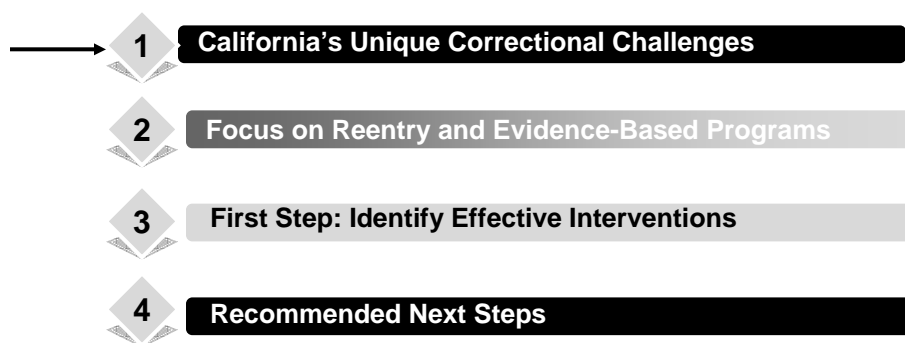


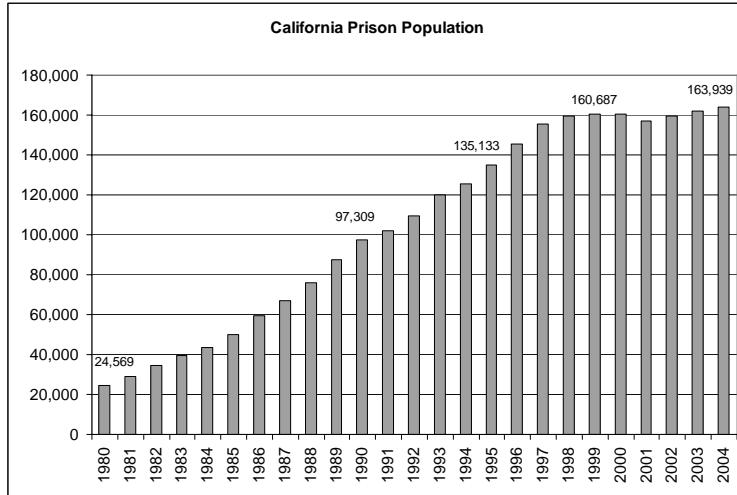
# *Strategic Reform: Implementing Evidence-Based Programs for California Offenders*

**Joan Petersilia, Ph.D.  
Professor of Criminology  
UC-Irvine**

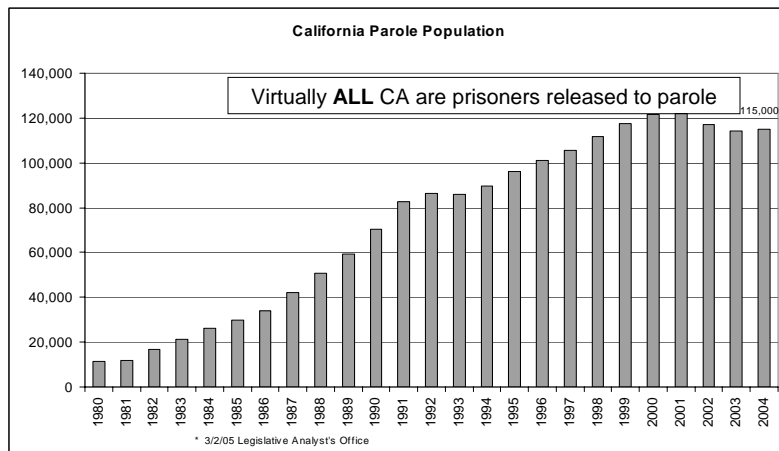
© 2005 Petersilia



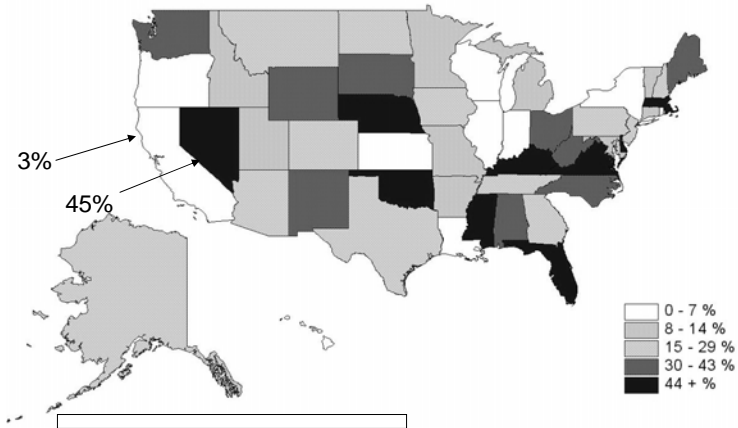
## CA Prison Population Increased Seven-fold, Compared to Four-fold Increase Nationally



## CA's Parole Population has Increased with Increases in Prison Population

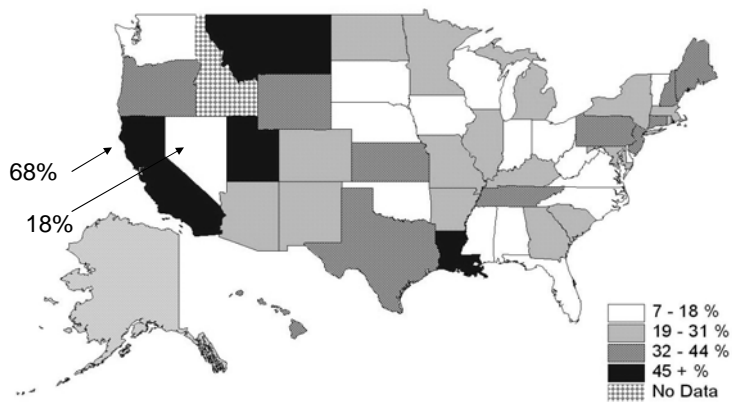


## The Percent of Prisoners Released WITHOUT Parole Supervision (“Unconditionally”) Varies by State



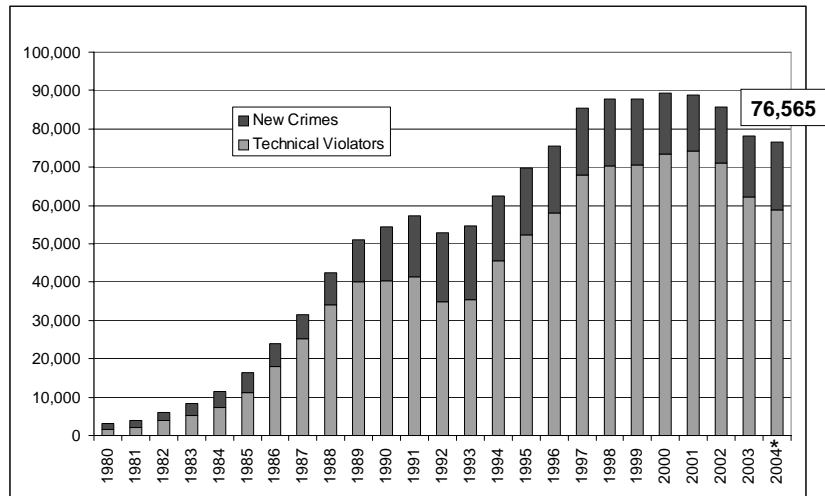
Source: Based on BJS National Prisoner Statistics.

## Parole Violators Returned To Prison Also Varies Significantly by State – California leads the nation

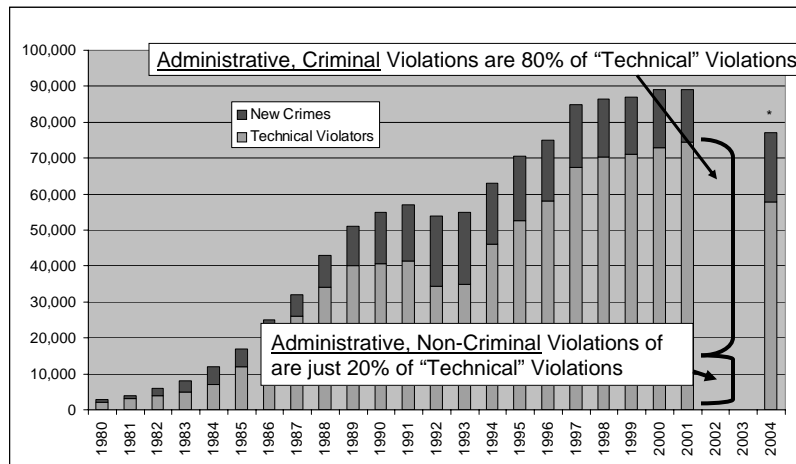


Source: Based on BJS National Prisoner Statistics.

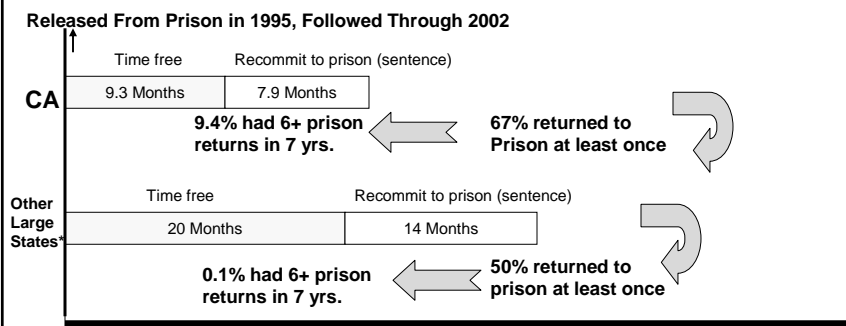
## Most CA Parolees Return to Prison, Usually for “Technical Violations”



## But “New Crimes” Comprise 80% of the “Technical Violations” Category



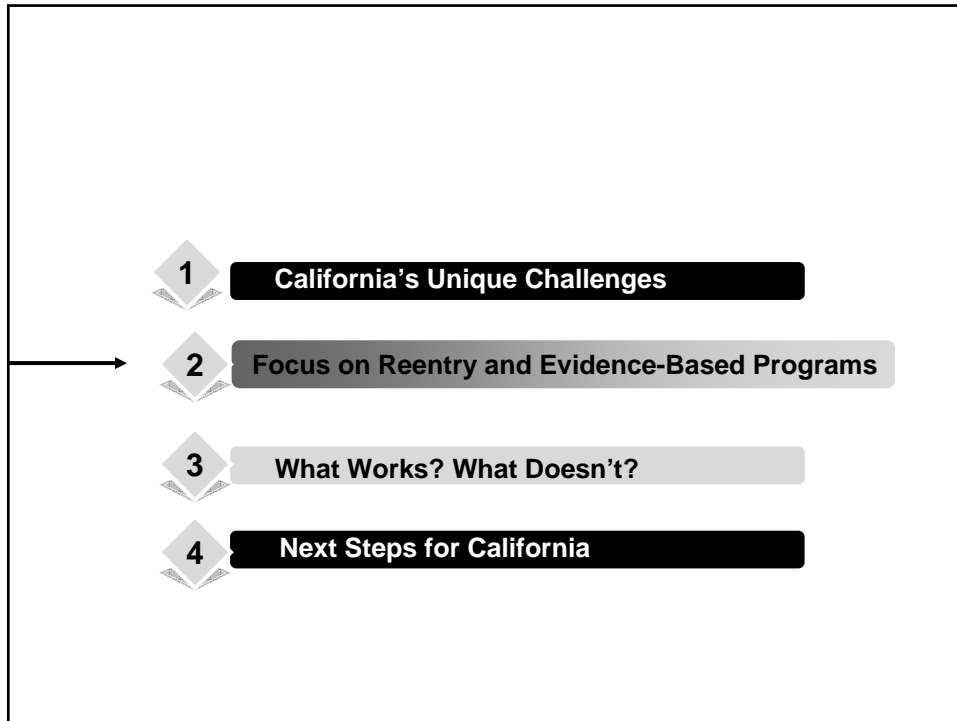
## CA Prisoners “Churn” More Returns to Prison Higher— Months Free and Months Re-Incarcerated Shorter



\*NY, Illinois, Florida. Analysis based on all 1995 prison releasees in each state.  
Source: Blumstein and Beck (2005) forthcoming.

## Who is Coming Home?

- 89% male (11% females)**
- Median age: 37**
- Most frequent offense is drugs (33%)**
- First arrested at age 17**
- Mental health (20%) and substance abuse (65%)**
- 22% have gang membership**
- 70% unemployed before prison**
- 50% read below 6<sup>th</sup> grade level**
- 30-50% have unstable housing within 1 year of release**
- ....and on and on.....**



## What To Do? 2-Pronged Approach Endorsed Nationally and Now in California

### 1) Focus on Reentry

### 2) Use Evidence-Based Programs & Principles

-What works, for whom, in what settings?

CA's new mission:

*"To improve public safety through **evidence-based** prevention and recidivism reduction strategies."*

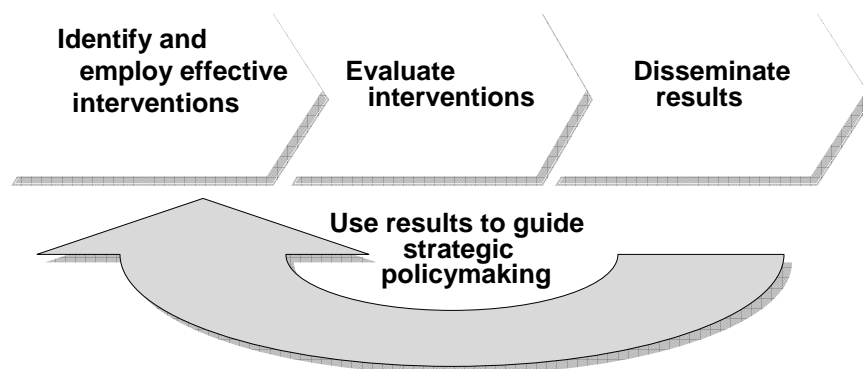
## Other States Linking Research to Evidence-Based Interventions

States with major initiatives and bi-partisan support:

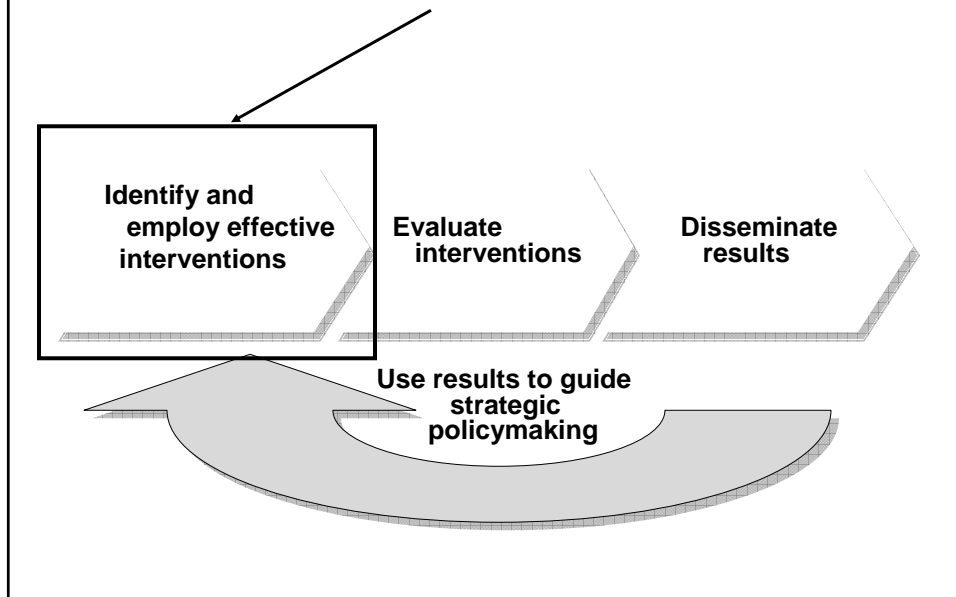
Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, **Georgia**, **Illinois**, **Kansas**, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, **Michigan**, Missouri, Massachusetts, **Maryland**, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, **New Jersey**, Oklahoma, **Ohio**, **Texas**, **Pennsylvania**, Rhode Island, **Washington**, Virginia, Wyoming

Committed to staying the course – **takes 3-5 years to realize full benefits and cost savings**

## What Does It Mean To Be Evidence-Based?



## California Just Beginning Phase 1



### Method Used to Identify Effective Programs

- 1<sup>st</sup> Locate all published and unpublished studies
- 2<sup>rd</sup> Classify them according to research results and methodology
- 3<sup>rd</sup> This process results in a categorization of what works, what's promising, what is unknown, and what doesn't work

**Programs with positive findings AND credible research methods are designated to "work"**

**This is commonly referred to as the 'what works' literature**

**“Junk Science”**

Deciding ‘What Works’:  
~~Rank Existing Studies for Methodological Rigor~~

Rank	Research Design	Example of Finding Produced
1	Correlation between program and outcome. No comparison group.	People who <b>completed</b> in sex offender treatment had a rearrest rate of 30%.
2	Comparison between groups without compatibility, includes drop outs and non-volunteers in comparison group, no statistical controls	People who <b>completed</b> sex offender treatment had a rearrest rate of 30%, and people <b>released from prison</b> have a rearrest rate of 70%.
3	Comparison between groups that are roughly comparable	People who completed sex offender treatment had a rearrest rate of 30%, and sex offenders have a rearrest rate of 70%.
4	Comparison between groups and statistically control for pre-existing differences	Sex offenders who completed treatment are compared to sex offenders who have not completed treatment, and when statistical controls are used to control for pre-existing differences, the treated group had a lower rearrest rate and the difference was statistically significant.
5	Random assignment (BEST)	Sex offenders who are eligible for treatment are randomly assigned to the treated (experimental) group or the untreated (control) group. Both groups are tracked, including program drop-outs.

How Do You Decide “What Works?”

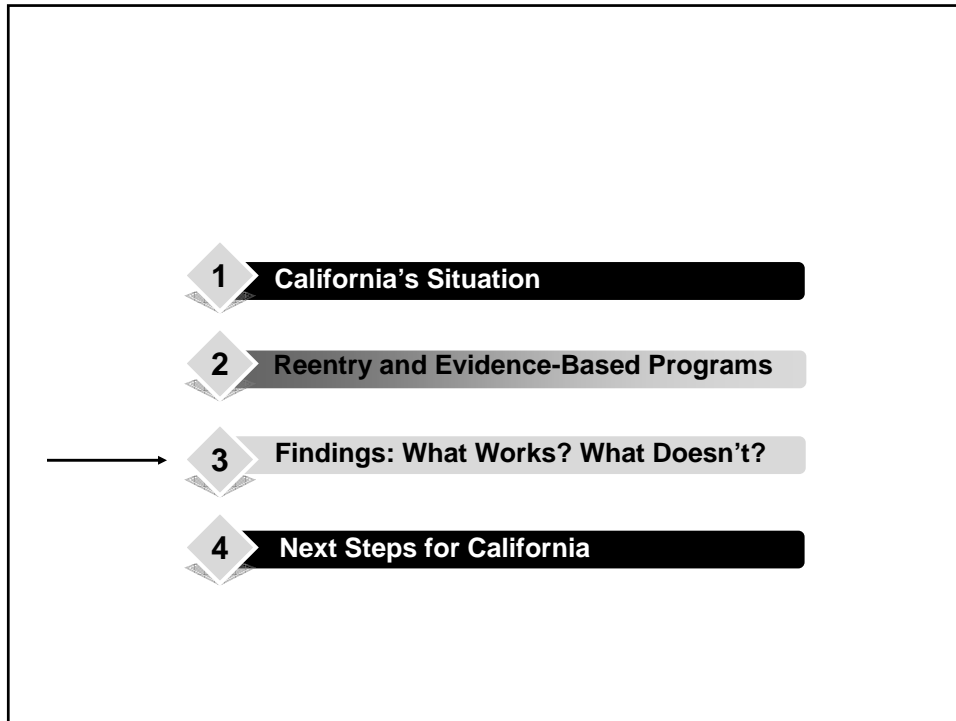
Level	Research Design
1	Correlation between program and outcome. No comparison group
2.	Comparison between groups without compatibility, includes drop outs and non-volunteers in comparison group, no statistical controls
3	Comparison between groups that are roughly comparable
4	Comparison between comparable groups and statistically control for pre-existing differences
5	Random assignment (BEST)

➤ **“Doesn’t Work”** = 2 Level 3 or above studies showing negative results

➤ **“Promising”** = 1 Level 3 or above evaluation showing effectiveness

➤ **“Works”** = 2 Level 3 or above studies showing positive results

➤ **“Unknown”** = No Level 3 studies exist



## **Findings: Programs that “Work” To Reduce Recidivism**

### In-Prison Programs

1. In-Prison Therapeutic Communities w/ follow-up community treatment
2. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
3. Vocational Education Programs with community job placement
4. Multi-Component Correctional Industry Programs
5. Intensive Treatment for persons with mental illness with day reporting or residential aftercare

### Post-Prison/Transition Programs

6. Sex offender treatment provided in hospital or residential setting (non-prison) using cognitive behavioral methods
7. High quality and intensive community employment programs

## **Findings: Programs That Are “Promising” To Reduce Recidivism**

### **In-Prison Programs**

- 1. Adult Basic Education**
- 2. Job preparation with intensive aftercare, for high risk parolees**
- 3. Prison-Based Sex Offender Treatment**
- 4. Family Case Management**
- 5. Comprehensive Case Planning and Aftercare for Persons with Mental Illness**

### **Post-Prison/Transition Programs**

- 6. Halfway Houses with Enhanced Services**
- 7. Day Reporting Centers with Enhanced Services**
- 8. Drug Courts and Reentry Courts with Intensive Services and Surveillance**
- 9. Police-Corrections Partnerships with Intensive Services and Surveillance**
- 10. Intensive Parole with Intensive Services and Surveillance**

## **Findings: Programs that ‘Don’t Work’ To Reduce Recidivism**

### **In-Prison Programs**

- 1. ‘Scared Straight’ type programs**
- 2. Vague and unstructured counseling & group sessions**
- 3. Military style boot camps without aftercare & services**

### **Post-Prison/Transition Programs**

- 4. Intensive supervision parole without services**
- 5. House arrest & electronic monitoring without services**

## **Programs That Have “Unknown” Impacts on Recidivism**

### **In Prison**

1. **Anger and stress management programs**
2. **Victim awareness programs**
3. **Education & Life Skills Prerelease programs**
4. **Sex offender treatment for different types of sex offenders**
5. **Having a prison work assignment**
6. **Faith-Based programs**

### **Post-Prison/Transition Programs**

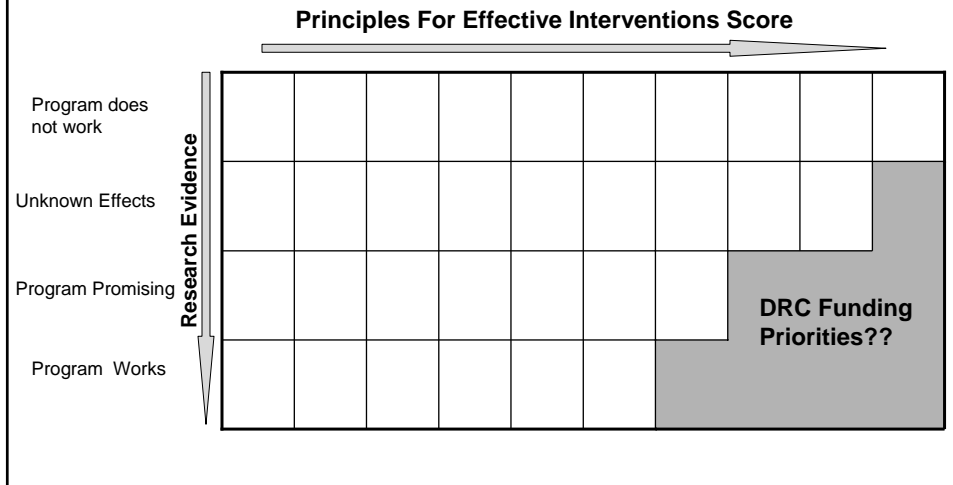
7. **Community Vocational Training**
8. **Police-corrections collaborations without intensive services**

**.....And all other programs that haven't been  
evaluated—which is more than 90% of all  
corrections programs!**

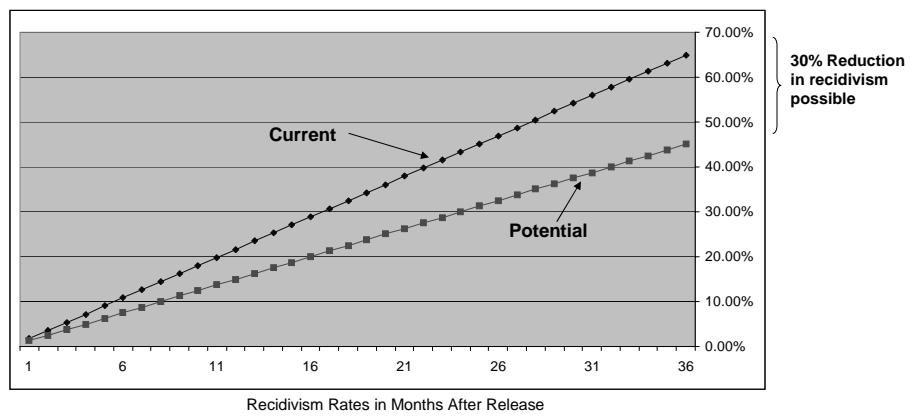
## **What Makes Programs Successful? Principles of Effective Interventions**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) Use risk assessments  | 3) Train Staff on Cognitive Behavioral Methods                            |
| 2) Target the intervention                                       | 4) Use positive reinforcers to motivate offenders                         |
| -To high risk offenders  | 5) Enlist community and family support                                    |
| -To specific criminogenic needs                                  | 6) Conduct evaluations and provide data feedback to staff, revise program |
| -Recognizes learning styles, culture, gender                     |   |
| -Are intensive enough (e.g., occupies 50% of time over 6 months) |   |
| -Treatment is combined with sanctions                            |   |

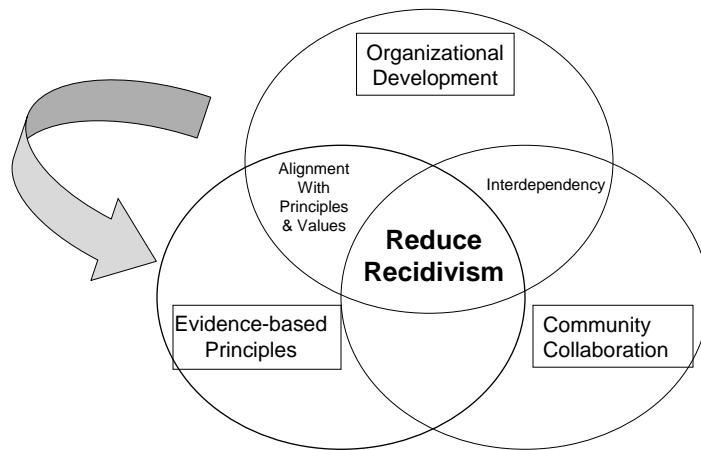
## Most Effective Programs Focus on Research Evidence and Principles



## Evidence-Based Practices Can Reduce Recidivism 30%



## Good Programs Don't Succeed Alone: Organization and Community Support Are Essential



1 California's Situation

2 Focus on Reentry and Evidence-Based Programs

3 Assessing What Works? What Doesn't?

4 Next Steps for California

## **Next Steps?**

Review and score all current and proposed programs according to the 'what works' literature and the 'principles of effective programs'

Use that information to target resources

Design, implement, and rigorously evaluate selected pilot programs

Provide cost and outcome data to decisionmakers, revise accordingly

In short, become an Evidence-Based Organization

## **Payoffs for Being Evidence-Based?**

Increases accountability by justifying decisions based on information that can stand up to scrutiny,

Improves transparency of reasoning behind policies,

Cost Benefit: best outcome for crime control dollar,

Increases in Public Safety: prisons are safer and crime and victimization is reduced.

# Thank You

Questions?  
or contact me at  
[jrpeters@uci.edu](mailto:jrpeters@uci.edu)