



An Evaluation of Ready, Willing & Able Executive Summary

In “The Right Way to Handle Former Inmates,” (November 2007) *The New York Times* highlighted Ready, Willing & Able and its impact on criminal recidivism, as part of an evaluation commissioned by the New York Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and conducted by Dr. Bruce Western of Harvard University, one of the nation’s leading criminal justice experts.

Dr. Western’s¹ follow-up evaluation analyzes Ready, Willing & Able’s long-term effects in greater detail, revealing that the program significantly improves public safety by reducing criminal recidivism in a cost-effective way. The study examines a sample of program participants who received services (“participants”), as well as a second sample group of program completers (“Graduates”) – a subset of the first sample group – and compared both sample groups to matched control groups. These control groups consist of other NYC parolees who are similar in all measurable ways to program sample clients but who did not take part in Ready, Willing & Able.

Key Finding #1: Ready, Willing & Able Graduates are 60% less likely to be convicted of a felony within three years after their release from incarceration.

Graduation from Ready, Willing & Able dramatically reduces criminal recidivism, resulting in improved public safety. By the end of the third year after their release from prison, Graduates are **60% less likely** to be convicted of a felony than their counterparts from a matched control group.

Key Finding #2: Ready, Willing & Able participants are 56% less likely to be convicted of a violent crime within three years after their release from incarceration.

Even without graduating from Ready, Willing & Able, parolees who participate in the program are much less likely to be convicted of new violent crimes. Specifically, by the end of the third year following their release from incarceration, participants are **56% less likely** to be convicted of a violent crime than their counterparts from a matched control group.

Key Finding #3: Ready, Willing & Able’s social benefit exceeds the cost of the program by 21%.

The estimated three-year social benefit that results from participation in Ready, Willing & Able, calculated based on program value and measurable criminal justice system expenses, exceeds the average cost of the program by **21 percent**. Because there are many potential benefits that are not included in this analysis, due to either lack of data or because some benefits resist quantification, this is a conservative estimate. Examples of these benefits include the payroll taxes a Graduate contributes over his lifetime; the fulfillment of child support obligations; the stabilizing effects of reuniting parents with their children; and the cost savings achieved by remaining out of taxpayer-funded homeless shelters and/or drug treatment programs.

This evaluation demonstrates that Ready, Willing & Able, which couples transitional employment with other services, is a proven, cost-effective strategy to reduce criminal recidivism among men recently released from incarceration. In the broader debate about criminal justice reform, Ready, Willing & Able’s strategy for reintegration deserves close attention from elected officials and other policymakers.

To order the full evaluation study, please contact David Howard at dhoward@doe.org.

¹ Dr. Western supervised researchers Cathy Sirois and Erin Jacobs.