



# FAMILIES AND REENTRY: UNPACKING HOW SOCIAL SUPPORT MATTERS

Safer Return Demonstration Project





# **Families and Reentry: Unpacking How Social Support Matters**

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

It is well known that families and social support networks play a critical role in prisoners' transition from incarceration to the community (see Naser and La Vigne 2006; Visher and Courtney 2007). As such, recent efforts by policymakers and practitioners have been to engage families in the reentry process both actively and purposely (diZerega and Shapiro 2007) under the logic that strengthening and leveraging families and social support networks will bring about more successful reentry outcomes. The research on family-inclusive reentry models has been promising. Case management techniques that are family-inclusive and family-focused have been shown to reduce the likelihood that an individual will return to criminal activity (see Bradley 1995; Quinn and Van Dyke 2004; Selber, Johnson, and Lauderdale 1993; Sullivan et al. 2002).

Based on the promising literature regarding family-focused approaches, a research-based prisoner reentry program called Safer Return developed a family-inclusive case management model as the core of its suite of reentry services to formerly incarcerated individuals. Developed with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Safer Return is a community-based comprehensive prisoner reentry program implemented in the Garfield Park community in Chicago, Illinois. Safer Return intends to increase public safety and the successful reintegration of people returning from incarceration to the community using a three-pronged approach: by addressing key individual and family needs; by introducing system reforms; and by improving the local conditions that present barriers to success. With funding from the MacArthur Foundation, the Urban Institute (UI) is conducting a comprehensive process, impact, and economic evaluation of Safer Return to determine whether and to what extent it is meeting its intended short- and long-term goals. Findings from the evaluation are expected in 2013.

As a complement to the MacArthur-funded evaluation, UI received federal funding through the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) in 2009 to explore whether family-inclusive case management—as implemented through Safer Return—led to better outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons and their family members. Specifically, given that the federal funding was to be used within one year, UI developed a process and outcome evaluation of the family-inclusive case management service to determine whether it influenced short-term outcomes among formerly incarcerated persons and their family members. The quasi-experimental evaluation focused on how individual participants in Safer Return and their family members compared to formerly incarcerated persons released to a comparison community and their family members.

Using qualitative and quantitative data from approximately 180 formerly incarcerated persons, their family members, and case managers, the goal of the research study was to add to the literature on whether and how family and social support networks are vehicles for practitioners and policymakers to reduce recidivism and lead to better reintegration outcomes. To support the ICJIA evaluation, information was gathered through (1) surveys of formerly incarcerated persons' family members in the Safer Return program and surveys of formerly incarcerated persons' family members released to a comparison community; (2) administrative and programmatic data; (3) focus groups with Safer Return participants and formerly incarcerated persons released to a comparison community; and (4) focus groups with family members of treatment and comparison subjects.

Through interviews and focus groups with case managers, family members, and Safer Return participants, we learned that Safer Return experienced challenges with family engagement for multiple, intersecting reasons. First, we learned that engaging families was difficult from

the perspective of trained, experienced case managers being asked to do their work differently with finite resources. Second, we learned that some formerly incarcerated persons found it difficult to engage their family members in their reentry process directly for fear (or the reality) that they had burned their bridges with family members. Meanwhile, some former prisoners reported that they actively tried to disengage with family members they perceived as being negative influences. Third, we learned that some family members did not want or were not able—for a number of reasons—to participate in the formerly incarcerated person’s reentry program directly. Complicating these matters further were former prisoners who did not have, or reported not having, any family or social support networks in the Garfield Park neighborhood or nearby community.

Indeed, preliminary analyses of program records kept by case management staff confirmed what we learned through focus groups and interviews. Few family members of Safer Return participants were *directly* engaged in the reentry program at any point. While efforts by Safer Return staff to strengthen implementation of the family-inclusive case management are ongoing, as are efforts by Safer Return staff to ensure that program records on family engagement are reliable and accurate, at the end of this three-year evaluation (extended from one year), levels of family engagement did not support an analysis that could isolate the impact of the Safer Return family-inclusive case management on outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons or their family members.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

Based on the aforementioned challenges executing the original research design and in light of the constraints placed on the evaluation by the funding mechanism to bring the project to a close, we developed an alternative analysis strategy to focus on whether and how “family-inclusive-like” variables (i.e., family support) were critical to reentry success. Instead of focusing squarely on the impact of the family-inclusive case management model, we

developed models to test whether the *intended* goals of the family-inclusive case management services, such as family attachment and communication, and greater knowledge of the reentry process, led to better reentry outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons. We also explored how “family-inclusive-like” variables changed over time, as reported by family members. This report is primarily an outcome analysis.

The analysis starts by describing the family member characteristics along with the nature of the relationships between the family member and the formerly incarcerated person. This is informed by the baseline and follow-up surveys of the family members administered at four months and ten months after the formerly incarcerated persons’ release from prison. Next, we used the family member surveys to isolate “family-inclusive-like” measures. The Safer Return family-inclusive case management is a strengths-based, family-inclusive model designed to leverage the resources and support of those individuals who play a significant role in the formerly incarcerated persons’ lives. The family survey asked a variety of scaled questions to capture family support attributes similar to those isolated and fostered by the family-inclusive case management model. These attributes include communication, levels of closeness/attachment, engagement in activities with the formerly incarcerated person, and coparenting. A scaled questionnaire was also used to capture a key family member outcome: quality of life. To confirm that these scaled questions were reliable measures of the intended underlying constructs, we calculated alpha scores of each scale.

For those scales that demonstrated an acceptable alpha score, we generated an additive composite score using the responses across all of the scale elements. Using these measures, we assessed the level of family support within the entire sample and across the two communities. Further, we used individual-level variance to assess change in family support over time. Next, we determined whether treatment group and levels of, or changes in, family support were associated with family

member well-being. Finally, Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) data for the sample of formerly incarcerated persons who had at least a 10-month outcome period (n=186) were linked with survey results from their family members. We then used multivariate analyses to assess (1) the impact of family-inclusive case management on recidivism outcomes of formerly incarcerated persons—though, as stated previously, the variance in these measures is greatly limited; and (2) the relationships between “family-inclusive-like” measures and recidivism outcomes.

After developing this alternative plan, we discovered that the focus groups conducted with family members and formerly incarcerated persons were of limited utility. The discussions centered heavily on individuals’ reentry experiences in general, and the appropriateness and utility of services for individuals returning to the community. Indeed, these discussions are tremendously helpful to our understanding of reentry needs, which will assist in our full evaluation of the Safer Return program. However, given the aforementioned analysis plan for the current research component, there were only five themes that we could draw from the focus groups useful to our understanding of family support (burned bridges, strained relationships, feelings of shame, depression or demoralization, and tough love). These five general themes about family support were echoed by family members, formerly incarcerated persons, and the case managers.

### **Conclusions and Tentative Implications**

The most significant finding from the analyses was the difficulty involved in engaging families in the reentry process directly, a finding that will be further explored in subsequent evaluation activities on Safer Return. At this point, we are unable to fully detail the extent of the challenges in implementing the family-inclusive case management from the perspective of formerly incarcerated persons, their family members, or the Safer Return case managers. Implementation of Safer Return is ongoing, as are efforts to extract information from the program management information system that chronicles service delivery. Yet, it became clear

as we set out to conduct this analysis that our ability to isolate the effect of the family-inclusive case management on the outcomes of family members and individuals was extremely limited. Future reports on Safer Return will include findings from a process evaluation—detailing administrative and programmatic data on the program’s process and performance—and an impact evaluation that uses data from *both* formerly incarcerated persons and their family members. Indeed, a missing piece of the story reported here is the extent to which individuals’ perceptions of family support and receipt of services aligns with their family members’ perceptions and how each of these are independently and collectively related to individuals’ reentry outcomes and their family members’ outcomes.

Nevertheless, the analyses do provide some insight on the importance of families in the reentry process. The surveys show, quite clearly, that family members report positive and strong relationships with former prisoners. It also appears that although the program—and by extension, the research—uses a broad definition of family, formerly incarcerated individuals who report having social support are likely to identify biological and intimate partner family members. That is, mothers, sisters, and partners, are the main sources of social support for individuals returning from prison. Family members of both Safer Return participants and the comparison families were highly supportive of formerly incarcerated individuals, maintained frequent communication, engaged in various activities together, provided diverse assistance and resources, and reported feeling very close or attached to the former prisoners. This is important to note because the family members are extending their support despite their own limited or challenging circumstances. Consistent with previous findings of family members, those in our sample reported very low incomes, low educational statuses, and relatively low perceptions on their quality of life. Many had their own histories of criminal justice involvement and the majority of respondents were not employed. Limited resources would understandably affect the provision of

assistance, yet family members reportedly provide a great deal of tangible support.

Our analysis of change within family members over time shows that while family members reported that the number of activities performed together increases significantly over time, as former prisoners are in the community for longer (from four months postrelease to ten months postrelease), the number of hardships reported by family members also increases. In addition, while our measure of closeness between family members and returned individuals increases significantly from prison to immediately following release, it appears that this feeling of closeness wanes over time. Our correlation matrix found that many of these measures of support and family contact are related. Further analyses on this sample of family members, with the inclusion of additional variables on the former prisoners, are needed to understand how family support and dynamics change over time and are related to outcomes. For example, we are unable to know whether reported increases in hardships lead to decreases in closeness or vice versa, and how and whether these relationships are related to other outcomes.

While families appeared to provide a great deal of support, it was the level of closeness or attachment that appeared to be a significant factor in individuals' reentry outcomes. In our models of the likelihood of reincarceration and the time to reincarceration, closeness appeared to be significant factor—in interesting ways. The surveys show that there is very little variation in family members' reported closeness with the formerly incarcerated persons immediately following their release from prison. There was variation, however, in the family members' reports of closeness before incarceration and during incarceration, which is illuminating. Our findings show that formerly incarcerated persons whose family members reported less attachment during incarceration (i.e., closeness dipped during incarceration) had better reentry outcomes.

The implications of this finding are difficult to interpret because the cause for the family members' reported dip in closeness is unknown, particularly given that communication levels during prison are controlled for in some of the models. In the focus groups, formerly incarcerated persons and family members in both communities gave two potential explanations. First, some formerly incarcerated persons indicated that they felt shame when their family came to visit or communicated with them due to their imprisonment. They actively cut themselves off from their family members. This internalized shame may provide incentive not to return to prison. Alternatively, some family members indicated that they used a "tough love" approach while the individual was incarcerated, cutting off contact, even when it was difficult personally. Their objective was to make prison a hard, unpleasant experience and discourage the individual from going back. In the formerly incarcerated persons' focus groups, several individuals echoed this reality, indicating that their family members had employed "tough love" while they were incarcerated.

While these are potential explanations for the results seen in the models, further investigation of this relationship is needed to elaborate the ways in which family members and individuals define and maintain their relationships during their incarceration. It could be that family members sever ties because they feel they do not want to burden those they care about while they are away in prison, or vice versa. It should also be emphasized that, in both instances, this explanation represents choices made by the family or the formerly incarcerated person, and does not support any policy of limited contact or forced separation between families and incarcerated persons. Indeed, previous research has shown the opposite, that in-person visits (a form of closeness) are significantly related to better reentry outcomes. While the current analyses do impart some new knowledge about the role of families and social support in formerly incarcerated persons' reentry process, certainly more research is needed.

# 1.

## Introduction

### Importance of Families in the Reentry Process

It is well known that families and social support networks are critical factors in prisoners' transition from incarceration to the community. As has been detailed extensively in the literature, individuals released from prison to the community face myriad challenges upon release (see Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001; Travis and Visher 2005)—challenges that former prisoners rely heavily upon their family members and social support networks to assist them in tackling in the days and months following their release from prison (Naser and La Vigne 2006; Visher and Courtney 2007). In particular, family support and contact pre- and postrelease, in the form of prison visits and housing, financial, and emotional support, for example, have been shown to be important for former prisoners' transition from prison to the community (see Nelson, Deess and Allen 1999; Sullivan et al. 2002 for discussion) and associated with better reentry outcomes (see Hairston 2002; La Vigne, Schollenberger and Debus 2009; La Vigne, Visher, and Castro 2004; Klein, Bartholomew, and Hibbert 2002; Minnesota Department of Corrections 2011; Visher, La Vigne, and Travis 2004). Family members' support is often considerable despite the fact that many of them struggle with their own limited incomes and histories of criminal justice involvement and substance abuse (La Vigne et al. 2009; Schollenberger 2009). And while some former prisoners acknowledge that their families and social support networks have negative influences on their behavior—because of active substance use, for example—the majority view their families and social networks positively (La Vigne et al. 2009).

It is for these reasons that recent efforts by policymakers and practitioners have been to engage families in the reentry process both actively and purposely (diZerega and Shapiro 2007). Tools have been developed for use by both institutional and community corrections staff that identify the resources and strengths of families and support networks for formerly incarcerated persons to improve reentry outcomes. The logic is that strengthening and leveraging the resources of families and social support networks—individuals who are already present in former prisoners' lives—will bring about more successful reentry outcomes. The research on family-inclusive reentry models has been promising. Case management techniques that are family-focused or family-inclusive have been shown to be effective ways to reduce the likelihood that individuals will return to criminal activity (see Bradley 1995; Quinn and Van Dyke 2004; Selber et al. 1993; Sullivan et al. 2002).

### Safer Return Demonstration Project

Based on the promising literature regarding family-focused reentry models, a research-based prisoner reentry program called Safer Return developed a strengths-based, family-inclusive case management model as the core of its suite of reentry services. Developed with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Safer Return is a community-based comprehensive prisoner reentry program implemented in the Garfield Park community in Chicago, Illinois. Founded on best and promising practices in the prisoner reentry field, Safer Return was designed jointly by the Urban Institute (UI) and the Safer Foundation based on the idea that in addition to formerly incarcerated persons, the entire community, including families of former prisoners, and

public and private systems, must be addressed and engaged to affect prisoner reentry positively. Therefore, Safer Return aims to increase public safety and the successful reintegration of people returning from incarceration to the community using a three-pronged approach: by addressing key individual needs, by introducing system reforms, and by improving the local conditions that present barriers to success. With funding from the MacArthur Foundation, UI is conducting a comprehensive process, impact, and economic evaluation of Safer Return to determine whether and to what extent Safer Return met its intended long-term goals. Findings from the evaluation are expected in 2013.

## Study Overview

As a complement to the MacArthur-funded evaluation, UI received federal funding through the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) in 2009 to explore whether family-inclusive case management—as implemented through Safer Return—led to better outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons and their family members. Specifically, given that the federal funding was to be used within one year, UI developed a process and outcome evaluation of the family-inclusive case management service to determine whether it influenced short-term outcomes among formerly incarcerated persons and their family members. The quasi-experimental evaluation focused on how individual participants in Safer Return and their family members compared to formerly incarcerated persons released to a comparison community and their family members. The comparison community, West Englewood, was selected specifically for this research component and the larger MacArthur-funded evaluation.<sup>1</sup> Using qualitative and quantitative data from formerly incarcerated persons, family members, and case managers, the goal of the research study was to add to the literature on whether and how family and social support networks are vehicles for practitioners and policymakers to reduce recidivism and to better reintegration outcomes.

Through interviews and focus groups with case managers, family members, and Safer Return

participants, we learned that Safer Return experienced challenges with family engagement for multiple, intersecting reasons. First, we learned that engaging families was difficult from the perspective of trained, experienced case managers being asked to do their work differently with finite resources. For example, discussions with case managers revealed that there was some level of discomfort with engaging families directly, using the strengths-based family-inclusive approach on which the Safer Return case management model was based. Others reported feeling very limited in their ability to serve families who had needs that matched or exceeded the needs of the Safer Return participants. Second, we learned that some formerly incarcerated persons found it difficult to engage their family members in their reentry process directly for fear (or the reality) that they burned their bridges with family members. Meanwhile, some former prisoners reported that they actively tried to disengage with family members they perceived as being negative influences. Third, we learned that some family members did not want or were not able—for a number of reasons—to participate in their family members' reentry program directly. Many family members insisted that they did not need help and instead wanted their formerly incarcerated family member to change their behavior and work on their own reentry goals, rather than worry about the family members' needs or goals. Others simply did not want to engage in the reentry program, despite the case managers' best efforts to reach out to them. Complicating these matters further were former prisoners who did not have, or reported not having, any family or social support networks in the neighborhood or nearby community. In fact, some Safer Return participants returned to Garfield Park from prison without having any personal connections or previous experiences with the neighborhood.

Preliminary analyses of program records kept by case management staff confirmed what we learned through focus groups and interviews. Few family members of Safer Return participants were *directly* engaged in the reentry program at any point. In addition, our

preliminary analyses of program records showed low variation in the number of interactions between family members and case managers—further limiting our ability to isolate case management effects. Safer Return staff are making efforts to strengthen implementation of the family-inclusive case management as well as to ensure that program records on family engagement are reliable and accurate. Yet, at the end of this three-year evaluation (extended from one year), levels of family engagement did not support an analysis that could isolate the impact of the Safer Return family-inclusive case management on outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons or their family members.

Quite simply, our preliminary analyses exhibited very limited power to detect the differences we were interested in. Preliminary analyses were confirmed by our conversations with family members, program participants, and case managers through interviews and focus groups. For these reasons, we are unable to report detailed, reliable findings from the process evaluation, including the progress and performance of the Safer Return case management model. As implementation of Safer Return continues to strengthen and additional cohorts of family members and Safer Return participants enter the research sample, future analyses may reveal greater levels of family engagement with the program. Documentation of how implementation has strengthened over time will be included in future evaluation reports.

Based on the aforementioned challenges executing the original research design and in light of the constraints placed on the evaluation by the funding mechanism to bring the project to a close, we developed an alternative analysis strategy to focus on whether and how “family-inclusive-like” variables (defined in more detail in subsequent sections) were critical to reentry success. Instead of focusing solely on the impact of the family-inclusive case management model, we developed models to test whether the *intended* goals of the family-inclusive case management services, such as family support, attachment, and communication, and greater knowledge of the reentry process, led to better

reentry outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons. We also explored how “family-inclusive-like” variables changed over time, as reported by family members. This report is primarily an outcome analysis.

Our review of the literature suggests that there are three ways in which the data collected and proposed outcome analysis plan could add to what is known about the importance of families in the reentry process. First, while the literature is clear that families and their support are a critical part of the reentry process, it has not been established in what forms family support matters. Our surveys of family members included several measures of family support, including reports of communication, closeness, activities together, and services offered, which each can be related to reentry outcomes in similar or different ways. Second, the literature on the importance of families has focused mostly on former prisoners’ perspectives of family support. The study design used surveys of family members, asking them directly about the quality of their relationships with the formerly incarcerated persons at four points in time: before prison, during prison, four months following the individuals’ release, and ten months following their release. Using the perspectives of family members directly may confirm or challenge what has been learned about the importance of family support from the perspective of currently or formerly incarcerated persons. Finally, the study design used a broad definition of family to include not only blood relatives, but any individual the formerly incarcerated person feels is a significant source of social support. This broad definition—used by the Safer Return program and the research—is based on literature showing that family-focused models using broad definitions for family are effective (Sullivan et al. 2002). In this way, the study is able to speak to family support more broadly and explore what types of people form an individual’s support network.

## **Road Map for the Current Report**

This report has six additional sections. The next section (section 2) provides an overview of the Safer Return case management approach,

highlighting major aspects of the model. Part of Section 2 discusses preliminary findings from the process evaluation on the family-inclusive case management logic. Section 3 details the study's data sources and methodology, which include two survey waves of formerly incarcerated persons' family members in the treatment and comparison groups, administrative data from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Safer Return program on case management procedures and trainings, and focus group data from families and formerly incarcerated individuals. In addition,

this section outlines the analysis plan used for the current analyses in greater detail. Section 4 provides portraits of family members of the Safer Return participants and family members in the comparison group. Section 5 discusses how family members' reports of support, attachment, and activities with their incarcerated family member change over time. Section 6 focuses on how and whether "family-inclusive-like" variables are associated with short-term recidivism outcomes. Section 7 presents tentative conclusions based on the findings.

## 2.

### Safer Return's Case Management Approach

A cohort of adults released from IDOC from spring 2008 through fall 2011 to the Garfield Park community have been eligible to participate in Safer Return, regardless of their gender, age, race, criminal charge, or history. The program is voluntary, and individuals are offered a host of pre- and postrelease services for up to one year following their release, depending on need. Services developed for the Safer Return program were based on best or promising practices in the field of prisoner reentry, as assessed by Urban Institute and Safer Foundation staff and through discussions with leading prisoner reentry experts. The case management component of Safer Return is the hub of Safer Return services to individuals—intended to leverage the strengths of individuals and their families and social support networks to increase public safety and successful reentry. Safer Return implementation will continue until fall 2012.

The case management model of Safer Return was based, in part, on Family Justice's<sup>2</sup> Bodega Model<sup>®</sup>. Family Justice staff trained on the Bodega Model and other family-focused tools provided extensive training and technical assistance to Safer Return staff during the initial months of the program's implementation. The research base on the Bodega Model and others that use a broad definition of family is promising (see Bradley 1995; Quinn and Van Dyke 2004; Sullivan et al. 2002). In addition to being family-focused, the Bodega Model is a strengths-based case management approach that attempts to put greater emphasis on individual assets, rather than deficits. Strengths-based approaches focus on assessing and leveraging participant capabilities, talents, skills, and resources to support change and solve problems from a positive perspective, which has been found to be effective with diverse groups (see Early and Glen Maye 2002). Using the strengths-based,

family-focused approach, the Safer Return case managers implement the Bodega Model through—

- ✓ Assessing the strengths, risks, and needs of formerly incarcerated persons through family-focused, strengths-based tools such as genograms, ecomaps, and the Relational Inquiry Tool, as well as validated risks and needs assessments, such as the Texas Christian University Criminal Justice Risk Assessment Tool;<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ Developing individualized reentry plans based on the strengths, risks, and needs assessments;
- ✓ Referring and linking individuals to services based on their reentry plans; and
- ✓ Monitoring participant progress.

The Safer Return case managers, called reentry coaches, are experienced case managers hired through a Safer Return subcontractor, Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities. Reentry coaches, trained on Family Justice's Bodega Model, use a broad definition of family to include blood relatives and close friends, mentors, faith leaders, and others who played a significant role in the formerly incarcerated persons' lives. In Safer Return, formerly incarcerated persons are the focus of the case management services, though family members are encouraged to participate in their reentry process through case staffings and by communicating with case managers frequently. Family members' strengths and resources are to be leveraged by the Safer Return participants, through the case managers' assistance and use of family-focused case management tools, to further their reentry goals. Family members are also eligible to receive limited assistance from case managers directly, such as information or referrals to services or resources for expressed needs. Typically, family members are identified by the Safer Return participants upon their

enrollment in the program, which could occur during prison or after release.

Voluntary participation of family members in case management is a departure from the Family Justice model. The Bodega Model requires that at least one family member participate in case management. While Safer Return case managers seek family member participation, participation in the case management component is not a requirement. As such, this evaluation focuses only on the subsample of Safer Return participants and comparison members who identified a family member/source of emotional support. It should be mentioned at the outset that this could bias the outcome analysis, since the evaluation does not include a sample of individuals who did not have or did not indicate a family member/source of emotional support. Individuals with no family support or those who do not indicate a family support member to a case manager may have outcomes significantly different from those in the present analysis.

### **Preliminary Process Evaluation Findings**

An interim report, which covered findings from the first two years of the process and outcome ICJIA-funded evaluation, was published in October 2011. The interim report outlined the logic of the family-inclusive case management model, based on information available at the time, and described the first cohort of families in the research sample (see Fontaine, Gilchrist-Scott, and Denver 2011). Briefly, the role of the family-inclusive case management model within

Safer Return is substantial, as it is the core of participant services. Safer Return case managers lead program enrollment efforts for individuals soon to be and recently released to Garfield Park. Case managers administer initial and periodic assessments of strengths, risks, and needs, while making efforts to reach out to family members. Case managers refer Safer Return participants to internal services that are provided by the program directly and external services that are available in the community, as needed. Finally, case managers also coordinate with neighborhood-based parole officers who have been trained in the Safer Return model.

Ultimately, the outputs associated with the case management are to assist participants with their reentry goals, to include securing employment and housing, receiving mental health and substance abuse treatment, finding educational opportunities, reuniting with family and children, and engaging with the community through prosocial activities. Preliminary findings from the overall process evaluation of Safer Return demonstrate successes along many of these goals. While there have been challenges with the family-inclusive case management, as previously discussed, Safer Return has been implemented in the Garfield Park community, and is enrolling men and women pre- and postrelease and connecting them to services as needed. Future efforts by the evaluation team, to culminate in 2013, will further document the progress and performance of the Safer Return program as it relates to measurable short- and long-term outputs and impacts.

### 3.

## Data Sources and Evaluation Methodology

The initial goal of this research component was to document the progress and performance of the family-inclusive case management model (process evaluation) and how it was related to expected outcomes (outcome evaluation) by collecting qualitative and quantitative data. While there were challenges executing the original research design, information from the following data sources has been collected: (1) surveys of formerly incarcerated persons' family members in the Safer Return program and of family members associated with formerly incarcerated persons (FIPs) released to West Englewood (comparison group); (2) administrative and programmatic data; (3) focus groups with Safer Return participants and FIPs released to West Englewood; and (4) focus groups with family members<sup>4</sup> of treatment and comparison subjects.

This research component uses the aforementioned data sources only. The data sources outlined in the previous paragraph and discussed in detail below are a subsample of the data sources collected for the larger evaluation. In addition to program records from Safer Return's database on service delivery, which were not available at the time of this report, the larger MacArthur-funded evaluation uses data from multiple sources for the process, impact, and economic evaluation. Findings from that evaluation are forthcoming, expected in 2013. Primary data sources for the MacArthur-funded evaluation include information gathered through semi-structured interviews with Safer Return stakeholders during site visits conducted by UI staff, survey data from formerly incarcerated persons in Safer Return and those released to the comparison community covering various domains,<sup>5</sup> survey data from family members of Safer Return participants and family members of FIPs released to the comparison community covering various domains (used for the current

research component),<sup>6</sup> community member surveys,<sup>7</sup> and physical block ratings. Secondary data sources that will be used include program and administrative records on Safer Return's implementation, institutional, service, and community reforms.

### Survey Data

To understand the importance of family-focused case management services on family outcomes for the current study, we used a cohort of family members of Safer Return participants and family members of FIPs released to the comparison community during the same period, starting in spring 2010.<sup>8</sup> Family members were recruited into the study through FIPs in both communities who were asked to identify up to four adults who were significant sources of emotional or material support to them, including biological family members, friends, mentors, pastors, or any other adult the person deemed appropriate. Starting with the first adult mentioned by the FIP and dependent on their availability for an interview, one family member of each Safer Return and comparison community research participant was surveyed. It is important to note that the definition used by the research team for family member is consistent with the broad definition of family member used by Safer Return; however, the family member surveyed may or may not have been the individual who participated in (or was targeted by) the case managers.

Surveys of family members were conducted in two waves: baseline and follow-up. Baseline surveys were conducted in person four months after the FIP's release to the community, and follow-up surveys were conducted by telephone, mail, and in person six months following the baseline interview (ten months following the FIP's release). The baseline survey covered three distinct periods: four months

before prison; during prison; and four months after prison release. In addition to sociodemographic and behavioral characteristics of the family member, the baseline tool covered the following domains:

- Relationship to the FIP
- Experiences and types of contact with the FIP prior to, during, and after incarceration
- Children/co-dependents with the FIP
- Experiences and types of contact children/co-dependents had with the FIP prior to, during, and after incarceration
- Provision of postrelease resources for the FIP
- Experiences with social service agencies
- Challenges due to the formerly FIP's return from prison

The follow-up survey was designed to explore the extent to which there were changes in the aforementioned domains since the baseline survey. Follow-up surveys for the current study were implemented at six months following the initial interview using a mix of recruitment strategies, including mail and telephone surveys. Cost limitations restricted our ability to conduct the follow-up surveys in person routinely. Individuals were offered modest incentives for participating in each survey wave, and were offered bonuses for participating in both survey waves and for keeping their contact information current between survey waves.

From spring 2010 through December 2011, a total of 235 baseline surveys were collected from family members across both communities (141 family members in West Englewood and 94 family members in Garfield Park).<sup>9</sup> Of the 235 family members surveyed at baseline, 186 had reached their 10-month follow-up survey period for inclusion in the current analysis.<sup>10</sup> Of the 186 who were eligible to participate in the study, 73 completed the follow-up survey (nearly 40 percent response rate). The low response rate was primarily the result of difficulties locating the family members on the phone (disconnected lines, wrong numbers, or deceased). Others did not answer the phone or did not return calls after multiple attempts. The

initial plan was to conduct cost-effective telephone surveys for the follow-up interviews. When that proved less successful than anticipated based on our experiences in other projects of a similar nature, we tried two additional approaches: mailing paper surveys and inviting potential respondents to appear at their convenience for an interview that covered the survey questions at a time we were onsite conducting field work and focus groups.

Throughout the course of follow-up data collection, only four people actively refused to take the survey. Mailing paper surveys was the more successful strategy for locating family members at follow-up. The final follow-up sample includes 37 paper surveys, 35 phone surveys, and one respondent who attended an in-person survey session. One case was removed due to invalid data, resulting in a final sample size of 72.

### **Administrative and Program Data**

Since Safer Return's implementation, the research team has conducted more than one dozen site visits to Chicago. Related to this ICJIA research component, UI collected administrative and program data by—

1. Conducting semi-structured interviews with program stakeholders, including each of the case managers and their supervisors;
2. Observing training sessions, conducted by Family Justice on the Bodega Model, for case managers and other program staff, such as the neighborhood-based parole officers;
3. Observing case staffings for participants and other components of the Safer Return program that participants are offered (e.g., exit orientations, mentoring); and
4. Conducting document reviews of case management tools, such as the case managers' standard operating procedures manual.

Contextual information has been gathered through these observations and interviews on program practices, procedures, and processes. Observations enabled UI to obtain firsthand knowledge of program operations, rather than

relying solely on the reports and opinions of stakeholders involved in program implementation. Through this fieldwork, we have documented the development, challenges, and changes in program operations over time. These data collection activities are used to detail the program context, program operations, processes, and the links between program inputs, performance and activities (outputs), and outcomes, as well as to make recommendations on potential program modifications, expansions, and sustainability opportunities.

In addition to the administrative and programmatic information listed above, UI has accessed official government records from IDOC to determine recidivism outcomes associated with the Safer Return program, the family-inclusive case management, and the role of family members in the reentry process. Specifically, UI collected full criminal history records, as well as recidivism outcomes data for the cohort that was released at least 10 months from the date of data collection for this research component (February 2012). This resulted in 186 formerly incarcerated persons, split across the Safer Return (treatment) and comparison group. Recidivism data included returns to prison for both new arrests as well as technical violations.

### **Focus Groups**

To glean a qualitative perspective on the importance of family and social support services for former prisoners and their families, we conducted 90-minute focus groups with FIPs in Safer Return, FIPs released to the comparison community, family members of Safer Return participants, and family members of FIPs released to the comparison community. The focus groups were facilitated with each of these four distinct groups separately. Twelve total focus groups were held in 2010 and 2011, which includes four separate focus groups for each subgroup: Safer Return participants, FIPs in West Englewood, family members of Safer Return participants, and the comparison group's family members. In total, 40 different family members participated in the focus groups and

56 different FIPs participated in the focus groups.

Individuals and family members were recruited directly by UI staff through mailings and telephone calls, using administrative and program data provided by IDOC and Safer Return staff. UI staff facilitated each of the focus groups; participants were provided a light dinner during the group discussion and a modest monetary incentive for their participation. The focus group discussions enabled individuals to reflect on their reentry experiences and how case management and support services affected changes in their reentry experiences and those of their families. The focus groups were intended to help us explore how FIPs and their family members benefited from the case management and family support, as well as what and how additional services would be useful.

### **Analysis Plan**

As mentioned in the Introduction, we were limited in our ability to detect impacts of the family-inclusive case management services on outcomes. This was primarily due to low levels of service receipt reported by the family members in the baseline and follow-up surveys. Based on the survey data, only 30 percent of the Safer Return family members reported ever having contact with the reentry coach, and approximately half of those individuals had only one contact. Further, very few family members completed the follow-up survey, which hindered our ability to detect changes in family outcomes over time. Both of these factors reduced statistical power by constricting variability in both the independent service receipt measures and the dependent family outcome measures.

In recognition of this limited potential to detect impacts of the family-inclusive case management, we formulated an alternative analysis plan to measure the changes in "family-inclusive-like" measures over time and to determine how those measures were critical to reentry success and related to family member outcomes. The analysis plan starts by describing the family member characteristics, along with

the nature of the relationships between the family member and the formerly incarcerated person. This is informed by the baseline and follow-up surveys of the family members performed at four months and ten months after FIP's release from prison.

Next, we used the family member surveys to isolate the "family-inclusive-like" measures. As stated previously, the Safer Return family-inclusive case management is a strengths-based, family-inclusive model designed to leverage the resources and support of those individuals who play a significant role in the FIPs' lives. The family survey asked a variety of scaled questions to capture family support attributes similar to those isolated and fostered by the family-inclusive case management model. These attributes include communication, levels of closeness/attachment, engagement in activities with the formerly incarcerated person, and coparenting.<sup>11</sup> A scaled questionnaire was also used to capture a key family member outcome, quality of life. To confirm that these scaled questions were reliable measures of the intended underlying constructs, we calculated alpha scores of each scale (see appendix A).

For scales that demonstrated an acceptable alpha score (0.7 or higher), we generated an additive composite score using the responses across all of the scale elements. The mean and variance of these scores are also presented in appendix A. Using these measures, we assessed the level of family support within the entire sample and across the two communities. Further, we used individual-level variance to assess change in family support over time. Next, we determined whether treatment community and levels of, or changes in, family support were associated with family member wellbeing outcomes.

Finally, IDOC data for the 186 formerly incarcerated persons who had at least a 10-month outcome period were linked with survey results from their family members. We then used multivariate analyses to assess (1) the impact of family-inclusive case management on recidivism outcomes of FIPs—though, as stated previously, the variance in these measures is greatly limited; and (2) the relationships

between "family-inclusive-like" measures and recidivism outcomes. Because only 34 individuals recidivated within the 10-month outcome period, only baseline survey data were used in these analyses. Only 13 of the 72 individuals whose family members completed the follow-up survey recidivated; 72 observations do not provide adequate statistical power to perform the proposed analyses.

After developing this alternative plan, we discovered that the focus groups conducted with family members and FIPs were of limited utility. A detailed reporting of those discussions can be found in appendix B. The discussions centered heavily on individuals' reentry experiences in general, and the appropriateness and utility of services for individuals returning to the community. These discussions are tremendously helpful to our understanding of reentry needs, which will assist in our full evaluation of the Safer Return program. However, given the aforementioned analysis plan for the current research component, there were only five themes, discussed below, that we could draw from the focus groups useful to our understanding of family support:

- Many formerly incarcerated persons talked about *burned bridges*. FIPs, particularly those who had been in prison more than once, felt they had burned their bridges with family members and felt reluctant to reach out to family both during their incarceration and following their release.
- Family members and FIPs mentioned *strained relationships* and feeling that they just were not ready or able to establish relationships with one another. This sentiment was echoed by both parties. Family members felt that they could not reach out to their loved one while he or she incarcerated because they were in different circumstances and environments. Formerly incarcerated persons mentioned that during prison, they did not want to talk to family, because they were not able to help with bills or other every day stressors. They felt powerless and that talking just was not enough.
- Both family members and FIPs revealed feelings of *shame*. During incarceration, many

family members felt they could not bring themselves to see their loved one in prison and vice versa. Family members with children did not want to subject their mutual children to seeing their loved one incarcerated, and many fathers also expressed the view that they did not want their children to see them incarcerated.

- Feelings of *depression or demoralization* were also echoed by many family members and FIPs. Relationships during their prison term were not strong because many could not bring themselves to visit their loved one in prison; many family members felt the process of gaining entry to the institutions made them feel like criminals, too.
- A concept that was echoed by family members and former prisoners was *tough love*. Many formerly incarcerated persons

said their family members purposely did not write them, call them, or visit them because they wanted them to do “hard time.” FIPs who had been in prison before said this was particularly true in their case, as family members felt that after multiple incarceration stints, their contact and communication did not make a difference. These sentiments were confirmed among our family member participants.

These five general themes were echoed by family members, formerly incarcerated persons, and the case managers on the nuances in family support and relationships. While not reflected in the focus group discussions, the survey findings revealed many positive things that family members mentioned about having their formerly incarcerated family member back home.

## 4.

### Portrait of Family Members of Returning Prisoners in Two Chicago Communities

#### Baseline Descriptives

Family members completed baseline surveys four months following the release of their formerly incarcerated family members. The baseline survey covered three time frames: (1) four months prior to their family member's most recent incarceration, (2) during their most recent incarceration, and (3) four months following their most recent release. The baseline survey covered several domains: demographics; relationship, contact, and activities with the returning family member; support the FIP provides for any children or dependents the family member provides care for; resources the family member has provided to the returning individual and the level of hardship involved for the family member; the family member's experiences with social service agencies; challenges involved with the returning prisoner coming back to the community; and services or resources the family member needs.

Of the 235 family members described in the baseline results, 94 were family members of a Safer Return participant and the remaining 141 were family members of FIPs returning to the comparison community. Table 1 describes some key characteristics of the family members in each group four months after the release of the FIP.

In general, the family members who completed surveys have limited resources (table 1). About 40 percent of all family members were employed, and nearly half were living on less than \$10,000 per year. Self-reported criminal history measures were also similar across groups, with approximately 40 percent of all respondents indicating that they had been arrested before. The highest level of education for approximately 60 percent of family members in each group was a high school diploma/GED or less. Moreover, the family

members surveyed had generally low outlooks on their life, rating their quality of life at or below average across multiple measures. Indeed, only family members' ratings of their health, housing, and support systems in both groups were on the higher end of the scale (greater than 3 out of 5). Notably, family members in the comparison group rated their housing and health significantly higher than the Safer Return family members at baseline. These were the only significant differences across groups. Finally, respondents were overwhelmingly female—more than 75 percent of the baseline sample was female.

As mentioned, the family-inclusive case management model defines family broadly, including not only biological family members, but also close friends, faith leaders, mentors, and other sources of social support. Despite this, the family members included in the survey, as identified by the formerly incarcerated persons, tended to fall into a traditional family member category. In both Safer Return families and West Englewood families, more than 60 percent of respondents were connected to the FIP in one of three ways: non-married intimate partner, parent, or sibling. Very few were friends or preachers or spiritual advisers. The statistical variation in connections to the FIP reported by the Safer Return families and West Englewood families was marginally significant (table 2).

A majority of the family members who responded to the survey were currently living with the formerly incarcerated individuals in each group (table 2). In addition to living together, family members reported high levels of contact with the formerly incarcerated person at four months after the FIP's release from prison. Table 3 shows the levels of communication during all three baseline time periods. In general, the communication patterns

in each group were similar; respondents in both groups reported routine communication after their family member's release from prison, both through face-to-face contact and electronic media. Levels of communication postrelease were greater than the levels of communication before prison at baseline, though the prerelease contact appears to be routine for a majority of the family respondents as well. During prison,

unsurprisingly, communication with the family members dropped substantially. With one exception, there were no significant differences in levels of contact with family members in the two groups before, during, or after prison. A significantly smaller percentage of Safer Return families reported face-to-face contact after prison than West Englewood families.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Family Members of Formerly Incarcerated Persons in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	<b>SR (N=94)</b>	<b>WE (N=140)</b>
<b>Employment and Income</b>		
Employed at least part time (percentage)	43.6	40.0
Number of jobs (average)	1.15	1.16
Number of hours worked per week at all jobs (mode)	31-40	31-40
Annual income from all sources (mode)	<\$10,000	<\$10,000
<b>Education (percentage)</b>		
Less than high school	28.7	31.9
High school graduation/GED	35.1	31.9
Some college	24.5	20.6
Associate's degree	3.2	6.4
Bachelor's degree or above	8.5	9.2
<b>Marital Status (percentage)</b>		
Never married	58.5	51.1
Married	24.5	24.1
Separated/Widowed/Divorced	14.8	24.1
Other	2.1	0.7
<b>Criminal History (percentage)</b>		
Ever arrested	39.4	39.7
Ever served a prison or jail sentence	20.2	14.2
<b>Perceptions of Quality of Life (mean)^</b>		
Housing**	3.3	3.7
Job	2.9	2.8
Health**	3.3	3.6
Overall financial situation	2.4	2.6
Involvement in community	2.2	2.2
Support system	3.4	3.6
<b>Gender (percentage)</b>		
Male	23.7	17.0
Female	76.3	83.0

^ Where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests and chi-square tests, as appropriate; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 2. Relationship between Family Members and Formerly Incarcerated Persons in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	SR (N=94)	WE (N=141)
<b>Living Arrangements (percentage)</b>		
Lived with before prison	71.4	67.9
Lives with currently	81.0	78.0
<b>How are you connected to FIP... (percentage)*</b>		
Non-Married Intimate Partner	29.8	24.1
Mother or Father	22.3	22.0
Brother or Sister	16.0	20.6
Grandparent	4.3	7.8
Spouse	3.2	5.7
Friend before Prison	7.4	2.8
Cousin	8.5	1.4
Aunt or Uncle	3.2	7.1
Child, Stepchild, or Foster Child	1.1	4.3
Preacher or Spiritual Advisor	2.1	0.0
Other	1.1	2.8
Ex-Partner	0.0	0.7
Former Wife or Husband	1.1	0.7
<b>Relationship to FIP's children (percentage)</b>		
Four months prior to incarceration		
FIPs with children	52.7	54.0
Had at least shared responsibility for FIP's children	41.7	40.5
During incarceration		
FIPs with children	51.7	53.6
Had at least shared responsibility for FIP's children	34.8	45.9
At four months postrelease		
FIPs with children	52.2	53.6
Had at least shared responsibility for FIP's children	47.9	44.6

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table 3. Forms of Contact between Family Members and Formerly Incarcerated Persons in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	SR (N=94)	WE (N=141)
<b>Forms of Contact/Communication (percentage)</b>		
At least weekly contact <i>before</i> prison		
Face-to-face	85.0	85.7
Phone/text/e-mail	67.7	65.0
At least weekly contact <i>during</i> prison		
Any type of contact	50.0	56.7
At least weekly contact <i>after</i> prison		
Face-to-face*	95.7	99.3
Phone/letters/text/e-mail	77.7	72.3

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Table 4. Types of Activities Engaged in by Formerly Incarcerated Persons and Family Members in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	SR (N=94)	WE (N=141)
<b>Prior to incarceration, at least weekly... (percentage)</b>		
Watched TV together...	51.1	55.5
Gone to the movies together...	3.3	4.4
Hung out in a park or playground together...	14.1	21.9
Shot pool or played card games together...	20.7	29.9
Exercised or played sports together...**	4.4	12.4
Spent time together in a group of family or friends...**	43.7	58.4
Spent time one-on-one together...	64.1	67.2
Ate out at a restaurant together...	23.9	24.8
Went to a play, a museum, or a cultural event together...	2.2	2.2
Attended a local civic or social organization together...	1.1	3.6
Attended religious services together...	14.1	8.8
Played instruments or perform together...	3.3	5.1
<b>Since incarceration, at least weekly... (percentage)</b>		
Watched TV together...	70.2	69.5
Gone to the movies together...	7.4	4.3
Hung out in a park or playground together...*	14.9	23.4
Shot pool or played card games together...	23.4	23.4
Exercised or played sports together...*	7.4	14.2
Spent time together in a group of family or friends...	57.4	67.3
Spent time one-on-one together...	80.9	83.7
Ate out at a restaurant together...	27.7	22.7
Went to a play, a museum, or a cultural event together...***	3.2	12.1
Attended a local civic or social organization together...	3.2	6.4
Attended religious services together...	11.7	8.5
Played instruments or perform together...	6.4	5.7

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Along with contact, family members were also asked to describe what activities they do with the FIP, as well as the frequency of those activities. As shown in table 4, more than half of respondents in each group spent time with the FIP one-on-one, in groups, and watching TV together at least weekly prior to the FIP's incarceration. Significantly more West Englewood families reported spending time with the FIP exercising or playing sports together and spending time together with family and friends prior to incarceration. Eating out at restaurants together was reported by nearly one in four family members in both the Safer

Return and West Englewood groups prior to incarceration. Other activities, such as going to the movies together, going to a play or cultural event, or attending a local civic or social organization together, were reported much less frequently by Safer Return and West Englewood families. In general, it appears that weekly activities together increased from before incarceration to after incarceration in both groups. The activities that were reported by a greater number of families as occurring prior to incarceration are similar to the activities reported by a greater number of families as occurring since the FIP's

incarceration (or following release). A significantly higher percentage of West Englewood families, as compared to families of Safer Return participants, reported spending time together in a park or playground, exercising or playing sports together, or going to a play, museum, or cultural event together.

Across both groups, the high levels of communication and time spent together are mirrored by the reportedly strong attachment that family members have with their formerly incarcerated family member. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed with a series of statements describing the nature of their relationship with their formerly incarcerated family member. The results, summarized in table 5, indicate that these family members held strong, positive, and meaningful relationships with their formerly incarcerated family member at baseline.

Despite their limited resources, as demonstrated in table 1, the family members who responded to the survey appear to provide myriad resources to returning individuals upon their release. Family members were asked what services they either provided directly or helped their formerly incarcerated family member find (table 6). When comparing the two groups, it appears that assistance was similar. Financial support, food assistance, and employment were the most common types of help provided by family members, with about half of respondents in each community reporting that they provided each of those services at baseline. There were no significant differences between the two groups four months after the FIP's release.

Family members also reported several hardships directly attributable to their FIP returning from prison. Survey respondents were asked about potential problems, as presented in table 7. The

most commonly reported issues were stress (in general and from worrying about the FIP) and financial hardship. Approximately 20 to 40 percent of respondents reported each of these difficulties four months after their family member's release from prison. Other adversities such as losing a job, having to move, or being arrested were reported at much lower rates among Safer Return and West Englewood family members. Significantly more families of Safer Return participants than their West Englewood comparisons reported that they had begun using alcohol or drugs or using drugs and alcohol more frequently as a result of the FIP's return. Significantly more families of West Englewood FIPs reported that their daily routine was disrupted by parole requirements and feeling stressed from worrying about the FIP.

Finally, the survey asked family members about the FIP's interaction with, and support of, any children they had in common. While surveyed family members reported that many of the FIPs had children (52.2 percent of Safer Return FIPs and 53.6 percent of comparison FIPs),<sup>12</sup> about 25 percent of the family members surveyed shared custody of a child/children with the interviewed family member. This is relatively consistent with the percentage of family members surveyed who classified themselves as a (current or former) married or unmarried intimate partner of the FIP. Further, of those FIPs who shared custody of a child or children with the family member, between 30 and 50 percent lived with the child/ren. However, FIPs who did not live with the child/ren did have frequent contact. As displayed in table 8, the vast majority had at least weekly contact with the child/ren they did not live with for whom they shared custody with the surveyed family member.

Table 5. Forms of Attachment between Family Members and Formerly Incarcerated Persons in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	SR (N=94)	WE (N=141)
<b>Before Incarceration Forms of Attachment<sup>^</sup> (percentage)</b>		
Felt close to (formerly incarcerated) family member	91.2	89.8
Wanted family member to be involved in his/her life	95.6	94.2
Family member has been a source of emotional support	82.4	82.4
Satisfied with communication with family member	84.6	84.7
Can calmly discuss problems with family member	82.4	84.7
Can express true feelings to family member	90.1	93.4
<b>During Prison Forms of Attachment<sup>^</sup> (percentage)</b>		
Felt close to (formerly incarcerated) family member	77.1	78.4
Wanted family member to be involved in his/her life	90.0	92.8
Family member has been a source of emotional support	68.5	67.4
Satisfied with communication with family member	64.1	68.3
Can calmly discuss problems with family member	70.3	69.8
Can express true feelings to family member*	75.8	85.0
<b>Postrelease Forms of Attachment<sup>^</sup> (percentage)</b>		
Felt close to (formerly incarcerated) family member	97.9	98.6
Wanted family member to be involved in his/her life	95.7	97.1
Family member has been a source of emotional support	87.2	84.0
Satisfied with communication with family member	94.7	90.8
Can calmly discuss problems with family member	91.4	90.8
Can express true feelings to family member	91.4	90.8

<sup>^</sup> Percentage who either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the statements; note that family member in this context is the formerly incarcerated person.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 6. Resources Provided by Family Members for Formerly Incarcerated Persons in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	SR (N=94)	WE (N=141)
<b>Helped your family member find or access to ... (percentage)</b>		
Food/food assistance programs	58.5	57.4
Employment	52.1	57.4
Transportation	46.8	51.4
Financial support	44.7	50.4
Community activities (e.g., church, recreational)	22.3	25.5
Housing	29.8	29.1
Enroll in an educational program	27.7	30.5
Enroll in a job training program	29.8	26.2
Medications and health care	17.0	23.4
Child care	3.3	7.2
Drug and/or alcohol treatment	11.7	9.9
Mental health counseling	7.4	8.5
Parenting/relationship classes	4.3	5.7

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 7. Impact of Formerly Incarcerated Person’s Return on Family Members’ Lives in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	SR (N=94)	WE (N=141)
<b>As a Result of Return... (Percentage)</b>		
Lost job...	1.7	1.3
Had to move or worried about eviction...	3.3	7.6
Family or friends pulled away...	8.2	3.8
Your children had adjustment problems...	3.4	1.3
Trouble with relationships with others...	7.0	6.4
Felt anxious or stress...	18.0	24.4
Begun using alcohol or drugs, or using more frequently...*	6.6	1.3
Been arrested...	4.9	3.9
Had financial hardship...	21.3	19.0
Daily routine interrupted by parole requirements...*	1.6	7.6
FIP brought unwanted guests into home...	8.2	6.3
Felt stressed from worrying about FIP...*	31.1	45.6
Other...	4.9	3.8

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests and chi-square tests, as appropriate; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 8. Frequency of Forms of Contact between FIP and FIP’s Children in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Four Months Postrelease

	SR (N=94)	WE (N=141)
<b>Forms of Contact ...</b>		
Mean number of children <i>before</i> prison	1.24	1.41
Always lived with minor <i>before</i> prison (percentage)	35.0	30.0
At least weekly contact <i>before</i> prison if didn’t live together (percentage)	69.2	85.7
Mean number of children <i>during</i> prison	1.19	1.40
At least weekly contact <i>during</i> prison (percentage)	50.0	57.6
Mean number of children <i>after</i> prison	1.13	1.44
Always lived with minor <i>after</i> prison (percentage)	43.5	30.3
At least weekly contact <i>after</i> prison if didn’t live together (percentage)	76.9	82.6

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

### Follow-Up Descriptives

The follow-up survey included the same domains as the baseline survey, but covered the six-month period between the baseline survey and the follow-up survey administration (i.e., the survey was administered 10 months after the formerly incarcerated person’s release from prison). A total of 72 valid surveys were completed, of which only 23 were completed by family members of Safer Return participants.

The remaining 49 were recruited from the comparison community. As noted previously, the follow-up sample is not representative of the baseline sample because of the high level of attrition experienced by the study (i.e., only 40 percent of the family members in the baseline survey completed the follow-up survey). To further explore the degree to which the follow-up survey participants were comparable to the baseline survey participants, we modeled the

propensity to participate in the follow-up against a set of available demographic data. Using the family members' age, criminal history, gender, employment status, marital status, education, relationship to the formerly incarcerated person, and sample group assignment (Safer Return or West Englewood), we found that those who participated in the follow-up survey were older and more likely to be from the West Englewood community (analyses not shown). Therefore, though select follow-up survey responses are described below, they should not be interpreted as being representative of the sample of family members at baseline. For these reasons, we hesitate to compare what was observed at baseline to what was observed at follow-up. To provide an overview of participant responses at the 10-month postrelease follow-up, this section highlights the following five domains: the closeness scale, the activities scale, the quality of life scale, hardships of the family member experienced due to the FIP, and the number of services the family member provided to the FIP.

As shown in table 9, the vast majority of family members in both groups reported high levels of attachment and communication to the formerly incarcerated persons 10 months postrelease. For all measures of attachment, approximately 90 percent of respondents or more indicated that they felt close to the FIP. Notably, 100 percent of Safer Return participants stated that they felt close to their formerly incarcerated family member, compared to nearly 90 percent of respondents in West Englewood; this was the only significant group difference found. Similarly, at the follow-up, family members reported participating in a number of activities with the FIP (table 10). The most common activities were watching television together, spending time together in a group of family or friends, and spending one-on-one time together. Across both groups, more than half of the family members reported that they had participated in these three activities; there were no statistically significant group differences.

Table 9. Forms of Attachment and Contact between Family Members and Formerly Incarcerated Persons in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Follow-Up

	SR (N=23)	WE (N=49)
<b>Postrelease Forms of Attachment<sup>^</sup> (percentage)</b>		
Felt close to (formerly incarcerated) family member**	100.0	89.6
Wanted family member to be involved in his/her life	95.0	95.8
Family member has been a source of emotional support	95.2	87.5
Satisfied with communication with family member	90.9	89.6
Can calmly discuss problems with family member	90.9	93.8
Can express true feelings to family member	90.9	97.9
<b>At least weekly contact (percentage)</b>		
Face-to-face	90.9	95.7
Phone/letters/text/e-mail	81.8	72.3

<sup>^</sup>Percentage who either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the statements; note that family member in this context is the formerly incarcerated person.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10;

\*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 10. Types of Activities Engaged in by Formerly Incarcerated Persons and Family Members in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Follow-Up

	SR (N=23)	WE (N=49)
<b>Since last interview, at least weekly... (Percentage)</b>		
Watched TV together...	59.1	83.3
Gone to the movies together...	4.5	6.4
Hung out in a park or playground together...	18.2	23.4
Shot pool or played card games together...	18.2	29.8
Exercised or played sports together...	27.3	16.7
Spent time together in a group of family or friends...	63.6	56.3
Spent time one-on-one together...	54.5	62.5
Ate out at a restaurant together...	22.7	22.9
Went to a play, a museum, or a cultural event together...	9.1	6.5
Attended a local civic or social organization together...	9.1	2.1
Attended religious services together...	18.2	22.9
Played instruments or perform together...	4.5	10.6

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Ten months after the FIP’s release from prison, the respondents’ perceptions regarding their quality of life remained relatively low (table 11). In both communities, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, only three measures—housing, health, and support system—had an average score exceeding a rating of 3, and all of these measures were rated less than 4. There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

As shown in table 12, the most commonly reported hardships at the follow-up were induced by stress and anxiety—in general and worrying about the formerly incarcerated person—and financial support. Follow-up survey results indicated that about 20 percent of respondents associated with Safer Return participants reported feeling stressed (in general and worrying about the FIP) 10 months after

the FIP’s release. Among West Englewood comparison family members, on the other hand, 41.2 percent reported general anxiety and 29.2 percent indicated that they felt stressed from worrying about the FIP. Moreover, in both groups, the return of the formerly incarcerated person resulted in financial hardships. This finding was particularly acute in the Safer Return group, where the approximately 40 percent of survey participants reported additional monetary strain as a result of the FIP’s return. Statistically significant group differences were found in three areas: lost job, family or friends pulled away, and began using alcohol or drugs more frequently. In all three instances, fewer Safer Return family members (0 percent) than comparison family members reported these areas as difficulties.

Table 11. Perceptions of Quality of Life among Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Follow-Up

	SR (N=23)	WE (N=49)
<b>Quality of Life Rating...<sup>^</sup> (Mean)</b>		
Housing	3.82	3.57
Job	2.72	2.75
Health	3.36	3.28
Overall financial situation	2.33	2.38
Involvement in community	2.48	2.48
Support system	3.50	3.11

<sup>^</sup> Where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 12. Impact of Formerly Incarcerated Person’s Return on Family Members’ Lives in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Follow-Up

	SR (N=23)	WE (N=49)
<b>As a Result of Return... (Percentage)</b>		
Lost job...**	0.0	8.5
Had to move or worried about eviction...	4.5	14.6
Family or friends pulled away...**	0.0	9.1
Your children had adjustment problems...	4.8	4.3
Trouble with relationships with others...	4.5	10.6
Felt anxious or stress...	20.0	41.2
Begun using alcohol or drugs, or using more frequently...**	0.0	8.3
Been arrested...	0.0	2.2
Had financial hardship...	40.9	31.3
Daily routine interrupted by parole requirements...	4.5	8.5
FIP brought unwanted guests into home...	9.1	6.3
Felt stressed from worrying about FIP...	22.7	29.2
Other...	9.1	8.3

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests and chi-square tests, as appropriate; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Finally, at the follow-up, family members in both groups reported taking active roles in directly providing assistance or helping their FIPs locate services (table 13). It should be noted that no group differences in this domain were observed with the exception of significantly more West Englewood families reporting that they helped the FIP find or access medication and health care. The table highlights a few ways in which family members provided assistance to formerly incarcerated persons, including such activities as helping with employment, financial support,

housing, and food. Findings for employment assistance, for example, showed that approximately 70 percent of respondents in both groups assisted their FIPs with obtaining employment or employment-related services 10 months after the individuals’ release. A similar pattern emerged with regard to financial support in both groups, where 63.6 percent of Safer Return family members and 71.4 percent of comparison group family members provided monetary aid.

Employment and financial assistance were not the only ways in which family members helped their formerly incarcerated persons directly or with assistance accessing resources. More than half of the respondents in each group indicated that they assisted their FIP with food or accessing food assistance. Similarly, respondents played an active role in providing access to housing. At the 10-month postrelease follow-up, 27.3 percent of Safer Return family members and 40.5 percent of the comparison

group family members reported that they had provided housing assistance.

Clearly, these examples, and the results summarized in table 13, indicate that family members helped their formerly incarcerated person in a variety of areas, from food assistance to employment, 10 months after the FIP's release. In fact, these findings would suggest that family members in each group played vital roles in assisting FIPs with obtaining a variety of crucial services that are often considered integral to successful reintegration.

Table 13. Resources Provided by Family Members for Formerly Incarcerated Persons in Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Comparison Group, at Follow-Up

	SR (N=23)	WE (N=49)
<b>Helped your family member find or access... (percentage)</b>		
Food/food assistance programs	54.5	52.4
Employment	68.2	71.4
Transportation	40.9	35.7
Financial support	63.6	71.4
Community activities (e.g., church, recreational)	31.8	38.1
Housing	27.3	40.5
Enroll in an educational program	28.6	38.1
Enroll in a job training program	31.8	24.4
Medications and health care*	18.2	38.1
Child care	14.3	4.9
Drug and/or alcohol treatment	23.8	17.1
Mental health counseling	4.5	7.1
Parenting/relationship classes	4.5	7.1

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

### In Their Own Words

Finally, one open-ended question was included in both the baseline and follow-up surveys: *In what ways does having your formerly incarcerated family member back in the community help you?* This question was intended to capture some of the beneficial and positive aspects of the formerly incarcerated person's return to the community. We grouped these open-ended responses into themes using two researchers

who defined and independently coded the responses and discussed their selections for verification. There was coding agreement between the independent researchers on more than 95 percent of all of the responses, and the two coders reviewed any discrepancies to determine the final categories. The qualitative responses resulted in 29 category types and three broader themes.

The first main theme (reported by 52 percent of the baseline and 49 percent of the follow-up

respondents) involved feelings of emotional support that the returning family member provided, with sentiments such as the following:

- Spending time together
- Communication
- Feeling less stressed or worried about the formerly incarcerated family member
- Planning for future goals
- Family bonding
- Happiness
- No longer feeling alone
- Friendship and love
- Having positive outlooks on life
- Being able to help guide and support the returning family member
- Being able to relate to the returning family member
- Helping the returning family member better himself

The second main theme (reported by 25 percent of baseline and 39 percent of follow-up respondents) involved thoughts about the physical, material, or tangible support the returning family member provided, such as the following:

- Helping around the house (including cleaning, cooking, fixing things, car maintenance)
- Helping with children (whether or not the returning family member was the father)
- Financial support

- Transportation (including driving and errands)
- Safety (protecting the respondent or increased perception of safety)
- Helping respondents with a physical restriction (including the elderly and those with a physical disability or serious medical issue)
- Helping the respondent to find work or resources

Last, there were miscellaneous benefits that were grouped into an “other” category. This included mentoring or otherwise benefiting the broader community and unspecified types of support or generic statements (e.g., “he helps a lot,” “he always helps”). However, this group also includes “don’t know” responses, neutral responses (e.g., “it doesn’t hurt,” “but doesn’t help to have him home”), and negative responses.

Several respondents noted more than one way in which the person returning home was beneficial. At baseline,<sup>13</sup> the most common responses were helping around the house, helping with children, feeling less stressed or worried about the FIP, communication with the FIP, and financial support. The follow-up respondents commonly cited helping around the house, made generic statements, or had neutral responses.

## 5.

### Changes in Family Experiences and Outcomes over Time

As mentioned, not all family members in the Safer Return research sample directly benefited from or were exposed to the case management services provided by the reentry coaches.<sup>14</sup> Recall, Section I outlined the number of ways that family engagement was challenged in the implementation of the Safer Return program. In addition, the sample of family members identified by Safer Return participants and interviewed by the research team may have been different from the family members who participated in any part of the Safer Return case management. Yet all family members of Safer Return participants did have the *potential* to benefit from the case management component, while family members of comparison individuals did not. They may have taken part in the case management directly or benefitted through the formerly incarcerated person's case management. Therefore, despite the implementation issues with the case management components, there was the potential for differences in family member responses between the two groups. Using only the 72 family members who completed both baseline and follow-up surveys, we used t-tests to compare the means between the two groups on several key constructed variables:

- Activities Scale – Additive scale, ranging from an occurrence of never (0) to daily (4), of the following 12 items: watched TV together; went to the movies together; hung out in a park or playground together; shot pool or played card games together; exercised or played sports together; spent time together in a group of family or friends; spent time one-on-one together; ate out at a restaurant together; went to a play, a museum, or cultural event together; attended a local civic
- Quality of Life Scale – Additive scale, ranging from a quality of poor (1) to excellent (5), of the following five aspects: housing, job,

or social organization together; attended religious services together; played instruments or performed together (see tables 4 and 10).

- Closeness Scale – Additive scale of whether the family member reported the following six items: felt close to formerly incarcerated family member, wanted family member to be involved in his/her life, family member has been a source of emotional support, satisfied with communication with family member, can calmly discuss problems with family member, and can express true feelings to family member (see tables 5 and 9).
- Hardships Scale – Additive scale of the following 13 issues family members reported experiencing due to the FIP's return: lost job, had to move or worried about eviction, family or friends pulled away, your children had adjustment problems, trouble with relationships with others, felt anxious or stress, began using alcohol or drugs or using more frequently, been arrested, had financial hardship, daily routine interrupted by parole requirements, FIP brought unwanted guests into home, felt stressed from worrying about FIP (see tables 7 and 12).
- Resources Scale – Additive scale of the following 13 services family members helped the FIP find or access: food/food assistance program, employment, transportation, financial support, community activities, housing, enroll in an educational program, enroll in a job training program, medications and health care, child care, drug and/or alcohol treatment, mental health counseling, parenting/relationship classes (see tables 6 and 13).

health, overall financial situation, involvement in community, and support system (see tables 1 and 11).

One other variable of interest, contact/communication (see tables 3 and 9), was excluded from the analysis of group differences and changes over time because of the results of the factor analyses.

### **Differences between Groups**

These variables were selected because they measured some of the constructs that the family-inclusive case management service was intended to buttress. Differences in the mean score reported by family members of Safer Return participants and West Englewood family members were not statistically significant; table 14 shows the means and ranges for the scales in the Safer Return and comparison groups. In short, there were no observed significant differences along key constructs of the family members in the Safer Return sample as compared to those in the West Englewood sample.

### **Group Changes over Time**

We explored whether the average scores along the key constructs of family inclusiveness were significantly different over time, from baseline survey implementation four months postrelease (which retrospectively asked about the time frames before and during prison) to the follow-up survey implemented 10 months postrelease. Using pooled t-tests, we also explored whether there were significant differences over time

among the four months before prison, during prison, four months after prison, and ten months postrelease. Because t-tests of group differences found no significant differences between the two groups (table 14), the analyses of changes in key constructs over time were combined, as shown in table 15.

Three different time frames for the closeness scale (before/during, during/after, and after/follow-up) were all significant, and the significance of the relationship was the strongest around the formerly incarcerated person's stay in prison. There was no statistically significant change in the family members' reports of closeness with the FIP from before prison to 10 months following prison. Family members' reports of closeness significantly decreased when the person was incarcerated and increased following release. Yet, the closeness reported by family members significantly decreased from when their incarcerated family member was recently released to several months later. In summary, this shows that while closeness dips during incarceration and bounces back upon release, family members' reported closeness to their FIP appears to wane over time. Also, although the results are not shown because the responses did not hang together in a factor score, changes in the level of communication mirrored the changes in the level of closeness over time.

Table 14. Mean Scores along Key Constructs between Safer Return (SR) and West Englewood (WE) Families at Separate Points in Time

	SR	WE
Activities together before prison (range: 0–48)	12.35	14.26
Activities together four months postrelease (range: 0–48)	13.96	14.65
Activities together 10 months postrelease (range: 0–48)	16.7	14.9
Closeness score before prison (range: 0–24)	21.18	21.28
Closeness score during prison (range: 0–24)	18.68	19.16
Closeness score four months postrelease (range: 0–24)	22.05	22.13
Closeness score 10 months postrelease (range: 0–24)	21.57	21.84
Hardships four months postrelease (range: 0–13)	1.19	1.23
Hardships 10 months postrelease (range: 0–13)	1.17	1.57
Resources provided four months postrelease (range: 0–13)	3.54	3.8
Resources provided 10 months postrelease (range: 0–13)	4.04	4.35
Quality of life score four months postrelease (range: 0–25)	14.73	15.71
Quality of life score 10 months postrelease (range: 0–25)	15.05	14.72

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 15. Changes over Time within Key Constructs Using Pooled Sample (Safer Return and West Englewood Families)

	Mean
<b>Closeness</b>	
Before prison to during prison	-2.33***
During prison to four months postrelease	3.12***
Four months postrelease to ten months postrelease	-0.79**
Before prison to 10 months postrelease	-0.19
<b>Activities</b>	
Before prison to four months postrelease	0.75
Four months postrelease to ten months postrelease	1.94*
Before prison to 10 months post-release	0.72
<b>Quality of life</b>	
Four months postrelease to ten months postrelease	0.48
<b>Hardships</b>	
Four months postrelease to ten months postrelease	0.79**
<b>Services provided</b>	
Four months postrelease to ten months postrelease	1.09***

Note: Tests of statistically significant differences were assessed using t-tests; significant differences are noted by \*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

While activities with the formerly incarcerated person reported by the family member and quality of life of the family member appear to increase slightly over time, these changes were generally not significant. Family members' reports of activities with the FIP increased significantly from four months postrelease to ten months postrelease, marginally. Yet, it appears that activities with the FIP reported by family members 10 months following release returned to levels reported before prison. Interestingly, the number of hardships reported by the family members and the number of services provided by the family members also increased significantly from four months postrelease to ten months postrelease. It appears that, according to the family members, there were significant increases in the number of activities, hardships, and services provided from four months after their formerly incarcerated family member's release from prison to 10 months following release. As shown in appendix C, many of these indicators are highly correlated with one another, and

these relationships are further analyzed through regression models in the next section.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that a significant limitation in these analyses is the small sample size on which to base conclusions. The family members who we were able to contact for the follow-up questionnaire differ significantly from the family members we were unable to reach. Therefore, our findings and the conclusions drawn from them are applicable only to the family members who are in our sample and are not generalizable to the larger population of family members of formerly incarcerated persons in the Safer Return program or the West Englewood neighborhoods. Yet, it does appear that family members whom we could contact at 10 months postrelease were similar along key constructs to the Safer Return and West Englewood samples, since we did not observe statistically significant differences between the samples.

## 6.

### Analyses of the Association between Family Support and Recidivism

#### Methodology

To explore the relationship between family member support and recidivism, multivariate analyses were performed using two primary outcomes: (1) whether formerly incarcerated persons were reincarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) within 10 months of their release; and (2) the number of days between the FIP's release and reincarceration in IDOC. Logistic regression was used to model the likelihood of reincarceration in IDOC, and Cox proportional hazards models were used to model the time to reincarceration in IDOC. Each outcome was tested under eight model specifications.

Model 1 includes only characteristics of formerly incarcerated persons that are expected to explain recidivism outcomes based on previous research. These characteristics include the FIP's race, number of previous incarcerations, and age at release from prison. Additionally, two dummy variables were included to indicate whether the FIP was incarcerated for a drug or violent crime in the most recent incarceration (the incarceration that led the FIP to be included in the research sample). All data used in model 1 were sourced from IDOC records.

In model 2, a dummy variable is added to control for the difference in recidivism rates between Safer Return participants and the comparison group. In the next six models (models 3–8), two sets of family-related variables were added from the family member baseline surveys. In models 3 and 4, variables capturing the receipt of family-inclusive case management and specialized parole<sup>15</sup> services were tested with and without the FIP characteristic controls, respectively. The variables measuring receipt of family-inclusive case management and specialized parole

services include counts of the meetings with case managers/reentry coaches and parole officers, as well as interaction terms between the meeting counts and Safer Return participation.<sup>16</sup> In addition, model 3 includes the family members' self-assessed understanding of parole requirements, as family education of parole requirements was one of the Safer Return family-inclusive case management model's goals. Receipt of family-inclusive case management services, specialized parole services, meetings with case managers/reentry coaches and parole officers, and understanding parole requirements were each sources from the family member baseline surveys.

Models 5–7 include key variables that capture the FIPs' and family members' relationship characteristics, drawn from the family member baseline survey data. Specifically, variables included were the scaled measures of closeness and activities conducted together, the type and amount of communication, and the number of resources the family member provided to the FIP. The models include measures of these variables prior to and during prison and at baseline survey administration, as available.<sup>17</sup> Model 5 includes only those relationship characteristics described above. In models 6 and 7, FIP and family characteristics were added, respectively, as control variables.

Finally, given the significant drop in closeness and communication observed in the analysis of change over time, model 8 was specified, replacing four-months prerelease and during prison closeness and communication measures with the change in closeness between the four-month prerelease and prison time periods. These measures capture the direction and the amount of any change in closeness, which trends closely with changes in communication. Measures of closeness and communication after

prison remain to control for family relationship characteristics postrelease.

To confirm that the proportionality assumptions of the Cox proportional hazards models were met, supplementary models were run, which included interaction terms for all predictors interacted with the log of time. Additionally, linear hypothesis testing was performed to assess the collective significance of the interaction terms, since any individual or collective significance of the interaction terms would indicate a violation of the proportionality assumption.

## Results

### Multivariate Logistic Regressions

The outcomes of the eight multivariate logistic regressions models are reported in table 16. Of the FIP characteristics, two measures were strongly and consistently associated with reincarceration: age at release was negatively associated with reincarceration in IDOC, while the number of previous incarcerations was a positively associated predictor. That is, older former prisoners and those with fewer previous incarcerations were less likely to be reincarcerated in IDOC than younger former prisoners and those with more previous incarcerations. Both regressors are significant at the 0.1 alpha level within all eight models. Additionally, the dummy regressor indicating whether or not the FIP's instant incarceration was for a violent crime is a significant, positive predictor in model 1; however, this coefficient is not significant when additional variables are introduced in models 2–7. This may be due to covariance between the violent crime dummy variable and other regressors, particularly the dummy variable indicating participation in Safer Return, as that group had significantly fewer violent crime convictions ( $p = 0.1$ ).

It was also observed that the dummy variable indicating the race of the FIP led to partial separation, because no non-black research participants recidivated in the 10-month period. This makes sense, as demographic census data tell us that both neighborhoods from which the samples are drawn, Garfield Park and West

Englewood, are majority black neighborhoods (more than 90 percent black). Race has been shown to be an important predictor of recidivism and was therefore kept in the models to avoid unobserved variable bias. However, as a result, all other variable coefficients describe the likelihood of recidivism only among the black subset of the population ( $n=181$ ). That is, leaving the race variable in the models is the functional equivalent of removing all nonblack individuals from the models (table 16).

Results of models 3 and 4 do not show any significant predictors of recidivism other than the number of previous incarcerations and the age of the FIP at release. In model 5, however, the scaled measure of activities in the four months after release had a significant, negative coefficient of  $-0.083$ , while the scaled measure of closeness between the FIP and the surveyed family member during incarceration had a significant, positive coefficient of  $0.125$ . These relationships held in models 6 and 7 when FIP and family member controls were added. The significant coefficients indicate that individuals who reported closer relationships with family members during prison were more likely to be reincarcerated than those who reported more distant relationships; individuals who reported more activities with their family members after release were less likely to be reincarcerated than individuals who reported fewer activities with their family members after release. Participation in the Safer Return program was also a significant, negative predictor of reincarceration in models 6–8 (table 16).

Similar to the findings of family closeness during prison in models 5–7, in model 8, the change in closeness between before incarceration and during prison was significantly related to reincarceration. The coefficient of  $0.141$  indicates that drops in closeness (negative values of change in closeness) predict a decreased instance of recidivism within the first 10 months after release. Conversely, increases in closeness are associated, on average, with an increased instance of recidivism. Inconsistent with previous regression results, this model also found that activities reported together before prison were significantly associated with

reincarceration outcomes; however, this effect was only marginally significant (table 16).

### **Cox Proportional Hazards Regressions**

As in the logistic regressions, the FIPs' age and number of previous incarcerations are also significantly associated with the number of days to reincarceration (see table 17). A greater number of previous incarcerations is associated with shorter time before reincarceration (hazard ratio:  $HR=1.131$ ), and age is associated with a longer time before reincarceration ( $HR=0.967$ )—men who are older at release were observed to have a longer period between their release and reincarceration than younger men at release.

Models 3 and 4 showed strong relationships between the number of meetings family members had with parole officers and the time to reincarceration: More meetings between family members and the FIPs' parole officers predicted shorter times to reincarceration. Further, this relationship does not appear to be influenced by participation in Safer Return, as the interaction term between meetings with the parole officer and Safer Return participation is not significant. This is markedly different from the logistic outcome, where no significant relationship was seen between the number of meetings with parole officers and reincarceration outcomes at 10 months postrelease (table 17).

New significant relationships between family characteristics and recidivism outcomes were observed in models 5–8. In the uncontrolled model (model 5), written communication at four months postprison, along with activities together at four months postrelease and closeness during prison, were significantly associated with the time to reincarceration. Family members who reported more written communication and more shared activities at four months postrelease had formerly incarcerated family members who were reincarcerated less quickly, on average, than family members who reported less frequent written communication and fewer activities together ( $HR=1.358$  and  $0.931$ , respectively). Family members who reported higher levels of

closeness during prison had a formerly incarcerated family member who was reincarcerated more quickly, on average, than family members who reported lower levels of closeness during prison ( $HR=1.115$ ). The relationship between reported family closeness during prison and poorer reincarceration outcomes is consistent with the logistic regression models. However, the relationship between closeness during prison and written communication at four months postrelease and a shorter time to reincarceration was not significant in the models where family member control characteristics were included (model 7). Yet, the family members reporting a number of activities with their FIP at four months postrelease is a consistent predictor of time to reincarceration across all three models (table 17).

Model 8 of the time to reincarceration analysis also found that a change in closeness is significantly associated with time to reincarceration, where a drop in closeness from preincarceration to during incarceration was associated with a smaller reincarceration hazard. That is, if reported closeness between the formerly incarcerated person and the family member dropped from before incarceration to during prison, the time to reincarceration was, on average, longer. Additionally, more activities reported together between the family member and the FIP four months postrelease continued to be significantly associated with a longer time to reincarceration ( $HR=0.918$ ).

Table 16. Results of the Multivariate Logistic Regression Models

		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>	<b>Model 8</b>
		Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)
<b>FIP Characteristics</b>	FIP is Black	∞	∞		∞		∞	∞	∞
	Drug Crime	-0.145 (0.684)	-0.096 (0.685)		-0.163 (0.725)		0.162 (0.780)	0.096 (0.795)	0.224 (0.769)
	Violent Crime	0.814* (0.472)	0.719 (0.481)		0.668 (0.489)		0.593 (0.545)	0.459 (0.618)	0.676 (0.558)
	FIP Age at Release	-0.040* (0.022)	-0.041* (0.022)		-0.042* (0.022)		-0.052** (0.025)	-0.054* (0.029)	-0.053* (0.028)
	No. of Previous Incarcerations	0.164** (0.080)	0.184** (0.083)		0.170** (0.086)		0.226** (0.092)	0.225** (0.100)	0.218** (0.099)
	Safer Return Participation		-0.728 (0.443)		-0.425 (0.482)		-0.820* (0.480)	-1.097** (0.532)	-1.066** (0.513)
<b>Case Management Measures</b>	No. of Meetings with FIP's Case Manager			-0.066 (0.158)	-0.085 (0.161)				
	No. of Meetings with FIP's Parole Officer			0.168 (0.176)	0.174 (0.178)				
	Understanding of Parole Requirements			0.346 (0.314)	0.241 (0.312)				
	INTERACTION: Meetings with FIP's Case Manager X Safer Return Participation			-1.560 (1.122)	-1.283 (1.156)				
	INTERACTION: Meetings with FIP's Parole Office X Safer Return Participation			0.168 (0.176)	0.174 (0.178)				
<b>Family Relationship Characteristics</b>	Face-to-Face Communication Four Months before Prison					-0.121 (0.233)	-0.006 (0.260)	-0.025 (0.280)	
	Phone/Text/E-mail Conversation Four Months before Prison					-0.021 (0.053)	-0.028 (0.064)	-0.020 (0.053)	
	Written Communication Four Months before Prison					-0.221 (0.171)	-0.175 (0.180)	-0.146 (0.190)	
	Face-to-Face Communication During Prison					-0.016 (0.058)	-0.035 (0.113)	0.066 (0.195)	
	Phone/Text/E-mail Conversation During Prison					0.101 (0.166)	0.036 (0.186)	0.157 (0.205)	

		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>	<b>Model 8</b>
		Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)
	Written Communication during Prison					-0.099 (0.178)	-0.079 (0.191)	0.035 (0.227)	
	Face-to-Face Communication Four Months Postrelease					-0.028 (0.597)	-0.097 (0.653)	0.500 (0.834)	0.647 (0.846)
	Phone/Text/E-mail Conversation Four Months Postrelease					-0.104 (0.149)	-0.106 (0.158)	-0.073 (0.176)	-0.056 (0.170)
	Written Communication Four Months Postrelease					0.293* (0.171)	0.255 (0.175)	0.200 (0.185)	0.144 (0.155)
	Activities Together Four Months before Prison					0.056 (0.036)	0.051 (0.039)	0.054 (0.043)	0.061* (0.036)
	Activities Together Four Months Postrelease					-0.083* (0.043)	-0.089* (0.046)	-0.095* (0.050)	-0.097** (0.049)
	Closeness before Prison					-0.056 (0.088)	-0.082 (0.091)	-0.071 (0.105)	
	Closeness during Prison					0.125* (0.064)	0.140** (0.068)	0.134 (0.073)	
	Closeness Four Months postRelease					0.012 (0.099)	-0.015 (0.098)	-0.057 (0.110)	-0.012 (0.085)
	Change in Closeness before Prison to during Prison								0.141** (0.063)
	No. of Services Provided by the Family Member Four Months Postrelease					0.037 (0.071)	0.014 (0.077)	-0.033 (0.088)	-0.039 (0.083)
<b>Family Member Controls</b>	Family Member Age							-0.017 (0.018)	-0.017 (0.017)
	Family Member Has Been Incarcerated							0.300 (0.714)	0.202 (0.691)
	Family Member is Male							0.335 (0.665)	0.318 (0.651)
	Family Member is Intimate Partner							-1.043 (0.716)	-0.930 (0.641)
	Family Member is Employed							-0.097 (0.500)	-0.115 (0.486)
	<b>AIC</b>	<b>177.70</b>	<b>176.82</b>	<b>174.47</b>	<b>176.54</b>	<b>192.52</b>	<b>191.04</b>	<b>187.09</b>	<b>175.10</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>167</b>

\*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

Table 17. Results of the Multivariate Cox Proportional Hazards Regression Models

		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>	<b>Model 8</b>
		Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)
<b>FIP Characteristics</b>	FIP is Black	∞	∞		∞		∞	∞	∞
	Drug Crime	-0.115 (0.620)	-0.073 (0.618)		0.070 (0.624)		0.212 (0.649)	0.227 (0.665)	0.342 (0.647)
	Violent Crime	0.609 (0.396)	0.498 (0.403)		0.577 (0.411)		0.305 (0.442)	0.317 (0.534)	0.498 (0.460)
	FIP Age at Release	-0.033* (0.020)	-0.033* (0.020)		-0.029 (0.020)		-0.041* (0.022)	-0.040 (0.025)	-0.042* (0.024)
	No. of Previous Incarcerations	0.012** (0.062)	0.132** (0.060)		0.115* (0.061)		0.159** (0.064)	0.150** (0.073)	0.141* (0.072)
	Safer Return Participation		-0.609 (0.397)		-0.0227 (0.425)		-0.619 (0.414)	-0.782* (0.456)	-0.749* (0.432)
<b>Case Management Measures</b>	No. of Meetings with FIP's Case Manager			-0.190 (0.202)	-0.198 (0.205)				
	No. of Meetings with FIP's Parole Officer			0.697** (0.232)	0.689 (0.241)				
	Understanding of Parole Requirements			0.321 (0.289)	0.244 (0.284)				
	INTERACTION: Meetings with FIP's Case Manager X Safer Return Participation			-0.872 (0.849)	-0.724 (.848)				
	INTERACTION: Meetings with FIP's Parole Office X Safer Return			-1.028 (0.669)	-0.942 (0.620)				
<b>Family Relationship Characteristics</b>	Face-to-Face Communication Four Months before Prison					-0.134 (0.202)	-0.032 (0.224)	-0.039 (0.235)	
	Phone/Text/E-mail Conversation Four Months before Prison					-0.018 (0.047)	-0.023 (0.052)	-0.017 (0.048)	
	Written Communication Four Months before Prison					-0.240 (0.158)	-0.188 (0.162)	-0.157 (0.167)	
	Face-to-Face Communication during Prison					-0.015 (0.052)	-0.023 (0.070)	0.039 (0.161)	
	Phone/Text/E-mail Conversation during Prison					0.097 (0.146)	0.043 (0.161)	0.151 (0.174)	

		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>	<b>Model 8</b>
		Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)	Coef. (S.E.)
	Written Communication during Prison					-0.077 (0.151)	-0.050 (0.159)	0.183 (0)	
	Face-to-Face Communication Four Months Postrelease					-0.002 (0.527)	-0.041 (0.558)	0.514 (0.728)	0.635 (0.723)
	Phone/Text/E-mail Conversation Four Months Postrelease					-0.110 (0.133)	-0.112 (0.133)	-0.060 (0.152)	-0.049 (0.148)
	Written Communication Four Months Postrelease					0.306** (0.155)	0.269 (0.156)	0.183 (0.161)	0.112 (0.127)
	Activities Together Four Months before Prison					0.049 (0.032)	0.038 (0.035)	0.037 (0.037)	0.047 (0.032)
	Activities Together Four Months Postrelease					-0.072** (0.036)	-0.076** (0.039)	-0.082* (0.042)	-0.086** (0.041)
	Closeness before Prison					-0.031 (0.077)	-0.044 (0.076)	-0.027 (0.087)	
	Closeness during Prison					0.109* (0.057)	0.111* (0.058)	0.097 (0.060)	
	Closeness Four Months Postrelease					0.019 (0.087)	-0.001 (0.086)	-0.034 (0.095)	0.008 (0.075)
	Change in Closeness before Prison to during Prison								0.100* (0.052)
	No. of Services Provided by the Family Member Four Months Postrelease					0.025 (0.059)	0.015 (0.062)	-0.021 (0.070)	-0.029 (0.065)
<b>Family Member Controls</b>	Family Member Age							-0.016 (0.016)	-0.016 (0.015)
	Family Member Has Been Incarcerated							0.0235 (0.596)	0.162 (0.575)
	Family Member is Male							0.326 (0.571)	0.301 (0.550)
	Family Member is Intimate Partner							-0.818 (0.614)	-0.709 (0.554)
	Family Member is Employed							0.019 (0.418)	0.024 (0.415)
	<b>AIC</b>	<b>348.80</b>	<b>336.26</b>	<b>321.99</b>	<b>330.27</b>	<b>320.84</b>	<b>332.25</b>	<b>293.34</b>	<b>295.83</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>167</b>

\*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

## Summary

In the multivariate analyses, multiple factors were found to be associated with recidivism outcomes. Several of these outcomes were expected. Of the FIP characteristics, the finding that age at release and previous incarcerations were associated with reincarceration is consistent with extant research. Further, it was expected that the group assignment may be significantly associated with better reincarceration outcomes. The individuals who participated in Safer Return had access to a wide range of resources unavailable to the comparison group members.

Recall that the intention of the multivariate analyses was to test the relationships between family-inclusive case management and recidivism. As shown in models 3 and 4, there does not appear to be a relationship between family-inclusive case management services and recidivism outcomes using four measures: meetings with the case manager; meetings with the parole officer; understanding of parole requirements; and the interaction term of Safer Return participation and meetings with the case manager. However, as noted previously in the report, such results were not wholly unexpected due to the low number of family members who reported receiving family-inclusive case management services. It should be noted, however, that the coefficient of the interaction term between the number of meetings between the family member and the case manager and Safer Return participation is negative, indicating that the family-inclusive case management services may be related to better recidivism outcomes. It could be that a larger sample size and/or more Safer Return family members receiving the case management services are required to isolate the effect.

When looking at interactions with parole, there is no relationship between parole meetings and likelihood of reincarceration within the first 10 months after release. However, meetings between family members and parole officers increased the reincarceration hazard (i.e., reduced the time to reincarceration). The significance of the meetings between family members and parole officers could indicate that

parole officers are more likely to visit individuals who are noncompliant or engaging (or suspected of engaging) in criminal behavior, at higher risk of recidivism, or having reentry difficulties. Since measures of risk were not available from IDOC, we cannot tease out whether the formerly incarcerated persons' risk was related to more parole officer meetings. It might also be the case that a more engaged family member may have more meetings with the parole officer, regardless of the FIP's risk or reentry experiences.

Given that there was little variation in the receipt of family-inclusive case management services, we modeled the relationship between reincarceration and "family-inclusive-like" measures previously discussed (e.g., shared activities, closeness, communication, hardships, resources provided, and quality of life). These models (models 5–8) revealed that two measures were consistently associated with reincarceration outcomes. First, formerly incarcerated persons whose family member reported participating in more activities together were less likely to recidivate. This relationship held when controlling for family and FIP characteristics, as well as other family support measures. However, directionality is not defined in the model. It is unknown whether the family members are increasing the FIPs' engagement in prosocial activities, which leads to better reentry outcomes, or simply whether individuals predisposed to better recidivism outcomes engage in more activities with their family members. Further research is required to explore this effect.

The second association between reincarceration and family member support concerns the closeness between family members and the formerly incarcerated persons during their incarceration. Overall, the descriptive analysis showed that levels and forms of closeness and communication were high among the family members and the FIPs before and after prison. Subsequently, the results of the multivariate analyses suggest that those individuals who did not maintain their closeness and communication with family members during prison were reincarcerated

less often and longer after their release in the community than family members who reported maintaining high levels of closeness and communication from before incarceration to during prison.

### **Limitations**

As previously mentioned, a significant limitation of the multivariate analysis was the limited data available for this research component. Ideally, additional information about the formerly incarcerated persons with respect to their risk

of recidivism should be included in the analysis. Furthermore, information about the FIPs' reentry experiences postrelease and perceptions of their family member support, activities, and services should be included in the analyses. Finally, the small sample size may have hindered our ability to find significant associations between several variables and reincarceration. Fewer than 200 FIPs were included in the analyses, and previous reentry research has shown that reentry programming, when effective, has rather small effect sizes.

7.

## Conclusions and Tentative Implications

The most significant finding from these analyses was the difficulty of engaging families in the reentry process directly, a finding that will be further explored in subsequent evaluation activities on Safer Return. At this point, we are unable to fully detail the extent of the challenges implementing the family-inclusive case management from the perspective of formerly incarcerated persons, their family members, or the Safer Return reentry coaches. Implementation of Safer Return is ongoing, as are efforts to extract information from the program management information system that chronicles service delivery. Yet, it became clear as we set out to conduct this analysis that our ability to isolate the effect of the family-inclusive case management on the outcomes of family members and formerly incarcerated persons was extremely limited. Future reports on Safer Return will include findings from a process evaluation—detailing administrative and programmatic data on the program’s process and performance—and an impact evaluation that uses data from *both* FIPs and their family members. Indeed, a missing piece of the story reported here is the extent to which FIPs’ perceptions of family support and receipt of services aligns with their family members’ perceptions and how each of these are independently and collectively related to FIPs’ reentry outcomes and their family members’ outcomes.

Nevertheless, the analyses do provide some insight on the importance of families in the reentry process. The surveys show, quite clearly, that family members report positive and strong relationships with FIPs. It also appears that while the program—and by extension, the research—uses a broad definition of family, FIPs who report having social support are likely to identify biological and intimate partner family members. That is, mothers, sisters, and

partners are the main sources of social support for individuals returning from prison. Family members of both Safer Return participants and the comparison families were highly supportive of FIPs, maintained frequent communication, engaged in various activities together, provided diverse assistance and resources, and reported feeling very close or attached to the FIPs. This is important to note because the family members are extending their support despite their own limited or challenging circumstances. Consistent with previous findings of family members, those in our sample reported very low incomes, low educational statuses, and relatively low perceptions of their quality of life. Many had their own histories of criminal justice involvement. Further, the majority of respondents were not employed. Limited resources would understandably affect the provision of assistance, yet family members reportedly provide a great deal of tangible support.

Our analysis of change within family members over time shows that while family members’ reported that number of activities performed together increases significantly over time, as formerly incarcerated persons are in the community for longer (from four months postrelease to ten months postrelease), the number of hardships reported by family members also increases. In addition, while our measure of closeness between family members and FIPs increases significantly from prison to immediately following release, it appears that this feeling of closeness wanes over time. Our correlation matrix found that many of these measures of support and family contact are related. Further analyses on this sample of family members, with the inclusion of additional variables on the FIPs, are needed to understand how family support and dynamics change over time and are related to outcomes. For example,

we are unable to know whether reported increases in hardships lead to decreases in closeness or vice versa, and how and whether these relationships are related to other outcomes.

While families appeared to provide a great deal of support, it was the level of closeness or attachment that appeared to be a significant factor in formerly incarcerated persons' reentry outcomes. In our models of the likelihood of reincarceration and the time to reincarceration, closeness appeared to be significant factor—in interesting ways. The surveys show that there is very little variation in family members' reported closeness with the FIPs immediately following their release from prison. There was variation, however, in the family members' reports of closeness before and during incarceration, which is illuminating. Our findings show better recidivism outcomes for FIPs whose family members severed ties to them while they were incarcerated (i.e., closeness dipped during incarceration).

The implications of this finding are difficult to interpret because the cause of the family members' reported dip in closeness is unknown, particularly given that communication levels during prison are controlled for in models 6 and 7. In the focus groups, formerly incarcerated persons and family members in both communities gave two potential explanations. First, some FIPs indicated that they felt shame when their family came to visit or communicated with them due to their

imprisonment. They actively cut themselves off from their family members. This internalized shame may provide incentive not to return to prison. Alternatively, some family members indicated that they used a "tough love" approach while the individual was incarcerated, cutting off contact, even when it was difficult personally. Their objective was to make prison a hard, unpleasant experience and discourage the individual from going back. In the FIPs' focus groups, several individuals echoed this reality, indicating that their family members had employed "tough love" (see appendix B).

While these are potential explanations for the results seen in the models, further investigation of this relationship is needed to elaborate the ways in which family members and incarcerated individuals define and maintain their relationships during their incarceration. Family members might sever ties because they feel they do not want to burden those they care about while they are away in prison, or vice versa. It should also be emphasized that, in both instances, this explanation represents choices made by the family or the FIP, and does not support any policy of limited contact or forced separation between family and incarcerated persons. Indeed, previous research has shown the opposite, that in-person visits (a form of closeness) are significantly related to better reentry outcomes. While the current analyses do impart some new knowledge about the role of families and social support in FIPs' reentry process, certainly more research is needed.

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## Appendix A.

### Alpha Scores of Family Support Attributes

Scale	Alpha Score	N	Mean	Variance
Communication: Before Prison	.644	232		
Communication: During Prison	.654	231		
Communication: Baseline	.490	235		
Communication: Follow-Up	.547	67		
Closeness: Before Prison	.853	227	21.23	15.16
Closeness: During Prison	.872	229	18.92	28.18
Closeness: Baseline	.816	234	22.08	8.74
Closeness: Follow-Up	.871	70	21.76	11.29
Activities Together: Before Prison	.846	225	13.45	77.56
Activities Together: Baseline	.799	235	14.33	59.32
Activities Together: Follow-Up	.836	69	15.49	79.96
Parent Communication: Before Prison	.684	34		
Parent Communication: During Prison	.507	45		
Parent Communication: Baseline	.619	32		
Parent Communication: Follow-Up	.783	11		
Quality of Life: Baseline	.701	232	15.32	16.11
Quality of Life: Follow-Up	.825	54	14.82	18.36

## Appendix B.

### Focus Group Findings

UI conducted focus groups with family members and formerly incarcerated persons in each community to augment the surveys with more detailed qualitative information. Each small-group discussion lasted from one hour to 90 minutes, covering such topics the process of returning home to the community, experiences with the Safer Return program or standard parole, and relationships between FIPs and their family members. The focus was on experiences in the few months prior to release and in the first four months after returning to the community.

Based on the focus groups, it was clear that formerly incarcerated persons and their family members across both communities had the following perceptions regarding prisoner reentry and the role that family members play in it:

- FIPs are inadequately prepared to return home.
- FIPs who have the option to do so rely heavily upon their family members for support after release.
- Family support is strongest immediately following release from prison and can diminish over time, as relationships are strained or resources are stretched to the breaking point.

In addition, Safer Return participants and their family members reported mixed experiences—both positive and negative—with the Safer Return family-inclusive case management. Those who reported dissatisfaction with Safer Return efforts may have held unrealistically high expectations of what the program could achieve within a given time frame (in this case, the group discussion was focusing on the first four months after release); possibly failed to recognize their own level of responsibility in contributing to positive (or, conversely,

negative) results; or could legitimately have encountered less-than-optimum case management and service delivery as the program worked to improve training and implementation. The following outlines what UI learned from the focus group discussions within four themes: (1) prerelease preparation; (2) sources of support; (3) clients' and families' perceptions of Safer Return; and (4) what constitutes a good reentry coach?

#### Prerelease Preparation

In the focus groups with formerly incarcerated persons, a few individuals (both Safer Return and comparison group respondents) reported that they felt reasonably prepared to return home because they had assumed individual responsibility for changing their attitudes and lifestyles to make lasting changes (e.g., they cited reading the Bible, attending anger management and other support groups, and seeking and openly accepting advice and support from family or other people) to avoid repeating their past mistakes.

Several Safer Return clients, especially those who enrolled prerelease, credited the program with helping them think about the issues they needed to address to be prepared for returning to the community; they reported that they really had not realized all the things that needed to be done and were quite thankful that their reentry coaches had both explained the process and worked to arrange services before their release. Despite these positive perceptions, some Safer Return participants noted that levels of assistance appeared to vary across reentry coaches; some seemed to be more proactive than others, and that likely accounted for the varying levels of satisfaction that were expressed with regard to prerelease planning.

One key issue that repeatedly surfaced was the importance of preparation for postrelease

employment; formerly incarcerated persons recognize the criticality of having a job that will enable them to be self-supporting. However, they feel that prison programming, even in this era of attention to improving reentry policy and practices, is woefully inadequate where employment readiness and job skills training are concerned. One participant noted, for example, that some computer classes are made available to prisoners, but these cover only the most basic skills and do not include teaching inmates how to use the Internet to find and apply for jobs (the latter likely due to security concerns). He further expressed frustration that the system is able to find opportunities for prisoners to do public work, but unwilling or unable to use those same connections to find jobs for FIPs once they are released.

By contrast, at least one comparison group member cited a program in the Adult Transitional Center (ATC) in which he had participated as instrumental in supporting his ability to explore various jobs through work release, which helped him improve his attitude and put aside money for his return home; what's more, the experience had at least the short-term effect of enabling him to remain employed—at the time of the focus group, he had been employed throughout the six months since his release. By contrast, however, another comparison individual who also had participated in an ATC did not find it as helpful: although she similarly benefited from the work experience and ability to save money pending release, her ATC was outside of Chicago and she was unable to retain that job or connect with a new one once she returned home to West Englewood.

Aside from the small cadre of respondents who had somewhat positive preparation for release, most generally reported that they felt unprepared for their transition back home. Many of the Safer Return participants had attended an IDOC program they called “Parole School” designed to provide basic information about parole, including requirements and restrictions. They also reported receiving a list of resources, including educational and employment opportunities, to assist them once

they returned to their home community; some received this information from parole officers and service providers who met with them in prison, while others were simply given handouts and flyers. Additionally, at least one comparison respondent reported receiving IDOC job search training that included general tips and resume writing. Despite such information, most believed that the limited programming provided by IDOC was inadequate to prepare them, and in some cases, it was viewed as detrimental, because it provided outdated and incorrect resource information. For example, one participant indicated that the materials gave him a false “sense of security” in that he believed there would be so many resources for him to tap once he left prison, but these did not materialize on the outside (e.g., some of the programs no longer existed, others he could not qualify for) and he had not made any other contingency plans, ostensibly because he was expecting to enroll in the programs he thought were in the community waiting for people with his background. Another suggested that in the final months in prison, he had little time to prepare for release as he was on a 23:1 rotation (i.e., he was locked up 23 hours per day and had only one free hour, during which time he could only accomplish showering and maybe making a few phone calls). Last, individuals reported receiving only \$10 in gate money from the state upon release, making it difficult to meet even short-term needs, much less support themselves, until they could find a legitimate source of income.

In addition to common perceptions of relatively weak prerelease preparation, there was general consensus among discussants that once they returned home their parole officers were too busy to provide much meaningful postrelease assistance. As such, the large majority of individuals said that they primarily relied on their family and social support networks to help support them when they returned.

#### Sources of Support

Formerly incarcerated persons occasionally spoke of the hardships imposed on them relative to their family relationships while they were incarcerated. For example, one man

indicated that although he was located in a facility proximate to family and was fortunate to see them fairly frequently, he nonetheless found it jarring when his daughter became pregnant and he had the stark realization that as a parent in prison, he was so limited in his ability to properly influence his children's lives. Others spoke of prison as an eye-opening experience in which they matured and came to realize they needed to do a better job of shouldering responsibilities, including setting better examples and pursuing courses of action that would give their children better opportunities in life. But some spoke of family estrangement. Some described negligible contact with family due to interpersonal factors such as hardships endured by family members when the FIP was home and engaged in substance abuse or other crimes that adversely affected everyone; others reported deliberately disengaging from their family because they were ashamed and did not want relatives, particularly their children, to see them under such circumstances. Additionally, a number of FIPs and family members mentioned fractured relationships due to logistical circumstances (e.g., distance from prison to family residence, limited resources to cover costs of staying in contact, family members' own criminal histories that limit clearances to visit).

Thus, for a variety of reasons, many formerly incarcerated persons said they did not stay in close contact with their family members during prison. This aligns with our survey findings that showed a reduction in communication during prison. In the focus groups, FIPs stated that some family members refused to contact them, giving them what they called "tough love," while others simply could not afford the transportation and telephone costs associated with staying in contact during their incarceration. Participants suggested that some system reforms could improve communication among family members while an individual is incarcerated; these suggestions included provisions for less expensive phone calls; bus service to all, not just some prisons; more family-friendly screening and logistical procedures to support visitation; and proactive efforts to place inmates in facilities closer to their home communities.

Nevertheless, the family members were happy to have the released individuals back home and to provide support. Family members—particularly mothers—expressed willingness to provide support, regardless of the nature of the relationship between the formerly incarcerated person and family members during confinement. FIPs and family members both attribute this to the excitement of release and reunification.

Family members reported feeling hopeful about the formerly incarcerated person's return and optimistic that positive behavioral changes were possible. Some saw their role as helping the FIP to develop a new attitude by providing positive reinforcement and encouragement to make the changes needed to avoid returning to former peer relationships and other circumstances that can undermine their success. Others expressed their belief in the value of "tough love" or were otherwise candid about their willingness to offer help with strings attached; some family members felt they had been "burned before," and this time were requiring the FIP to change his ways as a condition of ongoing family involvement and support.

Both formerly incarcerated persons and family members indicated that family support took a number of forms, including providing emotional support and a place to live, new clothes, and spending money, as well as offering assistance in getting a job, pursuing education or training opportunities, and complying with parole requirements.

As supportive as family members wish to be, over time, relationships between FIPs and their family and social support members can become strained. In some cases, relationships are tested because the FIP takes advantage of the assistance offered. But in other cases, relationships may fray over the dynamics of authority and decisionmaking within the family. For example, some noted that support offered to people during their incarceration included raising their children. Paradoxically, this support can become a source of friction once FIPs return home and want to reassert decisionmaking for their children: Those who have been caregiving may feel they have shouldered the burden thus far and earned the

right to continue to be the primary decisionmakers, or they may simply be reluctant to trust FIPs to exercise parental responsibilities, leaving them feeling disenfranchised.

However, even in situations where formerly incarcerated persons are actively trying to establish prosocial lifestyles and no source of conflict exists, they can overstay their welcome and become a burden to their family and other social support members. As seen in the baseline survey results, family members of FIPs have limited resources, yet provide the FIPs with a variety of assistance. While family members did not appear to be angry or resentful over helping in these various ways, they did acknowledge that they often struggle financially in providing this assistance.

Both formerly incarcerated persons and family members acknowledged that affordable housing is a critical shortage, not just for those returning from prison. Some suggested the need for a series of housing options that would enable FIPs to move along a continuum of subsidized housing as they are increasingly able to assume responsibility for their own living arrangements.

In addition to receiving support from family members, some participants reported receiving support from the larger community, such as from members of their 12-step or religious groups. Some advocated for more support groups constituted of formerly incarcerated persons, where they could discuss their needs and find out what resources are available to help address their issues. Several participants included parole officers as a valuable means of support. For example, one FIP said, "I'm 45-years old, and my mother and grandmother have passed. Support can come from anywhere though: parole, church, or any person on the street. It's hard to stay focused, so finding lots of sources of support and motivation is important."

Further, both formerly incarcerated persons and family members raised the issue of needing to deliberately avoid seeking support from some former social networks. At least one FIP

discussed how he had to change his social network in order to stay out of prison. In his current view, his old social network encouraged him to do wrong; he didn't realize before how much of a negative influence they were, but now he does and he's avoiding them while investing more heavily in a positive network of family and other friends so he doesn't miss the streets. Similarly, a mother of a recently returned individual indicated that she had encouraged her son to move out of her house; she visits him at his new location rather than having him come home, because they both realized that all of her son's temptations are still there on her block, and he needs to distance himself from that in order to build new, more socially appropriate behaviors.

#### Clients' and Families' Perceptions of Safer Return

As mentioned above, Safer Return participants had mixed opinions about whether Safer Return case management was helpful in addressing their needs. For example, some reported challenges finding resources, while others were satisfied with the services they received. Each participant's opinion of the program seemed to be dependent on their opinion of the individual reentry coach with whom they were matched. Some formerly incarcerated persons did not feel that their reentry coach cared about them or their reintegration, and consequently they did not participate in program activities.

Family and social support members shared similarly mixed opinions about the Safer Return program. While a few reported receiving various benefits through the program (such as frequent contact with the reentry coach who stopped by to provide resources such as job referrals, bus passes, or transportation to appointments), many had limited contact with reentry coaches. It appeared that the families who were most engaged with the reentry coaches had received information about parole and the program prerelease. They indicated that they felt very prepared for the process as a result of the reentry coach's assistance.

Notably, none of the interviewed family members considered themselves to be direct

beneficiaries of Safer Return services. Instead, family members were focused on the success of the formerly incarcerated persons. Even those family and social support members who had regular contact with the reentry coaches reported that they did not go to address their own needs; they went to help enhance services for their formerly incarcerated family member. In their opinion, the program could best serve them by putting all its efforts toward helping their FIPs.

Family members did, however, express a desire for support. In the focus groups, family members from both communities suggested that support groups, where they could meet with others in similar situations (a family member is incarcerated or has recently returned), would be helpful.

Additionally, family members suggested that reentry coaches could help them, as well as formerly incarcerated persons, by (1) holding mediated conversations between clients and their family members, and (2) discussing the family's goals for the client's future. Their view was that the reentry coach could facilitate a "reality check" by opening a conversation about how hard prison was not just for the FIP, but also for other family members, particularly children. For example, some family members indicated that they had obscured the truth about a person's being in prison to protect children from that knowledge, while others noted that children were told the basic facts and it was very disheartening for them (e.g., their grades dropped and they withdrew from extracurricular activities).

#### What Constitutes a Good Reentry Coach?

First and foremost, clients expect reentry coaches to help them get a job. After that, they are seeking other tangible services, such as clothes, bus cards, and other forms of financial support. They want to be informed of programs that can help them improve their daily circumstances, and they want hands-on assistance in gaining admission to such programs.

In addition, they value good communication skills, routinely scheduled contact, and

consistent follow-up from one encounter to the next. Of particular importance to a number of clients was their reentry coach's demeanor in interactions with them: They want to feel that the coach has a personal interest in them, a healthy respect for what they can accomplish, and a real commitment to helping them succeed.

As might be anticipated, some clients have unrealistically high expectations for immediate service and rapid results. Such clients may become easily disillusioned and disengage when reentry coaches are unable to deliver needed resources within the course of a few meetings.

Several clients expressed the strong desire to have reentry coaches who have personal histories of incarceration and successful reintegration. Several reentry coaches, indeed, have personal histories of incarceration. Participants perceived that coaches with prison backgrounds are more fully able to understand their circumstances and draw upon their own experiences to provide practical assistance.

Regardless of the reentry coach's background, both clients and family members agreed that good training and oversight, as well as familiarity with community resources, are critical to ensure consistently good-quality service for all program participants.

## Appendix C.

### Correlations of Family Closeness, Communication, Activities and Services (Safer Return and West Englewood respondents)

	Face to Face Contact 4 Months Before Prison	Telephone Contact 4 Months Before Prison	Written Contact 4 Months Before Prison	Closeness Scale: 4 Months Before Prison	Activities Scale: 4 Months Before Prison	Face to Face Contact During Prison	Telephone Contact During Prison	Written Contact During Prison	Closeness Scale: During Prison	Face to Face Contact 4 Months After Prison	Telephone Contact 4 Months After Prison	Written Contact 4 Months After Prison	Closeness Scale: 4 Months After Prison	Activities Scale: 4 Months After Prison	Forms of Assistance: 4 Months After Prison
Face to Face Contact 4 Months Before Prison	1.000														
Telephone Contact 4 Months Before Prison	0.806 ***	1.000													
Written Contact 4 Months Before Prison	0.979 ***	0.797 ***	1.000												
Closeness Scale: 4 Months Before Prison	0.383 ***	0.108	0.226 ***	1.000											
Activities Scale: 4 Months Before Prison	0.473 ***	0.062	0.375 ***	0.429 ***	1.000										
Face to Face Contact During Prison	0.801 ***	0.648 ***	0.794 ***	0.063	0.022	1.000									
Telephone Contact During Prison	0.801 ***	0.642 ***	0.790 ***	0.031	0.002	0.660 ***	1.000								
Written Contact During Prison	0.983 ***	0.797 ***	0.981 ***	0.153 **	0.283 ***	0.802 ***	0.806 ***	1.000							
Closeness Scale: During Prison	0.272 ***	0.077	0.162 **	0.468 ***	0.311 ***	-0.027	0.142 **	0.382 ***	1.000						
Face to Face Contact 4 Months After Prison	0.037	0.051	0.038	0.155	0.065	0.041	0.049	0.029	0.087	1.000					

	Face to Face Contact 4 Months Before Prison	Telephone Contact 4 Months Before Prison	Written Contact 4 Months Before Prison	Closeness Scale: 4 Months Before Prison	Activities Scale: 4 Months Before Prison	Face to Face Contact During Prison	Telephone Contact During Prison	Written Contact During Prison	Closeness Scale: During Prison	Face to Face Contact 4 Months After Prison	Telephone Contact 4 Months After Prison	Written Contact 4 Months After Prison	Closeness Scale: 4 Months After Prison	Activities Scale: 4 Months After Prison	Forms of Assistance: 4 Months After Prison
Telephone Contact 4 Months After Prison	0.050	0.076	0.115 *	0.058	0.206 ***	0.093	0.085	0.078	0.106	0.104	1.000				
Written Contact 4 Months After Prison	0.117 *	0.111 *	0.228 ***	-0.135 **	0.205 ***	0.182 ***	0.106	0.162 **	-0.080	0.064	0.466 ***	1.000			
Closeness Scale: 4 Months After Prison	-0.062	-0.021	-0.038	0.527 ***	0.145 **	-0.051	-0.042	-0.043	0.346 ***	0.155 **	0.094	-0.018	1.000		
Activities Scale: 4 Months After Prison	0.152 **	0.110 **	0.210 ***	0.144 **	0.548 ***	0.142 **	0.148 **	0.183 ***	0.116 *	0.259 ***	0.308 ***	0.392 ***	0.280 ***	1.000	
Forms of Assistance: 4 Months After Prison	0.065	0.061	0.114 *	-0.078	0.255 ***	0.082	0.094	0.097	0.066	0.073	0.239 ***	0.261 ***	-0.093	0.369 ***	1.000

\*p<0.10; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01.

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<sup>1</sup>The comparison community was selected based on interviews with key city and state stakeholders and UI's assessment of administrative data on crime, incarcerated persons' release patterns from the Illinois Department of Corrections, and sociodemographic statistics.

<sup>2</sup>The nonprofit organization Family Justice closed in late 2009. The organization's national training and technical assistance work continues as the Family Justice Program of the Vera Institute of Justice.

<sup>3</sup>A genogram is a diagram of a person's family and social network. The diagram is a family mapping tool that identifies the age, gender, and nature of a person's relationships (positive, conflicted, or neutral). The participant and others identify which individuals to include in the diagram, often in response to questions posed by the case manager. A genogram may also include other information relevant to the family and social network, such as employment, education, and involvement in the justice system. For more information, see <http://www.vera.org/centers/family-justice-program#/content/tools-methods-family-justice-program>. The ecomap is a diagram of the government and community resources a person and his/her family use, including formal and informal organizations (e.g., barbershop, drug treatment program, peer support group). For more information, see <http://www.vera.org/centers/family-justice-program#/content/tools-methods-family-justice-program>. The Relational Inquiry Tool is a series of questions designed to prompt conversations with incarcerated men and women about the support people in their lives. For more information, see <http://www.vera.org/centers/family-justice-program%23/content/tools-methods-family-justice-program#/centers/family-justice-program/tools-methods>. For more information about the Texas Christian University Criminal Justice Risk Assessment Tool, see <http://www.ibr.tcu.edu/pubs/datacoll/datacoll.html>.

<sup>4</sup>Hereafter, "family member" is intended to be synonymous with "family and social support member," consistent with Safer Return's broad definition of family.

<sup>5</sup>The survey administered to formerly incarcerated persons in the treatment and comparison groups covers several domains and constructs, including sociodemographics, family relationships, friendships, employment, health, perceptions of community, substance abuse, housing, recreation, spiritual beliefs, criminal history and victimization, conditions of supervision, programs and services, reentry experiences, parole supervision, and program satisfaction.

<sup>6</sup>The survey administered to family members of formerly incarcerated persons in the treatment and comparison groups covers several domains and constructs, including demographics, contact with the formerly incarcerated, activities with the formerly incarcerated, relationships with the formerly incarcerated, challenges with the formerly incarcerated, mutual children with the formerly incarcerated and types of support, type of help provided, experiences with social service agencies, and need for assistance.

<sup>7</sup>The community survey administered to residents in the treatment and comparison communities includes the following domains and constructs: demographics, length of residency, social cohesion and control, quality of life, community friendships, community resources, crime and victimization, safety and precautionary measures, perceptions and attitudes about formerly incarcerated persons, and contingent valuation.

<sup>8</sup>Surveys of formerly incarcerated persons, in the Safer Return Program and the comparison community, were conducted with funding from the MacArthur Foundation.

<sup>9</sup>Despite several efforts by the research team, baseline survey collection occurred much slower than expected, due primarily to incomplete contact information of formerly incarcerated persons and their family members, difficulty locating the sample of formerly incarcerated persons and their family members, and lower-than-expected enrollment into the Safer Return program, which directly affected the size of the family member baseline sample.

<sup>10</sup>Funding from ICJIA was used to focus on short-term outcomes attendant to the case management, since funding to focus on long-term outcomes is available from the MacArthur Foundation.

<sup>11</sup>The scales were drawn from previous instruments developed by UI researchers, such as the Returning Home study and the Chicago Family Case Management Demonstration.

<sup>12</sup>According to IDOC records, 72 percent of the FIPs reported having at least one child when they entered prison.

<sup>13</sup>Due to an error in skip patterns in the baseline survey, 81 respondents were unable to answer this question.

<sup>14</sup>Future reporting on the more comprehensive Safer Return study will detail findings from the process evaluation regarding both the case management component and other components, including the barriers to and facilitators of program operations.

<sup>15</sup>The Safer Return program employs dedicated, community parole officers, who coordinate their services with the Safer Return reentry coaches. IDOC does not use the community parole officer approach in West Englewood.

<sup>16</sup>The interaction term between the number of parole meetings and Safer Return participation led to partial separation in the logistic regression model and was subsequently dropped from that model.

<sup>17</sup>Given concerns about the low number of observed recidivism events (n=34), we ran additional, uncontrolled models testing the key variable sets, stratified by scale used (i.e., closeness, activities) and by time period (i.e., before, during, and after prison). Effects were consistent (i.e., significant and in the same direction) with those seen in the larger models.



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