

Justice-Involved Veterans and Employment: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Promising Strategies and Interventions

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Foreword

In January 2012, after a one and one-half year strategic planning process and four years into the operation of VA's national effort to provide outreach to incarcerated Veterans, the National Steering Committee of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJO) set as one of five strategic goals the matching of justice-involved Veterans with the medical, mental health/psychiatric, vocational, and social services that would improve health and optimize successful community integration and safety for these Veterans. *Justice Involved Veterans and Employment: A Systematic Review of Barriers and Promising Strategies and Interventions* was completed in support of that goal.

Undertaken by investigators from the Center for Innovation to Implementation (Ci2i) at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System in Menlo Park, California, the structured evidence review is a comprehensive and critical examination of the employment needs and interventions which either are, or are thought to be, relevant to this population of Veterans. A wealth of careful, thoughtful, and clear assessment of the evidence awaits the reader of the structured evidence review. Examination and feedback from research and other leaders with significant experience in this domain provided critical input to the structured evidence review's final draft.

Intended audiences of the structured evidence review include VA and non-VA practitioners and service providers, criminal justice professionals, researchers and program evaluators, and leadership across all of these domains. The intended objectives of the structured evidence review are to: understand the current knowledge base regarding employment for this population of Veterans, describe the evidence base for intervention to aid in selection of interventions for this population, and highlight the many areas where further work is needed. In providing information on the state of what is available, this document provides the beginning elements of an agenda for evaluating developmental work through pilot and demonstration projects in order that policy questions such as effectiveness, staffing, and costs can begin to be informed.

It is important to acknowledge that evaluating work in this field is enormously challenging. Research usually requires specialized prisoner representation on Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), which is not common practice. IRBs and funding agencies may not support the randomized designs necessary to provide the rigorous evidence needed to evaluate interventions, although a compelling rationale has been put forth to do just this with justice populations (Gueron, 2000). Finally, the complexity of needs of this population strongly suggests the need for interventions complementary to adjunctive treatment/services, which newly developed effectiveness-implementation hybrid designs may be suited to examine.

Limitations of the structured evidence review include feasibility decisions on limits of depth of coverage across the potentially wide range of domains, and on not highlighting in depth critical overlapping dimensions such as housing and other psychosocial factors, mental health and substance dependence related issues, and impact of environment and stigma. In addition, VA's benefits, medical services, and mental health (broadly), and homeless services were taken as a given for this review.

Veterans Justice Programs (VJP) and Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES) acknowledge and appreciate the high quality of the structured evidence review by Ci2i. VJP and HVCES outlined the general structure and made the decisions regarding domain coverage, and Ci2i had license to assess the literature scientifically. We believe the structured evidence review makes a highly significant contribution to VA's mission with justice-involved Veterans:

To partner with the criminal justice system to identify Veterans who would benefit from treatment as an alternative to incarceration. VJP [and HVCES] will ensure access to exceptional services, tailored to individual needs, for justice-involved Veterans by linking each Veteran to VA and community services that will prevent homelessness, improve social and clinical outcomes, facilitate recovery and end Veterans' cyclical contact with the criminal justice system (Clark, Blue-Howells, Rosenthal, & McGuire, 2010).

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Executive Summary

Background

The high unemployment rate among justice-involved Veterans has prompted legislative action and the development of programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs to address this issue and assist in returning justice-involved Veterans to the workforce. To better serve justice-involved Veterans, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) developed services through Veterans Justice Programs (VJP), including Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) and Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV). These services and programs are intended to help ease the transition from incarceration to the community, including developing linkages to vocational training and employment opportunities for justice-involved Veterans. The services and programs may also address the personal, social and economic costs associated with incarceration. Even with these services and programs, justice-involved Veterans continue to face substantial barriers to employment, including the barriers related to a criminal record and educational and vocational deficits.

Employment difficulties among justice-involved Veterans occur within the interrelationship of unemployment, recidivism, and homelessness. Neglecting needs in any of those areas can limit positive outcomes in the other areas. Ultimately, employment may reduce recidivism as well as serve to enhance overall quality of life, such as reducing homelessness.

Method

The topic and key questions were developed in collaboration with national program staff from the VJP and Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCES). This review focused on synthesizing employment intervention studies for justice-involved adults as well as additional reports and publications on this topic. Two of the authors manually assessed search results from the EBSCO, Web of Science, ProQuest, and Scopus databases (approximately 600 unique hits), combining search terms for justice-involvement, employment, and terms related to the specific key questions. Additionally, we identified further relevant sources by searching a variety of websites such as criminal justice organizations, policy institutes, and research corporations with information pertaining to employment for justice-involved adults. Finally, we were provided several additional sources by representatives of VHA's Veterans Justice Programs.

Results

Key Question #1: What Are the Employment Needs and Barriers for Justice-Involved Veterans? Justice-involved Veterans face a variety of barriers to employment, including human capital and social skills deficits and employer-related and legal restriction barriers. While justice-involved Veterans have higher levels of education and recent employment than non-Veteran justice-involved adults, many justice-involved Veterans may still have challenges related to education and recent employment, likely have deficits generally in civilian employment experiences, and may lack job-readiness skills that are frequently desired by employers. Additionally, justice-involved Veterans may lack pro-social tendencies and have antisocial attitudes and behaviors that interfere with their ability to acquire and maintain employment.

Although criminogenic thinking and lack of job-readiness skills are likely to be a barrier for justice-involved Veterans, just as they are with justice-involved adults more generally, some literature suggests that, relative to other justice-involved adults, the military training of justice-involved Veterans may serve as a unique strength in terms of job-readiness skills. Service members gain a variety of skills, experience, and training while in the military, which can be translated to civilian jobs. A comprehensive review of academic literature found that being in the military exposed individuals to highly advanced technology and technology training, and Veterans may be able to leverage this knowledge to tasks in the civilian sector (Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2012). Additionally, justice-involved Veterans may maintain certain job-readiness skills developed during their military service. Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (2012) found support for hiring individuals with military experience due to the attributes, abilities, and characteristics that are generally representative of military Veterans. These include: high levels of self-efficacy, quick decision-making and response time, resiliency, team-building skills, leadership ability, and loyalty and organizational commitment.

Many justice-involved Veterans have additional needs, including mental health and housing, which take initial priority over employment. More than half of justice-involved Veterans have a substance use disorder, approximately one-third have other mental health problems depending on the sample, and nearly half have experienced at least one traumatic event (Saxon et al., 2001). Veterans are overrepresented in the homeless population and one-third of Veterans in prison and nearly one-quarter of Veterans in jail have a history of homelessness (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013; Tsai, Rosenheck, Kaspro, & McGuire, 2013). These mental health, homelessness and other related needs, such as child care obligations, transportation issues and securing necessary items for employment, present further barriers to employment as these needs may take precedence over employment needs.

Beyond the personal characteristics of justice-involved Veterans, legal restrictions on employment, the prevalence of employer stigma, and use of criminal background checks present additional employment barriers. Legal restrictions prevent employment in certain professions for justice-involved Veterans with particular criminal histories, including felony convictions, violent offenses, and sexual offenses. The offense profile of justice-involved Veterans indicates that many of these individuals will face legal restrictions on employment, since Veterans in state prison are most likely to have a current violent offense and nearly one-quarter have been convicted of a sexual offense. Furthermore, employers are more likely to hire individuals without a criminal record and a large majority of employers use criminal background checks to exclude applicants. Also, employers may be less inclined to hire justice-involved Veterans who received a less than honorable discharge from the military.

Additionally, many justice-involved Veterans have disabilities that interfere with their ability to work, and the receipt of entitlements and other financial disincentives such as automatic wage-garnishing for outstanding taxes, fines, or child support may further impact their motivation for formal paid employment.

Finally, employment needs and barriers may be affected by specific readjustment issues related to the time spent incarcerated, whether the individual was in jail or prison, and the family and community support received upon return. For example, individuals exiting jail and individuals exiting prison may have very different needs and barriers given that prisoners have often spent more time incarcerated and

disconnected from the community and may have developed a “prison mindset,” which means they have adapted to structured routines, have lost the ability to function independently due to lack of freedom of choice, unsure of how to meet their own basic needs, and have difficulty asking for help (Hartiens & McCarty, 2008). In contrast, individuals who have been in jail for a brief time may still have connections to employers, a place to live, and family support and therefore have more limited needs. Employment challenges exist for both groups, but it may be a different challenge that may present differing needs and barriers.

Key Question #2: What Assessment Tools for Identifying Employment-Related Needs and Job-Readiness are Available for Justice-Involved Veterans? Assessment of recidivism risk can help identify employment needs since many of the risk factors for recidivism are predictors of employability. An integrated assessment approach to identify the risk and needs of justice-involved Veterans can assist with the employment objective. Matching services to employment needs and interests, recidivism risk, and job-readiness is an important outcome of the employment assessment. Services should be tailored based on an individual’s level of risk and job-readiness with more intensive services focused on those with higher risk and less job-readiness. These factors can be determined using the Resource-Allocation and Service Matching Tool. Other correctional assessment tools can be used to identify risk and needs that will lead to barriers in employment, such as risk-related attitudes and behaviors. Job-readiness factors can be assessed through clinical interview and through objective assessment measures, such as the Systems Approach to Placement and other personality assessment measures. These measures can be used to evaluate an individual’s ability to obtain and maintain employment and potential barriers to employment. This information can assist professionals working with justice-involved adults seeking employment.

Justice-involved Veterans employment-related needs may be different than those of non-Veteran justice-involved adults. Veterans obtain valuable employment skills while in the military, but often have difficulty translating these skills to civilian employment. Employment-related needs and job-readiness assessment with justice-involved Veterans additionally requires matching job skills learned in the military with civilian jobs. Resources such as those available on the Veterans Employment Center website have been developed to assess skills and match military specific training with civilian job opportunities.

Key Question #3: What are the Effective or Promising Employment-Focused Strategies and Interventions for Justice-Involved Veterans? There are many employment-specific interventions for improving employment outcomes, including three frequently cited recommendations: (1) individualized treatment planning using a validated risk and needs assessment tool to provide an appropriate intensity of care, (2) initial interventions focused on individual deficits such as cognitive thinking, mental health needs, substance misuse, and education prior to participating in job readiness and placement, and (3) employment-specific interventions to increase job-readiness and maintain employment.

Although there are many specific interventions that directly target each barrier, it is important to focus on the types of interventions with the most cross-cutting impact across the barriers to address multiple needs. Overall, the most effective programs seem to provide vocational and job-readiness skills training and ongoing support to meet the needs of justice-involved Veterans through job placement. Both

vocational skills training for a specific job and job-readiness skills training are effective in preparing justice-involved Veterans for work. Providing these interventions in a structured environment, such as transitional work, allows for the development of time management and other organizational skills, as well as the acquisition of skills for appropriate workplace behavior. On-the-job training and mentoring provide further effective supports as justice-involved Veterans develop a skill set and job-readiness skills.

Support and treatment for other competing needs can be particularly important elements of an intervention. Integrating mental health and substance use disorder treatment with employment-focused interventions can be effective in improving employment outcomes. Supported Employment is a promising model for justice-involved Veterans with mental health treatment needs. Mental health treatment and other competing needs, such as child care, transportation, and assistance with obtaining documentation, can be addressed through intensive case management services. This intensive support should also include housing services for justice-involved Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, since homelessness negatively impacts employment. VA provides a variety of programs aiming to increase employment for homeless Veterans through job development and vocational assistance. Since VA is likely to be the primary treatment setting for the majority of justice-involved Veterans, it is crucial to consider integration of effective interventions in the aforementioned areas.

To address employer barriers, there are a few interventions that may be most effective in reducing employer stigma. These include training justice-involved Veterans how to discuss their criminal record, educating employers about the benefits and incentives for hiring justice-involved Veterans and developing relationships with employers who are willing to hire someone with a criminal background.

Justice-involved Veterans may also benefit from financial assistance and planning related to tax and child support arrears or any other outstanding debt that may impact their desire for formal employment. Individuals receiving entitlements may have additional concerns regarding the impact of employment on their benefits and may need assistance with addressing these concerns.

Limitations

While this review is intended to highlight employment-focused interventions for justice-involved Veterans, very few of the intervention studies focused on justice-involved *Veterans* specifically, with much of the research drawn from the literature on the justice-involved general adult population. There is minimal literature on justice-involved Veterans, and even less literature on Veteran sub-populations, such as women Veterans, older Veterans, and recent-era Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. We attempted to find resources related to employment needs and/or interventions for specific Veteran subpopulations in the literature, but were unable to find any. We identified limited information specific to justice-involved women, but not specific to women Veterans. However, we did not find indications that the needs of subpopulations are likely to differ significantly from the broad range of barriers we have highlighted, although there may be some variation in the prevalence or prioritization of barriers that should be considered in providing individually-appropriate treatment to subgroups of justice-involved Veterans.

We identified formal research on a wide range of employment-related interventions for justice-involved adults, including numerous studies that used a randomized design. However, the study sample had several important limitations, some of which influenced our decision not to attempt to carry out a quantitative synthesis. Although a good portion of the studies we examined used a strong methodology, the studies were often not directly comparable because of variations in the population targeted, the length of treatment and follow-up, and the specific outcomes reported. Furthermore, our interest was mainly in identifying specific ways to help justice-involved Veterans overcome barriers to employment, and it is not generally possible to isolate the individual impact of a specific intervention element in a study of a multi-faceted intervention. Any quantitative synthesis would have produced necessarily broad conclusions about whether employment interventions in general have a positive impact on outcomes for justice-involved adults, and similar analyses have previously been published. While our narrative synthesis was able to frame the results in a way that a quantitative synthesis would not have been able to, it was still limited by some of the same problems of study design inconsistency, in particular the lack of reported outcomes related to homelessness.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on this review, there are several gaps in the literature on employment interventions for justice-involved Veterans and several research questions still need to be addressed. Many of the research areas refer to the need for more research on justice-involved Veterans specifically and determining the nature of employment needs and barriers for this population.

- 1) Do the employment barriers identified in this review correspond to issues identified and prioritized by justice-involved Veterans with regard to becoming employed? Are there additional, unique barriers that should be taken into account (e.g., an individual's level of education or employment background/vocational skills)? If unique barriers are identified, how can this information best be integrated into VA services, and inform non-VA organizations that may provide employment services to justice-involved Veterans?
- 2) Does the prevalence of barriers and the priority placed on them by justice-involved Veterans themselves, differ across subgroups of justice-involved Veterans? For example, are there differences based on offense category (e.g., those with a sexual offense history, those with a drug offense history), gender, race, or age and era of service? If there are differences, what are the employment needs of each subgroup and how should services be tailored to meet these needs?
- 3) What are the effects of the promising strategies and interventions highlighted in this review on justice-involved Veterans per se? Do high-quality, well-designed trials highlight elements that may need to be adapted to the unique needs of justice-involved Veterans?
- 4) How do justice-involved Veterans fare in employment programs targeted at Veterans generally (both within and outside of VA)? Are they able to access such programs, and are the programs able to address needs related to their justice-involvement?
- 5) What are the short- and long-term impacts of employment, unemployment, and underemployment on justice-involved Veterans?

- 6) How well do current services available to justice-involved Veterans succeed in producing improvements across the related outcomes of employment, recidivism, and homelessness?

Introduction

The high unemployment rate among justice-involved Veterans has prompted legislative action and the development of programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to address this issue and assist in returning justice-involved Veterans to the workforce. In 2008, Congress passed the Second Chance for America's Veterans Act (H.R. 3467, 2007), which established a U.S. Department of Labor grant program in collaboration with VA for referral and counseling services to assist Veterans transitioning into the workplace in order to reduce criminal recidivism by reintegrating Veterans into meaningful employment. To better serve justice-involved Veterans, VA developed services through Veterans Justice Programs (VJP), including Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) and Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV). These services and programs are intended to help ease the transition from incarceration to the community, including developing linkages to vocational training and employment opportunities for justice-involved Veterans. The services and programs may also address the personal, social and economic costs associated with incarceration. Even with these services and programs, justice-involved Veterans continue to face substantial barriers to employment, including the barriers related to a criminal record and educational and vocational deficits.

To support these efforts to return justice-involved Veterans to the workforce, this review synthesizes research relevant to: (1) the employment needs and barriers for justice-involved Veterans, (2) assessment tools that can identify employment-related needs and job-readiness, and (3) effective or promising interventions or strategies for addressing employment barriers. This synthesis of the research on employment barriers and associated interventions can help to inform those developing and striving to improve programs for justice-involved Veterans seeking to secure employment. Ultimately, employment may reduce recidivism as well as serve to enhance overall quality of life, such as reducing homelessness. This review is directed toward any person or program focused on employment for justice-involved Veterans, including practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers, and in particular VJP programs (VJO and HCRV) and VA employment programs such as Compensated Work Therapy, which is not designed specifically for justice-involved Veterans, but serves a high number of them. This review is also useful for non-VA providers, such as programs funded by the Department of Labor, to provide a greater understanding of the employment barriers and needs of this population and how to address them. Also, included at the end of the review are tables that provide a concise summary of some of our findings. They highlight specific assessment tools to evaluate risk and needs, outline strategies and interventions to address barriers to employment, list employment intervention studies, and provide barriers to employment.

Background

Employment difficulties among justice-involved Veterans occur within the interrelationship of unemployment, recidivism, and homelessness. Neglecting needs in any of those areas can limit positive outcomes in the other areas. In the next sections we focus in particular on the direct relationships between unemployment and risk for recidivism, and unemployment and homelessness. The relationship between homelessness and risk for recidivism is well established (e.g., McGuire & Rosenheck, 2004; Metraux, et al., 2007), but it is beyond the scope of this report to examine it in depth.

Unemployment and risk for recidivism. An extensive body of research has established that a criminal record creates substantial barriers to employment and lowers employment prospects. Yet, finding and maintaining employment is an important component of successful reintegration to the community following incarceration or potentially with any criminal conviction regardless of whether it results in incarceration. Employment interventions with justice-involved adults focus on reducing these barriers by addressing human capital deficits (e.g., limited education or work experience) impacting employability. These interventions are also important due to the role employment plays in recidivism reduction. Research on the link between the two has revealed job stability reduces an individual's likelihood to reoffend. One study found that unemployed former prisoners were three times more likely to return to prison one year after release (23%) than individuals who were employed and making more than \$10 an hour (8%; Visher, et al., 2011). Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) shows high recidivism rates among former prisoners in the first year after release. Among prisoners who are arrested within five years of release, more than a third (37%) are arrested within the first six months after release and more than half (57%) are arrested by the end of the first year (Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). These data point to the importance of finding stability soon after release, and obtaining employment has been associated with successful reintegration more generally (Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2011). Due to the unique challenges justice-involved adults face in securing and maintaining employment, it is important for employment interventions to be tailored to the distinct characteristics of justice-involved adults, including personal characteristics that place them at risk of reoffending.

Unemployment and homelessness. In addition to the link between unemployment and recidivism, unemployment is heavily intertwined with homelessness. For example, justice-involved adults who experience at least one episode of homelessness anytime in the year before incarceration have lower employment rates than consistently-housed justice-involved adults (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008). Justice-involved adults who are employed are also less likely to be homeless (Cooke, 2004). Thus, improving rates of employment among justice-involved adults can play an important role in reducing and preventing homelessness in this population.

Unemployment among justice-involved Veterans. The most recent data indicate that approximately one-quarter of justice-involved Veterans in state and federal prisons, and local jails (23%, 28%, and 28%, respectively) were unemployed in the month before their arrest (Mumola, 2000). These rates, combined with the barriers that have been alluded to thus far, point to the necessity to address employment needs among justice-involved Veterans. To support this need, VJP aims to improve its ability to match justice-involved Veterans with appropriate services.

VA has begun to address the needs of Veterans involved in the criminal justice system through the development of the VJP. As noted above, the VJP consists of VJO, which serves Veterans interfacing with law enforcement, jails, and the court system, and HCRV, which services Veterans interfacing with the prison system. These programs link Veterans to VA and other services, and represent an initial point of contact with Veterans to address employment needs (through linkage and referral). VA staff conduct outreach in prison and jail facilities and connect with Veterans in the court system; they assess for needed services, including employment-related services, and incorporate this dimension into the overall community reintegration plan developed with the Veteran. Currently, VA provides a number of different

vocational programs to Veterans, including those with histories of justice-involvement, which may be able to address these needs, including any unique and/or additional needs resulting from their distinct military experience. Programs such as Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), which includes Transitional Work and Supported Employment, focus on improving employment preparation for Veterans with mental illness or coexisting physical disabilities in a supervised and supported environment, with many of those served having a history of justice-involvement (In a recent survey, 54% of Veterans admitted to CWT programs had a history of incarceration; Northeast Program Evaluation Center, 2013). In addition to VA vocational programs, many non-VA employment-related programs are tailored to Veterans and utilized by justice-involved Veterans, such as Veterans programs administered by the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) of the U.S. Department of Labor, and specifically serve both homeless Veterans (e.g., Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program) and justice-involved Veterans (e.g., Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program). In some cases, justice-involved Veterans may access non-VA employment-related programs with assistance from VA.

Methods

Topic Development and Key Questions

This report addresses the employment barriers and needs of justice-involved Veterans, assessment tools that can be used to identify these needs, and employment-focused strategies and interventions by providing a review of the literature for three key questions. The topic and key questions were developed in collaboration with national program staff from the Veterans Justice Programs (VJP) and Homeless Veterans Community Employment Services (HVCES). The key questions are:

Key Question #1: What are the employment needs and barriers for justice-involved Veterans?

Key Question #2: What assessment tools for identifying employment-related needs and job-readiness are available for justice involved Veterans?

Key Question #3: What are the effective or promising employment-focused strategies and interventions for justice-involved Veterans?

Search Strategy

We conducted an extensive search to identify publications relevant to our key questions and to identify an exhaustive sample of evaluations of employment interventions for justice-involved adults. Two of the authors manually assessed search results from the EBSCO, Web of Science, ProQuest, and Scopus databases (approximately 600 unique hits), combining search terms for justice-involvement (“justice-involved” OR “justice involved” OR offender* OR criminal* OR prison* OR parole* OR probation* OR inmate* OR incarcerat* OR reentry OR “re-entry” OR reintegration OR “re-integration”), employment (employment OR job* OR vocation* OR labor OR “paid work”), and terms related to the specific key questions (barrier* OR challenge OR facilitator* OR need* OR peer OR assess* OR inventory OR tool OR instrument* OR intervention OR random* OR strateg* OR program* OR evaluation OR outcome OR comparison). We identified further relevant sources by searching the websites of the following organizations: Vera Institute of Justice, Council of State Governments Justice Center, National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Abstracts, Campbell Collaboration, Cochrane reviews, Rutgers Library of Criminal Justice Grey Literature Database, Urban Institute, Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Mathematica Policy Research, John Jay College of Criminal Justice Re-entry Institute, Justice Policy Institute, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), RTI International, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), National institute of Corrections (NIC), RAND Corporation, University of Cincinnati Center for Criminal Justice Research, Prison Policy Initiative Research Clearinghouse. Finally, we identified several additional sources by examining the references of identified articles, and from a sample of publications provided to us by representatives of VA’s Veterans Justice Programs.

Peer Review

A variety of subject matter experts were contacted to participate in this review. Six experts provided feedback. Their suggestions and recommendations were incorporated into this review to strengthen the final document and included wording changes, additional citations of relevant work, and practical

considerations for providers assisting justice-involved Veterans with employment issues. Changes made as a result of reviewer comments include (but are not limited to) the following:

In Key Question #1, we added relevant citations and included examples to increase clarity of some of the barriers and added information in the summary section regarding specific readjustment issues and employment needs and barriers for individuals exiting jail and prison.

In Key Question #2, we expanded our discussion of assessment tools to include interest inventory assessments used to identify individual employment preferences and provided additional information about Veteran-specific employment resources.

In Key Question #3, we added relevant citations to enhance support for particular treatment interventions, added a discussion on Veteran peer specialists, and added further considerations provided by reviewers.

Finally, some reviewers provided information and/or asked questions outside the scope of this review, or for which there was no relevant research identified. We incorporated these questions into our recommendations for future research.

The reviewers included:

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Results

Key Question #1: What Are the Employment Needs and Barriers for Justice-Involved Veterans?

Justice-involved adults, particularly those recently returned from jail or prison, face a variety of barriers to securing employment ranging from human capital deficits (e.g., limited education, employment experience, and social skills) to legal limitations and negative employer attitudes. Despite these challenges, most justice-involved adults indicate a desire for stable employment, and employment has been shown to play an important role in reintegration and desistance from crime (Bushway & Apel, 2012; Uggen & Staff, 2001; Visher, Debus, & Yahner, 2011), as well as an important role in the prevention of homelessness (Cooke, 2004).

The following sections outline specific barriers to employment for justice-involved adults. We will highlight barriers to employment and describe the impact each barrier has on employment for justice-involved Veterans. The specific barriers include (a) lack of education and vocational skills; (b) criminogenic thinking and lack of job-readiness skills; (c) competing needs; (d) homelessness; (e) legal restrictions; (f) employer stigma and criminal background checks; (g) military discharge status; and (h) entitlements and financial disincentives.

Barrier: Lack of education and vocational skills.

Description and evidence. The first barrier to employment for justice-involved Veterans to be discussed is a lack of education and vocational skills. Compared to the general population, justice-involved adults have lower educational levels, work experience and vocational skills, which limits employment opportunities and increases competition for positions that are often low-wage (Harlow, 2003; Uggen, 2000). A common focus of programs for justice-involved adults (in prisons, jails, and the community) is to increase levels of basic education, higher education and/or vocation-specific training and experience (Davis et al., 2013; Visher et al., 2011). Increasing education and vocational skills and experience may help to moderate other employment barriers (such as the influence of criminal record stigma; Holzer et al. 2003).

Prevalence of education and vocational skills deficits among justice-involved Veterans. Compared to non-Veteran justice-involved adults, justice-involved Veterans have higher levels of both education and recent employment. Data from VA's Veterans Justice Programs showed that the mean number of years of formal education in samples from both HCRV and VJO was 13 years, with a range of 1 to 20 years (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012). According to a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), 91% of Veterans in state prison had obtained a high school diploma or GED, while 32% had at least some post-secondary education, and the rates for Veterans in federal prison were 94% and 42%, respectively (Noonan & Mumola, 2007). The rate of at least some post-secondary education in justice-involved Veterans was more than twice the rate for non-Veterans in prison (Noonan & Mumola, 2007). Nonetheless, justice-involved Veterans tend to have lower levels of educational attainment than other Veterans (Black et al., 2005; Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2009).

We did not identify any studies that directly measured vocational skills among justice-involved Veterans. However, rates of recent employment may provide insight into the amount of work experience, and serve as a proxy measure of vocational skills among justice-involved Veterans. BJS data indicates that

Veterans incarcerated in state prisons and local jails are more likely than non-Veterans to have been employed in the month before their current arrest (78% vs. 67% in state prisons and 72% vs. 63% in local jails; Mumola, 2000). In federal prisons, the difference was only significant when looking at full-time employment (65% of Veterans were employed full time in the month before their current arrest vs. 59% of non-Veterans; Mumola, 2000).

In contrast with the BJS data, which describes the employment rates of justice-involved Veterans as a whole, data from VHA's VJP focuses on Veterans who may benefit from VA services due to mental health (e.g., mental health and/or substance use disorders) and other psychosocial needs (e.g., homelessness). Specifically, VJP data collected in 2011 (more than a decade after the BJS data was collected) measured the employment pattern during the previous three years of Veterans contacted by HCRV and VJO. The data indicate that only 16% of Veterans were regularly employed full-time and between 2-3% (HCRV and VJO, respectively) were regularly employed part-time. Overall, like other justice-involved adults, many justice-involved Veterans likely have deficits in civilian employment experience that put them at a disadvantage in competing for jobs against applicants without a criminal record.

Barrier: Criminogenic thinking and lack of job-readiness skills.

Description and evidence. Beyond specific job skills and knowledge, more general job-readiness skills and attitudes are important for acquiring as well as maintaining employment (or even fully participating in vocational training programs). These skills include pro-social attitudes and habits such as productive communication and problem-solving skills, self-control, punctuality, reliability, and time management (Fahey, Roberts, & Engel, 2006). Job-readiness skills are often lacking among justice-involved adults and are an important part of Andrews and Bonta's conceptualization of "criminogenic" needs, i.e., personal characteristics that are associated with criminal behavior (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Justice-involved adults who have a history of long-term incarceration may have experienced an erosion of pro-social tendencies necessary for maintaining employment (Raphael, 2011). Deficits in these areas are important predictors of success in the community (e.g., in terms of recidivism), as well as employment success (Bucklen & Zajac, 2009; Varghese, 2012).

Prevalence of criminogenic thinking and job-readiness skills deficits among justice-involved Veterans.

While the prevalence rate of criminogenic thinking among justice-involved Veterans is unknown, some justice-involved Veterans appear to have a variety of issues that are similar to those with criminogenic thinking styles. A literature review of recidivism risk factors among justice-involved Veterans did not find a consistent measure of criminogenic thinking, but did identify studies that highlighted related concerns such as elevated aggression, sensation seeking, and disinhibition, as well as lower levels of remorse among justice-involved Veterans compared to non-justice-involved Veterans (Blonigen et al., 2014).

Barrier: Competing needs.

Description and evidence. For justice-involved Veterans, employment may fall within a hierarchy of needs often including treatment for mental health problems and other related obstacles (e.g., transportation problems, child-care issues and securing official identification) that may act as further

barriers to employment. These needs may take initial priority over employment, and/or they may require ongoing support during employment.

Mental health problems and substance use disorders alone are often a significant barrier to employment, even in the absence of justice-involvement. The relationship between employment and mental health treatment is bi-directional in that employment is an important predictor of treatment outcomes and mental health treatment is a predictor of employment outcomes (Becker & Drake, 2003; Wolkstein & Spiller, 1998). Research has found that justice-involved adults with psychiatric disorders have less stable employment than individuals without this risk factor (Michon, van Weeghel, Kroon, & Schene, 2005; Visher et al., 2011). Additionally, an examination of the relationship between substance use and employment among justice-involved adults indicates that employment earnings, duration, and stability are negatively affected by substance use (O'Connell, Enev, Martin, & Inciardi, 2007; Webster, Staton-Tindall, Duvall, Garrity, & Leukefeld, 2007). While providing needed treatment for mental health problems and substance use disorders to justice-involved Veterans is important in its own right, such treatment can also help to create the stability needed for employment interventions to be effective. Though meeting these treatment needs may enhance employability, participating fully in treatment may interfere with the ability to maintain employment unless specific attention is paid to balancing treatment and work schedules. Furthermore, for individuals who would still be under community-based correctional supervision (such as through probation or parole), mental health symptoms can make adherence to supervision difficult.

In addition to mental health needs that may take initial priority over employment, justice-involved Veterans may have other concerns that limit their ability to obtain and maintain employment, including (immediate term) securing official identification and work appropriate clothing, and (intermediate term) finding reliable transportation, and fulfilling child-care responsibilities (Duran, Plotkin, Potter, & Rosen, 2013). Some justice-involved adults have restrictions on obtaining a driver's license and are therefore reliant on public transportation and family and friends to meet their commitments, including competing demands by treatment programs or courts, and transportation assistance may improve their chances of meeting these demands (Staton, 2001). Child-care obligations can also be a significant barrier, highlighted especially often by justice-involved women, and may require flexible employment and/or child-care support (Alemagno & Dickie, 2005; Blitz, 2006; Tonkin, Dickie, Alemagno, & Grove, 2004).

Prevalence of competing needs among justice-involved Veterans. A review of the literature indicates a high prevalence of mental health and substance use concerns among justice-involved Veterans. Problems include those related to mood disorders, psychotic disorders, suicidality, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and a range of substance use disorders¹. While estimates vary across different study settings and designs, research indicates that over half of justice-involved Veterans have a substance use disorder (with some estimates as high as 71%) and a substantial portion have other mental health problems (e.g., estimates of 14%-51% for depression and 4%-14% for psychotic disorders), many of those problems co-occurring with a substance use disorder (Blodgett et al., 2015). Almost all justice-

¹ For a review of mental health related issues and barriers, including trauma and PTSD, see Blodgett, Fuh, Maisel, and Midboe (2013).

involved Veterans have likely experienced at least one traumatic event (e.g., 87% in a sample of Veterans in jail and 93% in a sample of Veterans in a jail diversion program; Saxon et al., 2001; Hartwell et al., 2014), often during childhood, and possibly including unique traumas related to military service (e.g., combat trauma, military sexual assault, and/or noncombat traffic accidents during service). Estimates of PTSD among justice-involved Veterans range from 4% to 39% depending on the sample (Blodgett et al., 2015). Overall, administrative data from VA Veterans Justice Programs has estimated that 32% of Veterans contacted by HCRV and 62% of those contacted by VJO are in need of psychiatric treatment, while the estimates for substance use disorder treatment were 38% and 66%, respectively (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012). Mental health treatment is likely to be an important element in the reintegration process due to the high rate of mental health and substance use problems among justice-involved Veterans.

As noted, other issues such as child care and transportation are frequently cited as challenges to employment among justice-involved adults (Redcross et al., 2010) and are therefore likely to be challenges among the subgroup of justice-involved Veterans, although to our knowledge there are no studies that directly assess the prevalence of these competing needs among justice-involved Veterans.

Barrier: Homelessness.

Description and evidence. Homelessness is strongly linked to justice involvement and is a significant barrier to employment among justice-involved adults. Unemployment is linked to ongoing homelessness and without a permanent address and housing stability, finding and maintaining a job is increasingly challenging (Cooke, 2004). In fact, in a sample of jail inmates, substantial differences were found in the employment rates of inmates who had been homeless in the previous year and at the time of incarceration compared to those who were consistently-housed. Inmates who had been homeless in the previous year had employment rates 9% lower than consistently-housed inmates and this difference was 25% for inmates who were currently homeless at the time of incarceration (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008).

Prevalence of homelessness among justice-involved Veterans. Veterans are more likely than non-Veterans to become homeless and are overrepresented in the homeless population (Fargo et al., 2011; Gamache, Rosenheck, & Tessler, 2001). Administrative data from VJO showed that approximately 23% of Veterans assessed by VJO specialists were homeless and an additional 23% were at risk of homelessness (e.g., unstably housed or at risk of losing housing; Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013). Additionally, the rate of some history of homelessness reported by Veterans in prison is 30% according to administrative data from the HCRV program, with 11% reporting chronic homelessness (Tsai, Rosenheck, Kaspro, & McGuire, 2013). However, the true rate of homelessness among ex-prisoners is likely underestimated by these statistics given that data from the HCRV program only captures homelessness in the year prior to incarceration and expected housing upon release. We were unable to identify longitudinal research that identifies homelessness in the period after release from incarceration in relation to employment.

Barrier: Legal restrictions.

Description and evidence. It is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to deny employment to applicants solely on the basis of criminal records. However, applicants can be excluded if the restricted offense is job related and consistent with business necessity (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has published the “Enforcement Guidance” on the consideration of arrest and conviction records in employment decisions to assist employers in the hiring of justice-involved adults. The EEOC issued guidance states that, because a disproportionate number of justice-involved adults are African American, ruling out applicants based on criminal convictions can be discriminatory under certain circumstances.

Prior to the 2012 EEOC guidance, most states allowed employers to deny jobs to any individual with a criminal record, regardless of the circumstances of the offense or its relevance to the job (Legal Action Center, 2009). Furthermore, convicted felons are barred from more than 800 occupations due to laws and licensing rules (Wright, 2013). Justice-involved adults are disqualified from employment in licensed or professional occupations, jobs in health care, public sector employment, security positions, and positions in contact with vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly (EEOC, 2012). Due to these restrictions, justice-involved adults are relegated to entry-level positions with low rates of job retention that pay less and require less experience (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2003). Most of these jobs are within the manufacturing, construction, food service, retail, and administrative and support services industries (Holzer et al., 2003; Lichtenberger, 2006). Additionally, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), justice-involved Veterans with mental health disorders should not be denied employment on the basis of their mental health or substance use disorder. In some instances, individuals with a mental health condition such as PTSD or depression could request an accommodation under the federal ADA, which may help these individuals achieve success in the workplace (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).

Individuals with sexual offense histories. This category of offenders faces more significant challenges to employment than any other group of offenders, including those convicted of other violent crimes. Individuals with sexual offense histories are subject to a level of scrutiny reserved for only a few categories of offenders (Brown, Spencer, & Deakin, 2007). There are many restrictions on work related to community supervision including the nature and location of a job (Schaefer, 2001). Individuals with sexual offense histories face exclusions on where they can live and work, often resulting in a return to an unfamiliar community and environment with little social support following incarceration (Schaefer, 2001). The Montgomery County Corrections and Rehabilitation Department in collaboration with the Center for Sex Offender Management recommended that individuals with sexual offense histories be barred from jobs that give them authority over potential victims (including coworkers and subordinates), work in service industry jobs that provide access to vulnerable populations (e.g., children, elderly, and disabled), and work near a playground or a school (Seleznov, Littel, & Matson, 2002). Additional employment-related restrictions include limitations on computer access and requirements to be at their home between certain hours (Brown et al., 2007).

Offense profile of justice-involved Veterans and impact on employment. The offense profile of justice-involved Veterans indicates that many justice-involved Veterans will face legal restrictions on employment, such as disqualification from employment in the types of occupations discussed above.

These restrictions may be more pronounced for those seeking employment who have histories of violent offenses, particularly for those with sexual offense histories, and hence overall for Veterans based on rates of incarceration for violent crimes.

According to BJS data, more than half (57%) of Veterans in state prison had been convicted of a violent crime (Noonan & Mumola, 2007). Veterans in federal prison, however, were most likely to be convicted of a drug offense (46%), with 19% of Veterans convicted of a violent offense. Additionally, Veterans in state prison (43%) and federal prison (23%) had high rates of violent recidivism defined as at least one current or past violent offense. Administrative data from Veterans in prison contacted by HCRV and Veterans in courts and jails contacted by VJO specialists provides additional information about the offense profile of justice-involved Veterans. Veterans contacted by HCRV were most likely to have a current violent offense (36%), followed by drug offenses (21%) and property offenses (20%). Veterans contacted by VJO in jails and courts were most likely to have a current public order offense (e.g., a weapons offense, public intoxication, or disorderly conduct offense; 29%), followed by violent offenses (25%) and drug offenses (22%). Prior violent and drug offenses, especially felony offenses, will limit the type of work Veterans are eligible for. Among Veterans contacted by VJO, almost one-quarter (24%) had a current charge of driving under the influence, which may lead to driving restrictions, making it more difficult to get to work and other obligations.

Justice-involved Veterans also have high rates of sexual offense convictions. Nearly 1 in 4 Veterans in state prison (23%) were serving time for a sexual offense compared to 1 in 10 non-Veterans (Noonan & Mumola, 2007). Moreover, the Department of Defense collects data on the number of active-duty military personnel held in military corrections facilities whose offenses fall under the Uniform Code of Military Justice rather than civilian jurisdiction. Since reporting began, sexual assaults have been the most common offense each year and the most recent data from 2004 found that 29% of active-duty personnel were in custody for rape or sexual assault (Noonan & Mumola, 2007).

Barrier: Employer stigma and criminal background checks.

Description and evidence. A criminal record is a considerable barrier to employment, especially when justice-involved adults are in competition for work with many individuals without a criminal record considering that employers prefer hiring individuals with no prior criminal history (Decker, Spohn, Ortiz, & Hedberg, 2014). The use of criminal background checks prior to hiring a prospective employee has risen substantially in part due to increasing legal accessibility and availability and also in response to an increase in negligent hiring lawsuits. Negligent hiring means employers can be held liable for the criminal actions of their employees due to the risk created by putting others in contact with someone who may be dangerous, which has caused employers to reconsider their hiring practices (Connerley, 2001). Employers want to avoid liability for the harmful acts that may be carried out by their employees and therefore use background checks to screen out prospective employees whose criminal history indicates they may be a danger to others (Peebles, 2012). Employers must be able to prove they took “reasonable care” in hiring, though what defines reasonable care is influenced by the specific responsibilities and work environment of each position (Kleiman & Kass, 2014). It is more likely that an employer who did not examine, or overlooked, the criminal background of an employee may be held legally responsible for wrongdoing by that employee in what is known as “special duty of care” jobs

(e.g., caretaking, jobs involving unsupervised access to property, and/or jobs involving medical treatment), and this may be less of a concern in the context of jobs that involve close supervision and no access to vulnerable populations (Kleiman & Kass, 2014). For positions involving public safety, some states have imposed mandatory background screenings to protect the public and the employer from a potentially dangerous individual (Watstein, 2009). However, liability may sometimes extend to employers even if the employer has no knowledge of the employee's dangerous tendencies at the time of hiring and when their employee's actions are not authorized and not within the purpose of serving their employer (Watstein, 2009).

There is a stigma associated with having a criminal record and employers may be reluctant to hire an individual lacking a stable work history. Employers perceive offenders to be less likely to exhibit employment-related skills and characteristics than the general workforce (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008) and significant bias exists against hiring those with a criminal record regardless of type of charge (i.e., misdemeanor or felony; Graffam et al., 2008; Street, 2012). While employer attitudes toward individuals with a criminal record present a substantial barrier to employment overall, these attitudes are heightened for members of racial minority groups and for individuals with sexual offense histories. Due to negative stereotypes, Black applicants with or without a criminal record are the most disadvantaged group seeking employment (Pager, 2003). For two applicants with an identical criminal record, race plays a role in employer decisions as justice-involved White adults are less stigmatized by employers than justice-involved Black adults with the same criminal record (Decker et al., 2014; Pager, 2003; Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009). Additionally, individuals with sexual offense histories also face substantial employer stigma. Brown, Spencer, and Deakin (2007) found that approximately half of the employers surveyed would not hire an individual with a sexual offense history regardless of the circumstances.

Employers have also been found to be less willing to hire justice-involved adults than any other disadvantaged group (Graffam et al., 2008). A survey of employers found that 20% "definitely would not" hire a job applicant with a criminal record and 42% said they "probably would not" hire someone with a criminal record. In comparison, only 1% said they "definitely would not" hire other disadvantaged (low-skill) groups including individuals on welfare, those with a GED and no high school diploma, those with an unstable work history, and individuals unemployed for more than a year (Holzer et al., 2002). Additionally, Street (2012) found that more than 60% of employers would not hire a justice-involved adult and by comparison, 92% of those employers indicated they would likely hire a current or former welfare recipient and 83% would hire someone unemployed for more than a year.

In addition to employer stigma as a barrier to employment, there are two issues that compound the negative effects of criminal background checks on employment: 1) the permanent inclusion of very old convictions, and 2) the unreliability of background check systems. An employer can use convictions that occurred many years ago to exclude an applicant from employment, even after an extended period without re-offending. In addition, state criminal record repositories used by employers to access criminal records often remain incomplete. A 2011 study by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and BJS reported that, as of 2010, many state criminal history record repositories still had not recorded the final dispositions for a significant number of arrests (Greenspan & DeBacco, 2011). An earlier (2006) study by

the DOJ and BJS found that only 50% of arrest records in the FBI's database were associated with a final disposition (Greenspan & DeBacco, 2011). Background checks do not consistently yield complete and accurate information and errors in criminal background checks occur for a few of the following reasons: (a) expunged or sealed records may not be erased from private companies or media archives and are therefore mistakenly revealed, (b) arrests are reported without verifying a conviction, (c) the same offenses are reported multiple times, and (d) errors in the degree of offense such as misdemeanors recorded as felonies (Meinert, 2012). The accuracy of information in criminal background checks is concerning given that surveys of employers find that a large majority (between 70% and 87%) conduct criminal background checks in pre-employment screening for some or all job candidates (Holzer et al., 2004; Society for Human Resource Management, 2012; Swanson, Langfitt-Reese, & Bond, 2012).

Prevalence of employer stigma and criminal background checks impacting employment for justice-involved Veterans. We were not able to identify any studies that reported the prevalence rates of employer stigma and criminal background checks for justice-involved Veterans specifically. However, we believe that the current literature that focuses on justice-involved adults should be largely generalizable to justice-involved Veterans. As previously discussed, given the relatively high rate of sexual offenses among justice-involved Veterans, employer stigma is likely a significant barrier to employment.

Barrier: Military discharge status.

Description and evidence. A less than honorable discharge imposes significant limitations on Veterans' VA benefits and may impact employment opportunities. Under VA regulations, punitive discharges, such as "Dishonorable" or "Bad Conduct," issued by general courts-martial disqualify a Veteran from benefits. Additionally, a less than honorable discharge blemishes a Veteran's record and may have an impact on employment if, for example, a potential employer inquires about their military service.

Verification of military service, sometimes requested by employers, can be provided using the military discharge form DD214. This form provides information on the type of discharge, but not specific discharge information, since a Veteran's military record is not considered public information (Rosser, 2013). According to state and federal Equal Employment and Opportunity laws, employers may ask applicants about the type of discharge (i.e. Honorable or General) they received, but the nature (e.g. the reason for a less than honorable discharge) of their discharge is considered private information that may not be requested (Minton-Eversole, 2013). However, there are instances where it is allowable to ask about the nature of discharge, such as on applications for positions requiring the employee to obtain security clearance (Rosser, 2013). While these restrictions can provide some protection from experiencing bias based on their discharge status, employers may sometimes be misled by the limited information. A Veteran who did not receive an Honorable or General discharge did not necessarily receive a Bad Conduct discharge. The distinction between administrative discharges and discharges resulting from courts-martial can be easily overlooked by employers and result in a barrier to employment for Veterans with any discharge other than Under Honorable Conditions.

Prevalence among justice-involved Veterans. According to BJS data, the majority of Veterans in state (62%) and federal (65%) prison received an Honorable discharge from the military, while 17% and 16% respectively received a General (Under Honorable Conditions) discharge. However, among state prisoners, Veterans not honorably discharged had more serious criminal histories and a greater number

of prior sentences in addition to higher levels of prior substance abuse (Noonan & Mumola, 2007). These characteristics may be added barriers to employment for Veterans who were not honorably discharged and these Veterans may require additional tailored services to meet their employment needs.

Barrier: Entitlements and financial disincentives.

Description and evidence. Monetary entitlements available to some justice-involved Veterans, as well as financial disincentives such as wage-garnishing eligible debt, may limit their motivation to find formal paid work (e.g., employed by someone with a tax ID number) and consequently limit the reintegration and stability benefits that often come with employment. Many justice-involved adults have legitimate physical or mental health disabilities that may interfere with employment, yet these may be difficult to tease apart from disincentives to work due to entitlements. The majority of justice-involved adults face financial obligations following release from prison (Visher, LaVigne, & Travis, 2004) and entitlements provide individuals who are disabled, unable to work, or who meet other criteria with an income. For justice-involved Veterans, such entitlements may include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Social Security Retirement Income, VA service-connected pensions, or VA non-service-connected pensions (these benefits and how employment, or earned income, impacts the receipt of them are described in the next sections). While many individuals receiving disability benefits are severely limited in their ability to carry out necessary tasks at a job, with proper support and appropriate accommodations, formal employment may be possible.

One study found drug offenders' receipt of other income-related services (i.e., Medi-Cal, general relief, food stamps, or assistance with housing, transportation, and other basic needs) was associated with lower odds of employment at one year follow-up (Evans, Hser, & Huang, 2010). More generally, among a sample of service-connected Veterans (not necessarily justice-involved), the common concern that work will impact the receipt of benefits led to more willingness to turn down a job than risk losing their benefits (Meshberg-Cohen, Reid-Quñones, Black, & Rosen, 2014). In particular, service-connected Veterans with a substance use disorder preferred receiving benefits to being employed (Meshberg-Cohen et al., 2014). Entitlements keep individuals at a low income level, so justice-involved Veterans who are able to work may be more inclined to find employment if they are required to meet financial obligations such as repaying debt and to comply with parole and probation conditions (Visher et al., 2011). Such conditions can increase motivation to secure employment quickly following release from incarceration.

Other financial obligations may have the opposite effect on employment. During incarceration, justice-involved adults may accrue substantial arrears, including unpaid child support and charges for interest. Child support policies in particular, which can result in up to 65% of take-home pay being automatically garnished, may drive justice-involved adults away from obtaining formal employment and toward positions paid "under the table" (Griswold & Pearson, 2005; Pearson, 2004). Justice-involved adults with restitution, fines, fees for court-ordered treatment, or other debt may be similarly disinclined to obtain formal employment in order to avoid having their wages automatically garnished (Holzer et al., 2003).

Entitlements.

Supplemental Security Income. SSI makes cash assistance payments to disabled individuals who are unable to work and have limited income and resources. Individuals in this category could benefit from low wage and/or part-time work if they earn less than the substantial gainful activity level (SGA; \$1,090/month as of January 2015). The SSA has created employment support provisions known as work incentives including Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE), Unsuccessful Work Attempt (UWA), and Ticket to Work (TTW). Each of these programs was devised to assist individuals with meeting their employment goals.

Social Security Disability Insurance. SSDI provides benefits to individuals who are disabled and have worked and contributed to the Social Security trust fund. These contributions are commonly known as Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes. Individuals earning less than the SGA amount keep their benefits. SSDI employment support provisions allow an individual to test their ability to work (known as the Trial Work Period). These support provisions may provide incentive for justice-involved adults who receive SSDI to gradually re-enter the workforce and test the job market, while continuing to receiving a monthly income.

Social Security Retirement Benefits. Monthly earnings impact the amount of benefits received for individuals who continue to work after receiving retirement benefits. Benefits are reduced if earnings exceed certain limits for the months before full retirement age is reached. Once full retirement age is reached, there are no limits on earned income and the full benefits are received. Retirement status might be an indicator of work motivation.

VA Service-Connected Pensions. A Veteran may receive a VA service-connected (SC) pension for illness or injury related to his or her time in the military. For most Veterans with SC pensions, monthly earnings will not impact their pension; these benefits are not reduced due to income earned through VA employment services².

VA Non-Service-Connected Pensions. Pension for a non-service-connected disability is a tax-free monetary benefit for low-income wartime Veterans (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014c). NSC pensions have the biggest implications for employment. Earned income from work will terminate NSC benefits with the exclusion of Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) programs such as Transitional Work (TW), Incentive Therapy (IT), and Supported Employment (SE), three VA programs which are discussed below. Therefore, there may be a large disincentive to work for Veterans receiving these benefits. Veterans are in essence barred from employment if they wish to keep their NSC pensions.

Entitlement rates among justice-involved Veterans. Combining all Social Security benefits, Veteran beneficiaries comprise approximately 45% of the total Veteran population (Olsen & O'Leary, 2011). More specifically, of Veterans receiving Social Security benefits, approximately 8% receive benefits because of a disability (SSDI). The age profile of Veterans indicates that many individuals are close to or have already met the age requirements for retirement benefits with 93% of Veteran beneficiaries aged

² Veterans and their advocates are encouraged to consult with Veterans Benefits Office personnel and/or Veteran Service Officers for a clear understanding of the complexities of benefits determinations and associated impact of earnings from employment.

62 or older (Olsen & O'Leary, 2011). Also, older age groups are overrepresented among justice-involved adults who are Veterans. For example, in a 2004 survey of prisoners who were at least 55 years old and within two-years of release, 40% were Veterans (Williams et al., 2010). Justice-involved Veterans in state prison have a median age of 45, with approximately 1 in 5 Veterans aged 55 or older (Noonan & Mumola, 2007).

Among the general Veteran population, approximately 15% of all Veterans have a service-connected disability. Veterans with a lower service-connected disability rating are more likely to be in the labor force than those with a higher rating. For example, Veterans with a service-connected disability rating of less than 30% are nearly twice as likely to be in the labor force as those with a rating of 60% or higher (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Prior research has also found that Veterans with a service-connected disability of 50% or higher were less likely to access employment services and were more likely to be unemployed or not looking for employment (Abraham, Ganoczy, Yosef, Resnick, & Zivin, 2014; Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013). According to VA administrative data, 14% of Veterans assessed by VJO specialists have VA non-service-connected income (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013).

Additionally, according to VA's Veterans Justice Programs, many justice-involved Veterans have outstanding debt, including child support (17% of those contacted by HCRV and 12% of those contacted by VJO), fines or legal obligations (28% HCRV and 23% VJO), and outstanding tax bills (6% HCRV and 5% VJO; Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012).

Summary of Key Question #1. Justice-involved Veterans face a variety of barriers to employment, including human capital and social skills deficits and employer-related and legal restriction barriers. While justice-involved Veterans have higher levels of education and recent employment than non-Veteran justice-involved adults, many justice-involved Veterans may still have challenges related to education and recent employment, likely have deficits generally in civilian employment experiences, and may lack job-readiness skills that are frequently desired by employers. Additionally, justice-involved Veterans may lack pro-social tendencies and have antisocial attitudes and behaviors that interfere with their ability to acquire and maintain employment.

Although criminogenic thinking and lack of job-readiness skills are likely to be a barrier for justice-involved Veterans, just as they are with justice-involved adults, there is some literature that suggests that, relative to other justice-involved adults, the military training of justice-involved Veterans may serve as a unique strength in terms of job-readiness skills. Service members gain a variety of skills, experience, and training while in the military, which can be translated to civilian jobs. A comprehensive review of academic literature found that being in the military exposed individuals to highly advanced technology and technology training, and Veterans may be able to leverage this knowledge to tasks in the civilian sector (Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2012). Additionally, justice-involved Veterans may maintain certain job-readiness skills developed during their military service. Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (2012) found support for hiring individuals with military experience due to the attributes, abilities, and characteristics that are generally representative of military Veterans. These include: high levels of self-efficacy, quick decision-making and response time, resiliency, team-building skills, leadership ability, and loyalty and organizational commitment.

Many justice-involved Veterans have additional needs, including mental health and housing, which take initial priority over employment. More than half of justice-involved Veterans have a substance use disorder, a considerable portion have other mental health problems, and nearly half have experienced at least one traumatic event. Veterans are overrepresented in the homeless population and one-third of Veterans in prison and nearly one-quarter of Veterans in jail have a history of homelessness. These mental health, homelessness and other related needs (e.g., child care obligations, transportation issues and securing necessary items for employment), present further barriers to employment as these needs may take precedence over employment needs.

Beyond the personal characteristics of justice-involved Veterans, legal restrictions on employment, the prevalence of employer stigma, and use of criminal background checks present additional employment barriers. Legal restrictions prevent employment in certain professions for justice-involved Veterans with particular criminal histories, including felony convictions, violent offenses, and sexual offenses. The offense profile of justice-involved Veterans indicates that many of these individuals will face legal restrictions on employment, since Veterans in state prison are most likely to have a current violent offense and nearly one-quarter have been convicted of a sexual offense. Furthermore, employers are more likely to hire individuals without a criminal record and a large majority of employers use criminal background checks to exclude applicants. Also, employers may be less inclined to hire justice-involved Veterans who received a less than honorable discharge from the military.

Additionally, many justice-involved Veterans have disabilities that interfere with their ability to work, and the receipt of entitlements and other financial disincentives such as automatic wage-garnering for outstanding taxes, fines, or child support may further impact their motivation for formal paid employment.

Employment needs and barriers should be considered in the context of specific readjustment issues related to the time spent incarcerated, whether the individual was in jail or prison, and the family and community support received upon return. For example, individuals exiting jail versus prison may have very different needs and barriers given that prisoners have often spent more time incarcerated and disconnected from the community and may have developed a “prison mindset,” which means they have adapted to structured routines, have lost the ability to function independently due to lack of choice, do not know how to meet their own basic needs, and have difficulty asking for help (Hartiens & McCarty, 2008). In contrast, individuals who have been in jail for a brief period of time may still have connections to employers, a place to live, and family support and therefore may have more limited needs.

Employment challenges exist for both groups, but it may be a different challenge that may present differing needs and barriers.

Key Question #2: What Assessment Tools for Identifying Employment-Related Needs and Job-Readiness are Available for Justice-Involved Veterans?

Assessment of employment needs and job-readiness is important in improving successful job placement and long-term success by linking justice-involved Veterans to interventions tailored to individual needs and characteristics. Such assessments can either be focused exclusively on employment needs and job readiness, or they may be elements of a broader, integrated assessment of needs (e.g., including mental and physical health assessments). For example, given the important role employment plays in reducing

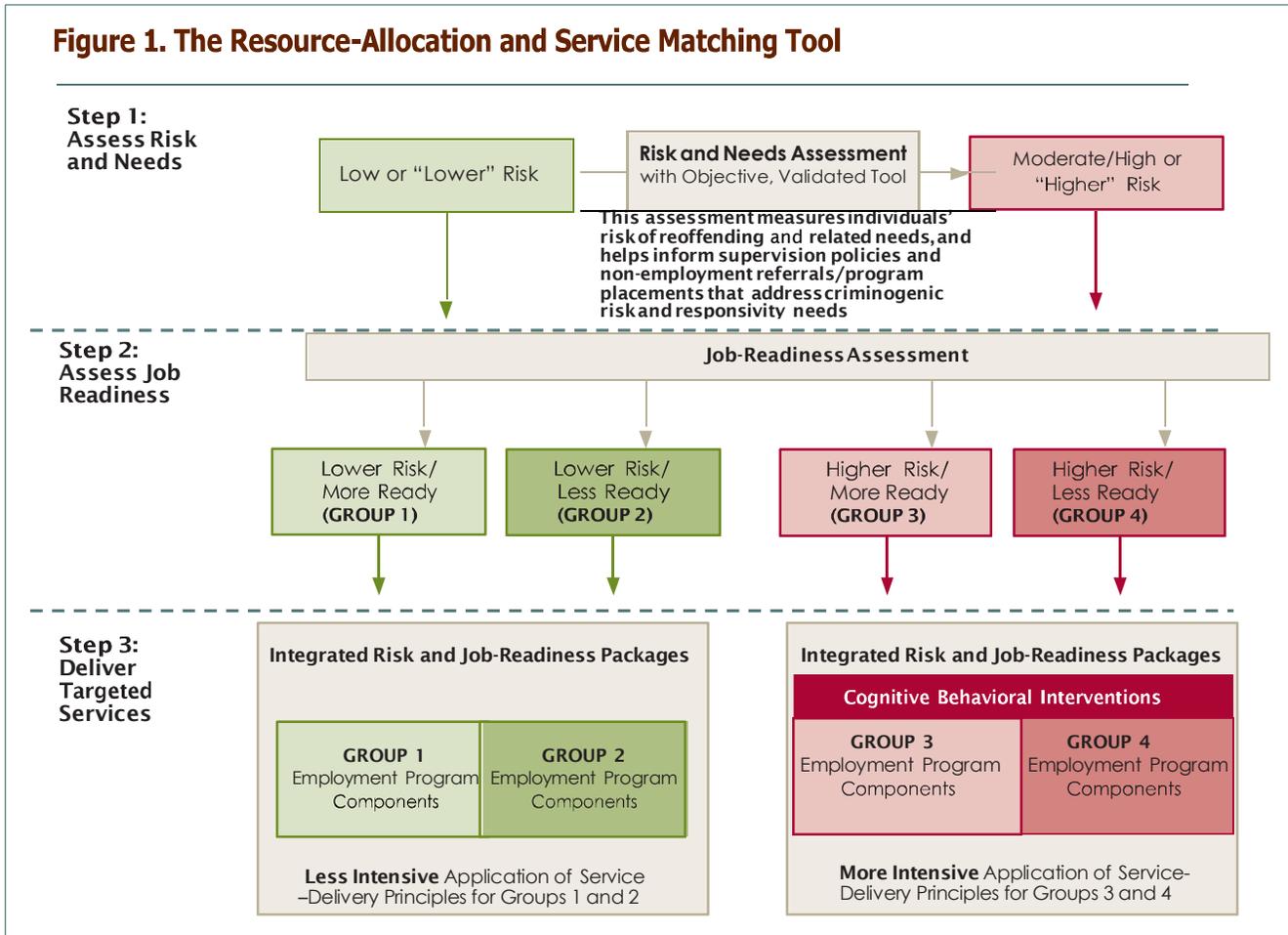
recidivism and providing stability following incarceration, an effective employment strategy may include the assessment of an individual's risk of reoffending. Such assessment tools can help identify individual's criminogenic risks and needs and characteristics that may need to be addressed before intervention begins. Screening and assessment tools can also assist in matching the most effective combination of services to individual needs. Identifying individuals with the highest risk and employment needs and targeting resources to those individuals can help reduce recidivism (Duran et al., 2013). In the following section, we first discuss the assessment of criminogenic risk and needs and the use of Risk-Needs-Responsivity principles. Next, we discuss the assessment of job-readiness factors and other barriers to employment. Finally, we consider how the assessment process can best take into account the unique needs and experiences of justice-involved Veterans.

Risk and needs assessment. The factors associated with recidivism risk and employability overlap considerably. Thus, assessment of risk and needs associated with recidivism is critical to increasing employment outcomes. Much research on recidivism reduction has assisted in the development of the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) theoretical model, which is focused on identifying the key factors that are associated with heightened risk of recidivism. The three core principles of the RNR model – *risk*, *need*, and *responsivity* – are used to prioritize services and allocate resources, direct treatment, and connect individuals with appropriate interventions (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). According to the risk principle, the intensity of services should match an individual's risk of recidivism, prioritizing services for individuals at moderate or high risk. The need principle indicates services should target “criminogenic needs,” defined as dynamic factors associated with criminal behavior that can be altered. These include characteristics such as antisocial attitudes, or circumstances such as negative familial dynamics and social influences (Duran et al., 2013). The third principle, responsivity, indicates the importance of matching treatment interventions to an individual's learning style and abilities. These interventions should target the needs identified in the risk assessment. The large amount of research on the effectiveness of RNR principles indicates that the use of these principles can reduce the risk of recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2010) and these principles highlight the importance of using risk and needs assessments to determine individual characteristics associated with recidivism (Duran et al., 2013). From this assessment, individuals can be matched with appropriate services and treatment to address needs that may require additional attention prior to an intervention and resources can be allocated to individuals who need them most (for more information about the RNR model and a summary of validity evidence, see Blodgett, Fuh, Maisel, & Midboe, 2013).

Consistent with RNR principles, an integrated approach to assessment that is focused on recidivism reduction and improving employment outcomes has been developed. The Council of State Governments Justice Center, in collaboration with the Center for Employment Opportunities, introduced the *Resource-Allocation and Service-Matching Tool* to assess factors associated with an individual's risk of reoffending and job-readiness in order to appropriately allocate resources (Duran et al., 2013). This tool assesses risk for criminal activity (low risk to high risk) and related needs, combined with a job-readiness assessment (less ready to more ready), including an assessment of an individual's skills, strengths, and attitude about work, that identifies characteristics that put individuals at a disadvantage in the workforce, such as limited work history and low levels of education or occupational training (Harlow, 2003; Uggen,

2000). This information is then used to focus resources and align services where they will be most effective (See Figure 1). For further information about how to use this tool see Duran et al., 2013.

Figure 1. The Resource-Allocation and Service Matching Tool



Source: (adapted from Duran et al., 2013)

Correctional assessment tools can also be used to identify risk and needs to focus appropriate resources to justice-involved adults who are at high risk of recidivism. These assessment tools can identify needs, such as negative behaviors and criminal attitudes, that will lead to barriers in employment and help individuals working with justice-involved adults pair resources with specific needs (Lawrence, 2010; Solomon et al., 2008). Table 1 provides an overview of several specific assessment tools, including The Correctional Assessment and Intervention System (CAIS; National Council on Crime & Delinquency, n.d.), Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS; Northpointe, n.d.), The Offender Intake Assessment (OIA; Motiuk, 1997), The Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2004), and the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS; Latessa, Lemke, Makarios, Smith, & Lowenkamp, 2010).

To optimize success in the labor market, in addition to identifying employment skills, services will also need to address risk-related attitudes and behaviors that may interfere with employment (Duran et al., 2013). Specific adaptive attitudes and behaviors that may promote successful employment outcomes

can be identified during the employment-related assessment, including willingness to work (even in unskilled or entry-level positions), employment preparation, searching for and obtaining work, adapting to work, and resilience when faced with challenges (Brown, Lent, & Knoll, 2013). An individual's motivation to find work and positive perceptions of the likelihood they will be able to find work are associated with better employment outcomes (e.g., finding and keeping a job) and should be included in an employment-needs assessment (Gillis & Andrews, 2005). Many of the attitudes and behaviors that are predictors of employability (e.g., interpersonal skills, ability to manage emotions, and antisocial attitudes) are analogous to risk factors for recidivism. Therefore, structured assessment of recidivism risk can help identify employment needs.

Additionally, identifying work that is consistent with an individual's interests, values, and skills may lead to more successful employment outcomes (Brown et al., 2013). It is important to take into account the employment preferences of justice-involved adults as well as matching individual characteristics with the work environment. By identifying individual characteristics and employment preferences, justice-involved adults may be paired with work environments best suited to their needs. Interest inventories (e.g., Self-Directed Search, Strong Interest Inventory, and Career Assessment Inventory) may be used to identify individual employment preferences and administered in addition to other risk and needs assessment tools. Vocational interests may further be impacted by age and generational characteristics. Derzis, Shippen, Meyer, Curtis, and Houchins (2013) administered the Self Directed Search inventory to justice-involved adults in prison with a range of ages from 21 to 61 years of age (mean age of 39) and found that there are generational differences in vocational interests and values that indicate different employment settings to ensure vocational success. Matching vocational interests and generational affiliation with vocational opportunities may lead to improved employment outcomes and in turn lead to a reduction in recidivism.

An alternative assessment focus utilizes a strength-based approach, which identifies personal strengths, skills, and healthy behaviors of justice-involved adults (Solomon, Osborne, LoBuglio, Mellow, & Mukamal, 2008). This approach allows individuals working with justice-involved adults to take advantage of specific abilities and build on these positive qualities that may assist in better employment outcomes (Clark, 1997).

Job-readiness assessment. An important component in improving employment outcomes and reducing homelessness and recidivism among justice-involved adults is matching services to an individual's level of job-readiness. There is an overlap between responsivity factors and job-readiness factors that need to be considered for job placement (Duran et al., 2013). Job-readiness is based on personal characteristics necessary to find and maintain employment. For example, job-searching skills, problem-solving skills, communication and interpersonal skills, work ethic, and interview preparedness are all indicators of job-readiness (Rakis, 2005). Job-readiness also includes personal characteristics that may undermine or contribute to an individual's success in the labor market, including health, substance use, education, and work experience (Duran et al., 2013). The level of services required to meet each individual's needs varies, from minor assistance with completing a job search to more extensive educational and vocational training. Some individuals may need assistance with finding a job, but may focus on positions that do not require high levels of interpersonal skills to succeed and therefore may not need to have

these personal characteristics addressed. Job-readiness can be assessed in a clinical interview by collecting information pertaining to an individual's employment history, education, certifications, and attitudes about work (Duran et al., 2013).

Objective assessment tools can also be used to assess job-readiness (see Table 2). For example, the *Systems Approach to Placement: Intake Assessment and Outcome Evaluation* is composed of eight subsystems and a total of 72 job placement related items used to evaluate an individual's ability to obtain and maintain employment. This tool offers a diagnostic approach to better identify an individual's employment and placement needs (Kundu, Schiro-Geist, & Dutta, 2005). Additionally, an evaluation of the factors within the eight subsystems can assist in identifying potential barriers to employment, including personality, abilities, skills, and work experiences (the client subsystem); specific disabilities and emotional stability (the health subsystem); formal and informal educational training and technical skills/on-the-job training (the education subsystem); and, employer's attitudes and job development potential (the employer subsystem; Kundu et al., 2005).

Personality assessments (e.g., Personality Assessment Inventory, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2, Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III) can also be useful if integrated within the job-readiness assessment to understand an individual's specific traits. Based on their personality traits and other job-readiness skills, individuals can be matched to jobs that may be most suitable for them. The information from these assessments can also assist professionals working with justice-involved adults in preparing a vocational plan or an individualized plan for employment (IPE), which outlines the individual's vocational goals and the services to be provided to reach that goal (Beveridge & Fabian, 2007).

Assessment of justice-involved Veterans. Justice-involved Veterans are a unique subgroup of justice-involved adults due to the training and experience they receive during military service. Thus, the employment-related needs of justice-involved Veterans may be different than non-Veteran justice-involved adults. To address the specific needs of justice-involved Veterans, the National Institute of Corrections is working with a multi-disciplinary advisory committee to develop an assessment that will be used as a screening tool to identify the clinical and criminogenic need factors of justice-involved Veterans (National Institute of Corrections, 2014). A risk and needs assessment protocol will also be developed and used as an operational guide for multi-disciplinary teams within Veteran's treatment courts (National Institute of Corrections, 2014).

While Veterans possess a variety of marketable skills learned in the military, translating these skills to the civilian sector poses some challenges. According to a national military survey conducted on behalf of the University of Phoenix by Harris Poll (University of Phoenix, 2014), the most identified skills learned in the military that Veterans believe are most beneficial to employers are responsibility, teamwork, ability to work under pressure, leadership, problem-solving, and communication skills. Therefore, justice-involved Veterans may be at an advantage in the labor market and may appear more job-ready than other justice-involved adults. However, some Veterans do not know how to translate their skills to civilian jobs and end up in positions beneath their skill set putting them at risk of being underemployed. The survey found that 61% of Veterans have previously been or currently are in jobs beneath their skill set.

To improve the transition from military service to civilian employment, employment resources have been created to assist Veterans with matching job skills learned in the military with civilian jobs. The Veterans Employment Center is an online source for connecting Veterans with career opportunities with public and private-sector employers (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014e). This resource includes a military skills translator career tool (<https://employmentportal.herokuapp.com/skills-translator>) to learn about career options that best suit a Veteran's skill set based on their branch of service, military pay grade, and military occupation code or job title. This Veteran-specific tool can be used to help identify job-readiness by assessing vocational skills required for a specific job. For example, jobs within each branch of the military require specific duties to be performed, which may provide Veterans with particular skills that translate to the civilian sector. Using the military skills translator tool, Veterans can select civilian skills comparable to their military skills and experience and customize it into a personalized resume. Veterans may need assistance with how to promote their skills and experience and connect these to skills required for civilian jobs. Integrating the assessment of employment-related factors with the translation of skills for justice-involved Veterans is key for successful employment outcomes. Justice-involved Veterans may have employment-related needs based on personal characteristic deficits that make them less competitive in the labor market despite possessing skills learned in the military that make them qualified applicants.

Summary of Key Question #2. Assessment of recidivism risk can help identify employment needs since many of the risk factors for recidivism are predictors of employability. An integrated assessment approach to identify the risk and needs of justice-involved Veterans can assist with the employment objective. Matching services to employment needs and interests, recidivism risk, and job-readiness is an important outcome of the employment assessment. Services should be tailored based on an individual's level of risk and job-readiness with more intensive services focused on those with higher risk and less job-readiness. These factors can be determined using the Resource-Allocation and Service Matching Tool and other correctional assessment tools can be used to identify risk and needs that will lead to barriers in employment, such as risk-related attitudes and behaviors. Job-readiness factors can be assessed through clinical interview and through objective assessment measures such as the Systems Approach to Placement and other personality assessment measures, which can be used to evaluate an individual's ability to obtain and maintain employment and potential barriers to employment. This information can assist professionals working with justice-involved adults seeking employment.

Justice-involved Veterans employment-related needs may be different than those of non-Veteran justice-involved adults. Veterans obtain valuable employment skills while in the military, but often have difficulty translating these skills to civilian employment. Employment-related needs and job-readiness assessment with justice-involved Veterans additionally requires matching job skills learned in the military with civilian jobs. Resources such as those available on the online Veterans Employment Center have been developed to assess skills and match military specific training with civilian job opportunities.

Key Question #3: What are the Effective or Promising Employment-Focused Strategies and Interventions for Justice-Involved Veterans?

Overview of previous research. The majority of previous research related to interventions to increase employment among justice-involved adults has focused on such interventions as tools to reduce

recidivism, based on research and assumptions about the relationship between the two (Andrews et al., 2006; Duran et al., 2013). To this end, past systematic reviews have largely focused on the association between employment interventions and recidivism, rather than the direct relationship between employment interventions and employment (Aos et al., 2006; Bouffard et al., 2000; Visher et al., 2005). The evaluation literature has mostly focused on employment programs for individuals in correctional facilities, and findings from these reviews indicate that employment interventions are effective in reducing recidivism among participants (Aos et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2000). However, systematic reviews of the relationship between community employment programs and recidivism has not yielded the same positive results, finding that these programs are not effective in reducing recidivism (Visher et al., 2005; Moses, 2012). To add to this literature on employment program outcomes, we will focus on employment as its own important outcome, independent of recidivism. We identified three reviews of employment related interventions that evaluated employment outcomes (Davis et al., 2013; Hurry et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2000).

Davis et al. (2013) identified nine studies of prison vocational education programs (within a larger analysis of all types of prison education programs), and found that participants in these programs had, on average, 28% higher odds of employment after release than study subjects who did not participate in such programs. Similarly, Wilson et al. (2000) identified nine experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations of education, vocation, and work programs for justice-involved adults that reported employment outcomes. Overall, these programs were associated with a significant increase in employment after participation (participants had about twice the odds of employment than non-participants). These increases in employment were also associated with decreases in recidivism (i.e., 38% of the reduction in recidivism was accounted for by the increase in employment); however, the authors note that they were unable to rule out selection bias as an explanation for both outcomes (Wilson et al., 2000).

Hurry et al. (2006) identified seven studies they rated as good quality (i.e., the studies compared at least two groups and included a follow-up period of at least 3 months) examining programs to promote employment among justice-involved adults. Using guidelines laid out in Sherman et al. (2000), which classify interventions as “working” if their effectiveness is supported by at least two high quality studies as well as the preponderance of other evidence, Hurry et al. (2006) concluded that prison work and vocational training programs were effective in terms of increasing the likelihood of employment after participation. On the other hand, community-based employment programs were deemed “promising” because only one study was identified, though it showed a positive impact on employment for the intervention tested. The authors also found evidence that younger justice-involved adults (i.e., those under 26 years old), may be less likely to engage and benefit from employment interventions. Furthermore, the study samples generally included few, if any, women, and often did not report the racial make-up of the samples, or assess possible outcome differences based on race (Hurry et al., 2006).

Aside from these systematic reviews, we found several expert reports that provide recommendations for those working to improve employment outcomes among justice-involved adults (Duran et al., 2013; Lawrence, 2010; Solomon et al., 2004). We identified three overarching themes that were consistently highlighted across these reports. First, individualized treatment planning should be used to provide an

appropriate intensity of care (Duran et al., 2013; Lawrence, 2010). Second, many justice-involved adults may require some initial interventions before they are able to fully participate in job readiness and placement interventions, and programs should be prepared to provide appropriate referrals as needed. However, some justice-involved adults will need support beyond a simple referral, possibly including assistance with making appointments and accompanying individuals to appointments when necessary. Co-occurring problems such as serious mental and physical health conditions, substance use disorders, as well as other problems (e.g., transportation, housing, and/or childcare) and deeply entrenched criminal thinking may need to be addressed before any employment interventions are applied, although in some cases (usually based on lower severity) this assistance may be provided simultaneously (Duran et al., 2013; Solomon et al., 2004). For example, Duran et al. (2013) stressed the importance of addressing recidivism risk by targeting cognitive-behavioral therapy programs that aim to change criminal thinking patterns (e.g., Moral Reconciliation Therapy; Little and Robinson, 1988) to those individuals assessed as high risk of recidivism. Third, each of the reports emphasized the importance of providing employment-specific interventions that include elements focused both on increasing employability (e.g., through education, development of “soft skills” such as punctuality and problem solving, and help with any competing needs), and on finding and maintaining permanent employment (e.g., through outreach and support for employers and ongoing support and monitoring for individuals; Duran et al., 2013; Lawrence, 2010; Solomon et al., 2004).

Independent synthesis. Previous reviews have provided evidence that employment-focused interventions can be helpful overall in improving employment outcomes for justice-involved adults. Further reports have highlighted the variety of needs that service providers should be prepared to address in order to improve employment outcomes for justice-involved adults. We attempt to build on this research and provide practical conclusions by examining specific treatment elements (see Table 3 for a list of barriers to employment and strategies and interventions to address these barriers). In the following synthesis, we focus on studies of employment-focused interventions, and examine in depth which specific barriers have been targeted by formally evaluated interventions.

Selection criteria. For our synthesis of findings, we selected studies including at least one comparison group and rated at least a Level 2 on the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods (i.e. the study had temporal sequence between the program and the employment outcome; Sherman et al., 1998). Additionally, each study must have reported at least one employment related outcome while participants were in the community (i.e., the entire study and follow-up period could not be while participants were incarcerated), and the intervention had to be standardized and described in sufficient detail to identify the employment barriers that were targeted.

While high quality trials are the best way to establish whether interventions are effective, additional research and suggestions may provide guidance for best practices and how to adapt interventions for use with specific populations. Thus, we compiled a sample of other identified interventions that may not have been formally evaluated (or the evaluation did not meet our inclusion criteria), but that we have judged to be relevant to the population of justice-involved Veterans and possibly worth further exploration.

Finally, we provide information about services currently being provided by VA that may be accessed by some justice-involved Veterans.

Organization. In the sections below, organized by the employment barriers identified in Key Question #1, we first synthesize the findings from the studies that met our inclusion criteria, and highlight several examples of interventions found to have positive results. It is important to note that most interventions targeted more than one barrier, so while we may describe a successful intervention as targeting a specific barrier, we are not generally able to establish how much targeting that specific barrier influenced the outcomes.

In each section, we follow the study synthesis with a further discussion of other, potentially promising ways of targeting each barrier.

Findings.

Summary of studies meeting our criteria. We identified 32 studies of employment interventions for justice-involved adults that met our criteria (see Table 4 for details). Almost half (N=15) of the studies used random assignment and were categorized as Level 5 using the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods. One study was classified as a Level 2, nine of the studies were classified as Level 3 and seven were classified as Level 4. The median sample size was 464 participants (SD=4,285; range=60-20,441). The interventions in 18 of the studies took place exclusively in the community, six took place exclusively in a prison setting with follow-up in the community to meet our selection criteria, while the other eight studies were set in a combination of a secure setting and the community. Two studies focused on justice-involved adults with a substance use disorder, one of which focused on mothers. One study focused on Veterans, specifically those with a mental health diagnosis (including substance use disorders). Four of the studies focused exclusively on men.

Twenty-one studies (66%) were rated as having positive results for employment outcomes, while 14 studies out of the 24 studies that reported recidivism outcomes reported positive results (58%). Only one study (Farabee et al., 2014) reported any outcomes related to homelessness, and no significant group differences were identified. The interventions studied targeted an average of 2.5 of the 8 barriers to employment we identified in Key Question 1 (five studies targeted one barrier, 11 studies targeted two barriers, 13 studies targeted three barriers, and the other three studies targeted four barriers). In the following sections, we will discuss the different ways that studies targeted each of the barriers we have identified.

Barrier: Lack of education and vocational skills.

Study synthesis. We identified 13 studies of interventions that specifically aimed to increase the vocational skills of participants in order to increase employment prospects. Of these studies, 46% (six studies) found a positive impact on employment outcomes. At least one recidivism outcome was reported in nine of the studies, and 44% of them (four studies) had positive outcomes. Most of the studies included vocational skills training and/or unsubsidized job placement or paid transitional work focused on building generic vocational skills or training for a specific job. Vocational skills training in the studies occurred in a classroom-like setting prior to beginning in the workplace, on the job, or a combination of both. For example, a few studies found positive employment outcomes for programs

that provide vocational training to incarcerated individuals, followed by assistance with the transition into the job market upon release by providing job placement and employment assistance (Richardson, 2005; Van Stelle, Moberg, & Welnetz, 1998). Other studies found positive employment outcomes for programs which provided marketable job skills and training in a specific field, with the intention of participants obtaining employment after release where specific skills can be implemented (Northcutt Bohmert & Duwe, 2012; Smith, Bechtel, Patrick, Smith, & Wilson-Gentry, 2006). For example, justice-involved adults trained in the construction trade during incarceration had significantly higher rates of employment in the construction field than a comparison group that did not receive the specific training (32.1% vs. 16.9%; Northcutt Bohmert & Duwe, 2012).

There appears to be an association between programs that provide ongoing job support and placement, in addition to vocational skills training, and positive employment outcomes. For example, the employment outcomes are positive for individuals who received vocational training while incarcerated and post-release support and job placement. Studies of two prison programs with this design, Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises and the Specialized Training and Employment Project, found that participants in these programs were more likely to have been employed after release than the comparison group (Richardson, 2005; Van Stelle et al., 1998).

Overall, interventions that specifically aim to increase vocational skills can have a positive impact on employment outcomes for justice-involved adults. However, it is important to note that since most of the studies targeted multiple barriers, it is difficult to discern what program components actually caused the effects.

Further considerations. Programs that focus on developing industry-specific skills based on job market demand have been shown to improve employment outcomes among low-income job seekers, including those who have been formerly incarcerated (Maguire et al., 2010). Such programs provide training for specific needs that have been identified in the local community, and often focus on sectors such as construction, healthcare (e.g., medical billing and accounting), and IT services. Ensuring that education and training is appropriately matched to job opportunities is an important consideration for those providing such services to justice-involved Veterans. In particular, we identified a variety of programs in the areas of construction and IT services.

General construction as well as specific trade (e.g., plumbing, welding) programs allow justice-involved adults to develop skills that are consistently in demand. These programs prepare justice-involved adults to gain qualifications and begin an apprenticeship in the community (e.g., Friel, 2006; Goldsberry, 2008; Mattucci & Johnson, 2006). Some programs additionally incorporate life skills training (Johnson, 2009; Young & Mattucci, 2006) and/or assistance with job searching after completion (Friel, 2006; Goldsberry, 2008). Furthermore, some related programs focus on expanding the “green economy,” including training justice-involved adults in building deconstruction using techniques to maximize reuse and recycling (Robbins, 2010), and growing sustainable plants and organic food (Morgan, 2011; Polomski et al, 1997; Wolfson, 2008).

Another area in which there seem to be promising developments is computer technology. Programs focused on computer technology have included those that develop programming skills such as the classes established by The Last Mile (<http://thelastmile.org>) and run for prisoners at San Quentin Prison

in California, a Montana Women's Prison-based program to prepare women prisoners for an A+ certification exam in computer technology (Plemmons, 2014), and computer repair and refurbishment labs such as the one at the Huntsville Correctional Facility in Texas (Prison Education, 2012).

In addition to developing skills for positions in demand, it is important to match justice-involved adults with positions congruent with their vocational interests. Training individuals in occupations that fit their interests and personalities may result in a more optimistic view about finding employment (Holt, 1990). Additionally, as indicated in the assessment section (Key Question #2), matching justice-involved adults with appropriate jobs based on their personality traits may be beneficial. Specific personality traits may play a role in determining job success, since personality and interests provide the motivation to engage in particular activities (Sullivan & Hansen, 2004). We identified two small-scale, short-term studies of interventions for prison inmates that aimed to increase job-search self-efficacy and positive work-related attitudes by relating participants' specific interests and skills to career options (Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Musgrove et al., 2012). Both studies identified positive changes in attitude at the end of the treatment, but neither reported any employment outcomes after release from prison. Providers working with justice-involved adults should therefore assess vocational interests and personality traits prior to job placement.

Barrier: Criminogenic thinking and lack of job-readiness skills

Study synthesis. We identified 29 studies that included at least one element aiming to change criminogenic thinking patterns and/or increase job-readiness skills. Of these studies, 69% (20 studies) had positive results in terms of improving employment. At least one recidivism outcome was reported in 21 of the studies, and 71% of them (12 studies) had positive outcomes. These studies aimed to improve these skills using varying, and sometimes multiple, techniques. These included formal training, use of a structured environment, and basic ongoing support and advice aimed at successfully maintaining employment.

A little more than half of the studies (16 studies) described including formal training (e.g., classes, workshops, or individual training) in job related skills such as job searching, interviewing techniques, and appropriate workplace behavior. For example, Duwe (2012) evaluated the EMPLOY program in Minnesota, which offers services and support to participants throughout the last months of incarceration and the first year after returning to the community. One element of EMPLOY is a pair of 8-hour group sessions led by a job-training specialist where participants learn about writing resumes, job searching, interviewing, and other skills to maintain employment. The odds of EMPLOY participants gaining employment after release were 72% higher than a group of prisoners who qualified for EMPLOY but chose not to participate (Duwe, 2012). The manual-guided About Face intervention for justice-involved Veterans also aimed to improve general employability skills (LePage, Lewis, Washington, Davis, & Glasgow, 2013). About Face provided training in job search techniques, professional-quality resume writing, skill identification, transferrable job skills, and interview strategies. During a 6-month follow-up, Veterans who received About Face classroom instruction were more likely to have worked at least 1 day in competitive employment (40.7% found employment) than were randomized groups who self-studied the manual (11.9%), or who received only basic support services (16.7%). In another example, Webster, Staton-Tindall, Dickson, Wilson, and Leukefeld (2014) evaluated an employment intervention provided

in the context of a drug court. The intervention included individual and group sessions that used techniques such as motivational interviewing and behavioral contracting to develop skills such as “networking, preparing effective resumes, writing a cover letter, filling out job applications, addressing and overcoming a criminal record in the application and interview, and proper workplace behavior” (Webster, Staton-Tindall, Dickson, Wilson, & Leukefeld, 2014, p.201). In the randomized trial, the intervention was associated with significantly more days of work during follow-up (210 vs. 200 days over 12 months), and had an especially large effect for a subgroup of participants with negative employment trajectory at baseline (with 82% of this poor prognosis group gaining employment vs. 64% in the control group; Webster et al., 2014).

Another group of studies (6 studies) included interventions set in a structured environment (e.g., a secure setting in the community) that allowed for development of increasing levels of job-readiness skills (e.g., time management, personal responsibility), while 3 studies used transitional or supported jobs aiming to develop similar skills along with other workplace behavior. For example, Smith and colleagues (2006) carried out an evaluation of the national Prison Industries Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP), which provides private industry market-rate paid jobs for prisoners. This program provides a more realistic but structured work experience than traditional prison work, and allows prisoners to acquire skills for appropriate workplace behavior. Of study participants who were followed for at least a year, 49% of PIECP participants had been employed continuously for at least a year, compared to 40% of those who had worked in traditional prison jobs, and 39% of those who had done other-than-work prison activities (e.g., educational programs or drug treatment programs; Smith, Bechtel, Patrick, Smith, & Wilson-Gentry, 2006). Van Stelle and colleagues (1998) evaluated the Specialized Training and Employment Project (STEP) in Wisconsin, which included (along with other elements such as substance use disorder treatment) a step-down process from a medium to a minimum security prison, an institutional work assignment and continuing support on release. STEP graduates were more likely to have held a full time job during the first six months on parole (82%) compared to a control group (62%; Van Stelle, 1998).

Further considerations. One element that was not explicitly tested in any of the employment intervention studies we identified was the inclusion of a cognitive-behavioral treatment program aimed at changing criminal thinking patterns (Visher, Smolter, & O’Connell, 2010). Programs such as Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) have significant evidence base, with especially promising recidivism outcomes (Blodgett et al., 2013), though they may benefit from adaptations to the unique needs of justice-involved Veterans (Timko et al., 2014). MRT intervention materials have recently been adapted for Veterans, including a workbook composed of Veteran-specific examples and stories (Little & Robinson, 2013).

Another promising strategy that may help to hone the job-seeking skills of inmates is the use of prison job fairs, which provide inmates interviewing experience and employers the opportunity to learn about a population of potential employees and broaden their perception of justice-involved adults (McCullum, 2000). A program in the Texas correctional system, Project Re-Enterprise, has been successful in connecting with the business community to provide inmates with mock job interviews and job interview

skills training (Moses, 1996). The community businesses involved have identified some potential job candidates through the job fairs.

Although the overall long-term employment outcomes for transitional jobs programs have not been significant (e.g., Redcross et al., 2012; Jacobs, 2012), certain components have been identified as particularly promising – e.g., being engaged in the program for 30 days or more; receipt of job readiness/development assistance; support payments provided for transportation, housing, food, or other needs; and, to some extent, retention bonuses consisting of incremental payments for maintaining employment (Bryan, Gunn, & Henthorn, 2007; Yahner & Zweig, 2012). Transitional work (TW) is offered as one of the VA CWT programs, which are therapeutic programs that provide support services and vocational opportunities matched to an individual Veteran’s abilities and interests (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014a). TW occurs in VA Medical Centers or in the community to enable participants to gain work experience and learn effective work behaviors that will prepare Veteran participants for community employment.

Other vocational training programs similar to transitional work are on-the-job training programs and supported placement programs. While these programs result in delayed regular employment, it provides support for individuals who need more training. On-the-job training includes coaching and mentoring from supervisors and co-workers on site. Mentoring in particular has been shown to have a positive effect on employment and recidivism for justice-involved adults (Fletcher, Sherk, & Jucovy, 2009; Geither, 2012). One example of a supported placement program is America Works, which works with hard-to-serve clients and includes a criminal justice program and a specific program for Veterans. America Works provides a job program focusing on vocational and job-readiness skills, job placement, and continued support to assist with any problems at work or referral to other services and has proven to be an effective job program (Eimicke & Cohen, 2002). While we were unable to find up-to-date statistics on the America Works Criminal Justice Program, initial results revealed that in the program’s first year of operation (July 2001 – July 2002), of individuals who completed the one-day orientation, America Works placed 78% in jobs, of which 44% held their jobs for at least 90 days, and 42% held their jobs for over six months (Eimicke & Cohen, 2002).

Barrier: Competing needs

Study synthesis. We identified 18 studies that included at least one element targeting barriers related to competing needs. Most of these studies (83%; 15 studies) found positive employment outcomes, while 57% of the 14 studies that reported a recidivism outcome found positive results for recidivism. In varying combinations, the studies aimed to integrate support for mental health and substance use problems and/or support for other needs like child care and transportation with more job-focused interventions.

Interventions in 13 studies were described as either providing mental health or substance use disorder treatment as part of the program (nine studies), or providing referrals to treatment by other agencies (four studies). For example, the Opportunity to Succeed program offered aftercare services in the community to felony offenders who had received substance use disorder treatment while incarcerated (Rossman & Roman, 2003). These services included ongoing substance use disorder treatment as well as other services as needed (e.g., parenting services). The randomized group receiving the support services

was employed on average for significantly more time over a year of follow-up than the control group (6.4 months vs. 5.1 months). The Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP) provided pre- and post-release employment support services through Department of Labor community contracted providers of housing and employment services to Veteran prisoners, and this included referrals to VA mental health and substance use disorder treatment when appropriate (McGuire, 2008). Though the evaluation was limited, IVTP participants were more likely to become employed after release than were Veterans who chose not to participate (57% vs. 9%; McGuire, 2008).

Interventions in eight studies explicitly aimed to address other concerns, including parenting and child care issues (two studies), obtaining identification documents (one study), and/or material concerns such as transportation, clothing, and food expenses (seven studies). For example, in the context of a residential substance use disorder treatment program with a significant vocational focus, the Female Offender Treatment and Employment Project also provided parenting assistance (e.g., on-site childcare, family reunification advocacy, parenting classes) and transportation assistance (Grella, 2006). A year after parole, participants in the program were more likely to be employed than eligible non-participants (71% vs. 55%). Another example is Project RIO (Re-Integration of Offenders) in Texas, which provides comprehensive pre- and post-release employment services to incarcerated individuals (Blakely, Carmichael, & Eltinge, 1991). This includes help with obtaining important documents such as social security cards and birth certificates, as well as referrals for food stamps and bus tokens. Blakely and colleagues (1991) found that in the first six months after release, Project RIO participants were more likely to be employed than non-participants (61% vs. 34%, respectively). However, because this is only an observational study and participants were not randomly assigned to the treatment or control groups, the extent to which the differences between the two groups are due to the effect of Project RIO is unknown.

Further considerations. The first priority for those with mental health treatment needs should be connecting them with high-quality and appropriate treatments, including those treatments available through VA. The VJO and HCRV programs are two programs that address the needs of incarcerated Veterans coming out of jail and prison, respectively. VJO and HCRV intervention begins with a pre-release assessment and link Veterans with medical, psychiatric, and social services, as well as short-term case management (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014f; Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014b). As with services noted above, VJO and HCRV intervention includes linkage to a variety of employment-related services, both within the VA and in the community. Promising employment-focused approaches for those in this population generally include ongoing support, sometimes intensive, both for skills development and for dealing with ongoing mental health problems (Bond, 2013). In the context of appropriate mental health treatment, it is likely that evidence-based approaches for justice-involved adults generally would be helpful for those who also have mental health treatment needs, including substance use (Durcan, 2012).

Supported employment (SE) has emerged as an effective evidence-based vocational model for individuals with mental health treatment needs seeking competitive employment and has become the standard of care in many states (Becker & Drake, 2003; Bond, Drake & Becker, 2008). Yet, access to SE services is limited and justice-involved adults take longer to access SE services partially due to barriers

related to aspects of the legal system such as mental health probation requirements and competing mental health treatment needs (Frounfelker, Glover, Teachout, Wilkniss, & Whitley, 2010). The VA has adopted this vocational model for use with Veterans who have significant barriers to employment due to mental health treatment needs. Justice-involved Veterans have access to SE services and are provided therapeutic supports and workplace accommodation to assist in maintaining employment. Services typically include employment counseling, job development, and job placement and retention. However, these services are generally reserved for individuals with serious mental illnesses (e.g., schizophrenia or other psychotic-spectrum disorders; bipolar disorder), although limited services may be provided to Veterans with spinal cord injury or traumatic brain injury who have a co-occurring mental health diagnosis (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014d).

Within the SE model, the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) principles can be adapted to meet the employment needs of justice-involved adults with mental health concerns (Durcan, 2012). These principles include: the goal of competitive employment, no restrictions based on mental health symptoms or work readiness, immediate job searches, integration of mental health and vocational services, focus on individual job preference, and follow-up support (Bond, 2004). IPS principles in employment services can be adapted to address the specific barriers to employment faced by justice-involved adults and these services can be enhanced with the inclusion of specialty teams that exclusively work with justice-involved adults, integrated dual disorder treatment, and assistance with discussing criminal history with employers (Bond, 2013). A review of the SE literature found the effectiveness of IPS to increase competitive employment from 23% for control participants to 61% for clients with severe mental illness (Bond et al., 2008). Additionally, a randomized controlled trial of justice-involved adults with psychiatric disabilities compared a vocational model using IPS to a Work Choice model with less intensive services and found that 31% of individuals receiving IPS found competitive employment compared to 7% of Work Choice participants at one year follow up (Bond et al., 2015). Many of the principles of IPS are relevant to justice-involved adults who face considerable barriers to employment and can be effective for this population.

Additionally, as previously noted in Key Question #1, in some instances employment assistance may be available to individuals with a mental health condition such as PTSD or depression through an accommodation under the federal ADA, which may help these individuals achieve success in the workplace (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).

Other competing needs can be addressed through the assistance of case management. Case management is an integral part of successful employment programs for justice-involved adults (Rossman & Roman, 2003; Solomon et al., 2004). Case managers can provide assistance with transportation and child care needs as well as any other issues that if unaddressed, may interfere with employment commitments (Solomon et al., 2004). Veteran peer specialists can also provide needed support to assist with competing needs. VA offers training and certification of peer support staff employed by VA facilities. Peer support specialists are Veterans who have histories of mental illness, including substance abuse (and possibly criminal justice involvement), who have been trained to help peers through a variety of services and roles (Gambill on Justice, 2013). The role of a peer support specialist includes instilling hope for recovery, helping individuals engage in treatment and support

services, addressing reentry challenges, and making linkages to housing, vocational, and educational opportunities (Davidson & Rowe, 2008). Particularly for justice-involved Veterans facing stigma associated with criminal justice involvement in their employment search, peer specialists who have a similar history can serve as a model for the potential to overcome barriers and stigma.

Within the justice-involved Veteran population, justice-involved women are a sub-population that have unique competing needs. One of the more frequently cited issues for justice-involved women is the difficulty balancing work and child care responsibilities (Danziger et al., 1999; Blitz, 2006). Providing assistance with these needs through case management or other services may be beneficial. Additionally, in comparison to their male counterparts, justice-involved women are more likely to have psychiatric disorders and a history of physical and sexual abuse (Blitz, Wolff, Pan, & Pogorzelski, 2005), which impact their readiness for work. These mental health issues require treatment and may take priority over employment. Furthermore, some justice-involved women may have other treatment needs related to a history of victimization and violence (Laux et al., 2011). Treatment for mental health and substance abuse problems increases the likelihood of experiencing stable patterns of employment (Blitz, 2006) and therefore treatment should be targeted and addressed to improve employment prospects (Tonkin et al., 2004).

Barrier: Homelessness.

Study synthesis. We identified two studies of interventions aimed at providing intensive support, including housing services, in order to increase employment prospects. While housing placement, referral, and/or support was only one of a few interventions targeting multiple barriers in each of these studies, both studies found a positive impact on employment outcomes, and one of the two studies (50%) found a positive impact on recidivism outcomes. A related conclusion from both studies was that increases in employment may be an important predictor in reducing recidivism (Milkman, 1984; Rossman & Roman, 2003). Neither of these studies reported any outcomes related to homelessness.

In addition to employment support, providing other comprehensive services to meet the needs of justice-involved adults can be beneficial. For example, as previously discussed in the study synthesis section for the competing needs barrier, the Opportunity to Succeed program provides employment and related services to justice-involved adults with substance use disorders, with services including housing, substance abuse treatment, family services, and health and mental health services (Rossman & Roman, 2003). The housing services include placement in supportive environments and other emergency services related to housing (e.g. emergency funds to cover unexpected expenses, crisis assistance and relocation). Again, the randomized group receiving the support services was employed on average for significantly more time over a year of follow-up than the control group. These services may keep justice-involved adults consistently-housed, which increases the ability to maintain employment.

Further considerations. The most immediate post-release concern for justice-involved Veterans is housing. Linking homeless Veterans or Veterans at risk of homelessness with safe housing is a priority for VA. To support this housing effort, the Department of Housing and Urban Development – VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program developed a joint initiative to assist eligible Veterans with permanent housing through its voucher program. Other VA programs provide grant assistance to organizations working to house homeless Veterans. Housing provides structure and stability necessary

for employment upon release from incarceration and for all justice-involved Veterans seeking employment. Through support and residential programs, VA seeks to improve employment outcomes for homeless Veterans and Veterans at risk of homelessness. VA programs providing employment opportunities to homeless Veterans include CWT (e.g., TW and SE programs) and Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES).

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) and Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program (IVTP) are Veterans programs administered by the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) of the U.S. Department of Labor with services that seek to expedite the reintegration of homeless Veterans into the labor force by providing an array of employment and support services including job placement, training, development, and career counseling (Department of Labor, 2014a; Department of Labor, 2014b).

While all of these programs serve Veterans with justice-involvement, they do not specifically focus on the needs of this population. As LePage et al., (2013) points out, "if the full capacity of CWT (10,800 admitted to CWT in fiscal year 2009) and Domiciliaries (6,300 admitted in 2009) were used solely for released veterans, this would accommodate only 27 percent of the 64,000 veterans released annually" (p. 184). Additionally, these programs require Veterans to be eligible for VA benefits and therefore exclude some Veterans with other than honorable discharges. While these programs are effective in addressing the homelessness barrier and improving employment outcomes for homeless Veterans, some justice-involved Veterans may need to access alternative homeless and employment services.

In addition to VA resources and programs, other housing resources are available to justice-involved Veterans such as housing subsidies through public housing authorities; however, these providers typically have long wait lists (Diana T. Meyers and Associates, Inc, 2010). Additionally, justice-involved Veterans can access a guidebook through the National Housing Law Project that discusses their rights and interests to access and remain in public and federally assisted housing (Bishop, 2008).

Barrier: Legal restrictions.

Study synthesis. We did not identify any studies of interventions that targeted this barrier.

Further considerations. In some cases, legal restrictions on employment may be addressed with legal assistance (e.g., to expunge the record of an old arrest or conviction). Although in many areas the availability of free or reduced-cost legal services cannot match the need for those services, there are Veteran-specific resources available. Searchable online directories maintained by the Legal Services Corporation (www.statesidelegal.org) and American Bar Association (http://www.americanbar.org/portals/public_resources/aba_home_front.html) provide contact information for local legal service providers experienced and interested in serving Veterans and service members. Since 2011, VA has encouraged its medical facilities to provide office space to non-VA legal service providers to meet with Veterans; there are at least 80 such clinics now operating in VA facilities.

Self-employment can also provide opportunities for employment success and career advancement for justice-involved adults who may otherwise struggle against legal restrictions and employer stigma. In fact, the U.S. Small Business Administration recently announced a partnership with the federal "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, including development of an online module specifically aimed at

encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship among justice-involved adults (Contreras-Sweet, 2015). Many incarcerated adults have an interest and aptitude for entrepreneurship (Lindahl, 2007). A 2006 survey of inmates found a high interest in self-employment, with 78% percent of respondents indicating self-employment as an option after release (Lindahl, 2007). While there is a high interest in self-employment among justice-involved adults, we were unable to identify any studies indicating either the prevalence or success of self-employment among justice-involved adults. Small businesses like those that are most likely to be started by justice-involved adults are known as microenterprises, and organizations supporting microenterprise development include elements such as training and technical assistance, credit and access to credit, economic literacy and asset development, and follow-up services (Lindahl, 2007). Programs to support entrepreneurship among justice-involved adults should also be prepared to address additional barriers that may often be present in this population. They may include owed back-taxes preventing the registration of a new business, parole/probation restrictions on travel and/or signing contracts, and child support arrears that may be negatively affecting the credit score (Lindahl, 2007).

At least one program has been implemented to teach incarcerated Veterans business skills and help them develop a business plan they may implement upon their release. The Veterans Behind Bars program was founded in 1999 by the New York State Small Business Development Center. Classes were offered in correctional facilities, and ongoing advising was offered after Veterans were released into the community (New York State Small Business Center, 2010).

We also identified two additional programs developed to encourage entrepreneurship among justice-involved adults. Defy Ventures is a non-profit entrepreneurship, employment, and character-training program for formerly incarcerated justice-involved adults. This program helps participants who may struggle to find employment due to their criminal records create legal business ventures through MBA-like training and executive mentoring (Freeman, 2015). Similarly, the Prison Entrepreneurship Program in Texas is run by a non-profit and maintains close ties to Baylor University's Hankamer School of Business. The program includes character development (e.g., learning to live with integrity, developing job-readiness skills), training in computer skills, and six months of full-time college-level entrepreneurship training, including extensive practice pitching a business plan. On their release, participants are provided with additional relocation assistance as well as ongoing mentoring support (Mangan, 2013).

Self-employment may be a particularly important pathway to financial stability for individuals with a sex offense history, who face the most extensive legal barriers to other employment (Brown et al., 2007). However, efforts to develop entrepreneurship will need to take into account restrictions that may be placed on individuals with a sex offense history related to unsupervised contact with members of the public and/or limitations on computer and internet access. These same concerns are also prevalent for individuals with a sex offense history who are attempting to find traditional employment. This population may require more extensive and active supervision, including careful consideration of job placements (e.g., based on access to potential victims, as well as employers' willingness to maintain close contact with the supervision agency; Seleznow et al., 2002). Open communication and reassurance through outreach to employers and ongoing support can both help those with a sex offense

history obtain long-term employment as well as limit risk to the employer and to potential victims (Brown et al, 2007; Seleznow et al., 2002).

Barrier: Employer stigma and criminal background checks.

Study synthesis. We identified 14 studies of interventions that aimed to reduce employer stigma toward hiring justice-involved adults in order to increase employment opportunities. Of these studies, 71% (10 studies) found a positive impact on employment outcomes, and 55% of 11 studies reporting recidivism outcomes also found a positive impact of the intervention. All of the studies with interventions targeting the employer stigma barrier also targeted at least two other barriers (a total of three or more); therefore, it is difficult to tease out how the interventions specifically targeting this barrier impacted employment outcomes. Nonetheless, there were two specific interventions found in most of the studies focused on reducing employer stigma: 1) training for how to discuss a criminal record in an application or a job interview, and 2) educating employers about the benefits of federal bonds and tax incentives for hiring justice-involved adults.

A few studies included program interventions focused on improving interviewing skills, including how to discuss a criminal record (Duwe, 2012; Visher et al., 2010; Webster et al., 2014). For example, as previously discussed, the About Face vocational program and manual was developed to assist Veterans with felony histories find employment by incorporating information tailored to justice-involved Veterans, including improving interview skills and how to present criminal history information (LePage et al., 2013). In addition to learning general job-readiness skills, justice-involved Veterans in this program learned how to answer difficult questions about incarceration and their criminal history record, which can reduce employer stigma if the employer has information about an individual's background.

Other studies included interventions focused on educating employers about special incentives for hiring justice-involved adults. For example, Texas Employment Commission counselors working with inmates in Texas' Project RIO, assist ex-offenders to become eligible for a program providing tax incentives and bond ex-offenders to protect employers against theft or damages, which helps reduce the employer's liability and perceived risk (Blakely et al., 1991). Similarly, job development specialists in Minnesota's EMPLOY program notify potential employers about tax credits and federal bonding (Duwe, 2012).

Another strategy found in some studies was to develop relationships with potential employers to expand employment options that might not have been otherwise available for justice-involved adults. In some studies, the programs included job referrals and placement, which provides linkages between the program and the employer (Blakely et al., 1991; Jengeleski & Gordon, 1999; Jung, 2014; Van Stelle et al., 1998; Milkman, 1984; Redcross et al., 2012; Visher et al., 2010). For example, one work-release program in Illinois, adult transition centers, connects prisoners and employers that are associated with the center to assist prisoners find employment (Jung, 2014). Building these relationships with employers can assist in breaking down the barriers that exist with employers unwilling to hire justice-involved adults.

Further considerations. Several strategies can be effective in reducing the concern employers may have with respect to hiring justice-involved adults. First, establishing a stable, positive work history following release may make employers more comfortable hiring justice-involved adults (Fahey et al., 2006). This emphasizes the importance of transitional employment where justice-involved adults build a work

history with the support necessary to overcome employment difficulties. Second, employers value job-readiness skills such as good interpersonal skills, communication skills, work ethic and responsibility (Holzer et al., 2003). These job-readiness skills can be taught in vocational programs and will prepare justice-involved adults for interviews with employers who may perceive these skills to be lacking among this population.

Additionally, there have been a variety of policy initiatives that aim to reduce the impact of employer attitudes and stigma on prospective applicants with a criminal record. So-called “ban-the-box” policies are becoming increasingly common, and prevent employers from asking about a criminal record on job applications, while further policies specify use of background checks only for otherwise qualified candidates and limited to offenses directly relevant to the position (National Employment Law Project, 2014a). These restrictions allow applicants to be judged first on their qualifications, experience, and interview performance, and may limit the influence that reporting a criminal record may have on the employer. For Veterans that may be hired in justice-related programs, there may need to be a voluntary disclosure of criminal background beyond the traditional criminal background check procedures.

Further policy efforts have focused on limiting background checks based on offense and/or time since conviction. Several researchers have focused on establishing helpful guidelines that may help to predict the decline in the chances of recidivism. Kurlychek, Brame, and Bushway (2006) examined how the probability of arrest declines as the time since last offense increases. They found that after a period of six to seven years with no new arrests, the probability approaches that of those who have never been arrested (though the rate remains slightly higher). Blumstein and Nakamura (2009) further developed a measure of what they term “redemption time” that takes into account offense category and age at last arrest, as well as a level of risk deemed acceptable by an employer. Their results were overall in line with Kurlychek et al. (2006) with, for example, a redemption time for someone whose first arrest was at age 18 estimated at 7.7 years for robbery offenses, 3.8 years for burglary, and 4.3 years for aggravated assault. Such estimates may be used to develop policies that remove offenses from background checks after a specific period of time without further offending, or they may be helpful to reassure employers about a reasonable estimate of risk posed by a particular applicant.

In addition, due to the high cost associated with errors in background checks, several states have taken constructive steps toward protecting job seekers including expanding expungement and sealing laws, preventing public disclosure of records, prohibiting the release of information about arrests that did not result in conviction, and reporting dispositions, particularly favorable ones, in a timely manner (Mouzon, 2008; National Employment Law Project, 2014b; Yoder, 2011).

Bonding programs and tax credits attempt to provide a financial incentive and/or reassurance that may make employers more likely to hire justice-involved adults. Bonding programs provide insurance protection against employee dishonesty (e.g., loss from theft, forgery). The policies may be provided through a government program, but are sometimes available to be purchased by the justice-involved individual and presented to a potential employer as a guarantee in the case of employment (Rodriguez, 2008; Schiffner, 2013). Employers may also receive federal tax credits for hiring justice-involved adults who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. Educating employers about the benefits of tax credits and federal bonds is frequently mentioned as an effective strategy that encourages

employers to hire justice-involved adults (Lawrence, 2010; Leshnick, Geckeler, Wiegand, Nicholson, & Foley, 2012). However, this strategy is not marketable to all employers since some employers are more interested in the assurance of a good employee. With some employers, the focus should be on the qualifications of the job candidate followed by educating the employer about bonding and tax incentives. In addition to tax credits some businesses receive for hiring justice-involved adults, supervisors in Los Angeles County are currently considering giving preferences in county contracts to non-profit and for-profit businesses that employ formerly incarcerated individuals (Sewell, 2015). If successful, this could be a leadership model replicated in other cities and counties with similar businesses.

Lastly, developing relationships with specific employers in the community can be a useful avenue for providers assisting justice-involved adults with employment. Employers can trust referrals from programs they have a history of working with and the program can refer appropriate candidates and assist in monitoring and supporting the employee and employer after hiring. The program in essence can act as an intermediary between employer and employee and pre-screens candidates for employment. This relationship with employers is an important component of programs such as the Safer Foundation, which is a not-for-profit provider of employment services for justice-involved adults (for more information on the Safer Foundation, see www.saferfoundation.org).

Barrier: Military discharge status.

Study synthesis. We did not identify any studies of interventions targeting this barrier.

Further considerations. A discharge under less than honorable conditions imposes significant limitations on Veterans' VA benefits and employment opportunities. Veterans should be coached on how best to discuss their discharge status with future employers if it arises and offered guidance on navigating the employment process with a discharge under less than honorable conditions. Guidebooks are available for incarcerated justice-involved Veterans from VJO and HCRV specialists to assist with release planning including information on benefits, employment, housing, and other services. These guidebooks are useful resources for all justice-involved Veterans seeking employment.

Furthermore, along with the effects of military discharge status on employment, an additional consequence of criminal involvement while in the military is the process of "titling" by law enforcement agencies. If a Veteran is found to have committed a crime while in the military, the Veteran is "titled" in the final report of investigation (Peterson, 1987). This titling can have important implications for future civilian employment because prospective employers may be able to access the report of investigation, even if the Veteran was acquitted of all charges, and the investigation determination that a crime occurred will stay on the Veteran's criminal record for approximately 40 years following the initial notation (Peterson, 1987).

Barrier: Entitlements and financial disincentives.

Study synthesis. We identified three studies that included interventions specifically aimed at addressing this barrier. Two of the studies included interventions that provided financial benefits and employment assistance upon release from prison to increase employment outcomes. The other study included an intervention aimed to deal with debt and other financial obligations, which may drive justice-involved

adults away from legitimate employment in order to avoid wages being automatically garnished. Two of the three studies found a positive impact on employment outcomes and on recidivism outcomes.

The receipt of transitional, financial benefits provided to justice-involved adults leaving incarceration can have a positive impact on employment. Programs that provide these benefits combined with job placement services help justice-involved adults alleviate financial constraints, while also allowing them to search for employment and reintegrate into the labor market. A study of one such program, Living Insurance for Ex-Offenders, which provided financial aid benefits and job placement services to ex-prisoners for a short term after their release, found that during the post-program period (i.e., the last two quarters of the study year) individuals who had received financial aid were more likely to be employed and had higher earnings than individuals who did not receive benefits (Mallar & Thornton, 1978). However, financial aid benefits negatively impacted full-time employment while participants were receiving benefits during the first quarter (Mallar & Thornton, 1978). It appears that the provision of financial benefits may have a positive impact on employment in the long-term.

Another study included a program intervention focused on reducing the financial debt of justice-involved adults following release from incarceration. Inmates participating in the previously mentioned PIECP program earn market wages, but are subjected to deductions for taxes, crime victims' compensation, and family support up to 80% of their gross wages (Smith et al., 2006). Participants of this program have an increased ability to pay child support and restitution prior to release. As mentioned above, PIECP participants were compared to inmates participating in a traditional job program and to an other-than-work group. Again, more PIECP participants had been employed continuously for at least a year than the other two groups. While this study addressed other barriers, particularly lack of vocational and job-readiness skills, the reduced financial obligations following incarceration likely at least contributed to the positive employment outcomes.

Further considerations. Financial assistance focused on dealing with tax and child support arrears can be an important element of successful interventions, especially since many justice-involved adults have child support obligations (Pearson, 2004; Piehl, 2008; Redcross et al, 2010). Some justice-involved adults may have large outstanding debt post-incarceration that exceeds their capacity to pay due to the accrual of child support arrears while incarcerated. Without modification to the child support payments, they continue to grow during incarceration and failure to pay results in enforcement that may impact reintegration (Pearson, 2004). Excessive arrears may discourage voluntary payment and drive individuals away from legitimate employment. Garnishing wages from prison work allows prisoners to get a head start on child support payments and other taxes and fees prior to release (Smith et al., 2006). Additional options for making these payments more feasible include suspension of accrual of debt during incarceration, capping the accumulation of debt, and providing more information about modifications (Cammatt, 2005; Piehl, 2008). Furthermore, many state policies and legislation regarding child support obligations for incarcerated parents have been enacted to address this issue (Pearson, 2004). Additionally, the Office of Child Support Enforcement has partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs to help Veterans remove child support barriers which can negatively impact a Veteran's ability to obtain housing and may be a disincentive to obtain employment (Office of Child Support Enforcement,

2015). The Office of Child Support Enforcement can provide information about resources that exist to address unresolved child support issues for justice-involved Veterans.

Another important intervention is addressing employment challenges for individuals receiving entitlements and addressing concerns about how work will impact the receipt of benefits. To assist with the employment needs of Veterans with service-connected disabilities, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services to link Veterans with employers and provide follow-up services for Veterans (Department of Labor, 2014c). These positions are funded by the Department of Labor and DVOP specialists are employees of the state, generally located in state employment service offices. DVOP specialists direct their services toward Veterans with the greatest barriers to employment and work to help Veterans find and keep jobs (Department of Labor, 2014c). On the VA side, vocational rehabilitation and employment (VR&E) services also provide training to assist Veterans reach their employment goals, with services restricted to eligible service-connected Veterans. Through this program, Veterans are offered job counseling and directed to services to assist their employment needs, including acquiring additional skills or training (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014g). These programs and services assist Veterans with service-connected disabilities to return to the workforce and may offer employment options that are flexible to meet needs related to their disabilities. However, eligibility is limited to service-connected Veterans and not specific to justice-involved Veterans. Behavioral interventions such as the Progressive Goal Attainment Program, which is currently being evaluated with disabled Veterans (Hossain et al., 2013), may also help disabled justice-involved Veterans secure and maintain employment. The Progressive Goal Attainment Program is focused on changing psychological and social behaviors (e.g., fears that increased activity will exacerbate symptoms and perceptions of their own limitations) that limit a disabled Veteran's recovery and ability to work toward a more active life including employment (Hossain et al., 2013).

Summary of Key Question #3. There are many employment-specific interventions for improving employment outcomes, including three frequently cited recommendations: (1) individualized treatment planning using a validated risk and needs assessment tool to provide an appropriate intensity of care, (2) initial interventions focused on individual deficits such as cognitive thinking, mental health needs, substance misuse, and education prior to participating in job readiness and placement, and (3) employment-specific interventions to increase job-readiness and maintain employment.

Although there are many specific interventions that directly target each barrier, it is important to focus on the types of interventions with the most cross-cutting impact across the barriers to address multiple needs. Overall, the most effective programs seem to provide vocational and job-readiness skills training and ongoing support to meet the needs of justice-involved Veterans through job placement. Both vocational skills training for a specific job and job-readiness skills training are effective in preparing justice-involved Veterans for work. Providing these interventions in a structured environment, such as transitional work, allows for the development of time management and other responsibility skills as well as the acquisition of skills for appropriate workplace behavior. On-the-job training and mentoring provide further effective supports as justice-involved Veterans develop a skill set and job-readiness skills.

Support and treatment for other competing needs can be particularly important elements of an intervention. Integrating mental health and substance use disorder treatment with employment-focused interventions can be effective in improving employment outcomes. Supported Employment is a promising model for justice-involved Veterans with mental health treatment needs. Mental health treatment and other competing needs, such as child care issues, transportation, and assistance with obtaining documentation can be addressed through intensive case management services. This intensive support should also include housing services for justice-involved Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, since homelessness negatively impacts employment. VA provides a variety of programs aiming to increase employment for homeless Veterans through job development and vocational assistance. Since VA is likely to be the primary treatment setting for the majority of justice-involved Veterans, it is crucial to consider integration of effective interventions in the aforementioned areas.

To address employer barriers, there are a few interventions that may be most effective in reducing employer stigma. These include training justice-involved Veterans how to discuss their criminal record, educating employers about the benefits and incentives for hiring justice-involved Veterans and developing relationships with employers who are willing to hire someone with a criminal background.

Justice-involved Veterans may also benefit from financial assistance and planning related to tax and child support arrears or any other outstanding debt that may impact their desire for formal employment. Individuals receiving entitlements may have additional concerns regarding the impact of employment on their benefits and may need assistance with addressing these concerns.

Summary and Discussion

This review found a variety of employment barriers that justice-involved Veterans might encounter as they seek to reintegrate into the workforce. Some justice-involved Veterans may face challenges due to human capital deficits such as lack of education and vocational experience. Addressing these deficits in addition to improving job-readiness skills that will prepare an individual for work can lead to successful employment outcomes. In particular, preparing justice-involved Veterans for the job application and interview process and discussing appropriate workplace behavior and attitudes may be beneficial. This pre-employment preparation is an important component of employment-related services for justice-involved Veterans and should build upon the skills many justice-involved Veterans possess from their military training.

Other competing needs may initially take priority over employment interventions and should, if possible, be addressed prior to job placement. These needs include mental health and substance abuse treatment and other related obstacles, such as transportation or child care issues and securing official identification that sometimes interfere with efforts to obtain or maintain employment. Homelessness is a further important concern due to its bi-directional relationship with employment. A lack of stable housing makes it difficult to secure employment, and a lack of employment makes it difficult to secure stable housing (and unemployment and homelessness are both associated with past and future justice-involvement). Reducing Veteran homelessness has long been a focus of VA, and the relationship between homelessness and other concerns is a major reason that VA's Veterans Justice Programs were developed within its Homeless Program.

Justice-involved Veterans sometimes face additional limits on certain occupations because of legal restrictions based on their criminal history, and are subject to effects of stigma from employer bias and background checks, all of which can further limit and reduce the likelihood of employment. Justice-involved Veterans, especially those with general violent and particularly sexually violent crimes may struggle more with legal restrictions. A more significant barrier for people with a history of one (non-sex) violent offense even far in the past may be discrimination rather than formal legal restrictions. Employers may be less likely to employ an individual with a criminal record and may be disinclined to hire someone who has a less than honorable military discharge status. Finally, the receipt of financial entitlements by justice-involved Veterans may act as a disincentive to find employment even for those who could benefit from suitable work despite a disability.

The delivery of employment-related services should be tailored to an individual's unique needs and characteristics; therefore, assessment of these needs is critical. An assessment can be specifically focused on employment needs or as part of a broader assessment of needs, including an assessment of recidivism risk. Given that the factors associated with recidivism risk and employability overlap considerably, assessing an individual's risk and needs associated with recidivism is an important component of the employment assessment. There are a variety of assessment measures that identify recidivism risk, including correctional assessment tools, which combined with a job-readiness assessment will help service providers match resources with the level of services necessary to meet the needs of each individual. One such tool, The Resource-Allocation Service-Matching Tool, assesses recidivism risk and job-readiness and uses the information to focus resources and align services where

they will be most effective. This integrated assessment approach can positively impact employment outcomes and is recommended for use by providers working with justice-involved Veterans within VA and community organizations serving justice-involved Veterans. Furthermore, Veteran-specific dimensions may need to be taken into account during the employment-related needs assessment. Justice-involved Veterans may have unique employment-related needs and job-readiness skills due to the training and experience they receive during military training, but may not know how to translate these skills to the civilian sector. Therefore, it is recommended that the employment assessments for justice-involved Veterans include components that match job skills learned in the military with civilian jobs.

This review found evidence for effective employment-focused interventions for justice-involved adults that provide a basis for assisting justice-involved Veterans (see Table 5 for examples of program interventions from Levels 3-5 in Table 4 that had positive employment outcomes and adequately described the employment intervention). The most promising interventions are those that address multiple barriers and needs and provide a range of support while providing flexibility in what order and intensity of services are provided. Such programs might include pre-employment preparation and job-readiness training in conjunction with services to address competing needs such as mental health and substance use problems, homelessness, transportation and child-care issues. In some cases, these services will be required before a justice-involved Veteran begins to work, while in other cases, it may be possible and beneficial to begin paid work while simultaneously receiving support related to job-readiness and other needs. Tailoring employment services for individual justice-involved Veterans, and providing ongoing support, may increase the likelihood of them obtaining and maintaining employment, which is associated with reductions in recidivism and homelessness, and enhancements in overall quality of life.

While limited research on job-placement into temporary or transitional jobs for justice-involved adults has not yielded significant long-term employment outcomes, certain components have shown promise. These components include being engaged in a program for 30 days or more, job-readiness training, financial assistance for transportation, housing, food, or other needs, and incentive payments for maintaining work. The transitional job model also shows promising results in the area of recidivism reduction, but these results have not been consistent and further research is necessary to determine what components of transitional job programs impact recidivism. Transitional work provides training to enhance future employability and an opportunity to get into the habit of working, build an employment record, and show dependability and stability and this preparation is beneficial for future employment.

Many justice-involved Veterans have access to VA employment-related services that can improve their chances of positive employment outcomes. VJP programs, such as VJO and HCRV, ensure that a continuum of care is provided from incarceration to the community, which is critical in helping justice-involved Veterans successfully reenter society and connect with the appropriate intensity of services needed. The reentry period after incarceration is an important point of intervention and a strong connection between institutional programming and post-release VA or community services can increase justice-involved Veterans' likelihood of finding and maintaining employment. It will be important for providers working with justice-involved Veterans returning to the community to consider community

variables, such as job availability and resources in the area the individual is returning to live, since some communities are limited in job availability and housing. This is more common in communities with a large number of released offenders often found in inner cities and the surrounding suburban neighborhoods (Western, Kling, & Weiman, 2001). These factors should be taken into consideration during an employment assessment in order to control for the effects of these variables. VJP outreach facilitates employment service triage by providing linkages and referrals to vocational training and employment opportunities for justice-involved Veterans. These employment-related linkages should be integrated with other VA services to enhance the more general clinical care of justice-involved Veterans, including addressing other related needs such as mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, and housing. Preventing and ending homelessness has been highlighted as a VA priority and outreach specialists can link justice-involved Veterans to housing services, which has important implications for employment.

Current Work in VA

Facilitating opportunities for employment is an important aspect of providing treatment to Veterans at VA. Employment services are integrated within the comprehensive services provided and are specific to the needs of each individual. Currently, VA provides vocational rehabilitation services through the Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services (TSES) programs, which include Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) programs, such as Supported Employment, Transitional Work, Incentive Therapy, and Vocational Assistance. The goal of these programs is to improve Veterans' overall quality of life through vocational assistance and help Veterans obtain meaningful employment while receiving necessary support services. While these programs are not specifically for justice-involved Veterans, they serve many justice-involved Veterans. Some of these programs identify Veterans' strengths and interests and match those skills and abilities to job requirements in certain industries. This matching of vocational strengths and areas of interest is an important component of these programs and may assist in increasing positive employment outcomes. Additionally, providing support through vocational case management and workplace support helps facilitate continued employment success.

One potential avenue for additional employment support may be through a partnership with VA and parole and probation departments that are responsible for supervising justice-involved Veterans. Currently, Veterans treatment courts, in which probation officers often play an active role, provide peer support and employment assistance to assist in getting justice-involved Veterans back to work. This model could be extended to Veterans in the community who have criminal justice involvement and are supervised by parole or probation departments. For example, VA and these departments could work together to provide employment resources to justice-involved Veterans and provide support in order to stay in compliance with parole or probation reporting requirements.

Lastly, the development of an employment plan is an important component of VA employment services. This plan includes the Veteran's vocational goals, an assessment of strengths, interests, and limitations, objectives to reach their stated goals, and strategies for meeting each objective. This plan can assist providers with matching Veterans to employment opportunities for which they are best suited. The following section highlights the above VA employment programs, and is followed by a general discussion of federal employment as an important option for many Veterans.

Supported Employment (SE). SE is an evidence-based practice intended for individuals with severe mental illness that utilizes an individualized approach to help Veterans obtain competitive employment. Veterans work with an Employment Specialist who helps the Veteran find jobs that are matched to their interests and abilities, identifies and addresses employment barriers, and provides on-going support while seeking employment and once employed. This program incorporates a variety of employment interventions that are effective in improving employment outcomes.

Transitional Work (TW). TW is a program where Veterans gain work experience in actual work settings through time-limited positions in the community or VA medical centers. Veterans are provided on-the-job support and supervision to address work-related issues that may arise. The goal of TW is to prepare Veterans to transition into competitive employment after having established a vocational foundation.

Incentive Therapy (IT). IT is a prevocational work program in which Veterans are assigned to work at VA medical center facilities. IT is indicated for Veterans who exhibit severe mental illness and/or physical impairments and provides an opportunity for assessment of Veterans in a clinically supportive environment. Unlike TW, the goal of IT is not competitive employment, but rather an opportunity to develop work skills.

Vocational Assistance. This program provides more general employment assistance via group and individual sessions. Components of Vocational Assistance may include assessment, guidance, and counseling.

Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCEs). In addition to the TSES programs described above, in 2014, VA implemented HVCEs and hired Community Employment Coordinators (CECs) for homeless Veterans at each medical center. CECs work closely with VA programs such as Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), non-VA programs such as Department of Labor grantees, local community and faith-based organizations, and community-based employers to improve employment outcomes for all homeless, chronically homeless and at-risk Veterans. The CECs also collaborate with VA and non-VA partners to identify local gaps in current competitive employment services for homeless Veterans including those with a history of justice involvement.

Federal employment

Aside from VA's employment services, VA and other federal departments are important sources of employment for Veterans, and should be considered by justice-involved Veterans. While data is not available on the employment rate of justice-involved Veterans specifically, recent data indicates that about a third of federal employees are Veterans (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2014), and 9% of employed Veterans are employed by the federal government compared to 2% of employed non-Veterans (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Many justice-involved Veterans may be able to take advantage of Veterans hiring preferences. According to the Code of Federal Regulations, applicants to federal job openings are given extra "points" if they are qualifying Veterans, based on active service dates, awards, and disability rating (Veteran; disabled veteran; preference eligible, 2012). Consequently, a qualifying Veteran would have an advantage over another applicant who also met the specific job requirements. However, all applicants must also meet Office of Personnel Management suitability requirements, and these include some restrictions on federal employment based on justice-

involvement. Prior justice-involvement does not present a definite barrier, and each case is considered based on number and severity of offenses, and time since offenses occurred (Criteria for making suitability determinations, 2012). A Veteran with a prior conviction, even one who served a long prison term for a serious crime, may meet suitability requirements based on time since the offense and evaluation of the ongoing character of the individual. A background check is standard for all potential federal employees, so dishonesty about a history of justice-involvement can be more detrimental than reporting honestly. While VA employs a large number of Veterans, including an increasing number of justice involved Veterans, VA could play an even larger role as a transitional employer for justice-involved Veterans seeking employment. This would provide a supportive environment for justice-involved Veterans as they return to the workforce.

Limitations

While this review is intended to highlight employment-focused interventions for justice-involved Veterans, very few of the intervention studies focused on justice-involved *Veterans* specifically, with much of the research drawn from the literature on the justice-involved general adult population. There is minimal literature on justice-involved Veterans, but even less literature on Veteran sub-populations, such as women Veterans, older Veterans, and recent era Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. We attempted to find resources related to employment needs and/or interventions for specific Veteran subpopulations in the literature, but were unable to find any. We were able to identify limited information specific to justice-involved women, but not specific to women Veterans. However, we did not find indications that the needs of subpopulations are likely to differ significantly from the broad range of barriers we have highlighted, although there may be some variation in the prevalence or prioritization of barriers that should be considered in providing individually-appropriate treatment to subgroups of justice-involved Veterans.

We identified formal research on a wide range of employment-related interventions for justice-involved adults, including numerous studies that used a randomized design. However, the study sample had several important limitations, some of which influenced our decision not to attempt to carry out a quantitative synthesis. Although a good portion of the studies we examined used a strong methodology, the studies are often not directly comparable because of variations in the population targeted, the length of treatment and follow-up, and the specific outcomes reported. Furthermore, our interest was mainly in identifying specific ways to help justice-involved Veterans overcome barriers to employment, and it is not generally possible to isolate the individual impact of a specific intervention element in a study of a multi-faceted intervention. Any quantitative synthesis would have produced necessarily broad conclusions about whether employment interventions in general have a positive impact on outcomes for justice-involved adults, and similar analyses have previously been published. While our narrative synthesis was able to frame the results in a way that a quantitative synthesis would not have been able to, it was still limited by some of the same problems of study design inconsistency, in particular the lack of reported outcomes related to homelessness.

Strengths

Despite these limitations, this review builds on previous research to examine the employment intervention literature in terms of how it relates to each of the identified barriers to employment for

justice-involved adults, and how it may inform future efforts to support this population. We found evidence for effective employment-focused interventions to address the numerous barriers facing justice-involved Veterans. The studies identified highlight the need for a range of services that address job preparation and readiness factors along with other needs that may interfere with employment. This review was able to identify likely employment needs of justice-involved Veterans and provides a starting point for developing and improving services available to justice-involved Veterans.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this review reveal several gaps in the literature on employment interventions for justice-involved Veterans. While there is considerable research on employment needs and barriers for justice-involved adults, little attention has been paid to employment issues for justice-involved Veterans specifically (and even less to subgroups of justice-involved Veterans). Research demonstrates a positive link between employment and reductions in recidivism and homelessness, but in this review, we only identified one employment-focused intervention study that reported outcomes related to homelessness. Due to the interconnectedness of employment, homelessness, and justice-involvement, this is an area of research that needs considerable attention. While there is currently helpful guidance available, further high-quality research is critically necessary to establish evidence-based interventions and models of care that take into account this interconnectedness. Questions that may help to guide future research include:

- 1) Do the employment barriers identified in this review correspond to issues identified and prioritized by justice-involved Veterans with regard to becoming employed? Are there additional, unique barriers that should be taken into account (e.g., an individual's level of education or employment background/vocational skills)? If unique barriers are identified, how can this information best be integrated into VA services, and inform non-VA organizations that may provide employment services to justice-involved Veterans?
- 2) Does the prevalence of barriers and the priority placed on them by justice-involved Veterans themselves, differ across subgroups of justice-involved Veterans? For example, are there differences based on offense category (e.g., those with a sexual offense history, those with a drug offense history), gender, race, or age and era of service? If there are differences, what are the employment needs of each subgroup and how should services be tailored to meet these needs?
- 3) What are the effects of the promising strategies and interventions highlighted in this review on justice-involved Veterans per se? Do high-quality, well-designed trials highlight elements that may need to be adapted to the unique needs of justice-involved Veterans?
- 4) How do justice-involved Veterans fare in employment programs targeted at Veterans generally (both within and outside of VA)? Are they able to access such programs, and are the programs able to address needs related to their justice-involvement?
- 5) What are the short – and long- term impacts of employment, unemployment, and underemployment on justice-involved Veterans?

- 6) How well do current services available to justice-involved Veterans succeed in producing improvements across the related outcomes of employment, recidivism, and homelessness?

In conclusion, justice-involved Veterans may have unique employment needs that are different from the more general population of justice-involved adults and/or from the general Veteran population.

Research could examine how to tailor effective employment interventions with justice-involved adults to justice-involved Veterans to address these unique needs. Based on this review, more research is needed in this important area.

Tables

Table 1. Correctional risk assessment tools to identify criminogenic needs that may be barriers to employment.

Name of tool	Descriptive information
<p>The Correctional Assessment and Intervention System (CAIS; National Council on Crime & Delinquency, n.d.)</p>	<p><i>Description:</i> “[CAIS is] designed to provide criminal justice personnel with integrated assessment tools which identify evidence-based supervision strategies that emphasize public safety, rehabilitation, accountability, and criminogenic needs. CAIS™...employ[s] a single semi-structured interview to derive assessments of risk, strengths, and needs. The results of the interview are scored by an automated response system which produces an individualized case plan including risk, needs, and supervision strategy classifications, as well as recommendations for evidence-based programs and services” (Reentry Policy Council, 2012).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> Unspecified.</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity?:</i> “The CAIS’s risk scores have been shown to predict recidivism in two states. More importantly, use of the CAIS has been shown to reduce recidivism” (Skeem & Eno Loudon, 2007, p. 30).</p>
<p>Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS; Northpointe, n.d.)</p>	<p><i>Description:</i> “[COMPAS] is a statistically based risk and needs assessment specifically designed to assess key risk and needs factors in adult and youth correctional populations and to provide decision-support for justice professionals who must make decisions regarding the placement, supervision, and case-management of individuals in community supervision and correctional institution settings. It achieves this by providing valid measurement and succinct organization of research supported risk/need dimensions. COMPAS scores each individual based on three different types of risk (violence, recidivism, and failure to appear in court) and 19 different criminogenic needs. The software also includes case planning, outcomes measurement, and reports generation modules” (Reentry Policy Council, 2012).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> Unspecified.</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity?:</i> At least two studies have shown reliability and predictive validity at least as good as other prominent risk assessment tools (Blomberg, Bales, Mann, Meldrum, & Nedelec, 2010; Brennan, Dieterich, & Ehret, 2009).</p>
<p>The Offender Intake Assessment (OIA; Motiuk, 1997)</p>	<p><i>Description:</i> “OIA is a comprehensive and integrated evaluation of the offender at the time of admission to the federal system. It involves the collection and analysis of information on each offender’s criminal and mental health history, social situation, education and other factors relevant to determining criminal risk and identifying offender needs. This provides a basis for determining the offender’s institutional placement and for establishing his or her correctional plan” (Motiuk, 1997).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> Unspecified.</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity?:</i> Predictive validity has been shown with re-assessment using this tool (Andrews et al., 2006).</p>

Table 1. Correctional risk assessment tools (continued)

Name of tool	Descriptive information
The Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI; Andrews et al., 2004).	<p><i>Description:</i> “The Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) is an assessment that measures the risk and need factors of late adolescent and adult offenders. The LS/CMI is also a fully functioning case management tool. This single application provides all the essential tools needed to aid professionals in the treatment planning and management of offenders in justice, forensic, correctional, prevention and related agencies.</p> <p>Developed to reflect the increasing knowledge base on offender risk assessment since the Level of Service Inventory–Revised (LSI-R™), LS/CMI has refined and combined the 54 LSI-R items into 43 items in Section 1. In addition 10 comprehensive sections have been incorporated to further assist public safety professionals in their analysis of offender management” (Andrews et al., 2004).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> Unspecified.</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity?:</i> Meta-analyses have demonstrated consistent predictive validity of the LS/CMI as well as the earlier LSI-R, with <i>r</i>-values from 0.36 to 0.41 for general recidivism (Andrews et al., 2006).</p>
Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS; Latessa et al., 2010)	<p><i>Description:</i> “In collaboration with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, researchers at the University of Cincinnati (led by Dr. Ed Latessa) developed the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS), which assesses individuals at several points in the criminal justice system. Ohio developed ORAS with two specific goals in mind: first, to promote consistent and objective assessment of risk throughout the criminal justice system; and second, to improve communication and avoid duplication of information from one system point to the next.</p> <p>Five assessment instruments were created [ranging from 4 to 35 items each, and developed through assessment of over 200 possible risk factors]: Pretrial Assessment Tool, Community Supervision Screening Tool, Community Supervision Tool, Prison Intake Tool, and Reentry Tool” (Vera Institute of Justice, 2011).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> Unspecified.</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity?:</i> Predictive validity has been demonstrated for each of the instruments, with <i>r</i>-values from 0.22 to 0.44 for predicting re-arrest (Latessa et al., 2010).</p>

Source: (adapted from Blodgett et al., 2013)

Table 2. Objective assessment tools to assess job-readiness.

Name of tool	Descriptive information
The Systems Approach to Placement: Intake Assessment and Outcome Evaluation (SAP: IAOE; Kundu & Schiro-Geist, 1993)	<p><i>Description:</i> The SAP:IAOE offers a diagnostic approach for a practitioner to identify an individual’s employment needs. The tool is composed of eight subsystems and a total of 72 job placement related items used to evaluate an individual’s ability to obtain and maintain employment. An evaluation of the factors within the eight subsystems can assist in identifying potential barriers to employment, including personality, abilities, skills, and work experiences (the client subsystem); specific disabilities and emotional stability (the health subsystem); formal and informal educational training and technical skills/on-the-job training (the education subsystem); and, employer’s attitudes and job development potential (the employer subsystem). The tool can be used by rehabilitation professionals, including vocational forensic practitioners and job-placement specialists and supports the need for services.</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> Unspecified.</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity for justice-involved populations?:</i> No, but designed for use by vocational forensic practitioners. The inter-rater reliability of the instrument is high, ranging from 0.88-0.93 (Kundu, Schiro-Geist, & Dutta, 2005).</p>
Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI; Morey, 1991)	<p><i>Description:</i> “The PAI is a self-administered objective test of personality and psychopathology developed to provide information related to treatment planning and evaluation... [It] has received considerable attention by clinicians and researchers because of its rigorous methodology. The development of the PAI was based on a construct validation framework that emphasized a rational, as well as quantitative method of scale development. A strong emphasis is placed on a theoretically informed approach to the development and selection of items. Key areas examined by the PAI include: response styles, clinical syndromes, interpersonal style, treatment complications, and subject’s environment. The instrument comprises 344 items and 22 non-overlapping full scales, including 4 validity scales, 11 clinical scales, 5 treatment consideration scales, and 2 interpersonal scales. Clinical scales include separate measures for alcohol problems, drug problems, somatic complaints, anxiety-related disorders, depression, mania, paranoia, schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, and antisocial personality disorder” (Peters et al., 2008, p. 90).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> Up to 2.5 hours (Peters et al., 2008).</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity with justice-involved populations?:</i> Yes, though some concerns about the relatively weak validity of the SUD subscale (Reentry Policy Council, 2012).</p>

Table 2. Objective assessment tools (continued)

Name of tool	Descriptive information
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory- 2 (MMPI-2; Butcher et al., 1989)	<p><i>Description:</i> “The MMPI is one of the most widely used objective personality tests throughout the world. The instrument has been used in correctional settings since 1945 to classify individuals and to predict their behavior while incarcerated and after release. The instrument is a self-report measure with 567 items and 10 main clinical scales, including Hypochondriasis, Depression, Hysteria, Psychopathic Deviancy, Masculinity-Femininity, Paranoia, Psychasthenia (obsessive-compulsive features), Schizophrenia, Hypomania, and Social Introversion. The MMPI provides 15 supplementary content scales that address internal traits, external traits, and general problems. In addition, the MMPI contains six validity scales that examine response sets, including unanswered items, endorsement of uncommon items, and inconsistent responding.</p> <p>The MacAndrew Alcoholism Scale-Revised (MAC-R) was developed to differentiate alcoholic from nonalcoholic psychiatric patients. This supplementary scale on the MMPI-2 includes 49 items that provide a subtle screening measure to differentiate alcoholics from nonalcoholics. A 13-item Addiction Acknowledgment Scale was developed using items in the MMPI-2 whose content is clearly related to substance abuse. The Addiction Potential Scale was also developed, which included heterogeneous items related to extroversion, excitement seeking, risk taking, and lack of self-efficacy” (Peters et al., 2008, p. 87).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> 60-90 minutes.</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity with justice-involved populations?:</i> “In a study of its validity in a prison setting, the test was slightly less likely to have produced valid profiles in women and African-Americans; but produced valid profiles in 79% of cases overall. The test [is] not an effective assessment with adults convicted of sex offenses” (Reentry Policy Council, 2012). Additionally, The MMPI-2 Criminal Justice and Correctional Report, provides guidance for interpreting results in justice-involved populations (Peters et al., 2008).</p>

Table 2. Objective assessment tools (continued)

Name of tool	Descriptive information
Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III (MCMI-III; Millon, 1983)	<p><i>Description:</i> “The MCMI-III (Millon, 1983, 1997) is an objective, self-report psychological assessment measure consisting of 175 true/false items. The MCMI is designed to assess DSM-IV Axis II (personality) disorders and related clinical syndromes (Axis I), and is particularly useful in identifying personality disorders that may affect involvement in treatment. The Personality Inventory consists of 14 Personality Disorder Scales and 10 Clinical Syndrome Scales, both of which include separate Moderate and Severe Syndrome Scales. In addition, there are Correction Scales that help detect random responding and consist of three modifying indices (i.e., disclosure, desirability and debasement) and one validity index. The MCMI-III contains three Facet Scales for each MCMI-III Personality Scale. The Facet Scales were included to guide clinicians in the interpretation of the Clinical Personality Patterns and the Severe Personality Pathology Scales and were developed using factor analytic techniques. The scales aid in identifying the specific personality processes (e.g., self-image, interpersonal conduct, cognitive style) that contribute to overall scale elevations” (Peters et al., 2008, pp. 88-89).</p> <p><i>Time to complete:</i> 25 minutes (Peters et al., 2008).</p> <p><i>Evidence of reliability/validity with justice-involved populations?:</i> It was found to correspond generally with a variety of outcomes (e.g., mental health and substance use) in a correctional sample, though it may underreport personality disorders (Retzlaff, Stoner, & Kleinsasser, 2002). Additionally, the developers provide norms for justice-involved populations, as well as separate interpretive guidance (Peters et al., 2008).</p>

Source: (adapted from Blodgett et al., 2013)

Table 3. Barriers to employment among justice-involved Veterans and strategies and interventions to address these barriers.

Barrier	Strategies and interventions
Lack of education and vocational skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational classes* • Generic or job-specific vocational skills training • Unsubsidized job placement or paid transitional work* • Matching career options based on interests and personality*
Criminogenic thinking and lack of job-readiness skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal training in job-related skills (i.e., job searching and interviewing)* • Structured environment (i.e., develop time management and other responsibility skills) • Transitional or supported jobs to acquire skills for appropriate workplace behavior* • Cognitive behavioral treatment aimed at changing criminal thinking patterns* • Prison job fairs • On-the-job training • Mentoring*
Competing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated mental health and substance use disorder treatment* • Assistance with child care issues* • Assistance with transportation* • Assistance with obtaining ID and documentation* • Supported employment • Case management*
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing services including placement, referral, and/or support*
Legal Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-employment assistance (e.g., developing entrepreneurial skills)
Employer stigma and criminal background checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for how to discuss a criminal record in a job interview* • Educate employers about federal bonds and tax incentives* • Develop relationships with employers*
Military discharge status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for how to discuss a discharge under less than honorable conditions in a job interview.
Entitlements and financial disincentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial assistance with tax and/or child support arrears • Addressing concerns regarding the impact of employment on benefits • Reducing fears and beliefs about what activities are possible with a given disability

*See Table 5 for more detailed program descriptions of these strategies and interventions

Table 4. Employment intervention studies¹

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.					
Level 2. Temporal sequence between the program and the crime or risk outcome clearly observed, or the presence of a comparison group without demonstrated comparability to the treatment group														
McGuire, 2008, USA	Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program (IVTP)	Non-matched comparison group		●						Prison (Veterans contacted by IVTP employment specialists)	1 year	916	Positive Employment after release was significantly higher for IVTP participants (57%) than the comparison group (9%).	Mixed Recidivism after release was significantly higher for the comparison group (50%) than for IVTP participants (35%). However, a reduction in recidivism for IVTP participants was associated with employment, not enrollment in IVTP alone.
Level 3. A comparison between two or more comparable units of analysis, one with and one without the program.														
Anderson, 1985, USA	Job training for CETA-qualified probationers	Matched comparison group	●	●						Community (CETA qualified probationers)	1 year	216	Non-significant Non-significant group differences	No recidivism outcomes reported.
Blakely et al., 1991, USA	Project RIO	Matched comparison group		●	●			●		Prison and the community (Texas state prisoners)	-	5,636	Positive In the first six months after release, Project RIO participants were more likely to be employed (61%) than non-participants (34%).	Positive In the first six months, Project RIO participants were less likely to return to prison (8%) than non-participants (10%). However, the difference was not significant when considering re-arrests, or when controlling for employment.

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.					
Bryan et al., 2007, USA	Center for Employment Opportunity (CEO) Rapid Rewards Program	Matched comparison group	●	●						Community (CEO participants)	1 year	189	Positive Participants in the Rapid Rewards Program had higher retention rates at 90, 180, and 365 days.	No recidivism outcomes reported.
Didenko et al., 2010, Canada	National Employability Skills Program (NESP)	Matched comparison group		●						Prison (Prisoners with some or considerable employment needs who are eligible for release within five years)	Study duration is unclear, but the full length of the NESP session is between 30 and 37.5 hours	3,199	Mixed There were no employment differences between groups. However, there was a positive intervention effect among women offenders who were 1.6 times more likely to secure employment upon release if they participated in NESP.	Positive There was a positive intervention effect for male offenders who were “0.83 times less likely to return to federal custody for any reason and 0.72 times less likely to return for a new offence than male offenders in the comparison group,” but the intervention for women offenders was non-significant.
Filella-Guiu & Blanch-Plana 2002, Spain	The Guidance Program for Job Search (PORO)	Matched comparison group	●	●						Prison (Prisoners in a Spanish prison)	-	256	Significance not specified Among those released during the study period, 48% (n=21) in PORO group and 23% (n=5) in the control group were employed.	Unspecified

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.					
Jengeleski & Gordon, 1999, USA	The Kintock Group, Inc.	Matched comparison group	●	●	●					Community-based correctional program (Offenders released from state and federal institutions)	90 days	100	Positive While in the program, the “full” participation group had significantly higher levels of employment compared to the “minimum” participation group.	Positive Reincarceration rates between the two groups were not statistically significant, but there was a "ninety percent success rate as determined by not being reincarcerated over the current study's time frame."
Richardson, 2005, USA	Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises (PRIDE)	Matched comparison group	●	●				●		Prison (Prisoners released from Florida Department of Corrections)	-	20,441	Positive In the first year after release, PRIDE participants were 54% more likely than non-participants to be employed.	Non-significant Non-significant group differences
Van Stelle et al., 1998, USA	Specialized Training and Employment Project (STEP)	Matched comparison group	●	●	●					Prison (Males in two Wisconsin state prisons)	6 months in prison, plus ongoing support after release	276	Positive STEP graduates were more likely to have held a full time job during the first six months on parole (82%) than the control group (62%).	Positive STEP graduates were less likely to return to prison during the study period (2-5 years after release; 12%) than the control group (25%).

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)		
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.						Finan. Dis.	
Visher et al., 2010, USA	Workforce Development Program	Matched comparison group	●	●					●			Community (Probationers enrolled in the Delaware Workforce Development Program who have a higher average risk of recidivism than other probationers)	1 year	80	Non-significant At one year follow-up, likelihood of employment was 66% and 53% between participants in the intervention and comparison groups, respectively.	Positive There were no definitive findings about program components and recidivism, but they were “generally unrelated to rearrest/revocation.” However, when compared to a matched sample of federal probationers, the one year recidivism rate was significantly less for program participants (15%) than federal probationers not enrolled in a Workforce Development Program (26%).

Level 4. Comparison between multiple units with and without the program, controlling for other factors, or using comparison units that evidence only minor differences.

Borus et al., 1976, USA	Michigan Comprehensive Offender Manpower Program (COMP)	Two matched comparison groups	●	●								Community (Parolees released during the first three months of 1974)	3 months	266	Negative Participants in the COMP had worse outcomes than both control groups	No recidivism outcomes reported.
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Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)	
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.						Finan. Dis.
Duwe, 2012, USA	EMPLOY	Matched comparison group	●	●				●			Community (Offenders released from Minnesota prisons between 2006-2008)	28-month average	464	Positive Participation in EMPLOY significantly increased the odds of gaining postrelease employment by 72%. The EMPLOY group earned more total wages than the comparison group.	Positive Offenders who entered EMPLOY had lower rates of recidivism for all four measures (rearrest, reconviction, reincarceration, and revocation). EMPLOY also “reduced the hazard ratio for recidivism by 32% to 63%.”
Grella, 2006, USA	Female Offender Treatment and Employment Project (FOTEP)	Matched comparison group		●	●						Community-based residential drug treatment program (Women completers of a substance abuse program in prison)	1 year	430	Positive Employment rate at follow-up was higher for the FOTEP group (71%) than the comparison group (55%).	Positive At follow-up, the FOTEP group was less likely than the comparison group to be incarcerated (37% vs. 58%).
Jung, 2014, USA	Adult Transition Centers (ATC)	Matched comparison group	●	●	●			●			Secure setting in the community (Minimum security prisoners nearing parole)	None specified (generally from about 6 months to 2+ years)	12,193	Non-significant Non-significant group differences	No recidivism outcomes reported.

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.					
Lichtenberger, 2012, USA	Offender Workforce Development (OWD) Specialist program	Matched comparison group	●	●				●		Prison (Moderate- and high-risk offenders)	2 years	6,091	Positive OWD group members had significantly higher wages during the first quarter following release than the control group.	Positive OWD participation was significantly associated with lower recidivism in the first year after release, but was no longer significant during the second year.
Northcutt Bohmert & Duwe, 2012, USA	Affordable Homes Program (AHP)	Matched control group	●							Housed in secure local correctional facilities, but work in the community (Offenders with felony convictions meeting program eligibility)	-	448	Positive AHP participants had significantly higher rates of employment in the construction field (32.1% vs. 16.9%), but postrelease employment in general was not statistically significant.	Non-significant Non-significant group differences
Smith et al., 2006, USA	Prison Industries Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP)	Matched control group	●	●					●	Prison (Inmates in state prisons in 5 PIECP states)	-	6,464	Positive 48.6% of PIECP group obtained employment for at least a year compared to 40.4% of TI group, and 38.5% of OTW group.	Positive 77.9% of PIECP group remained conviction free during follow-up compared to 75.2% and 73.6% of those in TI and OTW groups, respectively.
Level 5. Random assignment and analysis of comparable units to program and comparison groups.														
Baker & Saad, 1979, USA	Court Employment Project (CEP)	Randomized	●	●						Community (Defendants eligible for CEP)	1 year	666	Non-significant Non-significant group differences	Non-significant Non-significant group differences

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²								Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.	Finan. Dis.					
Berk et al., 1980, USA	Transitional Aid Research Project (TARP)	Randomized			●					●	Community (State prisoners)	Various (ranged from 13 to 26 weeks)	1951	Negative. Over a 12-month follow-up, TARP eligibility was associated with about 5 fewer weeks of employment.	Non-significant. Non-significant group differences
Clark, 1991, USA	Enhanced Employment Development:	Randomized	●	●							Secure setting in the community (Convicted felons nearing release)	6 months	60	Positive The enhanced program did not affect employment initially, but employment and wages were higher for the experimental group at 6-month follow-up	Positive Experimental group participants had less misconduct violations than the control group (56.7% vs.66.7%) and were less likely to return to prison (13.3% vs. 33%)
Farabee et al., 2014, USA	STRIVE employment model	Randomized	●								Community (Offenders released within the past six months)	1 year	217	Non-significant Non-significant group differences	Non-significant Non-significant group differences
Jacobs, 2012, USA	Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration (TJRD)	Randomized	●								Community (Offenders released within 90 days from state prison)	2 years	1,813	Non-significant Non-significant group differences	Non-significant Non-significant group differences

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²								Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.	Finan. Dis.					
Lamb & Goertzel, 1974, USA	Ellsworth House	Randomized	●	●	●						Residential setting in the community (Sentenced offenders in the county jail)	1 year	190	Positive The Ellsworth House group had a higher rate of employment after one year (69%) than the comparison group (56%).	Non-significant Non-significant group differences
Lattimore et al., 1987; Lattimore et al., 1990, USA	Sandhills Vocational Delivery System	Randomized	●	●					●		Prison and the community (Property offenders in state prisons)	-	827	Non-significant Non-significant group differences	Non-significant Non-significant group differences
LePage et al., 2013, USA	About Face	Randomized		●						●	Community (Veterans with at least one felony conviction and a mental health diagnosis)	6 months	111	Positive At 6-month follow-up, 41% of Veterans in the full program group found competitive employment compared to 17% in the basic condition and 12% in the self-study condition.	No recidivism outcomes reported.
Mallar & Thornton, 1978, USA	Living Insurance for Ex-Offenders (LIFE)	Randomized		●	●						Community (Offenders released from Maryland state prisons)	1 year	432	Positive By the last two quarters of the study year, the financial aid group had higher rates of full-time employment and earnings than the control group.	Positive The financial aid group has 27% fewer theft arrests than the control group. However, the job-placement group had similar rates of reduced theft recidivism as the control group (28% vs. 24%).

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)		
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.						Finan. Dis.	
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 1980, USA	National Supported Work Demonstration	Randomized	●	●					●			Community (Offenders incarcerated within the last 6 months)	3 years	2,268	Non-significant Non-significant group differences	Non-significant Non-significant group differences
Milkman, 1984, USA	Employment Services for Ex-Offenders	Randomized		●	●	●			●			Community (Offenders recently released from correctional facilities)	6 months	2,045	Positive The experimental group had significantly higher job placement rates than the control group, but there were no significant differences in employment rates over time.	Non-significant Non-significant group differences
Redcross et al., 2012, USA	Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)	Randomized	●	●	●							Community (Parolees under parole supervision)	3 years	977	Positive After the first quarter, CEO participants were significantly more likely to be employed (66%) than the control group (26%). By the fourth quarter, the differences were no longer significant.	Positive Over the 3-year follow-up period, CEO participants were less likely to recidivate than the control group (65% vs. 70%).

Table 4. Employment intervention studies (continued)

Reference, country	Intervention name	Study design	Barriers targeted ²							Treatment setting (specific population targeted)	Planned duration	Total sample size	Employment outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant) ³	Recidivism outcome summary (positive, negative, mixed/non-significant)
			Ed/Voc Skills	Job-Read. Skills	Comp. Needs	Homelessness	Legal Rest.	Stigma	Discharge Stat.					
Rossman & Roman, 2003, USA	Opportunity to Succeed (OPTS)	Randomized	●	●	●	●				Community (Offenders meeting program eligibility)	1 year	343	Positive OPTS participants were employed full-time for significantly more months than the control group. However, there were no statistical differences in employment rates between groups.	Positive An increase in employment level was an important predictor of reductions in recidivism.
Spencer, 1980, USA	Ex-Offender Clearinghouse	Randomized	●	●	●					Community (Individuals requesting manpower services)	1 year	956	Positive Clearinghouse program participants were significantly more likely to find employment at a quicker rate than the control group.	No recidivism outcomes reported.
Webster et al., 2014, USA	Drug Court Employment Intervention	Randomized		●	●					Community (Eligible drug court participants)	1 year	477	Positive The intervention group worked more days during the 1-year follow-up than the control group.	No recidivism outcomes reported.

¹The studies are organized according to the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods, with Level 1 being the weakest design and Level 5 the strongest (Sherman et al., 1998).

²Barrier abbreviations: Ed/Voc Skills = Education/Vocational Skills; Job-Read. Skills = Job-Readiness Skills; Comp. Needs = Competing Needs; Legal Rest. = Legal Restrictions; Discharge Stat. = Military Discharge Status; Finan. Dis = Financial Disincentives

³Positive = Intervention participants demonstrated significantly better employment, with no tests showing a significantly worse employment outcome; Negative = Intervention participants demonstrated significantly worse employment, with no tests showing a significant improvement in employment; Mixed/Non-significant = significance tests on employment outcomes showed no significant change for intervention participants, or showed conflicting results.

Table 5. Examples of program interventions targeting barriers to employment for justice-involved adults¹

Program name	Barrier targeted and intervention description
About Face ² (LePage et al., 2013)	<p><i>Lack of job-readiness skills:</i> This vocational program and manual is tailored to justice-involved Veterans and incorporates information about job interviewing skills, identifying job-related, transferable, and adaptive job skills, and job-search strategies. The manual assists with resume development and includes a sample resume where Veterans can fill-in their specific skills and examples.</p> <p><i>Employer stigma:</i> The manual assists justice-involved Veterans with how to answer difficult interview questions, especially those pertaining to their criminal background and provides answers to difficult questions that Veterans can tailor to their specific situation. Information is also provided pertaining to marketing specific skills to an employer.</p>
Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) ³ (Redcross et al., 2012)	<p><i>Lack of education and vocational skills:</i> Following a 5-day pre-employment class, participants are immediately placed into a transitional job. Participants are a part of a work crew supervised by CEO staff and paid each day for the work they perform.</p> <p><i>Lack of job-readiness skills:</i> The transitional jobs are intended to teach job-readiness skills that are valued by employers including punctuality, reliability, and appropriate workplace behavior. Participants gain experience with the requirements of work.</p> <p><i>Competing needs:</i> CEO participants meet weekly with a job coach/case manager for assistance with finding a permanent job once deemed job-ready. Participants are also referred to other services such as parenting programs and classes and post-placement services as needed.</p>
Drug Court Employment Intervention (Webster et al., 2014)	<p><i>Criminogenic thinking and lack of job-readiness skills:</i> The employment intervention is conducted by trained clinicians with prior experience in employment and substance abuse counseling. Individual sessions with participants may include utilizing established clinical approaches (e.g., motivational interviewing, behavioral contracting, thought mapping) with individuals struggling with criminogenic thinking. The intervention also focuses on building a resume, filling out job applications, job interviewing skills, and appropriate workplace behavior.</p> <p><i>Competing needs:</i> Strengths-based case management focuses on resolving employment barriers and individual sessions with a clinician also address substance use or other issues that may interfere with employment success.</p>
EMPLOY ⁴ (Duwe, 2012)	<p><i>Lack of job-readiness skills:</i> Participants meet with a job training specialist 60 to 90 days prior to release from incarceration for two 8-hour group sessions, which include instruction related to job searching techniques, resume building, and interview skills. Sessions also include a skills assessment.</p> <p><i>Competing needs:</i> After release from prison, EMPLOY participants meet with a retention specialist who provides information about job leads in addition to other resources (e.g., bus fare, interview clothing, etc.) to assist them in their job search. The retention specialist maintains contact with each participant over the course of one year to provide job support and/or referral for other services, if needed.</p> <p><i>Employer stigma:</i> Job development specialists inform employers in the community about potential applicants who may be a good fit for a position and determine whether employers are willing to hire justice-involved adults. These specialist also educate employers about tax credits for hiring an EMPLOY participant and provide information about bonding to protect employers against employee theft.</p>

Table 5. Examples of program interventions targeting barriers to employment for justice-involved adults (continued)

Program name	Barrier targeted and intervention description
Female Offender Treatment and Employment Project (FOTEP) ⁵ (Grella, 2006)	<p><i>Lack of job-readiness skills:</i> Vocational services are offered in individual and group sessions and include a job-readiness assessment and behavioral skills training and job-seeking skills training.</p> <p><i>Competing needs:</i> The FOTEP program provides comprehensive case management and parenting assistance in the context of a residential substance use disorder treatment program with a significant vocational focus. Participants engage in residential drug treatment services and are provided case management services, transportation assistance, and referral for other needed services. Another main component of FOTEP is parenting and family services including parenting training and classes, child-care and family reunification assistance, family therapy, referrals, and housing accommodations for children within the program.</p>
Opportunity to Succeed (OPTS) (Rossman & Roman, 2003)	<p><i>Lack of education and vocational skills:</i> Core elements of employment services include assessment of participant's skills and interests and job referral and placement. Adult basic education or GED classes, vocational skills training, and apprenticeship programs may also be offered.</p> <p><i>Lack of job-readiness skills:</i> Participants receive training in job search skills and instructions on developing a resume, filling out a job application, searching for job openings, and preparation for an interview.</p> <p><i>Competing needs:</i> The OPTS program model coordinates services identified as priority needs including substance abuse treatment (sometimes intensive); parenting/family services, including parenting classes, family counseling, anger management, and domestic violence counseling; and medical and mental health services, including referral for a variety of physical and mental health problems.</p> <p><i>Homelessness:</i> OPTS participants receive housing services including placement in a supportive environment and other related services (e.g., crisis management, provision of emergency funds to cover expenses).</p> <p><i>Employer stigma:</i> Case managers develop linkages to employers who have previously hired OPTS participants and actively seek employment opportunities for participants by contacting employers directly.</p>
Project RIO ⁶ (Blakely et al., 1991)	<p><i>Lack of education and vocational skills:</i> Project RIO provides job placement services matching clients to job openings based on skill and personality factors.</p> <p><i>Lack of job-readiness skills:</i> This program provides job preparation and job search assistance. RIO participants attend a 20-hour job search workshop, which includes basic skills such as filling out a job application and preparing a resume.</p> <p><i>Competing needs:</i> Counselors assist justice-involved adults obtain essential documents for employment, including social security cards, ID, and birth certificates prior to release from incarceration. Participants with other competing needs may be referred for supplemental services such as support groups, food stamps, and bus tokens.</p> <p><i>Employer stigma:</i> Participants learn how to prepare for a job interview and counselors educate employers about the advantages and incentives for hiring justice-involved adults and develop relationships with employers to expand employment opportunities for participants.</p>

Table 5. Examples of program interventions targeting barriers to employment for justice-involved adults (continued)

Program name	Barrier targeted and intervention description
Specialized Training and Employment Project (STEP) ⁷ (Van Stelle et al., 1998)	<p><i>Lack of education and vocational skills:</i> During participation in the institutional component of the program, STEP participants are required to participate in Adult Basic Education instruction if they do not have a high school diploma (or equivalent) or if their reading or math skills are below the 12th grade level. STEP institutional completers transition into a minimum security facility in the community for nine weeks prior to parole, where participants are assisted with employment placements and supervision is provided.</p> <p><i>Lack of job-readiness skills:</i> STEP participants attend curriculum classes for six months prior to release that address a variety of factors that may impact employment. Class topics include: employability skills, cognitive interventions, relationships with others, assertiveness, and anger management. Participants also have the opportunity to participate in the “Moving Ahead in Partnership and Trust” mentoring program to develop a support network upon release.</p> <p><i>Competing needs:</i> The institutional component includes alcohol or other drug abuse treatment for participants.</p>

¹ Program interventions from Levels 3-5 in Table 4 that had positive employment outcomes and adequately described the employment intervention.

² The About Face manual is available upon request in pdf format from the first author (LePage).

³ For more information on CEO, visit <http://ceoworks.org/>

⁴ For more information on EMPLOY, visit <http://www.employmn.com/about.asp>

⁵ For more information on FOTEP, visit <http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/rehabilitation/female-offender-treatment-employment-program.html>

⁶ For more information on Project Rio, visit <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/168637.pdf>

⁷ For more information STEP, visit <http://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/program/specialized-training-and-employment-projects-step>

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