

**Model Education Programs for Rikers Dischargees:
Getting Out and Staying Out (GO/SO) Program
A Program of the New York City Department of Correction (DOC)**

PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY

This overview of the Department of Correction's (DOC's) Getting Out and Staying Out (GO/SO) program is based on a program review conducted by Westat/Metis staff for the evaluation of the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) initiatives. The data were collected between March and June 2008 through interviews with staff of the CEO, staff of the sponsoring agency (DOC), and staff and clients of the provider agency (GO/SO), as well as observations of recruitment practices at Rikers Island's Horizon Academy and Austin H. MacCormick Island Academy.¹ Interviews and a program walkthrough were conducted in May 2008 at GO/SO's off-island center located in Harlem. In addition, the team reviewed program documents and monthly data reports from January through May 2008 and management reports from DOC from November 2007 through June 2008.

Sponsoring Agency: New York City Department of Correction (DOC)

Provider Agency: Getting Out and Staying Out (GO/SO)

Start Date: November 2007

CEO Budget: \$350,000

Target Population: Young adult males 18 to 24 years old

Statement of Need: Among young adults, aged 16 to 24, who are in poverty, those exiting detention and returning from incarceration are at particularly high risk of becoming disconnected from school and work. About 70 percent of those returning to their communities are high school dropouts and, according to at least one study, about half are "functionally illiterate." This lack of literacy skills contributes to the chronic unemployment experienced by young adults discharged back to the community. Without intervention, two-thirds of ex-offenders are likely to be re-arrested.²

Goal and Services: The goal of GO/SO is to reduce the recidivism rate of formerly incarcerated young men by assisting them in completing their high school education (i.e., GED), acquiring job skills, finding meaningful employment, and enrolling in higher education. GO/SO employs a team-based mentoring approach off-island, where a number of key staff members closely train and counsel participants, and monitor progress made toward their individual goals. By the end of FY 2008, GO/SO hopes to enroll hundreds of individuals incarcerated at Rikers and at New York's state prison, of which 150 are expected to arrive at GO/SO's off-site center after release from incarceration. The program also expects that the majority of these arrivals will pass their GED exam, find employment, and/or enroll in a job training program.

¹ Island Academy and Horizon Academy are the two high schools on Rikers Island and operate under District 79 (Alternative Schools and Programs) of the New York City Department of Education (DOE). Island Academy has three school sites and serves detained and sentenced male and female inmates ages 16-24 in three jails. Horizon Academy serves detained male inmates ages 18-24 in five jails.

² Statement of Need taken from Center for Economic Opportunity (December 2007), *Strategy and Implementation Report*. New York: Center for Economic Opportunity.

Eligibility Criteria: Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated males ages 18 to 24 who could benefit from assistance transitioning back into their communities through counseling and coaching, educational referrals, and job training and placement.³

Targets/Outcomes: The target and actual numbers for the categories presented in Table 1 below, as well as the percentage of each target obtained, are as of June 2008. As a performance-based contract, these outcomes are based on CEO's payment milestones. The enrollment targets (i.e., completion of initial assessment and transitional plan) were met by June. The arrival-at-GO/SO targets were over two-thirds of the way met and should approach completion by the end of the contract's fiscal year in October, as the number of recruited inmates released from incarceration increases. Completion of GED, enrollment in college, and placement in part-time and full-time jobs were lagging as of June, with 14 percent or less of program participants meeting these payment milestones. Data from the fourth quarter will more accurately demonstrate GO/SO's progress toward the milestones, and are expected to show an improvement as the program matures and has more time to recruit participants.

Table 1. Target and Actual Placement Numbers and Percentages of Targets Met

Category	Target Numbers	Actual Numbers*	Percent of Target Met
Initial Assessment Completed	150	150	100%
Transitional Plan Completed	150	150	100%
Court Involvement	150	150	100%
Group Counseling Participation on Rikers	150	150	100%
Confirmed Arrival to GO/SO Off-Island	150	103	69%
Counseling at GO/SO Off-Island	150	103	69%
GED Passed	50	4	8%
Trade School Enrollment	50	16	32%
College Enrollment	50	7	14%
Part-Time Job Placement	150**	3	6%
Full-Time Job Placement		6	

*Data provided by DOC.

**The combined total of job placements may not exceed 150.

Selected Key Findings

Fidelity to the Program Model. GO/SO was developed as a response to the rising jail population and the absence of programs in NYC that assist post-incarcerated young men to transition back into the neighborhoods to which they return. In addition, it was also an opportunity to combat the high recidivism rates (approximately two-thirds)^{4,5} of young adults in general. The program established an approach to the transition process that included coaching; individual and group counseling; vocational training; and referrals to educational programs, social service agencies, and employment agencies as part of a team-based mentoring model. Team-based mentoring (also known as multiple mentoring) is a contemporary model of support that uses a

³ The program's expertise lies in working with young adult males. It has discussed expanding the program to include young adult females, but does not have the capacity to do so at this time.

⁴ Brown, David; Maxwell, Sarah; Dejesus, Edward; Schiraldi, Vincent (2002). *Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

⁵ New York City Department of Correction CEO Contract (2007). *Getting Out-Staying Out FY 2008 Scope of Work*. New York.

team of individuals with complementary skills that are individually and mutually accountable for the success of its mentees.^{6,7} In addition to the original model, GO/SO currently provides in-house weekly math and literacy workshops, and invites outside consultants to provide vocational workshops, health information workshops, and program-relevant forums on criminal justice and financial management. The Westat/Metis team found that programmatic services generally are being delivered with a high degree of fidelity to the program's current model.

Characteristics of the Clients Served in Comparison to the Target Population. Information gathered through various interviews and program documentation demonstrates that the program is specifically only targeting age-eligible inmates from the various correctional facilities within the Rikers Island jails. The provider's demographic data also show that the program's participants fall within the target age range of 18 to 24 years old.

Service Delivery. GO/SO's programmatic implementation is divided into various on- or off-island activities, each contributing to the program's comprehensive mentoring approach to transitioning participants to their communities and helping them gain stability in their lives. On-island activities include outreach and recruitment, transitional planning, one-on-one counseling, court involvement, and the correspondence program. Off-island, center-based activities include coach support, individual counseling, vocational training, career management, and educational referrals.

Provider Capacity. Currently, GO/SO's staff consists of the program director, a licensed social worker, two career managers, two volunteer outreach counselors, six to seven volunteer center-based coaches, a program analyst (duties include data management), job developer, and a program associate. Through June, GO/SO provided services to over 150 individuals. At full capacity, GO/SO reportedly can manage a caseload of approximately 300 participants. Assuming enrollment occurs on a steady and rolling basis, GO/SO is confident that it will be able to support the 150 "confirmed arrival" target milestone by the end of the grant's fiscal year.

Agency Management. DOC monitors GO/SO's progress in various ways. DOC meets monthly with the program director to discuss the program's progress and review any issues related to visitation practices at Rikers. DOC personnel also have visited GO/SO's Harlem location to observe implementation of the program and speak with staff. Mainly, DOC continuously monitors GO/SO progress through the milestone achievements as outlined by CEO. In addition, DOC staff are in contact with the on-island school principals, through which they learn of GO/SO's ongoing efforts on Rikers.

Early Outcomes. In addition to the targets presented in the earlier table, GO/SO strives for other outcomes that they view as indicators of participant success. These include low recidivism rate, avoidance of drug/alcohol addiction, healthy family relationships, assuming responsibility for their children, improvement in physical appearance and presentation, positive relationships with successful men, participation in activities such as physical fitness and the arts, and community volunteering. Data for some of these outcomes are available through hard copy documentation, which were too extensive to be analyzed for this report. Interviews and focus groups in future evaluation studies could also assess achievement of the outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As implemented, the GO/SO program is in alignment with the CEO mission and is meeting key CEO criteria.

- 1 The program is serving an underserved population, as less than a handful of programs are providing transitional services to post-incarcerated young people.
- 2 The program is serving a population of young adults living in poverty.

⁶ Katzenbach, J. R., and Smith, D. K. (1993). *The Wisdom of Teams*. New York: HarperCollins.

⁷ Turk, R.L. (May 1999). "Get on the Team: An Alternative Mentoring Model." (Excerpt). *Classroom Leadership* vol. 2, no. 8. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- 3 The program is providing innovative programming, as few programs exist to help post-incarcerated young people with educational and career advancement.
- 4 The program appears to have a good program infrastructure and management, as well as dedicated staff.
- 5 Agency oversight is in place, enabling it to remain stable, make improvements, and be replicable in other sites.
- 6 Specific and measurable outcomes have been articulated.

Based on the program review findings, the review team recommends the following.

- The program currently employs a team-based mentoring approach off-island. The program should examine other (more traditional) mentoring models to determine if their current coaching arrangement provides participants with the most effective individualized attention.
- The program urgently needs technical assistance in various areas of data collection, coordination, recording, validation, and analysis, including quality assurance protocols for data entry, managing duplicate cases, and sharing milestone data effectively with DOC.
- Data on many of the program's projected outcomes (e.g., keeping participants off drugs/alcohol, etc.) are not currently collected in any formal way or maintained in an electronic data format. Doing so would help the program access more information about its outcomes and improve and inform decision-making.
- The program should survey longer-term participants to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the program's components and recommendations for future implementation.