

Five Years of Accomplishments

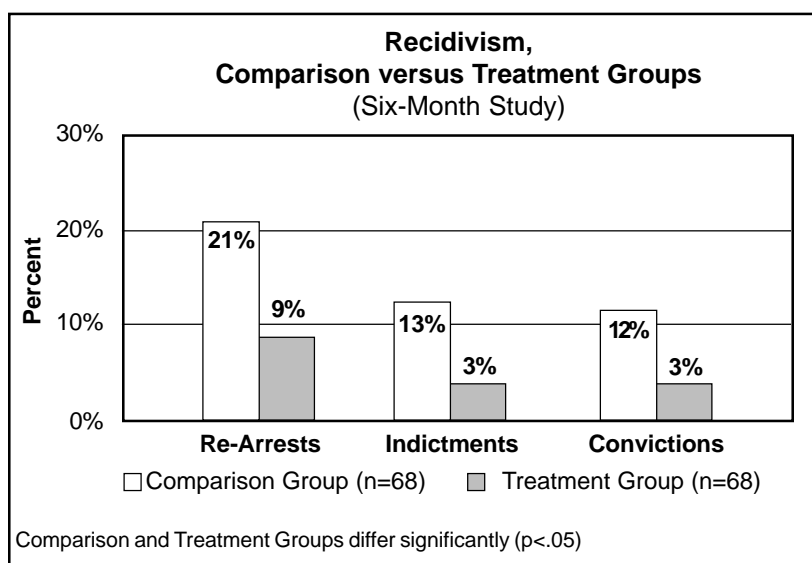
Better Job Retention: Perhaps the most significant accomplishment in Better People’s first five years is that we have come within a hair’s breadth of reaching one of our chief goals: 70 percent job retention. Since 1998, Sixty-three percent of our job placements were still employed one year after placement.

We know of no other offender-specific program that tracks placements for 365 days. Other nationally recognized programs typically achieve a 180-day (six-month) job-retention rate of between 50 to 55 percent. Better People’s 180-day job retention rate is 77 percent since we opened in 1998.¹

Better Wages: In addition to higher-than average retention rates, wages for Better People clients are higher, as well. Since 1998, Better People’s average wage for job placements is \$8.60/hr. Other former offender programs around the country reported average wages of \$6.30 to \$7.25 per hour.²

Better Recidivism: Another highlight occurred with the release of a study showing that former offenders who attend Better People’s cognitive behavioral therapy program (Moral Reconciliation Therapy) are less likely to reoffend than those who attended an orientation but chose not to participate. According to the findings, compiled by Clariner M. Boston, MS, MPA, with technical assistance from Annette Jolin, Ph.D., 21 percent of those who attended a Better People orientation but did not take part in Better People’s Moral Reconciliation Therapy were re-arrested over a six-month period compared to just nine percent of those former offenders who attended at least one Better People MRT group session. (The full report can be viewed on-line at www.betterpeople.org.)

This chart shows evidence of Better People’s success in meeting our number one goal – reducing recidivism rates in Multnomah County. Treatment Group refers to clients who attended at least one Better People MRT group session. The full report can be viewed at www.betterpeople.org.



¹In *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions of and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry*, Travis et al. (2001, p. 33) note that The Center for Employment Opportunities in New York has a 50% job retention rate at six months. An offender employment agency that Better People Executive Director Chip Shields worked for previously has consistently had a job retention of around 55% although that rate has increased to 80% for welfare clients who receive intensive job-retention help.

²See Buck (2000) *Getting Back to Work: Employment Programs for Ex-Offenders*, p. 28.—a Public/Private Ventures report.

What We Do And How We Do It

Since its inception in 1998, Better People’s goal has been to significantly reduce the number of people from Multnomah County and other areas who return to crime.

This goal is being accomplished with a three-pronged approach that includes cognitive-behavioral counseling using Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), living-wage employment and hands-on follow-up for one year to help Better People clients retain their jobs.

Under the direction of Better People facilitators, clients move through steps aimed at helping them identify and change the patterns of thought and behavior that have led to poor decision-making in the past.

Once clients have demonstrated their commitment by passing through at least three steps in the MRT program, they are eligible for employment through Better People’s referral program.

Clients receive ongoing support through Better People’s retention program, which monitors a client’s work performance in cooperation with employers.

Summary of Results

Job Placement and Retention Outcomes in 2002-03

Enrolled ¹	Completed ² MRT Step 3 (Job Ready)	Employed On Entry	Employment Placements	30-Day Retention	90-Day Retention	180-Day Retention	365-Day Retention	Active Clients	Waiting List
315	178	5	63	96%	84%	69%	53%	72	31

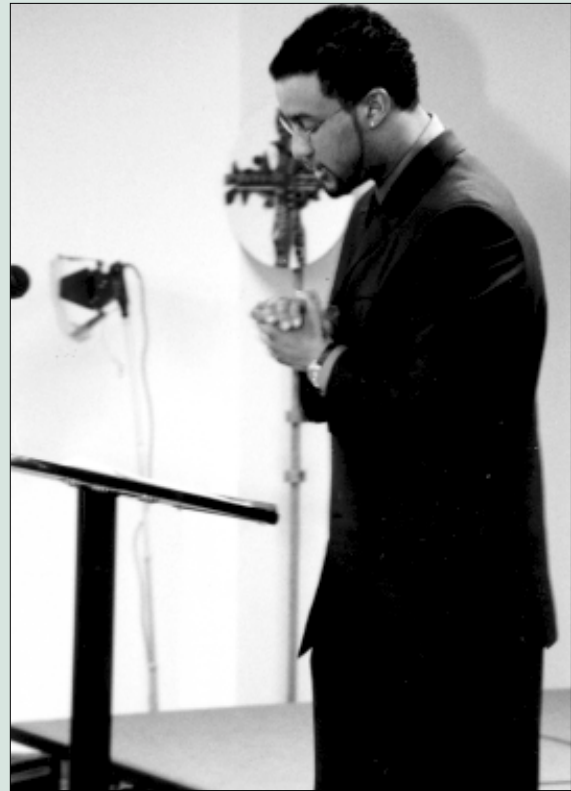
Job Placement and Retention Outcomes Since June 1998

Enrolled	Completed MRT Step 3 (Job Ready)	Employment Placements	30-Day Retention	90-Day Retention	180-Day Retention	365-Day Retention
1,389	784	300	96%	87%	77%	62%

¹ Enrolled means client paid the one-time \$25 enrollment fee and attended at least one MRT session. Referral agencies often pay part of the enrollment fee, but all Better People clients must pay something, even if it is only \$1.

² Step 3 is the MRT step where clients become eligible to be placed in permanent, full-time jobs that pay a minimum of \$8/hr. plus health benefits. The Step 3 benchmark is analogous to what other agencies consider “job ready.” It takes about three weeks for clients to pass Step 3. Better People refers clients to our partner temporary employment agencies so that they can earn some income while they work toward Step 3.

Five Years of Client Successes



Graduate Marvin Dean was recently inducted into the Portland State University Non-profit Management Leadership Fellows program – an organization devoted to the development of future agency and community leaders. He was Better People’s first job placement, and he celebrated his five-year employment anniversary in July 2003 with PCRI. He is a supervisor now and is hiring other Better People clients. (A KATU newsclip on Mr. Dean can be viewed at www.betterpeople.org.)

Five Years of Client Successes



DeJuan Chesterfield, one of Better People's first clients, is a member of Painters & Tapers Local 10 and is employed by Evan House Paint Co. He and his wife have three daughters and were just approved to purchase a home – a lifelong dream.



Bart Smith celebrated his three-year anniversary with Component Resources in May 2000. He is a leader in the Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good and the Better People Alumni Club. Staff member David Applin sits in the background.



Staff congratulated graduate J.R. Sanford (far left) in 1999. He celebrated his three-year employment anniversary with Selectron Global Services in January 2003. He has two children and has been sober for five years.

Future Challenges...

Following is a list of the goals Better People will be working on in the next five years.

Goal: Develop a Young Offender Initiative that includes a focus on returning Measure 11 offenders.

Those incarcerated at age 15 under Oregon's harsh mandatory sentencing law Measure 11 are now being released at age 21, an age criminologists consider to be within the most crime prone years.

To address their needs, Better People has teamed with Volunteers of America of Oregon, Metropolitan Family Service, and Irvington Covenant Community Development Corporation to propose a program designed to address in a comprehensive way the needs of young adult offenders who are returning to the community after having been incarcerated for an extended period.

The program will seek to reduce the rate of recidivism, increase job retention, and improve the lives of young offenders and their families. The Jehu Foundation has made a \$500,000 challenge grant to get the program started. The anticipated start date is Jan. 1, 2004.

Goal: Develop Innovative Job Placements

This year, we developed some innovative partnerships with Gunderson Inc. and Irvington Covenant Community Development Corporation. Gunderson Inc. has agreed to hire two young offenders per month for its welder training program if Better People donors will pay a portion of their training wages. Irvington Covenant Community Development Corporation has agreed to hire several construction trainees to learn the construction trades on their low-income building projects. One of Portland's largest construction companies has agreed to hire those who complete Irvington's three-month training. We hope to duplicate these types of partnerships with other living-wage businesses.

Goal: Expand to a second location in the Greater Portland area so that clients will not have to travel to North/Northeast Portland to attend MRT.

Our clients often commute hours by bus to get to Better People for MRT group sessions. Another metropolitan location will make attendance more convenient for clients, particularly those with children.

...Where We Are Going

Goal: Enhance Services to Hispanics

The United States is incarcerating more Hispanics than ever before. The MRT workbook comes in Spanish, and Better People has had a Spanish speaker on staff. However, to more fully meet the needs of Hispanic former offenders will require targeted outreach services and the hiring of additional staff.

Goal: Increase Private Fundraising To Increase Job Placements

Better People will work to increase its already successful private fundraising so that it can increase job placements without becoming overly dependent on one or two government funding sources.

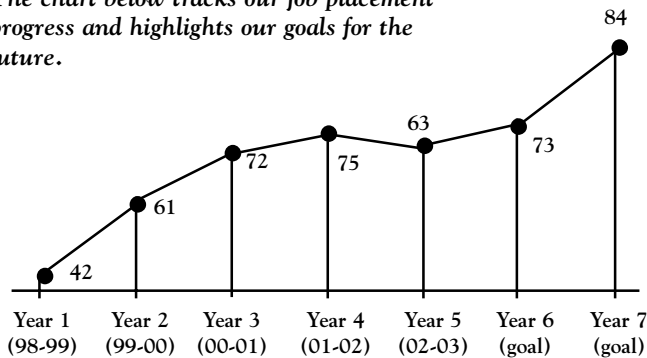
Goal: Continue To Evaluate Effect On Recidivism Using The Most Rigorous Means Possible

Better People's initial evaluation indicated that participation in Better People's cognitive-behavioral therapy component, MRT, was associated with significantly lower recidivism. We are committed to engaging in strong evaluation and look forward to furthering our study of Better People's effect on recidivism.

Goal: Expand Counseling Approaches

Better People is interested in providing other evidence-based counseling approaches that reduce recidivism, such as anger management counseling, domestic violence counseling or other cognitive therapies.

The chart below tracks our job placement progress and highlights our goals for the future.



Five Years of Innovative Outreach



Better People has sponsored two blues concerts at the Oregon State Penitentiary. Titled "Live in the Big Yard," the concerts are part of our ongoing efforts to reach out to those in need of our services.

Five Years of Fighting For Change



For five years Better People has worked for criminal justice reform as a key player in the Oregon Criminal Justice Reform Coalition. Sign up today at www.westernprisonproject.org.