

NYC Justice Corps

The NYC Justice Corps initiative places court-involved youth in a six-month work readiness program that includes skill building and assessment as well as community service. These activities are followed by a subsidized internship with job coaching and support.

<i>Agencies</i>	<i>Start Date</i>	<i>Number Served per year</i>	<i>CEO Budget (City FY 08)</i>	<i>Total Budget (City FY 08)</i>
The City University of New York (CUNY)/The Department of Correction	Spring 2008	250	\$4,800,000	\$4,800,000

Problem Statement

Among young adults aged 18 to 24 who are in poverty, youth exiting detention and young people returning from incarceration are at particularly high risk of becoming disconnected from school and work. The majority of individuals with criminal records returning to NYC come back to poverty-stricken neighborhoods with few job opportunities and little social capital. Without intervention, two-thirds are likely to be re-arrested.¹

Research and Evidence

The Civic Justice Corps (CJC) concept was piloted several years ago in Oregon. The Community Justice Department for Deschutes County, Oregon, organized probationers and parolees into a workforce team available for public, community based projects. The goals of this program were two-fold: to teach court-involved individuals new skills and to host a highly visible illustration of these individuals' contributions to the local community.² This intervention was quickly recognized as promising for court involved youth, and, in 2006, the U.S. Department of Labor funded the expansion of the project to 11 sites. Researchers Gordon Bazemore and David Karp describe CJC programs as having the following core attributes:

- Community service acts as a restorative practice that repairs harm caused by persons under criminal justice supervision to victims and communities and provides a tangible public benefit;
- Persons under criminal justice supervision benefit from participating in community service, enhancing their ability to be law-abiding and productive citizens; and
- Service is a mechanism to rebuild severed relationships between lawbreakers and community members, and re-establish trust and positive status of offenders in the community.³

In an evaluation of a Canadian juvenile offender community service program, researchers found that participants often maintained relationships with supervising agencies and a few were hired after completing required service hours.⁴ Studies that compare community service participation with alternative sentences document some reduction in recidivism, or at the very least, no increase in recidivism.⁵ Other studies reported that court involved individuals in service programs had relatively high rates of absenteeism and problems with interpersonal conflicts.

Although the CJC model has yet to be rigorously evaluated, extensive research has been conducted on similar youth-focused programs, including Job Corps and JOBSTART.⁶ Job Corps is the longest federally run job-training program for young adults. The program serves disadvantaged youth, ages 16 to 24, and provides comprehensive education, training, health care, and counseling services in a residential setting.

In addition, a small annual stipend is provided. Research demonstrates that 47% of the participants who entered the program without a high school degree succeeded in obtaining a GED during a follow-up

period, compared to 29% in a control group. Furthermore, 37% of participants reported receiving a vocational certificate, compared to 15% of control group members. By the fourth year of follow-up study there was also a 12% earnings gain for program group members versus control group members. The estimated average reduction of welfare receipts per participant was \$640, a statistically significant amount.^{7,8}

JOBSTART, in contrast, is a nonresidential version of Job Corps. The program is targeted to economically disadvantaged school dropouts ages 17 to 21 who have a below 8th-grade reading level. Participants received 200 hours of basic education and 500 hours of occupational training, but no stipend or extensive support services.⁹ Research suggests that by the end of 48 months, 42% of the experimental group compared to 29% of the control group had received their GED or diploma. In addition, occupational training yielded a 16-point rise in the receipt of trade certificates (from 17% to 33%). However, the program showed no statistically significant impact on earnings or employment.¹⁰

Several transitional jobs programs targeted to adult populations with multiple barriers to employment, such as low educational attainment, lack of work experience, and substance abuse problems, have also been evaluated.¹¹ For example, an evaluation of the Community Jobs program in Washington State, which provides high needs welfare recipients with temporary paid employment along with mentoring and training, found that the employment rates of participants increased by 33 percentage points over the rate they would have achieved without completing the program. This increase was better than that of participants in other state programs [i.e., workfare, job search, pre-employment training]. Moreover, a worker's successful completion of the program added nearly \$800 in quarterly earnings compared to anticipated income before participation. The results for all participants after two years show that average income increased 60% and was close to 150% more than the TANF grant. Almost three-quarters of all welfare recipients who entered the Community Jobs program worked after leaving the program. Only 13% did not engage in work after finishing the program.

A Mathematica Policy Research study of six major transitional job programs across the country, including the Transitional Work Corporation program in Philadelphia and the Community Jobs Program in San Francisco found that between 81% and 94% of participants who successfully completed one of these programs were placed in unsubsidized employment after their transitional jobs ended.¹² However, program retention was a problem and on average, only half of participants completed the program.

The sole exception to this poor retention problem was the GoodWorks! Program in Augusta, GA. It had a completion rate of 82%.¹³ Several key factors seem to contribute to this program's success. First, the program arranged for job developers from the State Department of Labor and the county job training authority to co-locate with the primary employment service provider (Goodwill Industries). Staff from these agencies collaborated with the service provider to conduct job search and readiness workshops, create individual employment plans for clients, and develop job opportunities with employers. The program also implemented a "phasing" process, where after four months in transitional job placement, the number of hours a participant is required to work decreases and the number of hours required for job search activities increases. Participants thereby had more of a chance to benefit from staff support while practicing job search skills.

Program Description

The NYC Justice Corps helps court-involved youth to become work ready through skill building and assessment, community benefit projects, and subsidized internship placements with job coaching and support. The initiative employs a sequenced model: the first month, includes participant orientation and individual assessments, skill building, team building, community project scoping, selection, and/or matching. In months 2-4 participants will engage as a team in a community-based service project identified by the local community. This service will build individual soft skills and teamwork ability, provide an opportunity to “give back” to the community, and prepare participants for their internships and the labor market. In months 5 and 6 participants will be placed in a subsidized internship with job coaching and support. At the end of the internship, participants will be supported in pursuing employment and educational goals.

Participants will receive \$8-\$9 per hour for their participation in the program. A central intermediary agency will manage and coordinate the initiative and provide technical assistance to three community based organizations in each target area (the South Bronx, Jamaica, and Bedford-Stuyvesant). These three community based organizations will serve as conveners, or service providers, for the neighborhood Justice Corps. After the community service and internship components are completed, participants will receive up to six months of follow-up placement and retention services to find and maintain unsubsidized, permanent employment (total participant engagement is up to one year).

Evaluation framework

There will be a random assignment evaluation to determine program impacts over four years.

Target Population

The program serves young adults ages 18 to 24 who are on probation, parole, recently discharged from the NYC jail system, or currently or recently enrolled in an alternative-to-incarceration program. A majority of the participants (80%) must reside in one of the following three target areas: Mott Haven, Melrose and Morrisania (CD 1 and CD 3), Jamaica (CD 12), Bedford-Stuyvesant (CD 3).

Expected Outcomes

Short-Term:

- Provide tangible job skills and increase employability of participants
- Increase positive social networks for participants
- Provide tangible benefit to the community

Long-Term:

- Retain participants in permanent, unsubsidized employment or educational activities
- Reduce recidivism rate among participants

¹ CEO Report, 33-34.

² Travis, Jeremy. *But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*. Washington D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2005: 181-182.

³ Bazemore, Gordon and David Karp. “A Civic Justice Corps: Community Service as a Means of Reintegration.” *Justice Policy Journal*, Volume 1, No. 3, Fall 2004:1.

⁴ Doob, A. N. and D.P MacFarlane. “The Community Service Order for Youthful Offenders: Perceptions and Effects.” Toronto: Centre for Criminology, University of Toronto. Quoted in Bazemore and Karp, “A Civic Justice Corps: Community Service as a Means of Reintegration.”

⁵ Bazemore and Karp, 2004: 11.

⁶ Mitchell, Maxine V., Davis Jenkins, Dao Nguyen, Alona Lerman and Marian DeBerry. "Evaluation of the Youthbuild Program." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, August 2003. For further background research see: Ivry, Robert and Fred Doolittle, "Improving the Economic and Life Outcomes of At-Risk Youth." MDRC, spring 2003.

⁵ Bazemore and Karp, 2004: 11.

⁶ Mitchell, Maxine V., Davis Jenkins, Dao Nguyen, Alona Lerman and Marian DeBerry. "Evaluation of the Youthbuild Program." Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, August 2003. For further background research see: Ivry, Robert and Fred Doolittle, "Improving the Economic and Life Outcomes of At-Risk Youth." MDRC, spring 2003.

⁷ Schochet, Peter, J. Burghardt, and S. Glazerman. "National Job Corps Study: The Impacts of Job Corps on Participants' Employment and Related Outcomes." Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. June 2001.

⁸ McConnell, Sheena, Glazerman, S. "National Job Corps Study: The Benefits and Costs of Job Corps." Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., June 2001

⁹ Mitchell, Maxine, et al., 2003: Appendix B, page 22. See also, Waller, Maggy. "Transitional Jobs: A Next Step in Welfare to Work Policy." The Brookings Institution Research Brief, May 2002: 4.

¹⁰ Cave, George, H. Bos, F. Doolittle, and C. Touissant. "Jobstart: Final Report on a Program for School Dropouts." New York: Manpower Development Research Corporation (MDRC), October 1993.

¹¹ Hill, Heather, Gretchen Kirby and LaDonna Pavetti. "Transitional Jobs Programs: Stepping Stones to Unsubsidized Employment." Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. April 2002.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.