

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 7-15
	DATE August 18, 2015

TO: AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
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FROM: PORTIA WU /s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Release and Availability of a New Research Report: *Evaluation of the Re-Integration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program: Two-Year Impact Report*

1. **Purpose.** In 2005, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) began a joint initiative with the Department of Justice to aid primarily urban communities heavily affected by the challenges associated with high numbers of prisoners seeking to re-enter their communities following completion of their sentences. This Training and Employment Notice announces the release and availability of the first impact report from this evaluation, entitled: *Evaluation of the Re-Integration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program: Two-Year Impact Report*.

2. **Background.** In June 2009, ETA awarded a contract to Social Policy Research to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation of the RExO Initiative. RExO focuses on faith-based and community organizations and their ability to serve prisoners seeking to reenter their communities following the completion of their sentences. The programs funded under RExO primarily provided four types of services: mentoring, employment services, case management and supportive services. Participants in the programs included in the evaluation were typically provided limited work readiness training, matched with a mentor and provided a range of services based on their needs; these programs were work-first and did not provide vocational training. The evaluation is examining the impact of program services on: service receipt, labor market success, recidivism, and other observed outcomes; at two points in time: approximately two years after enrollment into the study and three years after enrollment. This report is the first impact report from the evaluation, and presents preliminary results based on data from the first follow-up survey of study participants and state criminal justice records. Impact results three years after enrollment into the study will be documented in the final report, and will be based on individual survey responses, data from the National

Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and state-level criminal justice data. It is expected the combination of these three data sources will provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of the program on the range of outcomes the program is designed to effect. The final report is expected to be released in early 2016.

3. **RExO Evaluation Description.** Launched in 2009, the evaluation uses a random assignment design to examine the impact of RExO as implemented by 24 programs operating nationwide. The evaluation has two major components, an implementation analysis and an impact analysis, each of which seeks to answer specific research questions. Twenty-four grantees were initially awarded RExO funding in 2005. These grantees received continued funding until 2010 in preparation for their participation in the random assignment component of the evaluation. By 2008, the grantees were not only fully operational but were well positioned to participate in the random assignment component of the evaluation, with established services and service routes as well as active partnerships for related supportive services, setting the stage for this rigorous, experimental impact evaluation.
4. **Publication Description.** The report summarizes the preliminary impacts of program services on study participants, approximately two years after enrollment into the study. The preliminary impacts of the RExO program are presented in four areas: service receipt, labor market success, recidivism, and other observed outcomes.
5. **Key Evaluation Findings.** The preliminary results presented in the report draw upon two sources of data to measure outcomes, a telephone follow-up survey that asked about a range of services and outcomes and administrative data on criminal justice outcomes obtained from the states in which RExO programs in the evaluation operated. Although these findings are interim and final results may differ, key preliminary findings include:
 - RExO substantially increased the number and types of services received. Among other services, program participants were more likely to participate in job clubs or job readiness classes and to receive vocational training, job search assistance, referrals to job openings, and help with resume development and filling out job applications. This finding is not expected to change during the final analysis since engagement in the program by those in the treatment group ended during the first year of the evaluation.
 - RExO significantly increased self-reported employment, within both the first and second years after enrollment into the study. These increases were small but statistically significant. In addition, interim survey results revealed that those who participated in the program significantly reduced the length of time between their enrollment into the study and gaining their first job when compared to those in the control group. This finding is not expected to change during the final analysis since most study participants began their first job after enrollment into the study during the first year of the evaluation.
 - In the short term, RExO increased total reported income from all sources, although the effects of the program on reported hourly wages were not statistically significant. There were no differences between the study groups in their reported hourly wages at either the first job obtained after enrollment into the study, or at their current or most recent job. As study participants moved on to new jobs during the third year after enrollment into the

study, this finding is subject to change, presenting the potential for statistically significant impacts on hourly wages.

- RExO's effects on re-arrest rates were not statistically significant. Using both state criminal justice records and participant survey data, the evaluation team concluded that program group members were no less likely to have been convicted of a crime or incarcerated than control group members. The final report will examine whether differences in recidivism emerge in the third year after participants' random assignment into the study.

6. **The Evaluation Report Timeline.** The evaluation's Implementation Report was released in July 2012 and the final impact report is scheduled to be released in early 2016. The final report will focus on impacts in the three-year period following enrollment into the study. It will include administrative data (NDNH) on employment and earnings, which, if consistent with the analysis of survey data, will provide clear information as to whether RExO positively impacts participants' labor market outcomes.

7. **Inquiries.** For more information about this study, contact Eileen Pederson, Contract Officer's Representative, Office of Policy Development and Research, ETA at (202) 693-3647 or Pederson.eileen@dol.gov. To view an abstract of this report and to download either this impact report or the evaluation's Implementation Report, visit <http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/keyword.cfm>.