

## **Prisoner Reentry: Focus on Vocation, Substance Abuse, and Social Supports**

This CJ Fax is the second in a series intended to provide timely feedback on the progress of SANDAG's evaluation of San Diego's Prisoner Reentry Program (SB 618)<sup>1</sup>. SB 618 utilizes best practices in the field of prisoner reentry to address the growing issue of individuals returning home after incarceration. Key program components include assessment-based service planning through multidisciplinary team meetings, services in prison, and post-release case management to guide parolees' reentry back to the community. As of January 2009, 356 individuals were enrolled in the SB 618 study group.

Preliminary findings from analysis of the intake assessment data reveal a population that possesses a functional level of education and significant life skills to support immediate vocational programming. That is, the majority of participants (85%) scored above a sixth grade reading level on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) (a threshold the prison uses to determine inmate eligibility for educational programming while incarcerated) and above average on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), a second tool used to evaluate program participants' level of reading and life skills (Table 1). However, assessments of substance use and social support networks indicate several challenges that must be addressed in order to support success in vocational programming. Nearly all (84%) of SB 618 participants reported using alcohol or drugs in the past 30 days, with over one-half reporting using methamphetamine and/or multiple drugs in that same time period. Additionally, because research has shown that healthy social supports play a key role in successful prisoner reentry, family and social relationships were also assessed at intake. As Table 1 shows, less than one in ten participants rated any of their relationships with their friends, spouse/partner, parent(s), or sibling(s) as "considerably /extremely close."

**Table 1  
SB 618 PARTICIPANT NEEDS**

<b>Education and Life Skills</b>	
TABE Score Above 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	85%
CASAS Score at Advanced Level	98%
<b>Substance Abuse in Past 30 Days</b>	
Any alcohol or drug use	84%
Methamphetamine use	53%
Multiple drug use	52%
<b>Closeness to Parent/Sibling/Partner/Friend</b>	
Considerably/Extremely Close	5% or less
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>253 - 280</b>

*NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.*

*SOURCE: SANDAG, Improving Reentry for Ex-Offenders in San Diego County: SB 618 Second Annual Evaluation Report, January 2009*

These assessment data are the basis for matching clients with appropriate services, both while in custody and when released. As such, substance abuse treatment, as well as assisting participants to create and/or strengthen their social supports, is a primary focus of the SB 618 case managers. To learn more about the progress of this innovative program, visit the SANDAG Web site at [www.sandag.org/cj](http://www.sandag.org/cj) to download the full SB 618 report.

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<sup>1</sup> Senate Bill (SB) 618 is one of several efforts across California to reduce recidivism and increase the probability of successful prisoner reentry.