



Center for Effective Public Policy

Exploring the Impact of Halfway Houses and the Use of Revocations

The Reentry Coalition of New Jersey asked the Center for Effective Public Policy to review and summarize best practices for halfway houses and community residential facilities. This paper provides an overview of the research and explores the qualities and characteristics of programs that reduce recidivism and contribute to other positive outcomes. The report also focuses on the use and consequences of revocations for noncriminal actions across community-based correctional programs and describes several promising opportunities going forward.

Introduction

Halfway houses and community residential facilities have been critical to criminal justice reform efforts nationwide (Knapp et al., 1992). Although it is unclear when the first halfway houses started, Maud Booth, a prison reform advocate and cofounder of Volunteers of America, opened the first privately operated facility in New York during the mid 1800s to provide a more humane and less restrictive alternative for people arrested for minor crimes. Since then, the number and variety of programs has continued to expand, and these facilities now differ in terms of their purpose, size, services, population served, and functioning.

Similarly, the nomenclature used to describe these facilities varies dramatically. For example, federally licensed centers are typically referred to as residential reentry centers (RRCs), while state-licensed centers use other names, such as halfway houses, reentry centers, transitional centers, and more (Daniel & Sawyer, 2020). In this paper, unless a researcher uses other terminology, we will use the terms “halfway houses” and/or “community residential facilities” to

denote correctional facilities where people leaving prison or jail must live before rejoining their communities.

Halfway houses and community residential facilities typically share two goals. First, they are designed to support the gradual transition of incarcerated people into the community by providing structure and treatment. Second, they offer the promise of a safe, effective, less costly, and less restrictive alternative to mass incarceration—one that also has fewer negative impacts for those who are system-involved (Phelps & Curry, 2017; Sullivan et al., 1974; Travis & Latessa, 1984)

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of these programs at reducing recidivism varies widely, and the specific processes and practices that contribute to positive outcomes remain largely understudied (Latessa et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2019). There is also emerging evidence to suggest that rather than providing an *alternative to prison and jail*, halfway houses and other community alternatives, such as probation and parole, have become *significant drivers of mass incarceration* (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2018; Phelps & Curry, 2017). This can be attributed to the growth of get-tough policies and a more punitive approach to crime and justice that relies heavily on carceral controls (Phelps & Curry, 2017). For example, technical violations, disciplinary actions, sanctions, and other *noncriminal actions* can result in revocations or returns to prison and jail. Thus, people who violate the rules or conditions of a facility or community supervision order (e.g., drug use relapse, failure to comply with treatment) may experience an array of consequences, including an extended supervision period, loss of good time, and incarceration (Campbell, 2016; Grattet et al., 2008).

This document spotlights the use of halfway houses and community residential facilities as an alternative to incarceration. Our focus is threefold. First, we summarize the available outcome research conducted since 2010 to examine the impact of these programs and to identify models or program characteristics that are most important in reducing recidivism. Second, we explore

how carceral controls, such as technical violations and returns to prison, impact outcomes for people who are system-involved. Because of limited studies related to technical violations and revocations for people in halfway houses and community residential facilities, we have expanded our exploration to include carceral controls in other community-based supervision programs such as probation and parole. Finally, we identify options that show promise in enhancing outcomes across community settings.

Part 1: Halfway Houses and Community Residential Facilities: Uses, Outcomes, and Characteristics of Effective Programs

Estimating the number of halfway houses, community residential facilities, and residents at any given time is difficult. Daniel and Sawyer (2020) noted that one of the most significant challenges in determining these numbers is the lack of publicly available data, particularly across state funded programs. There are also differences in state and federal contracting and reporting requirements. For example, the contract process for a federal RRC is relatively standardized and transparent. Contracts typically specify operational policies and practices, the number of residents, the types of programs offered, and rules and requirements governing the return to prison. In contrast, state-funded facilities vary dramatically concerning function, use, and procedures.

According to their website, the Federal Bureau of Prisons administers 163 RRCs in 50 states (Federal Bureau of Prisons, n.d.). Estimates suggested that, in FY2015, 32,760 people spent time in a federal RRC and that, on any given day, approximately 10,000 people resided in these centers (Deloitte Development LLC, 2016). A Bureau of Justice Statistics study conducted more recently suggested that there are approximately 288 community-based residential programs of varying size across the United States (e.g., community corrections, work release, pre-release), not including the federal RRCs (Maruschak & Buehler, 2021).

The Impact of Community Residential Programs on Recidivism

Broadly, reentry facilities and their outcomes remain largely understudied, have failed to describe the delivered services sufficiently to allow for replication, and the reported efficacy of these programs is mixed. A meta-analysis conducted by Wong et al. (2019) included a summary of high-quality quasi-experimental studies of halfway houses in the United States ($n = 8$) and Iceland ($n = 1$). They concluded that halfway house residents are 1.27 times less likely to criminally recidivate than people on general parole or people released with no supervision. Although the meta-analysis shows that the overall outcome of halfway houses is positive, it is important to note that three of the eight studies reporting promising results are over 20 years old, and two, although more recent, include nonresidential programs that are outside the focus of this paper.

A study of note included in the Wong et al. (2019) meta-analysis is a state-wide evaluation of New Jersey's halfway houses (Residential Community Release Programs -RCRPs) conducted by Hamilton and Campbell (2014). At a 3-year follow-up, the researchers reported that participants ($N = 13,198$) in the RCRPs were significantly less likely than a propensity-score matched comparison sample of incarcerated people to be returned to prison for a technical violation (14.6% vs. 22.2%, $p < .001$) or for any reason (29.7% vs. 38.0%, $p < .001$). At the 1-year follow-up, participants in the RCRPs were also significantly less likely to have been reincarcerated for a new criminal conviction (1.7% vs. 2.5%, $p < .001$); however, the effect size on this outcome measure was small and was no longer statistically significant after two years (Hamilton & Campbell, 2014). The authors concluded that the RCRPs benefit the state by providing a safe alternative to prison with substantial cost savings.

Costanza et al. (2015) used a quasi-experimental design to compare the outcomes of people released from a correctional facility directly to parole with those of a matched group of people released from a correctional facility to a halfway house. They found that the effect of residential

programming on long-term recidivism was negligible; however, people who completed the halfway house program were almost twice as likely to complete parole successfully than those released directly to parole.

Initiated over 20 years ago, the University of Cincinnati conducted a series of studies on Ohio's halfway house programs. The initial study of these programs (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002) included a matched comparison group of people released from state prison. At the 2-year follow-up, completers of the halfway houses were significantly less likely to have been reincarcerated for a new offense (14% vs. 17%, $p < .05$) or for a technical violation (18% vs. 21%, $p < .05$); however, there was no significant difference in rearrest rates.

In a subsequent study by the same researchers, all halfway house residents, not just program completers, were included, and the results were mixed (Latessa et al., 2010). Reconviction rates differed by approximately two percentage points for any new felony and criminal offense, and reincarceration rates were higher for the halfway house participants. Further analyses revealed that halfway house participants assessed as high risk were significantly less likely to reoffend (felony or new convictions) than low risk participants.

What Are the Characteristics of Effective Programs and Who Benefits?

Given the diversity across halfway houses and correctional residential facilities with respect to purpose, functioning, policies, and practices, and the limited number of outcome studies examining the impact of these programs, it is difficult to generalize which qualities and characteristics are linked to positive results. One of the most significant findings from the Ohio studies (Latessa et al., 2010; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002) was support for the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model. The RNR model is an empirically supported correctional rehabilitation model that has been found to reduce recidivism rates when implemented with fidelity (Andrews et al., 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2017). The core tenets of the model are that treatment should be

matched to an individual's risk of recidivism, with more treatment offered to people at a higher risk (risk principle); programming should target dynamic risk factors or needs linked to criminal behavior (need principle); and programs and services should be evidence-based and delivered in a manner that is responsive to the individual's learning style (responsivity principle).

Both the initial and follow-up Ohio studies found that people assessed as moderate or higher risk on a standardized assessment were significantly more likely to benefit from residential intervention than participants who were lower risk (Latessa et al., 2010; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002). The follow-up report (Latessa et al., 2010) documented that effect sizes increased when people were provided with programs to address individual needs identified during the assessment process. In addition, facilities that provided programs targeting more than five criminogenic needs reduced recidivism by over 10% versus those that targeted just one or two criminogenic needs, which reduced recidivism by .6%. Finally, larger effect sizes were evident when cognitive-behavioral, gender-specific, and domestic violence programs were introduced and when a significant amount of time was devoted to role-play and skill practice.

Program fidelity is a critical component of the RNR model and the delivery of evidence-based practices. Not surprisingly, improved effect sizes were reported by Latessa et al. (2010) in facilities where staff received training and ongoing clinical supervision to ensure adherence to the treatment program and in sites where security staff were provided with opportunities to participate in treatment teams. The Costanza et al. (2015) study of transitional reentry facilities offered further evidence of the importance of program fidelity and staff integrity (e.g., staff–client rapport, a focus on behavior change rather than enforcement of conditions). Ultimately, the limited but available research suggests that when residential programs have well-trained staff who adhere to evidence-based practices (e.g., focus on people who are higher risk, address individual needs, offer targeted programming and services delivered with fidelity, etc.), they are more likely to demonstrate reductions in recidivism.

Part 2: Technical Violations that Result in Returns to Prison

As described earlier, community residential facilities and halfway houses were designed to provide people who are incarcerated with services and programs that support a gradual release from prison. However, when someone disregards the rules or expectations of the facility, they may face a technical (noncriminal) violation.

The response to technical violations varies across state and federal halfway house programs; however, in almost every setting, these noncriminal actions can result in the same consequences as criminal activity, which includes going back to prison or jail (Campbell, 2016). In this section, we will focus on the direct and indirect impacts of this response. Given that few studies explore the use and effects of technical violations and revocations in halfway houses, we will expand our discussion to include other community-based alternatives.

Technical Violations and Revocations

Over the last decade, several scholarly articles have been written describing the negative consequences of returning people to prison for noncriminal actions and questioning the ethics of this practice (DaGrossa, 2022; Jacobson et al., 2017; Phelps & Curry, 2017). According to Campbell (2016), the focus on and overuse of technical violations and disciplinary returns can be attributed in part to the assumption that when people violate the terms or conditions of their release, they are, in fact, at greater risk for recidivism. For example, the U.S. Committee on Community Supervision and Desistance from Crime (2008) stated that revocations for noncriminal actions protect society by preventing future criminal behavior.

Interestingly, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the use of standard conditions serves to preserve community well-being and safety. In 1984, Washington State reformed its community supervision framework, mandating that supervision conditions had to be directly related to the original offense and the person's criminal record. The state removed the emphasis on standard

supervision conditions, leaving most people with 2–3 conditions versus the more than 20 conditions monitored previously (Petersilia & Turner, 1993). It was expected that people on community supervision would commit more new crimes because they had fewer conditions and thus were less likely to be supervised closely. While people *did* commit fewer technical violations, crime rates for new criminal offenses *did not* increase (Petersilia & Turner, 1993).

Imprisonment is often believed to deter recidivism, yet there is no evidence that it serves as a disincentive for those imprisoned because of technical violations. Drake & Aos (2012) found that while 72% of people in Washington State who had received technical violations were reincarcerated, this sanction did not reduce recidivism rates and was actually associated with higher rates of recidivism. Similarly, jail does not appear to be a strong deterrent for people with identified technical violations. Wodahl et al. (2013) reported that when people are given a jail sanction for technical violations as opposed to a community-based sanction such as participation in treatment, there was no impact on the number of subsequent violations or the overall likelihood of completing supervision.

Finally, one of the primary justifications to support revocations for technical violations is that people will be “safer” in prison because of a reduced risk of harm (e.g., substance use) and greater access to treatment and structure. There is very little evidence to support this theory. For example, removing people from their communities can contribute to various negative impacts. In addition, access to treatment is often limited. Taxman et al. (2014) reported that, in 2005/2006, less than 10% of people in correctional settings across the United States could access programming on any given day. Access to treatment is further restricted in states that have decreased their economic investment in the criminal justice system (Cullen et al., 2017). Revocations can also result in short periods of incarceration (e.g., from two days to one year; Carns & Martin, 2011; DaGrossa, 2022), which may further limit a person’s ability to access and complete programming.

Although there is insufficient evidence that revocation decreases recidivism, enhances community well-being and safety, or benefits the person, it continues to be a common response to technical violations.

How Many People Under Carceral Control in the Community Are Returned to Prison?

It is estimated that 45% of state prison admissions nationwide are due to probation or parole violations—either new offenses or technical violations (Council of State Governments, 2019). Select studies (e.g., DaGrossa, 2022; Lin et al., 2010) have found extremely high revocation rates for technical violations—approximately 82%—in some community supervision settings. According to Pettus-Davis & Kennedy (2020), 26% of all new prison admissions are due solely to technical violations occurring while people are under probation and parole supervision. According to another study, in 2021, 114,649 people were admitted into U.S. prisons for technical violations (Carson, 2022).

Establishing revocation rates for technical violations specifically for community residential facilities and halfway houses is difficult, as state agencies often fail to record why people are returned to prison. For example, Latessa et al. (2010) suggested that the rate of returns for people in halfway houses and community residential facilities was lower than that for people under community supervision; however, researchers were unable to disaggregate the data and determine why people were revoked (e.g., new criminal action or technical violation).

Taken together, the available research suggests that the type and prevalence of revocations remain largely understudied. With few exceptions, researchers cannot clearly determine the reasons for returns. It is also clear that the actions and behaviors that prompt technical violations vary in accordance with state and federal policies across community residential programs. For example, in federal facilities, including RRCs, more than 50 conditions rated as high or moderate

severity, not including actions classified as new offenses, can be considered for revocation (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2020). This high number may be because residents of RRCs are held to higher standards of behavior than people on probation or parole to demonstrate their readiness for release (Campbell, 2016; Galvin et al., 2022).

The limited research makes it difficult to understand the type and prevalence of revocations and makes it impossible to assess the purpose, fairness, and proportionality of responses. We can, however, explore the direct and indirect costs of returning people to prison or jail for noncriminal actions.

The Cost of Revocations

As was previously noted, in 2021, 114,649 people were admitted into U.S. prisons for technical violations (Carson, 2022). It is projected to cost \$35,000 annually to keep someone in prison (DaGrossa, 2022). Using a conservative estimate, where a person on community supervision experiences only one revocation and is imprisoned for an average of one month, the United States government spends \$334.36 million in a single year to incarcerate people for technical violations. Given that people can experience multiple revocations and may be incarcerated for up to a year, this spending can be as high as \$4.01 billion per year.

In addition to the described fiscal costs, people experience immense social costs due to revocation. Imprisonment prevents them from accessing work and increases employers' perceptions of them as unreliable, making it more difficult to obtain and maintain gainful employment upon release (DaGrossa, 2022). This consequence is especially pernicious given that employment is a strong predictor of successful reentry (Brooks et al., 2008; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). In addition, people who have been incarcerated are more likely to experience housing instability and to be deprived of essential financial supports upon return to the community (DaGrossa, 2022; Phelps & Curry, 2017; Sawyer & Bertram, 2022).

Cycles of removal from and returns to the community also destabilize people's social networks (including their marital and familial relationships) and harm their community integration (DaGrossa, 2022). In addition, the emerging evidence points to the direct harm that people experience during incarceration, including the experience of trauma or retraumatization and an increase in mental health symptoms (Kajstura & Sawyer, 2023). Finally, parental incarceration can generate intergenerational harms, including the negative impact suffered when children are separated from caregivers. Children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system face a number of difficulties, including an increased risk for school difficulties (e.g., suspension or expulsions), child welfare and criminal justice involvement, and symptoms and reactions consistent with loss and trauma (Kajstura, 2019; Opsal, 2009). These concerns are most salient when women are incarcerated since they are more likely than men to be responsible for child welfare (Sawyer & Bertram, 2022).

Who Is Most Likely to Experience a Revocation?

There is growing attention directed to the disproportionate use of carceral controls across racialized and vulnerable groups (Wagner & Kopf, 2015). The research has consistently demonstrated that, when compared with white people, Black people, and other racialized groups are overrepresented in prison and parole populations (Carson, 2022; Galvin et al., 2022), are 25% more likely to be in custody pretrial (Sawyer, 2019), and are more likely to receive longer prison sentences (19.1% longer; United States Sentencing Commission, 2017). Given reported disparities, it is critical to explore individual, cultural, and structural factors linked to technical violations and revocations. We have provided a brief overview of the available research below; however, inconsistencies in data collection methods contribute to mixed results that should be interpreted cautiously.

Race. In an 18-month follow-up study of the revocation process among 300 people on parole, Steen & Opsal (2017) reported that black people are 50% more likely than white people to have their parole revoked for a technical violation. However, findings on sanctions across racialized

groups for noncriminal actions and new crimes have generally been mixed, ranging from no effect (Lin et al., 2010) to increased leniency (DaGrossa, 2022), more severe sanctions (Rodriguez & Webb, 2007), and more severe sanctions only in conservative counties (Helms & Jacobs, 2002). There is also some evidence to suggest that racial disparities in revocations started to reduce in 2020 and may be on the decline (Sabol et al., 2022).

Gender. The available research suggests that women are less likely to commit serious violations and experience different responses to technical violations than men. For example, women are more likely to abscond and receive drug-related technical violations. In contrast, men receive more serious or high-level technical violations such as weapons use/possession and contact with prohibited locations or people (Campbell et al., 2022). Men are 33% more likely to be returned to prison and 17% more likely to be returned to any type of custody than women (Campbell et al., 2022; Campbell, 2016; Lin et al., 2010). Women are more likely to receive less severe sanctions for technical violations, including verbal or written warnings, enhanced supervision conditions, partial confinement, or engagement in reparations (Campbell et al., 2022). An exception is when women abscond; they are more likely to experience revocation than men. Although women are returned to custody for technical violations less frequently than men, after experiencing a return, women are twice as likely as men to be returned to custody for another technical violation (Campbell et al., 2022).

Substance Use. People with histories of substance misuse are at an increased risk of receiving technical violations; however, they are not more likely to commit a new crime (Galvin et al., 2022). Substance misuse increases the likelihood of violating drug-related conditions and can affect a person's ability to work and attend appointments, which could result in further technical violations (Galvin et al., 2022). Given that relapse is a symptom of substance use disorders, a number of scholars have argued that abstinence is an inappropriate supervision condition for people who are substance-impacted (Galvin et al., 2022). Revoking someone who has relapsed does not resolve substance misuse and removes people from community support and treatment.

Mental Health. People with a diagnosed mental health condition are 80% more likely to abscond, 83% more likely to receive a drug use and possession-related violation, and 95% more likely to receive a miscellaneous technical violation (Grattet & Lin, 2016). Individuals identified with severe mental illness are significantly more likely to be rearrested and to have their community sentence suspended or revoked (Manchuk et al., 2014). This lack of success may be partly attributed to the fact that most staff lack the expertise to work effectively with this group. Many find it difficult to manage clinical symptoms associated with a mental health diagnosis and the many and varied challenges this population faces (e.g., substance use issues; socioeconomic challenges, including housing and employment instability; Prins & Draper, 2009).

Legal Factors. Several legal factors impact technical violations and revocations. For example:

- People with more extensive criminal histories have higher rates of technical violations, including absconding, drug use, and possession (Grattet & Lin, 2016; Lin et al., 2010).
- People with an original charge of a sex or violent offense are less likely to receive a technical violation (Grattet & Lin, 2016). Still, they are more likely to have their supervision revoked when they do (Lin et al., 2010). This effect may occur because this population is perceived as posing a greater risk to society and is more likely to be revoked whenever a violation (regardless of severity) occurs.
- Those assessed as high risk are more likely to be given more expansive conditions and to experience higher levels of surveillance, contributing to higher rates of failure (Ostermann et al., 2020).
- People with technical violations who undergo a trial adjudicating their violations are more likely to receive harsh sentences (DaGrossa, 2022). This finding calls into question whether there is a coercive force to admit to a violation and avoid a trial to obtain a more lenient sentence.

Other. A number of extraneous factors influence revocation, including geographical/political alignment, structural characteristics, and age:

- Conservative counties that endorse punitive justice approaches are more likely to revoke parole in response to a technical violation than less punitive, more liberal counties (Lin et al., 2010).
- Revocations are more likely to occur when prison reception centers are less populated, and space is not a barrier (Lin et al., 2010).
- Younger people (under 26 years) are more likely to have an identified technical violation and be returned to prison (Grattet & Lin, 2016; Latessa et al., 2010).

Part 3: Promising Opportunities

Even though various iterations of halfway houses and community residential facilities have existed for over 100 years, the evidence supporting their use is limited, and the characteristics contributing to positive outcomes have not been rigorously studied. Drawing from the available research and the evidence emerging across community alternatives, we have identified four promising opportunities and practices:

1. *Initiate evidence-based policy reforms that reduce technical violations that result in incarceration.* There is a growing body of research and scholarly interest in reducing the use of revocations for technical violations (e.g., Pew Charitable Trusts, 2020; Jacobson et al., 2017; Phelps & Curry, 2017; Steen et al., 2012). The prevailing arguments against revocations for technical violations include ethical concerns; devastating fiscal, personal, and social costs; and the lack of evidence supporting this practice as a deterrent to crime. Proponents of reform also argue that people who are justice-involved have a right to liberty that should be limited only to the degree necessary to ensure public safety. They assert that under the right conditions, rehabilitation can occur (Phelps & Curry, 2017).

In accordance with this belief, several states have worked to legislate that other, less disruptive sanctions must be pursued before considering reincarceration (e.g., Alabama; Code of Alabama, 2006/2022). There is also a movement to align judicial processes with legislative guidance. For example, 54% of federal judges have requested that sentencing guidelines include more expansive options for responding to technical violations; 94% have requested explicit directions on how to use other forms of sanctions (United States Sentencing Commission, 2015).

During COVID-19, in an effort to control the risk of infection, several states provided directives to reduce the number of people entering prisons and jails. For example, New York State proposed to end incarceration for less serious technical violations, cap incarceration terms for technical violations, and incentivize parole compliance through grants of “merit time.” Unfortunately, this practice was not fully realized in many parole settings, suggesting the need for legislative reform and policy change (Shiraldi, 2020).

Pew Charitable Trusts recently released a comprehensive report to guide policy reforms to strengthen probation and parole supervision practices (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2020). Though the report focuses on community supervision, several recommendations can be applied to halfway houses, including establishing effective and appropriate rules and conditions. For example, imposing requirements that benefit public safety, tailored to the individual’s specific needs, and using positive drug testing to indicate treatment needs rather than defiance.

2. *Implement evidence-based practices.* As discussed in part 1, the Ohio halfway house studies (Latessa et al., 2010; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002) and the prevailing research focused on probation, and parole supervision (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2020, 2018) support the use of the RNR model. Adherence to this model provides guidance concerning program eligibility, dosage and intensity, the targets of intervention, the types of programs that should be available, and how programs should be delivered. Specifically, the available literature suggests the following for halfway houses and community residential facilities:

- *Risk Principle:* Focus eligibility for placement in a halfway house or community residential facility on people assessed as moderate or higher risk on a standardized assessment instrument.
- *Need Principle:* Assess individual needs to determine the targets of intervention. Develop a case plan and direct participants to services tailored to the assessment results.
- *Responsivity Principle:* Address people's responsivity factors when determining appropriate programming and delivery methods. Provide high-quality, evidence-based interventions that include skill practice (e.g., cognitive-behavioral interventions). Offer ongoing training and coaching to the staff so they can improve relationships with clients, build more respectful and collaborative interactions, and address the broad array of needs and challenges (e.g., substance misuse, untreated mental illness, housing, and financial instability) that clients experience (Taxman, 2012; Vera Institute of Justice, 2013). By addressing people's responsivity factors and strengthening staff's

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Address people's responsivity factors when determining appropriate programming and delivery methods.

working relationships with them, people are more likely to complete halfway house programs and benefit from them.

As new information becomes available related to gender, race, and other identities, the need and responsivity principles should be expanded to ensure the equitable implementation of the RNR model. For example, we now know that justice-involved women have extremely high prevalence rates of childhood victimization and abuse and experience higher rates of mental health issues than the general population. Several innovative interventions have emerged from trauma research, including a staff communication model called Creating Regulation and Resilience (CR/2). Preliminary research suggests that the use of CR/2 contributes to a reduction in the number of disciplinary reports in settings with incarcerated women (Van Dieten, 2022).

3. *Implement a graduated responses protocol.* The use of a graduated responses protocol—one that combines the use of incentives/rewards and sanctions—has been identified as a critical element leading to positive outcomes across a variety of community programs, including drug courts (Farole & Cissner, 2007) community supervision programs (Pew, 2018; Taxman, 2012), and drug treatment programs (Hubbard et al., 2007).

The ultimate goal of a graduated responses program is to encourage accountability and build resilience (Harris et al., 2001; Stickels, 2007). The program is most effective when responses are swift, fair, proportionate, and consistent (Carter, 2015) and when staff focus on affirming and reinforcing positive behaviors, with a ratio of four rewards for each sanction (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019; Wodahl et al., 2015).

The “earned credits” model is an example of a program that links the attainment of individual goals to incentives. For example, people can earn credits for completing treatment programs and have their supervision gradually scaled back, with the possibility of early termination. A comprehensive study of this model was conducted in Missouri.

Researchers found that it reduced the community supervision population by nearly 20% without affecting recidivism rates (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2016).

There are also several gender-responsive tools to address the salient needs of incarcerated women: the Gender-Informed Practices Assessment (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2011), the Gender-Responsive Policy & Practice Assessment (Bloom et al., 2014), and the Gender-Responsive Policy and Practice Assessment – Community Version (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2021) for use in community supervision settings.

4. *Establish protocols for quality assurance and evaluation:* There is a need for halfway houses and community residential facilities to develop transparent policies describing operations, programs offered, disciplinary practices, client profiles, and more, and to implement quality assurance measures to examine how closely policies and procedures align with the available research. Several comprehensive facility/program-level assessments are available for this purpose. The best-validated instruments include the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (Gendreau & Andrews, 1989) and the Correctional Programs Checklist (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2015). There are also several gender-responsive tools to address the salient needs of incarcerated women: the Gender-Informed Practices Assessment (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2011), the Gender-Responsive Policy & Practice Assessment (Bloom et al., 2014), and the Gender-Responsive Policy and Practice Assessment – Community

Version (Center for Effective Public Policy, 2021) for use in community supervision settings. Each assessment allows service providers and stakeholders to explore fidelity to evidence-based practices, identify operational and programmatic strengths and challenges, and determine opportunities that can be prioritized for strategic planning. The Correctional Programs Checklist (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2015) provided rich qualitative information. It helped to identify the qualities and characteristics of specific halfway house programs in Ohio that contributed to positive outcomes.

Comprehensive data collection is critical to understanding the effectiveness of policies and practices, including the impacts of incentives, technical violations, and revocations across correctional populations. For example, when exploring technical violations and revocations, agencies may wish to gather data—and disaggregate it by race, gender, and other identities—to answer these key questions:

- How many technical violations take place each month/year?
- What behaviors result in technical violations?
- How are technical violations handled in our program?
- What types and how many technical violations result in a return to prison or jail?
- Who is more likely to receive a technical violation?
- What are the direct impacts of revocation?
- What are the indirect consequences for residents?
- What is the financial impact of revocations on jails and prisons?

Information gathered should be available to all stakeholders and used to inform policy and legislative change.

Summary

This paper summarized the available research on halfway houses and correctional residential facilities. These settings have the potential to provide high-quality programming in the community to people who need it most while also ensuring that the risk to community well-being and safety is minimized. Our review suggests that these programs show some promise in reducing recidivism when they adhere to the RNR principles and are implemented with fidelity. Importantly, to advance the use and efficacy of these programs, it is imperative that agencies improve data collection, reporting, and auditing efforts.

This paper also focused on the use and impact of technical violations and revocations. We know that when someone is returned to prison for a technical violation, there is an immediate and negative impact on their ability to gain and maintain employment; rebuild and retain family, social, and community bonds; protect housing; and become financially stable. Policy and legislative change are essential to reduce the use of these practices. At the same time, there are opportunities for programs to train and coach staff to use graduated responses and evidence-based programs that prevent and more effectively manage challenging behaviors that can contribute to technical violations and revocations.

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