenses). The other offense variable serves as the reference in the statistical analyses.

Prior Felony Convictions: the number of prior felony convictions, excluding the conviction(s) that resulted in the offender’s incarceration.

Prior Prison Commitments: the number of prior prison commitments, excluding the offender’s current prison incarceration.

Institutional Disciplinary History: the number of discipline convictions received during the term of imprisonment for which the offender was released.

Length of Stay (LOS): the number of months between admission and release dates.

Length of Post-Release Supervision: the number of months between an offender's first release date and the end of post-release supervision; i.e., the sentence expiration or conditional release date, the greater of the two.

Intensity of Post-Release Supervision: three dichotomous dummy variables were created to measure the intensity of post-release supervision. The three variables were intensive supervised release (ISR) (1 = ISR, 0 = Non-ISR); supervised release (SR) (1 = SR, 0 = Non-SR); and discharge (1 = discharge or no supervision, 0 = released to supervision). Discharge is the variable that serves as the reference in the statistical analyses.

Supervised Release Revocations: the number of times during an offender's term of imprisonment that he returned to prison as a supervised release violator.

In analyzing recidivism, survival analysis models are preferable in that they utilize time-dependent data, which are important in determining not only whether offenders recidivate but also when they recidivate. As a result, this study uses a Cox proportional hazards model, which uses both "time" and "status" variables in estimating the impact of the independent variables on recidivism. For the analyses presented here, the "time" variable measures the amount of time from the date of release until the date of first reconviction, reincarceration, or June 30, 2006, for those who did not recidivate.

For offenders who returned to prison as supervised release violators, the time they spent in prison was deducted from their total survival time when: 1) the supervised release return preceded a reconviction or reincarceration, or 2) the offender did not have a reconviction or reincarceration. The "status" variable used in the analyses was one of the two recidivism variables mentioned above; e.g., reconviction and reincarceration.

Results

The findings in Table 37 describe the characteristics of the offenders from the three groups. The results indicate that the sample consisted mainly of African American males in their 20s at the time of release. It is interesting to note, however, that offenders who refused to participate in SOAR were, compared to the SOAR group, less likely to be African American. For example, 49 percent of those who refused were African American compared to 74 percent in the SOAR group.

Of the 396 offenders, 45 percent had a felony conviction prior to their commitment to prison. In addition, 35 percent had previously been committed to prison. It is important to point out, though, that the criminal histories of SOAR participants were more extensive than those in both the Control and Refusal groups. The difference between the SOAR and Control groups, moreover, was statistically significant for all of the criminal history measures except for Prior Felony, which barely failed to reach statistical significance ($p = .06$).

Table 37. Descriptive Statistics of SOAR, Control, and Refusal Groups

	SOAR	Control	Refuse	Total
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	92.3	93.4	94.0	92.9
Female	7.7	6.6	6.0	7.1
<u>Race</u>				
White	15.4	14.9	25.8	17.0
African American	73.6	71.1	48.5	68.6
American Indian	7.7	9.1	10.6	8.6
Asian	1.9	4.1	9.1	3.8
Hispanic	1.4	0.8	6.1	2.0
Avg. Age at Release	27.1	27.8	27.5	27.4
<u>Criminal History</u>				
Prior Felony	49.5	38.8	44.8	45.4
Avg. No. of Prior Felonies*	1.25	0.78	1.25	1.11
Prior Prison Commit*	40.4	27.3	30.0	34.6
Avg. No. of Prior Prison Commits*	0.72	0.39	0.72	0.62
<u>Offense Type</u>				
Person	44.7	43.0	35.4	42.6
Property	19.7	19.8	24.6	20.6
Drug	16.8	25.6	21.5	20.3
Other	18.8	11.6	18.5	16.5
Avg. Discipline Convictions	9.35	9.13	7.28	8.93
Avg. Length of Stay (Months)*	18.4	23.1	24.0	21.1
<u>Post-Release Supervision</u>				
ISR	22.6	24.0	17.9	22.2
Supervised Release	57.7	52.9	59.7	56.6
Work Release	16.8	19.8	19.4	18.2
None/Discharge	2.9	3.3	3.0	3.0
Avg. Length of Supervision (mos.)	13.4	15.5	16.1	14.5
SR Revocation	40.9	48.7	49.3	44.7
Avg. No. of SR Revocations	0.51	0.60	0.69	0.57
<u>Recidivism</u>				
Felony Reconviction	26.0	19.8	17.9	22.7
Reincarceration	18.3	13.2	13.4	15.9
N	208	121	67	396

* Statistically significant difference between the SOAR and Control groups at the .05 level

Although it is reasonable to speculate that the difference in criminal histories is due to the termination of the random assignment process, the evidence does not bear this out.

Indeed, of the 131 SOAR offenders allocated during the random phase of the assignment process, 48 percent had a prior felony, 1.22 was the average number of prior felonies, 39 percent had a prior prison commitment, and 0.56 was the average number of prior prison commitments.

At 43 percent, person offenses were the most common crimes for which the 396 offenders were incarcerated, followed by property offenses (21 percent), drug offenses (20 percent), and other offenses (17 percent). The average length of stay for all offenders was 21 months; however, the average length of stay was five months shorter for SOAR participants, a difference that was statistically significant at the .05 level. During their period of incarceration, offenders had an average of nine discipline convictions.

Nearly all of the offenders (97 percent) were released to supervision, whereas the remaining three percent were discharged due to the expiration of their sentences. Of those released to supervision, 57 percent were placed on supervised release, 22 percent on intensive supervised release, and 18 percent on work release. The average length of supervision was 15 months, while 45 percent had at least one supervised release revocation. The average number of supervised release revocations, meanwhile, was 0.6.

A little more than one-fifth (23 percent) of the offenders had been reconvicted of a felony by the end of the follow-up period, whereas 16 percent had returned to prison for a new offense. For both measures of recidivism, SOAR participants had higher rates of reoffending. For example, the reconviction rate for SOAR offenders was 26 percent compared to 20 percent for the Control group and 18 percent for the Refusal group. The reincarceration rate, meanwhile, was 18 percent for SOAR and 13 percent for both the Control and Refusal groups.

Table 38. Recidivism Rates in Six-Month Intervals

<u>Reconviction</u>	<u>SOAR Percent</u>	<u>Control Percent</u>	<u>Refuse Percent</u>	<u>Total Percent</u>
6 Months	13.5	6.6	6.0	10.1
12 Months	20.7	15.7	10.4	17.4
18 Months	24.0	17.4	16.4	20.7
24 Months	25.0	19.0	17.9	22.0
Total	26.0	19.8	17.9	22.7
<u>Reincarceration</u>				
6 Months	3.4	1.7	0.0	2.3
12 Months	11.5	7.4	3.0	8.8
18 Months	15.9	10.7	9.0	13.1
24 Months	17.3	11.6	11.9	14.6
Total	18.3	13.2	13.4	14.6
N	208	121	67	396

In Table 38, the rates are broken out in six-month intervals to provide a more detailed look at the extent to which offenders recidivated. At six months, both the reconviction and reincarceration rates for SOAR offenders were at least twice that of the offenders in both the Control and Refusal groups. This initial difference in recidivism rates did not increase much over time, however. Instead, the size of the difference in recidivism rates (for both reconviction and reincarceration) between the SOAR group and the other two groups remained fairly constant from the six-month mark to the end of the follow-up period.

When SOAR offenders recidivated with a new crime, how did the severity of their offenses compare to that of the Control group? Because the felony conviction data obtained from the BCA do not always include offense type information, Table 4 depicts only the findings on the type of offense for which offenders were reincarcerated. The results indicate that all three groups were most likely to return for a property offense. Indeed, property offenses accounted for 40 percent of the 63 reincarceration offenses. Compared to the other two groups, SOAR offenders were more likely to reoffend with a person crime (24 percent), whereas offenders in the Control group were more likely to be reincarcerated for a drug offense (25 percent).

Table 39. Offense Type for Reincarcerated Offenders

Reoffense Type	SOAR (Percent)	Control (Percent)	Refuse (Percent)	Total (Percent)
Property	34.2	37.5	66.7	39.7
Person	23.7	18.8	11.1	20.6
Sex	5.3	0.0	22.2	6.3
Meth	0.0	6.3	0.0	1.6
Other Drug	18.4	18.8	0.0	15.9
Other	18.4	18.8	0.0	15.9
N	38	16	9	63

The results presented thus far indicate that SOAR offenders, compared to the other two groups, have reoffended at a higher rate, particularly during the first six months. But is this difference statistically significant? Put another way, did participation in SOAR significantly increase an offender's chances of reoffending? To address this question, four Cox regression models were estimated across types of recidivism (e.g., reconviction and reincarceration) and program participation (e.g., SOAR vs. Control and SOAR, Control, and Refusal group).

As noted earlier, it is necessary to use a multivariate statistical technique such as a Cox regression model due to the termination of the randomized assignment of offenders a little more than halfway through this project. The use of the Cox regression model takes on added importance, however, considering the statistically significant differences observed for length of stay and, more importantly, prior criminal history. Recidivism research has consistently demonstrated that prior criminal history is one of the strongest predictors of future criminal offending. Given that the criminal histories of the SOAR offenders are significantly greater in comparison to those of the other two groups, it is possible that their higher rates of recidivism are due to their more extensive prior involvement in crime as opposed to participation in SOAR. By statistically controlling for the impact of prior criminal history (as well as the other independent variables) on recidivism, the Cox regression model provides a more precise and valid estimate of the effect of SOAR participation on reoffending.

Felony Reconviction

In Figure 2, the felony reconviction survival curves are presented for all three measures of program participation. This figure, which represents the time following release to first felony conviction, depicts the probability that an offender "survived" without being reconvicted of a felony. As noted above, SOAR offenders were reconvicted at a faster

rate throughout the entire follow-up period. In particular, at the end of the first six months, the probability of remaining reconviction-free was 85 percent for offenders in SOAR, 93 percent for the Control group, and 94 percent for the Refusal group. After 12 months, the probability was 77 percent for SOAR, 84 percent for the Control group, and 89 percent for the Refusal group. After 24 months, the probability of remaining reconviction free was 68 percent for SOAR, 79 percent for the Control group, and 80 percent for the Refusal group. And at the end of the follow-up period, the probability for the Refusal group was the same as it was at 24 months, whereas the probabilities for the SOAR and Control groups dropped to 59 and 76 percent, respectively.

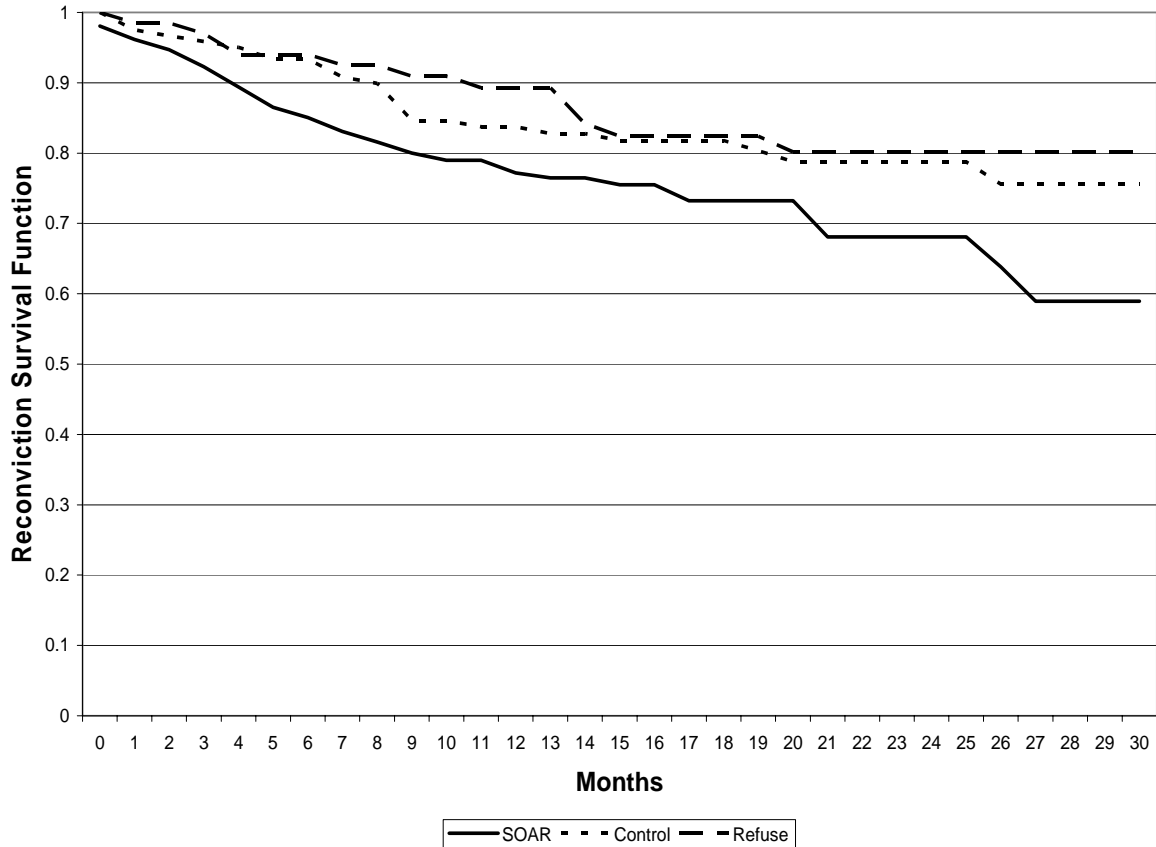


Figure 2. Reconviction Survival Functions

The results of the Cox regression models that analyze time to first felony reconviction are shown in Table 40. In Model 1, the program participation variable is a binary measure (SOAR = 1 and Control = 0), whereas program participation is divided into three categories (SOAR, Control, and Refusal groups with the Control group as the reference) in Model 2. The results from both models reveal that, controlling for the effects of the other independent variables, SOAR did not have a statistically significant impact on the

Table 40. Cox Proportional Hazards Model: Time to First Felony Reconviction

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	<u>Hazard Ratio</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>p Value</u>	<u>Hazard Ratio</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>p Value</u>
Program Participation						
SOAR	1.34	0.264	0.268	1.30	0.262	0.317
Refuse				0.72	0.363	0.374
Male Offenders	2.10	0.503	0.139	2.40	0.495	0.076
Minority Offenders	1.04	0.310	0.897	1.19	0.290	0.554
Age at Release	1.02	0.031	0.589	1.01	0.028	0.830
Prior Felony	2.11	0.286	0.009	1.87	0.264	0.017
Offense Type						
Person	1.06	0.366	0.864	1.02	0.339	0.943
Property	1.90	0.372	0.084	1.83	0.343	0.079
Drugs	0.68	0.427	0.359	0.59	0.401	0.192
Discipline	1.02	0.008	0.030	1.02	0.008	0.027
Length of Stay	0.98	0.013	0.102	0.98	0.012	0.048
ISR	0.65	0.359	0.224	0.54	0.351	0.083
Length of Supervision	0.97	0.022	0.237	0.98	0.021	0.242
SR Revocations	1.27	0.177	0.177	1.23	0.167	0.212

extent to which offenders were reconvicted of a felony. If offenders had a prior felony conviction, however, they were significantly more likely to be reconvicted. A prior felony conviction increased the timing to reconviction by 111 percent in Model 1 and by 87 percent in Model 2. The only other significant predictor in both models was institutional disciplinary convictions, which increased the risk of timing to reconviction by 2 percent for every disciplinary conviction. Although Length of Stay did not have a statistically significant impact in Model 1, it was significant in Model 2, decreasing the risk of time to reoffense by 2 percent for every one month increase in Length of Stay.

Reimprisonment for a New Offense

Figure 3 shows the survival functions for time to first reincarceration across all three types of participation. Similar to Figure 1, the survival probabilities of the SOAR group were lower throughout the entire follow-up period. For example, after six months, the probability of not returning to prison for a new offense was 95 percent for SOAR, 97 percent for the Control group, and 100 percent for the Refusal group. After 12 months, the probability of remaining reincarceration-free was 86 percent for SOAR, 91 percent for the Control group, and 97 percent for the Refusal group. After 24 months, the probabilities were 75 percent for SOAR, 87 percent for the Control group, and 86 percent for the Refusal group. At the end of the follow-up period, the survival probability for the SOAR group was 63 percent compared to 74 percent for the Control group and 83 percent for the Refusal group.

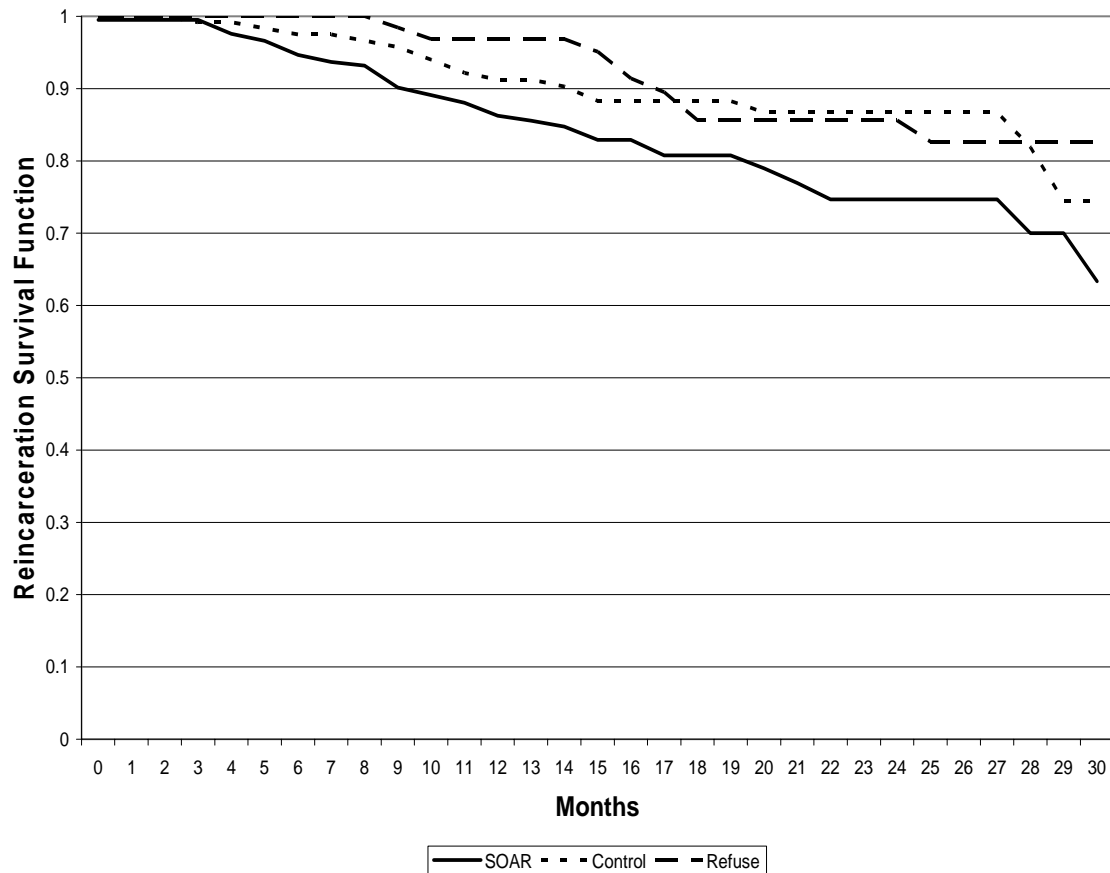


Figure 3. Reincarceration Survival Functions

Table 41 displays the results from the Cox regression models that analyzed time to first reincarceration for a new offense. Again, after controlling for the effects of the other independent variables, SOAR did not have a statistically significant impact on the extent

Table 41. Cox Proportional Hazards Model: Time to First Reincarceration for a New Crime

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	<u>Hazard Ratio</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>p Value</u>	<u>Hazard Ratio</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>p Value</u>
Program Participation						
SOAR	1.35	0.317	0.340	1.35	0.317	0.347
Refuse				0.76	0.428	0.530
Male Offenders	2.08	0.628	0.244	2.40	0.620	0.159
Minority Offenders	1.50	0.392	0.300	1.54	0.354	0.222
Age at Release	1.02	0.037	0.607	1.00	0.033	0.997
Prior Felony	2.65	0.363	0.007	2.28	0.329	0.012
Offense Type						
Person	1.29	0.455	0.575	1.03	0.415	0.939
Property	2.59	0.442	0.031	2.34	0.400	0.034
Drugs	0.68	0.533	0.478	0.49	0.507	0.156
Discipline	1.02	0.010	0.072	1.02	0.010	0.063
Length of Stay	0.98	0.016	0.210	0.98	0.015	0.105
ISR	0.69	0.446	0.398	0.59	0.437	0.222
Length of Supervision	0.99	0.027	0.687	0.99	0.026	0.729
SR Revocations	1.15	0.225	0.541	1.18	0.210	0.430

to which offenders were reincarcerated for a new offense. Likewise, prior felony convictions again significantly increased the risk of timing to reincarceration. More specifically, a prior felony conviction increased the risk of timing to reincarceration by 165 percent in Model 1 and by 128 percent in Model 2. Offenders whose governing offense was a property crime at the time of their release from prison were also significantly more likely to be reincarcerated for a new offense. Indeed, the risk of time to reincarceration was 159 percent greater for property offenders in Model 1 and 134 percent greater in Model 2.

CONCLUSION

The findings presented here suggest that SOAR did not significantly reduce recidivism. But despite the comparatively higher recidivism rates of the SOAR participants, neither did the program significantly increase the extent to which offenders recidivated. Rather, much of the difference in recidivism rates between SOAR participants and the other offenders is likely to due to the fact that the former had more extensive criminal histories, which was a significant predictor of future offending.

Why did SOAR not have an impact on offender recidivism? As revealed through the process evaluation, there was a clear consensus among those involved in the project that SOAR is a worthwhile concept. In particular, the broad range of comprehensive services was seen to be a major strength of the program's design. Services were generally viewed positively as they served to address the immediate needs of offenders during their reentry.

There were a number of problems, however, in how this concept was put into practice. In particular, there was a lack of communication and clarity regarding the roles of both partner agencies and stakeholders. The process evaluation showed, for example, that many interviewees reported that they would have benefited from having been more informed of all the components of SOAR services, the overall goals, and the organizational structure. This lack of communication may have been precipitated by the apparent absence of leadership. In short, Project SOAR may have been more effective had there been more organizational management.

The findings from the process evaluation also suggest that there was an inconsistent provision of services. The analyses performed for the outcome evaluation were based on the assumption that the provision of services was relatively consistent for all SOAR participants. This did not appear to be the case, however, as some offenders reported receiving the full array of services, whereas others did not. Moreover, because this evaluation did not measure the extent of reentry services received by offenders in either the SOAR or the control group, it is possible that a relatively large proportion of offenders in the SOAR and control groups was not significantly different from each other with respect to the services they actually received.

The results from the process evaluation further suggest that SOAR was not very successful in addressing long-term transitional needs. While SOAR's efforts to address short-term needs were often commended, the apparent lack of focus on obtaining long-term employment and stable housing was seen to be a major weakness of the project. Interviewees often reported that services included in reentry programming must address long-term needs in order for participants (and the program) to experience long-term success.

The services intended to address mental health and chemical dependency issues was another area that was not considered very successful. Many partners and stakeholders were unclear, for example, on how SOAR was addressing these needs, despite the fact

that mental and chemical health was an anticipated focus of the project. Overall, most of those interviewed for the process evaluation reported that there was a lack of attention paid to mental health and chemical dependency issues in SOAR's actual implementation.

Although SOAR was designed to be a comprehensive, multi-faceted program, the involvement of social support individuals appeared to be minimal. As discussed below, this finding has important implications for future reentry programs given that services involving social support individuals were ranked more positively by participants than *any* other provided by SOAR. Moreover, participants who were reincarcerated (often for a new offense) at the time of the interview reported having fewer social support individuals. This appears to be significant, as social support individuals were instrumental in helping offenders locate housing and employment. Overall, these findings suggest that fostering the development of healthy social ties may be critical to the success of future reentry programs.

There were clearly a number of difficulties involved in implementing SOAR, but its abrupt termination may have also had an adverse impact, particularly on those who were released from prison shortly before the end of the project. Nevertheless, since the inception of SOAR, it was known that the program would end because it was a pilot project. However, the relatively brief duration of the program may have had an effect on the outcome results reported here. As indicated by the process evaluation, most stakeholders felt that SOAR was beginning to find its rhythm at the time the project ended. This is consistent with previous research, which has shown that programs are sometimes like a business in that it takes awhile to turn a profit (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2006b). The lack of positive outcome results, then, could be a reflection of insufficient time in which to fully develop an effective program.

In explaining why SOAR did not reduce recidivism, it is important to also consider that it was implemented in only one county. As the largest (in terms of population) of Minnesota's 87 counties, Hennepin County is unique in a number of ways. Most notably, it not only has the greatest number of prison commitments on a yearly basis, but it also receives the greatest number of offenders released from prison. Because SOAR was implemented only in Hennepin County, it is unclear whether the program-implementation issues discussed above were unique to Hennepin or are applicable to reentry programs in general. This issue would have been addressed empirically, however, had the implementation of SOAR been consistent with the original design, which called for the participation of three counties—Hennepin, Ramsey, and St. Louis.

Recommendations

Although SOAR was not successful in lowering offender recidivism, the findings from this evaluation have a number of implications for the design and implementation of future reentry programs within the state. The following recommendations, some of which came directly from those interviewed for the process evaluation, address seven major areas where prisoner reentry can be improved. These areas relate to the need for: (1) emphasis on services that create long-term employment and housing opportunities, (2) increased

emphasis on services that facilitate the involvement of social support individuals, (3) increased education concerning the range of services provided by the project, (4) leadership within SOAR to facilitate more open communication, (5) a written understanding among all reentry service providers outlining responsibilities and expected outcomes, (6) the development of protocols to ensure consistency in the distribution of resources and services, and (7) increased rigor in evaluations of future reentry projects.

Create Long-term Opportunities

Future reentry efforts should emphasize not only short-term transitional needs, but also long-term employment and housing. The three main areas of improvement involve independent living skills training, job skills training (including trade skills and formal education), and the formation of a community housing partnership in order to provide suitable housing with permanency options. As shown by the process evaluation, some CRCs placed importance on the development of independent living skills, which could be formally incorporated into the job duties of those involved in working with offenders as they transition from prison to the community. In addition, job training opportunities could be increased by creating partnerships with community colleges, trade schools, and trade organizations (such as construction companies). Lastly, community housing partnerships with neighborhood organizations and nonprofit housing agencies could be formed to provide more diverse housing options, located in stable, healthy communities.

Extend the Length of Reentry Interventions

To maximize the benefits that might be derived from a reentry program, the intervention should begin at least six months prior to an offender's release and continue for at least the same amount of time, but preferably longer (e.g., 12 months), after release from prison. Extending the duration of the program is consistent not only with the literature regarding effective prisoner reentry but also with the concept of providing a continuum of care for offenders as they transition from the institution to the community.

Expand Social Support Involvement

This evaluation suggests that social support individuals (or the lack thereof) figure prominently in an offender's transition from prison, particularly when it comes to helping locate suitable housing and employment. As a result, identifying and strengthening offenders' ties to social support individuals prior to their release from prison would be beneficial.

Implement Clear Communication Expectations

Given the lack of clear understanding of SOAR by nearly everyone involved in the project, future reentry efforts should concentrate on the dissemination of pertinent information to all interested parties, including core partners, stakeholders, participants, and social support individuals. This would ensure that everyone involved is fully aware of the programmatic goals and organizational structure of prisoner reentry. Furthermore, social support individuals may become more involved as they would be aware of those services which are specifically designed for them, and participants may also take advantage of more services as family members would encourage them to use every

resource that is made available. Additionally, formal education concerning the different roles of supervision agents, ISR agents, institutional case workers, and community providers could be provided in order to prevent organizational conflict and duplicate services. This would also aid in team building, improved communication, and prevent participants from getting caught in the middle of professional conflicts.

Provide Leadership

Some of the problems associated with Project SOAR illustrate the need for increased leadership in future reentry efforts. Should a reentry program be developed in the future, one of the first steps would be to designate an individual responsible for the overall operations of the project. This person would prepare agendas for meetings stating the intended goals, facilitate open discussions, and mediate any conflicts that should arise. It is important that this leader is not involved with the provision of direct services.

Develop Clear Expectations for Roles and Responsibilities

It would be beneficial to develop formal contracts with all service providers in order to clarify responsibilities and expected outcomes. In addition, a formal agreement could provide stakeholders with an opportunity to be involved in decision making and team building (or at least offer greater clarity regarding their roles).

Development of Service Protocols

Leadership should develop procedures that create a more uniform distribution of services and resources. These protocols are not intended to limit participant's access to services, but rather to clarify roles and ensure consistency. In general, leadership would ensure uniformity in services, make executive decisions regarding conflicts, and enforce accountability within the project.

Increased Rigor of Reentry Evaluations

One of the strengths of the outcome evaluation is that an experimental design was used to measure the impact of Project SOAR on recidivism. Should reentry programs be developed in the future, however, efforts should be made to simultaneously evaluate sites in different counties. More important, however, evaluations must measure the type and amount of reentry services that are actually being provided to offenders in relation to their impact on recidivism.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Methodology

The process evaluation team interviewed four main populations in order to obtain a comprehensive perspective of the effectiveness of SOAR programming, the organizational structure, staff, and provider relationships. Interviews were conducted with core partners, stakeholders, participants, and family/friends of participants (i.e., social support individuals). Outlined below is the methodology used for each set of interviews.

PARTICIPANTS

Locating Participants for Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with SOAR participants. In order to locate participants for interviewing, the evaluation team first obtained current contact information. This population is rather transient and their contact information does not stay current for very long. Throughout the course of this evaluation, there were several efforts made to obtain contact information. In total, 240 offenders participated in SOAR over the three-year implementation. The DOC, RESOURCE, and other stakeholders had current information for a few of these participants. At the time of first contact, however, the majority of participants were no longer involved with SOAR. Finding information on these participants was difficult. Once the project ended, it was even more difficult to find participants. Several different methods were used to track down SOAR participants.

In August 2005, the evaluation team obtained the most recent contact information from RESOURCE and the DOC. At this time, the evaluation team also met with the CRD to determine the best way to gain updated information on participants. It was determined that contact information could be obtained from the CRCs. Unfortunately, however, SOAR's funding had ended around this time and CRCs were no longer employed at RESOURCE. The database used by CRCs to keep participant contact information was of limited help, as much of the information was outdated. The participant contact information would be entered into the database once they agreed to participate in SOAR. Often, they agreed to participate while they were still incarcerated. Therefore, contact information in the database either included their prison address or an address where they were no longer residing. When participants changed addresses, information was not updated in the database. Some of it was kept in CRC's case files, but it was not kept consistently or in any systematic way. As CRCs were no longer employed with RESOURCE, it was also difficult to obtain contact information directly from them.

The contact information that was received from RESOURCE included addresses, but it did not include telephone numbers. Therefore, the evaluation team sent a letter to each participant for whom we had an address (138 participants) that explained the purpose of the evaluation, confidentiality, and asked whether they would agree to be interviewed. The letter also explained that they would be compensated for their time and gave them a telephone number to call to schedule an interview. Over half of the letters came back

because the participant was no longer at the address. Five participants called back and set up interviews.

In September 2005, the process evaluation team received updated participant information from the DOC that helped in determining who was still incarcerated. The evaluation team also met with Federal F.O.R.U.M. to obtain current contact information. Unfortunately, Federal F.O.R.U.M. could not provide any names or contact information at that time. A second round of letters was sent to participants when current contact information was obtained. Again, many of these letters returned.

In September, the process evaluation team received a list of supervision agents with SOAR participants on their caseload. Unfortunately, when the supervision agents were contacted, it was apparent that much of this information was outdated. The participants had either been transferred to another supervision agent, had been reincarcerated, or had been completely discharged from supervision. Starting in October, the evaluation team began to use several other methods to obtain contact information. They included: 1) Contacting supervision agents with an updated caseload list, 2) Contacting community agencies, 3) Requesting contact information from the Hennepin County TEAMS data system, and 4) Additional recruitment efforts. See below for further details on each step.

As mentioned above, the previous information on supervision agents was outdated. In November, the process evaluation team received an updated list of SOAR participants matched with their supervision agent. From that list, it was evident that 59 SOAR participants were no longer on any kind of correctional supervision. Of those who were still under supervision, their supervision agent was contacted in an effort to get more up-to-date information on the participant. The supervision agents, however, were unwilling to give out contact information without release of information forms from the participants. The evaluation team then mailed packets to supervision agents that contained copies of signed consent forms for the participants on their caseloads, a letter explaining the purpose of the evaluation, a request asking them to release current contact information (such as address and phone number), and a letter that they could pass on to their clients so that the client could directly contact the process evaluation team to schedule an interview. All parole officers were contacted by phone in order to alert them that they would receive this packet and explain the purpose of it.

In total, consent forms were mailed to 39 supervision agents. Three of the agents who responded indicated that they did not have current information or any information for those participants whose sentences had expired. Seven SOAR participants (where the supervision agents had current contact information) were contacted either through a phone call, letter, or both. They did not respond to either phone calls or letters. Follow-up phone messages were left for supervision agents who did not contact the evaluation team but who had SOAR participants actively on their caseload.

The evaluation team, during November, also contacted RESOURCE, Federal F.O.R.U.M., and BIHA staff to obtain updated participant contact information and phone numbers. Some of the community organizations did not feel comfortable releasing

participant contact information as they felt this might violate participant's trust. Several did, however, agree to send their own letter to the participants on behalf of the process evaluation team. They felt this would be less threatening to participants than having the CCJ (the process evaluation team) send letters or contact them directly. Federal F.O.R.U.M. sent a letter to the participants they were in contact with informing them of the Project SOAR evaluation and asking participants to contact the CCJ to set up an interview. BIHA agreed to distribute a similar letter to participants who continued in Circles of Support. Unfortunately, participants did not respond to the letters that were sent out by Federal F.O.R.U.M. and BIHA.

SOAR participant telephone numbers were generated from Hennepin County TEAMS data. Approximately 137 of the numbers were disconnected, or the participant no longer lived at the number listed. Approximately seven numbers were still current, and interviewers were able to make contact with the participant. Those participants agreed to be interviewed.

Additional recruitment efforts involved placing flyers at local businesses and community organizations. Flyers explained the purpose of the interviews, ensured confidentiality, and offered compensation for the interviews. The flyer was posted throughout the Twin Cities Metro area, although efforts were focused in North Minneapolis because of its high rate of offender mobility. Specifically, fliers were distributed at Cub Foods, Rainbow Foods, Urban League in North Minneapolis, Sabathani Community Center, and Ramsey and Hennepin County Courts. The fliers did not yield any phone calls from participants.

In a further effort to locate participant contact information, CCJ staff conducted a file review of participant folders that the CRCs used. Many of the files examined contained information from 2003 or contained CRCs notes stating that phone numbers had been disconnected. Since those files contained incomplete or outdated information, only 17 case files were reviewed for contact information.

The evaluation team continued throughout the evaluation to look up people on the internet using reversephonedirectory.com, yellow pages.com, whitepages.com, and other internet search engines. Interviewers also went to 82 participant addresses to either explain the purpose of the study or leave a letter explaining the purpose of the study. However, many of the people were either not home or the participant no longer lived there. Additionally, each month the evaluation team would receive updated information from the DOC on SOAR participants who were incarcerated.

Developing Participant Survey

This survey was developed by reading documents that outlined the original intent of SOAR. However, questions were centered on the actual implementation and design of SOAR. The DOC provided input and issued final approval for the survey that was developed. Overall, participants were asked about their satisfaction with SOAR services.

Conducting Participant Face-to-Face Interviews

When current contact information was obtained, an interviewer would immediately call the participant in an effort to reduce the chance that the interviewer would lose contact with the participant. Interviews were conducted wherever the participant and interviewer felt most comfortable. If interviews were conducted in a participant's home, two interviewers would attend due to safety concerns. Interviewers would ask the participant approximately 100 survey questions, most of which consisted of closed-ended questions. See Appendix B for the participant survey. Upon completing the interview, the participant received a \$25 cash stipend.

Sixty-eight interviews were conducted in correctional facilities. Below are the numbers of interviews completed at each correctional facility.

Table 42. Interviews by Facility

Institution	Number of Interviews
Lino Lakes	14
Rush City	14
Hennepin County Adult Jail	12
St. Cloud	12
Red Wing	8
Stillwater	5
Moose Lake	3
Total	68

Participants who completed an interview at a facility did not receive a \$25 cash stipend due to DOC policy.

Analysis of Participant Interviews

In total, 98 offenders were interviewed, of whom 68 were reincarcerated at the time of the interview. Once interviews were completed, the results were entered into a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) database. The closed-ended survey responses were analyzed using this quantitative statistical package. The open-ended survey responses were analyzed thematically.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Locating Social Support Participants

After the participant interviews were complete, the interviewers asked the participants if they had any family or friends who are involved in their reentry and knew about their involvement in SOAR. In particular, the evaluation team asked them if they had family or friends who may have participated in Circles of Support or any other aspect of SOAR as the participant transitioned from prison. Many of the participants did not. Only 37 participants provided names for family and friends to contact. The evaluation team also

asked BIHA staff for referrals to family and friends that participated in Circles of Support. This did not produce any current information.

Developing Social Support Survey

This survey was developed by reading documents that outlined the original intent of SOAR. However, questions were centered on the actual implementation and design of SOAR. Again, the DOC provided input and issued final approval for the survey that was developed. The survey asked questions regarding their satisfaction on services that participants received. See Appendix C for the complete interview.

Conducting Social Support Interviews

The interviews were conducted wherever the interviewee and interviewer felt most comfortable. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the individual's home. After the interview was complete, the interviewee received a \$20 cash stipend.

Analysis of Social Support Interviews

In total, 45 interviews were conducted. Once these interviews were complete, the responses were entered into SPSS. The closed-ended survey responses were analyzed using this quantitative statistical package. The open-ended survey responses were analyzed thematically.

STAKEHOLDERS

Locating Stakeholders

Stakeholders included social service agencies contracted to work with SOAR and other professionals involved with participants (such as parole officers). The DOC initially provided the evaluation team with a list of potential interviewees. This list contained the contact information for stakeholders in addition to agencies that served as a referral for SOAR participants. In addition to working off this list, snowball sampling was used in order to broaden the sampling parameters. For instance, after a stakeholder who had been identified by the DOC was interviewed, they would be asked to provide the contact information for a few individuals that they felt should be including in the evaluation. This technique proved to be beneficial as many stakeholders were added to the original stakeholder list, further diversifying our sample.

Developing Social Support Survey

This survey was developed by reading documents that outlined SOAR services. However, questions were centered on the actual implementation and design of SOAR. The DOC provided input and issued final approval for the survey that was developed. The survey included questions concerning their satisfaction with the services that participants received. See Appendix D for the complete interview.

Conducting Stakeholder Interviews

Most interviews were conducted over the telephone and generally lasted 45 minutes. The interviews were exploratory in nature and often went beyond the set survey questions.

Analysis of Stakeholder Interviews

In total, 37 telephone surveys were conducted. Once the telephone interviews were completed, the responses were entered into SPSS for analysis. The closed-ended survey responses were analyzed using in this quantitative statistical package. The open-ended survey responses were analyzed thematically.

CORE PARTNERS

Locating Core Partners

A total of 12 interviews were completed with representatives from SOAR partner agencies. This included staff members from the DOC, Hennepin County, RESOURCE, Federal F.O.R.U.M., BIHA, and a psychologist. The evaluation team interviewed five of the 12 staff members twice. The first set of interviews (which comprised seven interviews) occurred during the beginning of the SOAR evaluation. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the organizational structure, original design, and actual implementation of the project. The second set of interviews (which comprised five interviews) were exploratory in that the evaluation team wanted to get staff members' thoughts and feelings about the project, as well as their thoughts regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

Conducting Partner Interviews

Interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed for a conversational flow. Interviewees discussed their roles and responsibilities with the project and provided suggestions for improving the project. Interviews were generally informal, although the evaluation team formed individualized survey guides based on the stakeholders' role with SOAR.

Analysis of Partner Interviews

Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Results from the analysis are included in the Organization Design vs. Actual Implementation and in the partner section of the report. Results from this analysis, however, are somewhat limited, as many used the time during these interviews to voice their overall concerns they had with SOAR. However, staff did provide a great amount of feedback regarding suggestions for improving future projects similar to SOAR.

PARTNER MEETINGS

The evaluation team also observed a few bi-monthly partner meetings. The evaluation team observed interactions, discussion topics, and outcomes of the meetings. After attending the meetings the team would individually write field notes on their observations from the meeting and write down any questions they had that would be used as either a survey question or an interview question. The partner meetings were analyzed to examine the effectiveness of the meetings as well as to examine interactions between attendees. Unfortunately, as the evaluation was beginning, SOAR ended. Consequently, only a few partnership meetings were attended.

APPENDIX B: Participant Interview

Introduction to Project SOAR

To start out, I'm going to ask you some questions about how Project SOAR was first explained to you in prison.

1. Did you go to an Orientation Session for Project SOAR, or meet with anyone who explained Project SOAR to you while you were in prison?

___ Yes (skip to Q#3) ___ No

2. If No, how did you hear about Project SOAR?

3. How good did you understand what was involved with Project SOAR when they first talked to you? **(Refer to Scale 1)**

___ Very Well ___ Pretty Well ___ Somewhat Well ___ Not at all

Project SOAR Pre-Release Planning and Services

Next I want to ask you some questions about your involvement with Project SOAR before your release. First I'll ask about your Community Resource Coordinator or CRC. A CRC is a case manager who works for Employment Action Center and would have started working with you while you were in prison.

4. What's your CRC's name? _____

5. How often did your CRC talk on the phone with you while you were in prison?

___ daily ___ weekly ___ monthly ___ other, please specify:

6. How often did your CRC meet face to face with you while you were in prison?

___ daily ___ weekly ___ monthly ___ other, please specify:

How much do you agree or disagree with this:

7. Your CRC worked hard to get to know you prior to your release from prison.

(Refer to Scale 2)

___ Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree

___ Don't Know/Unsure

8. I am going to list a few different programs that may have worked with you while you were in prison. For each one please tell me whether they did meet with you while you were in prison:

8a. Federal Forum (Mary Gaines, Toby) for Faith Assessment

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

8b. BIHA (*pronounced bi-ha*) (Gwen or Alice) for Restorative Justice Assessment

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

8c. Are there other programs or individuals who came into prison to work with you?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, please specify _____

Re-entry Plan

Next I want to ask you some questions about your release/re-entry plan.

9. Did you have a Release/Re-entry Plan?

___Yes _____No (skip to Q#13) _____Don't Know

10. I am going to list a few different people who may have helped you develop your release/re-entry plan. For each one please tell me "yes", "no", or "unsure".

10a. Did you help to develop your release/re-entry plan?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

10b. Did your Institutional Case Manager help to develop your release/re-entry plan?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

10c. Did your Community Resource Coordinator (CRC) help to develop your release/re-entry plan?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

10d. Did anyone else have a part in developing your release/re-entry plan?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, please specify: _____

11. I am going to go through a list of things that may have been included in your Release/Re-entry Plan. For each one, please tell me whether it was a part of your release/re-entry plan:

11a. Mental Health Services

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

11b. Chemical Health Services

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

11c. Support Groups

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

11d. Circles of Support

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

11e. Parenting Classes

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

11f., Employment Training

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

11g Are there any other services or requirements included in your release/re-entry plan?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, please specify: _____

12. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your re-entry plan: **(Refer to Scale 2)**

	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
a. My re-entry plan fit my specific needs	SA	A	D	SD
b. I felt that I had a say in making my re-entry plan.	SA	A	D	SD
c. I understood my re-entry plan.	SA	A	D	SD

Comments for Q12:

Transition to Community

Now I want to ask you some questions about the time **right after your release from prison** and your work with Project SOAR.

13. Did you and your CRC develop a “72-Hour Plan” to help you in the first three days after your release from prison?
____ Yes ____ No (skip to Q#17) ____ Don’t Know/Can’t Remember

14. If Yes, Can you tell what of the following was in your 72-Hour Plan?

14a. Getting identification
____ Yes ____ No ____ Unsure

14b. Getting a medical card
____ Yes ____ No ____ Unsure

14c. Meeting with probation/parole officer
____ Yes ____ No ____ Unsure

14d. Finding Housing
____ Yes ____ No ____ Unsure

14e. Was there anything else I have not listed in your 72 hour plan?
____ Yes ____ No ____ Unsure
If yes, please specify: _____

15. Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your 72-Hour plan: **(Refer to Scale 2)**

	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
a. My 72-Hour plan fit my specific needs	SA	A	D	SD
b. I felt that I had a say in making my 72-Hour plan.	SA	A	D	SD
c. I understood my 72-Hour plan.	SA	A	D	SD

Comments for Q15:

16. How helpful was your 72-Hour Plan? (skip to Q#18) **(Refer to Scale 4)**

- ☐ Very helpful,
☐ Somewhat helpful,
☐ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
☐ Somewhat unhelpful, or
☐ Very unhelpful

17. If No, did your CRC help you with any of these things:

17a. Getting identification
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

17b. Getting a medical card
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

17c. Meeting with probation/parole officer
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

17d. Finding Housing
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

17e. Was there anything else I have not listed that your CRC helped you with right after your release from prison?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
If yes, please specify: _____

18. Who picked you up from prison when you were released? (Check all that apply)

☐ CRC ☐ Spouse/Partner ☐ Family member
☐ Friend ☐ Neighbor ☐ Other (please specify) _____

19. Did your CRC take you to meet with your probation/parole officer for the first time?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Support Network Development

Circles of Support

Next I want to ask you some questions about your involvement with Circles of Support. A Circle of Support is a group of people who meets together to provide support to you in your return to the community. Circles of Support are organized by BIHA (pronounced bi-ha) and take place at their space in North Minneapolis.

20. Were you asked to participate in a Circle of Support after you got out of prison?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (Skip to Q#28)
☐ Don't know/Unsure

21. Did you ever go to circles of support after you got out of prison?

- ☐ Yes (Skip to Q#23)
☐ No
☐ Don't know/Unsure

22. If not, why didn't you go? _____
(Skip to Q#28)

23. If Yes, about how many circles of support did you go to? _____

24. I am going to go over a list of people who may have been involved with your Circle of Support. Please let me know if any of them were involved. (check all that apply):

24a. Family members

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

24b. Friends

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

24c. Probation Officer

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

24d. Police Officer

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

24e. Attorney or other Court official

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

24f. Project SOAR CRC

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

24g. Member of church or faith community
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

24h. Mentor
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

24i. Community persons invited by Circle leader or SOAR partner.
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

24j Was there anyone else I have not listed who was involved in your Circle of Support?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure
If Yes, please specify: _____

25. How helpful were the circles of support in your return from prison? Would you say they were: **(Refer to Scale 4)**
_____ Very helpful,
_____ Somewhat helpful,
_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
_____ Very unhelpful?

26. What was most helpful about the circles of support?

27. What was least helpful about the circles of support?

Religious or Faith-based Support

Now I want to ask you some questions about any religious or faith-based support you receive as part of Project SOAR.

28. Were you asked to participate in any faith-based activities or programs while you were in Project SOAR?

_____ Yes

_____ No (Skip to Q#35)

_____ Don't know/Unsure

29. If Yes, did you go to any faith-based activities provided by Project SOAR or Federal FORUM?

_____ Yes (Skip to Q#31)

_____ No

_____ Don't know/Unsure

30. If no, why not? _____(skip to Q#35)

31. If yes, about how many religious or faith-based activities did you attend? _____

32. How helpful were the religious or faith-based activities in your return from prison? Would you say they were: **(Refer to Scale 4)**

_____ Very helpful,

_____ Somewhat helpful,

_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,

_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or

_____ Very unhelpful?

33. What was most helpful about your religious or faith-based activities?

34. What was least helpful about your religious or faith-based activities?

Mentoring

You may have been asked if you wanted to meet with a mentor while you were in Project SOAR (the mentor may have come through your CRC, Employment Action Center, Federal FORUM, or BIHA). I'm now going to ask you some questions about Mentors. A mentor is a person who works with you one-on-one to help you develop in a certain area or to reach your goals.

35. Were you asked if you wanted a mentor?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (skip to Q#43)
- ☐ Don't know/Unsure

36. Did you ever meet with a mentor?

- ☐ Yes (Skip to Q#38)
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know/Unsure

37. If no, why not?: _____ (Skip to Q#43)

38. If yes, was your mentor through a religious organization?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know/Unsure

39. About how many times have you met with your mentor? (Write one number)

40. Do you plan on still meeting or talking with your mentor after you're done with Project SOAR?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know/Unsure

41. How would you rate your relationship with your mentor? (**Refer to Scale 3**)

- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Don't know/Unsure

42. Overall, how helpful was your mentor in helping you in your return from prison?

- ☐ Very helpful
- ☐ Helpful
- ☐ Somewhat helpful
- ☐ Not at all helpful
- ☐ Don't know/Unsure

Assessment of Support Network

Now I want to ask you some questions about the people that have supported you in your return home.

43. I am going to go over a list of different groups or persons that may have supported you in your return from prison. For each please tell me whether you were supported by anyone from each group, and if so, how many persons supported you.

43a. Did you have Family members who supported you in your return from prison?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, how many family members have supported you? _____

43b. Did you have Friends who supported you in your return from prison?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, how many friends have supported you? _____

43c. Did you have Social service professionals who supported you in your return from prison?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, how many social service professionals have supported you? _____

43d. Did you have Member of church/faith community who supported you in your return from prison?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, how many church or faith community members have supported you? _____

43e. Did you have Neighbors/Community Members who supported you in your return from prison?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, how many neighbors or community members have supported you? _____

43f. Did you have Employer/Coworkers who supported you in your return from prison?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, how many employer/coworkers have supported you? _____

43g. Are there others that I have not already listed that have supported you in your community?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, who? _____

44. How many supportive people have you gained as a result of involvement in Project SOAR? _____

Housing

Now I would like to ask you some questions about housing.

45. How easy has it been for you to find a place to live after your release?

___ Very Easy ___ Somewhat Easy ___ Somewhat Difficult ___ Very Difficult

46. How helpful was Project SOAR in helping you to find a place to live? (**Refer to Scale 4**)

___ Very helpful,
___ Somewhat helpful,
___ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
___ Somewhat unhelpful, or
___ Very unhelpful?

47. How well does your home meet your needs? (**Refer to Scale 1**)

___ Very Well ___ Pretty Well ___ Somewhat Well ___ Not at all

48. How well do you think you can maintain housing after you are finished with Project SOAR? (**Refer to Scale 1**)

___ Very Well ___ Pretty Well ___ Somewhat Well ___ Not at all

49. What city/town do you currently live in? _____

50. What type of place do you currently live in?

☐ Single Family Home
☐ Supervised Facility

☐ Shelter
☐ Multi-Unit Home
(such as apartment building,
duplex, townhouse, etc.)

51. Who do you currently live with?

☐ Family members ☐ Spouse/Partner ☐ Friends ☐ Other,
please specify:

Education

Now I want to ask you some questions about educational help you might have received while you were in Project SOAR.

52. Prior to starting Project SOAR did you have a GED or High School Diploma?

☐ YES (skip to Q# 54) ☐ NO

53. If no, did Project SOAR help you to get your GED or High School Diploma?

☐ YES ☐ NO

54. What is your level of education now?

☐ 1 to 5 years
☐ 5 to 8 years or less
☐ 9 to 11 years or less
☐ High School Graduate or completed GED
☐ Some college or Trade School
☐ 4 year degree or more
☐ Other (Specify) _____

55. Did you go to any educational workshops or educational support groups?

☐ Yes
☐ No (continue to Q#60)
☐ Don't know/Unsure

56. If Yes, about how many educational groups did you go to? _____

57. How helpful were the educational support groups in your return from prison?

(Refer to Scale 4)

☐ Very helpful
☐ Somewhat helpful
☐ Neither helpful nor unhelpful
☐ Somewhat unhelpful, or
☐ Very unhelpful?

58. What was most helpful about the educational support groups?

59. What was least helpful about the educational support groups?

Employment

Next I want to ask you some questions about employment.

60. Did anyone from Project SOAR help you with any of the following?:

60a. Employment Search

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

60b. Resume and Application Preparation

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

60c. Referral for additional employment training

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

60d. Provide a reference for you to potential employer

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

60e. Contact a potential employer on your behalf

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

60f. Are there any other employment-related assistance Project SOAR helped you with that I have not listed?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, specify: _____

61. Did you ever go to employment support groups?

_____ Yes _____ No (Skip to Q#66)

_____ Don't know/Unsure

62. About how many employment support groups did you attend? _____

63. How helpful were the employment support groups in your return from prison?

(Refer to Scale 4)

_____ Very helpful,

_____ Somewhat helpful,

_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,

_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or

_____ Very unhelpful?

64. What was most helpful about the employment support groups?

65. What was least helpful about the employment support groups?

66. Did you participate in the Tree Trust Employment Program?

_____ Yes _____ No (skip to Q#69)

67. If yes, how helpful was this program in getting you more employment skills?
(Refer to Scale 4)

_____ Very helpful,
_____ Somewhat helpful,
_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
_____ Very unhelpful?

68. How helpful was Project SOAR in helping you find employment after Tree Trust Ended? **(Refer to Scale 4)**

_____ Very helpful,
_____ Somewhat helpful,
_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
_____ Very unhelpful?

69. Overall, how helpful was Project SOAR in helping you get more employment skills? **(Refer to Scale 4)**

_____ Very helpful,
_____ Somewhat helpful,
_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
_____ Very unhelpful?

70. Are you currently employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
71. If Yes, Full Time or Part Time: ☐ Full Time ☐ Part Time
72. What type of work do you do? _____

Flex Fund Assistance

Next I'd like to ask you some questions about financial help you may have received from Project SOAR.

73. Did your CRC tell you about financial help that you could get through a Flex Fund?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know
74. Did you ever use any of this financial help?
☐ Yes ☐ No (skip to Q#76) ☐ Don't Know
75. If Yes, what did you use the money for?
☐ Housing ☐ Food ☐ Clothing
☐ Other, please specify: _____

Chemical Dependency and Mental Health Programming

76. While you were in prison were you given a screening for alcohol or other drug use? (probe- were you asked questions about your drug use or given a survey)
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know
77. Have any of these people suggested you get help for alcohol or drug use? (Check all that apply)
☐ CRC
☐ Probation Officer
☐ Mentor
☐ Other (Please Specify): _____
☐ None of the Above (skip to Q#79)
78. Was it suggested to you that you go to any of the following programs?
78a. Alcohol or Drug abuse assessment
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

78b. AA/NA Group
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

78c. Out Patient Chemical Dependency Treatment
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

78d. Inpatient Chemical Dependency Treatment
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

78e. Were there any additional programs you were referred to?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure
If yes, please specify: _____

79. While you were in Project SOAR did you think you needed help with your drug or alcohol use?

_____ Yes _____ No (skip to Q#81) _____ Don't Know

80. If Yes, how helpful was Project SOAR in this area? **(Refer to Scale 4)**

_____ Very helpful,
_____ Somewhat helpful,
_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
_____ Very unhelpful?

Now I want to ask you some questions about mental health.

81. Have any of these people suggested you should get help for mental health issues?

_____ CRC
_____ Probation Officer
_____ Mentor
_____ Other (Please Specify): _____
_____ None of the Above (skip to Q#83)

82. Was it suggested to you that you go to any of the following types of programs?

a. Individual Counseling
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure
b. Family Therapy
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure
c. Psychiatry or Medication
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure
d. Group Therapy
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure
e. Anger Management
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

f. Domestic Violence Program

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

g. Were there any additional programs you were referred to?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

If yes, please specify: _____

83. While you were in Project SOAR, did you think you needed help with mental health issues?

_____ Yes _____ No(skip to Q#85) _____ Don't Know

84. If Yes, how helpful was Project SOAR in this area? **(Refer to Scale 4)**

_____ Very helpful,

_____ Somewhat helpful,

_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,

_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or

_____ Very unhelpful?

Other Social Services and Basic Needs

85. How helpful has SOAR been with: **(Refer to Scale 4)**

	Very Helpful (1)	Somewhat Helpful (2)	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful (3)	Somewhat Unhelpful (4)	Very Unhelpful (5)
a. Help with material needs, such as food, clothing, and bus passes	1	2	3	4	5
b. Getting drivers license or other identification cards	1	2	3	4	5
c. Getting medical assistance or other health care assistance	1	2	3	4	5
d. Help with child support issues	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Community Resource Coordinator (CRC)

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your involvement with your CRC.

86. After your release from prison, about how often did you talk with your CRC on the phone?

___never ___daily ___weekly ___monthly ___every 6 months ___less than every 6 months

87. After your release from prison, about how often did you meet with your CRC?

___never ___daily ___weekly ___monthly ___every 6 months ___less than every 6 months

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements about your CRC: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that: **(refer to Scale 2)**

	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Don't Know/Unsure (DK)
a. Your CRC contacted you when he/she said they would.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
b. Your CRC was able to answer your questions.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
c. Your CRC was clear about what was expected of you.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
d. Your CRC was clear about what his/her responsibilities were toward you.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
e. Your CRC was helpful in your transition back into the community.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
f. Your CRC helped make getting in touch with social services easier.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
g. Your CRC listened to you.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
h. Your CRC understood your needs.	SA	A	D	SD	DK
i. You trusted your CRC.	SA	A	D	SD	DK

88. Overall, how would you rate your relationship with your CRC? Would you say your relationship was: (**Refer to Scale 3**)

- ☐ Very Good,
- ☐ Good,
- ☐ Fair, or
- ☐ Poor?
- ☐ Don't know/unsure

Additional Comments:

Overall Satisfaction with Project SOAR

89. I'd like to ask you how Project SOAR affected different areas of your life. Would you say that you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree that being in Project SOAR has helped you with: **(Refer to Scale 2)**

	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Don't Know/Unsure (DK)
a. A better relationship with your family?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
b. A better relationship with your probation officer?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
c. A better relationship with your friends?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
d. A more positive view of yourself?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
e. More involvement with your community?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
f. Being able to financially support yourself and your family?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
g. Better job skills?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
h. More Education?	SA	A	D	SD	DK
i. Avoiding involvement in illegal activities?	SA	A	D	SD	DK

90. Are there any services or needs that you thought Project SOAR should have helped you with but didn't?

91. Overall, what things about Project SOAR were most helpful in your return from prison?

92. Overall, what things about Project SOAR were least helpful in your return from prison?

93. Overall, how would you describe the role that your CRC and Project SOAR have played in your return from prison?

Demographic Information

Finally, I want to ask you a few more questions about yourself. This information will help us to better understand the people who've been in Project SOAR.

94. What is your current marital/partnership status?

☐Single ☐Married ☐Partnered ☐Divorced ☐Widowed
☐Separated

95. Do you have kids? ☐Yes ☐No (Skip to End of Survey)

96. If Yes, how many kids do you have? _____

97. If Yes, what are your kids' ages?

98. If Yes, do you currently live with your kids? ☐Yes ☐No

99. If you do not live with your kids, do you ever see them or talk to them on the phone?

☐Yes ☐No (Skip to Q#102)

100. How often do you see your kids or talk to them on the phone?

☐Daily ☐Several times per week ☐Weekly ☐Monthly
☐Less than Monthly

101. Are you financially responsible for your kids?

☐Yes ☐No
☐Sometimes

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APPENDIX C: Social Support Survey

First I'd like to ask you some questions about your relationship to XXXXX and their participation in Project SOAR.

1. What is your relationship with XXXXXX?

- ☐ Spouse/partner/girlfriend/boyfriend
- ☐ Sibling
- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Other family member
- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Mentor
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

2. Is XXXXXX still involved in Project SOAR?

- ☐ YES (skip to Q3)
- ☐ NO (proceed to Q2a)
- ☐ Don't Know

2a. If no, how long has it been since they were involved in this project?

3. Who is XXXXXX's Community Resource Coordinator/CRC?

CRC: _____ don't know

Next I want to ask you some questions about Circles of Support

4. Were you asked to be in a Circle of Support for XXXXX?

☐ YES ☐ NO (Skip to Q10) ☐ Unsure (Skip to Q9)

5. If yes, did you go to any Circles of Support?

☐ YES ☐ NO (Skip to Q9)

5a. If YES, about how many did you go to? _____

6. In your opinion, how helpful were the Circles of Support in XXXXXX's return to the community?

- _____ Very helpful,
- _____ Somewhat helpful,
- _____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
- _____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
- _____ Very unhelpful?

7. What was most helpful about the Circles of Support?

8. What could have been more helpful about the Circles of Support?

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about Project SOAR staff and project partners.

9. While XXXXXX has been in Project SOAR, did any of these people contact you?
(Check all that apply):

- _____ Community Resource Coordinator/ CRC
- _____ Federal FORUM/Faith-Based Call (such as Mary Gaines, Toby)
- _____ XXXXXX's mentor provided through Federal FORUM
- _____ BIHA/ Women in Action (Gwen and Alice)
- _____ Other. Please Specify: _____
- _____ None of the above (skip to Q12)

10. Why did they contact you? (indicate for each person)

11. While XXXXXX has been participating in Project SOAR, did you decide to contact any of these people? (Check all that apply):

- _____ Community Resource Coordinator/ CRC (list CRC names here)
- _____ Federal FORUM/Faith-Based Call (such as Mary Gaines, Toby, Robert,)
- _____ XXXXXX's mentor provided through Federal FORUM
- _____ BIHA/ Women in Action (Gwen and Alice)
- _____ Other. Please Specify: _____
- _____ None of the above (skip to Q14)

12. Why did you contact this person?

13. Did this person help you in the way you wanted?

14. How helpful do you think the CRC was in helping XXXXXX return to the community?

- _____ Very helpful,
- _____ Somewhat helpful,
- _____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
- _____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
- _____ Very unhelpful?

Next I want to ask you some questions about how much Project SOAR has helped XXXXX in their return to the community.

15. Please rate how helpful Project SOAR has been in preparing XXXXXX in the following areas:

	Very Helpful (1)	Somewhat Helpful (2)	Neither Helpful nor unhelpful (3)	Somewhat Unhelpful (4)	Very Unhelpful (5)	Not Sure (6)
a. Employment Preparation	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Securing Employment beyond Tree Trust	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Educational Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. find housing that meets their needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. material needs, such as food, bus passes, clothing, and other personal items?	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. connect to other social services?	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Support for family issues	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Increasing their network of support	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments:

16. In your opinion, when you think about when XXXXX first got out of prison until now (or until they completed Project SOAR) how much did XXXXX improve in these areas: If the topic doesn't fit their situation, please say so.

	A lot (1)	A little (2)	Not at all (3)	Not Applicable (4)	Unsure (5)
a. Employment	1	2	3	4	5
b. Staying out of Trouble	1	2	3	4	5
c. Handling Personal Relationships	1	2	3	4	5
d. Meeting basic needs	1	2	3	4	5
e. Making Appropriate Decisions	1	2	3	4	5
f. Involvement with the community	1	2	3	4	5
g. Abstinence from alcohol or drug use.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

17. In your opinion, what has helped XXXXXXXX the most in their return from prison to the community?

18. Do you know anyone else who has been released from prison?

___YES ___NO (skip to Q21)

18a. If Yes, in your opinion, what difference has Project SOAR made for XXXX compared to other people you know who've returned from prison who didn't have Project SOAR's help? Would you say it was better, worse, or the same?

___Better ___Worse ___Same ___Unsure

19. What barriers has XXXXXXXX faced in trying to return to the community?

20. Overall, how helpful has Project SOAR been in helping XXXXX come back to the community?

- _____ Very helpful,
- _____ Somewhat helpful,
- _____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
- _____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
- _____ Very unhelpful?

21. What was most helpful about Project SOAR?

22. What could have made Project SOAR more helpful?

23. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share about Project SOAR or XXXXX's experience?

APPENDIX D: Stakeholder Survey

Opening Questions

I'd like to start out by asking you some questions about your role with Project SOAR

1. What organization are you with?

2. What is your role with Project SOAR?
☐ Administration or Management
☐ Direct Service Provider
☐ Consultant or Preferred Provider
☐ Community Member or Mentor
☐ Other, specify: _____
3. Do you or your organization provide direct services to participants of Project SOAR?
☐ YES ☐ NO (Skip to Q#5)
4. If Yes, what kind of services do you provide?
☐ Basic Needs (Housing, Clothing, Food, etc.)
☐ Employment Services
☐ Chemical Health Services
☐ Mental Health Services
☐ Spiritual Services
☐ Educational Services
☐ Restorative Justice Services
☐ Other, please specify: _____
5. If No, how is your organization involved with Project SOAR?

6. How long have you been involved with Project SOAR?
☐ 3 + years ☐ 2 -3 years ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 6-12 months ☐ less than 6 months

Pre-Release Preparation

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about Project SOAR's involvement with pre-release services.

7. How helpful do you feel the pre-release services provided through Project SOAR were for participants?
☐ Very Helpful
☐ Somewhat Helpful,
☐ Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful,
☐ Somewhat Unhelpful,
☐ Very Unhelpful
☐ Don't Know/Unsure (skip to Q#10)

8. What was most helpful about the pre-release services?

9. What could have been more helpful?

Housing

I'd like to ask you some questions regarding housing services offered by Project SOAR.

10. In your opinion, how helpful are housing services provided by Project SOAR?

- ☐ Very Helpful,
- ☐ Somewhat Helpful
- ☐ Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful
- ☐ Somewhat Unhelpful
- ☐ Very Unhelpful
- ☐ Don't Know/Unsure (skip to Q#13)

11. What was most helpful about the housing assistance provided by Project SOAR?

12. What could have been more helpful?

Employment

Now I'd like to ask you some questions regarding employment for Project SOAR participants.

13. In your opinion, how helpful is Project SOAR's Employment Assistance for participants?

- ☐ Very helpful,
- ☐ Somewhat helpful,
- ☐ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
- ☐ Somewhat unhelpful, or
- ☐ Very unhelpful?
- ☐ Don't Know/Unsure (skip to Q#16)

14. What was most helpful about the employment assistance provided by Project SOAR?

15. What could have been more helpful?

Faith-Based Support

Now I'd like to ask you about the Faith-based support provided by Project SOAR.

16. In your opinion how helpful are the faith-based services offered through Project SOAR?

- ☐ Very helpful,
- ☐ Somewhat helpful,
- ☐ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
- ☐ Somewhat unhelpful, or
- ☐ Very unhelpful?
- ☐ Don't Know/Unsure (skip to Q#19)

17. What was most helpful about the faith-based services offered through Project SOAR?

18. What could have been more helpful?

Circles of Support

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the Circles of Support.

19. In your opinion, how helpful are the Circles of Support for participant's transition back to the community?

- ☐ Very helpful,
- ☐ Somewhat helpful,
- ☐ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
- ☐ Somewhat unhelpful, or
- ☐ Very unhelpful?
- ☐ Don't Know/Unsure (skip to Q#22)

20. What was most helpful about the Circles of Support?

21. What could have been more helpful?

Social Services

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about how well Project SOAR provides assistance with basic needs for participants.

22. Please rate how helpful Project SOAR is in assisting participants with the following basic needs:

	Very Helpful (1)	Somewhat Helpful (2)	Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful (3)	Somewhat Helpful (4)	Very Unhelpful (5)	Not Sure (6)
a. Help with material needs, such as food, clothing, and bus passes	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Getting drivers license or other identification cards	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Getting medical assistance or other health care assistance	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Help with child support issues	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments:

Partner's Meetings

I'd like to ask you some questions regarding the bi-weekly Project SOAR Partner's Meetings.

23. Did you attend any Project SOAR Partner's Meetings?

_____ YES _____ NO (skip to Q#27)

24. If Yes, how helpful did you find these meetings?

_____ Very helpful,
_____ Somewhat helpful,
_____ Neither helpful nor unhelpful,
_____ Somewhat unhelpful, or
_____ Very unhelpful?

25. What did you find most helpful about the Partner's Meetings?

26. What could have been more helpful?

Overall

Next I would like to ask you some questions about how much Project SOAR has helped participants in their re-entry to the community.

27. Please rate how helpful Project SOAR has been in preparing participants in the following areas:

	Very Helpful (1)	Somewhat Helpful (2)	Neither Helpful nor unhelpful (3)	Somewhat Unhelpful (4)	Very Unhelpful (5)	Not Sure (6)
a. Employment Preparation	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Securing Employment beyond Tree Trust	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Educational Needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. find housing that meets their needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. material needs, such as food, bus passes, clothing, and other personal items?	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. connect to other social services?	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Support for family issues	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Increasing their network of support	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments:

28. In your opinion, what do you think makes Project SOAR unique from other projects that may be working with the same population?

29. From your perspective, what are the major strengths of Project SOAR?

30. What are the major weaknesses of Project SOAR?

31. How do you think that SOAR participants most benefit from the program?

32. In what ways do you wish the project was better able to help participants? What do you think would be needed to do this?

33. In what ways do you think the design and implementation of Project SOAR could have been improved?

34. Do you know anyone else who has been released from prison?
____ YES ____ NO (skip to Q#36)

35. If Yes, in your opinion, what difference has Project SOAR made for participants as compared to other people you know who returned to the community from prison who did not have Project SOAR's assistance? Would you say it was better, worse, or the same?

____ Better ____ Worse ____ Same ____ Unsure

36. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share about Project SOAR or a participant's experience?

37. Do you know of anyone on else that we should contact who has been involved with the SOAR Project?

If yes, please provide the name and contact information for each individual.

Name_____

Organization_____

Title_____

Phone Number_____

Email_____

Address_____

Name_____

Organization_____

Title_____

Phone Number_____

Email_____

Address_____