

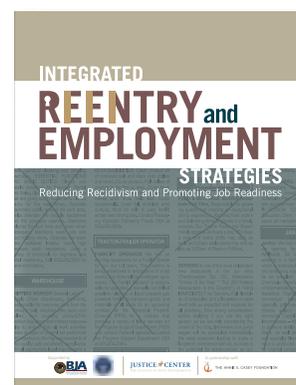
# SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT-FOCUSED REENTRY PROGRAMS:

## Measuring Fidelity to the Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies (IRES) Framework

Employment-focused reentry programs<sup>1</sup> are often uniquely positioned to reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes for people returning to communities after incarceration. However, few programs have been able to achieve success in both areas partially due to the fact that many of them focus solely on job attainment. While employment is crucial for successful reentry, simply placing someone in a job is not an ultimate solution for reducing recidivism or improving long-term job retention.

Various studies suggest that to improve employment and recidivism outcomes for people reentering communities after incarceration, employment-focused reentry service providers should work to address people's antisocial attitudes and beliefs associated with crime, many of which also impact a person's ability to succeed in the workplace.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, not everyone reentering the community needs the same types of services; people who are at a higher risk of reoffending require cognitive-behavioral interventions to address the thought patterns that lead to criminal activity, while those services can be detrimental to people who are at a lower risk of reoffending.<sup>3</sup> Employment-focused reentry programs that are achieving positive outcomes have moved beyond solely providing job-placement services and are focusing on providing opportunities to build employability skills such as sector-based training, education, credentialing, and subsidized and unsubsidized employment, among other skill-building options, and addressing a person's assessed criminogenic risk and need factors.

In September 2013, The Council of State Governments Justice Center published the [Integrated Reentry and Employment Strategies: Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness \(IRES\) white paper](#), with support from the U.S. Department of Justice (through the National Reentry Resource Center) and the Annie E. Casey Foundation as well as guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor. The white paper integrates best practices from both the workforce development and corrections fields and offers guidance on how to design employment-focused reentry programs that incorporate risk-need-responsivity (RNR) principles. The white paper also provides a tool (see Figure 1) to help policymakers and practitioners match people to appropriate services and triage limited resources in a way that maximizes their impact on recidivism and employment outcomes.

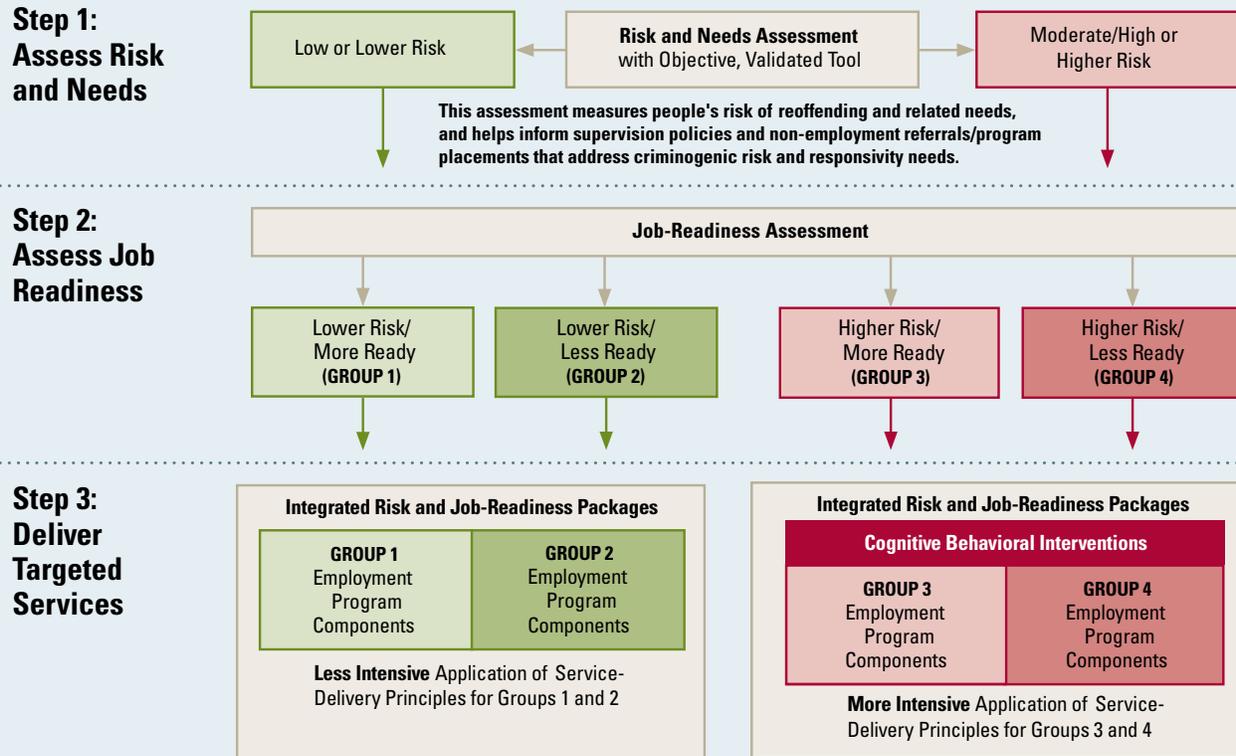


### Risk-Need-Responsivity Principles

In recent years, criminal justice and social science researchers have identified specific principles that have been proven effective in reducing recidivism. When implemented correctly and consistently, the RNR principles help administrators and practitioners focus their resources where they will have the greatest impact on reducing recidivism and meeting the needs of people reentering communities from correctional facilities. These principles state the following:

- **Risk Principle.** Match the intensity of a person's interventions to their level of risk for criminal activity. Research shows that prioritizing supervision and services for people assessed as being at a moderate or high risk of committing a future crime can lead to a significant reduction in recidivism among this group. Conversely, intensive interventions for people who are at a low risk of recidivism may actually be harmful and contribute to increasing the person's likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior.<sup>4</sup>
- **Need Principle.** Target criminogenic needs—the factors that contribute to the likelihood of new criminal activity. Research indicates that there are eight criminogenic needs which contribute to an individual's risk of recidivating: (1) antisocial behavior; (2) antisocial personality patterns; (3) antisocial thinking; (4) antisocial associates (5) poor family and marital relationships; (6) substance addiction; (7) low levels of performance and or satisfaction in school and/or work; and (8) unstructured and antisocial leisure time.<sup>5</sup> Understanding risk of future criminal behavior allows providers to tailor employment services and recidivism-reduction interventions to individual needs. For people with antisocial thinking, behaviors, personality patterns, and peers—the criminogenic risk factors that have the greatest effect on reoffending—cognitive-behavioral interventions may be needed to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and prepare them for the workplace.
- **Responsivity Principle.** Account for a person's individual abilities, learning styles, and motivation as well as his or her cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender characteristics when designing interventions. Learning disabilities and mental or physical illnesses, or substance addictions may also need to be addressed before corrections or employment interventions can be successful.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1: The Resource-Allocation and Service-Matching Tool**



Steps 1 and 2 of the framework informs who practitioners should target with services to address what needs. Step 3 informs what services to provide and how to deliver those services in a way that is responsive to the person's needs.

The following self-assessment is designed to help employment-focused reentry programs gauge their current capacity to provide integrated reentry and employment interventions to reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes. This tool assesses the extent to which programs are adopting promising practices from the workforce development field to improve work outcomes for hard-to-employ populations,<sup>7</sup> including people returning to communities from incarceration or who are on parole and probation supervision. It also assesses for the program's use of the service-delivery principles that have been shown to reduce recidivism and can be used to build the employability skills of this population.

This self-assessment should be used in conjunction with Section II of the *IREs* white paper. For each program component, select a corresponding statement that most accurately depicts the services or programming provided by your program. There are no right or wrong answers—employment-focused reentry service providers should use this assessment to identify opportunities to build capacity to serve any risk-need groupings desired. If, due to funding streams, programs are unable to offer certain services, they are encouraged to develop partnerships with other entities to offer such services.

## I. Employment Program Components to Improve Work Outcomes (What to Do)

### A. Promoting job readiness for people who are less ready for employment (groupings 2 and 4)

This includes improving a person’s hard and soft skills either through education, training, or work experience, as well as addressing non-skill-related barriers to employment with in-house programming.

	A	B	C
<b>Education</b> , such as Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED) preparation and certification, and/or post-secondary coursework	<input type="checkbox"/> No education programs are available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Education is offered, but it does not lead to credentialing (e.g., ABE).	<input type="checkbox"/> Education is offered and leads to credentialing (i.e., completion of a GED, post-secondary degree). Basic skills are taught in the context of work.
<b>Training</b> , such as vocational training programs focused on employment sectoral needs	<input type="checkbox"/> No training programs are available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Training is offered, but it does not involve employers’ feedback or focus on sectoral needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Training is offered and leads to credentialing in specific sectors, and the curriculum is informed by employers.
<b>Soft-skill interventions</b> , such as instruction on professionalism at work, managing conflicts with coworkers, and managing time effectively	<input type="checkbox"/> No soft-skill interventions are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft-skill interventions are offered, but cognitive-behavioral, social learning approaches (i.e., using structured learning experiences to model and reinforce positive attitudes and behaviors) are not utilized.	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft-skill interventions are offered, and cognitive-behavioral social learning approaches are utilized.
<b>Transitional-job placements</b> that are temporary, subsidized, developmental work experiences that last between 30 and 90 days and help participants learn and apply basic work skills	<input type="checkbox"/> No transitional job placements are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job placements are available but do not adhere to evidence-based program models (i.e., provide coaching and teach basic expectations for behavior and performance on the job).	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job placements are available for periods of at least 60 days and include coaching for participants. Placement length is long enough to teach skills but not so long that participants cannot transition to full-time employment.
<b>Non-skill-related interventions (supportive services)</b> , such as assistance with logistical challenges (e.g., obtaining housing, clothing, identification, transportation, or child care) that are provided in-house.	<input type="checkbox"/> No non-skill-related interventions are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Three of the five non-skill-related interventions are offered: - Assistance with obtaining housing - Assistance with obtaining clothing - Assistance with obtaining a government-issued identification card - Transportation assistance (e.g., buss pass, gas gift cards) - Assistance with child care	<input type="checkbox"/> Four of the five or all non-skill-related interventions are offered: -Assistance with obtaining housing -Assistance with obtaining clothing -Assistance with obtaining a government-issued identification card - Transportation assistance (e.g., bus pass, gas gift cards) - Assistance with child care

For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.

**TOTAL SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Based on your score above, determine the current degree to which your program is providing job-readiness services:  
 5-7 points = not providing job-readiness services                      8-11 points = providing some job-readiness services  
 12-15 points = providing robust job-readiness services

**B. Assisting with finding and retaining jobs for people who are more ready for employment (groupings 1 and 3)**– This includes linking people to unsubsidized and non-transitional subsidized employment opportunities through assessment and matching, as well as providing retention support services to help participants gain the stable work history needed for higher earnings and access to career pathways.

	A	B	C
<b>Non-transitional subsidized employment opportunities</b> that pay a portion of participants’ wages for a trial period while the employer or program provides training and support services	<input type="checkbox"/> No subsidized employment is available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Subsidized employment is available for program participants with less-intensive monitoring or support.	<input type="checkbox"/> Subsidized employment is available for program participants and includes close monitoring and training to facilitate successful completion of the subsidy period.
<b>Job coaching</b> to prepare the participant for the job search process by helping them develop a resume, search for appropriate jobs, and complete applications	<input type="checkbox"/> No job coaching is offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Job coaching is offered but is mostly self-directed (e.g., providing tools to create resumes and complete job applications).	<input type="checkbox"/> Job coaching is offered and involves regular interfacing and guidance.
<b>Job development</b> that includes working with local employers to identify job openings	<input type="checkbox"/> No job development is offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Job development is offered but is mostly self-directed (e.g., participants provided with list of employers).	<input type="checkbox"/> Job development is offered and includes building robust relationships with employers and frequent communication with employers about participants’ skill sets and qualifications.
<b>Employment opportunities</b> upon program completion	<input type="checkbox"/> No direct employment opportunities are available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some direct contact with employers is facilitated, such as through job fairs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Job placement is offered to eligible participants upon completion of programming.
<b>Retention and advancement services (participant-facing)</b> to assist participants in identifying and addressing problems that may lead to termination and working to match participants with higher-paying jobs or education opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> No retention or advancement services are available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Retention and advancement services are mostly reactive (i.e., when a participant seeks support to address a problem or to identify advancement opportunities).	<input type="checkbox"/> Retention and advancement services are provided for 6 months and include 3 contacts per month. These services are proactive and include strong participant-program staff relationships and incentives to promote participation.
<b>Retention and advancement services (employer-facing)</b> to mediate workplace issues, facilitate opportunities for advancement, and provide on-site support	<input type="checkbox"/> No retention or advancement services are available to employers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Retention and advancement services are mostly reactive (i.e., when an employer seeks support).	<input type="checkbox"/> Retention and advancement services are proactive and include strong employer-program staff relationships and coordination to identify growth opportunities.
<b>Financial work incentives</b> to encourage job retention and advancement	<input type="checkbox"/> No financial work incentives are available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial work incentives are offered for job acquisition.	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial work incentives are offered for job acquisition, as well as on an ongoing basis to recognize retention milestones.

For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.

**TOTAL SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Based on your score above, determine the current degree to which your program is providing job-retention and advancement services:  
 7-8 points = not providing job retention and advancement services  
 9-16 points = providing some job retention and advancement services  
 17-21 points = providing robust job retention and advancement services

## II. Employment Service-Delivery Principles to Reduce Recidivism (How to Do It)

This section will assess your program's capacity to deliver services in a way that impacts recidivism for higher risk participants (groupings 3 and 4).

**A. Engagement** – Address antisocial thinking and behavior through positive, high-impact interactions between staff and participants (e.g., mentoring relationships or cognitive-behavioral interventions).

	A	B	C
<b>Staff dedicated to case management duties</b> who meet with participants to encourage positive and prosocial relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> No staff are dedicated to case management duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some staff are partially dedicated to case management duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some staff are fully dedicated to case management duties.
<b>Trainings for staff dedicated to case management duties</b> on working with higher-risk participants, developing mentoring relationships, and encouraging positive behavioral change and accountability	<input type="checkbox"/> No trainings are provided for staff dedicated to case management duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Some trainings are provided for staff dedicated to case management duties.	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular and evidence-based trainings (e.g., for motivational interviewing, cognitive-behavioral therapy) are provided for staff dedicated to case management duties.
<b>Communication</b> to inform participants about programming and services	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff do not communicate with participants about available services. Participants are responsible for inquiring about and requesting services.	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff communicate regularly with participants about available services within the program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff communicate regularly with participants about available services within the program and available services offered through external partner agencies.
<b>Cognitive-behavioral interventions</b> to address participants' criminogenic thinking. These interventions are delivered one-on-one or in a group setting and are provided in accordance with participants' assessed risk and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive-behavioral interventions are not available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive-behavioral interventions are available once per week.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive-behavioral interventions are available at least two to three times per week.
<b>Peer supports</b> that are incorporated into programming to help promote participants' sense of community	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for peer support or engagement are not available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for peer support or engagement happen informally, on an infrequent basis, and mix low- and higher-risk participants.	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for peer support or engagement are a formal part of the program structure, are available frequently, and are offered in a way that keeps low- and higher-risk participants grouped separately.
<p>For each statement selected in the "A" column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the "B" column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the "C" column, add 3 points. <i>If "A" was selected for the availability of cognitive-behavioral based contacts, deduct 1 point.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>TOTAL SCORE:</b> _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is best equipped to serve based on the level of engagement provided to participants.</p> <p>4-5 points = level of engagement is most appropriate for low-risk participants          6-11 points = level of engagement is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants          12-15 points = level of engagement is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

**B. Timing** – Provide services shortly before or at the time of release, or at the start of community supervision, to address participants’ immediate needs, and adapt the services to the person’s changing needs over time.

	A	B	C
<b>Pre-release services</b> aimed at developing a transition plan and engaging the participant in programming	<input type="checkbox"/> No services or engagement in services begin prior to release from incarceration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff inform participants of available services prior to release from incarceration and engagement happens remotely between staff and the person incarcerated (e.g., letter writing, phone calls).	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff visit the correctional facility to engage participants in services and begin actual service delivery prior to release.
<b>Services in the community begin after release</b> to avoid service disruption and to assist with immediate needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Community-based services typically begin three months or longer after release from incarceration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Community-based services typically begin between one and three months after release from incarceration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Community-based services typically begin within one month after release from incarceration.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>TOTAL SCORE:</b> _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is best equipped to serve based on the timing of your first engagement with participants.</p> <p>2 points = timing of services is most appropriate for low-risk participants            3-4 points = timing of services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants            5-6 points = timing of services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

**C. Incentives** – Increase motivation for positive change and improve job performance with measures such as stipends for maintaining employment and peer-supported recognition for program completion.

	A	B	C
<b>Non-financial incentives</b> such as recognition or awards for programming milestones and completion in the presence of peers	<input type="checkbox"/> No non-financial incentives are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-financial incentives are offered to reward programming completion including employment obtainment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-financial incentives are provided in the presence of peers to reward programming milestones and completion including obtaining and retaining employment.
<b>Financial incentives</b> to increase motivation and involvement in employment services	<input type="checkbox"/> No financial incentives are offered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial incentives such as support payments for housing, child care, and transportation are offered to those involved in employment services.	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial incentives such as payment for involvement in transitional employment or retention bonuses are given to people that find and maintain traditional unsubsidized employment.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>TOTAL SCORE:</b> _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is best equipped to serve based on the incentives offered to participants.</p> <p>2-3 points = incentives for services is most appropriate for low-risk participants            4-5 points = incentives for services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants            6 points = incentives for services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

**D.Coordination** – Collaboration with corrections, workforce development, and reentry professionals as well as other service providers to ensure that interventions are provided in a way that supports recidivism-reduction and employment goals.

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Coordination with community supervision or corrections</b> for transition and/or reentry planning, as well as information sharing between relevant agencies	<input type="checkbox"/> No coordination between agencies takes place to establish transition and/or reentry planning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Information sharing is a one-time task or only occurs in one direction, as opposed to ongoing mutual communication.	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular two-way communication is conducted in a way that fosters coordination and collaboration.
<b>Communication with family or community supports</b> for reentry and/or transition planning purposes	<input type="checkbox"/> No communication takes place with family members or community supports.	<input type="checkbox"/> Reactive communication takes place with family members or community supports (i.e., family reaches out to program staff regarding coordinating services).	<input type="checkbox"/> Proactive communication takes place with family members or other supportive people (i.e., program staff reaches out to family regarding coordinating services), and they are active participants in the reentry and/or transition process.
<b>Case conferencing</b> to coordinate intervention timing and prioritize criminogenic needs and responsivity factors	<input type="checkbox"/> No case conferencing is conducted within the program between different service providers or between the program staff and external service providers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal case conferencing is conducted within the program between different service providers.	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal case conferencing is conducted within the program between different service providers, and external case conferencing is conducted with external service providers.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>TOTAL SCORE:</b> _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is best equipped to serve based on the level of coordination that takes place between your staff and other supports to plan for a person’s reentry.</p> <p>3-4 points = coordination of services is most appropriate for low-risk participants</p> <p>5-7 points = coordination of services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants</p> <p>8-9 points = coordination of services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

**E. Structured Time** – Organize people’s time with effective programming and positive activities to minimize opportunities for criminal actions and time with antisocial peers.

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>Structured programming</b> in planned, prosocial activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Between one and three hours per week of structured programming is available. If more hours of structured programming are available, participation is voluntary.	<input type="checkbox"/> Between four and six hours per week of structured programming is available, and participation is required.	<input type="checkbox"/> More than six hours per week of structured programming is available, and participation is required.
<b>Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programming</b> to provide structured programming	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programs are not available.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programs are offered and span between 1 and 20 hours per week.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitional job or unsubsidized employment programs are offered and span between 20 and 40 hours per week.
<p>For each statement selected in the “A” column, add 1 point. For each statement selected in the “B” column, add 2 points. For each statement selected in the “C” column, add 3 points.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>TOTAL SCORE:</b> _____</p>			
<p>Based on your score above, determine which criminogenic risk and need grouping(s) your program is most appropriate to serve based on the amount of structured time available to participants.            2 points = structured time of services is most appropriate for low-risk participants            3-4 points = structured time of services is most appropriate for low- or moderate-risk participants            5-6 points = structured time of services is most appropriate for high-risk participants</p>			

This self-assessment provides a platform to discuss your program’s capacity to provide employment services that increase public safety by incorporating recidivism reduction strategies for people returning to the community from incarceration or who are on parole or probation supervision. The results are not a reflection of your program’s quality, but provide guidance on which risk-need group(s) your program is currently best equipped to serve based on the IRES framework. To provide services appropriate for higher risk groups, it is suggested that programs identify strategies to provide interventions in Section II Column C or develop formal partnerships (MOUs/MOAs) with agencies that provide those services.

For more information on implementing the IRES framework, visit <https://csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/reducing-recidivism-and-increasing-job-readiness/>.

## Endnotes

1. This assessment tool focuses primarily on community-based programs/providers that offer employment services to the reentry population. For the purposes of this document, the term “employment-focused reentry service programs/providers” is sometimes used as shorthand to describe this group.
2. Edward J. Latessa, “Why Work is Important and How to Improve the Effectiveness of Correctional Reentry Programs That Target Employment,” *Criminology and Public Policy* 11, no. 1 (2012): 87–91.
3. Ibid.
4. Christopher T. Lowenkamp, Edward J. Latessa, and Alexander M. Holsinger, “The Risk Principle in Action: What Have We Learned from 13,676 Offenders and 97 Corrections Programs?” *Crime and Delinquency* 52, no. 1 (January 2006): 77–93; See discussion in Clement, Schwarzfeld, and Thompson, *The National Summit on Justice Reinvestment and Public Safety: Addressing Recidivism, Crime, and Corrections Spending*.
5. James Bonta and Don A. Andrews, *Risk-Need-Responsivity Model for Offender Assessment and Rehabilitation* (Ottawa: Public Safety Canada, 2007).
6. Don A. Andrews, Ivan Zinger, Robert D. Hoge, James Bonta, Paul Gendreau, and Francis T. Cullen, “Does Correctional Treatment Work? A Psychologically Informed Meta-Analysis.” *Criminology* 28, no. 3 (1990): 369–404.
7. Characteristics associated with people who are hard to employ include challenges with transportation and housing, education and skill deficits, and health or other needs that impair a person’s ability to attain and retain employment (including responsivity factors). To learn more about the needs of the “hard to employ” population, view page 19 of the *IRES* white paper.

*This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-MU-BX-K011 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*