

SETTING UP SUCCESS

Decreasing Recidivism in Virginia

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2020



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Brittany Whitley at the Office of the Attorney General and Jessica Lee and Scott Richeson at the Virginia Department of Corrections for their help throughout my research process. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to learn from and leverage your expertise over the past year.

I would also like to thank Professor Kirsten Gelsdorf and Professor Ray Scheppach for providing support, feedback, and advice over the course of my last two semesters. You are both inspiring mentors.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues at the Batten School and beyond for supporting me throughout my academic career. And to my mom and dad, thank you for instilling in me a passion for this topic from as early on in my life as I can remember.

CLIENT

This report was prepared for the Virginia Office of the Attorney General (OAG), which provides legal services to the Commonwealth's agencies, boards, commissions, colleges, and universities. The OAG also works with law enforcement to prepare for emerging public safety threats and to promote successful, secure communities.

DISCLAIMER

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Batten School, by the University of Virginia, or by any other entity.

HONOR PLEDGE

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.

Alexandra Connell

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Executive Summary

Nearly one-in-four inmates released from state prison in Virginia will be re-incarcerated (VADOC, 2020). The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) provides re-entry programming at 15 of 43 state facilities, but many inmates will not receive adequate support to be successful upon return to their communities. Ex-offenders face a variety of obstacles upon release from prison, among these are a lack of skills and education, unreliable access to housing and transportation, the stigma of incarceration, a lack of community and family support, and various health problems incurred or exacerbated while in prison.

The state of Virginia has the opportunity to address these barriers. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and VADOC should consider the following alternatives to decrease the likelihood that individuals return to prison upon release:

- (1) Let Present Trends Continue
- (2) Expand Current Programming to All 43 VADOC Facilities
- (3) Expand Current Programming to All Inmates at Current Facilities
- (4) Expand Current Programming to All Inmates at All 43 VADOC Facilities
- (5) Focus Resources on Post-Release Programming
- (6) Mimic Minnesota's Comprehensive Offender Re-entry Program (MCORP)

This analysis will evaluate each potential alternative based on five criteria: *Efficacy*, *Cost-Effectiveness*, *Political Feasibility*, *Administrative Feasibility*, and *Equity*. Based on evaluations of these criteria and projected outcomes of each alternative, the OAG should pursue **Option 3: Expand Current Re-entry Programming to all Inmates at Current Facilities**. This option is more cost-effective, politically feasible, and administratively feasible than the status quo. Its implementation will require VADOC Executive approval and an Executive Order by the Governor.

Problem Statement

Too many inmates released from state prisons in the Commonwealth of Virginia are re-incarcerated.

Problem Definition

As of February 2020, Virginia's rate of recidivism was 23.1% (VADOC, 2020). Virginia's recidivism rate ranks the lowest among the 42 states that report 3-year recidivism rates by tallying the number of offenders re-incarcerated within three years of their release from prison. Although Virginia might be the 'best', nearly one-in-four ex-inmates are still returning to prison.

In January 2020, the average daily population in VADOC institutions was 29,233 inmates (VADOC, 2020). In Fiscal Year 2018, there were 11,988 State Responsible New Court Commitments (SR NCC). These refer to offenders that are convicted of one or more felonies and sentenced to a state responsible term of incarceration within the year they were convicted (VADOC, 2019). For a demographic breakdown of those SR NCCs, please refer to Appendix 1.

Costs to Society

The costs to society include direct costs to the state and economic costs to the individual offender and other affected persons.

Direct Costs to the State

The annual cost to confine an individual in state prison as of 2018 was \$31,240, and per the budget session for Fiscal Year 2021, the Commonwealth will spend over \$103 million for the supervision of offenders and re-entry services, and over \$827 million for the operation of secure correctional facilities (VADOC, 2019; VADOC, 2020). The Commonwealth must ensure that the money spent is put to use in programs and systems that have a detectable positive effect on participants.

In Fiscal Year 2019, there were 12,819 SR inmate releases (VADOC, 2019). Knowing that a majority of re-arrests occur in the first year, at the 2020 recidivism rate of 23.1%, 2,961 of those inmates will be re-incarcerated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). In sum, the annual cost to the Commonwealth of confining recidivating individuals is just over \$92.5 million. If the re-incarceration of just 32 individuals could be prevented, the Commonwealth would save one million dollars per year in corrections expenditures. Growing prison inputs produce growing prison outputs, and assisting inmates in their transition back to the community is vital to ensure their success and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

Staffing for each Intensive Re-entry Program at VADOC facilities includes Cognitive Counselors, Treatment Officers, Offender Workforce Development Specialists, and Senior Re-entry Probation Officers. The current number of employees in each role and their pay is delineated in Table 1 below. This is in addition to the staff already in existence for normal corrections operations.

Table 1: Re-entry Programming Staffing Costs

Role	Number of Employees in Role at Present	Annual Salary	Aggregate Pay for all Employees in Role
Cognitive Counselor	35	\$70,420	\$2,464,700
Offender Workforce Development Specialist	18	\$82,580	\$1,486,440
Senior Re-entry Probation Officer	15	\$80,803	\$1,212,045
Treatment Officer	35	\$33,394-\$36,394	\$1,273,790
Total			\$6,436,975

Combining the total cost of confining recidivating individuals and the aggregate pay for re-entry programming staff, the direct costs to the state amount to \$98.9 million. Please refer to **Appendix 3** for the Net Present Values of Total Costs for each option, which I will discuss more in the description of each alternative.

Other Societal Costs

The White House Council of Economic Advisers assessed the damages crime imposes on society in 2018, and concluded that these damages represented an additional 1.5% of United States GDP (Council of Economic Advisers, 2018). They determined that the costs include, but are not limited to: pain and suffering, reduced quality of life, property losses, medical costs, loss of life, lower property values, reduced business investment, lost economic opportunity, and lost parenting opportunities due to incarceration. An estimated 80% of the total cost of a serious assault consists of intangible costs (CEA, 2018). The national average total cost per crime in 2017 came out to \$250,000 (CEA, 2018).

The costs to society can also be broken down into three categories: (1) victim costs, (2) crime career costs, and (3) intangible costs (McCollister, et al. 2011). Victim costs include the direct economic losses suffered by crime victims, including medical care costs, lost earnings, and property loss or damage. Crime career costs refer to the opportunity costs associated with the criminal's choice to engage in illegal rather than legal and productive activities. Intangible costs are those delineated before - i.e. pain and suffering, psychological distress, and decreased quality of life.

The total crime career costs across the state prison population in Virginia, at the current minimum wage rate of \$7.25, amounts to over \$8 billion of lost state GDP. At the proposed move to a \$9.00 minimum wage rate in July, 2020, the total crime career cost is nearly \$10 billion. Please see **Appendix 2** for calculations.

Background

State Prison System

A large majority of Virginia's State Prison facilities were opened in the 1980s and 1990s, with the onset of the 'War on Drugs' and 'Tough on Crime' policies. Below is a breakdown of the different types of facilities as well as their respective average daily populations.

Table 2: Virginia's State Prison System

Facility Type	Total Facilities	Average Daily Population
Major Institution	26	25,564
Field Unit	8	1,187
Work Center	6	928
Private Prison	1	1,536
Secure Hospital Unit	2	18
Total	43	29,233

State prisons differ in level of security; ranging from minimum to super-maximum, with a few mixed custody level facilities. The capacity of each facility ranges from about 120 to 1200 inmates. The number of employees at each facility depends on the number of inmates and the level of security, with a lower-security, higher-capacity facility reporting about 330 employees, whereas a high-security, high-capacity facility reported roughly 800 employees.

In 2009, one facility was demolished, and in 2012 another was closed as a result of the state's decreasing need for prison space. The cost to build these facilities varied, but ranged from roughly \$50 million to \$70 million (at the time of construction).

Governance

Code of Virginia §53.1-8 establishes the Department of Corrections as an executive department responsible to the governor. With regard to the VADOC budget, the VADOC Budget Office is responsible for establishing and coordinating processes to develop operating budget requests. The Director is responsible for identifying the needs of the VADOC and submitting a budget request as allowed by Executive Branch Leadership. The process is as follows:

- (1) The VADOC Budget Office and executive and deputy leadership meet to decide which addenda will be formally submitted to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security.
- (2) The Director works with the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security in planning the final VADOC budget submission.
- (3) After approval from the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, the budget submission is sent to the Department of Planning and Budget.

The VADOC Budget Office also prepares and processes all necessary operating budget adjustment transactions. Two points are of note here: (1) Transactions within the same fund and/or program require *only* VADOC approval, and (2) Transactions which require realignment between funds and/or programs require approval by the Department of Planning and Budget.

The Virginia General Assembly authorized 12,230 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions for the VADOC, of which only 11,258 are filled. This leaves 972 FTE positions vacant.

For any recommendation, there are additional decisionmakers that must help in assessing and implementing it. The chief decisionmakers are the Virginia Legislature and the Governor. The Virginia Department of Corrections leadership and staff will also likely need to support the recommendation to see the implementation through. Harold Clarke is the current director of the VADOC and Scott Richeson is the presiding Deputy Director of Programs, Education, and Re-Entry. Director Clarke and Deputy Director Richeson brought together a commission this year to evaluate the efficacy of re-instating the practice of parole. Governor Northam has discussed efforts to re-instate parole and reform re-entry programming, and would likely support a recommendation that would improve the current situation.

The Committees of Jurisdiction in the Senate include the Judiciary, Finance and Appropriations, and Rehabilitation and Social Services. In the House of Delegates, the Appropriations Committee, the Courts of Justice Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Public Safety Committee would all likely have some jurisdiction. Both chambers of the legislature have a Democratic majority, and the Commonwealth also has a Democratic Governor. Subsequently, policies that are more rehabilitative than punitive in nature would fare better now than at almost any other time. On an individual level, each prison has a warden, and with good behavior, inmates can be moved to lower security facilities.

Virginia's Abolishment of Parole

Code of Virginia §53.1-151, established in 1950, delineated the eligibility stipulations for parole:

- A. Except as herein otherwise provided, every person convicted of a felony and sentenced and committed by a court under the laws of this Commonwealth to the Department of Corrections, whether or not such person is physically received at a Department of Corrections facility:
 1. For the first time, shall be eligible for parole after serving one-fourth of the term of imprisonment imposed, or after serving twelve years of the terms of imprisonment imposed if one-fourth of the term of imprisonment imposed is more than twelve years;
 2. For the second time, shall be eligible for parole after serving one-third of the term of imprisonment imposed, or after serving thirteen years of the term of imprisonment imposed if one-third of the term of imprisonment imposed is more than thirteen years;
 3. For the third time, shall be eligible for parole after serving one-half of the term of imprisonment imposed, or after serving fourteen years of the term of imprisonment imposed if one-half of the term of imprisonment imposed is more than fourteen years;
 4. For the fourth or subsequent time, shall be eligible for parole after serving three-fourths of the term of imprisonment imposed, or after serving fifteen years if three-fourths of the term of imprisonment imposed is more than fifteen years.

However, discretionary parole was abolished in Virginia for felonies committed in 1995 or after by the passage of the ‘Truth-in-Sentencing’ Law (Code of Virginia §53.1-165.1), which reads, “the provisions of this article shall not apply to any sentence imposed or to any prisoner incarcerated upon a conviction for a felony offense committed on or after January 1, 1995. Any person sentenced to a term of incarceration for a felony offense committed on or after January 1, 1995 shall not be eligible for parole upon that offense.”

Offenders are now required to serve at least 85% of their sentences with the ability to earn good-time credits toward an early release date. The abolishment of parole removed one way by which to smooth an offender’s transition from prison to the community. Parole was granted as an opportunity for prisoners who seemed capable of reintegrating into society.

Once out on parole, a parolee enjoyed relative freedom in exchange for abiding by certain conditions. Some common conditions included: maintaining employment and residence, avoiding criminal activity and contact with any victims, refraining from drug - and sometimes alcohol - use, attending drug or alcohol recovery meetings, and not leaving a specified geographic area without explicit permission from the parole officer (VADOC, 2019). These conditions may seem stringent, but it gave offenders the opportunity to get on their feet with someone to supervise and hold them accountable.

Data Collection

Neither the Virginia Department of Corrections nor the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) has made public an evaluation of VADOC’s Prisoner Re-entry Programs since October of 2007. In 2013, DCJS published a review of Virginia’s Pre- and Post-Incarceration Services (PAPIS), however, PAPIS purposely excludes VADOC’s Re-entry Programming, only covering the PAPIS Virginia Re-entry Coalition - a group of non-profit organizations across the state providing services and guidance to offenders before and after incarceration (DCJS, 2013). Another interim evaluation on the efficacy of VADOC’s reentry programming must be completed to ascertain the system’s current effectiveness. As of right now, there is no numerical value that can tell the program’s effect on the offenders who participate (the effect of the treatment on the treated).

Obstacles of Re-entry

Ex-offenders face a variety of barriers that hinder their ability to successfully transition back into their communities upon release from prison. Effective re-entry programming must address all of these barriers and equip inmates with the tools they need to succeed upon release. The main obstacles of re-entry are detailed below.

❖ Skills & Education

- Of the national population of inmates in 2003, 41 percent had not completed high school or obtained a GED, compared to 18 percent of the general population. Along with lower levels of education comes reduced employability of offenders (Harlow, 2003). In the first full calendar year after their release, only 55 percent of those previously incarcerated (nationally) had any reported earnings and the median earnings of those that did are just above \$10,000 (Looney, 2018). This national data may have been determined using a sort of synthetic control evaluation, as there is no Virginia-specific data on these characteristics publicly available. However, these types of figures are vital to

understand the root causes of recidivism in Virginia, as well as how to fine-tune the state's re-entry initiatives going forward.

❖ Housing & Transportation

- Securing housing is perhaps the most immediate challenge facing prisoners upon their release. While many returning prisoners might have plans to stay with family, those who do not confront limited housing options. The process of obtaining housing is often complicated by a host of factors: the scarcity of affordable and available housing, legal barriers and regulations, prejudices that restrict tenancy for this population, and strict eligibility requirements for federally subsidized housing. Research has found that released prisoners who do not have stable housing arrangements are more likely to return to prison, suggesting that obstacles to securing both temporary and permanent housing warrant attention (Metraux et al., 2004).

❖ Stigma of Incarceration

- The stigma of incarceration hinders an ex-offender's reentry into society and often becomes a primary status for the evaluation of that person. Having been incarcerated decreases an individual's likelihood of obtaining education or gainful employment (Maroto, 2015). At the individual level, according to Liker (1982), unemployed people feel "less happy and satisfied with their lives," those who lose their jobs feel "less satisfied with themselves, and among ex-offenders, "unemployment increases the likelihood of recidivism." The problem progresses in a vicious cycle.
- Burkhardt (2009) surveyed existing research on labor market consequences of conviction and imprisonment, and found that: (1) conviction reduced employment among federal convicts, (2) incarceration (which implicitly includes conviction) reduces both employment rates and earnings of former prisoners, and (3) in the long term, post-incarceration employment falls below pre-incarceration levels. Burkhardt concludes that the bulk of the existing literature argues that felony conviction and imprisonment lead to diminished labor market opportunities and outcomes, implying a substantial labor market penalty for having a criminal record. Saxonhouse (2004) concurs, noting that: "research from both academics and practitioners suggests that the *number one factor* which influences the reduction of recidivism is an individual's ability to gain 'quality' employment... Either they work or they go back to jail."

❖ Community & Family Support

- Strengthening the family network and maintaining supportive family contact can improve outcomes for both family members and prisoners (Sullivan, et al., 2002). Strong family support before and during incarceration may reduce the likelihood of recidivism and may improve employment outcomes for prisoners returning to their communities (Visher et al., 2004).
- A relatively large number of prisoners return to a small number of cities in each state, and returning prisoners are often clustered in a few neighborhoods within those cities (La Vigne, 2003). High levels of social and economic disadvantage often characterize the communities to which prisoners return, and prisoners do

not necessarily go back to the communities from which they came (Visser et al., 2004). For those who do relocate, they tend to move to neighborhoods similar to the ones they left, and returning to neighborhoods perceived to be unsafe or lacking in social capital puts ex-offenders at a greater risk of recidivism (La Vigne, et al., 2005; Visser et al., 2005).

❖ Health

- The prevalence of severe mental health disorders and infectious diseases among the prison population is far greater than among the general population (National Commission on Correctional Health Care, 2002). Even when individuals have received adequate physical and mental health services while in prison, they often face limited access and insufficient linkages to community-based health care upon release (Hammett, et al., 2001). Incarceration disqualifies inmates from Medicaid eligibility, and restoring eligibility can take several months - interrupting access to prescription drugs and putting individuals at high risk of relapse.

VADOC Re-entry Programming

In coordination with the OAG, VADOC set out to improve re-entry programming across the state in 2016 with their *Future Directions in Re-entry* Initiative. VADOC's general re-entry treatment mission is to "promote long term public safety and reduce crime by preparing offenders for success through adequate supervision and the provision of a continuum of services, in collaboration with state and local partners, from the time of the offender's first contact with the VADOC through transition and reintegration in the community" (Virginia Department of Corrections, 2017).

VADOC currently offers an 'Intensive Re-entry Program' at 15 of its 43 facilities. The goal of the Intensive Re-entry Program is to prepare offenders for release by removing any potential barriers as well as working with the offenders to emphasize their potential assets. This programming incorporates many practices understood to be vital to efficacious re-entry programming, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and substance-abuse programs. Although there is no causal evidence, the VADOC's incorporation of these evidence-based practices and its relatively low recidivism rate (compared to the rest of the country) lead one to believe that they work well for those to whom programming is available.

Typically, each Intensive Re-entry Program will have a community of approximately 90 offenders, one Cognitive Counselor, and one Treatment Officer. The Offender Workforce Development Specialists can typically manage two communities (180 offenders in re-entry) and each facility typically has one designated Senior Re-entry Probation Officer.

The Intensive Re-entry Program is comprised of two phases:

PHASE 1: Offenders are enrolled in Phase 1 no later than one year prior to release, and they are provided programming that may include the *Matrix Model Substance Abuse Program*, *Thinking for a Change*, and the *BOOK Program* (VADOC, 2017).

- Matrix Model Substance Abuse Program: provides a framework for engaging substance abusers in treatment and helping them achieve abstinence. Participants learn about issues critical to addiction and relapse, receive direction and support from a trained therapist, and become familiar with self-help programs (NIDA, 2018).

- Thinking for a Change (T4C): Cognitive-behavioral curriculum that concentrates on changing the criminogenic thinking of offenders. Program includes cognitive restructuring, social skills development, and the development of problem-solving skills (NIJ, 2012).
- Building Opportunities of Knowledge (BOOK): Tutor-assisted and individually-paced Adult Basic Education program with correctional education support and oversight for offenders not enrolled due to waiting list or inability to attend (VADOC, 2019).

PHASE 2: The ‘Re-entry Cognitive Community’; an intensive institution-based treatment program for incarcerated offenders who are within six months of their release dates (VADOC, 2017). This phase focuses mainly on what the VADOC refers to as ‘cognitive restructuring’, aimed at changing offender thinking and behavior, and on meeting the needs of each participant prior to their release.

VADOC’s full Intensive Re-Entry Program (Phase 1 and 2) is selective and involuntary, meaning that a majority of inmates are not chosen to participate, and if an inmate is chosen to participate they do not have a choice of whether or not to do so. Additionally, those selected are chosen conditional on good behavior and because of their demonstrated aptitude for success, so they may have been more likely to succeed than their peers absent the programming.

At present, there are a total of 3102 re-entry beds available across the 15 facilities that provide re-entry programming (VADOC, 2020). This amounts a 10.6% rate of access for the total state-responsible population of 29,233 inmates. Of the 16,245 inmates housed at those 15 facilities, 19.1% have access to re-entry programming at any given time. VADOC also offers Re-entry ‘Planning’, a self-paced workbook that allows participants to work on various aspects of life, including education, finances, employment, relationships, and physical health (VADOC, 2019).

Pre- and Post-Incarceration Services (PAPIS)

In addition to VADOC’s Re-entry Programming, the Department of Criminal Justice Services administers Pre- and Post-Incarceration Services (PAPIS). PAPIS is financed by a state appropriation from the general fund as well as Federal Grants, and it supports pre-release and post-incarceration professional services and guidance that increase the opportunity for, and the likelihood of, successful reintegration of adults upon release from prisons and jails into local communities. PAPIS’s specific focus areas are of assessing clients for risk and needs related to recidivism, evidence-based cognitive-behavioral programming, and job readiness and employment services (DCJS, 2019).

PAPIS’s post-release risk and recidivism reduction services include assessment, training, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, information and referral, job readiness and employment services. Post-incarceration services also assist ex-offenders in obtaining stabilization and emergency services such as food, clothing, transportation, and shelter assistance. There are currently nine re-entry service providers supported by PAPIS’s funds (DCJS, 2019). In FY2018, PAPIS served 15,261 clients on a budget of \$2.8 million. The recidivism rate among its participants was 14%.

Best Practices – Characteristics

Much of the academic literature reports that re-entry programs in prison - particularly career and technical education programs - lead to reductions in recidivism, increases in employment opportunities, and increases in participation in education post-release (Ward, 2009). Re-entry programs around the country vary in scale and target population. Some projects are aimed at widening resources available for administrators to facilitate reentry, while others are instituted at the individual-level to prepare certain ex-offenders for life after incarceration.

Evidence-based practices have displayed that effective interventions: are cognitive-behavioral; emphasize positive reinforcements, and certain and immediate negative consequences; are appropriate to the offender's gender, culture, learning style, and stage of change; are based on a chronic-care model of care requiring continuity, aftercare, and support; require the active involvement of the sentencing judge in securing the offender's commitment to the treatment process and compliance with treatment conditions; and require continuous monitoring and evaluation of both program operations and offender outcomes (Warren, 2007).

If inmates do not like the situation they find themselves in post-release, or the job they find does not sufficiently support them, they are probably less likely to stick with it. Power (2017) conducted a study to explore which factors were valued by ex-offenders with regard to their employment, and how their employment may have contributed to their post-release success. He broke his findings down into a straightforward model of four factors:

- (1) *Extrinsic Rewards* - pay, benefits, job stability
- (2) *Intrinsic Rewards* - job autonomy, management-employee relationships, co-worker relationships
- (3) *Working Conditions* - stress, workload, physical effort
- (4) *Quality of Workplace Interpersonal Relationships* - management-employee relationships, co-worker relationships

Job searching and placement requires inevitable tradeoffs, but the desires of ex-offenders should be taken into account; and - if considered - will likely make for better employment outcomes, and, in turn, a lower likelihood of recidivism.

Best Practices – Programs

Programs around the country have incorporated these characteristics and have had measurable success over their years of service.

In Minnesota, the Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program (MCORP) significantly reduced recidivism as measured by re-arrest, reconviction, technical violation revocation, and reincarceration for any reason, but had no significant impact on new offense reincarceration. MCORP connected caseworkers in prisons with supervision agents in the communities to which participants return upon release from prison. The Minnesota Department of Corrections ran a randomized control trial of MCORP, and found the program beneficial in a statistically significant way.

The Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP), operating in Houston and Dallas, Texas, is a nonprofit that connect released felons with entrepreneurs and executives. It is focused on teaching leadership and innovation skills. PEP provides an in-prison leadership academy and a mini-MBA boot camp, as well as putting on real and highly competitive business plan competitions. Over 2300 ex-inmates have graduated from the program since 2004. All (100%)

of graduates are employed within 90 days of release from prison, and nearly 100% are still employed after 12 months (PEP, 2020). PEP graduates have a starting wage 68% above the minimum wage, and have launched more than 360 businesses. The 3-year-recidivism rate among graduates of the program is 7.5% (PEP, 2020).

The Delancey Street Foundation (DSF) is a residential self-help program dedicated to assisting drug addicts, ex-convicts, ex-gang members, and homeless individuals. DSF has seven facilities nationwide, and has graduated over 18,000 participants. DSF has provided over 10,000 formerly illiterate people with high school equivalency degrees (DSF, 2020). Along with recidivism, DSF participation has substantially reduced other risk factors, including drug use and unemployment.

The SAFER Foundation, based in Chicago, Illinois, provides housing, training, and employment assistance for ex-offenders. It helps over 300 individuals earn their GED annually. SAFER has a network of over 400 employers that hire participants, and in 2014 they were able to match 4,200 individuals to positions (SAFER, 2020). They serve just under 6,000 individuals each year in the Chicago metropolitan area, with a 74% one-year job retention rate and a 17.5% recidivism rate among participants.

The Last Mile (TLM) and the Prison to Employment Connection (PEC) are both initiatives conceived at San Quentin State Prison in California. TLM has since expanded to 19 classrooms in five states. The program teaches prisoners about technology, digital communication and business through a curriculum that provides front-end software training in two six-month segments, with eight hours of daily computer lab time. Inmates are offered entry-level, front-end coding positions from outside the prison walls. There is a six-month minimum lead time expected to launch TLM in a new facility. The program boasts a 0% recidivism rate among graduates (TLM, 2020).

The Prison to Employment Connection (PEC) was also founded at San Quentin State Prison. It is offered to inmates who are within one year of a release date or have a scheduled Parole Board Hearing within six months. After successfully completing a rigorous 14-week employment readiness program, inmates are invited to an employer day. PEC partners with over 50 Bay Area employers and service providers. These partners come to the prison to interview inmates, review their resumes, and offer guidance and support for potential employment upon release. Cumulative data from employer assessments showed that 83% of program graduates interviewed *better* than people employers interviewed outside of prison, and this trend holds for their outcomes - the recidivism rate among graduates is 1% (PEC, 2020).

Evaluative Criteria

(1) *Cost-Effectiveness*

The ultimate goal of any of my alternatives would be a decrease in the number of individuals who are released from prison and subsequently re-convicted and re-incarcerated. I will use this criterion to analyze each alternative by quantifying the total monetary cost of each option over a 10-year time frame per the decrease in the number of recidivating individuals in the Virginia State Prison Population. The 10-year total cost will be discounted back to a Net Present Value using a discount rate of 5%. After arriving at a ratio of cost per individual inmate recidivism prevented for each alternative, I will then compare all ratios to the status quo. Cost-effectiveness holds a weight of .40 in my analysis.

(2) *Political Feasibility*

The recommended alternative must be implemented by the Virginia Department of Corrections and some will need authorization from both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly, the Department of Planning and Budget, and the Governor. My client, although influential on the state level, is limited in institutional decision-making. Each option's political feasibility is ranked as "low," "medium," or "high" based on assessments of political barriers and avenues to implementation. This criteria is weighted at .25.

(3) *Administrative Feasibility*

Administrative feasibility refers to the ease with which state government officials and state prison officials and employees can and will implement the proposed options. It also accounts for the capacity of the necessary systems to expend resources in the manner that my alternatives require. This criterion takes into account whether or not the staff on the ground agrees with the recommendation and if they have the skills and resources necessary to implement it. Each option's administrative feasibility is ranked as "low," "medium," or "high" based on assessments of administrative and institutional barriers and pathways to implementation. This criterion is assigned a weight of .25.

(4) *Equity*

Because my alternatives call for different methods of base broadening across different facilities and prison populations, I want to ensure that my options do not unfairly disadvantage or restrict access to inmates of different custody levels or offense types. More specifically, inmates in high-security prisons or with longer sentences should not be disadvantaged in the manner or timeframe they receive treatment. This criterion receives a weight of .10.

Table 3: Criteria and Weights

Criterion	Weight
Cost-Effectiveness	.40
Political Feasibility	.25
Administrative Feasibility	.25
Equity	.10
Total Weight	1.00

Alternatives

The following are options I am considering to address this problem and its complexities from a few different angles.

Option 1: Let Present Trends Continue

VADOC currently offers Phase 1 and 2 of its 'Intensive Re-entry Program' at 15 of its 43 facilities. It is selective and involuntary, meaning that a majority of inmates are not chosen to participate, and if an inmate is chosen to participate they do not have a choice of whether or not to do so. This option would freeze the number of prisons that provide programming at 15 and those facilities would still only provide the two phases of programming. The current rate of access would remain at 10.6% of total state-responsible inmates (3102 re-entry beds). All existing laws, rules, and regulations regarding prisoners do not change over the projection period.

At present, there are 15 Senior Re-entry Probation Officers, 18 Offender Workforce Development Specialists, 35 Treatment Officers, and 35 Cognitive Counselors.

Option 2: Expand Programming to all Facilities

This option would entail expanding the availability of current VADOC re-entry programming from the current 15 VADOC facilities to all 43 of them. The contents of the programming would remain the same, still covering Phase 1 and Phase 2 for a selected group of inmates. The rate of access within facilities that currently provide programming - 19.1% - would be expanded to all facilities, totaling 5586 available re-entry beds.

This alternative would require the addition of: 28 Senior Re-entry Probation Officers, 13 Offender Workforce Development Specialists, 27 Cognitive Counselors, and 27 Treatment Officers. Because the VADOC has 972 FTE vacancies and this option only requires an additional 95 FTE staff, this action would only need authorization by Executive Order of the Governor.

This would reduce recidivism assuming that the current programming is doing what it was meant to do - prepare inmates for life upon release. By expanding the program to more facilities, more inmates would gain access and, subsequently, would have better post-release outcomes and refrain from committing another criminal offense.

Option 3: Expand Programming to All Inmates at Current Facilities

This option uses a similar base-broadening approach to Option 2 in an effort to reach a wider population of inmates. It would remove the ‘selective’ stipulation of current programming and allow access to *all* inmates at the current 15 facilities where programming is provided. This would increase the number of re-entry beds available to 16,245 - or a 55.6% of availability among all state-responsible inmates. This option would require no additional Senior Re-entry Probation Officers, 72 additional Offender Workplace Development Specialists, 146 additional Cognitive Counselors, and 146 additional Treatment Officers. In total, this option necessitates 364 additional employees. This is far below the 972 FTE vacancies threshold, and thus would only need approval by the Governor through Executive Order.

Given that inmates in the current model are chosen conditional on good behavior and because of their demonstrated aptitude for success, removing the selective stipulation would allow more vulnerable and disadvantaged inmates to gain access to programming.

Option 4: Expand Programming to All Inmates at All Facilities

This option combines the approaches from Option 2 and Option 3. It would give *all* inmates in *all* VADOC facilities access to re-entry programming. Assuming the programming is effective, it would ensure that it reaches the maximum population of state prison inmates - making 29,233 re-entry beds available.

This option would require an additional 28 Senior Re-entry Probation Officers, 145 Offender Workforce Development Specialists, 290 Cognitive Counselors, and 290 Treatment Officers. Technically, as it requires 753 additional employees total, this option would only need approval by the Governor by way of Executive Order. However, since it is far closer to the 972 FTE vacancy threshold than options 2 or 3, I believe it would also require approval from the Virginia General Assembly, the Committees of Jurisdiction (outlined in the Governance section of this report), and the Department of Planning and Budget; as well as the Governor.

Option 5: Focus Resources on Post-Release Programming (PAPIS)

This option would include pooling an additional \$5 million to help the Department of Criminal Justice Services support and expand PAPIS’s post-release services. This alternative would take place concurrent with the status quo. Offenders cannot recidivate until they have been released, and the six-month and one-year periods following release are when most recidivism occurs. As of FY2018, PAPIS’s grant for re-entry service providers was \$2,248,146 (DCJS, 2017). The \$5 million in additional funding would be used as the DCJS saw fit to expand PAPIS services.

PAPIS has proven its effectiveness, with a recidivism rate among its participants nearly 10 percentage points lower than the state’s average. This appropriation would increase the availability of support for employment opportunities, job training, housing, and transportation - many of the most pressing difficulties for ex-offenders post-release.

Option 6: Mimic Minnesota's Comprehensive Offender Re-entry Program (MCORP)

This option would supplement VADOC's current 'Intensive Reentry Program' with the Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Program (MCORP). To reiterate, this alternative would be *in addition to the status quo*. The program would include continuous and dynamic case planning/management that lasts from the time individuals are incarcerated until they are released into the community. It addresses the following three phases surrounding reentry: institutional, transitional, and community reintegration.

Caseworkers and supervision agents implement motivational interviewing and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based) planning strategies in conjunction with a risk/needs assessment tool to create a transition accountability plan, which is a guide that outlines participants' goals while they are incarcerated. Institutional caseworkers include participants' community supervision agents in the case planning as soon as possible, ensuring continuity during participants' transition from prison into the community.

In Minnesota, MCORP was offered to 1,693 offenders. Providing these services to 3,102 offenders (status quo access) would require the addition of 78 caseworkers and 78 supervision agents, each of which have a caseload capacity of about 40 offenders.

Findings & Evaluation of Alternatives

Table 4: Outcomes Matrix

CRITERIA	ALTERNATIVES						
	Option 1: Let Present Trends Continue	Option 2: Expand to All Facilities at Current Rate	Option 3: Expand to All Inmates at Current Facilities	Option 4: Expand to All Inmates at All Facilities	Option 5: Focus Resources on PAPIS	Option 6: Mimic MCORP	
	Cost-Effectiveness* (.40)	\$5042.16	\$5506.13	\$4185.03	\$4293.42	\$5076.95**	\$2,995.75**
	Political Feasibility (.25)	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Administrative Feasibility (.25)	High	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium
	Equity (.10)	Medium	High	Medium	High	High	Medium

* cost per one inmate recidivism prevented

** in addition to status quo

Please refer to **Appendix 3** for the net present values of the total costs for each option and their respective calculations.

Cost-Effectiveness (40%)

Options 2, 5, and 6 are *less* cost-effective than the status quo. Options 3 and 4 are *more* cost-effective. **Option 3: Expanding Programming to all Inmates at Current Facilities** is the most cost-effective, costing roughly \$850 less per-individual inmate recidivism prevented. Options 5 and 6 are *added* to the cost of the status quo, and the addition of Option 6 is the more cost-effective of the two. Although Option 3 is the most cost-effective, the large net present value of its total cost is important to consider.

Political Feasibility (25%)

Options 1, 2, and 3 require approval from VADOC executives as well as an Executive Order from the Governor. Options 4, 5, and 6 would require the approval of the aforementioned parties, as well as the Department of Planning and Budget and both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly. The General Assembly authorized enough full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to the VADOC that in December of 2017 they were left with 972 vacancies. The General Assembly is now democratically controlled in both chambers, so they would likely be open to *any* of these alternatives. However, I believe the General Assembly and agency heads would be more likely to scale up current programming than implementing something entirely new. Between the three alternatives that include expansion of current programming, I believe Option 2 and Option 3 would be **highly** politically feasible, given the number of FTE

vacancies the VADOC has. Because Option 4 requires such a large number of new staff and is an enormous undertaking, I think this scores **medium** on political feasibility. PAPIS is well-respected around the state and has proven its effectiveness with limited resources year after year, but considering that it is a coalition of multiple agencies, and that the state's share of funding will increase, I give PAPIS a **medium** rating. MCORP has had statistically significant positive effects in Minnesota, but their baseline is so different from Virginia's that the General Assembly and agency heads may be wary of transposing those results onto the Commonwealth's legal system and prison population. For these reasons it scores **low**.

Administrative Feasibility (25%)

Options 2, 3, 4, and 6 are likely to be accepted by individual facility leadership and staff on the basis that they would be provided with the resources necessary to implement the proposed initiatives. Again, with the number of VADOC FTE vacancies, I consider Options 2 and 3 highly feasible. Option 2 requires 95 additional staff members and Option 3 requires 364. Expanding to all facilities (Options 2 and 4) may not be as easily accepted by current or future employees at high security prisons with more violent, aggressive, or difficult inmates. This would put those employees into more frequent contact with inmates, and would require modified protocol for prisons new to programming. For these reasons, I score Option 2 **medium**, Option 3 **high**, and Option 4 **medium**. PAPIS has expressed that they have not been able to provide services to all offenders in need because of insufficient funding. They could scale up what they already do well with more resources, and for that reason, Option 5 scores **high**. Implementing characteristics of MCORP would require additional staff and additional training for new and current staff. It may not be well-received by employees or administrators since Minnesota's recidivism rate (regardless of MCORP intervention) is historically much higher than Virginia's, and their prison population is drastically different. I score Option 6 **medium** for administrative feasibility.

Equity (10%)

To reiterate, this criterion assesses whether or not any option unfairly disadvantages or restricts access to inmates of different custody levels or offense types. I score the status quo **medium** on this criterion as currently, re-entry programming is available to only 10.6% of state-responsible prisoners. Option 2 scores **high**, as it broadens access to all facilities regardless of offense type or security level. Option 3 maintains the facilities that currently offer programming, which makes it difficult for inmates at the other 28 to receive it, but higher re-entry capacity at those facilities means more inmates can be transferred in from other facilities when space becomes available. I score Option 3 **medium**. Option 4 scores **high** on equity. It allows all inmates access to programming, regardless of any differentiating factors. Option 5 also scores **high** - the more resources for post-release programming, the more available and, subsequently, equitable it becomes for released offenders. Option 6 scores **medium**, as it is solely a supplement to the status quo.

Recommendation: Option 3 – Expand Programming to All Inmates at Current Facilities

Based on my evaluation, I recommend that the Office of the Attorney General, in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Corrections, implement Option 3: ***expand VADOC's Intensive Re-entry Program to all inmates at current facilities***. Expanding programming to all inmates at facilities where it is currently offered requires no additional Senior Re-entry Probation Officers, 72 additional Offender Workforce Development Specialists, 146 Treatment Officers, and 146 Cognitive Counselors. This option increases access to re-entry programming from reaching 10.6% of total state-responsible inmates to 55.6%, and this higher capacity allows more opportunity for offenders to be transferred in from other facilities when space becomes available.

The cost per individual recidivism prevented is nearly one-thousand dollars less than the status quo. Expanding programming at facilities where the re-entry infrastructure is already in place will be highly politically and administratively feasible. In order to implement this option, VADOC executive leadership will need to propose the increase in the number of staff to the Governor, who can authorize it by Executive Order. The VADOC's budget authorization already provides enough full-time equivalent vacancies for this increase.

I also strongly suggest authorizing more funding for PAPIS, as it is highly efficacious and would likely be more cost-efficient once scaled up. The Office of the Attorney General or the VADOC could spearhead this proposal, but it would require approval from the committees of jurisdiction in the legislature; and approval from both chambers of the General Assembly, the governor, and the Department of Planning and Budget. In conjunction, these two initiatives would address weaknesses in re-entry support pre- and post-release for more prisoners, serving as a bridge between incarceration and success upon return to the community.

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Appendix 1: Demographic Breakdown of State Responsible New Court Commitments, 2018

Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Average Age (years)	DOC Crime Type	
Male	86%	White	40%	35.7	Violent	31%
		Black	43%		Property/Public Order	43%
		Hispanic	3%		Drug	25%
					Sales/Possession	
		Other	<1%		Not Reported	<1%
Female	14%	White	10%			
		Black	4%			
		Hispanic	<1%			
		Other	<1%			

Appendix 2: Crime Career Costs Calculations

The crime career costs across the state prison population in Virginia can be calculated by converting person-years served into state GDP losses, operating under the assumption that the earnings potential of the average perpetrator is equal to minimum wage (currently, \$7.25, proposed to move to \$9.00 in July, 2020). Person-years served are multiplied by a full year (2080 hours) of lost wages at the minimum wage rate to derive estimates of the per-offense losses. Excluding inmates sentenced to life or on death row, the mean sentence length of all SR-confined offenders as of June 30, 2019 was 219 months.

$$\frac{219 \text{ months}}{12 \text{ months}} = 18.25 \text{ years}$$

$$18.25 \text{ years} \times 2080 \text{ productive hours per inmate per year} = 37,960 \text{ hours per inmate}$$

$$37,960 \text{ hours per inmate} \times \$7.25 \text{ per hour} = \$275,210 \text{ per inmate (at current \$7.25 rate)}$$

$$37,960 \text{ hours per inmate} \times \$9.00 \text{ per hour} = \$341,640 \text{ per inmate (at proposed \$9.00 rate)}$$

$$29,233 \text{ inmates} \times \$275,210 \text{ per inmate} = \$8,045,213,930 \text{ (at \$7.25 rate)}$$

$$29,233 \text{ inmates} \times \$341,640 \text{ per inmate} = \$9,987,162,120 \text{ (at \$9.00 rate)}$$

Appendix 3: Net Present Value of Costs

Discount Rate = 5%, 10-year time-horizon

Option 1: \$49,704,614.70

Option 2: \$97,733,821.40

Option 3: \$216,035,449.00

Option 4: \$398,8324,667.11

Option 5*: \$55,968,262.14

Option 6*: \$34,973,831.63

*The NPV of costs for Options 5 and 6 would be in addition to the cost of the status quo (Option 1).

Screenshots of my calculations in excel are below.

	salary	status quo	all facilities	all inmates current facilities	all inmates all facilities
SRPOs	\$80,803	15	43	15	43
OWDs	82,580	18	31	90	163
TOs	36394	35	62	181	325
CCs	70420	35	62	181	325

	status quo (cost)	all facilities (cost)	all inmates current facilities (cost)	all inmates all facilities (cost)	PAPIS	MCORP
	\$1,212,045	\$3,474,529	\$1,212,045	\$3,474,529		
	\$1,486,440	\$2,559,980	\$7,432,200	\$13,460,540		
	\$1,273,790	\$2,256,428	\$6,587,314	\$11,828,050		
	\$2,464,700	\$4,366,040	\$12,746,020	\$22,886,500		
total cost	\$6,436,975	\$12,656,977	\$27,977,579	\$51,649,619	\$7,248,146	\$4,100,000

	year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4
status quo	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975
all facilities	12656977	12656977	12656977	12656977
all inmates current facilities	27977579	27977579	27977579	27977579
all inmates all facilities	51649619	51649619	51649619	51649619
PAPIS	7248146	7248146	7248146	7248146
MCORP	4,100,000	4,100,000	4,100,000	4,100,000

	year 5	year 6	year 7	year 8	year 9	year 10
status quo	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975	\$6,436,975
all facilities	12656977	12656977	12656977	12656977	12656977	12656977
all inmates current facilities	27977579	27977579	27977579	27977579	27977579	27977579
all inmates all facilities	51649619	51649619	51649619	51649619	51649619	51649619
PAPIS	7248146	7248146	7248146	7248146	7248146	7248146
MCORP	4,100,000	4,100,000	4,100,000	4,100,000	4,100,000	4,100,000

	NPV (5%)	NPV (3%)	NPV (7%)
status quo	\$49,704,614.70	\$54,908,702.41	\$45,210,618.79
all facilities	\$97,733,821.40	\$107,966,581.11	\$88,897,310.02
all inmates current facilities	\$216,035,449.00	\$238,654,423.75	\$196,502,807.42
all inmates all facilities	\$398,824,667.11	\$440,581,726.51	\$362,765,310.60
PAPIS	\$55,968,262.14	\$61,828,155.57	\$50,907,944.45
MCORP	\$31,659,113.21	\$34,973,831.63	\$28,796,684.32

	number of inmates who don't recidivate of 12819 releases	cost per unit	
status quo	9857.8	\$5,042.16	
all facilities	17750	\$5,506.13	
all inmates, current facilities	51621	\$4,185.03	
all inmates all facilities	92892	\$4,293.42	
PAPIS	11024	\$5,076.95	*in addition to status quo
MCORP	10568	\$2,995.75	in addition to status quo