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## The Influence of Community-Based Reentry Programs on Reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Ebony Ivery

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Review Committee

Dr. Robert Spivey, Committee Chairperson,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Michael Klemp-North, Committee Member,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Joseph Pascarella, University Reviewer,  
Criminal Justice Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2020

Abstract

The Influence of Community-Based Reentry Programs on Reintegrating Ex-offenders in  
Ohio

by

Ebony Ivery

MA, Tiffin University, 2016

BA, University of Toledo, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

November 2020

## Abstract

Ex-offenders participate in community-based reentry programs to help transition back into society, yet some are still reoffending. Previous research suggested that community-based reentry programs need to be evaluated to successfully determine their influence on reintegrating ex-offenders. Limited research existed on the experiences of ex-offenders while taking part in such programs. The theory of effective correctional intervention was used to guide this general qualitative research study on Ohio community-based reentry programs. The following areas were addressed: (a) the role that community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders; (b) barriers and limitations that community-based reentry programs face in meeting the needs of ex-offenders; and (c) the experiences of ex-offender in community-based reentry programs. Data were collected from one-on-one interviews with 12 participants, including four direct staff members, four management, and four ex-offenders within a community-residential program. The transcribed interviews underwent a six-phase process of thematic analysis using deductive coding. According to the findings, programs have an essential role in addressing ex-offender needs. However, changes are needed to program-exiting policies and procedures to ensure that ex-offenders have ample time to reintegrate. Follow-up services are required to ensure that offenders are navigating well within their communities. The theory of correctional intervention provided a framework and was used to help validate this study's results. This study's findings could be used to improve program-exiting criteria, resources, and services throughout Ohio and other states leading to positive social change.

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## Dedication

First and foremost, I want to give the honor and praise to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It would not have been possible to complete this dissertation without his guidance. To the memory of my mother, Deborah Jean Ivery. I wish you were here to celebrate this milestone, but I know you're celebrating in heaven. To my late pastor, the Reverend Dr. Leonard R. Dobbs, you were my lifeline. You taught me the essence of loving and giving without condition, and you showed me the importance of being a God-fearing woman. To my Grandmother, Virginia Ivery, the Matriarch of the family. I hope this accomplishment makes you proud. I dedicate my work to my daughters, Breanna and Adora. You girls are my most significant accomplishments. Breanna, you have been by my side throughout my entire educational journey. Adora, you came along towards the end, and you have shown me grace. For this, you two deserve this dedication. Now that this journey is over, I promise we will live life unapologetically. To my sister and Ph. Diva, Adrienne Long. You have been my biggest supporter throughout this process. You were there when times were rough and when times were good. You will be at the finish line soon! I am grateful to all of you!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Reintegration involves moving an ex-offender from prison into life as a productive citizen (Jason, Olson & Harvey, 2015). Ex-offenders are individuals who have been incarcerated and released back to their communities (James, 2015). Reintegration can be difficult for adult offenders, especially for those at a higher risk of recidivating. According to the National Institute of Justice (2019), ex-offenders are likely to re-offend within three years of being released from prison. It is difficult for ex-offenders to survive outside of prison because of the many challenges they are faced with, primarily, a lack of employment. Without employment, ex-offenders cannot reintegrate successfully, which results in behaviors that put them at risk of reoffending. Other barriers include parenting issues, self-esteem issues, and moral conflicts (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017). It is difficult for ex-offenders to successfully reintegrate without help from their families, friends, and even their communities (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017).

According to the National Institute of Justice (2018), facilitating successful offender reintegration occurs through reentry programs, which reenter individuals to their communities using community-based reentry programs (James, 2015). Reentry programs help offenders with employment, education, housing, treatment services, and alcohol and substance abuse counseling (Frazier, Sung, Gideon & Alfaro, 2015). It is unknown if these programs are helping ex-offenders stay out of prison. Many ex-offenders still participate in offending behaviors even after taking part in community-based reentry programs.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of participants in a community-based reentry program on the benefits of these programs and evaluating the program components. Community-Based Reentry Programs are social service agencies that assist ex-offenders in their communities (James, 2015). Participants must meet certain milestones within a program for the program to be deemed successful. Milestones can include employment, occupational skills, education, credentialing, and securing housing. Failures consist of the participant recidivating after a certain amount of time.

Prior research suggests the need for community-based reentry programs for ex-offenders (Frazier et al., 2015). But there has been little effort to explore whether programs are helpful in the transition of ex-offenders. This dissertation presents the background of community-based reentry programs and their influence on reintegrating ex-offenders. Chapter 1 covers the following topics: background of the study, the problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

### **Background of the Study**

Many offenders will return to their communities at some point (James, 2015). According to the National Institute of Justice, more than 650,000 ex-offenders are released from prison every year or nearly 1,885 individuals per day. Studies show that approximately two-thirds will likely be rearrested within three years of release (National Institute of Justice, 2019). Four million offenders were released under community

supervision (NIJ, 2019). It is difficult for ex-offenders to return to their communities because of the challenges and barriers they face. Challenges include securing employment and obtaining housing (Frazier, Sung, Gideon & Alfaro, 2015). Congress became aware of the obstacles and developed the Second Chance Act (n.d.), which provides grants for implementing programs and services to help reduce recidivism and improve ex-offenders (The National Reentry Resource Center, n.d.) Recidivism refers to criminal acts that result in being arrested, reconvicted, and returning to prison (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). The Second Chance Act grant allows ex-offenders to participate in community-based reentry programs to assist in their reintegration process. O'Hear (2007) stated that community-based reentry programs had been shown to help reduce recidivism rates; however, programs have not been consistently evaluated. There is a gap in the literature on the influence of community-based reentry programs on ex-offenders' transition back into society.

Duwe (2017) stated that such programs need to be evaluated to determine their influence. Effective programming requires a great deal of attention to program design, implementation, and ongoing monitoring and assessing its impact (Askew, 2016). Program evaluations involve conducting systematic studies to evaluate program performance (Program Evaluation: Why what, and when to evaluate, n.d.) If a program evaluation is negative, program directors to create more effective programs by revising program components or implementing new ones. Programs that are designed to align with the principles of effective correctional intervention that includes (a) Risk Principle that targets higher risk offenders, (b) Need Principle that targets criminogenic risk/need

factors including anti-social attitudes, anti-social peers, substance abuse, dysfunctional family and impulsivity/lack of self-control, (c) Treatment Principle that uses behavioral treatment approaches such as rehearsing new skills, (d) Responsivity Principle that helps to address treatment barriers such as lack of motivation, anxiety, reading levels, and consider individual differences such as age, gender and (e) Fidelity Principle that helps to carry out different interventions are more successful than programs with other designs (Duwe, 2017). Other designs include sex-offender treatment, faith-based interventions, and substance abuse treatment. These designs aren't used with different interventions (Duwe, 2017). Ex-offenders need adequate programming to reintegrate successfully into their communities

This study was needed to understand why ex-offenders are still reoffending after completing reentry programs within their communities. This study can help community-based reentry program staff, and stakeholders develop a plan to ensure that ex-offenders are reintegrating successfully after program completion. Stakeholders include professionals within the Department of Corrections, job and family services, faith-based organizations, substance abuse professionals, and mental health professionals (Wilkinson, Rhine & Henderson-Hurley, 2005). Program directors must conduct program evaluations and collaborate with each stakeholder to ensure that participants' needs are being met.

### **Problem Statement**

Many rehabilitation programs are implemented within state and federal institutions for the incarcerated, but there are also programs for ex-offenders returning to their communities. The National Reentry Resource Center suggests that 95% of

incarcerated individuals in state prisons will be released back to their communities at some point (Justice Center, n.d.). Once released, they face many barriers and challenges, making it difficult for them to become law-abiding citizens. The challenges include difficulties finding employment, securing housing, and reestablishing relationships with their families and their communities (Grier, 2015).

Community-based reentry programs have been developed to help ex-offenders successfully transition back into their communities. The problem is that ex-offenders are reoffending even while taking part in community-based reentry programs. There was a total of 52,233 offenders in Ohio in 2015 (Carson & Anderson, 2016). Of those released, 68% reoffended in three years (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). According to a study in Ohio (Carson & Anderson, 2016), 13,221 offenders who lived in 37 halfway houses and 15 community-based correctional facilities were tracked. A two-year follow-up was conducted to measure recidivism. Results showed that some programs reduced recidivism rates by over 30%; others had detrimental effects and recidivism rates increased by more than 35% (Latessa et al., 2014). The influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio needs to be explored.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this general qualitative research study was to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio.

### **Research Questions**

This research was guided by a research question and two subquestions.

#### **Main Research Question**



RQ: What role do community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders?

### **Subquestions**

SQ1: What barriers and limitations do community-based reentry programs face in meeting the needs of ex-offenders?

SQ2: What are ex-offenders' experiences of community-based reentry programs?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory of effective correctional intervention was used as the framework for this research study to guide recidivism reduction while using the seven principles of correctional intervention. Gendreau, Smith, and French (2006) described the seven principles of effective correctional intervention: organizational culture, program implementation, management characters, client risk and needs, program characteristics, core correctional practice, and interagency communication. This framework assists an organization in serving ex-offenders.

This lens helped guide the researcher on the issues explored in the study. It shaped the research questions, informed how data could be collected and provided a call for action or change (Creswell, 2009). Using the seven principles of effective correctional intervention can help community-based reentry program staff form an individualized plan to help participants achieve their reintegration goals and provide the information needed to carry out a successful reentry program. This theory will be explored further in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of Study**

This general qualitative study explored the perceptions and experiences of ex-offenders taking part in a community-based rehab? program in Ohio. The program provides supervision and treatment services to individuals released from prison and referred by the courts, or else to individuals who violate their probation or parole (Bureau of Community Sanctions, 2018). Phelps and Curry (2017) stated there is a major procedural difference between probation and parole. Probation is part and parcel of the offender's initial sentence, whereas parole comes much later, allowing the offender early release from a prison sentence.

The data collection included participants who took part in the community-based reentry program and the individuals who served them. This general qualitative research study was a suitable method instead of other research methods because qualitative research involves an in-depth analysis of a person, group, or event.

Qualitative research helps to provide information about an issue's human side, which often includes individuals' contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). Conducting a general qualitative research study on this community-based reentry program allowed me to understand the program through the lived experiences of 12 participants. This study helped explore whether the program helps the reintegration of ex-offenders through one-on-one interviews using Zoom. The target population included direct staff members, management, and male and female ex-offenders. The ex-offenders were required to have been released from a correctional facility within 2–4 months to participate in the study. The interviews took

place in the participants' natural settings at the residential program where the offenders currently reside. I also used memoing during the data collection process. The interviews were recorded and transcribed manually, from which codes, categories, and themes emerged.

### **Definitions**

*Transitional control* - Program designed to facilitate an offender's transition back into the community from prison while residing in a monitored halfway house (Bureau of Sanctions, 2018).

### **Assumptions**

Conducting interviews with ex-offenders requires them to be as honest and open as possible, especially during interviewing. I was aware participants might not be as forthcoming as assumed. If participants fail to be truthful during interviews, it could result in credibility issues. I assumed that the participants would answer each question openly and honestly and that the program staff was actively helping ex-offenders make behavior changes. I in their transition back into society

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Delimitations limit the scope and define the boundaries of a study (Simon & Goes, 2013). This study involved one-on-one interviews with 12 participants using Zoom: four direct staff members, four management members, and four program participants in a community-based reentry program in Ohio. This study was designed to explore the perceptions of participants about whether community-based reentry programs help them reintegrate successfully. This study's results were generalized to ex-offenders

who are currently taking part in a community-based reentry program in Ohio and have been in the program for at least 60 days. Because many participants have returned to prison after completing such programs, there is a need to explore whether community-based reentry programs successfully reintegrate ex-offenders. This study can be transferable outside of Ohio because it could promote strategies that could be used within other community-based reentry programs. Connelly (2016) stated that qualitative research's transferability is synonymous with generalizability, or external validity, in quantitative research. Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. It is important to note that the researcher cannot prove that the research study's findings will be applicable but provide evidence that it could be applicable (Connelly, 2016).

### **Limitations**

Limitations in research studies are weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control (Simon & Goes, 2013). One limitation was the lack of diversity among participants. The program under study housed only males, and because of this, it prevented me from obtaining experiences of female offenders. Therefore, the results of this study aren't generalizable to both male and female offenders. Another limitation was conducting the study during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented me from conducting face-to-face interviews, making it difficult for me to read the volunteer's body language and build rapport.

During this study, I was a Reentry Services Facilitator at a reentry program at Goodwill Easter Seals. I had been in this role for a few months. To help eliminate any bias, I used memoing during the data collection process. Memoing is the process of taking time to reflect and writing notes during the research process (Hope et al., 2019).

### **Significance of the Study**

As the prison population continues to grow with reoffenders, it is critical to determine if community-based reentry programs help ex-offenders reintegrate successfully (National Institute of Justice, 2018). I sought to contribute to the delivery approaches to meeting the needs of ex-offenders. This study allowed ex-offenders who took part in a community-based reentry program to share their experiences of how programs helped them transition back into society. This study also helped fill a knowledge gap and provide a deeper understanding of why ex-offenders recidivate after participating in programs. Understanding ex-offender needs are important to their reintegration process. This research contributes to criminal justice by providing recommendations and strategies for serving ex-offenders and promoting successful reintegration. Its findings could help the Department of Corrections, reentry administrators, and scholars understand ex-offenders' needs during their reintegrating process.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this general qualitative research study was to (a) explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio, to (b) explore the participants' perceptions, and to (c) provide the barriers and limitations

that programs face while working with the ex-offender population. This research pointed out the problem of offenders recidivating after taking part in programs. This chapter presented the background on community-based reentry programs, and the challenges ex-offenders face while reintegrating. It is difficult for offenders to secure housing, obtain employment, and get their other essential needs met once released, which is why many turns to community-based reentry programs for assistance. However, there is little analysis of how programs contribute to ex-offenders' reintegration. The Theory of Effective Correctional intervention was used to guide the purpose and understanding of the research study's problem. The ex-offenders were required to have been released from a correctional facility within 2–4 months to participate in the study.

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature on offender reintegration. I define reintegration and add to the discussion of the theoretical frameworks, ex-offender challenges, social support, second chance act, reentry programs and referrals, program components, the influence of reentry programming, and an overview of the program under study. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the research method, including the research questions, research design and rationale of the study, the researcher's role, ethical considerations, methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, data analysis plan, and trustworthiness. Chapter 4 includes the study results, data collection, setting, demographics of participants, and evidence of reliability, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, Chapter 5 includes the findings interpretation, themes, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature**

### **Introduction**

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported high recidivism rates among released offenders (Alpher & Durose, 2018). Many experience challenges and barriers, including difficulty obtaining employment and housing, food insecurity, substance abuse, mental health issues, lack of reliable transportation, and family issues. Community-based reentry programs have been designed to help address these issues, but many ex-offenders are reoffending even after participating in programs. To help ex-offender reintegration in Ohio, a systematic investigation on the influence of community-based reentry programs is needed. Berghuis (2018) stated that reentry programs do not affect recidivism. It has been argued that treatment does not help reintegrate offenders. Others suggest that offenders can be transformed using rehab programs (Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, & Gordon, 2016). The purpose of this general qualitative research study was to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio.

This chapter provides a review of the current literature on community-based reentry programs and how they help ex-offenders reintegrate. This literature review will reveal whether reentry programs are successful. Also discussed are the concept of reintegration, the Second Chance Act, the barriers that ex-offenders face, program components, and program successes and failures.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

To identify prospective, peer-reviewed articles (as well as books and grey literature), the following databases were used: ProQuest Central, Criminal Justice

Database, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, and Academic Search Complete. The following keywords and phrases were used for the literature search: *reentry, recidivate, recidivism, reintegrate, reintegration, offender reintegration, ex-offender, reentry programs, community-based programs, community-based reentry programs, program evaluation, the influence of reentry programs, reentry initiatives, community reintegration, ex-offender programs, and ex-offender challenges.*

I mainly used peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years. But I also used a few articles that exceeded the five-year mark because they provided relevant information on the theoretical framework and the influence of community-based reentry programs. I also used official sites and dissertations to help form this literature review.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Theory of Effective Correctional Intervention was developed from social learning theories and criminogenic theories. These theories inform program staff on how to conceptualize and change behaviors through modeling therapy, social training, and cognitive behavioral therapy (Gendreau, Smith, & French, 2006). There are seven principles of effective correctional intervention. The effective correctional intervention principles are used to determine the quality of treatment programs in jails, prisons, and community-based reentry programs. Gendreau et al. (2006) explained the principles of effective correctional intervention as follows:

- 1. Organization Culture.** The organization being receptive to implementing new ideas and has a code of ethics. A history of responding to new initiations and coping with problematic issues promptly is evident, as is a proactive



orientation to problem-solving. Organizational harmony is reflected in low staff turnover, frequent in-service training, and within house sharing of information (pg.13).

- 2. Program Implementation/Maintenance.** Based on individual-level survey data on the service's need and a thorough review of relevant treatment kinds of literature. Implementation occurs when the organization does not face contentious issues (e.g., fiscal, staffing levels, stakeholder reluctance) that might seriously jeopardize the project (pg.13).
- 3. Management/Staff Characteristics.** The program director has an advanced degree and several years of experience working in offender treatment programs. Most staff involved in direct service delivery has an undergraduate degree and clinical experience working with offenders. Staff members are hired on relationship and skill factors, improving the integrity of the therapeutic relationship. Staff members are expected to endorse rehabilitation and have confidence in their ability (i.e., self-efficacy) to deliver quality services (pg.13).
- 4. Client Risk/Need Practices.** Targeting criminogenic needs includes assessing offenders on a risk instrument that has adequate predictive validities and contains a wide range of criminogenic needs. These needs are routinely reassessed over time (e.g., every three to six months) to target them for treatment and monitor changes in risk and need levels, which significantly impact case management practices (pg. 13-14).

**5. Program Characteristics: *General Responsivity and High Risk*.** The most effective treatment programs employ behavioral treatment modalities (general responsivity). Behavioral programs should also target the criminogenic needs of higher-risk offenders — the program manual details the discrete steps to be followed in presenting the treatment protocol. Offenders spend at least 40% of their program time in getting pro-social skills. The ratio of reinforcements to punishers is 4:1 or more, and completion criteria are explicit. Relapse prevention strategy methods are extended to offenders after completion of the initial treatment phase (pg.14).

**6. Core Correctional Practice.** Program therapists engage in different therapeutic practices. Latessa et al. (2013), explained the practices as follows:

*Anti-criminal modeling*, which helps motivate offenders to use prosocial behaviors and provide them with positive reinforcement when using those behaviors.

*Effective reinforcement and disapproval* - which are used to reinforce good behaviors and provide immediate statements of approval and support. Disapproval is used to disapprove specific behaviors, which includes statements of why the behavior is disapproved. Long-term and short-term goals are used for prosocial behaviors.

*Problem-solving techniques* - which are used to help offenders address high-risk situations.

*Structured learning procedures for skill-building* are used to help offenders develop prosocial skills when involved in high-risk situations. Offenders learn how to react positively, and they are given constructive feedback when practicing the skill.

*Effective use of authority* shows the offender that there is a balance between them and the therapist. Program therapists will make use of authority by guiding offenders toward complying to care and giving the offender choices.

*Cognitive self-change* is used to help offenders change their negative thoughts and feelings and generate prosocial alternatives.

*Relationship practices* allow program staff to possess empathetic skills and give them the ability to be engaging, solution-focused, flexible, open, and nonjudgmental.

*Motivational interviewing* - a method used to motivate changed behavior.

- 7. Inter-Agency Communication.** The agency establishes a system (i.e., advocacy, brokerage) whereby offenders are referred to other community agencies to help to provide high-quality services (Genreau, 2006). Mellow and Barnes-Ceeney (2017) state having a clear vision and goals is needed to ensure organizations are resources for ex-offenders. Community-based reentry programs develop a communication system with many organizations, including but not limited to criminal justice agencies, legal aid, health care organizations, and mental health services.

Gendreau et al. (2006) explain the many theorists who believed correctional treatment had no influence on reintegrating offenders, including Robert Martinson; Per contrary, theorists such as Brockman and many others who opposed this theory. Learning theorists believe such programs can be useful if they have tools to ensure individual needs are met. The Correctional Assessment Inventory Tool is used with the principles of effective correctional intervention to evaluate program influence (Gendreau, 2006). It is recommended that programs use the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI) tool because it allows the program staff to develop strategies to meet the principles of effective correctional intervention (Duwe, 2017). Lovins and Latessa (2018) explained using this tool can increase the chance of successful intervention. The tool is used to assess program influence and outcomes; it was developed to improve reentry programs based on research and evaluation (Interactive, 2019).

The theory of effective correctional intervention has been used within the juvenile and adult institutions. It is also used within community-based programs serving offender populations. Lovins and Latessa (2018) explained past studies on correctional interventions proved that some programs were effective for high-risk offenders yet there have been detrimental effects for low-risk offenders. The scholars also noted that research should continue to explore the link between program integrity and program influence, which could help correctional and community-based reentry programs develop options to improve. Correctional intervention can help offenders and ex-offenders make changes to their behaviors. Scholars have indicated that programs can be effective when meeting the principles of effective intervention (Radatz & Wright, 2016).

Many programs use the Assess, Plan, Identify, and Coordinate (APIC) Model to help ex-offenders. The National Reentry Resource Center (2010) describes the APIC Model as reentry associated with successful integration back into the community. The APIC Model helps community-based reentry programs deliver services to the ex-offender by developing a plan based on individual needs. Scholars argue many community-based reentry programs lack specificity in matching services to individuals' unique risks; therefore, knowing the criminological risk and needs of an offender is important to their treatment (Gill & Wilson, 2017). Specific services are identified, and lastly, a plan is implemented (Osher et al., 2003). This model allows programs to help ex-offenders in a way that best serves them. This model is also used in the correctional institutions to help prepare offenders with their transition. The offender's first post- released need is to get employment. Their reintegration could be harmed if their other needs are not being met. Studies have shown that implementing program components to match the offender's services can be beneficial to the offender and the program (Askew, 2016).

James (2015) stated reentry programs should include phases to help offenders transition to society. The first phase begins in the institutions which deliver services based on the offender's needs. The second phase begins when the offender is released from the institution. During this stage, the offender's risk and needs will change, resulting in updated case plans. Aftercare is the final phase, where individuals receive long-term support (James, 2015). This study helps to explore if using the principles of effective intervention will have a significant influence on reducing recidivism and reintegrating ex-offenders successfully in Ohio.

## **Offender Reintegration**

Each released offender needs to reintegrate back into their communities successfully. Tarpey and Friend (2016) defined reintegration as abstaining from criminal activity and engaging in a socially productive and responsible life. Offenders are strongly urged to take the necessary steps to reintegrate successfully. The National Institute of Justice reported that 79% of over 400,000 released state offenders re-offended within six years. Forty-four percent of released offenders re-offend during their first year of release (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). Many offenders are re-arrested for drug crimes, gang crimes, human trafficking, property crimes, sex-related crimes, violent crimes, and terrorism crimes (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). Offenders must reintegrate successfully because it helps them become productive citizens while keeping them from new committing criminal actions.

Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, and Gordon (2016) suggested a need to set up interventions to support offender reintegration. Interventions include treatment, programming, and participating in pro-social activities. Intervention can be achieved by organizations partnering with other organizations. Successful reintegration helps ex-offenders adjust to the community by meeting educational, employment, mental health, substance abuse, and familial needs (Harding, Wyse, Dobson & Morenoff, 2014). Meeting these needs through programming maximizes the reintegration process (Harding et al., 2014). The beliefs that ex-offenders have can affect their reintegration experiences; therefore, if they train their minds to do the right thing, they will succeed within their communities, leading to a successful reintegration (Grier, 2015). Studies have shown that

successful reintegration is essential to be productive, law-abiding citizens. Scholars have conducted an extensive analysis of how the reintegration process works, and the different types of services in communities to help offenders with their individual needs. Those studies are also explored in this chapter.

### **Ex-Offender Challenges**

During offender incarceration, ex-offenders could become institutionalized, which could harm their psychological and cognitive ability. Once they are released, they develop barriers that cause them to adjust to society (Ethridge et al., 2014). Ex-offenders' mentality can change drastically, resulting in them being unable to handle affairs in an orderly fashion as they would before their incarceration. Applying for identification could cause some frustrations for some ex-offenders because they may not understand how to fill out paperwork or challenge understanding what is being asked of them by staff.

Ex-offenders are faced with many other challenges once they are released from prison or jail. Some challenges include lack of transportation and difficulty obtaining employment. When offenders are released from prison, one of the first things they attempt to achieve is obtained employment, but they are often discriminated against by employers because of their convictions. Most employers have a negative perception of hiring individuals with criminal records, even before the interview (Ethridge et al., 2014). This could be harmful because someone who meets the job qualifications could be turned down because of their past convictions. According to Harley (2014), gaining employment is important once released from prison. Without a job, ex-offenders will not have a reliable source of income to provide for their families. Their basic needs, such as food,

clothing, and shelter, would be challenging to meet. Ex-offenders have challenges in finding reliable transportation. It would be difficult for them to report to work daily without transportation.

Securing stable housing is also a challenge for some ex-offenders, and because of their criminal convictions, they are unable to qualify for government assistance, including housing (Wesley & Dewey, 2018). Individuals convicted of a drug offense are unable to receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps), federally subsidized housing, or higher education benefits (McCarty, 2013). This can be frustrating because, without help, it would be difficult for them to meet their financial obligations. They could also be disqualified for house rentals or federally insured mortgages (Orians, 2016). This could result in them becoming homeless, thus violating conditions of their parole.

Many ex-offenders released from the prison system lack necessary educational skills, which is a significant barrier to their reintegration. Many offenders receive their education within the prison system, but it is still difficult for them to further their education once they are released. Past research shows some ex-offenders, depending on their conviction, are unable to receive educational assistance. Orians (2016) found that having prior convictions can result in ex-offenders being denied licensing programs and educational grants. Many ex-offenders are unable to further their education because they do not qualify for financial aid; therefore, they cannot pay for their studies.

Ex-offenders are also dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues. The reintegrating challenges could cause someone to develop more problems by self-



medicating and not getting the necessary assistance for their mental health issues (Begun, Early & Hodge, 2016). According to Frazier, Sung, Gideon, and Alfaro (2015), newly ex-offenders are vulnerable to relapse after being released from prison. There is a negative relationship between substance abuse and reintegration, and substance abuse treatment is critical to offenders attempting to reintegrate (Connolly & Granfield, 2017). They need ongoing assistance to help them battle substances and receive mental health treatment.

Ex-offenders deal with confronting peers and community members because of their crimes. Their crimes have caused the communities to doubt them, making it hard for the communities to support their transition to society. Experiencing poor support during their transition contributes to their feelings of inadequacy and emptiness (Denney et al., 2014). They need robust support systems to ensure they will not lead to drugs, crime, and recidivism (Denney et al., 2014). Mellow and Barnes-Ceeney (2017) argued that active community members should be advocating for the ex-offender reintegration, which helps to provide the ex-offender a second chance at life.

### **Social Support**

Returning offenders can receive various social support types, ranging from formal support from professional agencies to informal supports from families, friends, and even communities (Martinez & Abrams, 2013). Systematic investigation confirms there is a relationship between social support and antisocial behavior (Taylor, 2016). Without social support, it will be difficult for returning offenders to be productive citizens. Receiving support can decrease the amount of time an ex-offender spends with a criminal peer (Taylor, 2016). Negative support can cause an offender to relapse into their

old ways. Family members who are involved in substances and crime can have a negative effect on the ex-offender reintegration. They can be easily persuaded into taking part in criminal activity.

Community-based reentry programs are designed to provide formal support to returning offenders. According to Clone and DeHart (2014), social support has three components: the strength of support, network characteristics, and the types of support offered. The level of services offered measures the strength of support. Network characteristics involve the kind of agencies willing to collaborate with the program staff. The kind of support provided can include funding for housing and utilities, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and employment services. Returning offenders need social support to help them reintegrate successfully.

Formal social support empowers returning citizens, their families, communities, and providers to address education, housing, employment, and primary and mental health care tailored to their needs (“Breaking the Cycle: Support for the Formerly Incarcerated,” 2015). Offenders can receive wrap-around services to assist with their reintegration needs. Formal supports are useful because it allows programs to coordinate with one another to better identify offenders' needs. Without formal supports, programs will not be effective, and they won't be beneficial to the ex-offender.

### **The Second Chance Act**

The Federal Second Chance Act was passed in April 2008, which allowed state, local, and federal governments and nonprofit organizations to receive adequate funding to help reduce recidivism and give offenders support during their reintegration process by

offering to program (The National Reentry Resource Center, n.d.). Grant recipients are expected to collaborate with different agencies and community organizations (O'Hara, 2007). Agencies include but are not limited to corrections, housing, education, mental health and substance abuse, victim services, employment services, and law enforcement agencies.

The purpose of the Second Chance Act is to not only break the cycle of recidivism, but it also reestablishes relationships between the offender and their families, encourage developing evidence-based programs, protecting the public and promoting law-abiding conduct, provide transitional services for offenders who are reentering the communities, and provide rehabilitation, educational and vocational programs in the correctional facilities (The National Reentry Resource Center, n.d.). More than 800 awards have been given to grantees across 49 states since 2009. Many of these awards have been granted to correctional facilities and community-based initiatives (The National Reentry Resource Center, n.d.). The Second Chance Act has been providing incarcerated offenders and returning offenders with many opportunities to become productive citizens within their communities.

### **Reentry Programs and Referrals**

Reentry programs are designed to provide services to those released from prison to assist them with their transition to the community. Services include employment and vocational training, housing, substance abuse and mental health treatment, counseling, and peer support. Programs are implemented within the communities and are offered by nonprofit and faith-based organizations. These organizations form partnerships with other

organizations within the communities. It is expected for organizations to collaborate to ensure offenders are reintegrating successfully. Mellow and Barnes-Ceeney (2017) argued that success is only available when stakeholders and community members interconnect to supervise and advocate for the ex-offenders returning to the community. There are many types of stakeholders involved in community-based reentry programs. Stakeholders include implementers, decision-makers, participants, and partners. Partners can consist of the Department of Corrections, Department of Social Services, Juvenile Services, Department of Health and Human Services, parole and probation officials, faith-based organizations, and employers. When programs are implemented, stakeholders are gathered to discuss the benefits of the programs and their components. The stakeholder interests and concerns, as well as their roles and responsibilities, are also discussed. Stakeholders can also elaborate on the many barriers ex-offenders face and discuss ways to reduce those barriers through the services programs have to offer.

Many community-based reentry programs require that each potential participant goes through a referral process, and this is where the organization partnerships exist. The case managers in the institutions refer the offenders to programs in the communities before they are released. According to Warwick, Dodd, and Neusteter (2012), offenders must be directed to programs and services within the community to address their criminogenic needs. The referral process includes the transfer of transition plans and assessments to referral agencies. Referrals should consist of the date, time, and address where the services will be held (Warwick et al., 2012). Other recruitment agencies such as juvenile services, county jails, and the court systems give the referral. Once the

offender is referred, they must submit to a background check to ensure they qualify for the program. During this process, they must bring all the required documentation to be enrolled in the program. The offender is required to complete criminogenic needs assessments and other assessments at the community-based agency to determine their risk level. After their needs are assessed, a plan is put into place, and services are rendered.

### **Community-Based Reentry Programs and Components**

Community-based reentry programs are designed to provide professional programming to help ex-offenders reintegrate back to society. A community-based agency's goals are to provide a continuum of care that may have started during the offender's incarceration. Case managers and social workers in the correctional institutions are recommended to collaborate with community-based agencies to address the offender's barriers and come up with a plan before release (Paulson, 2013). Community-based reentry programs offer many services to ex-offenders transitioning back into the communities. Services include but are not limited to, housing, employment, vocational training, mental health and substance abuse treatment, mentoring, and social and life skills. Case managers must collaborate with ex-offenders to identify, analyze, document, and create a plan to help them achieve their goals (Hunter et al., 2016). The ex-offender goals are expected to be completed by using the different components within a program. Program components are different for each organization, and not all organizations have the same components. The components include housing, education, vocational and job training, employment, counseling, case management, substance abuse treatment, life, social skills, mentoring, and follow-up and support (Drake & LaFrance, 2007). These

components are designed to help each participant receive help based on their individual needs. If the program does not have something the ex-offender needs, they are referred to an organization to help with their specific needs.

**Housing.** Returning offenders face difficulties in finding stable housing because of their challenges (NCJRS, n.d.). Roman (2004) stated many released offenders live with a family member, a close friend, or a significant other. The scholar also explains some offenders do not have the option to live with someone. They must turn to community-based correctional housing facilities, transitional housing, private housing, or homeless shelters (Roman, 2004). If offenders choose to take part in community-based reentry programs, they will be offered help to find housing. Research has indicated that housing components are needed within programs (Wright et al., 2014). Without a stable environment, it is unlikely offenders will be productive (Fontaine, 2013). Meeting the housing needs is vital to successful reintegration, and it also makes a program more engaging when participants know their housing needs will be met.

**Education.** Many community-based agencies have implemented an education component to their programs because offenders are being released from prison with little to no education. Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll (2003) argued that previously incarcerated individuals have lower education levels. The researchers also stated that 70% of offenders being released from correctional institutions are high school dropouts, 50% are illiterate, and 19% have less than eight years of education. Education is an important part of reentry. Some programs offer GED courses, as well as college courses. Wikoff, Linhorst, and Morani (2012) explained one-third of all released offenders receive

education training while incarcerated. Wikoff et al. (2012) performed survival analysis to compare recidivism rates. Results indicated that those who received an education no higher than a high school diploma were likely to re-offend.

**Vocational Training and Employment.** Community-based agencies also realize the importance of including vocational training and employment assistance as part of their programs. Ethridge, Dunlap, Boston, and Staten (2014) stated vocational components within the prison settings and communities are designed to help ex-offenders with the skills needed to get a job while staying out of trouble. Ethridge et al. (2014) recognized that vocational components within community-based reentry programs could increase the ex-offender chance of gaining employment after incarceration. Offenders need to advance their education and participate in vocational training to reintegrate successfully. They can take advantage of these training while taking part in community-based reentry programs, especially if they did not get the chance to take part while incarcerated. According to Muhlhausen and Hurwitz (2019), many offenders receive vocational training during their incarceration. All offenders do not take part or are unable to take part in vocational training during incarceration. Many programs require their participants to receive certifications and vocational training before being considered for employment. Studies have shown that when an employer sees credentials on an offender's resume, it sets them apart from other candidates applying for the same job (National Institute of Corrections, 2019).

The employment component to community-based reentry programs has been designed to assist individuals in locating employment using the educational and

vocational skills achieved during the program. Transitioning ex-offenders back into the community, and employment requires program staff to collaborate with employers. This allows ex-offenders to easily access and retain employment (Harley et al., 2014). Without the assistance of program staff, it could be daunting for an offender to get employment, so program staff must remove barriers when dealing with potential employers. Programs can potentially help ex-offenders with the skills required to perform a job efficiently and effectively. Recent studies offer the explanation that work prevents offenders from reoffending. Heaney (2013) suggested ex-offenders who are employed have a higher chance of successfully reintegrating versus unemployed ex-offenders.

**Case management.** Each participant within a community-based reentry program is appointed a case manager to help them with the reintegration process. Case managers act as a bridge to internal and external resources needed for individuals to achieve positive change (Hunter et al, 2016). According to Social Solutions (2019), there are four critical components for successful case management; Intake, Needs Assessment, Service Planning, and Monitoring and Evaluation. The participant needs are examined during the intake case management session. During intake, case managers meet with the client, establish trust, determine if they would benefit from the program, assess clients' needs and make referrals if needs cannot be met in-house, where the program is located. The case manager then conducts a needs assessment, where they use information from the intake to identify client problems, interests, and risks. This stage is reassessed over time, as needs and circumstances often change (Social Solutions, 2019).



The third component is service planning, where case managers establish specific goals and develop an action plan to meet those goals. Based on the service plan, case managers coordinate mental health services, health care, housing, transportation, employment, relationships, and community participation (Leutwyler et al., 2017). They also conduct plans based on individual needs. The fourth component is monitoring and evaluation, where case managers must continuously monitor and evaluate client progress (Social Solutions, 2019). If the client is not progressing, the case manager will develop a different course of action to help participants achieve their goals. Case management is essential to the reentry phase of an offender's life, especially for those suffering from mental illnesses (Angell et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2015). Case managers are considered the go-to person, and they also may be the only reliable support person in a client's life.

**Substance abuse and Mental Health Treatment.** Offenders re-entering to the community are at high risk for experiencing mental health and substance use problems (Begun et al., 2016). Program directors are offering substance abuse and mental health treatment as a component of their community-based reentry programs. Recent studies have shown that substance abuse and mental illnesses are the leading factors for crime and reentry (Wesely & Dewey, 2018). It is essential to provide the ex-offenders treatment to keep them from reoffending or provide substance abuse and mental health resources for successful reintegration.

**Life and Social Skills.** Many ex-offenders lack experience and social skills because of being institutionalized. Community-based reentry programs offer these skills to their participants to assist them in being responsible, law-abiding citizens. Within this

component, programs provide parenting classes, soft skills training, financial literacy, anger management, conflict resolution, job readiness, and pro-social activities, helping participants become comfortable communicating with other individuals within their communities. Paulson (2013) stated offenders had not been introduced or engaged in positive life skills while incarcerated. Therefore, offering support through programming within the communities will give them the skills needed to succeed.

**Mentoring.** Community-based reentry programs use volunteers to serve as mentors to the ex-offenders who take part in the plans. Mentors serve as positive role models and utilize their experiences to guide individuals that need support (Hucklesby & Wincup, 2014). Some of the volunteers are faith-based leaders and community members, and others are peer support individuals who have had some justice involvement experiences. Mentors can help the ex-offender get through each hurdle they may be faced with during their reintegration period. Kavanagh and Borrill (2013) conducted a study on eight ex-offender mentors, and they found the mentors had a positive experience building their mentees' trust. Buck's (2017) conducted an ethnographic research and interviewed 44 mentees. The interviews proved that the mentees admired their mentors and felt the need to imitate their mentors to improve themselves. Having a mentoring component can be essential to community-based reentry programs.

**Follow-up and Support.** Case managers provide support to each of their clients throughout a program. Following up with clients is critical because it allows case managers to monitor and refer clients to outside agencies if needed. It also provides case managers to regularly assess the client's level of care, keep clients motivated, ensure the

case plan meets their needs, and come up with other plans when circumstances change. Updating information and determining if they still meet the program criteria is critical when following up with the clients. They also follow-up when the client obtains employment and when the client completes all the program requirements.

Although the components are designed to assist ex-offenders on being more productive law-abiding citizens, it is undetermined if the programs are effective because of many programs' participants reoffending. Scholars have shed some light on programs and the influence on helping offenders with their needs. However, there is a gap in the literature on why offenders still re-offend after participating in programs. Program evaluation is needed to determine the issue behind this problem. Scholars have argued that programs are not being evaluated as they should. Parker, Bush, and Harris (2014) explained the problems of evaluating programs. The scholars note that some evaluators utilize the treatment as received (TR) model when assessing programs because it allows the evaluators to ignore if someone dropped out or refused services. Some scholars also use the intent to treat model (ITT), which explores differences in the characteristics of program completers and non-completers (Parker et al., 2014). This evaluation allows for statements on program influence to be made (Parker et al., 2014). Parker et al. (2014) also argued that evaluations should measure when the program has started to make a difference to the actual commencement date. Figuring out an effective evaluation method is needed for programs.

## **Influence of Reentry Programming**

Ex-offenders are returning to their communities with many barriers hindering their reintegration process. They need adequate housing, transportation, a liable source of income, family support, and a dependable communication source to converse with employers and other resourceful individuals. Community-based reentry programs have been providing services to assist ex-offenders with their barriers. Janaki and Anilkumar (2013) describe reentry as an opportunity to shape the offender's behavior as they transition back to their communities by reducing recidivism. Many researchers have explored community-based reentry program influence (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016; Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, & Gordon 2016; Jason, Olson, & Harvey, 2015; Miller, Barnes, & Miller 2017; Tarpey & Friend, 2016; Wikoff, Linhorst, & Morani, 2012; Paulson, 2013; Wesely & Dewey, 2018; Wilkinson, Rhine, & Henderson-Hurley, 2005). Recent studies showed that some effective programs help offenders in reintegrating successfully, but some studies declare unconfirmed results.

Scholars (Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, & Gordon 2016; Miller, Barnes, & Miller 2017) have discussed the importance of program evaluations to determine program influence. Miller et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-method study on two new reentry programs funded by the Second Chance Act. The programs are in Ohio, and they serve medium to high-risk offenders suffering from substance and mental health issues. The programs are Delaware County Transition Program and Delaware Substance Treatment Program (Miller, Barnes & Miller, 2017). The Delaware County Transition (DCT) Program is for male and female ex-offenders with substance abuse and mental disorders.

The Delaware County Jail Substance Abuse Treatment (DCJSAT) program is a residential-based program designed for male offenders who have been diagnosed with a drug dependency (Miller et al., 2017). Data was gathered from 34 participants within DCJAST and 58 participants from DCT. The first phase of the study was to gather qualitative data from stakeholders regarding the programs' attributes and develop data on whether offender needs are being addressed within the program. The second phase was to create quantitative data on programs' impact and influence. Participants in the DCT program had significantly lower rates of recidivism relative to the comparison group. There was also a significant difference between the comparison group and the DCJAST program (Miller et al., 2017). Findings suggest that the offenders who took part in the program were 75% less likely to re-offend than the comparison group. The programs had high implementation intensity, and they proved to have achieved their goals by reducing recidivism. The fidelity of both programs was inconsistent. The scholars suggest that sworn staff and treatment providers should develop a better communication system to ensure post-release support and providing adequate resources (Miller et al., 2017). Recommendations were made for programs to offer additional in-treatment services and link the offender with job opportunities, provide better access to substance and mental health treatment, and develop a better approach for community support.

Amasa-Annang and Scutelnicu (2016) conducted a study to explore reentry programs under the Second Chance Act for ex-offender males in the southern states of Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. The researcher used secondary data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, that conducted a multivariate analysis to assess the factors that

explain recidivism and evaluated the impact of the Second Chance legislation for three states. The investigation showed the lack of income within the minority demographics increased the risk of reoffending. The scholars argued that Georgia had the highest number, and Mississippi had the lowest number of new sentences (Amasa-Annang & Scutelnicu, 2016). All three states had mentoring services, substance abuse, mental health treatment, and vocational training as a component of their programs. Programs in Georgia and Mississippi showed that the programs reintegrate the ex-offenders successfully. In different circumstances, Alabama results were unsuccessful. There was an increase of 1,208 new sentences, which means offenders were not reintegrating successfully in that state.

Hunter et al. (2016) investigated how the Fresh Start Reentry Program in the state of Connecticut uses the strength-based approach to provide pre-release and post-release services to men. The program and evaluation design allowed the program to add services based on the participant's needs, risks, strengths, and goals (Hunter et al., 2016). The scholars explored the barriers to reentry discussed above. The scholars used the strengths and need inventory to assess the strengths and needs of 296 men. They reported that 66.6% of the participants had positive family interactions, 57.4% had formal support, and 51.4% received employment satisfaction. The scholars also reported the most frequent barriers of each participant. 23% of the participants had substance issues, 43.6% did not have support, and 34.5% could not find housing. In addition to the strengths and needs inventory, Hunter et al. (2016) conducted two focus groups, including 12 individuals. The

protocol was developed to target specific question areas, such as overall program impressions and what worked and was not working for program participants.

The participants believed the program was successful in their reintegration. Participants felt that the case managers were receptive to their needs, which made them feel significantly valued. Despite the findings, the study presented many limitations – it is possible that men who take part in the study received more support than those who declined to enroll (Hunter et al., 2016). The study's design limited the researchers to only receiving information on the description of the program and the participant experiences limiting the generalizability of the study.

Several studies (Jason, Olson, & Harvey, 2015; Tarpey & Friend, 2016; Wikoff, Linhorst, & Morani, 2012; Wilkinson, Rhine, & Henderson-Hurley, 2005) assessed whether housing, substance abuse, and mental health treatment in community-based reentry programs are effective to the reintegration of ex-offenders. Tarpey and Friend (2016) conducted a qualitative study on five individuals who have participated in a housing scheme. The scholars explored how those who took part were able to reintegrate into the community and refrain from using substances. Each participant identified that they had a place to call home, had a plan to change, was self-fulfilled, and had a suitable support system (Tarpey & Friend, 2016). When the scheme first began in 2008, there were 66 participants, and 57 of those participants successfully reintegrated back into the community, proving that reintegration is valuable. Although the participants talked positively about the scheme, there were some significant limitations to the study. A small

sample limited generalizability. The researcher also failed to capture the perspectives of those who were unsuccessful.

Scholars indicated the importance of acquiring the perspectives of program staff who work with ex-offenders regularly. Paulson (2013) conducted a qualitative study on eight staff members (six males and two females) who worked within agencies from the Second Chance Coalition in Minnesota. The goal was to understand the community-based reentry program's role and how they helped the offenders reintegrate successfully within their communities (Paulson, 2013). The scholar received data through semi-structured interviews about the program's services and the program staff knowledge of reentry barriers. The agencies were identified as Agency A and Agency B (Paulson, 2013). Agency A provides housing to those under community supervision. Agency B focuses on job readiness, collaboration with community agencies, and the participant's basic needs. Paulson (2013) described the five themes: social stigma as a barrier, lack of basic needs, effects of poverty, community ties, and unrealistic preparedness. Some of the participants also thought the ex-offenders showed a lack of motivation during their participation. All the participants agreed that there was a lack of services to help offenders reintegrate successfully, limiting the program's success. The sample size was small, which decreases the effectiveness of the study. Another limitation of this research study is that the program participants did not have the opportunity to give their opinions about the programs. Understanding the ex-offenders' perceptions would have been beneficial to the study.



Contrary to the unconfirmed results from the studies above, Wesely and Dewey (2018) found that community-based reentry programs can reintegrate offenders successfully. The scholars conducted a qualitative study of 30 women who took part in a voluntary reentry assistance program (The Advocate Program). This nonprofit agency offers various services to women. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews and focused on the four major pathways to incarceration for women: intersectional vulnerabilities, abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and compromised mental health. Drug use for women is correlated with childhood traumas or victimization (Holliday, 2014). Trauma, such as sexual and physical abuse and substance abuse and mental illnesses, are the leading factors to crime and barriers to reentry for women. Topics addressed included relationships, childhood background, criminal behaviors, experiences with the criminal justice system, reentry obstacles, and services received before, during, or after incarceration (Wesely & Dewey, 2018). The results showed that the program accommodated and acknowledged many of the women's needs. The scholars suggest that current and future programs should consider the three pathways to incarceration for women to develop an action agenda to better address women's unique reentry needs (Wesely & Dewey, 2018).

This review of the literature shows a gap surrounding the reasons offenders drop-out of programs. This general qualitative research study aims to shed light on the problem behind ex-offenders reoffending after enrolling and completing in reentry programs. The purpose of this research study was to explore the influence of a community-based reentry program to determine if the program helps reintegrate offenders successfully in Ohio.

will produce empirical data about community-based reentry programs and their influence on the reintegration of ex-offenders. Phillips et al. (2016) argued that successfully completing a reentry program is defined as completing all services or being referred to another organization for services. Participants will be discharged from a program if they are unsuccessful at meeting program requirements. I will conduct a general qualitative research study to explore ex-offender experiences while taking part in community-based reentry programs.

### **Program Under Study**

The program under study is a community residential-based agency in Ohio, that provides services on reentry, employment, and halfway housing placement. This agency offers services to men and women ex-offenders on community supervision and those that are not on any supervision. The residential reentry program provides a broad range of services designed to help ex-offenders' transition back into their communities.

Those who take part in the program can work, attend school, and do community service. The program helps participants rebuild their lives while assisting them to re-establish relationships with their families and community members, while also helping them become productive citizens. The program provides cognitive-behavioral therapy treatment, drug and alcohol treatment, job readiness, case management, and housing assistance. The agency also has partnerships with other organizations within the community that helps support the ex-offender reintegration process. The agency also provides mentoring, family and children services, transitional education programs, and services for those who have been a victim of human trafficking.

This program was chosen as the research study because the program offers many different components. Obtaining the perceptions of the program participants and program staff and managers would be beneficial to the study. This researcher's goal is to understand the role of the program play in addressing the needs of the ex-offenders, gain knowledge of the barriers and limitations the program face in meeting the needs of the ex-offenders, and obtain the ex-offender perceptions and experiences while participating in the program. I also wish to understand if or how the program utilizes the principles of correctional intervention to reduce recidivism and reintegrate offenders successfully.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Reintegration refers to the process of assisting offenders from engaging in criminal activity and helping them become productive citizens (Tarpey & Friend, 2016). Community-based reentry programs assist ex-offenders by providing supportive services, occupational skills, credentialing, and educational services. Using the Theory of Effective Correctional Intervention as the framework for this study identifies interventions programs could make services more beneficial to the ex-offender needs. Prior research has indicated that utilizing the principles of effective correctional intervention could assist programs with coming up with a plan for each participant. Targeting the ex-offender criminogenic needs could help community-based reentry programs develop a plan for the offender to return to their communities successfully.

This review of the literature provided important information regarding the Second Chance Act, stakeholders' role, reentry process and participant selection, risk assessments, success and failures of programs, and how programs are evaluated. I also

provided information on the program under study. The literature reports that researching new conclusions is needed to understand factors contributing to program dropouts (Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, & Gordon, 2016). There is a need for a future systematic investigation surrounding this area because of the literature gap.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study and the appropriateness of the research design.

### Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this general qualitative research study was to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio. Programs need to be continuously evaluated to ensure they are meeting the needs of ex-offenders. This research aimed to answer the following questions: (a) What role do community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders? (b) What barriers and limitations do community-based reentry programs face in meeting the needs of the ex-offenders? (c) What are the experiences of ex-offenders when taking part in community-based reentry programs?

This chapter presents the methodology, sampling strategy, research questions, instrumentation, data collection, organization and interpretation of the data, researcher's role, and ethical concerns.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

##### **Research Design**

The research design is the blueprint for developing a dissertation (Osanloo & Grant, 2016). It refers to the way a study is conducted. I used a qualitative methodology based on understanding the ways people see, view, approach, and experience the world and make meaning of their experiences and phenomena within it (Creswell, 2013). According to Patton (2015), qualitative research is used in fieldwork, research, and evaluation. Creswell (2013) described the different qualitative approaches, such as phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative, ethnography, and case study.

This study used a general qualitative research design to explore and describe a phenomenon in its natural contexts (Houghton et al., 2017), which allowed me to focus on participants' reentry experiences one at a time. Interviewing is essential to qualitative studies because it provides in-depth, vibrant, individualized, and contextualized data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The study revealed ex-offenders' experiences from intake to the completion of the program. Management and direct staff members shared their perspectives on working with the ex-offenders. They gave insight into the limitations and barriers that the community-based reentry programs face in meeting ex-offenders' needs; they explained their role in addressing ex-offenders' needs. The objective of this qualitative study was to examine how programs influence ex-offender reintegration. The ex-offenders provided information on their challenges while taking part in the programs and the programs' positive and negative influences.

### **Rationale**

I selected the general qualitative research approach was because it allowed the participants to describe their experiences without being limited to what they wished to share. Each participant could speak freely. The design provided an adequate amount of information to serve as the source of my findings. Using a qualitative method helped me understand the issues relating to ex-offenders reintegrating, thus enabling me to develop recommendations based on the results.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Researchers can become biased and take many things personally during their role as a researcher. Working with ex-offenders daily could cause me to be blinded by the results of my investigation. I worked as a Correction Officer for three years, and I am currently a Reentry Services Facilitator at a reentry program in Dayton, Ohio. As a researcher, I needed to remain professional and stay neutral while conducting interviews. I needed to be aware of my past experiences to ensure that my study would not be affected. I interviewed four ex-offenders that are currently participating in a community-based reentry program. Collecting data from the ex-offenders helped I recommend better procedures for better outcomes regarding community-based reentry programs.

I ensure that my examination reflects credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I asked follow-up questions and repeated the participants' answers during the interviews to guarantee reliability and validity. Due to the population, I prepared myself for any obstacles that could have caused delays or any other adverse outcomes to the study. I also made myself aware that some participants may or may not have easy access to certain instrumentations for the study; therefore, I was prepared to make changes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Many ethical issues could potentially arise when dealing with human subjects. The ethical considerations for this examination include potential biases and ensured that the participant's identity remains confidential. Protecting each participant is required within research studies. The process consists of gaining approval through the Institutional

Review Board (Creswell, 2013). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is responsible for ensuring that all Walden University research complies with the university's ethical standards (Walden University, n.d.). The concern of IRB is to protect the rights and privacy of human subjects. Once the study was approved, each participant received information on the study, and they either emailed "I consent" or signed the consent form. I ensured that no individual was coerced into participating in the study. The participants understood that participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were made aware that they could opt-out of the study at any time. Participants were also ensured that all information would be secured on a password-protected computer and a USB drive, kept in a secured location. Each participant was identified by a number along with a letter to ensure their confidentiality. The letter represents the category (i.e., M for management, S for staff, and E for ex-offender).

### **Methodology**

This general qualitative research approach helped explore adult ex-offenders' experiences who are taken part in community-based reentry programs in Ohio. Qualitative analysis is based on exploring a phenomenon in its natural context (Crowe et al., 2011). Ex-offenders had the opportunity to describe their experiences, and they discussed how they felt about whether programs address their needs. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that using one in-depth case could provide a rich and deep understanding of a subject at hand. I developed data from four direct staff members, four individuals in management, and four ex-offenders. Obtaining ex-offenders and staff



members' experiences provided me with the information needed to know if programs help the reintegration process.

To obtain information-rich data, I employed the deviant case sampling method. This sampling method allowed me to select unusual and typical cases. It helped me choose the best and worst performance records of participants (Palinkas et al., 2015). Cohen & Benjamin (2006) stated that using this method help develop a more productive and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (2006). This sampling plan points out the ex-offender success and failures when it comes to reintegrating back to society. It also allowed me to choose participants who have been incarcerated or have been arrested more than once.

### **Participant Selection**

Ravitch and Carl (2016) acknowledged that before a researcher selects a specific data collection, they must decide on the population to use as participants for the research study. This researcher's interest was to interview a total of twelve individuals. I interviewed twelve individuals for 45 to 60 minutes with an interview guide of 20 questions, which allowed me to obtain the data needed to reach saturation while using a general qualitative research approach. According to Patton (2015), saturation means there is nothing new to learn and that the information from the interviews becomes redundant. Therefore, the selection of participants and the information received was enough for this study. To participate in the study, ex-offenders were required to be enrolled within the program for at least 2-4 months. Participants were required to be age 18 or older, male or female, and from diverse backgrounds. I initially excluded individuals on community

supervision; however, I decided to interview participants on Transitional Control status, which requires them to be on community supervision.

The purpose of this general qualitative research study was to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio. Obtaining the ex-offenders' perceptions of the programs and program staff experiences in assisting ex-offenders were helpful. To recruit participants, I contacted the program manager to receive approval to interview their participants and hold the interviews at the program site or using phone, email, or video. Once approved, and with the program site manager's assistance, participants were selected based on the deviant case sampling method. I emailed the invitation and the consent form to the participant's email accounts. The consent form provides information about the interview procedures, risks and benefits, privacy information, a notice of participation being strictly voluntary, and researcher contact information to address participant questions. The participants viewed the consent form and replied, "I consent." The program participants signed the form, and the program manager emailed the forms back to this researcher.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Conducting in-depth one-on-one interviews are essential to qualitative research. Using other data collection tools also broadens the amount of information received. Castillo-Montoya (2016) states that the most useful instrument is the researcher; therefore, I was the primary instrument. Furthermore, I used the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Bureau of Community sanctions annual report.

This research study was started at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I was not able to conduct face-to-face interviews. The research questions were answered using Zoom. Each participant answered a total of 20 open-ended questions. Due to some of the pandemic challenges, it took two months to complete all the interviews. The participants were allowed to ask me any questions at the end of the interviews. Each participant permitted me to reach out with follow-up questions if needed. The interview recordings were transcribed and analyzed within a word document and secured on my password-protected computer.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I used qualitative data analysis software to transcribe the data obtained from the research participants. Qualitative Data Analysis Software provides tools to help with qualitative research such as transcription, recursive abstraction, content analysis, coding, text, and discourse analysis (Predictive Analysis Today, 2016a). I used the Otter transcription software for coding purposes. I also used thematic analysis to analyze the data. The thematic analysis makes an excellent analysis plan for general qualitative research because it involves reporting patterns within data (Nowell et al., 2017). I generated themes and patterns manually using a word document.

### **Trustworthiness**

After conducting interviews and exploring codes and themes, it is vital to ensure the findings are reliable, valid, and credible. Reliability and validity can arise while using qualitative methods. To avoid issues, I made sound judgments and was sure the methods undertaken were suitable. Validity and reliability apply to researcher measurement and

methodology. The measurement applies to the content, and the methodology validity refers to the examination's accuracy and credibility (Ravitch, 2016). I data was consistent, and findings were confirmed by using triangulation.

As a Reentry Services Facilitator and a former correction officer who currently works with ex-offenders, I had to be aware of my biases because it could influence my findings. I was open-minded, and I accepted the results, which was proven by my investigation. I also used other researcher's data because it made my work more reliable and valid, giving me credibility. Credibility refers to developing internal consistency and showing the readers how rigor is maintained in the study (Qazi, 2011). Triangulation included participants providing their perceptions and experiences through one on one interviews and annual reports from the Ohio Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Walden University Doctoral Committee, as well as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study (Walden IRB Approval No. 05-12-20-0340385).

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 provides a rationale for using the desired methodology for this study. This methodology helped answer each of the three research questions and allowed me to determine whether community-based reentry programs influence ex-offenders' transition to society. A general qualitative research design was the best approach for this study because it allowed me to explore and obtain the perceptions and experiences of four ex-offenders, four staff members, and four management members within a community-based reentry residential program in Ohio. The ex-offenders were all released from a

correctional facility within 2–4 months. The ex-offenders were selected using the deviant sampling method. The program director assisted in this process by locating participants who participated in the past programs and who have had the best or worst performances within a community-based reentry program. Each ex-offender discussed their reintegration experiences while participating in the program. Staff and Management also gave their experiences while working with the population.

Data was obtained through one-on-one interviews using Zoom and annual reports from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. Each participant answered a total of 20 open-ended questions. Due to COVID-19, it took two months to complete all the interviews. I used thematic analysis to code the data using Microsoft word document. Furthermore, I described how my role as a Reentry Services Facilitator makes it necessary to conduct an ethical research study. Also, providing a research study that is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable is essential to Walden University standards. Each participant's privacy was protected, and they were aware that the information shared would be kept confidential.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

This general qualitative research study sought to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio, such as the community residential program under study. The purpose of this program was to provide supervision and treatment services to offenders released from prison, referred by the courts, or for violating community supervision (Bureau of Community Sanctions, 2018). Twelve participants have interviewed: four program participants, four direct-staff members, and four members of management. The primary research question for this general qualitative research study was: What role do community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders? The sub-questions were as follows: What barriers and limitations do community-based reentry programs face in meeting the ex-offenders' needs? What are the ex-offender experiences when taking part in community-based reentry programs?

This chapter covers the setting, demographics, data collection, individual participants, data analysis, trustworthiness, results, and research questions summary.

### **Setting**

The community-based reentry program under study has many facilities within the state of Ohio that serve former inmates, both men and women, returning to their communities and transitioning back into society. I contacted the Program Director of Research and Clinical Development to set up a meeting and discuss the goals of the research study. I then went through a screening process to be permitted to interview

volunteers at the residential facility. My initial plan was to conduct face-to-face interviews at the facility, but that was not an option due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, I received approval to conduct the study using video. The program director presented me with a list of four direct staff members and four management, and I emailed the invitation and consent forms to them (see Appendix A). Additionally, the director received signed consent forms from the program participants and forwarded them to me (See Appendix B).

Although the invitation told volunteers about the interview process, I thoroughly explained the process again at the beginning of each interview. Before continuing, I also asked each volunteer if they were still interested in taking part in the study. Each participant was allowed to refrain from answering questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Each participant was also allowed to discuss other pertinent information regarding the study. I asked probing questions and repeated answers to verify that my interpretations were accurate.

### **Demographics**

Of 12 the participants, five were female and seven were male. All were over the age of 18. The participants represented different ethnic backgrounds, such as African American, European American, and Hispanic. The four program participants had been released from prison and transferred to the transitional control residential facility and had been there for a minimum of 60 days. The educational level of five of the staff/management participants ranged from a bachelor's degree to a graduate degree. One

ex-offender indicated that they had college experience. All four ex-offenders had been employed since starting the program.

### **Data Collection**

All 12 participants completed 20 open-ended interview questions for this study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all data collection was completed within two months. Since I was unable to enter the facility because of the pandemic, I had to email the participants the invitation and consent forms, and I had to wait until the participant had the availability to send the forms back. The first interview was conducted on June 12, 2020, and the last interview was on August 10, 2020.

I described the study's purpose during the beginning of the interviews, and all participants were aware that they were being recorded. I allowed the participant to ask questions before and after the interviews. The duration of the interviews was between 45 and 60 minutes. Some interviews lasted longer due to the amount of information some of the participants volunteered to share. One participant could not answer all the questions since the questions were not related to their position. The rest of the participants answered all the questions in their entirety.

All the interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom. All participants were in a private area during the interviews. Although I was able to conduct the interview face-to-face, I was still able to capture the participant's body language through video, except for one participant that preferred to be interviewed using audio. I also wrote down notes as the participants were answering the interview questions. Additionally, I used memoing to record what I was learning from the data. I transcribed the data using Otter,



then I manually coded the data in a Microsoft Word document and saved it on a password-protected computer.

I initially wanted to interview program participants who were not under community supervision, but the participants were TC (transitional control) clients who were transferred from prison to the community residential program. Therefore, they were on community supervision. I followed the interview protocol explicitly made for the program participants and staff and management. I also asked probing questions to receive more information. The interview protocol for the program participants consists of 20 questions (see Appendix C). The interview protocol for direct staff members and management also consists of 20 questions (see Appendix D and Appendix E).

### **Data Analysis**

I transcribed and coded the interviews within three categories: direct-staff, management, and program participants. Compiling all the transcriptions together, made a total of 60 pages of transcription. All interviews were transcribed using Otter transcription services. The interviews were manually coded while using thematic analysis, which is a method to identify and analyze patterns (Neuendorf, 2019). I followed the six-phase process for thematic analysis and generated codes while using deductive coding. Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) defined deductive coding as theoretical concepts or themes drawn from the existing literature. This allowed me to identify categories and themes based on participant responses and the theoretical framework under study. During the analysis process, 73 categories were identified. Twelve themes emerged from the categories such as treatment team meetings, constant

communication, supportive services, cognitive behavior interventions, timeframes, activities, support for parenting men, community volunteers, employment assistance, supportive staff, self-awareness, and pro-social skills. I did not identify any discrepant cases.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers must abide by the credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability criteria (Connelly, 2016). As explained in Chapter 3, I used member checking to ensure credibility. Member checking was done during the interview process. I restated the answers that were given to ensure the accuracy of this researcher's interpretations. To ensure transferability, which is the attempt to apply study findings to other contexts, situations, and populations (Solutions, 2017). I cannot prove that the findings will be applicable. Nonetheless, there is a possibility that it could be. Therefore, scholars who wish to transfer their findings to other contexts are responsible for making sound judgments of how sensible the transfer is. I generated themes that could potentially assist other scholars and criminal justice leaders. I also established dependability by allowing an outside researcher to conduct an inquiry audit. An inquiry audit allows the outside researcher to examine the processes of the research study (Solutions, 2017). To ensure confirmability, I used triangulation to obtain the perceptions and experiences through one-on-one interviews, and annual reports from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections.

## Results

The goal of the general qualitative study was to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio. I interviewed 12 participants, 4 direct staff members, 4 members of management, and 4 program participants. Participants met the criteria to take part in the said study, which included staff members who are employed in community residential program, management that oversees the day to day operations of the program, and the ex-offenders that are participating in the program. Participants viewed the consent forms and emailed them to me, stating that they consented to take part in the study. Program participants signed the consent forms and the program director forwarded the forms to me using email. The consent forms, interview transcripts, and other pertinent material are secured in my password-protected computer.

From the interview, data emerged 12 themes that answered the primary research question and the two subquestions.

**Research question: What role do community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders?** Data used to answer the primary research question included interviews, member checking, and annual reports from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. Data from the interviews were transcribed using deductive coding, which is codes drawn from the theoretical framework (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The theme that emerged across all data was cognitive-behavioral intervention and supportive services. The third theme was treatment team meetings, and the fourth theme was constant communication.

***Theme 1: Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention.*** Many participants explained that cognitive-behavioral intervention is used to help offenders change their thinking patterns. Interventions are targeted to the criminogenic needs of higher-risk offenders. The program therapist uses different therapeutic practices to assist the program participants with gaining pro-social skills, appropriate communication skills, decision-making skills, and anger management. Direct staff also uses cognitive-behavioral intervention to redirect the program participants. Staff believes that cognitive-behavioral interventions are essential to the offender reintegration process.

Many agencies implement cognitive-behavioral interventions in their intervention designs. According to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (2018), Community residential programs provide services such as cognitive-behavioral therapy to high-risk offenders.

The staff mentioned how they implement cognitive-behavioral techniques to redirect ex-offenders. Participant 5-S stated, "I always tell my clients that I'm not a therapist, but I can help them think things through. That's my job. I use aspects that are related to cognitive-behavioral techniques, but I'm not a therapist. I am trained in interventions, I use Epics and carry guides, which are all based on cognitive-behavioral research. I also encourage positive self-talk." Participant 6-S added, "cognitive-behavioral intervention helps with skills, anger management, how to identify deep breathing techniques, a lot of the unpleasant imagery and things, and social decision making. How should you respond in this particular situation compared to how you used to. Scale practice, advanced practice, which is roleplay, it's modeling on the skill and

having the client's model that back. We have a programming language here. It's thinking ahead, thinking of the consequences, thinking of other people making sure that we're creating more options for ourselves so that we have better outcomes." Cognitive-behavioral interventions are utilized within the program to help change offender behavior patterns. Program staff show offenders how to examine their behaviors and modify those behaviors using different techniques. Once the offender learns and understands their behaviors, they can recognize their thoughts and develop strategies to improve their negative thoughts and emotions.

*Theme 2: Supportive Services.* Supportive services were brought up numerous times throughout the data collection process. Many staff members mentioned that when offenders are transferred into the community residential program, they need employment assistance, educational assistance, alcohol and drug treatment, health and medical services, transportation, and counseling. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (2018) report states, community residential programs provide drug and alcohol treatment, electronic monitoring, job placement, educational programs, and specialized programs for offenders.

The staff under said study mentioned that the agency collaborates with community partners for different services. One of the services includes identification documentation services. Participant 5-S stated, "we collaborate with a place called JOIN. They help get vouchers for birth certificates and IDs. There are a couple of churches also if they have already used their join voucher. While participant 11-E confirmed, "we can get vouchers for the IDs, security cards, and birth certificates." However, Participant 12-

E mentioned, “we haven't got our IDs or birth certificates, no nothing. Because of the COVID. They say it's because of COVID. Social Security Office is right down the street. They are telling people it will take four hours to get your ID but I'm talking to people on the street. They are getting there's in 20 minutes, depends on where you go. 20 to 30 minutes.” On the contrary, COVID-19 has put a delay on things.

Staff also indicated that the program coordinates with staff in-house, as well as outside agencies to help meet the needs of the ex-offenders. Participant 6-S stated, “if someone needs medical attention, dental, things like that with our health. If they brought it to my attention, I would alert their case manager and the appropriate manager. While participant 5 added, “we refer clients to TOUCH which is for people that have been in the criminal justice system. They help people find jobs and get back on their feet as well. They have training for them.” Staff also indicated that they provide transportation services to the ex-offenders. Participant 8-S stated, “we're just transporting them to and from the drop, which is a location. They go and wait for transportation to pick them up from the inner-city area so they can get to and from the bus line. We take them to like dentists' appointments and stuff like that.” These services make a huge impact on the offenders' quality of life.

It was also indicated that the program offers family reunification assistance. One ex-offender expressed their interest in the service. Participant 10-E stated, “I want to reconnect with my daughter. I know they offer help doing that. So, I plan on using their services for that.” Without question, having a community-based reentry program that

provides supportive services as mentioned above, helps ex-offenders become self-sufficient.

Supportive Services was discussed through staff, program participants, and from the ODRC annual report. The program offers different services, and not all program participants receive the same services. Program staff makes sure that the offenders receive the services needed to help the offenders transition to society. Some participants mentioned that they were not receiving their identification documents due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Supportive services are essential because they help stabilize the offender. Without supportive services, programs would not be beneficial.

***Theme 3: Treatment Team Meetings.*** During the interviews, many participants expressed the importance of having treatment team meetings to address the needs of the program participants. Participants noted that treatment teams are held on a weekly and bi-weekly basis. Having regular treatment team meetings is essential because it allows staff members to identify the needs of the program participants and to develop a plan to assist their reintegration process.

Members of the management and direct staff team described how treatment team meetings are critical when executing a plan for the ex-offenders. Participant 1-M stated, “every two weeks we have a treatment team meeting for our programming department. And we start the meeting up off with some type of training, but then we talk about client issues. While Participant 2-M added, “I find treatment team meetings to be extremely helpful. So that way we can come together and discuss our clients.” Participant 5-S stated, “we have weekly, biweekly treatment meetings where everyone that's in our

facility discusses any issues they have with any clients or any concerns. While Participant 7-S added, “We all get together and discuss needs and client’s stuff like that. What we need to do or what is going on to keep afloat with everything.”

Participant 6-S concluded, “we discuss clients and, you know, maybe any barriers that they may be facing that I’ve noticed or that may have mentioned to me. To collaborate with them to see what kind of plan, maybe even a goal that can be put on their treatment plan that they can complete. Everyone can work together for them to achieve the goal”. Management and Staff understand that having regular treatment team meetings helps with the process of meeting the clients' needs, by developing individualized plans for each offender.

Each member of a treatment team has specialized training, skills, and education to fit their unique role. The offender is the most important person apart from their treatment team. The treatment team meets the individual where they are, and their input is valued. Without the treatment team, the offender would not meet any of their desired milestones. The treatment team uses the meetings to their advantage because they can identify the offender's needs, brainstorm ideas, and execute a plan that would benefit the offender.

***Theme 4: Constant Communication.*** Many participants discussed that constant communication is crucial when addressing the needs of the program participants. Management believed that communicating with direct-staff members, community partners, and other criminal justice agencies would impact the program participant's reintegration process. Participant 2-M explained, “I try to keep as much through email



and phone as possible just to maintain social distancing. Before the pandemic, I liked to have one on ones with my case managers. So that we had open communication if there was something, they felt I needed to know. I do that by phone now. I try to be as communicative as possible through email also. I'd like to have a very friendly, based approach to working with case managers. So sometimes if they come to me and they're just like, I have this problem with this client, my priority is like, how can we resolve this in a way that everybody gets what they need? How can we resolve it in a way that the client's needs are met? Because really what's best for the client takes priority.” Participant 4 stated that “constant communication between management and front-line staff is a constant thing.” Participant 5-S added, “I regularly talk to cognitive behavior specialists about how clients are doing in classes and in programming. They coordinate with our recovery choices, which is our treatment provider for certain statuses for addiction issues. I also collaborate with our reentry center employees or career and workforce development. We try to have an open communication.” Participant 8-S concluded, “we typically have staff meetings every other week on Thursdays discussing the client's needs and what needs to be discussed and what can be done better or handled better. Outside of us meeting every two weeks with management, we debrief staff every day coming and going on our shift. And amongst what's going on throughout the day we discuss what could be done, what do you think could have been done better? We document in the shift log and basically discuss it the day after or when it's brought up in that shift meeting.” Constant communication is fundamental when working with individuals reintegrating back to society. Management, direct-staff, community partners, and criminal justice

partners coordinate with one another to ensure the offender's needs are met. Management also regularly communicates with staff when disseminating or revising new policies and procedures.

**Subquestion 1: What barriers and limitations do community-based reentry programs face in meeting the needs of the ex-offenders?** Data used to answer this research question included interviews and member checking. Data from the interviews were transcribed using deductive coding. The themes that emerged across all data were timeframes, activities, support for parenting men, and community volunteers.

*Theme 5: Timeframes.* Limited timeframes were mentioned numerous times, where staff feel that they do not have enough time with clients to adequately prepare them for society. Staff discussed that offenders need time to transition successfully. Participant 4-M included “if I had to make a decision, it would be sometimes like changing the timeframe as to when things happen.” Participant 6-S stated, “One of the biggest challenges is time. From the time that we get them from, you know, in the course, I mean, we have certain timeframes. Then time communicating. If they must do further assessments with intensive outpatient programming, through recovery choices program. Getting appointments scheduled, so they can, you know, do the intakes and the reassessments or further assessing and getting that portion started. We don't have enough time with them, I think that's the biggest challenge.” Participant 6-S also added, “Most of the gentlemen have a limited stay here. So, we'd like to see it not take 15 weeks to get through programming, because we are trying to bridge that gap between institutions and back into the community. And we don't want them to be rushed through it. But to be a

better time frame for them to complete. So that, you know, they know, hey, this is all structured and you know, plan, because this is how long it's going to take you to get through it and they have enough time to seek employment and seek gainful employment and meaningful employment. So that they're not jumping from job to job or anything like that. So just a better time frame for them.” Having ample time to assist offenders is essential to their reintegration process. Program staff needs to spend more time with the program participants to ensure all their needs are being met. Staff announced that each program participant needs are different; therefore, timeframes should be changed on a case by case basis. Program participants should not be released from the community residential program until they are ready.

***Theme 6: Activities.*** Numerous participants have discussed the lack of activities offenders can partake in. The staff mentioned that the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) participants are unable to participate in any other activities while in treatment, which causes the offenders to have lots of idle time. Participant 4-M stated, “we have a state client who's doing a program called IOP. They're not able to do anything else for the first 10 weeks that they're in their program, they can't work. They can't do anything. They're not allowed to do anything for the rest of the time that they're in here, they're just in the building, and then sometimes you can be no idle mind. There's things that go on and we don't want them to fall back into certain habits and try to determine what activities but if they're doing something for so long and they're not able to have any other outlets, and sometimes it's a bad situation.” Participant 5-S explained, “having a designated position to keeping clients active and motivated in the facility and having

more things to do. It would be nice if you had a position that was like devoted to that, just keeping the clients maintained and having a program and schedule. Participant 10 stated, “it'd be nice to get out and do other things but since the Coronavirus, you know, I think it's intended to let us get out and do like other activities, but we're kind of locked down right now.” Increasing activities could limit the amount of idle time offenders have while being in the community residential program. Staff discussed the importance of having activities to ensure program participants are using their time effectively. Increasing activities could positively impact the offender's pro-social behaviors and could deter offenders from making the wrong decision, which could result in recidivism.

*Theme 7: Support for fathers.* Staff discussed the lack of resources available to men who parent their children and how they are not receiving the same support as mothers. Participant 1-M stated, “in criminal justice, you see a lot of focus on women and families. A lot of men are responsible for their children. And so, I would like to see programming made available for men who are responsible for their kids too. I don't think the justice system looks at fathers as parents in the way in which it looks at mothers as parents. I think the reason why I feel that way is because one, the MAP program like I see so many guys come through that program who both parents are addicts. A lot of these kids are in the foster care system. And if something doesn't change soon, they're going to have a sunset hearing and the parents will lose all rights and they won't have custody of their kids. I'm not saying if they're not committed to being better, that they should lose custody of their children, that they shouldn't. But what I'm saying is that there are some people who are fighting really, really hard. And what I know is that oftentimes, in your

journey towards recovery, you stumble, but there's people who get right back up, but it's not an aha moment. Oh, I'm going to go through this program, and it's gonna be good for the rest of my life. No, it doesn't happen like that. Sometimes it may take six, seven times for that to happen for a person before they finally get it. But what resources do we have for a man who to go into a program to some type of housing or stable housing program after he leaves a program? Where would he go if he has kids? Like they don't have it. And I feel like as a parent, we always talk about what are these grand contributions that we can make to be a good community member. You can be a good community member by being a good parent". While Participant 2-M added, "we don't have a lot of assistance for our guys as far as parenting. Those are at our women's facilities. They have a lot of parenting classes and a lot of stuff that's engineered for them redeveloping relationships with their kids. But at the men's facilities, that's not really precedent." Staff explained wholeheartedly how the program lack resources for fathers. Fathers are parenting their children the same as mothers. Oftentimes, Fathers lack housing opportunities and parenting skills. Furthermore, children aren't always in the mother's care, therefore, men are in need of the same resources and assistance that mothers receive.

***Theme 8: Community Volunteers.*** Participants discussed numerous times how difficult it is to get volunteers to come into the facility. The staff mentioned that volunteers are needed to assist program participants in learning financial literacy, parenting skills, and providing pro-social activities. Participant 5-S stated, "it'd be nice if we had someone designated to keep them engaged." While Participant 2-M added, "it's really difficult for us to get volunteers in the facility. I wanted to offer financial classes,

parenting classes, you know, classes on this because we had guys come in and they didn't know what a bank card was. I want to offer things where guys can be on the up and up about situations that they're going to be facing in the community as much as possible so that they can be as prepared as possible. I really want to offer more assistance for the guys in the facility, as far as group volunteers” The staff mentioned that they were making a lead way towards obtaining volunteers before the COVID-19 pandemic, but things have become a challenge since. Staff discussed the importance of having volunteers hold educational courses, financial literacy training, and parenting courses for the program participants. Having more volunteers to assist in these areas would help program staff meet the program participants' goals better.

**Subquestion 2: What are the ex-offender experiences when taking part in community-based reentry programs?** Data used to answer this research question included interviews and member checking. Data from the interviews were transcribed using deductive coding. The themes that emerged across all data was employment assistance, supportive staff, self- awareness, and pro-social skills.

***Theme 9: Employment Assistance.*** Program participants discussed how staff assisted them with employment training. Participant 9-E stated, “I was able to get work.” Participant 10-E added, “we went over interviewing and resume and stuff like that, and then it led to me getting a job. I had a job within a week of getting out of prison, which is pretty good. I didn't think that was going to be possible.” Participant 11-E stated” when I first got here, they taught me how to do a job interview, I got a certificate in it, and they taught me how to do a resume. Participant 12-E concluded, “they helped me speak. Like

speaking to employers, I mean how to speak to employers. Fill out the application and what to wear in an interview.” Participants explained how gaining employment the most important goal to their reintegration was. Participants also described how the program provided them with adequate occupational skills before assisting them with employment. It is fundamental to assist offenders with job training, soft skills, and interviewing skills to ensure that they obtain employment and retain employment.

*Theme 10: Supportive Staff.* Supportive staff is essential in the offender reintegration process. Without support from staff, the program would be of a disservice. Participant 10-E stated, “they're open to anything, you know, I mean, if you got a question, they're willing to help, you know, and I think they have our best interests at hand. I haven't had a problem with any of the staff. They really try to help you out.” Participant 11-E added “the case manager helps me keep a job. He works with me too about my job, like scheduling wise. However, Participant 12-E mentioned “it’s their job but other than that, no. They don’t allow us to do nothing. Try to go get my birth certificate, my social, all the stuff that I need.” Although Participant 12-E appears to be dissatisfied, COVID-19 has placed extra barriers to the ex-offenders' lives. Above all, the staff provides advocacy, assistance, and many other needed items to help offenders reintegrate back into society. Participants count on the staff to get things done. The staff could be the only support system the offender has. Staff who show concern, provide advocacy, and help the offender develop self-advocacy helps the offender become productive citizens. Participants are more receptive to staff who show support through their actions.

**Theme 11: Self-Awareness.** Participants discussed how staying away from the wrong crowd helps them remain productive. Participants also explained what the program has done to help them be more aware of the negative things around them daily.

Participant 9-E stated, “I have learned to listen, observe, and watch what others do and don’t make their mistakes.” Participant 11-E added, “it teaches me to stay away from the crowd. Stay out of everybody’s business, stay to myself basically. And that’s what I’ve been doing since I’ve been here. I learned it here, to stay the way because you can tell by the groups like basically, like the crowd of people who goes back, you know, you’ve been with that crowd of people. Go back to peer pressure. Peer pressure is here for sure.”

Participant 12-E concluded, “it taught me more patience, how to have more patience with people, know how to have a lot of discipline. Because you got to have patience here. You don’t have patience, you just gone be waiting. I mean, you just gone be getting angry.

You got to have a lot of patience.” Participants provided their mindfulness to the importance of being patient. Participants demonstrated their self-awareness and their need to stay away from the wrong crowd to be successful. Self-awareness makes individuals aware of their interactions or relationships with others (Sutton, 2016).

Offenders who are aware of their surroundings and the harmful effects it could cause are more likely to stay clear from individuals that could deter their reintegration process.

**Theme 12: Pro-Social Skills.** Participants must demonstrate pro-social skills to reintegrate back into their communities successfully. However, Participant 11-E stated, “I literally stay to myself.” While Participant 10-E added, “I don’t know if it’s really done anything for social skills. You know, I’m kind of locked in. When I come back, I go to



my room and stuff like that. Pretty much stay away from everybody, so there's really no socializing with people. I'm an introvert so I really don't branch out to talk to people. It's not really my thing. I mean, I guess you could, I just choose not to." Participant 12-E concluded, "my social skills are kind of okay because I went to college." It is necessary that ex-offenders are gaining pro-social skills so that they wouldn't return to re-offending behaviors.

Participants pointed out how they choose not to engage with peers and how they believe that they should stay away from others. Abenaa et al. (2019) argue that changes in behaviors depend on adopting pro-social skills, which are beneficial to oneself and others. Offenders who are adopting pro-social skills are less likely to recidivate and return to prison. Offenders who are receptive to changing their anti-social behaviors are likely to reintegrate successfully.

### **Evaluation of the Findings**

Participants were recruited who are employed and are program participants at the program under study. The data was collected from 12 participants using interviews, member checking, and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections annual report. Participant's perceptions and experiences could contribute to the delivery approaches for meeting the needs of ex-offenders. The results could potentially assist the Department of Corrections and other reentry community-based programs in providing services to ex-offenders.

The primary research question; What role do community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders? Data from participants and the Ohio

Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections annual reports indicated that community-based reentry programs have an essential role in addressing the needs of the ex-offenders. The community-based residential program treatment team meets regularly to discuss the needs of the clients. Sixty-six percent of the 12 participants described treatment team meetings are necessary because the members of the client's treatment team can collaborate and develop a plan to ensure program participants are receiving adequate services to meet their needs. The data also suggests that constant communication, providing the offenders with supportive services, and using cognitive-behavioral interventions are vital while addressing the needs of the offender population. All participants answering this research question expressed that they work well together to meet the program participants' needs.

Subquestion 1; What barriers and limitations do community-based reentry programs face in meeting the needs of the ex-offenders? Data from participants indicated that there are some barriers and limitations on serving ex-offenders. Multiple participants that answered this research question indicated that there isn't enough time to work with offenders due to the timeframes that they are obligated to abide by. The study participants also explained the lack of activities the program has for participants., therefore, there is difficulty keeping the participants engaged in activities. The data also suggests that the program lack available support for parenting men and community volunteers to assist with meeting the needs of the offenders.

Subquestion 2; What are the ex-offender experiences when taking part in community-based reentry programs? Data from the program participants indicated that

the program under study provided support to their reintegration process. The experiences the program participants shared consists of employment assistance and being aware of things that could alter their success of becoming a law-abiding citizen. All participants answering this research question expressed that they would highly recommend the program to a formerly incarcerated individual.

### **Summary**

This general qualitative research study aimed to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio. I presented data from one-on-one interviews at a community-residential facility in Ohio. The interviews were conducted using Zoom with 12 participants; four staff, four management, and four program participants. A primary research question and two sub-questions were used to guide the study. Triangulation was achieved by the interviews and annual reports from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. The study results included 12 themes that identified the participant's perceptions and experiences regarding the influence the program has on reintegrating ex-offenders. The primary research question was; What role do community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders? Data from the participants and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections annual reports indicated that community-based reentry programs have an essential role in addressing the ex-offenders' needs. Community-based reentry programs provide adequate services to ex-offenders to assist in their reintegration process.

Subquestion 1: What barriers and limitations do community-based reentry programs face in meeting the ex-offenders' needs? Data from participants indicated that

the program staff does not have enough time with clients to prepare them for society adequately. Participants also discussed how activities are limited to program participants, especially for IOP participants. Data also indicated a lack of support for parenting men and a lack of community volunteers to assist the organization in providing services to the program participants.

Subquestion 2: What are the ex-offender experiences when taking part in community-based reentry programs? Data from the program participants indicated that they are receiving adequate support while taking part in the program. Contrarily, program participants are demonstrating a limited amount of pro-social skills. The twelve themes that emerged from this study provided support and evidence to the theoretical framework. I described the setting, demographics of the participants, data collection, and the analysis process. Chapter 4 also included the research questions, the obstacle of conducting the said study during the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence of trustworthiness, participants' verbatim statements, results of the study, and an evaluation of the results. Findings from this general qualitative study will contribute to the existing literature surrounding participants' experiences in community-based reentry programs. I identified the literature on the influence of community-based reentry programs and their influence on ex-offenders' transition to society.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of my interpretation of the research findings. The chapter also includes the study limitations, recommendations for future research, implications for positive social change, implications, and the conclusion of the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

This general qualitative research study explored how community-based reentry programs influenced ex-offenders and their reintegration. This study involved one-on-one interviews with staff members, management, and ex-offenders at a community-based reentry program in Ohio. A general qualitative approach was used because it allowed participants to describe their perceptions and experiences of the program. The primary research question for this general qualitative study was as followed: What role do community-based reentry programs play in addressing the needs of ex-offenders? The secondary research questions were as follows: What barriers and limitations do community-based reentry programs face in meeting the ex-offenders' needs? What are the ex-offender experiences when taking part in community-based reentry programs? Findings revealed 12 themes, which are interpreted below.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings aligned with the literature review, research questions, research design, and the theoretical framework. The theory of Correctional Intervention relates to this study because it provides the best practices used to meet the needs of offenders. When using the seven principles of correction intervention (Organizational Culture, Program Implementation, Management/Staff Characteristics, Client Risk/Needs Practices, Program Characteristics, Core Correctional Practice, and Inter-Agency Communication), programs are more likely to benefit offenders. The agency under study

represents all the principles. The emerging themes align with the existing literature and the principles of effective correctional intervention.

### **Themes**

*Theme 1: Cognitive-behavioral intervention.* Cognitive-behavioral interventions were mentioned throughout the data collection process. They served as the core correctional practice within the agency. Core correctional practice is the sixth principle of correction intervention, and it represents the services the agency provides to its offenders. Program staff must engage in different therapeutic practices to ensure that offenders are changing their negative behaviors. Offenders can become reinstitutionalized if they start to show a lack of decision-making skills or other skills required for their transition back into society. Scholars have indicated the need for motivational interviewing, relationship practices, effective reinforcement, problem-solving techniques, effective use of authority, cognitive self-change, and structured learning procedures for skill building (Gendreau et al., 2006). Community-based reentry programs that use cognitive-behavioral interventions with evidence-based practices as a core service help ex-offenders examine their behavior patterns, recognize their negative thoughts, and use strategies mentioned above to change their thinking and behaviors. Ex-offenders expressed that the program helps them become aware of their negative influences.

### *Theme 2: Supportive Services*

Individuals returning to their communities need additional assistance to make their transition as smooth as possible. Ex-offenders are more vulnerable at the time of their release because they struggle with obtaining identification documents, employment,

drug and alcohol treatment, secure housing, and reestablishing relationships with friends and family. Having assistance in these areas is necessary for ex-offenders' personal growth. There are specific program characteristics, which is the fifth principle of correctional intervention that targets the criminogenic needs of high-risk offenders (Gendreau et al., 2006). Participants discussed the treatment modalities used to treat offenders with drug and alcohol and mental health issues. Furthermore, low-risk participants stated that the program had offered them help with obtaining employment and providing other services to assist in their transition. The community-based reentry program provides many different support services to the offenders, and they also provide community resources to help assist with their reintegration process.

### *Theme 3: Treatment Team Meetings*

Participants expressed that every client is different, and every treatment plan is different. Therefore, treatment services should be individualized to the offender's needs. Assessing the offender's risk and needs are the fourth principle of correctional intervention. Many participants indicated that the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) is the instrument used to identify the offender risks and need levels. Staff indicated that the offender's risk level is scored based on their past, their criminal history, drug history, and other areas. Members of the treatment team, which are, case managers, group facilitators, intake coordinators, cognitive-behavioral specialists, and treatment coordinators, collaborate to develop a treatment plan that significantly impacts the offender's needs.

#### *Theme 4: Constant Communication*

Studies showed that communication is essential when providing quality services to ex-offenders. The participants expressed that there is constant communication between management and front-line staff. The agency also demonstrates inter-agency communication, which is the seventh principle of correctional intervention. This allows community-based reentry programs to develop relationships with other community agencies that provide services to offenders (Gendreau et al., 2006). Participants stated that they communicate with criminal justice and community partners to help meet the needs of the offenders. Furthermore, the program organization culture is receptive to disseminating and implementing new ideas (Gendreau et al, 2006). Participants in this study expressed that staff is encouraged to share resources and other pertinent information because it reflects the culture of the organization. Staff is provided a safe place to share suggestions without the concern of being reprimanded.

#### *Theme 5: Timeframes*

Although programs are intended to assist offenders with returning to their communities, participants expressed the limited timeframes they have with that process. The staff doesn't have enough time to ensure all offenders obtain employment and secure housing at the time of exiting the program.

#### *Theme 6: Activities*

Participants expressed the lack of activities available for the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) offenders. The staff mentioned that the offenders aren't allowed to



participate in any activities while in treatment. The treatment lasts for ten weeks and having so much time on their hands can do more harm than good. Program participants also stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there hadn't been activities for them to partake in.

*Theme 7: Support for Fathers*

A lack of support for fathers was expressed by management. Although the program offers services to men, they do not have programming available for the men that are responsible for their kids. Participants also indicated the need for parenting classes and housing programs for fathers who have legal guardianship of their kids. Such resources aren't available for fathers when they exit the program.

*Theme 8: Community Volunteers*

Participants indicated that having community volunteers or designated individuals to enter the facility and assist staff with the day to day functions has been a challenge. A lot of community-based reentry programs are operated by community volunteers. Participants indicated that volunteers are needed to keep offenders occupied. It was also stated that volunteers could provide financial literacy assistance. The participants are aware of the contribution volunteers could make towards the offender's reintegration.

*Theme 9: Employment Assistance*

Obtaining employment is the offender's first post-release need. Securing employment could be difficult due to the offender's criminal record, and also due to the lack of occupational skills the offender has. However, participants stated that the program offers job-readiness training and resume building services. Participants also indicated that

staff assists with their job search, resulting in them obtaining gainful employment. The participants are willing to accept the assistance and report to their place of employment each day.

*Theme 10: Supportive Staff*

Building rapport and trust are necessary for the offender's reintegration process. Several participants expressed how the staff has their best interest at heart. Case managers are the first person to advocate on the offender's behalf. Offenders are more receptive to staff that keeps their word and follows through on tasks because their credibility is important to the offender.

*Theme 11: Self-Awareness*

Studies have shown that offenders are more likely to be successful when they are aware of their interactions with other individuals. The community-based reentry program has provided the offenders with the tools to identify individuals and situations that could harm their reintegration goals. Participants understand that self-awareness could positively impact the offender's performance. All program participants expressed the importance of having the mindset of not following the wrong crowd.

*Theme 12: Pro-social Skills*

Management and staff indicated that participants are taught social skills, but program participants expressed their lack of engagement with other peers within the program. Participants pointed out that they report to work, and when they enter back into the facility, they report to their rooms. Participants weren't enthused about socializing with others in the program.

The themes above validate the Theory of Effective Correctional Intervention. The results also validated the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd principle of correctional intervention: organizational culture, program implementation, and management/staff characteristics. Staff discussed that there is a specific program language and that management is open to new ideas. Also, discussed training and the different ways of sharing information. Therefore, this validates the organizational culture principle. Management also addressed the need to evaluate the program's functions to disseminate changes, which validates program implementation. Gendreau et al. (2006) suggest that the director of a program holds an advanced degree and has many years of experience. Participants in this study disclosed their knowledge and skill level, which deliver quality services to the offenders. Staff and management indicated that they have degrees in the helping professions. Programs are required to employ individuals that are qualified to serve certain job functions.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Despite the contributions this study could provide to the current literature, some limitations were out of this researcher's control. The small sample size of 12 was not all offenders or professionals that work with offenders. There were only four individuals interviewed per category: staff, management, and offenders. Even though there was a mixture of male and female participants within the staff and management participants, only male offender participants were interviewed, therefore, this study is not generalizable to all ex-offenders. Therefore, future studies should investigate the experiences of female ex-offenders partaking in programs in Ohio. Additionally, the

research questions that were used to guide the study were generalized to each group, especially the second sub-research question.

Another limitation includes the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic had on the initial interview plan. I was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews, which limited the ability to capture the participant's emotions, body language, and other physical expressions. Additionally, this study was limited to a community-based residential reentry program within the state of Ohio. Further research should be explored in other geographic locations. Also, due to the pandemic, the only means of data collection, besides examining annual reports from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, was the participant responses during interviews. I initially wanted to conduct observations and view case notes, but these activities needed to be conducted in person. I needed to be compliant with CDC and local government guidelines regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it was unacceptable to enter the organization.

A final limitation was receiving participants picked from the program director. Due to the pandemic, I needed to respect the director's decision to choose program participants to participate in the study. To eliminate biases, I explained to the participants that their participation was strictly voluntary. At the beginning of the interviews, each participant was asked if they were still interested in taking part in the study, reassuring the participants that they have a choice. Also, I took efforts to alleviate the limitation of my own biases. During the data collection process, I memoed my assumptions to avoid introducing biases in interpreting the data. I remained neutral during the entire

investigation, which allowed me to interpret the data based on the participant's experiences and perceptions.

### **Recommendations**

This study was conducted to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio. The 12 study participants shared their perceptions and experiences regarding how the program assists ex-offenders in reintegrating successfully. The study focused on a community-based reentry program in Ohio. Therefore, the results are not generalizable to other ex-offenders' perceptions and experiences in other states. Further research should be explored in other geographic locations.

The program under study was generalized to only male offenders. Therefore, future research is needed to examine female perceptions of community-based reentry programs on reintegration in Ohio. The agency under study has both male and female facilities. Therefore, future research could also include a comparison between female and male facilities, as each facility has different program characteristics. future Lastly, further research on resources for parenting men is also necessary. Fathers need our help in locating resources and housing programs to assist them with their children, as sometimes fathers are the custodial parent.

### **Implications**

Successfully reintegrating ex-offenders is a phenomenon that keeps them from recidivating. For instance, when offenders receive additional assistance to help their transition to society, they are less likely to commit new crimes (O'Hear, 2007).

Implications for positive social change for this study include informing program directors and other stakeholders of the importance of using evidence-based practices. However, there are instances when offenders recidivate after taking part in programs. Therefore, organizations need to continually evaluate their programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of ex-offenders.

Community-based reentry programs play an essential role in meeting the needs of the ex-offenders. However, more collaboration is needed. Not only with correctional and law enforcement agencies, but partnerships need to be formed with other agencies to ensure the ex-offender is receiving the skills needed to assist in their reintegration. For example, partnering with vocational, housing, and credentialing organizations could impact the ex-offender reintegration significantly. Most importantly, ex-offenders who volunteer or are required to participate in a program after incarceration should be given ample time to transition. Organizations should not exit ex-offenders until all requirements of the program completed, and until they have received all the assistance necessary to reintegrate successfully. Furthermore, programs should implement follow-up procedures to ensure offenders are navigating well within their communities. The results of this study should aid program staff and the department of corrections to recognize ex-offender reintegration needs to reduce their chances of recidivating after completing programs.

### **Conclusion**

This general qualitative research study aimed to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio. This study was also needed to understand why ex-offenders re-offend after completing programs within

their communities. This research examined the perceptions and experiences of 12 participants in a community residential program in Ohio. This study supports the findings of Frazier et al. (2015), who noted that community-based reentry programs are developed to help offenders with employment, education, housing, and treatment services.

Participants indicated their experiences while providing services to ex-offenders.

Participants also supported Leutwyler et al. (2017) that case managers coordinate mental health services, health care, and transportation to the ex-offender. Participants in the study stated that they attributed their success to the program staff. Ex-offenders must receive support during their reintegration period because they could quickly return to criminal behaviors.

The results of this study support the Theory of Effective Correctional Intervention. Lovins and Latessa (2018) explained that programs were effective for high-risk offenders, yet there have been detrimental effects for low-risk offenders. Participants expressed that programming is unnecessary for low-risk offenders. However, high-risk offenders are required to do programming. Gendreau et al. (2006) noted that program staff could conceptualize and change behaviors using cognitive behavior therapy. Study participants mentioned that cognitive-behavioral interventions are utilized to assist in this area.

Results showed that the program under study has a significant influence on addressing the needs of the ex-offenders. Participants announced that obtaining employment, reestablishing relationships with family, staying out of prison, and staying away from the wrong crowd is their main priority. The program has done a phenomenal

job of assisting the ex-offenders. Results also showed the barriers and limitations of serving offenders.

Future research recommendations suggested that other programs are examined in other states, examine female perceptions, compare female and male community residential facilities, compare community-based reentry programs within rural and suburban areas, and provide further research on the available resources for fathers.

Implications for the study include continually evaluating programs to ensure ex-offenders are reintegrating successfully and recommend changes to program exiting policies and procedures, including follow-up services to ensure offenders navigate well within their communities.



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## Appendix A: Invitation to Staff and Management

### **Participation Invitation letter**

Dear Invitee,

My name is Ebony Ivery. I am a doctoral student in the Criminal Justice Program at Walden University. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: The Influence of Community-Based Reentry Programs on Reintegrating Ex-offenders in Ohio. The purpose is to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on the reintegration of ex-offenders in Ohio.

This study will involve exploring the perceptions and experiences of individuals who take part in community-based reentry programs.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The information you provide will be kept confidential. If you would like to take part in the study, please read the Informed Consent letter below. Your participation in the research will be beneficial to help promote social change to ensure that ex-offenders are reintegrating successfully when taking part in community-based reentry programs.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Ebony Ivery, B.A. M.S, Doctoral Student, Walden University

## Appendix B: Invitation for Ex-Offenders

### **Participation Invitation letter**

Dear Invitee,

My name is Ebony Ivery. I am a doctoral student at Walden University's Criminal Justice Program. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: The Influence of Community-Based Reentry Programs on Reintegrating Ex-Offenders in Ohio. The purpose is to explore the influence of community-based reentry programs on the reintegration of ex-offenders in Ohio.

The study involves obtaining the perceptions and experiences of those who take part in community-based reentry programs.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The information you provide will be kept confidential. If you would like to participate in the study, please read the Informed Consent letter below. Your participation in the research will be beneficial to help promote social change to ensure that ex-offenders are reintegrating successfully when taking part in community-based reentry programs.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Ebony Ivery, B.A. M.S, Doctoral Student, Walden University

## Appendix C: Interview Questions for Ex-offenders

## Ex-offender Questions:

1. What can you tell me about the reentry programs you participated in while incarcerated?
2. What information did you receive about programs within the communities? Please explain.
3. Can you explain the type of program assistance you received since being released? Please explain how the assistance has helped you to better your life or quality of life.
4. Please explain how you found out about this current program.
5. Please explain the experiences you had while participating in this program?
6. Please explain what services are most important to you. Why?
7. Please explain in detail your goals in this program.
8. Please explain the ways this program is helping you achieve positive results.
9. In what ways this program helped you gain pro-social skills? Please explain.
10. In what ways the program provided you with resources? Please explain the specific resources and how they help.
11. Please explain in what ways can the program be more productive.
12. Please explain what you would want to change about the program.
13. Please explain your current support system.
14. Please explain, in your own words, what it means to be a law-abiding citizen?



15. Please explain what you consider is the most challenging part of your reentry process.
16. Please explain how the program staff has helped your reintegration process.
17. In what ways you feel this program made you into a better community member?
18. Explain why you would or wouldn't recommend the program to a formerly incarcerated individual?
19. Please explain your plans for the future.
20. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

## Appendix D: Interview Questions for Management

### Management Questions:

1. Please provide an overview of the program and how it benefits the program participants
2. Please explain your role.
3. What is the role of your staff members, along with their qualifications?
4. Please explain the vision and mission of the program?
5. Please explain how this program is funded.
6. Can you explain in what ways do you recruit participants for the program?
7. Can you share each of the program components you have within the program?
8. Which component do you find that the participants need most? Could you explain?
9. Please explain the process or methods you take in working with your team in meeting program goals?
10. What is the most important part of building relationships between staff and program participants? Please explain
11. Please explain the most important part of building relationships between staff and community partners?
12. As a part of the management team, describe your experiences with collaborating with community partners in providing services to the participants?
13. Please explain the most rewarding aspect of your work.

14. Explain how you dialogue with case managers or other staff members to discuss participant achievement and share resources? What is the frequency?
15. Please explain any changes you would like to make to meet the needs of the participants better.
16. Please explain your involvement with the creation and instruction of programming?
17. What opportunities, if any, are there for staff members, as well as participants to discuss services they desire to be included in programming?
18. Based on your reentry services, describe its effectiveness among the ex-offender population.
19. Please explain the importance of a good support system.
20. Is there anything else you would like to share about the program?

## Appendix E: Interview Questions for Direct Staff

## Staff Member Questions:

1. Please explain how you came to work for this agency.
2. How long have you been in this role?
3. Please explain your experiences.
4. Please explain your connection with the program participants before they are released from prison.
5. Please explain how you collaborate with colleagues on meeting the needs of the program participants.
6. How do you collaborate with Criminal Justice agencies and community partners?
7. Please explain to me what a typical day is like for you.
8. Please describe the amount of interaction you have with the program participants.
9. Please explain the program participants' support system.
10. Please explain what type of pro-social activities you provide to the program participants.
11. How often do you dialogue with other staff members during the week to discuss client achievement and share resources? What is the frequency?
12. Could you share the program participants' attitudes while participating in the program?
13. Please explain the most rewarding aspect of your work.

14. Please explain how you keep the program participants engaged.
15. In what ways do you engage the program participants using therapeutic practices?
16. Please explain the coping mechanisms you recommend the program participants to use.
17. What are the challenges you face in delivering services to the program participants?
18. What would you like to change to meet the needs of the program participants better?
19. Please explain what you would like to change about the program.
20. Is there anything else you would like to share about the program?

Table 1

*Themes Applied by Research Questions*

Research question	Subquestion 1	Subquestion 2
Cognitive-behavioral intervention	Timeframes	Employment assistance
Supportive services	Activities	Supportive staff
Treatment team meetings	Support for fathers	Self-awareness
Constant communication	Community volunteers	Prosocial skills

Table 2

*Themes that Emerged from Participants*

Themes 1-12	Number of times referenced during interviews	Number of participants who referenced theme
Cognitive-behavioral intervention	33	6
Supportive services	44	12
Treatment team meetings	13	8
Constant communication	14	6
Timeframes	15	3
Activities	12	4
Support for fathers	9	2
Community volunteers	8	2
Employment assistance	18	6
Supportive staff	17	6
Self-awareness	9	3
Prosocial skills	16	9

Table 3

*Percentage of Participants Mentioned Each Theme*

Themes 1-12	Percentage of Participants
Cognitive-behavioral intervention	50%
Supportive services	100%
Treatment team meetings	67%
Constant communication	50%
Timeframes	25%
Activities	33%
Support for fathers	17%
Community volunteers	17%
Employment assistance	50%
Supportive staff	50%
Self-awareness	25%
Prosocial skills	75%