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Insights from the Ready4Work Reentry Initiative

Shawn Bauldry, Danijela Korom-Djakovic, Wendy S. McClanahan, Jennifer McMaken and Lauren J. Kotloff

Field Report Series

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## INTRODUCTION

In the United States, more than 650,000 prisoners are released from incarceration each year (Harrison, Beck 2006). Finding ways to support those former prisoners after their release is key to ensuring their successful transition back into society. Research has shown that ex-prisoners who obtain steady jobs and develop social bonds have much lower recidivism rates (Austin, Hardyman, Irwin 2002), but many find it difficult to secure stable employment (Western 2002) and establish positive relationships. In 2003, the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Ford Foundation engaged Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) to develop and test a new strategy to address these issues.<sup>1</sup> The resulting program, Ready4Work, provided newly released inmates with traditional employment and training services as well as mentoring and other "wraparound" social services (e.g., housing assistance and drug rehabilitation). These services were offered through partnerships among community- and faith-based organizations.<sup>2</sup>

This report explores mentoring within the context of a larger programmatic strategy as a tool for supporting successful reentry among the formerly incarcerated. It describes how mentoring was implemented in the Ready4Work sites, the extent to which mentoring was attractive to participants, the types of adults who volunteered to serve as mentors and how receipt of mentoring services was related to participant outcomes. This research was not designed to definitively determine if mentoring changes the lives of the formerly incarcerated, but does aim to explore how mentoring, or supportive relationships more broadly, can fit into comprehensive reentry efforts. We hope our research on Ready4Work's mentoring component will help support practitioners in their efforts to develop mentoring programs for newly released inmates, assist policymakers in understanding both the difficulties and the potential benefits of implementing

mentoring programs for this population and encourage researchers to embark on further study of the efficacy of mentoring to help offenders get back on track after their incarceration.

### **The Challenge of Reentry**

Today, the percentage of Americans in prisons is five times higher than it was three decades ago. In early 2008, The Pew Charitable Trusts reported that 1 in every 100 adults in the US was behind bars (The Pew Charitable Trusts 2008). As the incarceration rate has skyrocketed, so have the challenges presented by the steady stream of former inmates rejoining society. Men and women returning from incarceration are often concentrated in the nation's poorest neighborhoods, where their presence may threaten already fragile households and communities. These neighborhoods often lack the supports and services that are necessary to help ensure successful reentry.

Many ex-prisoners encounter serious barriers when they return home. Former inmates often have trouble finding a job for a number of reasons, including a lack of education, a weak work history or employers' reluctance to hire ex-prisoners (Buck 2000; Solomon et al. 2004; Taxman, Young, Byrne 2002). Other issues faced by this population include a lack of adequate housing<sup>3</sup>; addiction<sup>4</sup>; health or mental health issues<sup>5</sup>; and a lack of the stable social bonds and family supports that can help them resume their lives (Sampson, Laub 1993; Laub, Sampson 2001; Horney, Osgood, Marshall 1995).

The chances of recidivism rise when former inmates do not have access to legitimate means of earning a living or to community resources or social supports (Harer 1994; Kempiner, Kurlychek 2004). Within three years of release, more than 25 percent of former inmates return to prison due to a reoffense, while another 25 percent are returned to custody for violating probation or parole (Langan, Levin 2002).

**Table 1**  
**Ready4Work Adult Sites**

Location	Lead Agency	Type
Chicago, IL	Safer Foundation	Secular nonprofit
Detroit, MI	America Works	For profit, in collaboration with Hartford Memorial Church
Houston, TX	Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church and InnerChange Freedom Initiative	Faith-based nonprofit
Jacksonville, FL	Operation New Hope	Faith-based, nonprofit community-development corporation
Los Angeles, CA	Union Rescue Mission	Faith-based nonprofit
Memphis, TN	City of Memphis, Second Chance Ex-Felon Program	City program
Milwaukee, WI	Holy Cathedral/Word of Hope Ministries	Faith-based nonprofit
New York, NY	Exodus Transitional Community	Faith-based nonprofit
Oakland, CA	Allen Temple Housing and Economic Development Corporation	Faith-based nonprofit
Philadelphia, PA	Search for Common Ground	Secular international nonprofit
Washington, DC	East of the River Clergy-Police-Community Partnership	Faith-based nonprofit

The cycle of incarceration and recidivism takes an enormous human and financial toll, not only on the prisoners themselves, but also on families, communities and the nation. It is clear that interventions are necessary to prevent ex-prisoners from returning to criminal activity.

### **The Ready4Work Demonstration**

The primary goal of Ready4Work was to reduce recidivism by simultaneously addressing the most critical barriers faced by ex-inmates as they transitioned back into their home communities. With this goal in mind, Ready4Work was designed to:

- Increase ex-inmates' rates of employment through job training and placement services;
- Meet other critical needs by providing wraparound services through intensive case management; and
- Strengthen the social networks and supports of ex-inmates through mentoring.

To test the feasibility of this strategy, the 11 sites listed in Table 1 agreed to participate in the demonstration.<sup>6</sup> Faith-based organizations (FBOs) were the lead agencies at seven of the sites, while two community-based organizations (CBOs),

a mayor's office and a for-profit entity headed the remaining four. The sites led by the mayor's office and the for-profit entity partnered with FBOs or CBOs to provide critical program services such as mentoring.

P/PV and the US Department of Labor established program-eligibility criteria to ensure that the Ready4Work sites focused their efforts on individuals with the greatest need and those at the highest risk for recidivism. According to these criteria, Ready4Work enrollment was open only to ex-prisoners between the ages of 18 and 34 who were incarcerated most recently for a nonviolent felony offense and were out of prison no longer than 90 days.

Over the course of the demonstration, nearly 4,500 individuals participated in Ready4Work. The average age of participants was 26, and more than three fourths were African American, making the participants younger and more likely to belong to an ethnic and racial minority group when compared with the overall population of ex-prisoners. Yet despite the relative youth of the participants, most had a long history with the criminal justice system. Half of all participants had been arrested five or more times, a majority had spent more than two years in prison, and almost 25 percent had spent five or more years behind bars.<sup>7</sup>

Once individuals entered the program, they were eligible for services for up to one year.<sup>8</sup> A typical Ready4Work program trajectory began with assigning a participant to a case manager. Case managers were expected to have regular contact with participants throughout the initiative and were responsible for identifying participants' needs, connecting them with appropriate services, ensuring their retention and progress in the program, and supporting their work placements. Participants immediately received a week or two of training in "soft job skills"—such as résumé writing and workplace etiquette—to prepare them for their job search.<sup>9</sup> During this time,

participants were also invited to take part in mentoring, an optional component of the program. Once initial employment training was complete, most began searching for work, though some participants received additional industry-specific training. Case managers, mentors and job placement specialists helped participants find jobs and supported them while they were working.

Our analyses of Ready4Work data revealed that:

- Participants remained in the program for an average of eight months.
- Almost 60 percent of participants in Ready4Work became employed while in the program. About two thirds of them remained employed for three consecutive months, and a little over a third remained employed for six consecutive months.
- Among the Ready4Work sites for which such data are available, only 6.9 percent of enrollees returned to prison within one year after they were released, a proportion that compares favorably with the national average of 10.4 percent.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Current Study**

Ready4Work's mentoring component was both innovative and challenging. P/PV has a long history of research on mentoring, and that work, and the research of others, shows that carefully structured, well-run mentoring programs can have concrete benefits for young people, such as improving family and peer relationships and decreasing delinquent behaviors and substance use (see, for instance, Tierney, Grossman 1995; Rhodes 2002). These benefits result from the development of a trusting relationship between a young person and a mentor who provides consistent, nonjudgmental support and guidance (Sipe 1996). This previous work indicated to us that mentoring might benefit returning prisoners by offering them



emotional support and practical advice to help them navigate the everyday barriers and frustrations they faced upon release. Mentors might also reinforce other program areas by supporting participants' efforts to find a job or seek drug rehabilitation services.

Prior to the Ready4Work demonstration, very few programs for formerly incarcerated individuals had ever tried mentoring as a program service, and none had evaluated the impact of mentoring (Solomon et al. 2004).<sup>11</sup> For this reason, P/PV decided to closely examine this component. While P/PV was not funded to conduct a rigorous impact study of Ready4Work, we did document the program's feasibility, implementation and outcomes. Our early analysis suggested that mentoring was strongly related to how long participants remained in the program, as well as to their ability to find and maintain employment (McClanahan 2007).

To delve deeper into this promising association, we conducted further analysis on three sources of information collected during the three years of the initiative:

- Data collected by the sites on their participants, including basic demographic information, a monthly record of the services they received through the program and a monthly record of their employment status;
- A questionnaire participants completed when they joined the program that included detailed information on their level of education, work history, criminal background, religious beliefs and practices, and family supports;<sup>12</sup> and
- Interviews conducted by P/PV with 14 mentor coordinators, 31 mentors, 79 participants, 10 program managers and 1 executive director, which were designed to gather information about the implementation of the mentoring component and, more broadly, to get a sense of the interviewees' perspectives on mentoring formerly incarcerated adults.

Ideally, we would have preferred to include in our study a planned control group of ex-prisoners who received Ready4Work services without the mentoring component, as well as a follow-up survey and an in-depth analysis of qualitative implementation data on mentoring from each of the sites. Unfortunately, this was not possible, so we base our conclusions on the interview data and on a statistical analysis of the records we have.

We discovered considerable variation in how mentoring was implemented across Ready4Work sites. Only about half of all participants received mentoring. When we compare the outcomes of participants who received mentoring with those who did not, we find positive relationships between mentoring and participant outcomes. It appears that this effect may be due in part to the fact that participants who had mentors were more likely to find a job—a condition that, in turn, improved other outcomes. Because the people who voluntarily participated in mentoring may have been systematically different from those who did not, in ways we could not easily detect (for example, they may have been more motivated to reintegrate or more needy), we are unable to determine whether these outcome disparities were caused by mentoring or may be attributed to other differences between mentored and unmentored participants. However, the comparisons are suggestive and compelling enough to make a case for further exploration of the value of mentoring in prisoner reentry initiatives.

### **Organization of This Report**

The remainder of this report examines the implementation of the mentoring component of Ready4Work and details how program outcomes differed for participants who received mentoring compared with participants who did not. Chapter II outlines the mentoring component as it was implemented at the Ready4Work sites. Chapter III describes the participants who were drawn to mentoring and details how

they differed from the general population of Ready4Work participants. It also includes a description of the mentors and briefly discusses the challenges they faced in sustaining their relationships with the ex-prisoners. Chapter IV examines the ways in which participation in mentoring was related to program retention and employment and recidivism outcomes. Chapter V discusses the promise of mentoring as part of a comprehensive strategy to assist returning prisoners and suggests avenues for future research.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF READY4WORK MENTORING

Because mentoring was a relatively new strategy in programs for ex-prisoners, it was not known what kind of mentoring model would be most appropriate for the Ready4Work population. Consequently, P/PV did not specify a particular model for Ready4Work sites to implement. Instead, the 11 sites were asked to develop a model that would suit local conditions and to decide whether to emphasize group mentoring, one-on-one mentoring or a combination of both strategies. All sites were required to adopt certain best practices regardless of the mentoring model they chose. For example, sites were expected to encourage mentors to have at least four hours a month of face-to-face contact with participants and commit to the program for at least a year (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership 2005). In addition, all sites were asked to carefully screen prospective mentors and provide them with training, ongoing monitoring and support. Throughout the demonstration, P/PV program officers offered oversight and technical assistance that took into account each agency's structure and capacity and the availability of partners. The sites established and then modified their mentoring components based on P/PV recommendations.

This chapter examines the choices the Ready4Work sites made in designing and implementing their mentoring components and asks the following questions:

- What types of mentoring did the sites provide?
- What structure and supports did the sites build into their mentoring efforts?

### **What Types of Mentoring Did the Sites Provide?**

Across the 11 sites, mentoring shared some common features:

- Ten of the Ready4Work lead agencies operated their own mentoring components, while one site contracted with a local organization to provide

mentoring. The sites in Chicago and Washington, DC, collaborated with several congregations to implement mentoring; in those locations, mentoring meetings took place in these partner congregations rather than at the lead agency.

- Ten sites employed mentor coordinators.<sup>13</sup> The coordinators typically recruited, screened, trained, monitored and supported new mentors. More than half of the coordinators we interviewed had previous experience working with ex-prisoners.

As shown in Table 2, six of the sites focused on group mentoring, while five sites focused on one-on-one mentoring. In group mentoring, several participants and mentors met together at the same time in a central location. In one-on-one mentoring, coordinators matched each participant with one volunteer; the matched pairs then talked on the phone and spent time together, usually on outings. Although sites tended to emphasize one type of mentoring over the other, the two categories were not mutually exclusive. Sites that favored one-on-one mentoring occasionally held group meetings for participants and their mentors, and mentors at group mentoring sites often talked individually to participants before or after group meetings (though these pairs rarely spent time together outside of this context). Nine sites offered mentoring before participants were released from incarceration.

Regardless of the approach used at each site, Ready4Work mentoring efforts shared two goals: to provide ex-prisoners with support and to offer positive role models. These interconnected goals were designed to help participants reestablish their lives and deal with the challenges of returning to their communities. As one mentor coordinator noted: "The goal [of mentoring] is to get the participants an additional support, somebody they can bounce things off and use as a sounding board, another

**Table 2**  
**Types of Mentoring Offered at Ready4Work Sites**

Site	Group	One-on-One	Prerelease
Chicago	P	S	√
Detroit	S	P	
Houston	S	P	√
Jacksonville	S	P	√
Los Angeles	P	S	√
Memphis	P	S	
Milwaukee	P	S	√
New York	P	S	√
Oakland	P	S	√
Philadelphia	S	P	√
Washington, DC	S	P	√

Notes:

P denotes the site's primary type of mentoring.

S denotes the site's secondary type of mentoring.

√ denotes that the site offered prerelease mentoring.

person who will be rooting for them and [who] they can call for advice.”

### *Group Mentoring Sessions*

At sites emphasizing group mentoring, participants and mentors typically met weekly or every other week for two hours at the program office or in the meeting room of a participating church. To maintain attendance rates, many sites held meetings in the evening, on weekends or on multiple days and called participants to remind them of meeting times. Ten sites encouraged attendance by providing refreshments and covering participants' transportation costs.

The meetings took two forms: structured and unstructured. Four sites offered structured meetings, with staff members determining the discussion topics and activities before the session started, while two sites offered unstructured meetings, with the participants and mentors determining their activities jointly at each session. In both cases, the meetings addressed topics of use to former prisoners, including goal

setting, stress management, budgeting, persistence and responsibility.

To deal with the challenge of keeping participants and mentors engaged, coordinators tried to make meetings interesting and interactive by including everyone in the discussions and incorporating topics that participants suggested. Three sites took the mentoring groups on outings, and two sites arranged for guest speakers to make presentations during mentoring sessions. Group leaders often allotted time for spontaneous discussions, and some would begin their meetings with everyone sharing their “highlights of the week.” At some sites, mentors took turns leading the meetings, while at others the responsibility belonged to specific coordinators. Generally, mentors contributed to discussions, shared their experiences and provided feedback and support. Mentors engaged participants in one-on-one conversations before and after the meetings and often checked in with participants by phone between meetings.

### *One-on-One Mentoring*

At the five sites focusing on one-on-one mentoring, meetings were held at the convenience of the participant and mentor, and as such, varied in frequency and length. Mentors and participants often spent their time engaged in activities—eating a meal together, seeing a movie or sporting event, or attending church<sup>14</sup>. Conversations ranged from work, family and life in general to frustrations with and concerns about readjusting to life outside of prison. Between their face-to-face meetings, participants and their mentors talked on the phone. Coordinators at these sites provided extra support to mentors, giving them suggestions for activities and outings as well as additional advice on working with ex-prisoners.

### *Prerelease Mentoring*

Johnson and Larson (2003) suggest that social programs that begin working with ex-prisoners while they are still incarcerated may have more success in maintaining connections with them after they are released. Thus, Ready4Work encouraged inmates to sign up for the program 90 days before their release, and nine sites included mentoring in their prerelease offerings. Ultimately, participants who received prerelease mentoring accounted for 10 percent of those who received mentoring across all sites. Prerelease mentoring was often administered through the site's prison ministry outreach, but some sites matched inmates and mentors for telephone conversations on their own. Through its partnership with a correctional facility and the local offender-supervision agency, the Washington, DC, site offered video conferencing between mentors and prisoners.

### **What Structure and Supports Did the Sites Build into Their Mentoring Components?**

All Ready4Work sites were required to include a number of practices in their mentoring programs that P/PV knew from past research were essential to high-quality mentoring: mentor screening and training, careful matching of mentors with participants, and monitoring and support of the mentoring relationships.

#### *Mentor Screening*

Sites screened potential mentors in a number of ways. Along with criminal background checks, staff members conducted in-person interviews, and each candidate completed a questionnaire designed to provide an understanding of the candidate's personality, talents, interests and hobbies.<sup>15</sup> Coordinators used the information gleaned during the screening process to help match mentors and participants.

#### *Mentor Training*

All sites required mentors to undergo training programs provided by the lead agencies or their partnering organizations. The sessions ranged in length from two to eight hours, with an average of six hours. Though P/PV set guidelines and provided materials for the sessions, the trainers generally determined the format; most used a combination of group discussions, vignettes, videos, question-and-answer sessions, guest speakers and peer advising. In addition to general information about mentoring, training sessions included additional information of specific interest to those working with ex-prisoners, such as the barriers ex-prisoners face and communication skills. Furthermore, mentors were provided with training on the role of faith in mentoring. In Ready4Work, which had federal funding, there were clear guidelines about what did and did not constitute appropriate messages about faith. For instance, mentors were not permitted to proselytize and could only talk about religious issues

if the participant asked an explicit question. Similarly, mentors could not ask the participant to attend religious services, but the pair could attend church together if the participant requested it, which happened fairly frequently. Mentors already working with Ready4Work who wanted a refresher course were welcome to attend additional training sessions.

### ***Mentor-Participant Matching***

Sites focusing on the one-on-one approach followed similar procedures in matching mentors and participants. Coordinators, familiar with the mentors from the screening process, tried to match them to participants by interests, hobbies and personality traits as well as availability, geographic proximity and religiosity. All sites used same-gender matching and reassigned mentors if relationships floundered. Mentors and participants met for the first time by phone or at the program office.

Matching procedures tended to be less formal in sites that focused on group mentoring. During group meetings, pairs would often form on their own without the involvement of coordinators. At times, coordinators used their knowledge of participants and mentors to suggest possibilities for matches.

### ***Mentor Monitoring and Support***

Staff members generally called the mentors monthly to provide oversight to mentors, make sure the matches were going well and problem solve when they weren't. Staff members also made themselves available on an ongoing or "drop in" basis to answer mentors' questions and to discuss concerns between calls and meetings. Before and after group meetings also were prime opportunities for informal check-ins; after meetings, coordinators often asked mentors about their experiences, and mentors used that time to lend support to each other as well. Additionally, Ready4Work staff were required to collect

monthly data on the frequency and length of mentor meetings, activities the match engaged in and to document when and why a participant was unreachable. These mentoring logs were completed by Ready4Work mentor coordinators during their monthly scheduled conversations with mentors.

### **Summary**

The Ready4Work sites offered group mentoring and/or one-on-one mentoring to all program participants. Employing the mentoring models that best fit their organizational structure and capacity, the sites developed their own procedures for working with the ex-prisoner population by adapting a number of practices known to support strong mentoring relationships with youth. How successful they were in recruiting mentors and engaging ex-prisoners is the subject of the next chapter.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS AND MENTORS

Mentoring was offered to Ready4Work participants because P/PV staff hypothesized that the additional support of a caring adult might ease ex-prisoners' readjustment to society. However, because mentoring was a new strategy for reentry programs, sites did not know how attractive the service would be, and they could not predict what factors might create barriers to broad-based participation.

Another uncertainty the sites faced was whether enough mentors could be recruited to meet the demand—a challenge facing mentoring programs in general (Furano et al. 1993; Roaf, Tierney, Hunte 1994). P/PV's experience with Amachi, a national mentoring program for children of prisoners, indicated that mentors, particularly male mentors of color, could be recruited from local congregations, and Ready4Work sites hoped to use this strategy to identify potential mentors. However, questions remained about congregants' willingness to mentor adults, particularly adults who have been incarcerated.

By the end of the initiative, the sites succeeded in recruiting more than 1,000 mentors. However, despite their efforts to present mentoring as a valuable service, the sites could engage only half of the total number of Ready4Work participants in mentoring during the course of the initiative.

This chapter examines who came forward to participate in Ready4Work mentoring and asks the following questions:

- What were the characteristics of the participants who chose to engage in mentoring?
- What barriers or misperceptions may have discouraged more participants from engaging in mentoring?
- Who volunteered to become mentors, and how were mentors recruited?
- How were mentoring relationships sustained?

The chapter ends with a brief discussion of how the Ready4Work sites dealt with the challenge of persuading participants to take advantage of—and continue participating in—mentoring services.

### **What Were the Characteristics of the Participants Who Chose To Engage in Mentoring?**

To begin to understand the type of ex-prisoners who were drawn to the mentoring program, we compared the characteristics of those participants who agreed to have a mentor with those who declined mentoring services to see if there were any systematic differences between the two populations.

Participants who met with a mentor (whether one-on-one or in a group) shared many characteristics with those who did not.<sup>16</sup> Reflecting the general characteristics of the larger pool of Ready4Work participants, both groups were predominantly male and African American, and about two fifths had earned less than a GED (see Table C-1 in Appendix C for more information). Despite their surface similarities, deeper analyses revealed a few characteristics that did seem to differentiate mentored from nonmentored participants (see Table B-1 in Appendix B for more information on this analysis). Holding other factors constant, older participants, females and those expressing a higher level of religiosity at enrollment were most likely to engage in mentoring. Also, mothers were less likely to participate in mentoring than were women without children. Importantly, none of the other characteristics we considered, including ethnicity, level of education, criminal history or time of enrollment in Ready4Work, seemed to affect whether a participant engaged in the mentoring component of the program.

### **What Barriers or Misperceptions May Have Discouraged More Participants from Engaging in Mentoring?**

The findings suggest that older individuals and women without children may have been more comfortable accepting support and guidance than were young males; young males may have been more likely to view the need for support as a sign of weakness. The fact that women with children were less likely to meet with a mentor than were childless women suggests that the mothers' child-care responsibilities may have interfered with their participation in mentoring.

Further indications of why certain participants may have been reluctant to take advantage of the mentoring component can be gleaned from interviews we conducted with 15 Ready4Work participants who declined mentoring, as well as our interviews with program staff. Their answers suggest a wide range of barriers, needs and misperceptions that may have prevented more men and women from getting involved: Some ex-prisoners considered mentoring more suitable for youth than for adults or viewed meetings as just one more form of institutional requirement. As participants worked to reestablish their lives, they often prioritized activities they felt were directly related to finding work. Between family obligations, jobs and other programs or classes, some ex-prisoners found little time to participate in mentoring. Some hesitated to discuss their problems with strangers, and others questioned the motivations and intentions of the FBOs that were providing the mentoring.

The sites took steps to increase participation in mentoring and make it more appealing to participants. For example, to avoid the association of "mentoring" with youth programs, six sites used terms such as "life coach," "career coach" or "transition coach" to refer to mentors. As one mentor explained: "Life coaching is what we call it. [Participants] can buy into that.

To coach, you think through with the objective to become a better person. They can live with that definition of mentoring. They get involved in sports, and coaching is something they like."

For the first two years of the demonstration, P/PV asked the sites to invite all active Ready4Work enrollees to participate in mentoring within 90 days of their enrollment in the program. In the last year of the demonstration, however, that time frame was changed to 30 days after enrollment to persuade participants to engage in the mentoring process earlier, before they became overwhelmed with other concerns.

### **Who Volunteered To Become Mentors, and How Were Mentors Recruited?**

Although there was some concern at the beginning of the demonstration regarding whether Ready4Work sites would be able to recruit enough volunteers willing to mentor adult ex-prisoners, the sites successfully recruited a diverse group of 1,013 volunteer mentors during the three-year project. Their ages ranged from 18 to 80, with an average age of 45. Perhaps more impressive is that just less than 60 percent were male and more than 85 percent were African American. All told, about half were African American males. Recruiting minorities (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007) and males as volunteers is no simple task; but as noted in previous work on faith-based mentoring programs (Bauldry, Hartmann 2004), the success with recruiting minorities probably stems from drawing on African American congregations as a primary source of volunteers. The reason for the high number of male volunteers is less clear, as other mentoring programs drawing mentors for high-risk young people from congregations have had less success (Bauldry, Hartman 2004). The sites were also able to recruit many volunteers who had no previous mentoring experience; almost two thirds of those who came forward were first-time mentors.



Although the sites' mentor recruitment efforts did not deliberately target formerly incarcerated individuals, almost one third of the mentors had spent time behind bars.<sup>17</sup> Our interview data suggest that mentors who had been incarcerated may have been in a better position to support their mentees.<sup>18</sup> Mentors who had never been incarcerated mentioned more frequently that they struggled with getting their mentees to open up and be responsive to offers of help than did mentors who were ex-prisoners.

Mentors expressed a variety of reasons for volunteering. Those who had previously been incarcerated themselves expressed a strong desire to serve as role models more frequently than did other mentors. As one mentor explained: "In order to be a good mentor, you need to set an example. These guys coming out of prison, they need to see this. . . . I have to be totally dedicated to mentoring; I have to show these guys that they can succeed without robbing or stealing or deceiving." Some mentors who were ex-prisoners said their passion to help came from experiencing life on both sides of the prison gates. Many of the mentors who had never been imprisoned said their interest in mentoring stemmed from the incarceration of relatives or friends.

Table 3 shows that Ready4Work successfully recruited mentors through faith-based organizations.<sup>19</sup> Just over half of the mentors reported learning about the program from their congregations. (Seven of the 11 agencies targeted congregations as partners for their mentoring programs.) But sites could not rely solely on faith-based organizations; they also needed to recruit mentors through direct outreach and word of mouth.

### **How Were Mentoring Relationships Sustained?**

Previous research on mentoring for children and youth indicates that the length of the mentoring relationship is a key factor: Without adequate longevity, mentoring does not benefit youth.<sup>20</sup> In Ready4Work, developing and sustaining relationships between mentors and ex-prisoners was sometimes challenging: The average match length was slightly longer than three months. Sixty-eight percent of the mentoring relationships lasted three or fewer months, and 89 percent lasted six or fewer months. For some participants, face-to-face mentoring was difficult to sustain once they became employed or because of other competing demands on their time. However, some participants and mentors did believe talking on the phone was a good way to keep in touch regularly. Program staff also noted that some ex-prisoners needed time to open up and feel comfortable with mentors. If participants lacked enthusiasm about the mentoring relationship, mentors felt discouraged and occasionally became less motivated. "A lot of times, participants don't make appointments, and the mentor gives up. And some of them cannot be flexible with their time," one staff member commented. Another noted, "When the mentors first come they are excited, but soon they realize that their mentees are not as excited." We do not know how match duration operates for ex-prisoners. Whereas longer matches are necessary for youth to accrue benefits, durations of three to four months may be adequate for ex-prisoners, especially if one factors in phone contact. More research needs to be done in this area.

**Table 3**  
**How Mentors Learned About Ready4Work**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Congregation	526	54%
Direct outreach	192	20%
Acquaintance	172	18%
Other outreach	43	4%
Advertisement	8	1%
Other	63	7%

Source: Program MIS data, October 2003 through July 2007, mentor intake.

Note: N = 1,013. Forty-five mentors did not report how they learned about Ready4Work. Percentages total more than 100 because mentors could indicate more than one category.

### **Summary**

Ready4Work sites rose to the challenge of recruiting mentors but had trouble convincing participants to take advantage of mentoring services. Older participants, women with no children and participants who expressed higher levels of religiosity were most likely to meet with a mentor. Most mentors learned about Ready4Work and its mentoring opportunities through their congregations. Sites were particularly successful recruiting mentors who were new to the field, members of minority groups and male. Many of the people who volunteered to mentor participants were ex-prisoners themselves, and those mentors may have had an advantage when it came to encouraging participants to accept their offers of assistance.

## MENTORING AND OUTCOMES

A fundamental premise of Ready4Work was that ex-prisoners need to find employment to meet basic needs and avoid committing further crimes. In analyzing the role of the mentoring component in supporting these goals, we considered its relation to three employment-related outcomes: whether participants found work; how long it took to secure employment; and how long they remained employed. We examined the relationship between mentoring and program retention because we believed that having a mentor could encourage extended program participation, which would in turn help ensure participants received the full array of services. In addition, because the ultimate goal of Ready4Work was to reduce recidivism rates, we investigated whether participants who met with a mentor were less likely to return to prison. Statistical models for these analyses are presented in Tables B2 to B6 in Appendix B.

In examining these outcomes, it is important to keep in mind that mentoring was just one component of the Ready4Work model; virtually all participants, regardless of whether they were mentored, received case management and some type of employment service. Many received other support services as well. Since the importance of these services is well documented (Mallik-Kane, Visher 2008; Reentry Policy Council 2005), the focus of this research is on the potential contribution of mentoring *as part of a comprehensive reentry program*.

We employ two strategies to explore whether mentoring is related to outcomes of interest. First, we take advantage of the fact that only about half of the participants ever met with a mentor during their tenure in the program. This allows us to compare participants who met with a mentor with those who did not. However, as mentioned in Chapter I, participants volunteered for mentoring, meaning the motivation that drove them to seek mentoring also might have led them to

experience other positive outcomes, such as remaining active in the program for a longer period. Thus, we cannot be sure that any differences in outcomes between mentored and nonmentored participants are due strictly to mentoring. We did, however, include a number of participant characteristics in our models to help isolate the effects of mentoring and to partially address selection bias.<sup>21</sup> In broad categories, we controlled for sociodemographic characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity and age), family composition (whether the participant was ever married and whether the participant had a child), education and work history (level of education, number of full-time jobs held and duration of longest full-time job), criminal background (number of arrests and time spent in prison), social support (extent of family contact while in prison and relationship with friends) and religiosity (religiosity index). We also included a variable that allowed the association between the outcome of interest and having children to differ for males and females and a variable for whether the participant enrolled in Ready4Work before being released from incarceration. Finally, we included the local monthly unemployment rate for each given month in our model of time to first job. Thus, while our results should be considered tentative, the associations we discuss in this section are certainly strong enough to warrant further research.

Our second strategy involves focusing only on the participants who met with a mentor at least once to determine whether the length of time spent with a mentor affected other outcomes. We consider both the total number of months and the average number of hours per month that participants met with a mentor. Both of these measures are subject to the same caveat regarding the voluntary nature of the mentoring component of the program.

### **How Was Program Retention Related to Mentoring?**

Participants spent an average of eight months in the program, exiting with four months of eligibility left, and about a third left after just four months. This is not surprising given the many competing demands on ex-prisoners' time. When comparing those who participated in mentoring with those who did not, the difference in program-retention time, controlling for other factors, is statistically significant: Participants who met with a mentor at least once remained in the program 9.7 months, whereas those who did not left the program after an average of 6.6 months. We also examined how mentoring affected a participant's likelihood of leaving the program each month and found that participants who met with a mentor were 60 percent less likely to leave the program in any given month than were participants who did not.

To examine whether the amount of time participants spent with their mentors each month was associated with better program retention, we limited our analysis to the group of participants who met with a mentor for at least two months.<sup>22</sup> We did not find any difference in program retention based on the average number of hours per month that participants met with a mentor. We may not have detected an effect because most participants met approximately the same amount of time each month. (More than 65 percent met with a mentor between one and six hours per month on average.) It is also possible that simply meeting with a mentor at all in a given month confers the principal advantage in terms of program retention and that additional hours spent do not add to that effect.

### **How Was Mentoring Related to Employment Outcomes?**

Ex-prisoners need to find work quickly to make a successful transition back to society, yet people coming out of prison

face a number of barriers that can make securing employment extremely challenging (Travis, Solomon, Waul 2001; Finn 1999). Even for those with strong social networks, family and friends may be able to provide only limited job search assistance. Mentors may provide additional support by expanding ex-prisoners' networks, helping them get to interviews or providing encouragement when the search or job gets tough. Because ex-prisoners need to remain employed to establish stability in their lives, we looked at how participation in mentoring was related to whether participants found a job, how long it took to secure employment and how long they were employed.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Finding a Job*

Of the 4,450 Ready4Work participants, 56 percent secured at least one job while they were active in the program. Those who took advantage of mentoring appeared to benefit from the experience—participants who met with a mentor at least once were twice as likely to obtain a job as were those who were not mentored.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, among participants who ever met with a mentor, we found that longer matches were associated with an increase in the participants' odds of finding a job. The amount of time that participants met with mentors in any given month, however, did not emerge as an important factor.

#### *Time to First Job*

Across all participants, 35 percent obtained jobs in their first month in the program (including a small percent who were employed when they enrolled), 26 percent found employment in their second month, and slightly more than 10 percent got jobs in their third or fourth month of participation. Participants who met with mentors needed less time to find their first jobs than did those who were unmentored. One way of analyzing how long it takes for participants to secure their first job is to estimate their odds of finding a job in any

given month. An increased likelihood of getting a job in a given month translates into finding a first job more quickly. In our analysis, we found that meeting with a mentor increased a participant's odds of getting a job the next month over those who did not take advantage of the mentoring component of the program.<sup>25</sup> Among participants who met with a mentor for at least one month, an additional month of meetings was also related to a small increase in the odds of finding a job in any given month. The average number of hours participants met with their mentors did not affect their probability of finding work the next month.

### *Job Retention*

Participants were fairly successful at retaining jobs—overall, almost two thirds of the study participants who found a job remained employed for three consecutive months.<sup>26</sup> We found that retention rates were associated with mentorship—participants who met with a mentor were more likely to remain employed for three months than were those who were unmentored.<sup>27</sup> As with the other employment outcomes, the average hours per month a participant spent with a mentor did not matter, but the number of months a participant met with a mentor did. An additional month of mentoring was associated with an increase in the odds of remaining employed for three months.

### **How Was Mentoring Related to Recidivism?**

In this report, we define recidivism as returning to prison for a new offense within one year of being released. We accessed state- and federal-level administrative records to determine the recidivism status of each of the Ready4Work participants. (See Appendix A for details of our data collection efforts.) Using this measure, we found that 6.9 percent of participants recidivated. This rate

compares favorably with the national average of 10.4 percent reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, using an identical measure of recidivism (Langan, Levin 2002).<sup>28</sup>

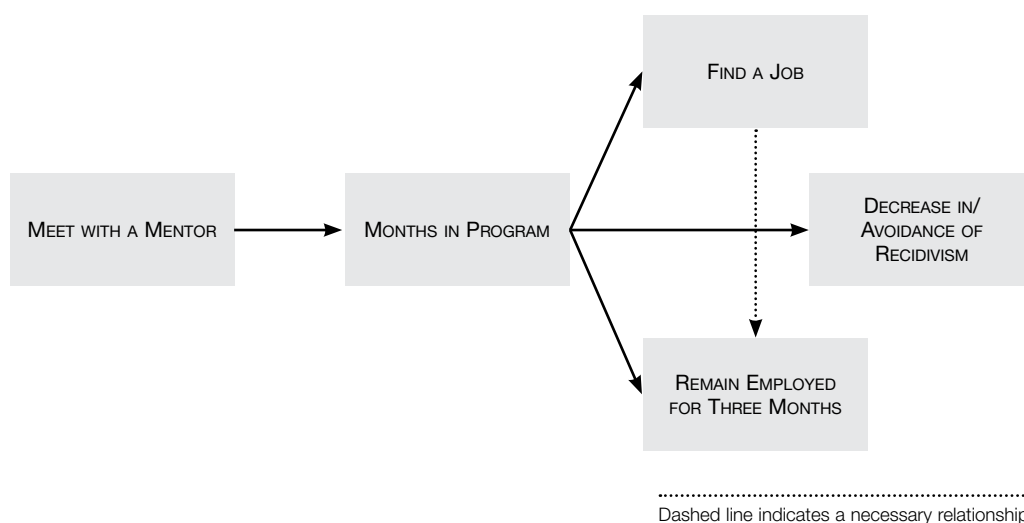
Compared with participants who did not have a mentor, mentored participants were 35 percent less likely to have recidivated within a year of being released.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, restricting our attention to participants who met with a mentor at least once, we found that an additional month of mentoring was associated with a small decline in the likelihood of recidivating.

### **How Did Mentoring Provide These Benefits to Participants?**

Our results are generally consistent whether the focus is program retention, employment outcomes or recidivism: Mentoring is associated with positive outcomes. Up to this point, however, the data analysis has not provided a sense of exactly how mentoring may have been beneficial. In this section, we investigate potential paths through which mentoring may operate and draw on our interviews with participants to better understand the relationships between mentoring and outcomes.

Our data<sup>30</sup> allow us to statistically examine two potential pathways through which mentoring could be related to employment and recidivism: through program retention, and through participation in program services (wraparound and job placement/retention services<sup>31</sup>). First, as we noted above, participants who met with a mentor remained active in the program for a longer period of time. Therefore, participants who met with a mentor may also have received more services overall, which, in turn, could lead to better outcomes. Following the same logic, participants who met with a mentor may have been more likely than those who did not to take advantage of job placement and job retention services

**Figure 1**  
**Path Model with Months in Program as Mediator**

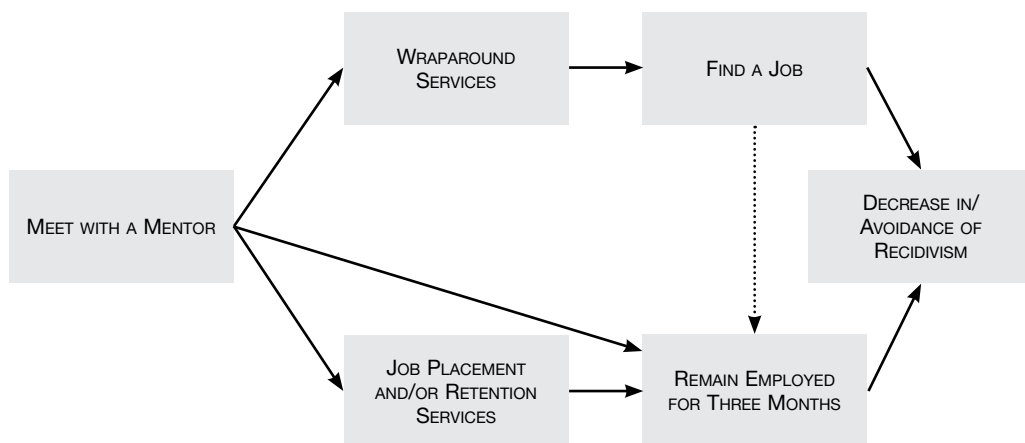


and/or the array of wraparound services provided by the Ready4Work sites or their partner organizations. We explore these possible pathways and conclude this section with an examination of whether the fact that participants who met with a mentor were more likely to find and retain jobs accounts for the relationship between mentoring and recidivism. Statistical models are presented in Tables B-7 and B-8 in Appendix B.

We illustrate the results of our analyses in the path diagrams above and on the next page.<sup>32</sup> Figure 1 shows that participants who met with a mentor spent more time in the program and that spending more time in the program increased the likelihood of finding a job, retaining that job and avoiding recidivism. Once we account for the relationship between mentoring and program retention, mentoring no longer has a direct effect on any of the other outcomes. This suggests that the effects of mentoring may work largely through keeping participants engaged in the program.

Because MIS data on the various outcomes were collected only for people who were active in the program, it is possible that this analysis underestimates the effect of mentoring and overestimates the effect of engagement. We can partially address this problem by focusing on the array of services participants received rather than focusing solely on the time they spent in the program. In Figure 2, we illustrate a model that includes wraparound services and job placement or retention services. In this model, we find that participants who met with a mentor were more likely to receive wraparound services and employment-related services. Furthermore, participants who received wraparound services were more likely than those who did not receive such services to find a job but were no more likely to retain a job for three months. Employment services, however, mattered for both finding a job and for remaining employed for three months. Meeting with a mentor retained its association with job retention, but we do not find any direct

**Figure 2**  
**Path Model with Specific Services as Mediators**



Dashed line indicates a necessary relationship.

effects of the mentoring services on recidivism. In contrast, participants who found a job and remained employed for three months were less likely to recidivate.

### *Participant Interviews*

Many of the participants we spoke with mentioned the emotional support and encouragement they received from their mentors, and they often said their mentors helped them stay motivated, focused and “on the right track.” This support may have led some participants to stay in the program longer and continue to receive services geared toward increasing their employability and job prospects. One participant said his mentor helped him “stay focused on the big picture.... Sometimes I’ll be stressing, and he will tell me: ‘I can’t tell you what to do, but think about the choices you made in the past.’”

Although mentioned less frequently, participants also received tangible help or instrumental support, such as transportation assistance or proofreading a cover letter, from their mentors. Group meetings also launched discussions on topics that were

informative and useful to ex-prisoners—such as goal setting, stress management, budgeting, persistence and job leads—and created additional opportunities for participants to get concrete advice.

Going beyond their requirements, some mentors helped participants find jobs by sharing leads and helping the participants prepare for interviews and complete applications. One participant said his mentor “always keeps in contact with me. Calling me, letting me know different people are hiring. Calling me to see how things are going. I like that.” Another noted: “[Mentors] teach you the true responsibilities in life—how to get out there and get a job and dress appropriately for a job interview.”

### **Summary**

The pattern of outcomes reported in this chapter suggest that mentoring, in combination with other supportive services, may help support the main goals of reentry programs—helping ex-prisoners find and retain employment and avoid recidivism. The analysis presented here

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cannot make a definitive case for the benefit of mentoring because the individuals who chose to meet with a mentor and who sustained that relationship over a longer period of time may also have had other characteristics that helped them stay in the program, get and keep a job and avoid recidivism, even in the absence of a mentor. However, the pattern of results, combined with the qualitative analysis of interviews, suggests providing mentoring to ex-inmates may warrant further exploration. In the final chapter, we draw together the lessons learned from Ready4Work mentoring and suggest areas for future study.



## CONCLUSIONS

P/PV designed Ready4Work to test whether a reentry program could be successfully implemented through a partnership of local community- and/or faith-based organizations to provide ex-prisoners with targeted case management, employment services and mentoring. Our analysis of the initiative demonstrates that this model is extremely promising: Participants stayed in the program, and many found jobs and avoided recidivism.<sup>33</sup>

This report delved into the usefulness of a mentoring component as part of a comprehensive program designed to serve ex-prisoners. Mentoring was the most challenging—and innovative—aspect of Ready4Work. Although the sites were able to recruit enough mentors, only about half of those enrolled in the initiative chose to participate in the mentoring component. Sites experienced ongoing struggles to increase the number of matches and to keep participants engaged. But the ex-inmates who made the time to meet with mentors fared better than those who did not in terms of how long they remained in the program and the employment outcomes they experienced during their period of enrollment.

Our findings indicate that mentoring, in conjunction with intensive case management and employment services, may offer a promising approach for helping previously incarcerated individuals reintegrate into their communities, but much remains unknown. Further projects and research are needed to develop best practices for mentoring this population and to determine whether mentoring contributed causally to the positive outcomes seen in this demonstration.

### **How Do We Best Provide Mentoring for Ex-Prisoners?**

More work needs to be done to learn how to make mentoring more attractive to formerly incarcerated individuals in general—and to young males in particular. Because adults often associate the term

“mentoring” with children, several sites experienced some success in using the phrase “life coaching” for the same service, but all found it difficult to overcome the reluctance of many participants to discuss personal problems with strangers and to persuade them to fit mentoring into their busy lives. Future research is needed to find successful ways to circumvent those barriers.

We also do not yet understand what mentoring for ex-prisoners ideally looks like and which participants will benefit most. Ready4Work sites employed several approaches: one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring and a combination of both. Participants received different doses of mentoring; some met with mentors a few times a month, while others met their mentors much more sporadically. Participants reported a variety of mentoring experiences, from engaging in group life-skills training and recreational activities to receiving employment assistance and friendship. In addition, the mentor training and monitoring processes, along with the characteristics of the volunteers themselves, varied widely. The age, gender, religious orientation and personal history of mentors (including their criminal backgrounds and life experiences) may have significant implications for building and sustaining relationships in this context.

More programming, with careful research on its implementation and outcomes, is needed to determine how much training and oversight is required, which mentors work best with which participants, who can be expected to participate in and benefit from mentoring and what form or forms mentoring for ex-prisoners should take.

### **Does Mentoring Really Improve Outcomes?**

More research is needed to determine with certainty if mentoring for ex-prisoners works. The nature of our comparison group limited our study, allowing us to

consider only how those who elected to participate in the mentoring component compared with their peers who did not. A study with a carefully constructed comparison group or a randomized control group would allow us to determine definitively if mentoring provided the decisive difference and whether it produced other positive outcomes, such as improved family relationships, higher self-efficacy and reduced drug and alcohol use.

Ready4Work participants received relatively little mentoring, and the structure of the program differed greatly from site to site and person to person. Further research will allow the field to assess the effects of different types and amounts of mentoring. Additional research also will allow demographic comparisons that could assist programs in attracting more participants to their mentoring services. For instance, if we knew definitively why fewer men volunteered to be mentored than did women or why younger participants were less likely to accept mentoring than were older participants, we could adjust the program to make it more attractive to a wider variety of people.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Promoting successful reentry among recently released inmates is a critical issue facing individuals, families, communities and government organizations. The financial and social costs of incarceration seem destined to mount in the absence of consistent and strong reentry supports for recently released ex-prisoners.

In Ready4Work, mentoring emerged as a promising approach to help former inmates readjust to society. However, mentoring alone is not enough. Finding and retaining a job is key. Reentry programs need to address the full range of ex-prisoners' needs—from housing to healthcare and employment—and they must be individualized enough to address the unique issues facing first-time, short-term, long-term and repeat prisoners. Dependable, supportive

relationships are likely to be as critical to the well-being of those returning from prison as they have proven to be in the lives of other at-risk populations.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 P/PV also developed a Juvenile Ready4Work program, funded by the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Findings from that initiative are not included herein but will be presented in a future report.
- 2 See Good and Sherrid (2005) for more information on how the Ready4Work demonstration developed.
- 3 In New York City, 11.4 percent of ex-prisoners entered a New York City homeless shelter, and 32.8 percent of this group were imprisoned again within two years (Metraux, Culhane 2004). Shelter use has been found to be linked to an increased risk of returning to prison (Rodriguez, Brown 2003; Supportive Housing Network of New York 2002).
- 4 Fifty-seven percent of ex-prisoners report that they used drugs in the month before their arrest, about 80 percent of state prisoners report a history of involvement with drugs or alcohol, and two thirds of those in jail reported being “actively involved with drugs” at the time they entered jail (Mumola 1999; Wilson 2000; Solomon et al. 2004).
- 5 Thirty-one percent of state inmates have a “physical impairment or mental condition” (Solomon et al. 2004).
- 6 There were an additional six Juvenile Ready4Work sites, but, as noted above, this report focuses exclusively on adult sites.
- 7 See Table C-1 in Appendix C for additional information about Ready4Work participants.
- 8 Participants with additional needs, such as substance abuse counseling, may have followed an altered program trajectory but were still eligible for only one year of services.
- 9 For participants who were enrolled in Ready4Work before their release from incarceration, this trajectory describes what happens after they were released, though they were still only eligible for a year’s worth of services. While those participants were still incarcerated, case managers met with them and began planning their transition back into the community. In some cases, mentors also began meeting with participants prior to their release.
- 10 The recidivism rate reflects data collected from the three quarters of Ready4Work sites with publicly available data.
- 11 Only 7 of the 75 organizations profiled in the study by Solomon et al. offered mentoring services.
- 12 From February 2004—when P/PV began using the questionnaire—until the program ended in 2006, 3,507 people enrolled in Ready4Work. 2,930 of those enrollees completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 84 percent.
- 13 At the site that did not employ a mentor coordinator, the program director and program manager were responsible for implementing the mentoring component.
- 14 Church attendance was an activity that was permitted (under guidelines governing the receipt of federal funds) only if the ex-prisoner requested it.
- 15 P/PV set the following guidelines for Ready4Work sites: Mentors had to be at least 18 years of age, have no violent offenses and have been out of prison or jail and arrest-and violation-free for 3 years. Some sites made their own, more stringent, requirements, only accepting mentors who had been out of prison for five years or more.
- 16 Most participants who received mentoring received both one-on-one and group mentoring for at least one month, so it is difficult to differentiate the effects of each type of mentoring. For this reason, in the following analysis, we consider any participant who met with a mentor in either context as having been mentored. Similarly, in determining the amount of mentoring received by each participant, we represent the number of months and the number of hours per month participants met with a mentor without regard to whether those meetings were one-on-one or in a group setting. See Appendix B for details about this analysis.
- 17 See note 15.
- 18 We analyzed interviews with 31 mentors, out of whom 8 were ex-prisoners.
- 19 Previous research has shown that only about 1 percent of any congregation is willing to mentor high-risk youth (Bauldry, Hartmann 2004).

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- 20 For example, Herrera et al. (2007) showed increasing benefits of school-based mentoring as youth were exposed to additional three-month chunks of mentoring. Grossman and Rhodes (2002) showed that mentoring youth for fewer than six months was harmful, and that once the six-month mark was passed, youth did increasingly better with additional mentoring.
- 21 We were unable to identify an instrumental variable for having received mentoring.
- 22 We made this decision in an effort to avoid any extreme values that could result from calculating an average based on a single month. Thirty-six percent of the participants who met with a mentor did so for just one month and are excluded from these calculations.
- 23 Because the jobs available to ex-prisoners are often temporary or transitional, we looked at whether participants enjoyed steady employment, not whether they retained a single job.
- 24 Odds ratios and hazard rates are reported in Tables B-2 through B-6 in Appendix B. It is important to note that although an odds ratio may be high, it does not imply that the absolute number this increase represents is large. Here, as context, 56 percent of participants ever became employed.
- 25 By measuring employment only in the month after a mentoring session, we were forced to exclude from this analysis the 22 percent of all participants who found a job in the first month. Our data were not detailed enough to determine whether participants met with a mentor prior to but within the same month of obtaining a job.
- 26 We could only collect data from individuals while they remained in the program. Thus, our retention analysis was limited to participants who remained enrolled for at least three months after finding employment.
- 27 We excluded from our analysis of mentoring the three percent of participants who remained employed for three consecutive months prior to ever meeting with a mentor.
- 28 The statistics reported in this BJS report are somewhat dated, but they represent the most recent data available at the time of press.
- 29 This decrease in odds represents a small absolute change because absolute levels of recidivism are low.
- 30 See Appendix A for an explanation of data sources.
- 31 Almost all participants received case management, so it was not included in this analysis.
- 32 This is not a conventional path diagram for two reasons. First, the sample varies across different outcomes (e.g., the sample consists only of participants who ever found a job in the model component related to employment retention). Second, the nature of the coefficients changes across model components (e.g., some are standard linear estimates, and some are odds ratios depending on the nature of the outcome). For these reasons, we do not include coefficients for the paths but instead simply illustrate paths with significant effects.
- 33 For more details on the positive outcomes experienced by participants in the Ready4Work program, see Farley, Hackman 2006; Farley, McClanahan 2007.

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## APPENDIX A: SOURCES OF DATA

The data in this report stem from three sources: a management information system (MIS) used by the sites, a questionnaire administered to participants when they enrolled in the programs, and interviews with program staff participants and mentors.<sup>1</sup>

### **Ready4Work Management Information System**

The MIS data used here come from a participant-intake form and a monthly update form. A staff member at each site completed the intake form for participants when they enrolled in the program. The form captured basic demographic data and information on the participant's education, employment history and criminal background.

At the end of the month, a staff member at each site completed the update form for every active participant. This form included three sections. The first section indicated whether the participant left the program in the last month; the second documented the services the participant received during the month; and the third recorded information related to key outcomes. This information included the participant's employment status at the end of the month, whether he or she achieved any educational goals (e.g., completed a GED or attended college) and whether the participant was arrested, convicted or incarcerated during the month.

Staff members input the forms into an Access database distributed to each Ready4Work site. On the fifth day of each month, the sites sent a copy of the database along with any consent forms and questionnaires to P/PV. We combined these databases into a single database for analysis.

We began collecting MIS data from the sites in October 2003 using a preliminary database that included only portions of the intake and monthly update forms. In January 2004 we trained staff members at each site to use this database. In January 2005 we added the job form to the database and began collecting that information as well. MIS data collection ended in Fall 2006.

### **Participant Questionnaires**

When participants enrolled in Ready4Work, they were asked to complete a 14-page questionnaire with five sections. The first section asked for detailed demographic information, such as their living arrangements, marital status and whether they had children and paid child support. The second section asked for participants' educational background. The third section asked for extensive information on participants' past and current employment; this section also captured information about their attitudes toward work, whether they earned illegal income before becoming incarcerated and information about their health status and social supports related to work. The fourth section asked about participants' faith and religious orientations and whom they turned to when facing problems. The final section focused on participants' criminal histories and experiences while in prison.

A few sites began administering the questionnaire to new participants in February 2004, and by April 2004 all the sites were using it. We received questionnaires from 3,827 participants out of the 4,291 enrolled in the program since sites began administering the forms—a response rate of 89 percent.

## **Interviews**

From November 2003 to July 2006 we conducted 22 site visits spread across 8 of the 11 adult Ready4Work sites. During the site visits, we interviewed program staff, participants, mentors, program partners and employers. During the first two years of the study, P/PV selected the mentors and participants who were interviewed, randomly choosing among individuals who were in the program for various lengths of time. Program staff were eventually asked to help identify program partners and employers for interviews; later, they helped identify mentors and participants as well.

For the purposes of this report, we analyzed 14 interviews with mentor coordinators, 31 interviews with mentors, 79 interviews with participants, 10 interviews with program managers and 1 interview with an executive director, for a total of 135 interviews. While all interviews with mentors and participants were conducted in person, eight interviews with program staff members were conducted over the phone. Interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length and covered a number of topics related to mentoring in general as well as to the specific mentoring components implemented at the sites. For example, interviews with program staff contained questions pertaining to their beliefs about the effectiveness of mentoring and the flow of mentoring services, such as mentor training and mentor-mentee matching. Interviews with participants and mentors focused on exploring their experiences with Ready4Work mentoring. All interviews used open-ended questions and a semistructured format.

## **Incarceration Records**

All recidivism data used in this analysis were based on public incarceration records. In examining those records, we sought two key pieces of information for each participant: whether he or she has returned to prison for a new offense and, if so, the date he or she returned to prison. Because regulations differ across states, we have established various methods for gaining access to criminal records. For data on participants in Chicago, Detroit, Jacksonville, Memphis and New York, we tapped state-administered online databases of state-level incarcerations. For data on participants in Milwaukee and Philadelphia, state-administered online databases allowed us to determine which participants were back in custody but did not reveal the date of that reincarceration or whether they committed a new offense; employees of justice agencies in these cities also provided information for participants known to be in custody. Our data for participants in Houston were provided by direct communication with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

## APPENDIX B: ANALYSIS

### Variables Examined

Although we focused our analysis on estimating the effects of mentoring, we included a number of participant characteristics in our models to help isolate the effects of mentoring and to partially address our issue with selection bias. In broad categories, we controlled for sociodemographic characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity and age), family composition (whether the participant was ever married and whether the participant had a child), education and work history (level of education, number of full-time jobs held and duration of longest full-time job), criminal background (number of arrests and time spent in prison), social support (extent of family contact while in prison and relationships with friends) and religiosity (religiosity index). We also included an interaction term for being female and having a child and a dummy variable for whether the participant enrolled in Ready4Work before being released from incarceration. In addition, we included the local unemployment rate for each given month in our model of time to first job.

### Multilevel Data Structure

To account for the nesting of participants within sites, all models are estimated in a multilevel framework allowing for clustering within sites.

### Mentoring

For our analysis of who received mentoring services, we estimated logistic regression models with random effects across sites. These regression models take the following form:

$$\log \left( \frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}} \right) = \mu_i + \beta \mathbf{x}_{ij} + \alpha_j$$

where  $p_{ij}$  is the probability that participant  $i$  in site  $j$  was ever mentored,

$\mathbf{x}_{ij}$  is a vector of participant-level explanatory variables,

$\alpha_j$  represents the site random effects, and

$\mu_i$  is an intercept that varies across individuals.

**Table B-1**  
**Likelihood of Receiving Mentoring Services**  
**by Sociodemographic Characteristics**

Characteristic	Ever Mentored
Age	1.02**
African American/Black	1.04
Female	1.86***
Have child	1.02
Female-child interaction	0.72*
Ever married	0.88
GED or high school degree	1.13
More than high school degree	1.30
Number of full-time jobs ever held	0.93
Longest full-time job	1.09
Number of arrests	0.96
Time spent in prison	0.96
Family contact in prison	0.97
Supportive friends	0.99
Religiosity	1.13*
Enrolled pre-release	0.83
N	3,325

Note: Numbers presented in table are odds ratios.

\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

### Participant Retention

We based our analysis of participant retention on techniques developed for survival analysis. In particular, we estimated a survival distribution function (SDF) based on cumulative data from sites' management information systems, treating participants who remained active in the program as censored cases (see Allison 1995). We transformed the data so that the program history for each participant ranged between 1 and 13 months. We estimated the SDF using the product-limit method, which takes the following form:

$$S(t_i) = \prod_{j=1}^{13} \left( 1 - \frac{d_j}{n_j} \right)$$

where  $d_j$  is the number of participants who leave the program in month  $j$ , and  $n_j$  is the number of participants who remain in the program at month  $j$ .

To assess whether any participant characteristics or program variables affected how long people remained in the program, we estimated Cox regression models with both time-independent and time-varying covariates. We also included random effects for sites (see Allison 1995). The Cox regression models take the following form:

$$h_{ji}(t) = h_0(t)\mu_j \exp(\beta x_{ij})$$

where  $h_{ji}(t)$  is the hazard function for individual  $i$  in site  $j$ ,

$\mu_j(t - t_j)$  is an unspecified baseline hazard function for all individuals at site  $j$  with the site fixed effects absorbed into the function, and

$x_i$  is a vector of predictor variables.

We estimated the models using partial likelihood and the Efron method for handling ties.

**Table B-2**  
**Hazard Ratios Predicting Exiting the Ready4Work Program by**  
**Sociodemographic and Select Program Characteristics**

	<b>Model 1<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>Model 2<sup>++</sup></b>
Age	0.99	0.99
African American/Black	0.89**	0.98
Female	1.02	1.03
Have child	1.06	1.04
Female-child interaction	1.09	0.96
Ever married	0.99	0.93
GED or high school degree	0.93	0.93
More than high school degree	0.78***	0.90
Number of full-time jobs	0.98	0.96
Longest full-time job	0.96	0.98
Number of arrests	1.06***	1.08***
Time spent in prison	0.99	0.99
Family contact in prison	1.01	1.01
Supportive friends	0.97	0.94
Religiosity	0.98	0.97
Enrolled pre-release	1.29***	1.46***
Ever mentored	0.40***	–
Average hours/month mentored	–	1.06
N	3,217	1,141

Note: Numbers presented in table are hazard ratios. Hazard ratios above 1.0 indicate an increased likelihood of exiting Ready4Work in any given month; numbers below 1.0 indicate a reduced likelihood of leaving the program in any given month.

+ To accommodate lagged mentoring, only participants active at least one month are included in this model.

++ Only participants who met with a mentor for at least two months are included in this model.

\* Hazard ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Hazard ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Hazard ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

## Employment Outcomes

Our analysis of employment outcomes is based on the number of participants who ever held a job during Ready4Work and the number of participants who held a job for three consecutive months during Ready4Work. For each outcome, we estimated logistic regression models with random effects across sites. The regression models take the following form:

$$\log \left( \frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}} \right) = \mu_i + \beta \mathbf{x}_i + \alpha_j$$

where  $p_{ij}$  is the probability that participant  $i$  in site  $j$  was ever employed or employed for three consecutive months,

$\mathbf{x}_i$  is a vector of participant-level explanatory variables,

$\alpha_j$  represents the site random effects, and

$\mu_i$  is an intercept that varies across individuals.

**Table B-3**  
**Likelihood of Ever Being Employed**  
**by Sociodemographic and Select Program Characteristics**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>Model 3<sup>++</sup></b>
Age	1.03**	1.01	1.03
African American/Black	1.02	1.22	1.19
Female	0.83	0.72	0.87
Have child	0.87	0.81	0.69*
Female-child interaction	0.79	1.28	0.96
Ever married	0.91	0.95	0.78
GED or high school degree	1.28**	1.35*	1.34
More than high school degree	1.87***	1.84*	2.34**
Number of full-time jobs	1.13*	0.99	0.94
Longest full-time job	1.09	1.20*	1.43**
Number of arrests	0.89***	0.92	0.93
Time spent in prison	1.06*	1.07	1.02
Family contact in prison	0.99	1.04	1.04
Supportive friends	1.04	0.99	0.95
Religiosity	1.01	1.03	0.98
Enrolled pre-release	0.53***	0.47***	0.44***
Ever mentored	2.14***	–	–
Number of months mentored	–	1.52***	–
Average hours/month mentored	–	–	0.00
N	2,836	1,377	894

Note: Numbers presented in table are odds ratios.

+ Only participants who met with a mentor at least once are included in this model.

++ Only participants who met with a mentor for at least two months are included in this model.

\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

**Table B-4**  
**Likelihood of Remaining Employed for Three Consecutive Months by**  
**Sociodemographic and Select Program Characteristics**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>Model 3<sup>++</sup></b>
Age	1.03	1.04*	1.05*
African American/Black	0.73*	0.81	0.74
Female	0.94	0.87	0.88
Have child	0.88	0.84	0.84
Female-child interaction	0.90	1.23	1.00
Ever married	1.11	1.01	1.01
GED or high school degree	0.98	1.02	1.07
More than high school degree	1.06*	0.83	1.03
Number of full-time jobs	1.03	1.10	1.22
Longest full-time job	1.16*	1.16	1.04
Number of arrests	0.91*	0.91	0.86*
Time spent in prison	1.06	1.03	1.07
Family contact in prison	1.08	1.15*	1.07
Supportive friends	1.06	1.04	1.15
Religiosity	1.14*	1.24**	1.25*
Enrolled pre-release	0.78	0.57**	0.60*
Ever mentored	1.56***	–	–
Number of months mentored	–	1.24***	–
Average hours/month mentored	–	–	0.97
N	1,640	1,058	807

Note: Numbers presented in table are odds ratios. Only participants who ever found a job are included. Models exclude those who were employed at enrollment, found a job prior to meeting with a mentor and were active in the program for less than three months.

+ Only participants who met with a mentor at least once are included in this model.

++ Only participants who met with a mentor for at least two months are included in this model.

\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

### Employment Process

We used survival-analysis techniques to analyze the first step in the employment process: obtaining a first job. In modeling the number of months participants took to find their first job, we consider only those who could possibly have been employed. We transformed the data such that each participant's time series begins with the first month he or she was both enrolled in the program and out of prison.



**Table B-5**  
**Hazard Ratios Predicting Time to First Job**  
**by Sociodemographic and Select Program Characteristics**

	<b>Model 1<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>Model 2<sup>++</sup></b>	<b>Model 3<sup>+++</sup></b>
Age	1.02**	1.00	1.00
African American/Black	0.96	0.96	0.89
Female	0.81	0.85	0.99
Have child	0.85**	0.86*	0.86*
Female-child interaction	1.11	1.12	1.01
Ever married	0.91	0.97	0.95
GED or high school degree	1.14*	1.12	1.10
More than high school degree	1.41***	1.26**	1.35**
Number of full-time jobs	1.04	1.06	1.06
Longest full-time job	1.10**	1.06	1.08*
Number of arrests	0.94***	0.95**	0.95**
Time spent in prison	1.03	1.05**	1.05**
Family contact in prison	0.98	0.98	0.96
Supportive friends	0.99	0.98	0.95
Religiosity	1.07*	1.07*	1.06
Enrolled pre-release	0.62***	0.90	0.96
Unemployment rate for month	1.01	1.04	1.02
Mentored in previous month	1.73***	–	–
Number of months mentored	–	1.07***	–
Average hours/month mentored	–	–	1.02
N	2,525	1,748	1,141

Note: Numbers presented in table are hazard ratios. Hazard ratios above 1.0 indicate increased likelihood of finding employment in any given month; ratios below 1.0 indicate decreased likelihood of finding employment in any given month.

+ To accommodate the lagged mentoring, participants who found a job their first month in the program were excluded from this model.

++ Only participants who met with a mentor at least once are included in this model.

+++ Only participants who met with a mentor for at least two months are included in this model.

\* Hazard ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Hazard ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Hazard ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

## Recidivism

Our analysis of recidivism is based on the number of participants who returned to prison with a new sentence within one year of being released. We estimated logistic regression models with random effects across sites. The regression models take the following form:

$$\log \left( \frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}} \right) = \mu_i + \beta \mathbf{x}_i + \alpha_j$$

where  $p_{ij}$  is the probability that participant  $i$  in site  $j$  returned to prison,

$\mathbf{x}_i$  is a vector of participant-level explanatory variables,

$\alpha_j$  represents the site random effects, and

$\mu_i$  is an intercept that varies across individuals.

**Table B-6**  
**Likelihood of Recidivism**  
**by Sociodemographic and Select Program Characteristics**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>Model 3<sup>++</sup></b>
Age	1.00	1.00	1.00
African American/Black	0.99	0.96*	0.98
Female	0.95*	0.95*	0.96*
Have child	0.98	0.98	0.99
Female-child interaction	1.05	1.06*	1.07*
Ever married	0.99	0.99	1.01
GED or high school degree	0.98	1.01	1.01
More than high school degree	1.00	0.98	0.98
Number of full-time jobs	1.00	1.00	1.00
Longest full-time job	1.00	1.00	1.00
Number of arrests	1.01*	1.01**	1.01*
Time spent in prison	1.00	1.00	0.99
Family contact in prison	1.00	1.00	0.99
Supportive friends	0.99	0.99	0.98
Religiosity	1.01	1.00	0.99
Enrolled pre-release	1.01	0.99	1.02
Ever mentored	0.65**	–	–
Number of months mentored	–	0.90	–
Average hours/month mentored	–	–	1.00
<b>N</b>	<b>2,912</b>	<b>1,594</b>	<b>1,075</b>

Note: Numbers presented in table are odds ratios.

+ Only participants who met with a mentor at least once are included in this model.

++ Only participants who met with a mentor for at least two months are included in this model.

\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

### Pathways Between Mentoring, Employment and Recidivism

Below are models used to investigate the pathways through which mentoring was related to participant outcomes.

**Table B-7**  
**Employment and Recidivism Outcomes**  
**by Mentorship and Time Spent in the Ready4Work Program**

	Ever Employed	Employed for Three Months	Recidivated
Ever mentored	1.16	1.39**	1.03
Number of months in Ready4Work	1.34***	1.23***	0.84***

Note: Numbers presented in table are odds ratios. All models account for the sociodemographic characteristics included in Table B-6, above.

\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

**Table B-8**  
**Employment and Recidivism Variables by Mentorship, Other Services Received in the Program and Employment**

	Ever Employed	Employed for Three Months	Recidivated
Ever mentored	1.52***	1.38**	0.75
Ever received job placement or job retention services <sup>a</sup>	4.29***	3.94***	–
Ever received wrap-around services <sup>b</sup>	2.05***	0.91	0.82
Ever employed	–	–	0.57***

Note: Numbers presented in table are odds ratios. All models account for the sociodemographic characteristics included in Table B-6, above.

\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .05$ .

\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .01$ .

\*\*\* Odds ratio is significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

a The variable for job placement services was used in the model predicting whether participants were ever employed; the variable for job retention services was used in the model predicting whether participants remained employed for three months. Neither of these variables was used in the model predicting recidivism; in that model, instead, we used a variable indicating whether participants were ever employed.

b Wraparound services include the following: education-related services, drug and alcohol treatment, life-skills classes, housing and other emergency assistance services, health services and court advocacy.

## APPENDIX C: CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS BY MENTORING STATUS

**Table C-1**  
**Mentored and Nonmentored Ready4Work Participants by Sociodemographic Characteristics**

	<b>Met with a Mentor N = 2,203</b>	<b>Never Met with a Mentor N = 2,247</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18–21	16%	18%
22–25	28%	31%
26–30	27%	25%
31–34	30%	26%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	80%	81%
Female	20%	19%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African American/Black	79%	75%
Other	21%	25%
<b>Level of education</b>		
Less than a GED	38%	40%
GED or higher	62%	60%
<b>Number of previous arrests</b>		
1	10%	8%
2	12%	14%
3	13%	14%
4	16%	13%
5 or more	48%	51%
Enrolled in Ready4Work prior to release	19%	23%
Have children	58%	59%
Average on religiosity index <sup>a</sup>	3.1	3.0

Note: Each characteristic is missing some data.

a Values on the religiosity index range from 1 (low) to 4.86 (high). The religiosity index represents the combined mean of seven items. It includes questions such as "How often do you go to religious services?" and "How often do you read religious texts?" and asks participants to agree or disagree with statements such as "Faith is important to me." Item responses are on a six-point scale ranging from "never" to "more than once a week" or on a four-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

## APPENDICES ENDNOTE

- 1 We collected data only for individuals who signed a consent form agreeing to participate in our study. The vast majority of individuals agreed to participate in the research; those who did not, however, were still eligible for Ready4Work services.



Ready4**Work**

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