Preparing for Success After Prison (PSAP) Evaluation Report



Prepared By
Stacy Calhoun, PhD and Lincoln Bohn, MA
University of California, Los Angeles

December 27, 2024

Executive Summary

Preparing for Success after Prison (PSAP) is a comprehensive tablet-based program designed to equip participants with essential skills for successful reintegration into society. This program consists of 35 modules that are delivered via the Edovo tablet platform to correctional facilities across the United States. These modules include voluntary pre- and post-surveys that serve as a quality assurance measure to gauge participant progress in key intermediate outcomes. This report presents findings from a secondary analysis of survey data from 145 participants who completed both pre- and post-intervention surveys between January 1, 2024, and March 30, 2024. Overall, these participants rated the program highly, with a mean satisfaction rating of 9 out of 10. Additionally, the findings showed statistically significant improvements in the following areas for the program participants:

- Agency
- Hope
- Impulsivity
- Resilience
- Trust
- Wellbeing
- Emotional Intelligence
- Empathy Perspective Taking

While this evaluation has several methodological limitations, including a low response rate and no control group, that limits our ability to determine the effectiveness of this program, the preliminary results suggest that this program had a positive impact on participants who completed it. Additionally, many participants expressed strong satisfaction with the program and appreciated its clear organization and methodical layout. Thus, the preliminary evidence from this evaluation suggests that the PSAP program is a promising intervention for helping to prepare individuals to successfully reintegrate back to their communities. Subsequent research will build upon the findings of this evaluation using more rigorous methodology through a randomized design.

Table of Contents

3 Introduction

5 Methods

6 Participant Characteristics

7 Analytic Plan

7 Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey Results

9 Participant Satisfaction and Feedback

10 Conclusion

Introduction

Reentry programs are essential for helping to prepare individuals to successfully reintegrate back to their community after being incarcerated.

Specifically, these programs help to address the needs of individuals incarcerated in correctional facilities by offering a range of services such as job readiness, addiction recovery, cognitive-behavioral skills training, employment assistance, and mental health support (Phelps, 2011; Potts & Bierlein Palmer, 2014; Veeh et al., 2018). While there has been substantial research on reentry programming, the overall evidence on the effectiveness of reentry programs remains mixed (Berghuis, 2018; Petrich et al., 2022). Thus, while some programs and approaches have been found to be promising, there is some variability in findings across different settings and populations. This underscores the need for continued evaluation of reentry programs to identify programs that are both effective and adaptable to diverse contexts.

Researchers and policymakers tend to determine the effectiveness of a reentry program based on its impact on recidivism. However, focusing solely on recidivism to determine effectiveness presents several challenges when evaluating these programs. For instance, these programs often include short-term interventions with participants who may be serving life sentences or who are not expected to be released soon, making traditional recidivism metrics less applicable. Additionally, desistance from crime is increasingly being recognized as not a single event, but as a complex process involving a fundamental transformation in identity, values, and lifestyle (Weaver, 2019). This process can be non-linear, featuring periods of progress interspersed with relapses. Thus, there is a growing understanding that evaluations of reentry program should capture immediate behavioral and attitudinal changes as indicators of participants' progress toward long-term reintegration to allow for a more nuanced assessment of the impact of these programs (Maguire et al., 2019; Turner et al., 2024).

Assessing intermediate outcomes can provide a deeper understanding of the incremental changes that occurs as a participant prepares for their release back to the community (Maguire et al., 2019). When developing data collection tools, it is crucial for program developers to identify and utilize scales and outcome measures that reflect the specific dimensions they believe their program impacts. By doing so, they can ensure that the evaluations capture participant transformation—such as improvements in emotional regulation, social skills, or employment readiness. Furthermore, aligning these measures with the program's objectives ensures that the evaluations are directly relevant and truly indicative of the program's success in fostering meaningful and sustainable changes.

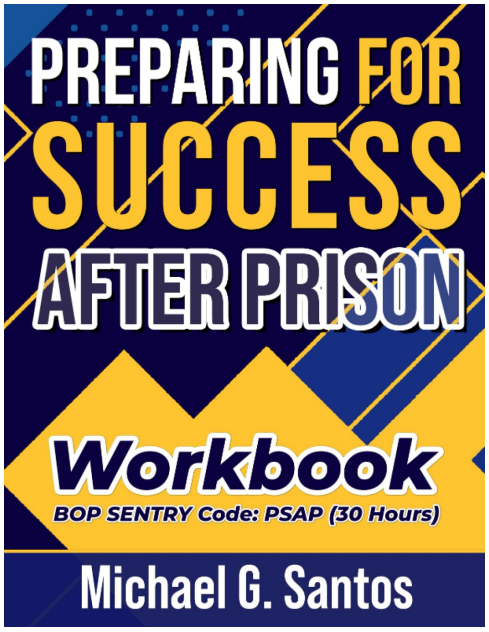
Evaluating reentry programs in correctional settings is often challenging due to factors such as maintaining program fidelity and unpredictable

operational issues, including lockdowns, as well as frequent participant transfers or releases (Petrich et al., 2022; Turner et al., 2024). These issues hinder consistent participant engagement and the accurate tracking of long-term outcomes, thereby complicating the assessment of the correctional-based programs. The integration of tablet-based programming offers a promising solution to some of these challenges as tablets can provide consistent educational and rehabilitative content, even during lockdowns or other operational disruptions. Additionally, digital platforms can facilitate the collection of real-time data on participant engagement and progress, enhancing the ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programs accurately across different facilities and conditions. Tablet-based programming allows for greater access to a wide range of programs that learners can complete at their own pace.

PSAP Program

Preparing for Success after Prison (PSAP) is a comprehensive tablet-based program designed to equip participants with essential skills for successful reintegration into society. The Edovo Foundation delivers the program through its electronic tablets to several hundred correctional institutions across the United States as part of the Edovo platform, which enables the delivery of free educational, vocational, and rehabilitative curricula from hundreds of providers to incarcerated individuals across the United States with access to tablets. The PSAP program strategically guides individuals through crucial steps, beginning with helping them define success, followed by assisting them in creating a strategic plan, setting priorities and developing tools, and finally, adjusting their plans as needed. It teaches them the value that comes from executing the plans, adjusting as necessary. The PSAP program urges participants to participate in self-directed learning opportunities that emphasize developing communication skills, critical thinking, and a self-directed work ethic.

Throughout the course, participants engage in detailed release planning. PSAP encourages participants to prioritize tasks, develop various tools, tactics, and resources that will advance their prospects for a successful transition post-release, as a law-abiding, tax-paying, contributing citizen. The PSAP program consists of 35 modules that include voluntary pre- and post-surveys. These surveys serve as a quality assurance measure, allowing PSAP staff to gauge participant progress and the overall impact of the program.



Methods

Researchers from the University of California, Los Angeles conducted a secondary analysis of de-identified PSAP pre- and post-assessment data extracted from the Edovo Learn platform. As part of the program, PSAP participants who agreed to participate in the survey component of the program completed an initial survey after reviewing the course overview module and a second survey upon finishing the final content module (Preparing for Success After Prison Final Exam). Participants not wishing to engage with the surveys had the option to bypass them and proceed directly to the first content module (Values and Goals). The PSAP surveys included items drawn from the following standardized scales:

- **Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument (IOMI):** The Intermediate Outcomes Measurement Instrument (IOMI) was originally developed for use in arts and mentoring programs (Maguire et al., 2019) but has since been successfully implemented in a diverse range of programs. It is a theoretically informed 29-item questionnaire that covers seven key domains such as resilience, wellbeing, agency/self-efficacy, impulsivity, motivation to change, hope, and interpersonal trust.
- **Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI):** The IRI, developed by Davis (1983), was designed to measure both cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy. For the PSAP evaluation, the Perspective-Taking (PT) subscale and the Empathic Concern (EC) subscale were used.
- **Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT):** The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), was created to assess emotional intelligence levels. It is a 33-item self-report measurement that has been shown to have good internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Schutte et al., 1998).



Participant Characteristics

The participants included adults incarcerated in correctional facilities across the United States who started and completed the program between January 1, 2024, and March 30, 2024. The study sample consisting of 145 participants who had complete baseline and follow-up data.

The study sample was predominantly male and primarily consisted of younger adults, with the largest groups being those aged 25 to 34 years and 18 to 24 years. The racial and ethnic composition was diverse, with American Indians, Hispanics, and Asians making up the majority, and smaller proportions of Black, White, and Other. Marital status varied significantly, with the majority being separated, or widowed, followed by legally married and never married.

Geographically, most participants were residing in correctional facilities (includes jails and prisons) located in the Western and Southern regions of the United States. The criminal history of the group revealed a range of arrests.

Description	%
Gender	
Male	76.6
Age	
18 to 24 years	28.3
25 to 34 years	37.2
35 to 44 years	20.7
45 to 54 years	12.4
55 to 64 years	1.4
Race and Ethnicity	
Hispanic	23.4
Black	4.8
Asian	21.4
American Indian	36.6
White	3.4
Other	10.3
Marital Status	
Never married	14.5
Living together	6.2
Legally married	26.9
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	50.4
Unknown	2.0
Location	
Northeast	7.6
Midwest	17.9
South	21.4
West	53.1
Total Arrests	
1 time	15.2
2 to 3 times	20.0
4 to 6 times	15.2
7 to 9 times	17.2
10 or more times	32.4
Arrests prior to the age of 18	55.2
Arrests for a property offense	40.7
Arrests for a violent offense	64.8
Arrests for a drug offense	53.8
Arrests for a sexual offense	15.2

Analytic Plan

Paired-sample *t*-tests were conducted to assess changes in agency, hope, impulsivity, motivation, resilience, trust, wellbeing, empathy, and emotional intelligence across time among the PSAP participants who completed a baseline and post-intervention survey. Paired-sample *t*-tests allow us look at change over time per individual but report the findings for the group. Thus, we do not need to control for other variables (e.g., age or race, etc.) in the analyses because each person is their own control case and demographic variables will not vary over time.

Statistical significance is represented by the "p-value." This value represents the probability that the observed results would have occurred if the program indeed did not have an impact on the participants. The commonly accepted minimal p-value that represents statistical significance is $p<.05$. Thus, a p-value of <.05 means that there is only a .05 percent probability that the observed difference between the pre- and post-test means for an item would have occurred if the program did not have an impact on the participants

Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey Results

Participants showed statistically significant improvement on 8 (80%) of the 10 measures analyzed. Specifically, there were statistically significant improvements in agency, hope, impulsivity, resilience, trust, wellbeing, emotional intelligence, and the perspective taking (PT) dimension of empathy. Significant change was not found in motivation or the emphatic concern dimension of empathy.

Pre- to Post-Assessment Change in Outcomes

Description	Pre-Program Mean (SD)	Post-Program Mean (SD)	Change	p-value
Agency	3.70 (0.81)	3.88 (0.85)	0.18 (0.77)	0.006
Hope	3.75 (0.98)	3.96 (0.99)	0.20 (0.98)	0.013
Impulsivity	2.54 (0.97)	2.28 (1.05)	-0.26 (1.00)	0.002
Motivation	4.46 (0.74)	4.43 (0.81)	-0.02 (0.63)	0.660
Resilience	3.57 (0.86)	3.71 (0.82)	0.14 (0.85)	0.046
Trust	3.75 (0.86)	3.90 (0.75)	0.15 (0.74)	0.015
Wellbeing	3.75 (0.88)	3.96 (0.93)	0.21 (0.88)	0.005
Emotional Intelligence	120.68 (19.34)	126.60 (18.35)	5.92 (20.23)	<0.001
Empathy-PT	17.50 (5.61)	19.51 (5.14)	2.01 (4.85)	<0.001
Empathy-EC	20.19 (5.29)	20.48 (5.25)	0.30 (4.76)	0.454

* p < 0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p <0.001

Participant Quote

I feel as if this program is life changing and has given me hope to pursue my success. Very well put together. Excellent course, thank you so much!

Participant Satisfaction and Feedback

This section presents findings on what the PSAP participants thought about the program. Participants were asked to provide feedback and rate the PSAP program on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent) as part of the post-intervention survey (excellent). The mean rating provided by these participants was 9 indicating a high degree of satisfaction with this program. Findings from the qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions showed that many participants liked the program because it provided them with tools to succeed.

Participant Quote

"I think the ideas that this program exposes people to are very positive, and if implemented can be constructive to building the foundations for a better life."

While not universal among all participants, the theme of hope resonated strongly with a few individuals. These participants described the program as a catalyst for renewed optimism and aspiration.

Another prominent theme from the qualitative analysis was the educational impact of the program. Several participants highlighted the program's informativeness and its role in expanding their knowledge.

A few participants reported that the program broadened their perspectives and deepened their understanding of various aspects of life. These individuals appreciated how the content encouraged them to think more broadly and critically, fostering a mindset conducive to personal development and effective problem-solving. This expansion of thought was credited with helping them see beyond their current circumstances, enabling a more strategic approach to future challenges and opportunities.

Participant Quotes

"I think it makes me realize the importance of setting goals. To live by values and principles in order to achieve them. Embracing challenges and developing a resilient mindset in the face of adversity. I think the overall message is one that most people in prison have never been exposed to. [The Presenter] is a positive role model for individuals who don't want to be mired down in the quicksand of prison life."

"It has given me a new way of looking at my time while incarcerated. It has shown me how to use my time wisely so I can and will be different and prepared for when my time is up. It is a positive force in what can be a negative environment. It gives you light at the end of the tunnel."

Conclusion

The findings from the PSAP program evaluation provide preliminary evidence of its positive impact on participants. The program appeared to enhance various aspects of personal development and emotional intelligence, which are crucial for successful reintegration into society. Participants rated the program highly, indicating strong overall satisfaction and a belief in its effectiveness. The tablet-based delivery of the program also suggests potential advantages in accessibility and engagement, as it allowed participants to interact with the content at their own pace.

The qualitative feedback generally supported the positive trends observed in the quantitative data. Participants expressed that the program provided them with practical tools and strategies for success, contributing to their personal growth and development. This is consistent with the findings of Veeh et al. (2018), who emphasize the importance of equipping individuals with practical skills for reintegration. Many participants noted that the program instilled hope and motivation, aligning with the observed improvements in hope and agency. Although the quantitative analysis did not show significant changes in motivation, several participants reported feeling more motivated due to their involvement in the program. This discrepancy highlights the potential limitations of quantitative measures in capturing the nuanced impacts of reentry and underscores the value of qualitative insights (Patton, 2002).

While the findings were generally positive, there are several limitations to consider in the evaluation of the PSAP program. First, the majority of program participants did not complete the surveys, resulting in a sample that represents only a small percentage of those participating in the program during the evaluation timeframe. This limited response rate may introduce bias and limit the generalizability of the findings, as those who chose to complete the surveys may differ in significant ways from those who did not. Additionally, this study employed a single group pre/post design, which has inherent limitations. Without a control group for comparison, it is difficult to attribute changes in the outcome measures solely to the program as other external factors or events occurring during the observation period could have influenced the results.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the PSAP program was delivered to correctional facilities across the United States, which enhances the geographic and demographic representation of the sample. Despite the limitations, the diverse locations and populations involved in the program delivery suggest that the findings may still provide valuable insights into the program's impact in various settings. Further research that includes a more rigorous design and higher response rates will be necessary to confirm and expand upon these preliminary findings.

References

Berghuis, M. (2018). Reentry Programs for Adult Male Offender Recidivism and Reintegration: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *62*(14), 4655–4676. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X18778448

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2025). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Fifth edition). Sage.

Galletta, E., Fagan, T. J., Shapiro, D., & Walker, L. E. (2021). Societal Reentry of Prison Inmates With Mental Illness: Obstacles, Programs, and Best Practices. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, *27*(1), 58–65. https://doi.org/10.1089/jchc.19.04.0032

Hussein, A. R., Acquah, E. O., & Musah, M. B. (2019). Testing the cross-cultural validity of Schutte self-report emotional intelligence test (SSEIT) scale. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *9*(12).

Jonson, C. L., & Cullen, F. T. (2015). Prisoner Reentry Programs. *Crime and Justice*, *44*, 517–575. https://doi.org/10.1086/681554

Maguire, M., Disley, E., Liddle, M., Meek, R., & Burrowes, N. (2019). *Developing a toolkit to measure intermediate outcomes to reduce reoffending from arts and mentoring interventions.* Ministry of Justice.

Petrich, D. M., Cullen, F. T., Lee, H., & Burton, A. L. (2022). Prisoner Reentry Programs. In E. Jeglic & C. Calkins (Eds.), *Handbook of Issues in Criminal Justice Reform in the United States* (pp. 335–363). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77565-0_18

Phelps, M. S. (2011). Rehabilitation in the Punitive Era: The Gap Between Rhetoric and Reality in U.S. Prison Programs. *Law & Society Review*, *45*(1), 33–68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5893.2011.00427.x

Potts, K. S., & Bierlein Palmer, L. (2014). Voices of Parolees Attending Community College: Helping Individuals and Society. *Community College Review*, *42*(4), 267–282. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552114534725

Qualter, P., Ireland, J., & Gardner, K. (2010). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis of the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale (SSREI) in a sample of male offenders. *The British Journal of Forensic Practice*, *12*(2), 43–51.

Turner, S., Calhoun, S., & Hess, J. (2024). *Intermediate Outcomes Final Report*. University of California Irvine: Center for Evidence-Based Corrections.

Veeh, C. A., Lattimore, P. K., Stainbrook, K., Aldridge, A. P., Pettus, C., Veeh, C. A., Lattimore, P. K., Stainbrook, K., Aldridge, A. P., & Pettus, C. (2023). The Impact of Traumatic Brain Injury on the Receipt of Services Following Release from Prison. In *Concussion—State-of-the-Art*. IntechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.109467

Veeh, C. A., Renn, T., & Pettus-Davis, C. (2018). Promoting Reentry Well-Being: A Novel Assessment Tool for Individualized Service Assignment in Prisoner Reentry Programs. *Social Work*, *63*(1), 91–96. https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swx050

Weaver, B. (2019). *Understanding desistance: A critical review of theories of desistance*. *25*(6), 641–658. https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2018.1560444