Evaluation Methodology:

Study 1

The program was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design with a nonrandomized treatment and a control group. The two groups were made up of parolees released from a secured facility between Feb. 1 and Dec. 31, 1995, who were assigned to the California Youth Authority's Inland Parole Office. If a juvenile reported a residence that was within a 25-mile radius of the Inland Parole Office at the time of release, the youth was placed in the treatment group. If the address was beyond the 25-mile radius, the youth was in the control group. Coincidently, n=115 for both the treatment and the control group. The overwhelming majority of participants were male—97.4 percent in the treatment group and 95.7 percent in the control group. The average ages were 20.0 and 20.2, respectively. The treatment group was 40.9 percent African-American, 39.1 percent Hispanic, and 14.8 percent white. The control group was 50.4 percent Hispanic, 24.3 percent African-American, and 20.0 percent white. The treatment group was required to attend all 13 Lifeskills '95 classes, while the control group was not.

Data was collected through semistructured interviews and surveys of parolees, treatment facilitators, and parole agents. Random drug tests were also performed. Data was collected three times: 1) the 1st week after release, 2) after the treatment was complete (3 months after release), and 3) at the end of the evaluation period (Feb. 28, 1996). During this analysis, n=106 for the treatment group and nine parolees became involved in an additional program and were removed from the sample.

Evaluation Outcome:

Study 1

Ninety days after release from secure confinement, control group youths were twice as likely as the experimental group to have been rearrested, to be unemployed and to lack the resources necessary to find and maintain a job, to have a poor attitude toward working, and to have frequently abused drugs or alcohol. Control group youths were three times as likely to associate with former gang members, to have "serious problems" with family relationships, to be unresponsive and negative in their commitments to parole, and to associate almost exclusively with negative, unfavorable peer groups.

A year after the evaluation began, the results were just as favorable for the Lifeskills '95 program. The control group youths were twice as likely as the experimental group to have one or more arrests, to be associated with negative peer groups, and to be unemployed without means of financial support. They were also twice as likely to have failed in their parole, meaning they had their parole revoked owing to a technical or criminal violation, were in jail awaiting a new criminal charge, were in temporary detention awaiting a revocation hearing, or they were missing. Control group youths were three times as likely as experimental group youths to continue their abuse of drugs.

All of these findings were significant.

References:

Josi, Don A., and Dale K. Sechrest. 1999. "A Pragmatic Approach to Parole Aftercare: Evaluation of a Community Reintegration Program for High-Risk Youthful Offenders." *Justice Quarterly* 16:51–80.