

IMPACT EVALUATION - VOLUME II

SUPPORTED WORK: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A
TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT ENTERPRISE

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FOREWORD

This study evaluates one program component funded under the "Special Impact-Corrections" grant (June, 1975 through May, 1976). Impact monies were targeted at MCI-Concord commitments providing for a variety of programs and services both unique and complementary to existing capabilities. The scope of these programs ranged from those serving the actual institutionalized Concord population, to street-based strategies. Briefly, these were:

1. New Line: a classification capability aimed at court commitments to MCI-Concord.
2. Lancaster: a pre-release/minimum security facility for returns to the Worcester area.
3. Pre-Release Training: training designed to reduce program non-completions at community-based facilities.
4. C.A.R.V.E.: employment project at the Fernald State School for the mentally retarded.
5. Supported Work: training and community work experience for pre-release clients and parolees.
6. Release Support: tri-phased program to facilitate transition for individuals released directly to the street.
7. Purchase of Services: funds for requests in such areas as education, medical costs, and vocational training.

Each of these components is analyzed in a separate study, since they differ in type of population served and objectives addressed. Hence, variables collected for each and desirable outcome measures will also differ. Each volume of the Impact studies should be incorporated as a segment of a comprehensive assessment of the Impact program.

The present study is an evaluation of the Supported Work component of the Impact grant.

ABSTRACT

As a portion of a comprehensive evaluation of the program components of the Special Impact - Corrections grant (June, 1975 to May, 1976), the implementation of Supported Work during that year was studied. Based on a model developed by the Vera Institute in New York, Supported Work was conceptualized as a transitional employment enterprise, designed to equip the marginally employable offender or ex-offender with the skills and attitudes requisite for employment in the community. The vehicle to achieve this was the operation of self-supporting business ventures, which served the dual purpose of training clients and actually enabling them to work for wages. The effort was subcontracted on a "purchase of slots" basis, slated primarily for residents of a community-based facility and parolees. This study concerns the experience of program participation of Supported Work clients who were referred via the Impact mechanism.

Four enterprises served as training sites for correctional clients. The endeavors provided experience in either paint deleading, building repair and maintenance, or graphic arts. A total of 53 individuals participated. Of those who terminated from the program in some manner (36), eight (22.2 percent) were positive terminations (resulting from finding another job or pursuing education); 17 (47.2 percent) were negative terminations (the employee was fired, rearrested, or returned to higher custody); and eleven (30.6 percent) were neutral terminations (individuals who moved, or who resigned due to health factors, or dissatisfaction with the program).

Clients were found to be registered as program participants for a relatively short time; 41.7 percent were employed for one month or less, whereas 25 percent remained for five months or longer. Given the number and length of suspensions evidenced, however (36.1 percent had been suspended at least once), length of program participation was readjusted to reflect these periods. The result indicated that actually, 47.2 percent of all terminated clients had actively participated in Supported Work for one month or less. Even when all clients were included in these calculations, over thirty percent were program participants for this period of time. Individuals employed for longer than five months constituted only 35.9 percent of the sample.

Implications of the findings in terms of program objectives were discussed. In view of the few number of individuals serviced, the rate of negative terminations from the program, and the short length of actual participation (as compared to concept parameters, which specified six months to one year as necessary to attain maximum program benefit), no definitive conclusions are drawn regarding either short-term or long-range program impact.

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SUPPORTED WORK

Introduction

An often-cited body of criminological theory assumes a socio-economic perspective. Essentially, it is argued that the motivation for an individual to engage in illegitimate activity stems from a lack of marketable skills and poor work habits, compounded by inaccessibility of opportunities to develop and utilize these skills. These two factors are interactive, and may result in an infusion of attitudes and behaviors antithetical to securing and maintaining a job. The experience of incarceration tends to exacerbate this condition by adding the stigma of "ex-offender", a label which can further impede the individual from finding a legitimate job. Imprisonment itself constitutes a significant period of unemployment, during which time job training may not occur and work-readiness may not be reached.

Two traditional responses have emerged to address this situation. Both sheltered workshops and work-release programs are designed to equip correctional residents with skills and attitudes requisite for employability. Supported Work diverged from these strategies in a number of ways. In lieu of establishing a simulated work environment, the project operated actual self-supporting businesses, the profits from which would be reinvested in each enterprise. Corollary to this, applicants were screened, interviewed, and hired as they would be for jobs in the community, and received similar fringe benefits. A counseling component was directly integrated into each enterprise instead of existing as a separate entity. Since most clients shared an offender or ex-offender identity, the similarity of experience would tend to minimize the possibly negative effects this label could elicit from co-workers and supervisors. Finally, an opportunity existed for clients to be hierarchically promoted, often to a supervisory role within the business.

The concept paper submitted by the project administration summarizes the salient advantages of Supported Work as the following:

- (1) a job setting where his (the offender) background is known and accepted and where his supervisor is aware of his involvement in counseling;
- (2) an employment situation where other employees will be in similar personal situations, therefore, eliminating the element of tokenism; and,
- (3) a place where individual needs can be accommodated and work problems solved, because the business is small and the work crews can be readily supervised.

Supported Work staff services were oriented toward Concord commitments, particularly within the age bracket of 18 to 26, who were marginally employable; that is, who had demonstrated little or no prior employment history, or whose previous jobs had been a negative experience. Both pre-release and post-release

clients were eligible for participation in the program. Modelled as a transitional employment effort,¹ the expectation was that clients who had completed the program (anticipated as consuming a six-months to one year's span of time) would be able to apply the interpersonal and vocational skills attained to similar positions upon release. Thus, graduates of Supported Work would possess both the means and the motivation to become gainfully employed members of the community.

Project staff assumed responsibility for job development, training, and placement functions, as well as for the counseling aspects, which included preparing the Supported Work client to deal with the demands and frustrations that potentially surround participation in the job market. Four enterprises, which served as training sites for Supported Work clients, were administered. Metropolitan Deleading and Worcester Deleading involved the task of lead paint removal, primarily in residential settings; the goal of Alert Maintenance was to enable clients to execute minor building repair functions such as painting and light carpentry. (At a point midway through the funding period, Alert and Metropolitan Deleading were consolidated, due to the complementary nature of the work of these two enterprises.) Finally, employees of the Graphic Arts Center undertook the range of tasks associated with this field. It should be noted here that prior to the reception of Impact funds, an automotive mechanics concern, Satellite Auto, was an essential component of the program. This effort was abandoned, however, as a result of a discontinued lease and the non-feasibility of re-establishing clientele. The services of all four operating enterprises were performed on a contract basis with the community which was coordinated by the administrative office of Supported Work.

The program has had a long-standing relationship with the Department of Correction, commencing several years prior to receiving funding under the present Impact grant. First sub-contracted to the Technical Development Corporation (TDC) in 1973, Supported Work ultimately was administered by Transitional Employment Enterprises (TEE). The latter was originally a TDC undertaking, although it eventually branched out under its own auspices. A complete description of the organizational history can be found in the Impact final report.²

A significant modification in administrative policy was made during the year being studied. Whereas previously the Department of Correction supplied complete fiscal support, this procedure was supplanted by eight "purchased slots" for training Impact clients. In actuality, however, at any given time there may have been fewer or greater than eight Impact employees participating in the program. Additional funding for Supported Work was sought

¹ Supported Work is based upon a model developed and implemented by the Vera Institute in New York City.

² See: Barthe, Robert, and Terry Assael, Corrections Impact Program Final Progress Report, 75-ED-01.0002.

and derived elsewhere; consequently, some of the enterprises were comprised of trainees accepted from non-correctional agencies as well.

This study will examine the operations of Supported Work during the June 1975 through May 1976 Impact funding period.

Methodology

The sample consists of all 53 individuals referred by a Massachusetts Correctional Institution who were subsidized by current Impact funds. Clients who participated in Supported Work prior to June, 1975, and subsequent to May 31, 1976, are excluded from the analysis. Data regarding participants still active on May 31 are included when applicable.

Several program-related variables, provided by the Impact administrative staff and Transitional Employment Enterprises personnel, were available for analysis. These encompass the type of enterprise, status of the client in the correctional system upon acceptance into the program and when terminated, the total number of suspensions from active status and the length of each suspension, and the reasons for termination.

Due to the relatively small number in the sample, the following narrative will be primarily descriptive. Generally, the data for each variable will be presented in tabular format, grouped according to each enterprise. Where appropriate, a statistical measure, the Chi Square test, will be utilized to assess the degree of association between two variables in question. A significant association will be assumed to exist if the probability is .05 or below; that is, the observed relationship could be expected to occur by chance only five times in one hundred, or less.

This study will describe the experience of participation in Supported Work Enterprises during the Impact funding period, and should serve to illuminate the ways in which the project was operationalized.

FINDINGS

Composition of Supported Work Enterprises

More than half of Supported Work clients were employed by the Boston-based Metropolitan Deleading. Concord referred 75.9 percent of those clients to the program, with Walpole contributing the remainder.

Alert Maintenance hired 11 correctional clients (54.5 percent from Concord and 45.5 percent from Walpole) for a total contribution of 20.8 percent to Supported Work.

Women, incarcerated at MCI-Framingham, participated in Graphic Arts. Of the seven individuals accepted by this enterprise, four were women (57.1 percent), one was referred by Concord (14.3 percent), and two clients from Walpole (28.6 percent).

The final Supported Work enterprise, Worcester Deleading, utilized the fewest Department of Correction trainees. All six were from Concord.

The distribution of accepted trainees is illustrated by Table I below:

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPORTED WORK CLIENTS
BY TYPE OF ENTERPRISE AND REFERRING
INSTITUTION (N = 53)

<u>Enterprise</u>	<u>Concord</u>		<u>Walpole</u>		<u>Framingham</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Metropolitan Deleading	22	(75.9)	7	(24.1)	-	-	29	(54.7)
Alert Maintenance	6	(54.5)	5	(45.5)	-	-	11	(20.8)
Graphic Arts	1	(14.3)	2	(28.6)	4	(57.1)	7	(13.2)
Worcester Deleading	6	(100.0)	-	-	-	-	6	(11.3)
TOTAL	35	(66.0)	14	(26.4)	4	(7.5)	53	(100.0)

Location of Participants in the Criminal Justice System

The institution referring a client to Supported Work was generally different from the facility from which he or she began participating in the program. As can be seen in Table II, most of the clients either resided in a community-based facility or were on parole upon initial employment. This conforms to the policy requirements of the program, that trainees be available daily as they would for a regular business. Participants who had completed the program in some manner were also predominantly residents of a pre-release center, halfway house, or on parole.

TABLE II
STATUS OF SUPPORTED WORK CLIENTS IN
THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM AT BEGINNING AND
END OF PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

	<u>STATUS AT BEGINNING</u>		<u>STATUS AT TERMINATION</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Walpole	1	(1.9)	-	-
Concord	1	(1.9)	3	(8.8)
Community-based Facility	32	(60.4)	15	(44.1)
Parole	19	(35.8)	16	(47.1)
TOTAL	53	(100.0)	34*	(100.0)

* This data was unavailable for two participants.

Terminations from Supported Work

One measure of program success can be discerned from the reason for which a client is terminated from the program. Theoretically, a client resignation resulting from securing employment elsewhere would reflect most favorably on meeting Supported Work objectives. The pursuit of further education or vocational training may also be construed as evidence of positive program effect. An examination of the types of completions for terminated Supported Work clients is, therefore, necessary to address the issue of short-term program success.

Program completions were adjudged in two ways; a client either resigned or was terminated by the Supported Work staff. Three types of termination have been designated. If a client resigned because he or she found another job or for educational

purposes, it is considered a positive termination. If the resignation occurred due to a move away from access to a work site, health reasons, dissatisfaction with the program, or if no reason is given, it is categorized as a neutral termination. Finally, if the individual was fired, rearrested, or returned to higher custody, the designation of negative termination is appropriate.

As of May 31, 1976, 17 individuals remained on active status with Supported Work (32.1 percent of the sample). Of the remaining 36, eight (22.2 percent) were positive terminations; 17 (47.2 percent) were negative terminations; and 11 (30.6 percent) were considered neutral terminations. Table III portrays this variable according to enterprise.

TABLE III

TERMINATION TYPE OF SUPPORTED WORK CLIENTS
BY ENTERPRISE (N = 36)

<u>Enterprise</u>	<u>TYPE OF TERMINATION</u>							
	<u>Positive</u>		<u>Negative</u>		<u>Neutral</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Metropolitan Deleading	3	(15.0)	10	(50.0)	7	(35.0)	20	(55.5)
Alert Maintenance	3	(30.0)	3	(30.0)	4	(40.0)	10	(27.8)
Graphic Arts	1	(25.0)	3	(75.0)	-	-	4	(11.1)
Worcester Deleading	1	(50.0)	1	(50.0)	-	-	2	(5.6)
TOTAL	8	(22.2)	17	(47.2)	11	(30.6)	36	(100.0)

Length of Program Participation and Suspensions

A large proportion of the 36 terminated clients were Supported Work clients for only one month or less (41.6 percent). Nine individuals (25 percent of the sample) were employed for longer than five months. Table IV on page 9 illustrates this for all enterprises. Table V depicts the length of time employed by each type of termination.

It was decided to generate a third table concerning length of employment that would reflect this variable for clients active on May 31. It might be possible that inclusion of these 17 individuals might substantially alter the pattern presented in Table IV. Thus, Table VI on page 11 was compiled utilizing "active" clients in the calculations as well. A shift in length of employment is evident. The proportion of Supported

Work clients working for one month or less was lowered (30.2 percent for all clients versus 41.7 percent for terminations only); and individuals remaining longer than five months were more numerous (37.7 percent of the entire sample compared to 25 percent of the terminations).

Two aspects of this finding deserve elaboration. First, a curvilinear pattern can be detected, with a large proportion of clients employed for a short period of time, a levelling-off, and a large proportion who were clients for five months or longer. Second, although following the adjustment, a greater number of individuals are found in the category "longer than five months", over sixty percent of the sample had been employed for less than five months. The implications of this will be presented in the discussion section of this paper.

TABLE IV

LENGTH OF TIME EMPLOYED BY SUPPORTED WORK BY ENTERPRISE (N = 36)

LENGTH OF TIME EMPLOYED

Enterprise	1 Month or Less		1 to 2 Months		2 to 5 Months		4 to 5 Months		Longer than 5 Months		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Metropolitan Deleading	10	(50.0)	1	(5.0)	2	(10.0)	4	(20.0)	3	(15.0)	20	(55.6)
Alert Maintenance	1	(10.0)	3	(30.0)	1	(10.0)	-	-	5	(50.0)	10	(27.8)
Graphic Arts	2	(50.0)	1	(25.0)	-	-	-	-	1	(25.0)	4	(11.1)
Worcester Deleading	2	(100.0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	(5.6)
TOTAL	15	(41.7)	5	(13.9)	3	(8.3)	4	(11.1)	9	(25.0)	36	(100.0)

TABLE V

LENGTH OF TIME EMPLOYED BY SUPPORTED WORK BY TERMINATION TYPE (N = 36)

Type of Termination	LENGTH OF TIME EMPLOYED						TOTAL N %
	1 Month or Less N %	1 to 2 Months N %	2 to 3 Months N %	4 to 5 Months N %	Longer than 5 Months N %		
Positive	5 (62.5)	1 (12.5)	-	-	2 (25.0)	8 (22.2)	
Neutral	5 (45.5)	2 (18.2)	-	2 (18.2)	2 (18.2)	11 (30.6)	
Negative	5 (29.4)	2 (11.8)	3 (17.6)	2 (11.8)	5 (29.4)	17 (47.2)	
TOTAL	15 (41.7)	5 (13.9)	3 (8.3)	4 (11.1)	9 (25.0)	36 (100.0)	

TABLE VI

LENGTH OF TIME EMPLOYED BY SUPPORTED WORK BY ENTERPRISE INCLUDING CLIENTS ACTIVE ON MAY 31, 1976 (N = 53)

LENGTH OF TIME EMPLOYED

<u>Enterprise</u>	<u>LENGTH OF TIME EMPLOYED</u>					<u>Longer than</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	<u>1 Month or Less</u>	<u>1 to 2 Months</u>	<u>2 to 3 Months</u>	<u>4 to 5 Months</u>	<u>5 Months</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	
Metropolitan Deleading	11 (37.9)	1 (3.5)	2 (6.9)	4 (13.8)	11 (37.9)	29	(54.7)	
Alert Maintenance	1 (9.1)	3 (27.3)	1 (9.1)	-	6 (54.5)	11	(20.8)	
Graphic Arts	2 (28.6)	1 (14.3)	-	1 (14.3)	3 (42.8)	7	(13.2)	
Worcester Deleading	2 (33.3)	2 (33.3)	2 (33.3)	-	-	6	(11.3)	
<u>TOTAL</u>	16 (30.2)	7 (13.3)	5 (9.4)	5 (9.4)	20 (37.7)	53	(100.0)	

The length of time registered as an employee of Supported Work may not accurately reflect the time actively employed by the program. Nearly half of the terminated participants were suspended at least once, sometimes for periods lasting longer than three months. Thirteen individuals who were terminated had been suspended once (36.1 percent); three had accrued two suspensions (8.3 percent).

TABLE VII

TOTAL NUMBER OF SUSPENSIONS OF TERMINATED
CLIENTS BY ENTERPRISE (N = 36)

<u>Enterprise</u>	<u>NUMBER OF SUSPENSIONS</u>							
	<u>None</u>		<u>One Only</u>		<u>Two</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Metropolitan Deleading	8	(40.0)	10	(50.0)	2	(10.0)	20	(55.6)
Alert Maintenance	7	(70.0)	3	(30.0)	-	-	10	(27.8)
Graphic Arts	3	(75.0)	-	-	1	(25.0)	4	(11.1)
Worcester Deleading	2	(100.0)	-	-	-	-	2	(5.6)
TOTAL	20	(55.6)	13	(36.1)	3	(8.3)	36	(100.0)

The number of weeks clients actually worked was found to be considerably fewer than the total number of weeks in the program. If the time spent in suspension status is considered "dead time" (that is, no program activity being undertaken) and deducted from the time employed, the result is the real duration of program participation. Table VII depicts the total number of suspensions experienced by Supported Work clients; Table VIII summarizes the length of each suspension. In Table IX an adjustment is made for suspensions, and presents the actual time individuals were active participants of the program.

TABLE VIII

LENGTH OF SUSPENSIONS OF TERMINATED SUPPORTED WORK CLIENTS

	<u>First Suspension</u>		<u>Second Suspension</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Less than 2 Weeks	8	(50.0)	2	(66.7)
2 Weeks to 1 Month	3	(18.7)	-	-
1 to 2 Months	2	(12.5)	1	(33.3)
2 to 3 Months	1	(6.3)	-	-
Longer than 3 Months	2	(12.5)	-	-
TOTAL	16	(100.0)	3	(100.0)

TABLE IX

ACTUAL LENGTH OF PARTICIPATION IN SUPPORTED WORK

<u>Length of Participation</u>	<u>Terminated Clients</u>			<u>All Clients</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>Cum. (%)</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>Cum. (%)</u>
2 Weeks or Less	12	(33.3)	(33.3)	12	(22.6)	(22.6)
2 to 4 Weeks	5	(13.9)	(47.2)	5	(9.4)	(32.0)
1 to 2 Months	6	(16.7)	(63.9)	9	(17.0)	(49.0)
2 to 5 Months	5	(13.9)	(77.8)	8	(15.1)	(64.1)
Longer than 5 Months	8	(22.2)	(100.0)	19	(35.9)	(100.0)
TOTAL	36	(100.0)		53	(100.0)	

Table VIII highlights the finding that a relatively high percentage of Supported Work trainees were actually employed for two weeks or less (33.3 percent). Nearly fifty percent of the sample remained trainees for one month or less, a figure that is somewhat higher than that reported prior to recalculation accounting for suspensions. When all clients are included, however, this finding is altered. The percentage employed for two weeks or less remains fairly high (22.6 percent) and the proportion participating for longer than five months was revised upward to 35.9 percent. Nevertheless, over sixty percent of the sample actually participated for five months or less.

Finally, contrary to what might have been expected, analysis revealed no association between the type of termination and the number of times an individual was suspended from the program. Similarly, no significant relationship emerged between the length of time employed by Supported Work and the reason the client was terminated.

Discussion

It appears that Supported Work may not have been implemented as originally conceptualized. Although we are not in a position to gauge the extent and nature of impact rendered to program participants, a summary of the findings should highlight areas that may be problematic.

In view of the relatively small number of individuals serviced by Supported Work, a large proportion were negative terminations. Nearly half of all released employees behaved in ways considered cause for firing, or ultimately, being returned to higher custody. Logically argued, these individuals could not receive any program benefit, since participation was prematurely disrupted. More importantly, the very existence of these negative terminations reflects poorly on the ability of the program to sustain a client's motivation to complete the endeavor. The argument is further substantiated by the recognition that more clients were considered neutral terminations than those resignations resulting from a positive action. A mere 22 percent of all terminations were for positive reasons, such as accepting employment elsewhere or embarking on an educational career.

Another finding regarding provision of program services concerns the number and length of suspensions. Over forty percent of all terminated clients had been suspended at least once, and more than thirty percent of all first-time suspensions were of longer than one month's duration. Several inferences can be drawn from this finding. First, the occurrence of these suspensions may indicate the program's failure to inculcate the client with attitudes conducive to positive participation in Supported Work. Second, the continuity of services provided by project staff are withheld during the time spent in inactive status, thereby interrupting the process geared toward maximum program effect. Finally, use of the sanction of suspension may imply that the client's job-related interpersonal and/or vocational skills are not of the level that is generally accepted in the community.

Supported Work clients were also found to be employed by the program for a significantly shorter time than concept formulators envisioned as necessary to reap full benefit from a transitional employment enterprise. Nearly fifty percent of the terminated clients were active trainees for only one month or less. This length of enrollment is not sufficient, in terms of the concept philosophy, to transform the marginally employable individual into one who could experience a relatively trouble-free transition to more permanent employment. Further, 77.8 percent were employed for less than five months. Even when all clients are included in the calculations for length of employment, a high proportion (64.1 percent) were found to be enrolled for this period. It should be remembered that program parameters cited at least six months for the achievement of maximum program effect.

This report has presented a basic characterization of participation in Supported Work. It must be reiterated, however, that in view of the small number of correctional clients, any attempt to assess program effect should be tentative. If a larger group of individuals had been serviced, these important questions of impact would have been best addressed.