

EMPLOYER ATTITUDES
TOWARD EX-ADDICT EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

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Employer Attitudes Toward Ex-addict Employees

Twenty-one public sector employers who closely supervised ex-addicts from the Wildcat Service Corporation were interviewed in order to gauge their attitudes toward ex-addict employees.

The majority of the supervisors initially held neutral or "wait and see" attitudes while the majority of their staffs were described as holding negative attitudes toward the ex-addicts. Over time, (averaging 27 months), the attitudes of both the supervisors and the staffs seemed to change to a more positive acceptance of the ex-addict employees. The day to day working contact, the style of supervision and the relationship the supervisors developed with Wildcat management were factors which influenced the attitude changes.

Ex-addicts were compared favorably by the supervisors with regular staffs on job performance and initiative, but less favorably in the area of attendance. Employers seemed to know little about methadone maintenance but clearly preferred drug-free ex-addicts to those maintained on methadone.

While many success have been recorded in placing ex-addicts employees in public sector jobs, ex-addicts face continuing problems at work and changes need to be made to better meet the needs of the employees and the employers.

Employers' Attitudes toward Ex-addict Employees

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Introduction

The potential rehabilitative benefits of holding a job are regularly denied to ex-addicts because they are discriminated against in the job market. For the past four years the Wildcat Service Corporation has placed hundreds of ex-addicts in positions with agencies which have had little experience with this population. This report analyzes the attitudes toward these ex-addict workers as described by twenty-one host agency supervisors who have participated in the Wildcat experiment.

These supervisors did not directly participate in their agencies' decision to hire Wildcatters but were assigned the workers by their supervisors. Since the supervisors were not willing participants, they most likely represent a cross-section of public sector employee supervisors. Thus, the subjective narrative material gathered from these respondents provides valuable insights into outside employers' feelings toward ex-addicts as workers, and about the management of a supported work program, as well as their suggestions for methods they found successful in supervising ex-addicts at work.

It is important to note, however, that it is difficult to draw too many conclusive statements about employers' attitudes since the study was done retrospectively without psychometric attitude tests.

Specifically, the study focused on the supervisors who had the day-to-day responsibility of training and supervising the work of the Wildcatters and who were given the role of integrating these ex-addicts into the regular staff. The questions centered

on 1) what their initial attitudes toward the ex-addicts were, 2) how they introduced the idea and the people to their staff, 3) what problems they faced and how they handled them 4) their assessment of their relationship with Wildcat management and the assistance they received, 5) their judgment as to how well the Wildcatters fared compared to regular staff in the areas of work performance, initiative, and attendance, and 6) their attitudes toward drug-free versus methadone maintained workers. The answers might contribute to an understanding of whether attitudes change over a period of time and what factors might be influential in the change.

I. Site Selection and Description

Selection of sites was made according to the following site characteristics: 1) a mixture of white and blue collar jobs (14 white collar and seven blue collar sites were selected); 2) sites where Wildcatters had been on the job for at least a year working alongside regular staff at a similar job (to provide a basis of comparison); 3) sites with supervisors who were at the project when Wildcatters were first hired and worked day-to-day with the Wildcatters (these supervisors were usually not the persons who made the initial decisions to hire Wildcatters).

It was difficult to adhere strictly to all three characteristics and some projects had to be eliminated outright. Any crews which were not directly supervised by a person in

the host agency were not included. This accounts for the smaller representation of blue collar projects in the study because a good number of these crews work independently of regular staff. Such crews are supervised exclusively by Wildcat management and may perform short-term renovation, construction and painting work at various sites.

It is important to note that in all the blue collar jobs and all but three of the white collar jobs, the basic motivation for the agency's accepting Wildcat was one of economic need. The agencies were understaffed, beginning to feel the crunch of the city's financial crisis, unable to hire more regular staff. Thus they turned to Wildcat which offered an inexpensive, if risky (to them) solution to their manpower problems.

Seven supervisors of blue collar projects were interviewed. Four of the seven projects were maintenance jobs at court houses and police precincts. One was a city agency print shop, another was a shop that built and repaired police barriers and the seventh was a fire department garage that serviced vehicles. In six of these projects the Wildcatters worked alongside civil service workers in the same or similar capacities. In the seventh project, a police precinct that moved to a new building without assigned civil service cleaners, the Wildcatters took over the responsibilities once held by civil service employees. So, in each case, the supervisor was able to compare Wildcatters and civil servants.

It is interesting that as a group these blue collar supervisors were long-time civil servants. Except for one black supervisor who worked 30 years in private industry and only four years for the city, the other six averaged about 30 years of experience in civil service. They were similar demographically--all male, six white and one black, average age 52, with the oldest 65 years old and the youngest 45 years old.

A greater diversity existed in the 14 white collar projects--both in types of jobs performed and in the supervisors interviewed. Six crews worked in clerical or typist positions, three in the library as desk clerks or information aides, and one crew each worked as paralegals, field interviewers, Spanish-English interpreters, graphic artists and microfilmmers. Twelve of the crews worked with the regular civil service staff performing similar work. Personnel decisions on the part of the supervisors in the two other white collar projects accounted for the Wildcatters' working alone. In one crew, Wildcat and civil service employees worked together for a month until it became obvious to everyone that the Wildcatters' productivity was outstripping the civil servants by about four to one. In the other situation, the supervisor felt that the Wildcatters needed a year of training and separate supervision before they were ready to work with the regular staff.

Demographically, the supervisors of the white collar pro-

jects were more diverse than the blue collar supervisors: 11 male, three female; eight white, five black and one Filipino. The ages ranged from 30 years old to 60 years old, averaging 40 years old. Supervisors' years of experience in city government also covered a wide range--from 3 to about 35 years, the average about 16 years. All of the supervisors, except two Legal Services lawyers, were civil servants.

II. Initial Attitudes of Supervisors and their Staffs

The initial attitudes toward ex-addicts held by the supervisors and their staffs as reported by the supervisors were classified as positive, negative or neutral attitudes.

Only one supervisor described himself as being vehemently opposed to Wildcat, while the greatest majority of supervisors (16) reported neutral feelings and four said they felt positive and enthusiastic about the opportunity to have Wildcat workers. However, most of the supervisors felt that their staff's initial reaction was strongly negative. Only four supervisors felt their staff took a neutral or "wait and see" attitude and no one reported positive feelings on the part of their staff.

The following chart summarizes the initial attitudes held by the 21 supervisors and staffs, as described by the supervisors.

	<u>Initial Attitudes</u>		
	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Neutral</u>
Staff	17	0	4
Supervisor	1	4	16

A. Negative Attitudes

The negative attitudes toward ex-addicts as employees were expressed in many ways, but seemed to be based on fear, stereotypic views of addicts and their previous experience with addicts. The following factors influenced the negative attitudes:

1) fear of criminals - "To me all addicts were criminals." Many supervisors said that the immediate worry of their staffs was a fear of thefts. They felt that the Wildcatters would be blamed for everything that went wrong and would be accused right away for any thefts that took place. A number of these job sites were already experiencing a serious theft problem before Wildcat appeared.

2) fear of losing their jobs - civil service ranks have been reduced recently by budget cuts and job security no longer exists to the same extent as in the past. Wildcat workers were seen as threats to civil service jobs because they represented a cheaper labor force to an impoverished city.

3) lack of contact with people from minority groups - Three supervisors who described their offices as "traditionally white" reported that their employees were more upset that blacks and Puerto Ricans would be working with them than they were with the Wildcatters' addiction history. Some civil service workers were upset when many young black and Puerto Rican workers whose hair style and dress differed from their own appeared at their job sites.

4) effect of past experience with addicts - "I used to arrest kids just for looking the way they looked. How could I have one of them working in my office?" The Police Department officers were aware of the possibility of an automatically negative attitude on the part of police officers toward ex-addicts because the two groups had been such long time enemies in the street.

"It set the scene for a natural confrontation."

These men mentioned that their constant exposure to the under side of life is a problem to them as well in their daily life with friends and family.

"Policemen are naturally suspicious. Most cops get killed when they let their guard down."

Cleaners who worked in maintenance crews in the courts were reported to have expressed the feeling that the Wildcat ex-addicts would be just like the addicts who lined the hallways of the courts waiting trial for criminal charges.

"The building will go to hell. The city is opening up the prisons."

5) effect of lack of experience with addicts - "We thought the city was going to send us a bunch of weirdos who would be swinging from the ceilings." One blue-collar supervisor said that while most of his workers were black, they knew virtually nothing about drugs.

"If one of my workers saw a vial of heroin or methadone, he wouldn't know what it was but would probably treat it like a bomb and flush it down the toilet."

Other supervisors expressed worry that they would be incapable of handling the problems of ex-addicts on the job.

"If on a Friday, one of the fellows kicks his foot through a wall, I know what's bugging him. But if an ex-addict did it, I would be afraid I wouldn't know how to talk with him. I don't know his problems."

Another supervisor described his staff as "95% white, mostly over 40 years of age" and totally ignorant of addicts and their lifestyle. His staff asked him if they would be shooting up in the bathrooms or smoking reefers all day. A number of the women workers refused to use the same bathroom because they were afraid they would contract venereal disease from the Wildcat women whom they assumed had been prostitutes.

6) prejudice - The attitude of the only supervisor who was strongly against Wildcat from the start appeared to be based on prejudice and not on reason. He was intemperate, had alcohol on his breath, and was uncooperative during the interview. When asked about the Wildcat workers he answered "Well, I have some Wildcat people, but I wouldn't say they were working." He said they smoked reefers all day in the back of his office, used bad language, did not respect him and were all "fags." He said he had been lied to when told by his superiors he would be getting supplemental workers who would be able to do the work.

B. Positive Attitudes

Only one of the staffs was described by their supervisor as having positive initial attitudes, but four supervisors reported that they were personally enthusiastic about the concept of supported work and saw it as an opportunity to help rehabilitate ex-addicts. Each took a strong interest in the success of the project.

Two of the most forceful proponents of Wildcat reported that they had had positive experiences assisting disadvantaged people in the past. One, a former social worker, had directed a home for children of prisoners, and reported he had "an understanding of different kinds of behaviour." He saw as a good opportunity to show his office that "stereotypes do not work, that people can do more than you think." Another described himself as an "original member of CORE and a person with a long history of involvement in the civil rights movement. "I put my heart into Wildcat."

Two other supervisors were also positive but expressed it in less personal ways. One supervisor, working in a traditionally white agency quietly stated that he felt his staff was "ignorant" of other people and he wanted to help the Wildcatters do well. And a fourth simply stated he felt it was "a worthwhile project and a great idea."

C. Neutral Attitudes

Most of the supervisors and four of the staffs seemed to have held neutral attitudes toward the ex-addicts. They were willing to "give a guy a chance" and see what happens. The supervisors of the four neutral staffs attributed this tolerant atmosphere to the fact that the goal of their agencies is to assist poor people.

The initial attitude of 16 of the supervisors was neutral, characterized by a pragmatic need to secure inexpensive labor. In a number of cases these supervisors were chosen by their superiors to handle the Wildcat program. The feelings behind their openness are illustrated below:

- Wildcat just might help lighten the work load so it might be advantageous.
- Wildcat is an experiment and they will work hard to prove themselves.
- Wildcat promised to screen the workers and remove anyone who did not work out. The supervisors trusted Wildcat to do this.
- In a number of cases, Wildcat workers were free of charge and in others, the fee was low, about \$1.50 per hour. The supervisors had no better offers.
- Some supervisors had no choice. "They were wished on me by my superiors in the department."

Thus, the supervisors were caught between their need for

workers, a lack of reserves, and it was thus in their interest to give Wildcat a try. As one supervisor summed up - "My need outweighed my fears."

III. Changes in Attitude

Most of the supervisors and most of their staffs changed their attitudes toward the Wildcatters as workers from negative or neutral to a more positive acceptance of them. The one originally negative supervisor remained negative, joined by an originally enthusiastic supervisor who was disappointed with the Wildcat workers. Attitudes held by the staffs were usually the same as the attitude held by the supervisor.

The breakdown of the attitudes toward the Wildcat workers held by supervisors and staff at the time of the interviews, as reported by the supervisor, was as follows:

Attitudes Toward Wildcat Employees

	<u>Negative</u>	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Mixed</u>
Staff	2	16*	2
Supervisor	2	17	2

* Since one crew was separated from the regular staff so early in the experience, there is no data available about the staff's present attitude.

IV. Wildcatters working under host agency supervision

In discussing their on-going experiences with Wildcat, four factors emerged which influenced the change of supervisor and staff attitudes: 1) day-to-day contact between Wildcatters and regular employers; 2) style of supervision and atmosphere of the work setting; 3) special precautions and steps taken by supervisors to insure a smooth introduction and transistion; and 4) the relationship that developed between supervisors and Wildcat management.

Daily Contact The opportunity which Wildcat afforded ex-addicts and regular employees to work side by side contributed to breaking down initial stereotypic attitudes of city employers and employees. Typical comments were:

"They learned that everyone is a human being with problems. Some are nice and some are not."

"They are not animals, but people just like anyone else."

The ex-addicts were seen as individuals, and in some cases, not as criminals but as victims of their addiction.

"They are like alcoholics. It is a matter of control. Maybe two out of ten are hardened criminals. The rest commit crimes out of poverty."

The supervisors told personal stories of crewmembers with whom they had become close.

"I admired her so much. She fought her ex-addict husband every day to get out of the house and come to work."

One police officer, initially afraid the Wildcatters would commit crimes, told the story of his foreman, who was serving weekend time in jail for shooting someone and who worked during the week in his precinct. He added "He's a damned good worker so why not let him work during the week?"

On the negative side, there were stories of individual Wildcatters who were caught stealing and others who were arrested for various crimes. There were also instances of Wildcatters being terminated quickly from a project if they did not work out. Many supervisors complained of turnover, but were also grateful if they could call up Wildcat and request the quick transfer of a bad worker.

A number of supervisors felt that they had encountered a small minority of Wildcat workers who didn't seem to want to work at all and others "who took all they could get but gave little back." Most supervisors seemed to feel that there was a workable balance - "There have been a few rotten apples, but all in all they have been good."

The supervisors who reported negative feelings toward the Wildcatters generally felt the bad experience with difficult Wildcatters strongly outweighed any benefits and "it wasn't worth the trouble."

On the whole, the supervisors reported positive interactions with most of the Wildcat workers. The initial

apprehension of both the supervisors and the staffs, in most cases, abated as time went by. At three clerical sites some of the male Wildcat workers were "romancing" the secretaries. Some said that as soon as a month after the experience began the Wildcatters began to be accepted. "It seems like they have been here forever. I cannot remember when they first came."

Style of supervision and the atmosphere of the work setting.

Each supervisor described his/her approach to his/her job and to the resolution of difficulties. They also described the atmosphere of their settings: whether there was high or low production, loose or strict supervision, and emphasis on attendance, punctuality and initiative.*

A composite of the most commonly mentioned description of style of supervision would read: "I am honest, direct, treat people fairly and expect them to work and get the job done." On the edges of this solid center are the fuzzy areas of the degrees of strictness and tolerance they enforce or allow. It seems to depend on the individual and the work setting.

All seven blue-collar supervisors stated that attendance and punctuality were emphasized at their projects but only one supervisor said that crews worked under pressure.

* These questions are discussed on page 22.

This supervisor, head of the print shop, said that they had a heavy production schedule. He felt that he could not tolerate any slackening off and that the Wildcatters complied with this demand as much as the civil service workers did.

The other six blue-collar supervisors stated that there was little need for productivity on their job sites and that "down time" was practically a built-in feature of the job and the setting.

"I don't mind if a fellow takes a nap,
as long as he does it out of sight and
gets his job done at the end of the day."

Often Wildcatters do the least desired work, e.g. cleaning the main floor and public toilets of a criminal court house. This supervisor felt that:

"they do as well as can be expected under the circumstances - it never really looks very clean and the staff is grateful to be relieved of such unpleasant work."

Three of the maintenance supervisors, who themselves have risen in the ranks from cleaners to senior custodians, felt that while a few Wildcatters seemed to enjoy the work, "most of them don't want to push a broom the rest of their lives." The supervisor seemed somewhat apologetic for the monotony and often demeaning nature of the work and the lack of opportunity for Wildcatters to move up or to gain civil service status. This attitude seemed to make them undemanding toward the Wildcat workers.

Supervisors on the white-collar projects, working in more contained settings, such as offices, or in jobs that

require self-discipline and self-reliance on the part of the employee, seemed to differ more from site to site in their handling of supervision.

The supervisor who was consistently negative toward the Wildcatters said that when he was angry, which seemed to be often, "I blast them, right in front of the office." Another supervisor, more willing to give time to the Wildcatters, said it was his style to "avoid over-reacting to every situation." His style seemed more prevalent.

Other supervisors also mentioned that they were more patient in the beginning of the experience. One, whose present attitude is negative, felt it was his duty to "stick my neck out for the Wildcatters to help change the attitudes of his staff." He saw signs in the men's room deriding him for his actions but he felt it was necessary to back up the Wildcatters against his staff's trumped-up charges of theft.

A positive supervisor suggested that "you talk to them early about what is wrong, don't wait too long. They will appreciate it and it will make your job easier." He felt he had to be particularly conscious of workers' feelings because he supervised a staff that worked in close quarters, answering telephone inquiries of the public and that often the situation became tense.

In three settings where the Wildcatters worked with loose supervision, mostly out in the field, the supervisors

decided early to treat them exactly like their regular staff. They expected and tolerated a certain amount of time taken off by workers in the field and felt that the good work record of the Wildcatters' justified their decision.

The willingness to participate in lengthy interviews suggested most supervisors took their responsibilities toward the new Wildcatters seriously. They tried to help the Wildcatters to do a good job and took the lead in changing the attitudes of their staffs.

Special steps taken by the supervisors

In order to calm some of the initial fears and help make the transition as smooth as possible for both groups of workers, a number of supervisors took precautionary steps. For example:

Theft was mentioned frequently as a worry. One supervisor decided that Wildcat crews should work only during the day since it was much more difficult to supervise at night and they didn't yet trust the Wildcat workers. A police officer posted "restricted area" signs around his precinct to control the access of Wildcatters to certain rooms where valuable property was kept. Other supervisors on maintenance crews assigned the Wildcat crews to certain floors, usually the highly visible and heavily trafficked main floors, because they could watch them better and keep them off the upper office floors.

Separation was also the goal of other supervisors. One gave the Wildcatters their own locker room so they could be together and another kept a crew in a separate office working on a special project for a year.

To handle the fears of civil service workers that the Wildcatters posed a threat to their jobs, some supervisors did not assign certain of the more skilled tasks to the Wildcatters. In fear that the Wildcatters were in fact unreformed criminals, a supervisor assigned the Wildcatters to a project interviewing recipients at a welfare center and not to a project interviewing elderly people in their homes. "I gave in to stereotypes." (Now, a year and a half later, the Wildcatters are working with the elderly).

Weekly "rap" sessions were set at three projects to enable the Wildcatters to talk about their feelings about work and coworkers.

Some of these measures may have protected the Wildcat workers from unfair attacks and others may also have contributed to a positive attitude change on the parts of the staff. Others, however, perhaps indicate a continuing lack of trust and acceptance of the Wildcat workers on the part of the employers.

Supervisor's Relationship with Wildcat management

Unexpectedly, the supervisor's relationship with Wildcat emerged in the interviews as important to attitudes about Wildcat workers. All seven blue collar supervisors and one white collar supervisor of a police project felt they had worked out a fairly good relationship with Wildcat management and could get assistance when needed. All seven reported that their agencies' personnel policies were similar to those of Wildcat's. Also, all used time clocks to check in time. Five were police or fire department projects where discipline and strict guidelines are the established rule. All but one of the seven supervisors felt positive toward the Wildcat workers at the time of the interview.

The other 14 host agency supervisors, however, were critical of Wildcat management, decried the double standard Wildcat enforced on them, and felt Wildcat was more interested in their own perpetuation than helping the workers become skilled, independent workers or placed in private industry. "Sometimes I felt I cared more about these people than the management of Wildcat did."

Two of the specific criticisms of Wildcat from a number of supervisors were 1) mismanagement of Wildcat and 2) double standard for employees.

The supervisors felt that the quality of Wildcat supervisors was poor. The supervisors were too young, turned over

too frequently, did not understand the workings of the job site and didn't seem to listen to the needs of the host agency supervisors. "They didn't use common sense - they actually wanted to place a woman among 40 men!"

Double standards for employees were the most common complaint. The supervisors felt that they wanted to treat the Wildcat workers fairly and equally, exactly like their other workers, but that Wildcat's stricter policies on attendance, lunch time, weekly pay schedule, and sick time constantly conflicted with the agency's. "How can I ask a Wildcatter to bring a note from his doctor when he is sick, when I never would ask that of a regular worker?"

Wildcat workers who do field interviews are given assignments by their agencies in the beginning of the week and are checked at the end. Since Wildcat insists on time sheets and recording of time in and time out, often these interviewers must call three different people each morning to be sure that the right person fills out the required sheet. The supervisors felt the Wildcatters were confused by these different approaches and the supervisors resented the usurpation of their authority.

Most of the supervisors who were critical of Wildcat management felt that Wildcat's personnel policies are too strict. They felt flexibility was the most important factor in dealing with people and especially when dealing with people who are starting off with a number of problems.

One supervisor said his workers who are having difficulties would never call their Wildcat supervisor for help or go to their counselors because they are afraid they would be fired if they honestly discussed their problems.

It is interesting that three of the four supervisors originally holding positive views about Wildcat stated specifically that they fought constant battles with Wildcat management in an effort to enforce the host agencies' policies rather than Wildcat's. Two of these three supervisors pointed to Wildcat's interference and intransigence as factors in their eventual change of attitude from positive to either negative or mixed. However, most of the other supervisors who disagreed with Wildcat often absolved the workers from the problems of Wildcat management. "The Wildcat workers do well in spite of Wildcat."

V. Comparison of Wildcat and non-Wildcat workers

The average amount of time the Wildcat crews had worked at the host agencies was 27 months. Each supervisor was asked to rate the Wildcatters in comparison to their regular workers (90% of whom were civil service employees) in the areas of job performance, attendance and motivation.

A number of the supervisors felt it was impossible to generalize by group since they had experience with both good and bad workers in and outside Wildcat. Since workers performed different jobs at different skill levels, it was difficult to compare. The responses to the question "How would you rate the Wildcat workers in comparison to your regular staff in the area of job performance" were distributed as follows:

	<u>Performance Rating</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Better	2	9
Worse	1	5
The same	9	43
Depends on the individual	9	43

"A person who likes his job will work well; if he doesn't like it, he won't work well. The same is true of Civil Service. You find good and bad everywhere."

The two sites where Wildcatters were rated better than regular staff included a clerical project; ("Wildcatters worked four times as fast - it became embarrassing

and we had to separate the Wildcatters from the civil service employees.") and a maintenance project (where the former civil service employees would "do only what they were told to do and the building never looked clean. The Wildcatters took pride in their work and worked hard.") Prevalent among supervisors however was the feeling that they expected less performance from the Wildcat crews because they were people in treatment and without experience. "I don't expect that much from them because they have no training." In a project where Wildcatters did work similar to college-graduate Vista volunteers, the supervisor felt that they "did as well as their skill level but naturally not as well as college-educated people."

In the area of attendance the Wildcatters were most often rated worse than the regular staff employees:

	<u>Attendance Rating</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Better	0	-
Worse	12	57
As good	9	43

In four of the projects where attendance was as good, a time clock was used for all employees and there was strict accountability of attendance. In the other five projects, a loose arrangement was set up and employees often worked out in the field or in court without checking into the main office first.

In the projects where attendance and punctuality were worse for the Wildcat crews, time clocks were either

used or there was a strong emphasis on punctuality and attendance. Poor attendance was most often mentioned by these supervisors as the one weak spot of even the very good workers. They felt they could not always rely on a Wildcat worker to come to work on time five days a week and that this problem lowered Wildcatters' overall rating as workers compared to regular staff. One supervisor was surprised by the lack of discipline of the Wildcat workers assigned to his staff.

"A regular slob gets up each day, has breakfast, goes to work, eats lunch at noon, works 'til five and goes home to dinner. It struck me that these guys just didn't fit into that routine."

In the area of motivation and initiative, there was a wide difference of opinion among the supervisors in rating Wildcat workers. (The supervisors were not so much commenting on the degree of motivation held by Wildcatters but how Wildcatters compared to regular workers. If motivation is the same for both groups, it is not necessarily high motivation.) How would you rate the Wildcat workers in comparison with your regular staff in the area of motivation?

	<u>Motivation Rating</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Less motivated	5	24
More motivated	5	24
The same, some good, some bad	6	28
Depends on the individual	5	24

The five who felt the Wildcatters were better motivated than non-Wildcatters attributed it to the Wildcatters' desire to prove themselves. Civil service employees, despite threats of layoffs, still feel that they have "made it" and become lax. A number of Wildcatters started their jobs with great enthusiasm, only to be disappointed when the job became monotonous. "They've got to do more than drive nails all day." Some supervisors mentioned that they did not expect as much work from the Wildcatters because their salary was considerably lower than the regular workers. "I would get lazy too if I got paid their salary." Thus outside factors such as boring work, lack of future, no opportunity to develop skills, and the static, low salary were seen as constraining hope of continued high motivation. In most cases the supervisors blamed the management of Wildcat or the state of the economy for this and not the individual workers.

VI. Comparison of Wildcatters on Methadone and Drug Free Treatment

Although by 1970, methadone maintenance programs were prevalent in New York City, the attitudes of the supervisors reflect misinformation and myths about methadone. The supervisors were asked if they knew which of their workers were on methadone and which were drug-free, and if they noted any differences in the work between the two groups. Five said that they didn't know who was on methadone and never asked. Only two knew which workers were on methadone and which were drug-free and stated it made no difference in performance, attendance and initiative. One supervisor expressed a negative position on methadone: "People on methadone are still addicts." A total of eleven supervisors, however, had strong adverse reactions to methadone as a form of treatment because they felt it interfered with work in varying degrees;* (The number in parenthesis is the number of supervisors who mentioned the item). Some of the typical reservations included the feelings that methadone has the following effects:

- makes workers sleepy and unable to work (5). One supervisor advised all his workers to take their dosage at night so they would be awake in the morning and ready to work.

* Two of the eleven supervisors who were against methadone as a treatment mode said that they automatically assumed all the Wildcatters were on methadone -- "our meth cleaners" as one called them.

- when mixed with alcohol causes the workers to become "crazy", "belligerent" and "argumentative (5)."
- causes wide mood swings in the workers (4). Some would have an "extra zip" after taking their medication and work for short spurts and then slow down. Others became "violent" and "dangerous" under its influence.
- interferes with steady attendance because pick-up schedules at clinics do not take working hours into consideration (3). A number of supervisors said they felt the Wildcatters used trips to their clinic as an easy excuse to leave work.
- put the supervisor in the uncomfortable position of not knowing whether someone was high from methadone or from some other drug (2). One woman felt she wasn't a doctor and couldn't be expected to determine if "someone was high from something other than methadone and therefore should be sent home."
- is given out indiscriminately without counseling from the programs and has no long-term benefits (2).

Thus, while the supervisors were generally not too knowledgeable about methadone, most of them who were aware of the Wildcatters' treatment status had reservations about methadone and would have preferred drug-free ex-addicts.

VII. Conclusions

This section summarizes the findings on employer's attitudes toward ex-addict employees and provides a general look at the work problems faced by ex-addicts.

Attitudes

The attitudes toward ex-addicts as workers held by supervisors and staff generally changed from predominately negative and neutral to positive and mixed. Most supervisors said that they were basically satisfied with the work the Wildcatters did. A number mentioned they now could not get along without Wildcat. This reflects not only a change of attitude toward the ex-addicts, but also the effects of increased cutbacks in their staffs in recent times.

There were qualifications about the positive feelings toward the Wildcatters. Those extremely satisfied included those who said "If I lost them now, I would lose my right arm" or "It proved to be to our advantage, they did the work." It is interesting that three supervisors who described their agencies' jobs as demanding, calling for resourcefulness and independence, were all very satisfied with the Wildcat workers. They admitted that few people could meet the requirements, addict and non-addict alike, but that they were able to find appropriate workers among the Wildcatters after careful screening.

Other supervisors, while not wildly enthusiastic

about the Wildcatters performance and punctuality, felt that in the long run it was worthwhile. "I would go along with the whole program just to keep that one guy who is such a good worker." Another said that "it is no big deal now. They come in and do their work like everyone else."

Those who held mixed reactions said that they found it impossible to judge whether the experience with the Wildcat workers was a good one. They felt they had come across just about an equal number of good and bad workers. Two supervisors who had initially very positive attitudes toward the Wildcat workers were keenly disappointed at the time of the interview. They both became personally very involved with the workers and felt very hurt by the bad experiences they had had with individuals -- an occurrence which they had not at all expected. One of these supervisors, expressing his strong feelings of ambivalence stated that he had eight Wildcatters and would use one or two more but that "it wasn't worth the time and effort I put into it. I would never start the project again. It takes the heart out of you." The other said that while some Wildcatters were good workers, he personally felt it wasn't a success because his agency refused to hire any Wildcat workers and dropped the whole program when they were asked to contribute to the workers' salaries. He seemed to place the blame equally

on Wildcat management and his agency.

Those who still felt negative or who changed their attitude from neutral to negative generally believed that the workers were not as good as their civil service employees.

"I wouldn't take them back at all--two civil service employees could do the work of the whole Wildcat crew. I still haven't gotten over the experience."

The supervisor who stated that he was negative initially was even more so at the time of the interview:

"I have tolerated them for a year and half. They do not measure up."

These two supervisors who held negative views headed the staffs who shared their negative feelings toward the Wildcat workers.

Some of the factors which affected positive and negative change are illustrated below:

- each of the 21 supervisors developed a particular style of supervision. If a supervisor was willing to spend time with the Wildcatters and to set and check standards of production, Wildcatters would generally adjust better to the work setting. Also, the leadership provided by the supervisors helped shaped the attitudes of the staffs so that usually the present attitudes of the staffs reflect those held by their supervisors.

- the day-to-day contact from working alongside each other allowed both the regular staff and the Wildcatters to break down the stereotypes each had and gave the Wildcatters an opportunity to learn skills and demonstrate their abilities. When the Wildcatters performed their jobs, easing the burden on the regular staff, the staff's attitude changed positively.
- the various precautionary steps often taken in good faith by the supervisors did not always help smooth the transition for the Wildcatters and assuage the fears of the staffs. Some steps included conducting weekly "rap" sessions with Wildcat workers, restricting areas of access to the Wildcatters, separating the Wildcatters from the regular staff and assigning limited skill jobs to the Wildcatters.
- the relationship of the supervisor with Wildcat management affected feelings toward Wildcat workers. Those agencies whose policies on punctuality, attendance and strictness were closely aligned with those of Wildcat and who preferred to rely on Wildcat management to resolve personnel problems were generally satisfied both with Wildcat management and with Wildcat workers. Those supervisors who felt Wildcat was inflexible and unwilling to adapt its policies to the varying styles of the different agencies felt that a double standard was being imposed on them and

on the Wildcat workers. This, they felt, sabotaged their efforts to assimilate and treat the Wildcatters just like everyone else.

Problems Ex-Addicts Face at Work

According to the supervisors, the Wildcatters faced numerous problems because of their addiction histories. Their skill level was low due to earlier interrupted education. This forced them to work at demeaning, dead-end, low-paying jobs which often chipped away at their initial motivation. (Even the most interesting, least demeaning jobs were low-paying). They face the apprehensive and negative images held by the public and are put in a position of having to prove themselves at a time when their own self-images are fragile and in the process of development. They often are reliant on their supervisor's willingness to give them time, support and patience. Since they are in treatment, often maintained on methadone, and maybe dealing for the first time in their lives with long-neglected medical problems, some need time off to go to clinics, doctors, dentists, etc. Some supervisors tolerate and accept this as part of the ex-addicts' program of coming into the mainstream of life, others do not and resent Wildcatters who are not thoroughly "work-ready." "We bent over backwards so far, we are about to fall off the cliff," was the attitude of one supervisor.

And, of course, the continuing declining economy of New York City and the addition of thousands of skilled, experienced civil service employees to the labor market decreases the ex-addict's chances for private industry employment. Thus, supported work programs, such as Wildcat, give the ex-addicts one of their few opportunities to enter the working world and change the attitudes of employers.

VIII. Recommendations

An ideal setting which would meet the needs of both Wildcat workers and host agencies might have the following components.

A) The host agency supervisor would a) have the time and willingness to be tolerant and give ex-addicts an opportunity to do well; b) reassure the Wildcatters that they will be treated fairly and ensure that this is being done; c) assign real, not "make-do", work; d) help the Wildcatters experience success at entry level tasks in the beginning of their placement; e) be firm about completing work assignments; f) help Wildcatters do a good job -- the quickest way to change staff attitudes; g) hold weekly meetings to discuss feelings about work and keep a dialogue open with crewmembers and regular staff; h) realize that ex-addicts need help in learning office routines and skills in getting along with different people; i) remember the pull and influence

of the Wildcatters earlier drug experiences and the neighborhoods in which they live, j) deal honestly with the Wildcatters' inner conflicts -- whether to learn skills and earn the rewards of society or to continue a pattern of failure and opposition to the establishment; k) follow and reinforce the personnel policies of Wildcat and finally l) be prepared for disappointments on a personal level.

B) There should be a variety of work settings available to Wildcat workers. Work settings should range from simple maintenance jobs up the ladder of skill levels to meet the needs of the many different types of Wildcatters. For those who want to advance, Wildcat (perhaps in conjunction with the host agency) should provide solid, well-organized training programs, not short-term 8 week typing courses that produce unskilled people and mislead both Wildcatters and agencies alike.

An ideal work setting should provide real work for people, because "people will know in a minute if they are needed or not." Work should be checked by the supervisor, daily if possible.

C) The role of Wildcat management and application of policies must reflect a more flexible attitude toward the variety of work settings, and the individual needs of the workers and the host agencies. "The militaristic, disciplinarian approach of Wildcat is counterproductive" was a theme

often expressed by the supervisors dissatisfied with Wildcat management. They felt Wildcat was "more supervised work than supported work" and that management's rigid application of rules demonstrated a lack of trust of the workers and the supervisors. One supervisor said she found "Wildcat (to be) more bureaucratic than most city agencies" and called for more latitude in dealing with individual problems, "the same latitude we give to our own employees."

Wildcat should develop the capacity to respond to individual agencies and people, so that it can be structured or flexible depending on the situation.

The experiences related by the supervisors provide valuable information that can be applied to the ex-addict's eventual need to find non-supported work. Why would an outside employer hire an ex-addict? As one supervisor put it:

"An ex-addict has got problems and may go bad on him. An employer isn't looking for trouble when there are so many regular people around. It's like playing the horses - a 2 to 1 horse will win over a 4 to 1 horse."

A major reason Wildcat has been able to put ex-addicts to work in city agencies is because the workers are either free of charge or inexpensive. Perhaps in non-supported work, ex-addicts will have to work (at least initially) for lower salaries than non-addicts and thus appeal to the employer's desire to save money.

However, since the biggest obstacle an ex-addict faces in the job market seems to be the underlying fear of the

employer, two alternatives for Wildcat Job Development are suggested:

1) Give the workers solid skills, a good Wildcat job experience, time to take care of lingering rehabilitation problems, the opportunity to learn to work with people and develop work routines, and a substantiated work record. Then convince the private employer that all of the above lowers the risk he probably feels he is taking in hiring the Wildcatter.

Or

2) Do not tell the prospective employer about the addiction history of the job applicant. One supervisor stated that he advised his Wildcatters to write on their application that they actually work for the host agency and not for Wildcat. "If an employer knows about the addiction and can ignore it and forget about it, fine. But most can't, so they shouldn't be told in the first place."

In either case, as one supervisor put it:

"You can't throw people away. Somehow they are going to need our help whether in prison, on welfare, on methadone or stealing our money. Wouldn't it be better to let them have a positive impact on our lives - working and helping themselves? It can be done."