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# Foreseen Role For Occupational Therapy Rehabilitation In Correctional Facilities

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# Foreseen Role For Occupational Therapy Rehabilitation In Correctional Facilities

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# Foreseen Role For Occupational Therapy Rehabilitation In Correctional Facilities

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## **CLINICAL SCENARIO:**

A 43-year-old man in the prison system is 9 months from release. The man became incarcerated at 17 years old upon shooting and wounding three peers at a high school party while intoxicated. He was sentenced to 27 years, he has served time throughout various prisons due to overcrowding; he was in solitary confinement for 3 years after stabbing an inmate when he was 20, but remained violation free for 15 years. Since incarceration he has had no access to the outside world besides what he can understand through television and radio via walk-man. Prior to entry, he was living at home with his mother and three younger siblings, he maintained a job as a dishwasher at a local restaurant, and had a 2.4GPA. Upon clients release he will be expected to reintegrate into society, and live independently.

The United States prison systems are continuously struggling with high volumes of inmates, high rates of recidivism, and pressure for budget cuts. Currently there are “2.2 million people in prisons and jails in the United States” (Smyer & Burbank 2007). These statistics are concerning, however what is more concerning is the increased rates of recidivism. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics there were 272,111 people released from prisons in 1994; within three years 67.5% of this population were rearrested for a serious felony or misdemeanour. These high rates place a larger burden on the already muddled correctional system. Occupational therapy can bring a unique and beneficial perspective to the rehabilitation process as an effort to decrease recidivism. The field of occupational therapy was developed to assist clients with establishing roles, habits, and routines in their daily life. Ex-offenders are in need of re-establishing their roles as healthy and productive members of their home community who contribute to society at large.

## **FOCUSSED CLINICAL QUESTION:**

What is the role of occupational therapy in correctional facilities, facilitating community reintegration to reduce recidivism?

### **SUMMARY of Search, 'Best' Evidence appraised, and Key Findings:**

- Five research articles regarding community reintegration programs were selected and critically appraised for content. Content of additional positional papers were also analysed.
- The best evidence found was an article written by Eggers, Sciulli, & Hickerson Crist, (2006). This article described the community reintegration project which was introduced at the Allegheny County Jail in Pittsburgh PA. The program was created to decrease recidivism and develop support for offender's successful reintegration into their community.
- Fournier, A.K., Geller, E.S., & Fortney, E.V. (2007), studied the effectiveness of the PenPal animal prison program on inmates and the HAI (human animal interaction). The study found inmates who were involved with the program had a significantly higher report of treatment progress, lower amounts of criminal behavior, increased social skills, were higher on the HAI questionnaire.
- Furst, G. (2006) created a survey as an initial attempt to collected data for animal based prison programs for all state correctional systems. The survey collected data describing the types of animal programs, the amount of involvement, and perceived outcomes. The survey results were collected for 159 programs, which were reported to have multiple perceived benefits.
- Moneymaker, J.M., & Strimple, E.O. (1991), studied the effects of pet facilitated therapy (PFT) within prison system facilities on inmate behaviour. The study analyzed the PAL program within a prison system it found decreased rates of recidivism, inmates reported feelings of compassions & responsibility, fewer altercations between inmates, and decreased drug use.
- Jones, E.J., & McColl, M.A. (1991), evaluated the effects of an interactional life skills (ILS) group design and the traditional non-interactive group design on programs within the prison system. The study found inmates desire to participate in other groups increased for broth program designs, however in the ILS group inmates were able to take on multiple roles within the group, and gave those roles higher value. Inmates also reported more interest and excitement to attend ILS group.

### **CLINICAL BOTTOM LINE:**

Prolonged occupational deprivation impacts an offender's ability to reintegrate successfully into their community. Occupational Therapists can create programs for offenders to aid in preparation for reintegration, create support networks, develop independently living and vocational skills; in turn these programs can decrease recidivism.

**Limitation of this CAT:** This critically appraised paper has not been peer-reviewed by one other independent person. This paper was created by a master of occupational therapy second year student and is not exhaustive.

## SEARCH STRATEGY:

### Terms used to guide Search Strategy:

- **Patient/Client Group**: prisoners, correctional facility, inmates, prisons, jail
- **Intervention (or Assessment)**: occupational therapy, rehabilitation, vocational programs, pet programs, programs, gardening, therapy
- **Comparison**: No intervention, typical intervention
- **Outcome(s)**: recidivism, social participation, reintegration

Databases and sites searched	Search Terms	Limits used
CINAHL: October – November 2010	Prisoners, Inmates, Prisons, Correctional Facilities, Rehabilitation, Occupational Therapy, Gardening	English
MedLine : October – November 2010	Prisons, Inmates, Jails, Correctional Facilities, Vocational Programs, Programs, Occupational Therapy	English
Google Scholar: October- November 2010	Inmates, Jails, Occupational Therapy, Prisons, Programs, Therapy, Animals, Prisoners, Prisons, Correctional Facilities	English

### INCLUSION and EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Inclusion:
  - Studies which incorporated a rehabilitation program in correctional facilities
  - Studies which incorporated interventions requiring active participation from inmates.
  - Data collection on current rehabilitation programs available throughout the US
  - Position Papers on prisons
- Exclusion:
  - Studies which incorporated a program or intervention that did not require active participation from inmates
  - Interventions that did not take place within the correctional facilities, or on the current inmate population.
  - Studies which were not written in English

## RESULTS OF SEARCH

5 relevant studies were located and categorised as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Summary of Study Designs of Articles retrieved**

Study Design/ Methodology of Articles Retrieved	Level	Number Located	Author (Year)
<b>Cohort</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>1</b>	Eggers, M., Munoz, J.P., Sciulli, J., & Hickerson Crist, P.A. (2006).
<b>Case-Control</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>1</b>	Jones, E.J., & McColl, M.A. (1991).
<b>Cross-Sectional</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>1</b>	Furst, G. (2006).
<b>Retrospective</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>1</b>	Moneymaker, J.M., & Strimple, E.O. (1991).
<b>Before and After</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>1</b>	Fournier, A.K., Geller, E.S., & Fortney, E.V. (2007).

## BEST EVIDENCE

The following study was identified as the ‘best’ evidence and selected for critical appraisal:

Eggers, M., Munoz, J.P., Sciulli, J., Hickerson Crist, P.A. (2006). *The Community Reintegration Project: Occupational Therapy At Work In A County Jail. Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 20(1): 17-37.*  
DOI:10.1300/J003v20n01\_02

Reasons for selecting this study were:

- Study included direct intervention between occupational therapist and inmates
- Study included results of inmates post release.
- Study included both an experimental group and a control group for comparison.
- Study directly addressed effects on inmate recidivism.

## SUMMARY OF BEST EVIDENCE

**Table 2:** Description and appraisal of Eggers et al (2006) cohort study The community Reintegration Project: Occupational Therapy At Work In a County Jail.

### Objective of the Study:

The object of the study was to develop a program that directly address occupational performance needs of inmates in hopes of successful reintegration into the community and reduction of recidivism.

**Study Design:**

The cohort study was conducted in the Allegheny County Jail in Pittsburgh PA. Inmates were screened for eligibility to the program, assigned to a reintegration specialist, and enrolled in the program. The 8-10 week program included completing assessments, developing goals and release plans, investigation of community supports; as well as homework, and classroom activities. Participants attended classes for two hours each Monday- Friday while enrolled in the program. Classes focused on development of life and vocational skills needed for community reintegration. The program also included a post-release component to which inmates would meet with their reintegration specialists to address goals established with their Individualized Reintegration Plan (IRP).

**Setting:**

The study was conducted in the Allegheny County Jail as well as post release throughout Allegheny County

**Participants:**

For an inmate to qualify for the program they must have 90-190 days remaining on their sentence with no pending charges, as well as have residency in Allegheny County post-release. All inmate participant data was included in the experimental group; data from 87 inmate participants was collected and analysed for the purpose of this study, the program is ongoing, therefore new enrollees continue to be added. All inmates eligible for the program attend a mandatory meeting. If interest in the program was expressed, inmates were then interviewed and began the collection of formal paperwork including intake forms, records, employment and education history, and questionnaires on wellness and support systems.

*Demographics:*

N = 87; 70% age 20-40, 83% single, 80% male, and 57% unemployed prior to entry.

Seven inmates were terminated from the program in the post-release phase due to contract violations.

**Intervention Investigated**

The Pre-release phase of the program 8-10 week program consisted of classes Monday – Friday for two hours per day. Topics included self-awareness, goal setting, personal development, psychosocial life skills, and job readiness. Activities engaged inmates in activities that mirrored life situations inmates would encounter in the community, scenarios of personal inmate experiences were also used. Inmates were assigned homework to help develop a habit of completing small tasks toward a larger goal. Classes were run by occupational therapists and Goodwill integration staff members. The Post-Release phase began 48hrs after inmate release. Ex-offenders would meet one on one with their assigned reintegration specialists to establish monthly plan updates, assist with job searches or perform job site visits, connect with community supports, meet with family, and perform any other necessary tasks ex-offender regarded as necessary.

*Experimental:* Inmates of the Allegheny County Jail who did not participate in the program.

*Control:* Inmates of the Allegheny County Jail who participated in the program.

<b>Outcome Measures</b>		
Measure were taken during intake phase and post-release phase		
	<b>Outcome Areas</b>	<b>Measures Used</b>
<b>Intake</b>	Outcomes of the assessments were used to develop inmates initial Individualized Reintegration Plan (IRP)	Occupational Self Assessment (OSA) Self-Sufficiency Index Inventory Wholistic Clinical Assessment of drug, alcohol, and mental health history.
<b>Pre-Release</b>	IRP used to assess progress towards personal goals	IRP goals
<b>Post-Release</b>	Maintain pattern of employment and meet minimum salary requirements. Meeting IRP goals.	IRP goals

### **Main Findings:**

In first 11 months: 87 inmates enrolled, 59 re-entered into community. One inmate has returned to jail yielding a 2% recidivism compared to 60% of the control group. There is a large difference shown between the two groups.

Of released inmates, seven inmates were terminated from the program, 51 inmates remain for post-release data collection.

N=51: 57% placed in competitive employment, 9% in job search phase, 56% meeting minimum salary level of .

The recidivism rates for those placed in employment 12.1%, and 46.5% for those who were never employed.

### **Original Authors' Conclusions**

The study showed evidenced that occupational therapy intervention for inmates pre and post release can directly impact the rates of recidivism seen within the prison system. Intervention that provides goals directed toward finding community supports and employment will greatly impact the success rate for community integration among ex-offenders.

### **Critical Appraisal:**

Overall this experiment provided a general knowledge as to the effects of occupational therapy on reduction of recidivism in the prison system with ex-offenders. The authors described plans for gathering grants and additional work force to ensure program structure remains successful. Information with the intention of providing greater credibility to program success would include data for inmates with no involvement in the program, as well as those who were terminated from the program. Introducing these results would yield a stronger argument for occupational therapy intervention. The paper also does not discuss any inmate point of view, inmates did not provide information as to changes needed in the program, nor perceived benefits of their involvement with the program. This demographic on the receiving end of intervention, seems to be ignored. With the purpose of increasing program credibility, researchers should also provide results for both pre and post test assessments given. This would provide readers with increased knowledge of other benefits of program involvement besides reduction of recidivism.



**Validity**

*Consent:* Written consent was obtained from all participants in the program.

*Assessment Validity:* The Occupational Self Assessment has been tested and found for both high validity and reliability. A potential limitation to the study is the lack of reliability and validity of the assessments, which were created for the purpose for the study, such as the Self-Sufficient Index Inventory and the Wholistic Clinical Assessment of drug, alcohol, and mental health history.

*Bias:* The bias that could have affected the results is the allocation of the control and experimental group. Participants were automatically entered into the experimental group, and those who did not wish to participate in the program became the control. A personality type or general openness to change could be influential for enrolment into the program; this could also influence a person's susceptibility for recidivism.

*Missing Information:* Further information is needed regarding additional programs available at Allegheny County Jail. Descriptions of classes and examples of intake assessments, developed specifically for the program, were not provided therefore could not be analysed. Additional information is needed in regards to the results of intake assessments, and description of how the results were used. Post-release phase information is also lacking in explanation of duration ex-offenders remained enrolled in the program, as well as if additional assessments were provided to determine the effectiveness of the program beyond recidivism.

**Summary/Conclusion:**

These results suggest with the implementation of a program focused on development of life and vocational skills required for community reintegration, inmates are provided support for successful reintegration and facilities can decrease their rates of recidivism. Unemployment is a large factor in recidivism, inmates who are unable to find or maintain employment are more likely to return to jail. Establishment of these programs support inmates in finding and maintaining employment. Programs should focus on development of skills and habits needed for independent successful community integration, as well as helping inmates establish routines of making, setting, and achieving goals. When supports are provided both in incarceration and post release ex-offenders are less likely to return to their prior roles, and criminal behaviour.

**Table 3: Characteristics of included studies**

<b>Study</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Intervention &amp; Outcomes Used</b>	<b>Results</b>
<p>Fournier, A.K., Geller, E.S., &amp; Fortney, E.V. (2007). Human-Animal Interaction in A Prison Setting: Impact on Criminal Behavior Treatment Progress, and Social Skills. <i>Behavior and Social Issues</i>, 16, 89-105.</p>	<p>This study examined the effect of implementation of an occupational based program such as the forensic human-animal interaction (HAI) program on the criminal behaviour of prison inmates.</p>	<p><b>Treatment Group:</b> N= 24</p> <p>Participants were in the PenPal program. Dogs were selected from local shelters. Dogs lived with inmates for 8-10wks; inmates were educated in dog-training skills. They provided basic needs for the dogs and trained them in basic obedience. Dogs were adopted by individuals in the community upon the end of training</p> <p><b>Control Group:</b> N=24</p> <p>Inmates not enrolled or on the waiting list for the program.</p> <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <p>The Social Skills Inventory &amp; The Human-Animal Interaction Scale were completed by members from each group and analysed for comparison. Treatment Progress, Criminal Behaviour, and Social Skills were also compared.</p>	<p>A reduction in criminal behaviour, increase social skills and social sensitivity, and increase in treatment progress were all beneficial results seen in the treatment group. The Treatment group also scored higher in the human-animal interaction checklist.</p> <p>These findings show us by retraining typical human interactions and social skills we are better able to prepare inmates for re-entrance into the community.</p>

Study	Purpose	Intervention & Outcomes Used	Results
<p>Furst, G. (2006). Prison-Based Animal Programs: A National Survey. <i>The Prison Journal</i>, 84(4), 407-430. DOI:10.1177/0032885506293242</p>	<p>The study is a national survey of state correctional systems, to acquire information Prison-based animal programs through correctional facilities in the US, as well as information regarding their size, design, and perceived benefits.</p>	<p>The survey was sent to all 50 states department of corrections central office, a cover letter stated the purpose and information required, administrators asked to forward information to appropriate people for accurate responses. The survey addressed questions directly related to the program. Questions on program characteristics, which included year of establishment, number of participants who were involved in the program, criteria used for inmate selection, animals used in the program, and amount of resource expenditures. Questions regarding the nature of the program included post-release employment availability, participant-animal interaction, perceived benefits, and retention rate.</p> <p>Survey was sent to 50 states within the US, 46 states returned the survey. Data was collected and analysed on 159 programs.</p>	<p><u>Program Designs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community service: 33.8%</li> <li>• Service animal socialization: 21.1%</li> <li>• Multimodal: 19.7%</li> <li>• Livestock care: 14.1%</li> <li>• Visitation: 4.2%</li> <li>• Wildlife rehabilitation: 2.8%</li> <li>• Other: 2.8%</li> <li>• Vocational: 1.4%</li> </ul> <p><u>Perceived Benefits:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of responsibility: 21.5%</li> <li>• Job Skills: 9.1%</li> <li>• Meaningful Work: 8.6%</li> <li>• Patience/anger management: 7.5%</li> <li>• Self-esteem: 7.5%</li> <li>• Empathy: 6.5%</li> <li>• Parenting skills: 6.5%</li> <li>• Communication skills: 6.5%</li> <li>• Sense of pride/ accomplishment: 5.9%</li> <li>• Work ethic: 5.4%</li> <li>• Humanizes/calms facility: 4.3%</li> <li>• Self-control: 3.8%</li> <li>• Relationship skills/trust: 3.8%</li> <li>• Reduces stress: 3.2%</li> </ul> <p>These results show perceived benefits for inmates in developing a sense of responsibility, as well as many other skills.</p>

Study	Purpose	Intervention & Outcomes Used	Results
<p>Money maker, J.M., &amp; Strimple, E.O. (1991). <i>Animals and Inmates: A Sharing Companionship Behind Bars. Journal of Offender Rehabilitation</i>, 16(3/4), 133-152</p>	<p>The purpose of the study is to show how pet facilitated therapy (PFT) within prison system facilitates a positive behavioural change in violent-prone individuals</p>	<p>Data collection was retrospective. A review of inmate records for all inmates who were engaged in the PAL (people, animals, love) program from 1982-1984. The PAL program consisted of a 2 hr. a week, 26-week training program to educate inmates on how to care and train for animals. Records were reviewed for inmates level of participation in the program, termination based on drug use, altercations, or animal abuse, recidivism, distribution and use of drugs while in the program, work release eligibility, and duration of involvement since program inception. Variables were assessed via assessment of records, and anonymous questionnaire, to determine their effects on behaviour; 99 men went through the program, however 10 case files were lost therefore a sample of 88 men was obtained.</p>	<p><u>Inmate Participation</u>: 57% Extremely or Very active (included involvement in club process, officers, record keeping, activities, etc)  <u>Termination from Program</u>: 12% Rule violations including drug use, altercations with other inmates or staff, or animal abuse.  <u>Recidivism</u>: 11.3%  <u>Drug Involvement</u>: 45% used drugs while in the program- determined from questionnaire.  <u>Work Release</u>: 95% Not involved in traditional work release programs- animal related job training</p> <p>No comparison was made of treatment group to prison population at facility.</p> <p>This information applies directly to recidivism rates of participants, though there is not a comparison group, the rates of recidivism for this population are lower than the average rates of prison recidivism.</p>

<b>Study</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Intervention &amp; Measures Used</b>	<b>Results</b>
<p>Jones, E.J., &amp; McColl, M.A. (1991). Development of Evaluation of an Interactional Life Skills Group for Offenders. <i>The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research</i>, 11(2), 80-92</p>	<p>The purpose of the paper is to evaluate an interactional life skills (ILS) group design for an offender population.</p>	<p>Quasi-experimental study design, comparing a convenience sample of an experimental and comparison groups. The experimental group was the ILS group participants while the comparison participated in a psychotherapy group. The same therapist ran the groups, at equal duration, and equal intensity. The Saskatchewan Newstart model was used to develop the ILS group; the group focused on performing both group and individual tasks, and required participants to evaluate themselves and others. The comparison group was based on Yalom's model; it was a psychotherapy group in which participants worked on personal issues. The study looked at Desire to participate in other primary groups, Desire for Inclusion, Ability to take on group roles, Ability to take on positively valued or pro-social roles, and Affective response to group participation.</p>	<p>The experimental subjects took on roles of pleasure, director, and risk-taker when compared to the non-experimental group. Individuals in the experimental group were also found to place higher value and take on more roles, as well as feel excited about their general experiences of participation in the group. This study's results show proof that "the participation of adult male offenders in an ILS group can have a significant impact on their self-perceived ability to learn and perform pro-social group roles" (p.88).</p>

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## **IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, EDUCATION and FUTURE RESEARCH**

It is estimated that 1 in every 15 people in the United States will at some time in their life be imprisoned (Smyer & Burbank, 2009). The Federal Sentencing Reform Act, which mandates minimum sentences and duration of incarceration for federal offenses, as well as the “Three strikes” program, and “Get Tough” on crime program have all contributed to the growing prison population, through increasing sentence lengths for prisoners (Rikard & Rosenberg, 2007). With federal and state financial cutbacks and issues with prison overcrowding on the rise, recidivism rates should be the topic of debate. Rikard and Rosenberg (2007) argue that there has “been a movement in the criminal justice system away from an overarching philosophy of rehabilitation toward one of incapacitation” (p.152). The environments of the current prison systems are strong contrasts to the communities beyond their prison walls. Inmates experience occupational deprivation from the moment of arrest. Upon release they are given limited to no supports for reintegration and are expected to independently abide by social norms of a community to which they are unfamiliar.

### **Practice**

Occupational therapy can provide a unique yet fundamental role in the formation of rehabilitation programs within US prison systems. The above studies provide critical information as to the importance and need for implementation of rehabilitative programs, but also the need for these programs to actively engage inmates in developing life skills prior to release. Occupational therapists are specialists in the area of life skills; the study by Jones & McColl (1991) provided proof that an interactive life skills training program yield better results than those that are psychotherapy based.

Occupational therapists can help structure rehabilitative programs to encompass a multitude of life skills training opportunities. The implementations of rehabilitative programs have unveiled benefits for both inmates and the correctional facilities. Animal-based programs, in which life and vocational skills are developed have been shown to reduce the rates of criminal behaviour, increase social skills, and help rehabilitate inmates prior to release, (Moneymaker & Strimple, 1991). Development of appropriate social skills can increase an ex-offender’s self-esteem when trying to reintegrate into their community and build a healthy social support system. This skill is also very beneficial when searching for employment post-release.

Program structures should also include a post-release component to create a structured support for ex-offenders as they unearth the requirements of becoming a member of their community at large. The domains of practice for occupational therapists include active engagement in all life activities from self-care to money management, and employment to social participation. These are essential skills for independent living, and the

prison system can not provide all the contexts and environments to help fully rehabilitate inmates prior to release; therefore, post-release rehabilitation will ensure ex-offenders receive training for independent living.

### **Education**

Rehabilitation will be the key to reducing the rates of recidivism, as well as an attempt to control the exponentially expanding prison population. In the interest of expanding the field of occupational therapy and serving an underserved and growing population, occupational therapists should look toward rehabilitation of the inmate and ex-offender demographic. In preparation in working with this demographic, as well as designing programs and developing goals, occupational therapists should educate themselves on current rehabilitative programs, both within the United States and internationally. This can serve as guide for therapists in program expansion and development.

### **Future Research**

Future evidence-based research is needed surrounding the structure, implementation, and effectiveness of activity based life skills training programs on reduction of recidivism rates for prison systems throughout the United States. Evidence-based research on programs should also include surveys of ex-offenders concerning their experiences, perceived benefits from program enrollment, and current occupational activities. More occupational therapy research, including the development of evidence-based longitudinal studies, is needed to expand our knowledge on the effect of occupational therapy directed program participation on ex-offenders following years of community reintegration.

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