

THE NETWORK PROGRAM OF
EPISCOPAL SOCIAL SERVICES

A Process Evaluation

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Executive Summary

The social dislocation and loss of community that inmates feel while incarcerated often continue after release, challenging the former inmates' capacity for leading crime-free lives. Programs that bridge the gulf between incarceration and community life may displace these feelings, both inside and outside of prison, improving the likelihood of successful reintegration into society. The Network Program of the Episcopal Social Services is such a program. It currently operates in nine correctional facilities and four work-release facilities in New York, holding regular, therapeutic group meetings both in prison and in the community. Like any private organization operating in this arena, the Network Program faces obstacles that are endemic to the corrections environment. Identifying and adapting to these obstacles is an essential first step toward successfully serving the needs of the inmate population.

Episcopal Social Service commissioned this study to better understand how the Network Program has been implemented, how it may be improved, and what types of offenders it attracts. To answer these questions, researchers at the Vera Institute of Justice observed Network Program meetings in several correctional facilities and in the community, interviewed ESS and corrections staff, participated in Network Program training sessions, and reviewed program documents.

Researchers found that successful implementation of the prison-based program rested on three elements: building relationships with counselors and officers to create a sense of shared mission and an expectation of cooperation; providing corrections staff with tools and assistance to oversee the Network Program; and encouraging extended communication between corrections staff and ESS. However, these elements did not appear to influence the implementation of the community-based program. Here, the focus on reentry and the innovative strategies that distinguish the Network Program from other post-incarceration programs may ultimately be more influential in determining the work-release staff's acceptance and use of the program.

Data indicate that the prison-based program tends to attract a very particular type of offender: generally long-term, violent offenders. One possible explanation for this is that inmates facing a long period of incarceration may be seeking out the program as a way of creating an orderly and peaceful social life while in prison. The presence of long-term offenders, even if they are statistically balanced by others with relatively short periods remaining to be served, has altered the tone of the program by shifting the focus away from preparing for reentry and toward preparing for community living inside prison.

The Network Program in the community has also attracted a particular group of offenders: generally, minority drug offenders. Unlike the prison-based program, where the central goal involves creating community, the community-based program remains focused on the goal of reentry and meeting participants' tangible post-incarceration needs. The innovative inclusion of family members in these meetings has expanded the notion of an inclusive community, potentially extending the program's benefits beyond initial reentry.

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Introduction

In 1979, The New York State Department of Correctional Services created the Network Program, a therapeutic community program for inmates that emphasized personal responsibility and the importance of community living. Available in thirty minimum, medium, and maximum security facilities, the program housed participant inmates in a single living unit within each facility and coordinated daily, therapeutic group meetings for all participants. Through peer support the program sought to build self-esteem, teach conflict avoidance, and create a sense of community among the participants while in prison. Its ultimate goal was to reduce or eliminate the offenders' delinquent and criminal behavior after release from prison by establishing clear rules and emphasizing shared societal values within the prison. As one of the first therapeutic community programs in New York's correctional facilities, the Network Program was well received by prison administration and staff. However, following state budget cuts in 1990, the program was discontinued in correctional facilities and survived only in the state's Shock Incarceration Program, a six-month "boot camp" program for offenders in need of substance abuse treatment.

In 1999, Episcopal Social Services (ESS), a non-profit organization based in New York City, received permission from the commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services to reintroduce the Network Program to New York correctional facilities. Currently operating in nine facilities, the Network Program of ESS mirrors the model previously developed by DOC, with individual Network cellblocks housing between thirty and one hundred men or women and daily group meetings for participants. ESS also offers a post-incarceration component which was initiated in 1990 to serve parolees released from shock incarceration programs. The community-based Network Program currently helps work-release inmates from four facilities and parolees from the general population transition from prison to the community by administering weekly group meetings at two sites in New York City. Ideally, participants enter the Network Program years prior to release from prison and continue their association in the community-based Network Program for at least the duration of work release.

To assess its own performance and improve services, ESS asked the Vera Institute of Justice to evaluate the implementation and operation of its Network Program. Our subsequent research examined the implementation of the program in the prisons and the community, the working relationships between corrections and Network Program staffs, and the characteristics of Network Program participants. Vera researchers observed Network Program meetings in several correctional facilities and in the community, interviewed ESS and corrections staff, took part in Network Program training sessions, and reviewed program documents. In addition, we analyzed basic demographic, offense, and sentence information for participants in the Network Program in July 2001. This

report details the program's operations several years after implementation and suggests several key factors that have affected its subsequent operations.

It also discusses the prison and community components of the program in separate sections. Since each component serves a different target population and, as our findings suggest, seeks a slightly different result, it proves useful to treat them as distinct for the purposes of analysis. However, while the two components differ in several respects, a common theoretical foundation and structure unifies the entire program. The first section of the report describes this foundation and how it is incorporated into the Network structure.

The Mission and Structure of the Network Program

The Therapeutic Community Approach

The Network Program rests on the therapeutic community model of behavior modification, a group-method approach that is recognized for its effectiveness in reducing drug abuse behavior.¹ Therapeutic communities seek to build individual self-esteem and a sense of community among participants by focusing on personal responsibility for behavior and individual attempts to learn from and change that behavior. By confronting and examining its members' behavior, the group reinforces positive ways of thinking and acting consistent with those of the wider society (e.g. hard work or personal responsibility). The ultimate goals of treatment or recovery are changes in individual participants' lifestyle and identity. The basic elements of this approach can be organized into four interrelated areas: perspective, method, model, and recovery.²

Perspective. The perspective of the therapeutic community approach to behavior modification focuses on four factors: the disorder, the person, recovery, and right living. In the traditional therapeutic community designed for drug addiction, drug misuse is viewed as a disorder of the whole person, affecting cognitive, behavioral, emotional, social, and physical aspects of the participant's life. The problem to be changed is the person, not the drug use. Changing drug use or criminal behavior is a byproduct of changing the individual.

Building on this idea, traditional therapeutic communities distinguish individuals by psychological dysfunction and social deficits rather than criminal or drug use patterns. Highlighting characteristics shared by all participants allows therapeutic communities to focus on those characteristics in individuals that need changing. These may include poor tolerance for frustration, low self-esteem, or problems dealing with authorities. By clearly expressing a set of values and beliefs—such as honesty, personal and social

¹ MacKenzie, Doris Layton (2000). "Evidence-Based Corrections: Identifying What Works," *Crime and Delinquency* 46 (4): 457-471.

² De Leon, George (1995). "Therapeutic Communities for Addictions: A Theoretical Framework," *The International Journal of the Addictions* 30 (12): 1603-1645.

responsibility, and community involvement—the community approach provides individual participants with an alternative model to embrace and draw upon in altering their behavior.

Recovery, or the changes in lifestyle and identity that are the ultimate goals of treatment, usually includes investing participants with the capacity for self-help and self-motivation. Participants acquire these characteristics through social learning, or learning from and changing their behavior in a social context. Participants learn to make these changes by participating in the community in various roles. Thus, according to therapeutic community proponents, “the community is both context in which change occurs and method for facilitating change.”³

Method. Therapeutic communities are distinguished from other therapeutic programs by their reliance on the community itself as the primary method for facilitating social and psychological change in its members. The community approach involves integrating people and practices under a common perspective and is based on the assumption that affiliating with others engaged in a similar struggle can foster willingness to learn and change. As one’s peers provide the primary source of instruction and support for individual change, reacting and providing feedback to others becomes the responsibility of all participants. To fully profit from the community method, participants are expected to embrace a variety of roles: peer, friend, tutor, role model, etc. Through their interactions with each other, members offer feedback on undesirable characteristics and provide examples of how to change them. The success of this method depends on open communication. Public declarations of experiences, feelings, and thoughts are meant as therapy and are considered to have a significant impact on the recovery of the individual.

Investing the therapeutic community with structure can strengthen the approach’s effectiveness. This is done, in part, by designing regular collective tasks or interactions, including meetings or group activities. However, establishing and maintaining shared values, rules, and regulations governing behavior and sanctions for enforcing positive behavior is also useful, as individuals are thought to learn by adhering to procedures and systems, accepting and respecting supervision, and behaving as responsible members of the community.

Model. Since creating a sense of community is central to the therapeutic community method’s success, programs also focus on strengthening the perception of community among participants and staff. Usually, this includes both significantly segregating the community from the larger population in separate housing units. Often, this is further reinforced by signs posted in common areas displaying the philosophy of the program, the names of participants, or the daily agendas or components of meetings.

³ De Leon, George (1995). “Therapeutic Communities for Addictions: A Theoretical Framework,” *The International Journal of the Addictions* 30 (12): 1603-1645, at 1606.

Creating a sense of community also involves creating structure. According to proponents of therapeutic communities, a daily or weekly routine achieves several objectives including countering the generally disordered lives of participants, distracting participants from negative thinking, and providing opportunities for participants to learn time management, planning, and goal achievement.

Recovery. Recovery under the traditional therapeutic community model involves movement through a series of three program stages: introduction, primary treatment, and reentry. During the introduction stage, the objective is to quickly assess the individuals' needs and assimilate them into the community through participation in the program regimen. Once assimilation is complete and the suitability of the participant for the community is established, the main social and psychological goals of the therapeutic community—changing the individual through participation in the community—are pursued in the primary treatment stage. Progress through this stage is marked by periods of stable behavior and the achievement of pre-selected goals. Finally, during reentry, the program prepares participants for the healthy separation from the therapeutic community; this involves gradually reducing their participation in all community activities and, ultimately, cutting them off from the therapeutic community altogether. During reentry, participants begin to maintain an individual status within the larger community outside the program. Gradually, the participant deploys the tools acquired in the therapeutic community to the larger community, essentially replacing the therapeutic community with a larger community created outside.

The Network Program Structure

The Network Program addresses each of these elements through a series of group meetings that form its basic structure in both the prison and community settings: the community meeting, the four-part meeting, and the clearing meeting. While the length of these meetings can vary depending on the number of participants and the amount of interaction, the community and four-part meetings typically last about one hour each; the clearing meeting approximately forty-five minutes. These meetings, which occur on a daily basis in the prison program and on a weekly basis in the community program, comprise the program's only organized group-therapeutic interactions.

Because the Network Program is seen as group therapy involving guidance from similarly situated individuals, meetings in both settings are run by participants with minimal interference by ESS or corrections staff. However, both ESS and corrections staff are responsible for enforcing the structure of the meetings. In the community program, former Network participants from the prison and community programs oversee the meetings; in the prison program responsibility for administering the meetings is shared by counselors and correctional officers. This latter arrangement, as we discuss below, has received mixed support from corrections staff.

The Community Meeting. A community meeting occurs every time Network Program members meet as a group. These meetings focus on the members' shared characteristics and their general responsibilities to themselves and the larger community. A small group of participants lead community meetings along a prescribed format that begins with the collective reading of the Network Philosophy and comments from individuals on its personal meaning to them.⁴ The collective reading provides both the initial structure of the program and a clear expression of the values participants are expected to embrace.

Community meetings then move into two reflective segments focusing on self-reported negative and positive experiences. In the "regression" segment, participants make personal statements about self-recognized negative (regressive) behavior and request guidance from others who have had similar personal experience. After listening to the guidance offered, the person requesting assistance identifies lessons learned and ways the negative behavior might be avoided in the future. The group then comments on the strategy proposed and makes further suggestions. Through this interaction, the problem becomes something the person requesting assistance can deal with only by changing him- or herself. Thus, as in therapeutic communities designed for drug addiction, criminal behavior becomes a symptom, rather than the essence, of the participants' social or psychological disorders.

The focus on social and psychological characteristics rather than criminal behavior is reinforced in the "pull-up" section of the meeting. In this section, participants recognize recent progress achieved by themselves or other members of the group by reporting successes or positive experiences in all areas of accomplishment, including anniversaries of sobriety, success in job searches or school, or fulfillment of a personal objective. Incorporating the pull-up section allows the program to view the entire person, with both negative and positive attributes addressed and drawn on by the community.

Community meetings generally end with announcements and a "teaching" theme for the day, often a specific word chosen by the group leaders (e.g. integrity, honesty). Participants respond to the theme by communicating its personal meaning to them or discussing how they may use it in the future to change their own behavior. The meeting ends with a feedback session in which participants comment on the meeting's content and process and make suggestions for future improvements.

The community meeting's basic structure meets many of the objectives of the therapeutic community approach. The regression and pull-up sections allow the group to communicate openly, focus on shared characteristics, and articulate their community

⁴ The Network philosophy is: "Network is a positive environment for human development in a caring community where individuals can help themselves and each other. Members work together to establish and maintain growth-filled environments. Community members focus on behavioral change and confront attitudes that are destructive to individuals, the community and the life of the program. Network is a place to set goals, and to practice behaviors that lead to successful living. Network is a chance to change, to confront mistakes, and to accept responsibility for your life."

values. They also let individual participants assume a variety of roles: by admitting similar regressive behavior, members act as peers; giving feedback on how to avoid such behavior lets them become role models; in applauding the accomplishments of others, they are friends. In each of these instances, participants learn how to change their behavior by interacting with others. These objectives are reinforced in the smaller meetings that form the rest of the Network Program.

The Four-Part Meeting. Following the community meeting, participants usually break into smaller groups of ten to fifteen people for the four-part meeting. The four-part meeting allows members to focus on specific issues, achievements, and goals in a more focused, reflexive setting. ESS administrators describe this meeting as the cornerstone of the Network Program; the intimacy and continuity of the small group provide the potential for deep effects on the participants.

In the first part of this meeting each participant describes one positive act he or she is proud of having done since the last meeting; this is similar to the pull-up portion of the community meeting. In the second part, participants are encouraged to share issues, concerns, and areas of conflict with the group listening in silence. Following each participant's statement, the group offers feedback and advice that the person stating the concern may accept, respond to, or clarify. The primary objective of this portion of this second part of the meeting is to stimulate sympathetic discussion and acceptance of concerns that may not be immediately resolvable. Participation in this portion of the meeting is not mandatory if participants have no concerns to share.

In the third part of the four-part meeting, each participant tells the group one positive activity he or she would like to accomplish before the next meeting. The activity should be realistic and time-specific. For those who have shared issues and concerns, the activity generally relates to these concerns. Finally, the meeting concludes with a minute of silence intended to recall others in one's life and to contemplate personal growth and change.

Members generally stay in the same four-part meeting group throughout their participation in the Network Program. This provides continuity in the program and opportunity for members to build strong, enduring relationships with other participants. Such relationships are thought to facilitate the openness required for succeeding in the therapeutic community method and allow participants to act in a variety of roles within the group. The intimacy of the four-part meeting ensures a great deal of one-on-one interaction over a long period of time, letting participants act as tutor, role model, and friend in ways that foster the honesty and trust believed to encourage change.

The Clearing Meeting. The clearing meeting concludes the sequence of Network Program meetings by providing each participant with time to air his or her feelings without interruption or comments from others. Participants in a clearing meeting sit in a

circle; one person begins with the words, “I feel like saying...” followed by his or her feelings about any topic. Beginning this way ensures that emotions drive the comments. When the first speaker is done, he or she says “I am clear,” turns to the next person in the circle, and asks, “What do you feel like saying?” This formula is repeated until everyone has spoken. Clearing meetings draw the group together as a community by allowing the collective airing of emotion or grievance. By requiring each person to ask how another feels, they also encourage participants to be aware of the feelings of others.

Network administrators emphasize that great care should be taken over how these feelings are expressed, especially negative feelings toward others in the group. Accusatory statements are forbidden, but participants may express feelings of dislike or anger through what administrators call “I statements.” I statements address how one has been affected by another’s actions. For example, administrators instruct participants who may be angry with others in the group for being late to the meeting to avoid using phrases such as “You’re always late” or “You don’t care about anybody.” Rather, participants may say, “I was upset when you didn’t arrive on time” or “It made me feel like you did not care about the group when you didn’t arrive on time.” Whenever such negative feelings are expressed, the person they are directed toward is given a chance to respond. As administrators point out, this portion of the meeting requires strong leadership by program facilitators.

Network administrators stress that clearing meetings should not be held separately from either the community meeting or the four-part meeting. When held alone, they say, clearing meetings can become negative. Without the positive affirmations and focus on community found in the other meetings, participants may focus only on those negative aspects of others in the group. At the conclusion of a clearing meeting, program administrators encourage a short period of silence or a holding of hands to allow room for group reflection.

The Network Program as a Therapeutic Community

The meetings at the center of the Network Program adhere to three of the four axes of the therapeutic community approach. Their focus on shared social/psychological characteristics follows the approach’s perspective, which views the dysfunction behavior as a byproduct of these defining characteristics. Their reliance upon the community as therapeutic method is evidenced by the emphasis on openness, interaction, and peer support. And insofar as they seek to cultivate structural and systemic support for individual change, they conform to the model of the approach, which deploys such features to strengthen participants’ community identification.

Traditional therapeutic communities involve similar group meetings where most of the social learning and community building takes place. The content and repetition of the meetings, and the resultant routine created for the participants are intended to effect change in the individual, preparing him or her to leave the therapeutic community and

assimilate into a new, self-created community. This separation, as stated above, generally marks the recovery of the individual and the end of treatment.

It is in this last respect that the Network Program of ESS differs substantially from the traditional therapeutic community approach. Recovery in the revived Network Program, particularly in the prison component, is not marked by separation from the therapeutic community and assimilation into a larger community. Rather, in this context recovery involves cultivating the ability to live indefinitely within the therapeutic community itself. This fundamental distinction and its implications are explored in each of the sections below.

Network in the Prisons

Introduction

The Network Program of ESS currently operates in nine correctional facilities—Bedford Hills, Fishkill, Mid-Orange, Otisville, Queensboro, Sing-Sing, Sullivan, Taconic, and Woodbourne—representing 50 percent of the prisons in the New York Department of Corrections’ (DOC) lower two hubs. In six facilities (Bedford Hills, Fishkill, Mid-Orange, Otisville, Sing-Sing, and Taconic), DOC has established segregated Network units, or individual cellblocks in which all Network participants within the facility are housed. In three facilities (Queensboro, Sullivan, and Woodbourne), segregated Network units are unavailable and participants are housed with the general prison population; in these facilities, the program operates on a “call-out” basis, with Network meetings and activities taking place in education buildings or other mixed-use spaces.

Participation in the prison program is voluntary and open to all persons regardless of offense, length of sentence, time served, or time remaining before earliest release. In those facilities with Network units, space restrictions generally restrict the number of program participants; in facilities running the program on a call-out basis, every effort is made to accommodate everyone interested in participating. At any given time, the program includes roughly 350 participants across the nine facilities.⁵ The number of participants involved within each facility ranges from fourteen in Woodbourne (1.5 percent of the entire facility population) to seventy-three in Taconic (15 percent of the entire facility population).

While persons in the Network Program are understood to be participating in the program twenty-four hours per day through their interactions with other participants and staff, the organized portion of the program remains the three meetings described above (the community meeting, the four-part meeting, and the clearing meeting), which amount to approximately one hour of meetings daily. Community meetings typically occur each

⁵ Exact participant totals are difficult to determine since participants often move in and out of the program. As of July 2001, 357 offenders participated in the Network Program.

day, with the four-part meeting taking place on a weekly or semi-daily basis as time and space permit. While the Network unit is often a segregated unit, participants continue to participate in activities outside the unit, including work requirements and other programs. Thus, Network Program meetings generally occur in the late afternoon, after work and other programs are complete.

ESS employs two program coordinators to oversee the program in seven of the facilities (Bedford Hills, Fishkill, Mid-Orange, Otisville, Sullivan, Taconic, and Woodbourne). Like the staff in traditional therapeutic communities, the coordinators are self-help recovered individuals themselves: both are ex-offenders who participated in the Network Program while incarcerated. Their primary tasks involve traveling to the facilities once each week to observe the Network meetings, distribute literature about the program, and meet with corrections administrators and staff. In the two remaining facilities (Queensboro and Sing-Sing), ESS employs two additional facilitators to perform these tasks. Since the Network Program is run by its participants, with inmates coordinating and leading the meetings, all four employees observe the meetings only as advisors, to ensure that they follow ESS guidelines.

Operating a prison-based program, however, exposes any organization to obstacles that are endemic to the prison environment. Problems in areas such as staffing, scheduling, and space restrictions are particularly challenging in programs that involve changing the prison environment in any significant way. The Network Program is no exception. Recognizing and clearly identifying these obstacles was an essential first step toward ESS's developing appropriate responses, strategies, or techniques for adapting to the environment. Indeed, ESS overcame a number of implementation obstacles, successfully obtaining the cooperation of prison administrators, establishing strong working relationships with corrections staff in most facilities, and targeting and serving a particular type of offender.

Gaining Staff Support

Implementing a prison-based program administered by a private, non-profit organization requires cooperation from people in a range of positions, from state-level prison administrators to frontline correctional counselors and officers. The success of the state-run Network Program in the late-1970s, its continued vitality in the shock incarceration program, and the familiarity many administrators had with both aided high-level corrections executives in their initial reception and approval of ESS's Network Program.

Prior to its implementation, ESS gained the necessary approval of the commissioner of correctional facilities in Albany. On ESS's initiative, the commissioner contacted the superintendents of correctional facilities for the Green Haven, Sullivan, and New York City hubs who, in turn, contacted the superintendents of individual facilities within their hubs, conveying the support for ESS's administration of the program. Thus, ESS entered

each facility with a great deal of support from high-level executives through mid-level administrators.

Meetings were then set up within individual facilities, involving the superintendent, the deputy superintendents of administration, programs, and security, and the senior counselor and officer in charge of the proposed Network unit. These initial meetings allowed ESS to involve all relevant stake-holders in the implementation and to ensure wide administrative support of the program. ESS also mobilized mid-level administrators (senior counselors and officers) to aid in the program's development, while altering its approach over time in some facilities to avoid conflicts with unsupportive actors capable of blocking or undermining the program. The functioning and appearance of the program in each facility has evolved over time in response to personnel changes within the facilities and to changes in support by new administrators and staff. As a result, the program looks very different in each prison, primarily in terms of the existence of a segregated Network unit and the level of involvement of correctional officers and counselors.

Some of the initial resistance to the Network Program of ESS revolved around the segregated units. Setting up such a unit involves overcoming several administrative obstacles, including moving inmates between cellblocks. In most facilities, prison administrators designated a cellblock as a Network unit and the inmates housed in the unit at the time were given the opportunity to volunteer to be part of the Network Program. Every effort was then made to move those inmates opting out of the program to other cellblocks and to move other volunteers for the program into the unit. Since moving inmates within a facility involves administrative oversight, many officials resisted creating a segregated unit. Because of such resistance, in Queensboro, Sullivan, and Woodbourne, the program currently operates on a call-out basis.

The aspect of the Network Program's operation that stands out most prominently, however, is its ability to change the behavior and gain the cooperation of correctional counselors and officers. Prison-based program innovations usually require modifying the behavior of corrections staff whose traditional responsibility is to provide counseling and security. The Network Program requires correctional staff to play a critical role in its functions as integrated members of the therapeutic community. Professional skills such as counseling and security remain their primary function, but within the Network Program they are also asked to serve as authorities, facilitators, and guides in the community method. They are responsible for creating and maintaining a positive environment within the program by articulating clear rules to guide the community's operations and goals, by acting as role models for program participants, and by functioning as part of the team. Thus, the Network Program differs from other therapeutic programs in New York correctional facilities, such as residential ASAT programs and Stay'n Out, in assigning a primary treatment role to correctional officers and counselors, who receive extensive program training prior to staffing the Network units and administering meetings.

The strategy of developing counselor and officer “buy-in” evolved throughout the operation of the Network Program, and depended in part on the corrections staff involved and the specific operational changes needed. Still, three common elements of the strategy are apparent: building relationships with counselors and officers to create a sense of shared mission and an expectation of cooperation; providing tools and assistance that enable corrections staff to oversee the Network Program; and encouraging extended communication between ESS and corrections staff. To carry out this strategy, ESS used multiple tactics, including training sessions and regular on-site face-to-face meetings with counselors and correctional officers.

Training. To ensure that corrections staff understand the philosophy, structure, and responsibilities of the Network Program, each year for the past three years ESS has conducted a three-day training session for counselors, correctional officers, and senior prison staff (deputy superintendents, senior counselors, and senior officers). The latest training session, in June 2001, attracted twenty-five participants from eight of the nine facilities: eight counselors, four correctional officers, three senior counselors, five senior correctional officers, two deputy superintendents, and three education supervisors. The training sessions provide information about how the Network Program should function and teach corrections staff how to analyze their own learning strategies to improve the ways they administer the program. The sessions also help to establish personal relationships between corrections and ESS staffs, outline ways participants and corrections staff could benefit from the Network Program, and reinforce the expectation that the success of the program depends on the active participation of corrections staff. Many attendees credit the training for giving them a clearer understanding of the program, skills such as teaching and cooperation techniques that ensure that it runs effectively in their facility, and enthusiasm for how the Network Program could change their units for the better. Most importantly, many gleaned a sense of responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the program, which translated into increased participation and support.

Meetings. While ESS has implemented the Network Program in nine facilities, the program has not been adopted uniformly. In several facilities corrections staff required additional interaction with ESS staff and the Network Program before buying in. Through weekly meetings, ESS staff have been able to tailor their approach to individual counselors or officers based on personalities and unique structures of particular facilities. These weekly meetings and visits to the units have led to strong personal connections in most facilities that have allowed ESS to mobilize corrections staff to aid in the adaptation of the program to the different prison environments. By recognizing the unique interests and skepticism of individual corrections staff, ESS has been able to “sell” the program in a variety of ways to different facilities, emphasizing the program’s benefit in creating a

quieter housing unit in one facility or stressing the positive effects on participants in another facility. As a result, ESS has been able to garner a strong, shared sense of mission among prison staff in most facilities.

Facing Challenges in the Facilities

To gauge reaction to and perceptions of the Network Program, we interviewed four counselors and three officers currently working with the Network program or on Network units. The results suggest that the Network Program has succeeded in the challenging task of establishing positive relationships with most corrections staff. These relationships directly contribute to the operation of the program in all facilities. As our observations indicate, in those facilities in which corrections staff lack a general belief in the program or a sense of shared mission—Bedford Hills and Sullivan—the Network Program continues to struggle to hold meetings on a regular basis, maintain a structured environment for participants, or gain much enthusiasm and discipline among participants. In these facilities, ESS staff continue to employ different strategies to garner the support of corrections staff but are often met with resistance or ambivalence. In the end, the commitment of individual correctional officers and counselors largely determine the buy-in at the front line and the implementation of the program.

Several structural factors unique to each facility, however, continue to create additional obstacles to the proper functioning of the program and may be limiting corrections staff's ability to take an active role in the Network Program. For example, corrections counselors assigned to the Network Program generally oversee many other prison programs; the understaffing of counselors in some facilities, such as Bedford Hills, combined with this large workload and high staff turnover, prevents many counselors from overseeing Network meetings or even visiting the Network units on a regular basis. In other facilities, such as Mid-Orange, the scheduling of Network meetings conflicts with the work schedules of some counselors, with meetings often occurring after the counselor's work day has ended; the result has been limited participation among corrections counselors in the Network Program.

The lack of incentives for officers who work on the Network units also affects the level of corrections staff involvement in the Network Program. Under the state-run Network Program, officers received grade promotions for working on Network units; officers are no longer eligible for such promotions under the ESS-run Network Program. As a result, officers may view working on the Network unit as more work in exchange for no tangible benefit. The necessary scheduling of Network meetings at or just after shift changes in some facilities, such as Mid-Orange, also prevents trained Network officers from taking an active role in Network meetings or requires security procedures (e.g. head counts) to occur during the meetings. Finally, the overall scarcity of resources in the prison system, the lack of communication between the security and program departments of the facilities, and the limited access to prison staff by any outside

organization have been cited by correctional personnel as significant constraints on the Network Program.

Finally, problems in role definition and responsibilities exist for correctional officers. Officers are on the Network unit primarily to maintain security, yet they are asked by the Network Program to play a role in Network meetings and abide by the Network philosophy at all times. This apparent contradiction in the correctional officer's role in the prison and his or her role in the Network Program remains unresolved for several officers. However, by recognizing this apparent contradiction in roles, ESS may be able to redefine the role of the officer in the Network Program and set responsibilities for them that are also within the scope of their roles as security officers.

According to ESS coordinators, the Network Program functions as designed in only one facility, Taconic. Here, a Network trained counselor and correctional officer both play an active role in the program on a segregated Network unit. In other facilities, counselors and correctional officers assume varied levels of involvement. In Fishkill and Woodbourne, for example, counselors have no role in the Network Program; in Woodbourne, the Deputy Superintendent of Programs and the Education Supervisor oversee the program on a call-out basis. In Bedford Hills, Mid-Orange, and Woodbourne, correctional officers have no role in the program. In Mid-Orange, the Network trained officer works on the unit only during the day and is not present during Network meetings. Instead, a non-Network trained officer is assigned to the unit during Network meetings but takes no active role. Ultimately, however, as a participant-run program it is the active involvement of the participants that determines the effective implementation and adoption of the program in each facility.

Participant Characteristics

Since the Network Program operates on a voluntary enrollment basis, ESS has some influence over the recruitment of participants to the program (e.g. through providing program information to the general prison population) but limited control over the type of offenders involved at any given time. However, while the previous state-run program targeted only inmates who were nearing release, the Network Program of ESS is available to all interested inmates regardless of sentence status. The resultant diversity of participants, with both long and short prison terms to serve prior to release, distinguishes the Network Program of ESS from the earlier state-run program. The presence of long-term offenders, even if they are statistically balanced by people with relatively short periods remaining to be served, has altered the tone of the program by shifting the focus of recovery from preparing participants for reentry to preparing participants for community living inside prison.

In July 2001, most participants in the Network Program were incarcerated for violent offenses (71 percent), with 19 percent incarcerated for drug offenses and just ten percent

for property offenses (Table 1).⁶ Given this high percentage of violent offenders, Network participants have a high average imposed minimum sentence, 7.7 years. They have also spent a considerable amount of time in prison, with an average of 7.5 years served, and face an average of 1.4 years of incarceration before their earliest possible release. Network participants are also very homogeneous in their racial and ethnic background. Overall, 68 percent of Network participants are African-American, 14.5 percent are white, 14.5 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent are of other racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Table 1. Characteristics of All Correctional Facility and Network Program Populations⁷

	Facilities ⁸	Network
Population	6,025	202
Age (yrs.)	37.2	37.2
Race		
percent White	13	15
percent Black	52	68
percent Hispanic	33	15
Sentence (yrs.)		
Min. Imposed	6.3	7.7
Served	5.1	7.5
To Release	1.4	1.4
Offense		
percent Violent	51	71
percent Property	5	10
percent Drugs	42	19

These aggregate figures mask, however, the varied characteristics of participants in each facility. Since the maximum and medium security facilities in which the Network Program operates serve different types of offenders, comparisons between Network

⁶ Participant characteristics were available for only six of the nine facilities. Sing-Sing and Queensboro did not supply a list of participants. Sullivan was unable to determine the participants in the program since it operated on a call-out basis and attendance varied each week.

⁷ Sing Sing, Sullivan, and Queensboro did not provide Network participant rosters and are not included in the facility and program totals. Bedford Hills provided information only for participants entering the Network Program in July 2001; thus, the information does not represent the characteristics of all participants currently in the program.

⁸ General population characteristics for each facility were weighted by the percentage of all Network participants housed in that facility. These weighted characteristics were then summed to determine the total population characteristics over all facilities. The characteristics were weighted as follows:

$T_c = \sum_f (T_{cf} * I_f)$, where T_{cf} is the facility average for characteristic c in facility f , I_f is the percentage of all Network participants that are housed in facility f , and T_c is the weighted total for characteristic c .

participants and the general prison population at each facility provide a better indication of whether the program is serving offenders who are markedly different from the overall facility population. As Table 1a indicates, Network participants do not vary from the rest of the population in their facility in age or time to earliest release. But in several facilities they are substantially different from the general facility population in race, offense type, sentence imposed, and time served.

In the seven facilities for which we have data, roughly 52 percent of the entire prison population is African-American, compared to 68 percent in the Network Program. In only one facility, Taconic, does the racial composition of the program mirror the general population, with 53 percent of the inmates African-American. Elsewhere, the differences are dramatic. For example, in Mid-Orange, 91 percent of Network participants are African-American compared to just 55 percent of the entire facility population. In Woodbourne, 100 percent of Network participants are African-American compared to just 49 percent of the facility's general population.

Network participants in Mid-Orange and Otisville are similar to the overall prison populations in the type of offense for which they were incarcerated. However, dramatic differences exist in the other facilities. For example, in Taconic 47 percent of Network participants are incarcerated for violent offenses, compared to just 13 percent of the overall prison population. In Fishkill, 88 percent of Network participants are incarcerated for violent offenses, while roughly 69 percent of the facility population is incarcerated for violent offenses. Finally, in Woodbourne, 100 percent of Network participants are incarcerated for violent offenses, compared to 79 percent of the entire prison population.

Network participants also have imposed sentences and time served in prison that are longer than those of the overall prison population. Compared to inmates in the general population, who have imposed minimum sentences of roughly 6.3 years, Network participants have sentences of 7.7 years, a difference of 1.4 years. The average imposed sentences of participants in Fishkill, Otisville, and Taconic are more than 1.5 years longer than average sentences in the facilities' general populations. In Otisville, Network participants' average imposed sentences are 2.12 years longer than the facility average.

Given these longer sentences, Network participants also have served more time in prison. While inmates in the general population in the seven facilities have average time served of roughly 5.1 years, Network participants have served an average of 7.5 years, or 2.4 years more than the general population. In Fishkill and Taconic, Network participants have served an average of 2.8 years longer than the rest of the facility population. In Otisville, Network participants have served an average of 2.9 years more than the rest of the facility population.

Table 1a. Characteristics of Correctional Facility and Network Program Populations⁹

	Bedford Hills ¹⁰		Fishkill		Mid-Orange	
	Facility	Network	Facility	Network	Facility	Network
Population	845	15	2,236	49	737	23
Age (yrs.)	35.2	31.5	36.5	38	38.5	34
Race						
percent White	20	33	12	9	14	4
percent Black	54	53	53	67	55	91
percent Hisp.	24	13	33	15	29	4
Sentence (yrs.)						
Min. Imposed	8.5	7.6	7.8	9.5	8.0	7.7
Served	2.9	1.8	5.6	8.8	8.0	8.5
To Release	4.7	6.5	1.8	1.8	1.2	1.3
Offense						
percent Viol.	54	80	69	88	81	83
percent Prop.	8	13	4	4	6	9
percent Drugs	30	7	22	8	12	8

	Otisville		Taconic		Woodbourne	
	Facility	Network	Facility	Network	Facility	Network
Population	760	28	473	73	974	14
Age (yrs.)	38.3	38.8	36.6	36.5	38.7	36.5
Race						
percent White	13	11	13	26	16	0
percent Black	53	75	52	53	49	100
percent Hisp.	32	14	35	21	33	0
Sentence (yrs.)						
Min. Imposed	8.3	10.4	3.4	5.1	9.4	8.9
Served	8.3	11.2	1.7	4.6	7.8	9.1
To Release	1.1	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.9	1.9
Offense						
percent Viol.	83	82	13	47	79	100
percent Prop.	1	11	8	15	2	0
percent Drugs	12	7	74	38	16	0

As a voluntary program, inmates themselves have some control over the demographic composition of the program through self-selection and attrition. As these figures indicate, in several facilities, the program has attracted a very particular type of offender: generally the long-term, violent offender. One possible explanation for this is that offenders facing a long time in prison may be seeking out the program as a way of creating an orderly, peaceful, social life for themselves during that time. If so, this signifies a shift in the

⁹ Sing Sing, Sullivan, and Queensboro did not provide Network participant rosters and are not included in the table.

¹⁰ Bedford Hills provided information on participants entering the Network Program in July 2001; thus, the information does not represent the characteristics of all participants currently in the program.

program's focus in these facilities from preparing inmates for reentry to preparing them for prison life.

Building Community among Participants

Participation in the state-administered Network Program was limited to inmates who were "short to the Board," or nearing parole board review. This restriction reflected the program's primary focus on preparing inmates for release. Under ESS, the program functions at all levels of prison security and includes inmates with both short and long terms remaining prior to their initial meetings with the parole board. In some cases, participants may be serving up to twenty years in prison. ESS maintains that it is important for these long-term participants to see the prison community as a place for growth. This emphasis reflects a shift in focus away from preparing inmates for release and toward creating a community inside the prison that has a relatively stable core of members, maintains some continuity over time, and can provide a desirable life in itself. It is unclear how much of this change is attributable to conscious decisions made by ESS to restructure the program. Since volunteer participants entirely manage the content of the program, the shift in focus may reflect the desire of long-term inmates to construct an orderly environment within the prison and to fill it with similarly situated like-minded individuals.

As ESS coordinators note, the challenges of prison life are in many ways comparable to the challenges of life in general. Inside prison, there are experiences of discrimination, confrontation, and pressure just as there are outside prison. While the Network Program may not entirely eliminate these challenges, it may ameliorate them by improving the capacity of inmates to react to them responsibly. Through participation in the Network Program participants can build a social life with like-minded inmates, a process that may ultimately affect their ability to cope with prison life. This involves building a support system in which participants encourage each other in subtle and direct ways. Moreover, as inmates characteristically have minimal social interaction with each other, the Network Program, particularly in segregated housing units, may provide a place where inmates can gain a sense of social connection and, ultimately, improve socialization skills. While ESS coordinators may not explicitly promote this development of community as an ultimate goal in itself, they may have indirectly abetted it by presenting the Network Program as a way of life rather than a series of daily meetings. The construction of the program as a segregated housing unit promotes this. Since participants live and interact primarily with other Network participants, the program has the opportunity to create a closed, controlled community within the prison in which participants can develop.

Not only does this shift signify a change in program focus, but it also represents a significant departure from the therapeutic community model. Generally, therapeutic community programs seek to move participants through a series of stages of recovery which, once completed, mark the completion of the program. Under this approach, the

community is a context and method of recovery; the ultimate goal is the participants' reentry into society. While the Network Program of ESS initially focused on preparing participants for release from prison or managing parole after release, in the prison-based program, at least, the ultimate goal has become the creation of community.

A complete evaluation of the impact of the Network Program on participants was not a focus of this evaluation, but several anecdotal factors indicate that this evolved priority may be having desirable effects. For example, participants have initiated innovations within their facilities that include the creation of group leaders, Network liaisons, and participant-maintained daily attendance and participation sheets to ensure all participants are included in daily meetings. These developments suggest that Network participants have adopted the program's philosophy and values. Correctional officers also report that, compared to non-Network units, Network units generally involve fewer disciplinary infractions, more cooperation between staff and inmates, and better attitudes among inmates.

Prison staff in several facilities report that inmates continue to ask to be relocated into Network units, indicating a strong interest in the program among the facilities' general population. However, space and scheduling restrictions within some facilities have continued to limit the growth of the program and inhibit the sense of community among participants. The lack of adequate or permanent meeting space within some facilities has contributed to short meetings or the elimination of certain portions of the Network curriculum. In Bedford Hills, for example, the community meeting is the only part of the Network curriculum that occurs on a daily basis, due to time constraints; the four-part and clearing meetings occur weekly rather than daily. In Sullivan, Network meetings occur only once each week, on days when ESS program coordinators are present.

The larger problem of prison crowding has led to the lack of housing space for segregated Network units within some facilities and may compromise the program's effectiveness. The presence of non-participants in an otherwise segregated Network unit in Bedford Hills may result in a significant reduction in the program's ability to build a community among those who are participating. In other facilities, such as Sullivan and Woodbourne, Network participants are dispersed throughout several different housing units. As a result, prolonged social interaction among participants is often limited and the maintenance of a coherent, unified set of norms can be disrupted. Scheduling conflicts with other inmate programs (e.g. ASAT or CASAT) or participant work requirements similarly limit the ability of Network to build a sustained community or a routine meeting schedule.

Recognizing Future Challenges

While the Network Program has enrolled a very specific offender group and created strong relationships with corrections staff in several facilities, a number of internal challenges continue to impact its operation in the prisons. Unlike many of the staffing

and space problems listed above, internal challenges are within ESS's control and may involve simple solutions to remedy. First, unclear role definitions and assignment of program responsibilities among program administrators may compromise prison staff involvement and inhibit the proper functioning of the program in some facilities. For example, the roles and responsibilities of counselors and corrections officers have been defined solely to include attending Network meetings to ensure that they are run according to program guidelines. This may limit the involvement of prison staff who are reluctant to interfere with responsibilities they see as ESS's, or who may be unaware of responsibilities that they could take on outside of their normal job description. By better defining the roles and responsibilities of correctional staff, ESS may motivate them to take on additional responsibilities. The counselor's role, for example, may be extended to tutoring participants on the philosophy of Network, counseling them on life skills questions they may encounter during Network meetings, taking an active role in developing strategies to build a community within the Network Program, or acting as a conduit for participants to communicate with Network Program directors.

Difficulties in defining roles have also contributed to problems in dividing responsibilities among ESS coordinators and prison staff, particularly in the supervision of Network meetings. ESS, counselors, and officers remain unsure of who is ultimately responsible for ensuring inmate attendance or participation at meetings. Similar difficulties arise in sanctioning. ESS has avoided imposing sanctions on participants because of the potential bureaucratic problems this may cause within the prison (e.g. the paper work involved in moving an inmate off of a Network unit) and the resultant negative reflection this may have on the program. Officers have similarly neglected to impose sanctions in some facilities because they are either not trained in the Network Program or are unsure if their responsibilities include sanctioning program offenders.

Finally, tracking participants and reporting progress within the facilities have proven difficult from the inception of the Network Program. With nearly 350 participants in nine facilities, the movement of participants in and out of the program often occurs without ESS's knowledge. This likely is because there is no mechanism within the prison system for reporting such information to outside organizations. As it is not an agency of the state government, ESS lacks the authority to monitor inmate movement within the prison and must rely on program-created lines of communication between the relevant parties involved in the Network Program. Thus, maintaining corrections staff support and buy-in is essential to tracking the movement of participants through the program and monitoring or evaluating their success upon completion.

Reports detailing the progress and problems of the Network Program within each facility can be of great benefit in many of these areas. Initially, ESS coordinators filed detailed weekly reports for each facility. These early reports provided information on positive developments with participants or staff, issues raised in Network meetings, interactions with corrections staff, and specific suggestions from ESS staff for improving

the program in each facility. Such reports can provide a valuable resource for internally evaluating the success of the program, critically reviewing past practices, and developing strategies for adapting the program to meet new constraints.

Conclusion

Though the Network Program faced several initial obstacles, ESS has successfully implemented the program in nine facilities, primarily by establishing strong working relationships with corrections staff. As a result, the program has been able to reach and attract a particular type of offender, the long-term violent offender with significant time served. A very simple explanation for this may be that, as a segregated unit, the Network Program provides a stable, quiet life for those who know they will be incarcerated for a long time. Thus, the evolved Network Program's goal of creating continued, positive socialization experiences and a strong sense of community within the prison environment appears to have taken hold, serving a population who can greatly benefit from the service.

Network in the Community

Introduction

The community-based portion of ESS's Network Program involves parolees from the general prison population and offenders from four work-release facilities in the New York City Hub—Bayview, Fulton, Lincoln, and Queensboro. Unlike offenders in the prison-based program, Network participants in the community program are not housed in segregated Network units within work-release facilities and do not participate in the program there. Rather, they are required to attend one meeting each week at either of two churches in New York City, on either Monday nights in Brooklyn or Thursday nights in Manhattan. Participants meet as a group for approximately three hours, conducting all three Network meetings—the community meeting, the four-part meeting, and the clearing meeting—as time permits. As participants generally have other work-release activities during the day, including work requirements and other programs, the meetings take place in the evening, from 6:45 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., and form the only organized part of the Network Program's community-based operation.

Participation in the community program is voluntary for parolees and mandatory for work-release inmates. However, not all persons from a particular work-release facility are required to attend the Network Program. Facilities select individuals to attend either randomly or based on their assessment of the particular offender's needs. For example, all the work-release inmates received at a particular facility at a certain time might be assigned to the program to ensure that a range of individuals with varied offense types and time served, participate in the program. Counselors at each work-release facility may also assign an individual to the program based on an assessment of the potential benefits he or she may receive, such as improved socialization skills or a supportive peer community.

The number of participants in the Network Program fluctuates with the size and composition of the work-release population. ESS administrators stated that the program has included up to sixty participants at once, across all four facilities. Roughly 90 percent of these participants attend the Thursday meetings; ten percent attend the meetings on Monday. In July 2001, the number of participants averaged thirty-seven per week,¹¹ with eight participants attending from Bayview, fourteen from Lincoln, fifteen from Fulton, and none from Queensboro. The percent of work-release inmates involved in the program from each facility ranged from 3 percent of the facility population in Bayview to 6 percent of the Fulton population. Network administrators hoped to have more participants released from prison-based Network Units attend the community program; however, since ESS plays no part in the selection process for its community-based project, few

¹¹ The number of participants attending each meeting fluctuated throughout the month.

individuals who lived in a Network Unit in prison are assigned to the community program in work release.

Persons assigned to the Network Program are expected to attend meetings for the remainder of their work-release term. In some cases, this amounts to approximately six months of meetings. During this time, ESS offers assistance in finding jobs and housing to those nearing or currently on parole. ESS administrators require participants to take part in every Network meeting by volunteering concerns or personal guidance to others in the group. Refusal to do so can result in sanctions, including periods of confinement to the work-release facility or removal from jobs or housing obtained through the Network Program.

The same two ESS coordinators who oversee the prison-based program supervise the community-based program. Their primary tasks here involve organizing the weekly Network meetings and ensuring that participants attend and actively participate. Five additional, part-time Network facilitators assist in administering the Thursday meetings. Like the ESS coordinators, most are former Network participants from either the prison or community programs. ESS recruits facilitators primarily from the pool of former Network participants because, compared to other people, former participants are thought to have a greater commitment to the program and its participants. Those who are not Network alumni have included former counselors and social workers. Facilitators receive no formal training, but are trained by other Network facilitators in the course of administering meetings. Even though the Network Program is fundamentally a participant-run program, ESS facilitators play an active role in the community-based program, taking part in community meetings and leading the small group discussions of the four-part meetings.

In implementing the community-based program ESS faced many of the same obstacles it encountered in developing the prison-based program. It had to gain the cooperation of corrections administrators and establish relationships with corrections staff at each facility before counselors would begin sending participants to the program. However, unlike the prison-based Network Program, the strength of these relationships does not appear to determine the interest or acceptance of the program by work-release facility staff. The community-based program's focus on reentry and the development of innovative strategies to assist participants in transitioning from the Network community to the larger community distinguish the Network Program from other post-incarceration programs and may ultimately be more influential in determining the work-release staff's buy-in to the program.

Gaining Staff Support

ESS founded the community-based Network Program in 1990. Under a contract with the New York State Department of Parole, the program served parolees released from shock incarceration into the Edgecombe work-release facility. Following budget cuts in 1995,

the Department of Parole terminated the contract with ESS and discontinued the Network Program. In cooperation with the Department of Correctional Services, ESS revived the Network Program in the community in 1997 to target both parolees from the general population and work-release inmates.

As with the prison-based program, the continued popularity of the original Network Program in shock incarceration facilities and the familiarity many administrators had with it aided in the initial reception and approval of ESS's community-based Network Program. Gaining support for and implementing the program within each work-release facility required a series of meetings similar to those conducted in implementing the prison-based program. These efforts focused on gaining deputy superintendent and counselor support since these groups would ultimately place participants in the program. ESS conducted training sessions and on-site face-to-face meetings with deputies and counselors to build relationships, create a sense of shared mission and cooperation, and familiarize staff with the functioning and goals of the program. However, ESS coordinators encountered results in the work-release facilities that are quite different from those encountered in the prisons: they achieved staff buy-in and built participation in the program without extended training and continuous on-site meetings.

Training. Like prison staff, staff from the four participating work-release facilities attended the annual three-day training sessions conducted by ESS. The latest training session, in June 2001, involved four participants from two of the four facilities: two counselors from Queensboro and one correctional officer and one counselor from Bayview. While these sessions disseminate the same information to both prison and work-release staff, to the latter group ESS coordinators emphasize the potential post-incarcerative benefits for participants, such as job and housing assistance and peer support. Work-release staff attending the latest training said the sessions clearly demonstrated how participants could benefit from the program during and after work release and helped reinforce personal relationships with ESS staff. One work-release counselor attending the training noted that clear articulation of program benefits led to an increase in referrals from her facility.

However, the fact that staff from two work-release facilities chose not to attend the session suggests a distance between some work-release staff and the program that does not exist among prison personnel. Unlike corrections staff in the prison-based program, who are asked to interact with the Network Program on a daily basis, work-release counselors have no opportunity to take part in the program in their facilities. And even though ESS encourages counselors to attend and observe the community-based Network meetings on a regular basis, few have done so. As a result, work-release staff may not see the need to receive Network training on a regular basis. Administrators from Fulton, for example, said staff did not attend the most recent training because they had received

Network training in the past and, thus, were familiar enough with its functioning and potential benefits.

Yet this personal disconnect between counselors and Network staff does not translate into fewer referrals to the program. Counselors from Lincoln and Fulton did not attend the training sessions in June 2001, yet these two facilities had the highest number of referrals to the community program in July 2001, sending fourteen and fifteen participants, respectively, each week. Thus, in the work-release setting, staff buy-in may depend less on interactions with ESS staff or active participation in the program by work-release staff and more on an understanding of the program's benefits to Network participants.

Meetings. Although the Network Program has participants from four work-release facilities, interest in the program among work-release staff, as indicated by the number of participants sent to the program each week, has not been uniform. But this disparity does not seem tied to the frequency of meetings between ESS and work-release staffs, as it is in the Network's prison-based operations.

During the early stages of the community-based program's implementation, ESS coordinators visited work-release facilities on a regular basis, underscoring the benefits of the Network Program and encouraging additional participants. The effort yielded near equal participation across the facilities. Eventually, however, ESS facilitators took over the task of meeting with work-release staff. An ESS facilitator still visits Fulton each week to speak to counselors and Network participants, but there are no longer regular visits to the other facilities.

The fact that Fulton, which ESS facilitators continue to visit regularly, and Lincoln, where facilitator visits have stopped, continue to send nearly the same number of participants each week suggests that staff buy-in in the work-release setting depends less on frequent contact with ESS staff and more on counselors' understanding of the program's benefits for Network participants. As one counselor noted, she sends participants to the Network Program primarily because of the peer support and direct services they receive during the meetings, rather than because of any personal sense of shared mission she feels toward the program or its staff.

ESS has also tried to include more parolees in the community-based program by reaching out to parole officers. In Spring 2001, ESS coordinators met with the parole chief in Brooklyn to discuss the benefits of the Network Program and to gain administrative support for referrals. In the past, mandatory drug treatment programs were an obstacle to receiving parolees in the Network Program, as parole officers were reluctant to assign two mandatory programs at once. According to ESS staff, the chief agreed to support officers who send particular offenders to the Network Program over drug treatment when they felt the Network would be more beneficial. ESS coordinators said this has resulted in just one referral since December 2001. But given the recent timing of the attempt to recruit parolees, it is too early to assess these efforts.

Participant Characteristics

Because each work-release facility independently assigns persons to the Network Program, ESS has limited influence over the type of offenders involved in the program at any given time. Moreover, the program initially served only work-release inmates from shock incarceration; it now targets all work-release inmates and general population parolees regardless of crime committed, previous Network involvement, or previous level of incarceration. Nonetheless, participants in the program are a very homogenous group.

Most participants attending the program in July 2001 had been incarcerated for drug offenses (89 percent), with 11 percent of participants incarcerated for property offenses (Table 2); this ratio is very similar to the offense breakdown for work-release participants in general. Despite the high percentage of drug offenders, Network participants had lengthy average minimum imposed sentences, 3.5 years, and had spent a considerable amount of time in prison before entering work release, an average of 2.1 years. The average age of participants is 37.1 years. Network participants are also very homogenous

Table 2. Characteristics of All Work-release Facility and Network Program Populations¹²

	Facilities ¹³	Network
Population	1,061	37
Age (yrs.)	35.0	37.1
Race		
percent White	6	6
percent Black	46	67
percent Hispanic	47	27
Sentence (yrs.)		
Min. Imposed	3.1	3.5
Served	2.1	2.1
To Release	0.7	0.9
Offense		
percent Violent	6	0
percent Property	7	11
percent Drugs	84	89

in racial/ethnic background. Overall, 67 percent of Network participants are African-American, 27 percent are Hispanic, and just 6 percent are white.

¹² Queensboro did not send any Network participants to the community program in July 2001 and is not included in the calculations.

¹³ General population characteristics for each facility were weighted by the percentage of all Network participants housed in that facility. These weighted characteristics were then summed to determine the total population characteristics over all facilities. The characteristics were weighted as follows:

$T_c = \sum_f (T_{cf} * I_f)$, where T_{cf} is the facility average for characteristic c in facility f , I_f is the percentage of all Network participants that are housed in facility f , and T_c is the weighted total for characteristic c .

As with the prison participants, aggregate figures hide variations in participant characteristics within each facility. Comparisons between Network participants and the general population at each work-release facility provide a better indication of whether the Network Program is serving a group of offenders who are different from the overall work-release population.¹⁴ As Table 2a indicates, Network participants do not vary significantly from the rest of the work-release population in age; they do differ, however, in race, offense type, sentence imposed, and time served. Yet given the small sample of Network participants available from each facility, it is not clear if the program is serving a population very different than the general population in each facility. In the four work-release facilities where Network participants are housed, roughly 93 percent of the overall work-release population is minorities, compared to 94 percent of those in the Network Program. However, the composition of the minority populations in the facilities and the program is not the same. Forty-six percent of the overall work-release population is African-American and 47 percent is Hispanic, compared to 67 percent and 27 percent, respectively, in the Network Program. Thus, while the Network

Table 2a. Characteristics of Work-release Facility and Network Program Populations¹⁵

	Bayview		Fulton		Lincoln	
	Facility	Network	Facility	Network	Facility	Network
Population	264	8	232	15	376	14
Age (yrs.)	37.6	38.3	34.5	36.9	34.2	36.7
Race						
percent White	8	0	1	0	10	15
percent Black	55	88	38	60	51	62
percent Hisp.	37	12	60	40	39	23
Sentence (yrs.)						
Min. Imposed	2.8	3.5	2.9	3.3	3.4	3.6
Served	1.8	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.2
To Release	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.8
Offense						
percent Viol.	3	0	6	0	9	0
percent Prop.	9	0	6	0	7	29
percent Drugs	86	100	88	100	82	71

Program mirrors the work-release population in terms of its predominantly minority population, the program’s population has a greater proportion of African Americans. The difference is even more dramatic in the individual facilities. For example, in Bayview, 88

¹⁴ The “overall work-release population” includes only persons in the four work-release facilities from which the Network Program draws participants – Bayview, Fulton, Lincoln, and Queensboro.

¹⁵ Queensboro did not send any Network participants to the community program in July 2001 and is not included in the table.

percent of Network participants are African-American compared to just 55 percent of the entire facility population. In Fulton, 60 percent of Network participants are African-American compared to just 38 percent of the facility population.

Network participants also differ from the individual facility populations in the type of offense for which they were incarcerated. Across the four facilities, 89 percent of Network participants had been incarcerated for drug offenses, compared to 84 percent of the overall work-release population. But this similarity masks distinctions within each facility. For example, in Bayview and Fulton, 100 percent of Network participants were incarcerated for drug offenses, compared to roughly 87 percent of the overall population in each facility. In contrast, in Lincoln, 71 percent of Network participants were incarcerated for drug offenses, compared to 82 percent of the facility population; similarly, in Lincoln, 29 percent of Network participants were incarcerated for property offenses, compared just 7 percent of the facility population.

Network participants' imposed minimum sentences and time served in prison are also slightly higher than those of the overall work-release population. Compared to inmates in the four facilities, who have imposed sentences of roughly 3.1 years, Network participants average 3.5 years, a difference of only 5 months. Yet given the lengths of sentences, Network participants' sentences are actually 12 percent longer than the overall population. In Bayview, Network participants' average imposed sentences are more than 8 months, or nearly 25 percent, longer than the average sentences of the general population in that facility.

Overall, Network participants have not served longer periods of time in prison than the general work-release population, with both groups serving an average of 2.1 years. In Fulton, Network participants have served roughly 1 month more than the general facility population; in Lincoln they have served roughly 1 month less. However, in Bayview, Network participants have served an average of 5 months, or nearly 22 percent, more than the facility's general population.

Focusing on Reentry

Unlike the prison-based program, the community-based Network Program adheres closely to the traditional therapeutic community model that views recovery as reentry into the larger community. ESS coordinators maintain that they would like participants to continue in the program (and, hence, in the community) even after completing work release and parole, but they focus their efforts on preparing participants for separation from the Network community and successful transition into a self-created community. Their strategy has two apparent elements: providing participants with clear examples and tools for successful reentry and integrating the larger community with the Network community prior to the participant's complete separation from the Network Program. In applying these elements ESS employs several tactics. These include using former

Network participants as credible role models, providing direct services to participants, and incorporating participants' family members into weekly Network meetings.

Network-graduated facilitators offer participants credible role models for change and examples of successful reentry into the larger community. ESS strives to recruit facilitators from current participants in the community program who, once trained, are given an active role in the weekly meetings. As such, facilitators in the community-based program are more involved in Network meetings than ESS coordinators in the prison-based program and provide participants with a ready source of information concerning reentry. For example, facilitators greet participants when they arrive at the meetings, share “regressions” and “pull-ups” during the community meetings, and lead the small group discussions during the four-part meeting for the same group each week. Through these facilitators, participants are routinely reminded that successful reentry is possible and given advice on how that reentry may be achieved.

Most therapeutic community programs employ self-help recovered individuals; however, ESS coordinators maintain that such individuals are especially critical to the potential success of the Network Program. As ESS coordinators note, the transition from incarceration to the larger community poses many dilemmas that are not encountered in reentry after general therapeutic community programs. For example, inmates are typically separated from the larger community longer and often face more isolation and violence while incarcerated than participants in most therapeutic community programs. As a result, when participants prepare to leave the Network community and return to the larger community they must deal not only with changes in themselves, but also with radical changes in their environment. One work-release counselor said that rather than send an offender to Narcotics Anonymous (NA), which involves many people who have never been incarcerated, she assigns him or her to the Network Program, where former inmates can talk about their problems with similarly situated individuals who have either just started dealing with such problems or have successfully confronted them after reentry.

ESS also offers direct services to help participants live in the larger community. Many participants enter the program with little or no experience in finding a job, preparing for job interviews, or securing suitable housing. Moreover, they note, they must also overcome prejudices against former inmates in hiring and housing decisions. By partnering with other organizations, ESS offers assistance in constructing resumes and preparing for job interviews; it also provides direct aid in finding jobs, places to live, and medical insurance. While the number of employment and housing placements by ESS remains small, coordinators hope to increase these services in the future. Learning to live in the larger community, they note, is only part of successful reentry. Without stable lives—including stable jobs, housing, and families—participants will likely not adjust to the separation from the therapeutic community and, as a result, revert to prior negative behavior.

Providing direct employment and housing services adds a new type of assistance for therapeutic community participants. But the aspect of the Network Program's approach to reentry that stands out most prominently is its desire to expand the notion of the therapeutic community itself. ESS encourages participants' families to attend Network meetings and seeks to use these family members as resources in the reentry process. In this way, the Network Program creates a new integrated community that differs significantly from the general therapeutic community model.

Since a sense of community is central to the success of the therapeutic community method, most programs separate their participants from the larger population in order to create and maintain their own sets of shared values, rules, and regulations. They also assume that affiliating with others engaged in a similar struggle is the primary way to foster willingness to learn and change. By including family members in the weekly meetings, the Network Program creates the possibility for the program's values to be shared by the people who will form the core of the participant's larger community after reentry. More importantly, it allows family members to engage in the participant's struggle to change, which may help foster the willingness to change by minimizing the isolation many individuals feel during reentry.

Indeed, in traditional therapeutic communities the reentry process is intended to prepare the participant for the healthy separation from the therapeutic community. Gradually, the participant will deploy the tools acquired in the therapeutic community to the larger community; over time, replacing the former with the latter. By including family members in the weekly meetings, ESS brings an important core of this larger community into the therapeutic community, thereby ensuring a less drastic transition between the two. The inclusion of family members also provides participants' families insight into how they may assist participants in reentry. As the success of the therapeutic community method depends to a large extent on the openness of communication fostered among participants, including family members may be beneficial insofar as it encourages participants and their families to develop open communication and continue using it in their everyday interactions.

Recognizing Future Challenges

While the community-based Network Program has maintained a consistent level of continued participation, it faces two ongoing challenges: competition with other programs for participants' limited time and monitoring inmate participation.

Most individuals in work release have a limited amount of time each day that they may spend outside the facility. As a result, the Network Program often loses participants to employment opportunities or other mandatory programs. As Network participants find jobs, they have less available time and are often required to attend fewer meetings. Similarly, participants enrolled in mandatory drug treatment tend not to be required to attend Network meetings even when they express an interest in doing so. Given the

mandatory nature of the drug treatment and the limited time available to offenders, work-release counselors cannot send many potential participants to the Network Program. These limitations prevent the program from developing a consistent base of attendees; some participants attend meetings every week, others attend only sporadically.

Tracking participants has proven difficult since the inception of the community-based Network Program, just as it has in the prison-based program. Because participation in the community program is mandatory for work-release inmates, ESS staff take attendance as participants enter the weekly meetings. The attendance records are to be checked against lists of participants required to attend, supplied each week by each of the work-release facilities. But not all of the facilities submit these lists. For example, while Fulton consistently sends a list of participants every week, the other facilities send such a list approximately every three months. Some facilities have failed to send a list of participants for over a year. Moreover, the lists that are supplied are frequently incorrect. The names of participants who have not attended meetings in months continue to appear long after their absence has been reported to the facilities. According to one ESS staff member, coordinators often have no clear idea of who is supposed to attend the meetings. Not only does this prevent ESS from monitoring individual participation and progress in the program, but it also hinders its ability to gauge overall demand and services needed for administering the program. This problem, like the similar problem encountered by the prison-based program, may result from the correctional system's lack of mechanisms for reporting such information to outside organizations. As a non-state run program, ESS has no authority to demand weekly attendance sheets and must rely on communication with individual facilities.

Improved communication between ESS coordinators and facility staff could yield benefits in both of these problem areas. ESS staff indicate that there is currently little correspondence with the facilities regarding attendance records or absences from the meetings. The program has sustained momentum without regular face-to-face meetings with work-release staff, but such meetings may be necessary in order to monitor the program. Weekly reports, similar to those filed during implementation of the prison-based program, could prove to be a valuable internal resource for evaluating the program's success, critically reviewing its past practices, and developing new strategies for adding services or attracting new participants.

Conclusion

Though the Network Program continues to face several obstacles in its community-based operation, it has been successfully implemented in four facilities and serves a fairly stable number of participants each week. The program has been able to reach a particular group of offenders—minority drug offenders—and is structured to directly serve their needs. Unlike the prison-based program, where the central goal involves creating community, the community-based Network Program remains focused on the goal of reentry and the

participant's eventual separation from the therapeutic community. However, by including family members in program meetings, ESS has expanded the notion of an inclusive community. This expansion has the potential to extend the program's impact by developing capacities for sustained open communication between participants and their families in their everyday interactions well beyond initial reentry.