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Study analyzes effects of intensive job training on recidivism

- **As many as 2/3 of former inmates are re-arrested within three years of release**
- **More than 600,000 inmates are released annually**
- **This is one of the first studies to employ a random control trial to compare the impact of an intensive job training with that of more traditional job preparation programs geared toward newly freed inmates**

In a new working paper, Sturgill Endowed Professor of Economics Chris Bollinger, along with Professor of Economics and ISFE Affiliate Aaron Yelowitz, study the impact of an intensive job training program on recidivism and find that participation in the program reduced the re-arrest rate by 19 percentage points for non-violent ex-offenders. Recently freed inmates that signed up for the study were randomly placed into either an intensive job training program or a standard job assistance program consisting of job-readiness training and self-directed job-search assistance.

The intensive job training program consists of a two-week program that reinforces soft skills, assistance in actual job placement, and follow-up support for up to six months to ensure a successful employee-employer match. The research team found little impact on recidivism among violent ex-offenders but large reductions in recidivism among non-violent ex-offenders. They estimate that reduction in social and criminal enforcement costs from this decrease in re-arrests more than pays for the \$5000 per participant cost of the program.

The authors note, “For the roughly half of program participants with nonviolent arrest histories, intensive job-search assistance significantly decreased the likelihood of recidivism. Only 31 percent of nonviolent offenders receiving intensive job training were subsequently

rearrested; among participants receiving standard training, on the other hand, 50 percent were subsequently rearrested.”

They continue, “Such results suggest that enhanced job-search assistance is most effective for the easiest of the hard-to-serve population (i.e., those without histories of violence and few charges) and far less effective for clients with more difficult histories of arrests and charges.”