

# The Relationship Between Select Correctional Education Programming, Consistent and Quality Employment, and Recidivism

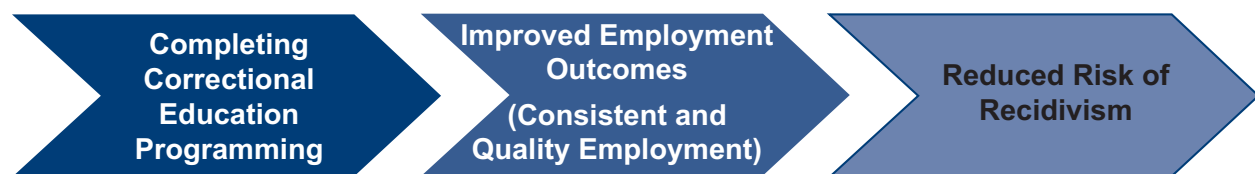
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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This research brief descriptively explores the relationship between the completion of select correctional education programming and recidivism, while integrating both risk—as measured by the LSI-R—and employment as mediating factors. The underlying theory is that correctional education programming increases human capital which increases the likelihood of post-release employment, but more particularly post-release employment with sustained wages above the poverty threshold. This subsequently reduces the likelihood of recidivism. Risk is added as a factor to determine if the strength of the indirect relationship between correctional education programming and recidivism varies for ex-offenders within the different risk categories.

Figure 1:  
*Relationship between Correctional Education and Recidivism with Employment as a Mediating Factor*



The interaction of employment and recidivism was measured across all risk levels for completers of vocational training, GED completers, and a comparison group of non-participants.

### Conclusions

- Risk—as measured by the LSI-R—was negatively related to the more desirable post-release outcomes: maintaining consistent and quality employment, in addition to success (not recidivating).
- Conditional upon consistent employment, rates of success were fairly similar between vocational training completers, GED completers, and comparison group members.
  - However, program completion was related to a substantial increase in the rate of consistent and quality employment even after taking into consideration risk.
  - More importantly, completing vocational training increased the likelihood of consistent and quality employment across all risk levels, but particularly for low- and moderate-risk offenders.
  - A similar positive impact was evident for low-risk GED completers, but to a slightly lesser extent.

- Maintaining consistent and quality employment during the first year following release dramatically increased the likelihood of success (no recidivism) regardless of risk level. Substantially more of the vocational training completers, across all risk categories, met that condition, better enabling success.
- Conditional upon consistent employment, rates of success were fairly similar for moderate- and high-risk study group members (moderate-risk offenders experienced slightly higher rates of success).
- Failing to maintain consistent and quality employment had a much more negative impact on those in the high-risk category—and most notably for high-risk vocational training completers.

## Policy Implications

- A holistic approach with an emphasis on both job placement and employment retention is required if the benefits of completing vocational training or a GED program are to be maximized. Active assistance and support in finding and retaining employment must be available throughout the re-entry process and maintained until the risk of job-loss dissipates.
- Early indicators of an increased likelihood of recidivism should be established and shared with both offenders and KDOC staff. Based on the current results, failing to maintain consistent employment from quarter to quarter could be one such indicator. This and/or other indicators should be tracked and reported on a real-time basis, so that interventions could be immediately introduced.
- It would also be beneficial to develop a profile of successful ex-offenders, but more particularly successful ex-offenders within the high-risk category. Modeling their correctional program completion patterns, in addition to their personal characteristics, would provide some insight into the correlates of success.
- Workforce Development, Employment, and Retention specialists should establish and foster relationships with employers with a history of hiring ex-offenders, in addition to employers that do not currently hire ex-offenders but might take it under consideration under the right circumstances.
- Ideally, workforce development agencies and organizations in the community should be apprised of the ex-offenders' skills and employment interests prior to release. This would allow them to perform individualized job development activities and facilitate more expedient and higher quality post-release employment.
- Although a lower proportion of high-risk offenders obtained consistent employment during the study period, doing so greatly increased their likelihood of success. Further, failing to obtain such employment had a much more detrimental impact on high-risk study group members (regardless of program completion) than it did for their low- and moderate-risk counterparts. Because of this, perhaps providing more in-depth job placement and job retention services to high-risk offenders could be considered.