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# Sentinel Event Review for Successful Transition and Reentry Together (START) Program in the Eastern District of Wisconsin

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# Executive Summary: Sentinel Event Review of Federal Reentry Program

Partnering with National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Successful Transition and Reentry Together (START) program of the Eastern District of Wisconsin undertook a Sentinel Event Review (SER) process to systematically review near-misses and unsuccessful cases of reentry and propose recommendations to improve START program outcomes. SERs are a formal assessment of the processes that result in the sentinel event. A sentinel event is a significant negative outcome that is likely the result of compound errors, may signal underlying weaknesses in the system or process, and may provide—if properly analyzed and addressed—important keys to strengthening the system and preventing future adverse events or outcomes.

## Process

The START SER Team included all START Team members that regularly participate in START, including representatives of the Federal Judiciary, Federal Probation and Parole, Bureau of Prisons (including a Residential Reentry Center), prosecution, and defense. Cases were selected informally in consultation between the START SER Team and NIJ facilitators. Four reentry cases, two near-misses and two unsuccessful, were selected based on representative indicators of near-miss, yet successful, cases and unsuccessful cases. Biweekly meetings over the course of five months were conducted in a hybrid format with the majority of participants attending in-person, and some attending virtually.

Participants committed to attendance, active participation, information sharing, and willingness to participate in discussions to improve START program outcomes.

Expectations for START SER Team members also included willingness to participate in interviews with NIJ facilitators, and to assist in the development and refinement of recommendations. NIJ facilitators assisted in launching START SER, facilitated initial reviews, and provided deliverables, including a ranked list of recommendations, a recommendation ranking tool, an analysis of the current state of START, an updated dataset tool, and this final report.

## Results

In order to understand current START program outcomes, guide discussions, and generate recommendations for program improvement goals, the START team shared program data to allow for analysis of program outcomes. This data analysis occurred in parallel with the formal SER of select cases.

### ***START Program Outcomes: Data Analysis***

- Many program participants successfully complete START and have their Term of Supervised Release (TSR) discharged despite extending the program beyond the minimum 365 days for completion.
- Completion of START was associated with individuals' TSR being discharged.
- Most START program terminations occurred during the first phase of the program, suggesting Phase 1 as an optimum target for future improvements.
- Regular data analysis and routine monitoring of program outcomes support the SER process.

### ***SER Outcomes: Recommendations***

- Twenty-eight actionable recommendations.
- Recommendations were ranked and prioritized based on impact, evidence, importance, sustainability, resources, and likelihood of implementation.
- Top scoring recommendation: implement behavioral incentives and deterrents that can be ratcheted up or down.
- Other recommendation themes: improving mental health supports, improving information sharing, adapting START program practices, mentoring, education and job training continuity.

The SER process facilitated communication in a high-trust environment, allowing START SER Team members to build on their existing spirit of cooperation to generate insights about the program and how it can be improved.

The emphasis on open data sharing between stakeholders helped reduce the effects of institutional siloing, as START SER Team members were able to benefit from the data and documentation of other members during the SER sessions.

## Future

### ***Continuing Sentinel Event Reviews***

- Forming a team – Have a champion, the right people and right agencies participating, and practice information sharing.
- Selecting cases – Apply a balanced approach to examine various outcomes and investigate ideas about areas for improvement; involve the whole team and external stakeholders if possible.
- Executing sessions – Promote strong facilitation, shared expectations, information sharing, and active participation.

### ***Prioritizing and Implementing Recommendations***

- Individual team members should take ownership and responsibility for specific recommendations.
- Develop a data-driven Implementation Plan that incorporates sustainability.
- Prioritize recommendations with ranking tools and readiness assessments informed by Implementation Science.

Exit survey results from SER participants suggest broad endorsement of the SER process as an effective means to generate ideas to improve program outcomes. Collectively, this report demonstrates that SER can be effectively implemented within a federal probation and parole reentry program and produce actionable recommendations for improvement.



# Introduction

In a complex system, like a hospital system or a criminal justice system, an unexpected, negative occurrence or outcome is rarely the result of a single act, event, or slip-up. More likely the bad outcome is a sentinel event — a significant negative outcome that indicates fundamental weaknesses in the system and which is likely the result of multiple factors. A systematic review of the sentinel event can identify system gaps and opportunities that improve the system and reduce the risk of future bad events. For this reason, the fields of aviation, medicine, and the military conduct Sentinel Event Reviews (SER) to assess the processes that resulted in the sentinel event. An SER seeks to identify systemic opportunities for improving processes.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has made investments over the years in applying the SER process in the criminal justice field, including beta projects, research awards, and a joint demonstration program with the Bureau of Justice Assistance.<sup>1</sup> To date, the reviews have focused on a variety of detrimental criminal justice outcomes in local jurisdictions, including violent crime, victimization, false convictions, dismissal of guilty individuals, corruption, excessive use of force, youth justice issues, and sex trafficking. The implementation of SER in criminal justice has involved the review of negative outcomes along with “near misses” and even successful outcomes to better understand the specific conditions contributing to negative outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> “Sentinel Events Initiative,” National Institute of Justice, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/sentinel-events-initiative>.

This report discusses the application of the SER process to the program Successful Transition and Reentry Together (START) in the Eastern District of Wisconsin, the first SER in the federal criminal justice system.<sup>2</sup>

The SER of START reviewed four cases of individuals who participated in the program. The reviews took reentry failure as their sentinel event, although two of the four cases were successes that the SER team defined as “near misses.”

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<sup>2</sup> The Eastern District of Wisconsin START program was one of six federal reentry court programs that were subjects of an evaluation conducted by the Federal Judicial Center (FJC) to determine program efficacy in light of the higher cost of program implementation compared to standard supervision of persons at a high risk of offending. See Rauma, D. (2016). Evaluation of a federal reentry program model. *Federal Judicial Center*. The FJC report evaluated two versions (A and B) of the START program. The results of the study were inconclusive, largely due to relatively small sample sizes, lack of fidelity to a suggested model among the evaluated courts, and lack of agreement as to appropriate measures of success. Our report covers version A of the START program, which is how the program currently operates.

# START Program

START is the Eastern District of Wisconsin's reentry court program and has been in operation for just over 10 years. The program is modeled on successful problem-solving courts, especially drug treatment courts. START seeks to reduce recidivism and supervised release revocations of individuals returning from incarceration and identified as high-risk by the United States Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

There are typically 8 to 12 participants in the START program at a given time, and participation is voluntary, though incentivized. The program takes place in an informal court setting where a federal magistrate judge presides. In the initial phase of the program, each participant attends a weekly court session with the federal judge to review the participant's progress toward achieving individual and court-ordered goals designed to keep the participant on a path to living a crime-free life.

START program staff — including a prosecutor, defense attorney, and probation officer — provide guidance, encouragement, and access to services. Participants are sanctioned for substantial violations of the rules of supervision; sanctions include reprimands, community service work, extended time in the program, and short periods of incarceration. Participants progress through the program in phases, each phase requiring adherence to the rules of supervision while maintaining employment, enrollment in school, or other productive activities. When a participant completes the program, they receive a year off their term of supervision.

## START Program Phases

There are four phases to the START program, each with a minimum time requirement, as well as specific expectations that must be met in order to advance to the next phase. The program moves participants through early phases that require engagement with mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers, cognitive-based programming, mentoring, employment readiness, and other training programs, to later phases that

focus on maintaining sobriety, network building, and careers that lead to stability and self-sufficiency.

START program participants remain in each phase until they complete the requirements. Participants must spend at least 52 weeks to advance through all four phases. The reentry court judge, upon consultation with the reentry court team, may also extend the period of each phase as necessary to ensure that participants meet the goal of that phase. Each phase is briefly described below. See Appendix B for more information on specific objectives and expectations for each phase.

- Phase 1 (minimum of six weeks)
  - Goal: Participant will begin to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize, manage, and avoid patterns of behavior and factors associated with substance use disorder and criminal behavior.
  - Criteria for Phase 1 Advancement: Participant must receive credit for six satisfactory weeks and meet required expectations.
- Phase 2 (minimum of 12 weeks)
  - Goal: Participant will demonstrate a commitment to living a crime-free lifestyle and continue to acquire and develop skills for identifying, managing, and avoiding high-risk situations. Participant will develop a prosocial network and work toward developing economic self-sufficiency.
  - Criteria for Phase 2 Advancement: Participant must receive credit for 12 satisfactory weeks, have a period of abstinence from substances or addiction of at least two weeks, and meet required expectations.
- Phase 3 (minimum of 16 weeks)
  - Goal: Participant will continue to demonstrate a commitment to a crime-free lifestyle by continuing the development and mastery of skills for identifying, managing, and avoiding high-risk situations. Participant will continue to develop a prosocial network and progress toward economic self-sufficiency.
  - Criteria for Phase 3 Advancement: Participant must receive credit for 16 satisfactory weeks. Participant must have a period of abstinence of at least four weeks preceding phase advancement and meet required expectations.
- Phase 4 (minimum of 18 weeks)
  - Goal: Participant will demonstrate the ability to apply the skills learned in Phases 1-3 for living a crime-free lifestyle and articulate a relapse prevention plan that identifies potential high-risk situations, skills that reduce the identified risks, a prosocial network that supports the participant, and financial planning that enhances economic self-sufficiency.

- Criteria for Phase 4 Advancement and Graduation: Participant must receive credit for 18 satisfactory weeks. To graduate from the program, the participant must receive credit for 52 satisfactory weeks.
  - Participant must have a period of abstinence from illegal substances of at least six weeks preceding graduation from the program.
  - Participant must have a period of one month of employment or educational programming or be enrolled in an employment training program leading to full-time employment.

# Implementation of SER for START

## SER Overview

An SER, which involves the multidisciplinary sharing of information and assessment of the bad outcome, yields a shared understanding in a non-blaming environment in order to develop and implement holistic recommendations for change. The START team, with representation from the federal systems that support reentry into the community from prison, was interested in collectively identifying solutions to enhance successful reentry.

The goal of this SER was to enhance outcomes for START participants and community. START team members were especially interested in taking an intensive look at the program through an SER framework. The START SER Team and NIJ facilitators were interested in learning:

1. Can we complete case reviews following SER principles?
2. Will partners engage in this case review process?
3. What is required for engagement?
4. Which partners are key to the success of the reviews?
5. What can we learn from the reviews? What information is shared?
6. Can we identify intra- and inter-agency prevention and intervention strategies to improve outcomes for START participants?
7. Will the deliverables and training provided by NIJ facilitators allow the START SER team to continue SERs independently?

## Forming the START SER Team

The START SER team included all regular START Team members, including individuals representing the federal judiciary, probation/parole, residential reentry centers (RRC), prosecution, and defense, with the addition of a BOP representative for the purposes of the SER. Each representative committed to actively participating in the SER process, including attending each meeting, reviewing and sharing case information, participating in discussions, and making recommendations to improve outcomes.

START SER Team:

- U.S. magistrate judge
- Retired U.S. magistrate judge
- Assistant U.S. attorney
- First assistant federal public defender
- Federal prison reentry affairs coordinator
- Federal Residential Reentry Center supervisor
- Federal Residential Reentry Center federal job placement provider
- U.S. Probation and Pretrial Office START participant supervisor
- U.S. Probation and Pretrial Office community resource specialist

NIJ facilitators:

- NIJ senior scientist
- NIJ science and technology policy fellow, 2020-2022
- NIJ science and technology policy fellow, 2021-2023
- NIJ research assistant from the University of Wisconsin-Madison

## Timeline and Meetings

All meetings were a hybrid of in-person and virtual. The main NIJ facilitator met in-person with the majority of the START SER Team for all meetings. Meetings were between 90-120 minutes in length. During the START SER kickoff meeting, the next four meetings were scheduled to ensure START SER Team availability and time to prepare for case reviews. Meeting invites, reminders, and follow-ups were sent by the U.S. Magistrate Judge. All meetings beyond the first four were generally scheduled directly after other START program meetings. There were nine core sessions over a five-month period with periodic meetings between sessions to interview and train select staff on data collection and information-sharing processes.

## Exhibit 1. Summary of SER Meetings

Session	Meeting Description	Main Agenda Items
Session 1	START SER kickoff	Expectations, SER process, and timeline
Session 2	Review Case A	Ground rules SER of Case A
Session 3	Review Case A	START data review SER of Case A facilitated by NIJ
Session 4	Review Case B	START updated data review START process flow SER of Case B facilitated by NIJ
Session 5	Review Case C	SER of Case C facilitated by NIJ
Session 6	Review Case D	SER of Case D facilitated by Magistrate Judge
Session 7	Discuss recommendations	Review and discuss recommendations from all case reviews
Session 8	Discuss recommendations, follow-up surveys, and outline of final report	Recommendations status (e.g., entry/exit survey) and ranking tool Final report outline SER exit survey
Session 9	SER wrap-up	Discuss ranked recommendations Contingency management and PICNIC Analysis® presentation Final comments

## Expectations

During the kickoff meeting, expectations of the START SER Team and NIJ facilitators were discussed. This 40-minute discussion outlined the following expectations of the START SER Team:

- **Participate in SER meetings.** All members of the START SER Team were expected to participate in the case study reviews and presentations by asking questions, sharing information, and suggesting solutions or recommendations to help meet the SER's goal.
- **Review and share agency information.** To aid case reviews, all members were expected to prepare and share all relevant de-identified agency information.
- **Assist in development and refinement of recommendations.** All members were expected to contribute to the creation, planning, execution, and evaluation of solutions generated during the SER process.
- **Sharing of aggregate data.** To understand the current state of the START program, all START reentry team members were expected to share any aggregated data that could be used to evaluate the START program as a whole.
- **Participate in interviews with NIJ facilitators.** Participants were expected to engage in interviews and surveys to enhance future renditions of federal SERs.



NIJ staff, research fellows, and research assistants, acted as third-party facilitators and provided assistance to help execute the START SER. NIJ facilitators' expectations were to:

- **Assist in launching START SER.** NIJ facilitators were responsible for explaining the SER process, keeping track of recommendations, conducting secondary data analysis, and developing sustainable processes to enable the START SER Team to conduct SERs in the future.
- **Facilitate initial reviews.** The first three case reviews were facilitated by NIJ staff who would go through the case study timeline, ask questions, and encourage conversation about what worked and did not work in each case study. The fourth case review was facilitated by the U.S. Magistrate Judge.
- **Provide the following deliverables:**
  - Ranked list of recommendations. NIJ facilitators kept track of suggested recommendations, reviewed wording with the START SER Team, and provided a tool that helped prioritize recommendations. The ranked list of recommendations is provided in the *Results of START SER* section.
  - Recommendation ranking tool. NIJ facilitators created a survey tool for ranking recommendations based on certain features. This tool is described in the *Selecting Recommendations* section.
  - Analysis of current START current status. NIJ facilitators reviewed available de-identified START participant data to analyze how the START program is performing. Analyses of the START program were presented to the group. A summary of these presentations is in the *Understanding the Existing START Program Outcomes* section.
  - Updated dataset tool. An updated version of the START reentry team's dataset file was sent to the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Officer. The file contains many auto-generated formulas, pivot tables, and graphs that allow updated graphs and summarized analyses so the START SER Team can better understand their program outcomes and explore similar data trends in the future.
  - Final report. This document outlines the federal START SER processes, findings, and considerations for future SERs.

## Case Selection

Cases selection for this SER was a largely informal process. The START Team worked together to decide which cases to review without input from NIJ facilitators. This was done, in part, to allow the START Team to take ownership of the SER process from the beginning. The START Team selected four cases for review: two near-miss cases and two unsuccessful cases.

Analyses in previous SERs have discussed the value of reviewing “near misses.”<sup>3</sup> Examining “near misses” can provide insight into how to improve program practices and processes. The absence of explicit failure in a case does not mean there is no room for improvement, or that nothing can be learned from a review. Additionally, reviewing these kinds of cases may help identify unique challenges for individuals who are otherwise doing well in the program and inform ways to provide continued support. Finally, because it was the START SER Team’s decision to review both near-miss and unsuccessful cases, NIJ facilitators sought to support those efforts. Additional approaches for case selection for future SERs can be found in the *Understanding the Existing START Program Outcomes* section.

## Cases Reviewed

Case A is an individual currently in the START program and was classified as a “near-miss” case. They were charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute, and distribution of 5 kg or more of cocaine, 50g or more of cocaine base, and marijuana. They were sentenced to 120 months. Ninety-one months into their stay, they became eligible for release. The individual’s security designation was Minimum. The individual transitioned from prison into a residential reentry center for almost four months before moving in with a partner, where they have remained for their entire time in supervision. Compliance issues with drug testing requirements resulted in extended time in each phase. The participant experienced extensive trauma and grief after the loss of multiple family members in a 30-day period; however, they are currently on track for program discharge.

Case B was reviewed as an “unsuccessful” case. The individual was charged with two counts: distribution of crack cocaine and distribution of heroin. This individual spent roughly 66 months in prison prior to supervised release and joining the START program. This individual had an extensive juvenile and non-federal arrest history, including several drug possession charges. At the beginning of the START program they were employed and passed all random drug tests. However, less than four months into the program the individual missed a drug test, was not able to maintain employment, and was removed from a “cognitive thinking group” program due to lack of attendance. After 7.5 months in the START program, the individual was re-arrested for possession of a firearm, which resulted in termination from the program.

Case C was also reviewed as an “unsuccessful” case. The individual was charged with conspiracy to distribute 500g or more of cocaine. The individual spent roughly 67 months in prison prior to supervised release and joining the START program. Throughout their time in the START program, they were employed and passed all random drug tests. They also attended and graduated from “Think 4 Change,” a cognitive-based intervention program. The individual was later identified as being involved in a federal drug trafficking investigation. After other accomplices were arrested, this individual was rearrested later that year for heroin possession and distribution, resulting in their termination from the START program.

Case D was a past “near-miss” case. This individual was charged with one count of distribution of cocaine, resulting in a 60-month sentence with 36 months of supervision

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<sup>3</sup> Doyle, J. M. (December 5, 2013). NIJ’s sentinel events initiative: Looking back to look forward. *NIJ Journal*, 273(1). <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/sentinel-events-initiative-looking-back-look-forward>

after release. After serving the 60 months, they enrolled into the START program during their TSR. The program participant passed all random drug tests, maintained steady employment, and completed the “Think 4 Change” cognitive intervention program. Similar to Case A, this individual experienced considerable trauma and grief while in the program related to the deaths of multiple family members and their own children. Despite these difficulties they were able to complete the program in 14 months resulting in one year off their TSR.

## Recommendation Tracking and Prioritization

During each case review meeting, START SER Team members discussed the specifics of an individual’s case and identified recommendations for how the START program could help make individuals in the program more likely to succeed. Recommendations were tracked by NIJ facilitators with one team member explicitly assigned the responsibility of writing down the recommendations as they were discussed. During the meeting, when a recommendation was identified, the facilitator clarified the recommendation with the group. This was repeated at the end of each meeting to make sure each recommendation was documented and the wording, context, and meaning of the recommendation was clear to the group. This was repeated for each meeting. Recommendations were also identified through two separate analyses of START program outcomes. This process and the results from these analyses are described in the *Results of START SER* section. The recommendations that resulted from the START SER are described in the *START SER Recommendation Themes* section.

# Understanding the Existing START Program Outcomes

When implementing an SER for a specific program, it is important to review the overall program outcomes. Reviewing program outcomes requires reviewing any available program data, describing the program data by summary statistics, reviewing the results, collecting more information or data, and repeating the process as needed. These separate analyses guided the initial recommendations and discussion, and can be used to guide case selection for future SERs.

## Basic Overview of Analysis Methods

The START SER Team compiled their collected data on program participants and shared a de-identified version of their dataset with NIJ Facilitators along with all past START program evaluation reports. The data and reports were used to help the START SER Team understand the current state of START program outcomes. All analyses were done in a way to allow the START probation officer to review updated information to any point going forward.

Desirable program outcomes of the START program were discussed. The START SER Team identified the primary desirable START outcome as an individual having their Term of Supervised Release (TSR) discharged. A secondary outcome was identified as graduating from the START program. When an individual exits the START program, their START outcome is determined (Graduated, Terminated, Voluntarily Left). However, their TSR remains pending until the remaining time on their TSR expires (Discharged) or they violate their supervision terms (Revoked). The hypothesis is that those who graduate from the START program have a better chance of having their TSR discharged.

Understanding the primary and secondary program outcomes help guide discussion, data analysis, and recommendations. The data analysis first compared the number of individuals with near-miss and unsuccessful primary and secondary outcomes. NIJ facilitators then

used these findings to guide insight and discussion into potential causes of poor outcomes (that is, terminated from START and/or TSR revoked). Open questions regarding program outcomes were then outlined in terms of what data is available and what data needs to be collected to answer any remaining questions. The START SER Team then collected additional data to answer some of these open questions, and a second round of analysis was performed. The following sections describe the findings regarding the current state of the START program from both analysis presentations. Please note that the results discussed are simple observations of the dataset. More robust statistical tests and analyses are needed to confirm these findings along with any potential relationships between program outcomes and possible causes.

All analyses and graphs displayed in the following sections were created and stored in a new Excel spreadsheet for the START Team members to use for future data collection. This new spreadsheet was created from the original data spreadsheet used by the START team. Enhanced features of the new Excel spreadsheet include cleaned data, new formulas, pivot tables, summary statistics, and new data columns to track START participants.

## START Program Outcomes Analyses

The primary outcome is if the individual had their TSR discharged or revoked. Guiding questions regarding the primary outcome were:

- How many people had both their TSR discharged and graduated from START?
- Was it possible for someone to be terminated or voluntarily leave the START program and still have their TSR discharged?
- What was missing for those who completed START, but ultimately had their TSR revoked?
- What factors make someone more likely to have their TSR discharged?

The secondary outcome is if the individual graduated from/terminated/left the START program. Guiding questions for the secondary outcome were:

- At what phase (1-4) do people most often terminate from the START program?
- What risk factors make someone less likely to complete START?
- What programming best helped people with specific risk factors be successful? How can we connect others to the most beneficial programming?
- What programming/resources would be most helpful to individuals after they are terminated, voluntarily leave, or graduate? How can we include more of this programming at the right stage of the program?
- What were individuals doing well before they were terminated, voluntarily left, or graduated? How can we replicate and incorporate these activities and benchmarks?

## Data Analysis Round One

### Exhibit 2. START Program Outcomes Over Time

	Number of Individuals	% of Total Individuals	% of START Outcome Group	Chi Squared P-value
All individuals	76	-	-	-
Graduated	32	42.1 %	-	Base Comparison
- TSR Discharged	28	36.8 %	87.5%	-
- TSR Revoked	4	5.3 %	12.5%	-
Terminated	24	31.6 %	-	<.0001
- TSR Discharged	2	2.6 %	8.0%	-
- TSR Revoked	22	29.0 %	92.0%	-
Voluntarily Left	20	26.3 %	-	0.6578
- TSR Discharged	14	18.4 %	70.0%	-
- TSR Revoked	6	7.9 %	30.0%	-

The total number of individuals that have both completed the START program and had final determinations on their TSR is 76, including 32 graduated, 24 terminated, and 20 voluntarily left the START program. The number of individuals who had their TSR discharged was 44, and 32 had their TSR revoked. Exhibit 2 shows the number of individuals grouped by their final primary (discharged, TSR revoked) and secondary (graduated, terminated, voluntarily left) outcomes. Based on Exhibit 2, we additionally can see that:

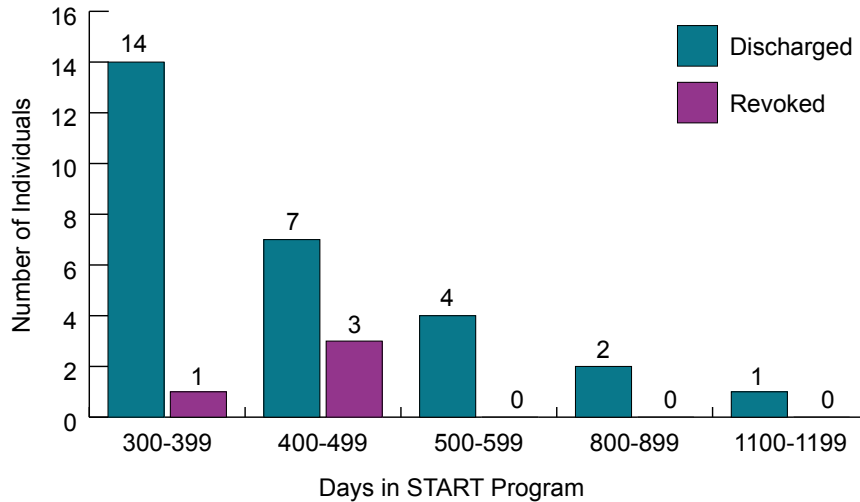
- More than three-quarters ( $28/32 = 87.5\%$ ) of START graduates had their TSR discharged.
- Nearly all ( $22/24 = 92\%$ ) individuals terminated from START had their TSR revoked.
- More than two thirds ( $14/20 = 70\%$ ) of individuals who voluntarily left the START program had their TSR discharged.
- Less than half ( $32/76 = 42.1\%$ ) graduated from the START program.

Looking at these numbers it appears that individuals who graduate from the START program are likely to have their TSR ultimately discharged, whereas those who are terminated from the program are likely to have their TSR revoked. Therefore, the data suggests that finding ways to increase START completion rates—currently 42%—is a reasonable goal. Additionally, individuals who voluntarily leave the program are likely to have their TSR discharged. Future case reviews that could provide further insight would involve those individuals who graduated from the START program but had their TSR revoked ( $n=4$ ), and those who were terminated from the START program, but had their TSR discharged ( $n=2$ ). It could also be interesting to gather more information on those who voluntarily left the program, what made them successful in having their TSR discharged, and how they might compare to those who graduated from the START program.

To look more closely at the relationship between the primary and secondary outcome, NIJ facilitators graphed the number of individuals in the START program grouped by the number of days they were in the START program and their primary and secondary outcomes. Exhibits 3, 4, and 5 show the number of START participants grouped by their

status (graduated, voluntarily left, or terminated), the number of days they were enrolled in START, and whether or not their TSR was revoked (dark grey) or discharged (light grey). Number of days in the program was calculated from the date an individual started and ended the START program.

**Exhibit 3. Number of Graduated Individuals, Grouped by Days in Program and TSR Outcome**



As shown in Exhibit 3, just over 50% (17/32 = 53%) of START graduates were in the program for more than 400 days. The minimum number of days someone can be in the program is around 365 days, indicating that extending a portion of their START program did not automatically result in the individual failing to complete the program or having their TSR discharged. Most graduates who had their TSR revoked were in the program for 400-499 days. Additionally, everyone in the program for more than 500 days had their TSR discharged. A chi-square test could not be calculated to support these observations due to the small number of START graduates who had their TSR revoked.

**Exhibit 4. Number of Voluntarily Left Individuals, Grouped by Days in Program and TSR Outcome**

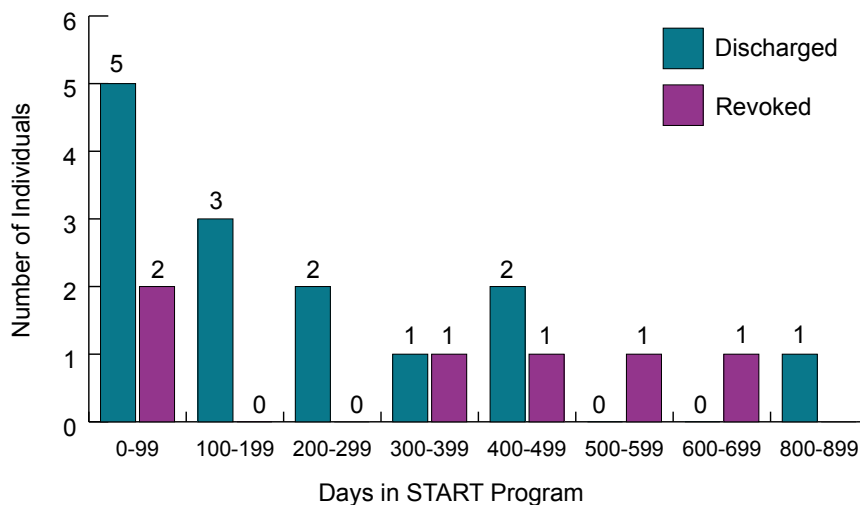


Exhibit 4 shows that the vast majority ( $10/12 = 83.33\%$ ) of individuals who voluntarily left the START program in fewer than 300 days had their TSR successfully discharged. Conversely, half ( $4/8 = 50\%$ ) of individuals who voluntarily left the START program, and were in the program for more than 300 days, had their TSR revoked. However, a chi-square test for statistical significance only produced a p-value equal to 0.6375. Therefore, it is unclear if being enrolled >300 days had an effect on TSR outcomes. Thus, a lower priority can be placed on exploring why individuals left the program, what services would continue to be provided or discontinued after they left, and other similarities between these individuals and those who had their TSR discharged or revoked but graduated from START.

#### Exhibit 5. Number of Terminated Individuals, Grouped by Days in Program and TSR Outcome

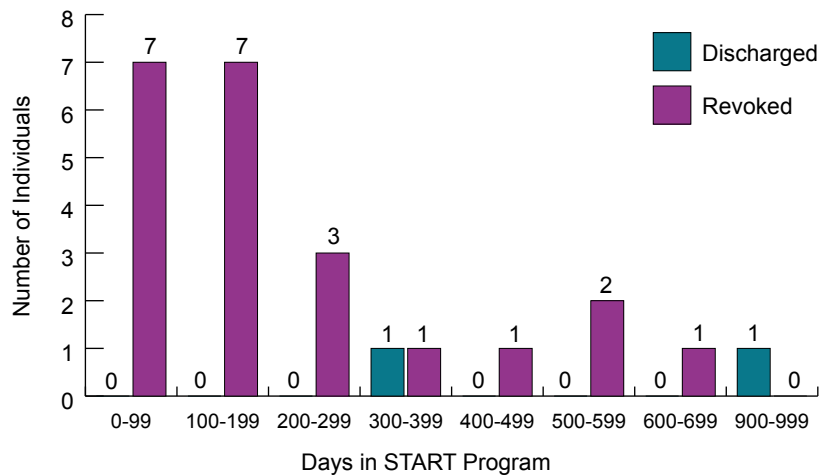


Exhibit 5 shows that around 70% ( $17/24 = 70.83\%$ ) of individuals terminated from the START program were in the program for <300 days and all of them had their TSR revoked. The two that had their TSR discharged were in the program for 378 and 903 days and started the program in 2011 and 2015, respectively. Therefore, it is of interest to understand what individuals are struggling with in the first 300 days of the START program. Additionally, future analysis to understand the difference in TSR outcomes between those who were terminated from the program and those who voluntarily left in less than 300 days is warranted. A chi-square test could not be calculated to support these observations due to the small number of individuals who had their TSR discharged.

To understand the differences in TSR outcomes, the START SER Team began to collect additional information on each case. Specifically, participant age at the time of START enrollment was selected to test the hypothesis that individuals who are younger in age would have poorer outcomes than those who were older in age. The START SER Team also collected information on the phase individuals were in when they were terminated from the START program to test the hypothesis that certain phases had higher termination and TSR revoked rates than other phases.

#### Data Analysis Round Two

The second round of analysis focused on the additional data (exit phase and age) collected on individuals who were terminated from the START program. Exhibit 6 shows the number of START-terminated individuals grouped by exiting START phase. Only one individual was



terminated from the program in Phase 4. More than half ( $17/33 = 51.52\%$ ) were terminated from the START program in Phase 1. This suggests that most individuals struggle earlier on in the program. Changes to Phase 1 of the START program should be strongly considered to help retain individuals in the program for longer.

**Exhibit 6. Number of Individuals Terminated, Grouped by START Program Phase at Time of Exit**

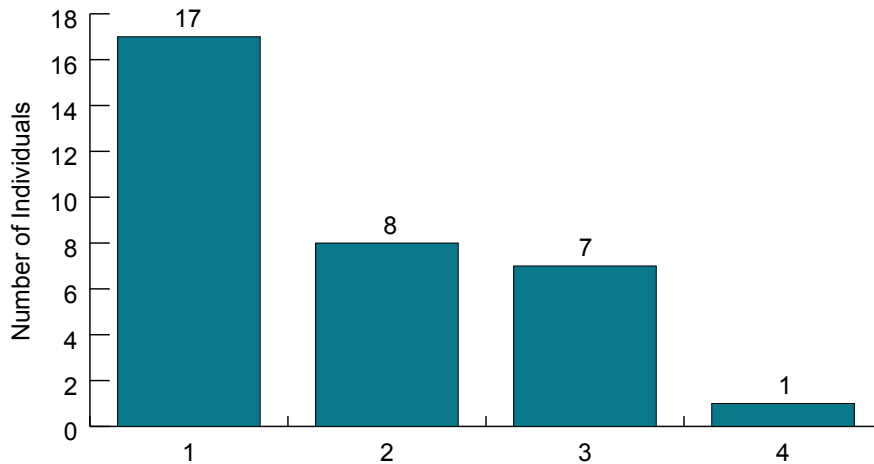


Exhibit 7 shows the maximum, average, and minimum ages of individuals terminated unsuccessfully from the START program grouped by their exiting START phase. Ages of terminated individuals were comparable in terms of how long they have been in the START program before they were terminated. Those who were terminated in Phase 1 were on average slightly younger than those terminated in other phases. Collecting ages of graduated and voluntarily left individuals might provide more insight into how age influences START completion.

**Exhibit 7. Age of Individuals Terminated From START, Grouped by START Program Phase at Time of Exit**

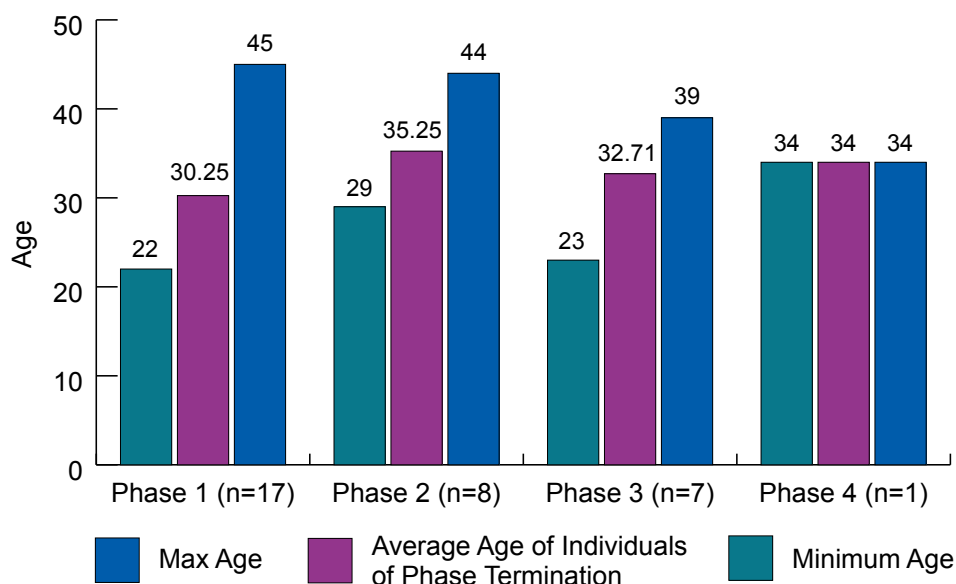
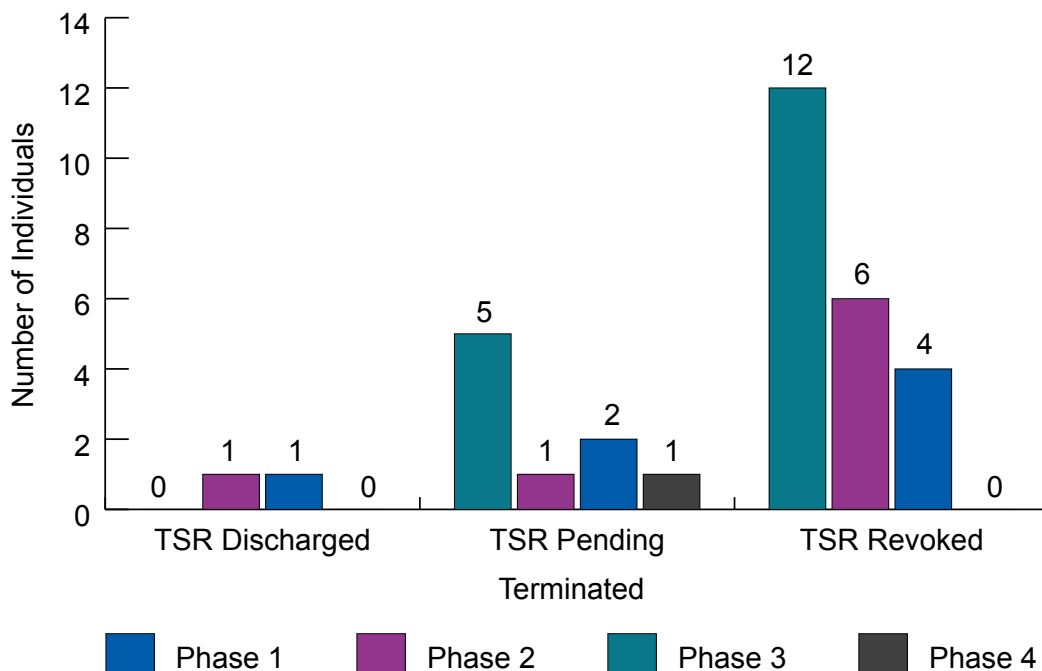


Exhibit 8 shows the number of individuals terminated from the START program grouped by their TSR Outcome (discharged, revoked, pending) and phase when terminated. More than half ( $12/22 = 54.55\%$ ) who had their TSR revoked were in Phase 1 of the START program when they were terminated. Additionally, the two individuals who had their TSR discharged were in Phases 2 and 3 when they were terminated from the program. This implies that those who are further along in the program have their TSR discharged more often than individuals who were in Phase 1 of the START program when they were terminated.

The two individuals who had their TSR discharged were in the START program 378 and 903 days. Therefore, the START SER Team might be interested in collecting completion dates of each START phase. This would allow the START SER Team to calculate how long, on average, individuals spend in each phase and if any additional time in a given phase is indicative of an individual being more or less likely to have positive primary and secondary outcomes.

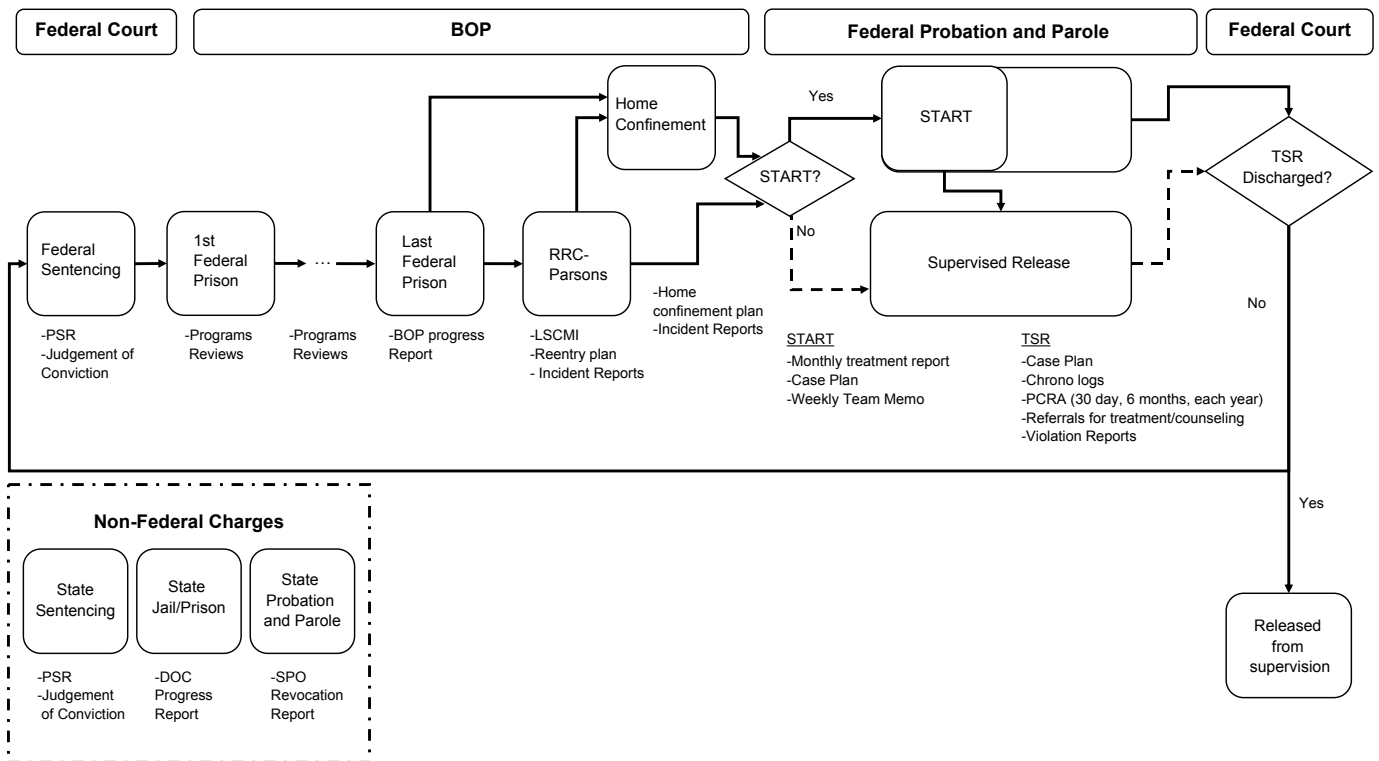
**Exhibit 8. Number of Individuals in Each Phase When They Exited the START Program, Grouped by START Outcome and TSR Outcome**



## Process Map

After a couple of meetings discussing the available information regarding a program participant, NIJ facilitators were able to map the flow of available documentation and information on START participants. Exhibit 9 shows a process map of the sentencing, incarceration, and reentry processes for individuals entering the START program. Different federal criminal justice organizations appear in the top row, with specific events/ places/programs aligned beneath. Under each event/place/program is a list of identified documentation created at that stage. Mapping all documentation allowed the START SER Team and NIJ facilitators to explore what information can be shared when and with whom, as well as where information is missing and who might be best to collect it. Acronyms and descriptions of documentation are provided in Appendix A.

**Exhibit 9. Process Map for Enrollment Into the START Program Along With Associated Documentation and Reports at Each Stage**



# Results of START SER

The START program outcomes analysis and case review process resulted in 28 identified recommendations. Following the final case review, the recommendations identified were categorized into themes, as well as into goals and strategies (Appendix D). This was done because the START SER Team recognized that many recommendations were broadly related and could potentially be addressed as a group. Team members also recognized that some recommendations were larger goals, and some were more specific strategies for achieving those goals.

To help prioritize the implementation of the 28 proposed recommendations, two steps were taken. First, START SER Team members were asked to identify their top 10 recommendations out of the total 28 recommendations by sending an email of those recommendations to NIJ facilitators. NIJ facilitators compiled the results and shared them with the START SER Team at the January meeting. This process resulted in each recommendation receiving a certain number of endorsements by the team. Of all 28 recommendations, 12 were endorsed by three or more members of the START SER Team (Appendix E).

Second, to further prioritize these 12 endorsed recommendations, NIJ facilitators developed a custom ranking and prioritization tool (Appendix F), which was modeled after similar ranking tools used in Implementation Science.<sup>4</sup> This ranking tool allowed each member of the START SER Team to anonymously rank the 12 endorsed recommendations by six features: impact, evidence, resources, sustainability, implementation, and importance. This ranking tool is one of the deliverables mentioned above and was administered via SurveyMonkey® through an account accessible to the START SER Team. In the future, as recommendations are implemented, the tool can be used to re-rank remaining recommendations along with any other new or previously unranked recommendations

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<sup>4</sup> Metz, A. & Louison, L. (2018) The hexagon tool: Exploring context. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Based on Kiser, Zabel, Zachik, & Smith (2007) and Blase, Kiser & Van Dyke (2013). <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/hexagon-exploration-tool>

the START SER Team is interested in implementing. Average total scores for each of the 12 recommendations, along with a description of the recommendation, can be found in Exhibit 10.

Recommendation	Score
Recommendation 8: Use consequences (incentives, deterrents) that can be ratcheted up and down.	31.2
Recommendation 6: Have BOP run a new progress report 30 days prior to release and share it with RRC and probation and parole.	30.8
Recommendation 4: Connect case managers across prison, RRC, and START program, including sharing of all relevant reports.	30.2
Recommendation 10: Have client take career aptitude and/or personality tests to show potential future career options and highlight their strengths.	30.2
Recommendation 5: Assemble START team and BOP personnel on a regular basis.	30.0
Recommendation 2: Add a therapist as part of the START Team.	29.2
Recommendation 3: Create more directed/specific counseling for mental health issues (for example, grief- and trauma-oriented).	29.2
Recommendation 11: Review past and current career assessment and training opportunities throughout the BOP, RRC, and START program to ensure continuity.	29.2
Recommendation 7: Create a standard process for recognition of and escalation for at-risk individuals within each phase.	29.0
Recommendation 12: Match Phase 1 START participants with Phase 4 participants, or use program graduates as mentors (to improve role models and family supports for some START participants).	28.2
Recommendation 9: Provide programming that focuses on how to avoid reengaging in drug sales/distribution and not just drug use.	27.8
Recommendation 1: Teach individuals how to recognize if they have experienced trauma. Expand access and enrollment in current BOP trauma treatment programs.	26.6

The detailed results for each ranked recommendation can be found in Exhibit 11, where the rows list each of the 12 recommendations that were ranked using the survey. The column headings indicate the feature that was ranked in the survey and the number is the average of the five survey responses. Each feature was scored between 1 to 5, except Importance, which was scored between 1 to 10. This created a range of potential scores from 6 to 35. Values highlighted in gray indicate the highest average feature scores for that recommendation.

#### Exhibit 11. Total Ranking Score and Average Rank Score Across Features\* for Each of the 12 Recommendations Endorsed by the START SER Team

	Impact (5)	Evidence (5)	Resource (5)	Sustain (5)	Implement (5)	Importance (10)	Total (35)
Rec 8	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.2	9.4	31.2
Rec 6	5.0	4.6	4.2	3.8	3.8	9.4	30.8
Rec 4	5.0	4.6	3.8	3.8	3.8	9.2	30.2
Rec 10	4.4	4.0	5.0	4.6	4.2	8.0	30.2
Rec 5	4.6	4.2	5.0	4.2	3.4	8.6	30.0
Rec 2	4.0	4.4	3.4	4.2	3.8	9.4	29.2

**Exhibit 11. Total Ranking Score and Average Rank Score Across Features\* for Each of the 12 Recommendations Endorsed by the START SER Team (continued)**

Rec 3	4.4	4.6	3.8	3.8	3.4	9.2	29.2
Rec 11	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.2	3.4	8.2	29.2
Rec 7	4.2	4.0	4.6	3.8	3.8	8.6	29.0
Rec 12	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.2	3.8	8.2	28.2
Rec 9	4.0	4.4	3.8	3.8	3.8	8.0	27.8
Rec 1	4.2	4.0	2.6	3.0	3.8	9.0	26.6

\* Top scores for each feature type are in grey.

The recommendations with the highest total scores were also generally the ones that scored highest for each feature. Exceptions are Recommendation 2 (adding a therapist to the START reentry team), which scored high on Importance, and Recommendation 3 (adding additional counseling services), which scored high for “Is there Evidence?” Additionally, Recommendation 10 (START program members taking career aptitude and personality tests) scored in the top 5 for total score but has one of the lowest Importance scores. This highlights some of the dynamic features of the ranking tool: It doesn’t simply indicate which recommendation is most preferred, it also shows *why* it’s preferred, which can help with understanding potential barriers to implementing a given recommendation.

# START SER Recommendation Themes

As mentioned above, START SER Team members identified broad themes that encompassed a number of different recommendations (see Appendix D). This section of the report summarizes these themes.

## Improving Mental Health Supports

There was a strong consensus among the participants that improving mental health support in the START program was an area of high priority. Mental health challenges were recognized by the START SER Team as a challenge for program participants, and the event review emphasized this theme.

For the cases examined, the START SER Team observed that, regardless of success or failure in the program, grief was a common experience for program participants. This grief was compounded by its recurrent nature and circumstances, wherein participants lost friends and family members on an ongoing basis due to homicide. START SER Team members felt unequipped to adequately address the high degree of chronic grief faced by program participants and identified the addition of grief counseling or grief management classes as possible solutions.

A history of potentially traumatic events or adverse childhood experiences (ACE) were identified as common to START program participants. ACEs refer specifically to a commonly defined set of 10 specific potentially traumatic events occurring in childhood;<sup>5</sup> these have been correlated with a wide range of poor outcomes, including criminal justice

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<sup>5</sup> Felitti, V. J., et al. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245–258. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797\(98\)00017-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797(98)00017-8)

involvement and violent behavior,<sup>6,7</sup> although the causality and directionality of these relationships are subjects of ongoing scientific debate.<sup>8</sup> In the SER process, a conversation arose about the lack of understanding of ACEs by START program participants, potentially traumatic events, and their potential impacts, despite their prevalence. To support START participants in identifying and coping with trauma, trauma-specific mental health support-related recommendations were generated. Adding a mental health counseling provider to the START team was widely supported, but challenges of feasibility were identified as a concern. A conversation about funding ensued, wherein the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration was identified as a possible funding agency for pursuing mental health service-related recommendations.

## Improving Information Sharing

Another primary theme that emerged from the recommendations was to increase information sharing about individuals within the START program. It was recognized that providing Federal Probation and Parole with information on the programs individuals accessed while incarcerated can help ensure better continuity of services. If individuals received substance use treatment, family counseling, or mental health supports, the START program can attempt to make similar services available in the community. This could allow for reentry resources to be better individualized and prioritized to eliminate unnecessary redundancies in programming while also maintaining continuity of services as necessary.

### **Sharing Reports Between Stakeholders**

A specific recommendation from the SER process identified the need to share reports generated at each step of the conviction and corrections process. Information about an individual from each stage of the process should be shared with the stakeholders in the next phase of the process (see Exhibit 9). As a specific example, it was recognized that certain relevant information about individuals from the Bureau of Prisons and RRC was not being shared with Federal Probation and Parole. If made available, that information could have been used by START case managers to develop more individualized support services and improvement plans for START program participants.

### **Report Quality Control**

Once information sharing is established between START team members and adjacent personnel, individuals who have access to the information for the first time may interpret and use the information in different ways. This means that the content and quality of these reports, not just their availability, may need to be monitored. Quality control feedback loops allow for more open communication about how information in a given report is used by other stakeholders. This can help reinforce the need to produce high-quality reports. A

<sup>6</sup> Testa, A., Jackson, D. B., Ganson, K. T., & Nagata, J. M. (2021). Adverse childhood experiences and criminal justice contact in adulthood. *Academic Pediatrics*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2021.10.011>

<sup>7</sup> Fitton, L., Yu, R., & Fazel, S. (2018). Childhood maltreatment and violent outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective studies. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 21(4), 754–768. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838018795269>

<sup>8</sup> Vaske, J., Boisvert, D., & Wright, J. P. (2012). Genetic and environmental contributions to the relationship between violent victimization and criminal behavior. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(16), 3213–3235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260512441254>



corrections or court officer may be more likely to fill out a report completely and correctly if they understand how that information may be used to promote successful reentry. Feedback on report quality from Federal Probation and Parole to the Bureau of Prisons could help establish this kind of quality control. Additionally, due to a history of siloed information, reports may only be structured around internal organizational needs. If reports can be shared across stakeholders, then the required information within them and the Standard Operating Procedures for filling out reports may also need to be adapted.

### ***Non-Federal Criminal Record***

In addition to sharing information across Federal Courts, Bureau of Prisons, and Federal Probation and Parole, there is also a potential benefit in Federal Probation and Parole and the Bureau of Prisons having access to an individual's non-federal criminal record and incarceration history. This may be particularly challenging given the historic lack of, or one-way, information sharing between state and federal justice systems. Sharing of information between these systems may also provide START case managers with additional information to maintain continuity of services for START participants and thereby develop more individualized reentry plans.

While information sharing is generally suggested, this should never be done at the expense of an individual's privacy. All information sharing should be supported through data sharing agreements and Memorandums of Understanding that outline specifically how data will be shared, stored, and protected to maintain critical individual privacy protections.

## **Adapting START Program Practices**

A number of recommendations were targeted toward adapting existing START program practices in order to improve outcomes for START program participants.

### ***Identifying At-Risk Participants***

During the SER for the two "failure" cases it was recognized that there were certain indicators that the individual may be at risk of non-compliance with the START program requirements. The team recognized the need to develop a system to identify at-risk participants within each phase of the program. Missing drug tests or other required appointments and losing and/or changing jobs quickly, while not grounds for removal from the program, may be important indicators that an individual is at risk of failure. Additionally, the analysis of START program outcomes reported above identified that extra time spent in a given phase (particularly Phase 1) was associated with higher failure rates. Identifying these risks, and intervening with additional engagement or some other planned incentives, could help get individuals back on a path toward success. It is important to continue to evaluate risk indicators, as well as the reengagement plans, so that this approach and the tactics used can continue to be optimized.

### ***Evaluating Use of Incentives and Deterrents***

The START program has a variety of incentives and deterrents built into its structure to promote compliance with the program requirements. The SER process identified circumstances where the various incentives and deterrents were insufficient to maintain program compliance. A set of tools to consider for guidance on how to best leverage available incentives and deterrents comes from insights from behavior analysis. Two tools for

developing and evaluating incentive systems are Contingency Management and the PICNIC Analysis® (see Appendix H for more information).<sup>9</sup> An overview of these tools was provided to the START SER Team by NIJ facilitators. A summary of this information can be found in Appendix I.

### ***Understanding START Program Participant’s Perspective***

A number of members of the START SER Team spoke of the value of better understanding the experiences of START program participants. The team discussed ways to more systematically survey program participants about their successes and difficulties with the program. NIJ facilitators worked with the START SER Team to develop an exit survey for individuals who complete the START program. A preliminary draft of this survey can be found in Appendix C.

## **Mentoring**

Another set of recommendations identified the need for better mentoring services. The START SER Team recognized the need for better external and internal mentoring for START participants. For external mentoring, Phase 4 START participants should be more strongly encouraged to identify a community mentor to attend their START program sessions during Phase 4. This could help START participants maintain the community connections they developed during the program.

A recommendation from the SER also suggested developing an internal mentoring system. Analysis of START program outcomes showed that most individuals who are not successful in the START program failed during the first phase, while there was very little failure during Phases 3 or 4. This analysis led to the specific recommendation for START participants from Phase 3 or 4 to be matched with participants in Phase 1 to act as mentors. Expanding peer support networks, particularly with trusted voices, could help Phase 1 START participants be more successful.

## **Education and Job Training Continuity**

Another set of issues identified in the SER was the lack of connection and continuity between the job training and education services provided while incarcerated and available job opportunities once released from prison. The cases reviewed identified that—while incarcerated individuals engaged in a variety of jobs and skill development including plumbing, HVAC, and kitchen management—upon release, individuals were not connected with employment opportunities that matched these experiences. Job training and skills development in prisons should be connected to job opportunities within those same sectors. This could provide additional incentive to engage in these programs while incarcerated and also help provide actual opportunities and assurances for a good job and life after prison. While there are a range of factors that contribute to recidivism, including substance use, so does the lack of meaningful employment.

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<sup>9</sup> Daniels, A. C., & Daniels, J. E. (2014). Performance management: Changing behavior that drives organizational effectiveness. Atlanta, GA: Performance Management Publications.

***Programs: Targeting Existing Strengths***

The relationship between employment and substance use was further noted by START participants. While not specific to the START program, there seems to be a lack of effective program options for participants whose primary motivation for drug trafficking is the associated lifestyle, rather than substance use itself. Arrests for possession and sales could suggest a substance use problem that needs to be addressed through substance use treatment programs. However, engaging in a drug dealing lifestyle, not just substance use itself, may be an additional risk factor for reentry failure. In these circumstances, providing participants with pathways to better paying jobs that allow them to support and generate respect from family, friends, and peers may be more impactful than substance use programming alone. This recommendation speaks more generally to the need for better assessment and utilization of individuals' existing strengths and competencies when planning for reentry success.

## Benefits of Engaging in SER

The START SER Team identified many benefits of engaging in the SER process. Meeting regularly around a common cause facilitated the building and strengthening of new and existing relationships. These relationships could serve to enhance collaboration and problem-solving now and in the future by building on and expanding the existing tradition of cooperation in the START SER Team. Specifically, the collaborative environment of the SER process allowed for a high-trust atmosphere in discussing both successes and failures in the program, allowing for new insights to be generated. In this process, missing voices in the START SER Team were identified, allowing for their inclusion in the future. Furthermore, the emphasis on open data-sharing allowed for the elimination of institutional siloing between the different components of the criminal justice system. Stakeholders representing distinct institutions within the START program were able to share data and information, benefiting from one another and identifying what information can be shared in the future to facilitate the success of the START program.

Through the SER, representatives from different components of the federal criminal justice system were able to come together around a specific outcome: reentry success. While each of these representatives played some role in an individual's transition into community corrections, responsibility for understanding success and failure in reentry has generally fallen on probation and parole systems. This SER is unique in bringing together federal criminal justice system partners to plan for reentry success earlier in the incarceration process.

The SER process allowed for the identification of common observations about the struggles of START participants and areas for improvement in the program. Through the SER process, these common observations and interests were shaped into goals, and then concrete, stepwise recommendations for implementation. SER participants expressed appreciation for the facilitation of the SER process, and an interest in implementing SER internally on an ongoing basis.

The SER process facilitated reviews of aspects of the program that might not otherwise receive dedicated attention. This allowed for the holistic review of program outcomes, facilitating the recommendations previously described. The SER process allowed for data analysis to be conducted and used to inform new conversations. Internal START program data collection methods were reviewed and concrete steps identified to improve them. Overall, new data, relationship development, and observations and goals were used to improve the START program.

# Considerations for Implementing Future SERs

## Considerations for Forming an SER Team

The START SER Team has had a long history of cooperation. START has been in existence for over 10 years and many of the START SER Team members have been part of START for many years. Critical elements when forming an SER team include:

1. **Having a champion.** In the case of the START SER, the Assistant United States Attorney had been a regular participant in other reviews occurring in the district and had seen firsthand the positive outcomes achievable through SER.
2. **Right people, right agencies.** All of the START SER Team members were engaged and committed in the START SER. Each member was able to share relevant case information, provide valuable information on policy and practice in their organization, and participate in thoughtful discussion for change. If additional expertise or information was required, ad hoc members were included as needed.
3. **Information sharing.** In the case of START, agencies were already sharing information, and the SER allowed the team to identify gaps by viewing the information through a slightly different lens.

## Considerations for Future Case Selection

Future SERs can look to formalize the case review selection process. There are several possible strategies for guiding case selection. A few options are:

1. **Balanced approach:** Look at equal numbers of “near-miss” and unsuccessful cases.
2. **Agency-specific:** Have representatives from the different justice systems (BOP, RRC, Probation and Parole, Reentry Court, Community Resource Specialist) select cases.
3. **START program features:** Compare cases that were unsuccessful in particular phases (1-4) or cases that did or did not receive certain services.
4. **Individual demographics/BOP record information:** Compare cases where individuals are in certain age ranges (25-30 years old vs. 35-40 years old) or who have certain BOP designations (Residential Drug Abuse Program (RDAP) required vs. RDAP not required).
5. **TSR discharged vs. TSR not discharged, but still completed program.**
6. **Other themes identified through START programming.**

## Considerations for Executing Successful Sessions

As seen from the demonstrated success in the development and initial implementation of recommendations by the START SER Team, SERs are a forum for collaboration and information sharing that leads to improvements in agency and system policy and practice. Several critical elements are fundamental to a successful SER; these include:

1. **Shared goal to improve outcomes.**
2. **Strong facilitation.**
  - i. **Creating a safe place to share information.**
  - ii. **Non-blaming discussion.**
  - iii. **Confidential discussion.**
3. **Shared understanding of expectations of the SER.**
4. **Aggregate-level data and use of case reviews to provide context to the focus area.**
5. **Representative case selection based on identified themes, such as incorporating non-case review meetings/information.**
6. **Consistent information sharing.**

7. Consistent participation.
8. Recommendations to improve system- and agency-specific policy and practice:
  - i. Assign someone to track recommendations during meeting.
  - ii. Review recommendations after each meeting.
  - iii. Record recommendations as they are identified. (Waiting until the end of a given meeting or case review and trying to remember all the recommendations will likely result in missed or misrepresented recommendations. In future SERs without NIJ facilitators, a member of the START SER Team can fill this role.)
9. Action taken on the recommendations developed.

## Considerations for Analyzing START Program Data

It is recommended that the START probation officer use the new Excel spreadsheet format to collect START participant data. The new format has a variety of calculated cells and figures and tables that can be easily refreshed when new data is added. Additionally, data that should be collected from START participants include their age at the time of entering the START program and the dates they complete each phase. Summary tables and figures regarding this additional information are already built into the new Excel spreadsheet.

Additional information the START SER Team might wish to collect, analyze, and discuss in the future include an individual's risk score assigned at the start of probation, the risk factors that most contributed to an individual's high-risk score, programming used by the START participant, and additional information regarding why someone voluntarily left or was terminated from the START program. These additional data and/or creation of additional tables or graphs can be managed by the START probation officer. However, it may be best to have an intern, contractor, or project assistant create any new features in the Excel document due to the amount of time required to collect information on all past START participants and the technical skills required to create new tables, formulas, or graphs in Excel.

Desired data of current START participants should be tracked and updated routinely by the START probation officer as soon as information becomes available. Summary tables and figures should be reviewed and discussed frequently and regularly (e.g., monthly, quarterly) with the entire START SER Team. These discussions can help pinpoint areas of concern or identify future SER case reviews that the team would like to discuss. They can also guide other information the team wishes to collect or review. Lastly, when discussing future SER case reviews, these data tables and summaries can help the START SER Team determine if an individual's experience or needs might be common among START participants with poor or successful outcomes, or if the recommendations discussed are specific to just that individual.



## Considerations for Selecting and Implementing Recommendations

For future SERs, NIJ facilitators suggest following the process outlined above in the *Case Selection* and *Cases Reviewed* sections. Additional suggestions for selecting and implementing recommendations are provided below.

### **Selecting Recommendations**

Ranking tools like the one designed by NIJ facilitators are used in implementation science to help prioritize and plan for system changes. A ranking scorecard is used to capture different dimensions of the potential success and barriers of a given recommendation. If a recommendation is ranked high on impact but low on resources and sustainability then, while potentially impactful, it may be difficult to implement and sustain. Similarly, there may be resources and even evidence to support a given recommendation, but if it is not ranked as important to the group, then START SER Team members may be less likely to take ownership for advancing that recommendation. In general, focusing on recommendations that score well across all features may be more likely to be adopted and sustained.

Importantly, the Recommendations Ranking tool is meant to be dynamic and repeatable. Different features can be ranked, and ranking scores can be changed to emphasize the priority of certain features. The tool can be used repeatedly because, as some recommendations come to fruition, other recommendations may become more actionable. Additionally, only a subset (12) of the original 28 recommendations were ranked. As certain recommendations are achieved, it may be necessary to revisit the original list and reassess priority and rankings. Finally, these rankings are based on the START SER Team's perception of priority and capability, which may also change as the team learns more about the barriers and supports associated with making certain kinds of changes.

The SurveyMonkey® account used to create the ranking tool belongs to the Wisconsin Eastern Probation Office. Please contact them to access, update, and reuse the survey for future Sentinel Event Reviews.

### **Implementing Recommendations**

NIJ facilitators provided the START SER Team with some general guidelines for implementing recommendations identified through the SER process. First, each recommendation should have a designated team member(s) responsible for taking ownership and responsibility for a specific recommendation. Ownership means holding assigned team members accountable for implementing the recommendation in a timely fashion. Based on the experiences of NIJ facilitators in prior SERs, recommendations were more likely to be worked on when a single individual was primarily accountable for a given recommendation.

Second, once ownership is established for a given recommendation, an Implementation Plan should be developed. This plan specifies the steps needed to implement the recommendation. Each step should be ordered, have trackable implementation goals, and include self-imposed deadlines with specific dates, when possible. These trackable goals help with monitoring and ensuring fidelity to the changes outlined in the Implementation Plan. During implementation it is important to regularly assess fidelity in order to know if

implementation goals are being met. If goals are not being met, the broader START SER Team should meet to discuss barriers and make a revised Implementation Plan. While not everyone on the START SER Team will be working on each recommendation, members can work together to hold each other accountable by monitoring and reporting progress on implementation goals. Before an assessment can be made about whether implementing a given recommendation produced meaningful impact, it is critical to know if the initial implementation was successful.

Each implementation plan should be developed with sustainability of the recommendation in mind. System recommendations should establish and sustain system modifications through changes and investments into the organizational infrastructure. Infrastructure investments are often needed to support monitoring and reporting of progress on implementation goals.<sup>10</sup> Sustainability also means planning for expected staff turnover and other changes in resources.<sup>11</sup> This could include incorporating changes into official documentation, Standard Operating Procedures, Statements of Work, and performance evaluations.

Implementing recommendations in a complex and interconnected system like the criminal justice system can be difficult; to maintain engagement of partners it is important to celebrate successes.<sup>12</sup> When implementation goals are reached, plan for celebrations and recognition for START SER team members.

Finally, the data should guide implementation. To promote data-based decision-making about the START program, the START SER Team should keep reviewing any new measurements they establish to monitor implementation of recommendations. The Team should also continue assessing the current metrics to see if successful implementation of a given recommendation impacts outcomes for START program participants.

## Sustainability of SER Sessions

There are several key steps to sustain internal implementation of SER for the START SER Team on an ongoing basis. Frequency and leadership goals should be established and resources needed to meet those goals should be identified. Key questions to answer might include:

- How often should SER be conducted?
- Who will lead the sessions?
- Where will sessions be held?

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<sup>10</sup> Proctor, E., Luke, D., Calhoun, A., McMillen, C., Brownson, R., McCrary, S., & Padek, M. (2015). Sustainability of evidence-based healthcare: research agenda, methodological advances, and infrastructure support. *Implementation Science*, 10(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-015-0274-5>

<sup>11</sup> Savignac, J., & Dunbar, L. (2014). Guide on the implementation of evidence-based programs. *Ottawa: Public Safety Canada*. <https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/item?id=PS114-10-2014-eng&op=pdf&app=Library>

<sup>12</sup> Demes, J. A. E., et al. (2020). What are the characteristics of the champion that influence the implementation of quality improvement programs? *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 80, 101795. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2020.101795>

- What allocation of time and meeting space is needed?

With these questions answered, a timeline and agreement for future SER can be prepared. Implementing accountability systems to track progress toward recommendations generated through SER will be crucial to maximizing the benefits of SER. An Implementation Plan for reviewing and discussing progress toward recommendation implementation would be helpful for reaching these goals. Maintaining contact between START SER Team members for periodic discussion of the recommendations will also be useful for this purpose.

## SER Exit Survey

To improve future federal SERs and to better understand the SER Team's experiences, all members of the START SER Team were asked to complete an exit survey administered via SurveyMonkey. Six members of the START SER Team responded to the survey, which took an average of 10 minutes to complete. See Exhibit 13 for survey questions in Appendix I.

Results from the survey suggest that all (6 out of 6 or 100%) to most (5 out of 6 or 83%) survey participants responded favorably to questions about the SER review process. Survey respondents reported that the SER achieved its goals as a non-blaming, forward-looking review. Participating agencies felt engaged and that their agency was important to the SER process. Survey respondents agreed that the SER process improved information sharing and that they feel prepared to complete future SERs on their own. (See exhibit 12 for responses to specific Yes/No survey questions.) However, only half (3 out of 6 or 50%) of survey respondents thought that *most* of the recommendations could be implemented (see Appendix I, exhibit 14), or that the agency knows *all* of what is needed for successful implementation of recommendations (see Appendix I, exhibit 15).

The survey also contained eleven open-ended questions. Responses to these questions were grouped into three major categories: what made SERs work, what were the SER challenges, and how to improve future SERs. Major themes identified across respondents included:

What made SERs work?

- Honesty and openness among SER Team members.
- Getting the group together to talk about what they can do to improve outcomes for participants and not just what the participants need to do.
- Not being upset about the actions and processes in other criminal justice systems.

What were the SER challenges?

- More time was required for the first case review to allow SER Team members to become familiar with the process.

- Hybrid meeting format (virtual and in-person) was not ideal; in person was preferred.
- SER participants could have benefited from a better understanding of what is needed to prepare for SER reviews, including a timeline of actions for each case review and the need for redacted reports and existing data/statistics about program participants.
- Implementing recommendations had limitations, including differences in participating agency priorities and insufficient access to resources such as staff and funding.
- Some agencies have a larger role to play in implementing certain recommendations, which may require them to be responsible for a larger number of recommendations.

How to improve future SERs?

- Develop a more concentrated timeframe for the review.
- Ensure that all potential SER Team members participate in all meetings and all aspects of the SER process from the beginning.
- Have additional voices represented at the SER, including former START program participants, as well as representatives from the initial arresting agency (specifically if arrested as a juvenile).
- Establish repeated periodic reviews and ongoing communication.

All participants responded positively to participating in the SER process, stating that they would participate again, that it was beneficial, and that the process will help make the program better. Participants reported feeling positive and encouraged and recognized the value of outside perspectives, comments, and questions from NIJ facilitators who are not necessarily familiar with their program. Most members of the SER Team completed the survey; however, there were only six total responses. This sample size should be noted in any extrapolations based on these survey results.

#### Exhibit 12. Summary of Yes/No Exit Survey Questions

Number	Question	Percent Responding 'Yes' (N=6)
Q1	Has the SER process up to this point achieved its goal?	100%
Q3	Was the SER process a non-blaming review of events?	100%
Q4	Was the SER process a forward-looking review?	100%
Q8	Did you feel engaged in the SER process?	100%
Q10	Do you think your agency was important in completing the SER process?	100%
Q12	Were there agencies/participants that detracted from the process?	0%
Q14	Did the SER process improve information sharing from other agencies with your agency (e.g., new information, more timely information)?	100%
Q15	Did the SER process improve your agency sharing information with other agencies?	100%

**Exhibit 12. Summary of Yes/No Exit Survey Questions (continued)**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Percent Responding 'Yes' (N=6)</b>
Q18	Do you think your agency will be able to overcome any challenges to implementing recommendations?	83%
Q20	Do you feel that that there is a shared responsibility to ensure all recommendations will be implemented?	83%
Q22	Did the SER process meet your expectations?	100%
Q24	Do you feel that you were adequately prepared for your participation in the SER?	100%
Q26	Would you participate in another SER?	100%
Q27	Would you recommend SER to another agency that wants to strengthen their procedures in a non-blaming, forward-looking way?	100%
Q28	Do you think the START team can implement future SERs without an external facilitator (e.g., NIJ staff)?	100%
Q29	Do you think the START team will continue to implement future SERs?	100%

## Conclusion

The SER of the Eastern District of Wisconsin's START program was executed in an effort to improve outcomes for START program participants. This report outlines the SER process that was carried out with the START SER Team, with the help of NIJ facilitators. Engaging in case reviews and structured analysis of existing START program data and outcome measures resulted in over two dozen recommendations to improve reentry success for START program participants. To aid the START SER Team in implementation of suggested changes, recommendations were discussed and ranked to prioritize the most actionable recommendations. Recommendation themes spanned topics ranging from improving mental health supports to improving information sharing.

NIJ facilitators also outlined how to make the SER process sustainable and repeatable for the START SER Team. Guidance was provided on forming the SER Team, case selection, executing successful review sessions, analyzing START program data, and considerations for prioritizing and implementing recommendations, all with the goal of making SERs a common, efficient, and effective practice. Exit survey results from the START SER Team indicated broad support for the SER process across a variety of metrics. This first SER of a federal program suggests that SERs can be effectively implemented to evaluate a federal probation and parole reentry program and produce actionable recommendations for improvement.

# Appendix A: List of Acronyms

ACE	adverse childhood experiences
BOP	Bureau of Prisons
DOC	Department of Corrections
FJC	Federal Judicial Center
LSCMI	Level of Service Case Management Inventory
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
RDAP	Residential Drug Abuse Program
RRC	Residential Reentry Center
SER	Sentinel Event Review
SPO	State Parole/Probation Officer
START	Successful Transition and Reentry Together
TSR	Term of Supervised Release



## Appendix B: List of Documentation and Reports

Below is a list of all documents and reports that were accessible to START team members and used in conducting the SERs.

**BOP Progress Report** – Federal prison report summarizing BOP programming, education, violations, disciplinary actions, and BOP placement. This report is typically run six months to one year prior to placement in RRC or home confinement.

**Case Plan** – The probation office plan for supervision that includes the conditions, needs, and risks, and how the START Team is addressing each area.

**Chrono Logs** – Detailed notes from the probation office for every contact relating to each case. These were used in the case review process but were not specifically referred to in this report.

**DOC Progress Report** – Standard report from the state prison system summarizing the conditions of incarceration, incident reports, and programs successfully completed by the individual in prison.

**Federal and State Parole/Probation Officer (SPO) Revocation Report** – A report listing court action on the case, violations while on supervision, and adjustments while on supervision.

**Home Confinement Plans** – A description of the home confinement placement residence and other occupants of the residence.

**Incident Reports** – Reports by BOP/RRC/Home Confinement that capture all incidents of violations at each phase.

**Judgment of Conviction** – The judgment from both federal and state courts, including the sentence and conditions of supervision.

**Level of Service Case Management Inventory (LSCMI)** – The risk assessment tool RRC uses upon entry to the RRC.

**Post-Conviction Risk Assessment** – A risk assessment tool used by the federal probation office.

**Presentence Report** – A report that explains the current offense, past offense(s) and arrests, family history, substance use disorder and mental health history, education, employment, and guidelines for sentencing.

**Program Reviews** – Summary of treatment or programming while in the BOP/RRC.

**Reentry Plan** – A report created by the BOP and RRC as to the needs and description of reentry plan for transitioning to the term of supervised release.

**Referrals for Treatment/Counseling** – Information sent to an agency by the probation office to request provision of treatment services for a client.

**Treatment Report** – A treatment program report that provides a description of the treatment goals, progress, and recommendations for future treatment.

**Weekly Team Memo** – A memo the federal probation officer writes before each START session on each START participant, with an update to the team on what happened since they last appeared and credit available.

# Appendix C: START Program Phase Objectives and Expectations

## PHASE 1 (minimum of 6 weeks)<sup>13</sup>

Goal: During this phase, the participant begins to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize, manage, and avoid patterns of behavior and factors associated with substance abuse and criminal behavior.

Objectives:

- Have the participant engage in a treatment process that provides the skills necessary to avoid or manage high-risk situations.
- Provide supervision that teaches new skills that reduce the participant's risk and offers ongoing review and feedback of the participant's progress with the agreed-upon case plan.
- Provide judicial oversight using both sanctions and incentives that are designed to enhance the participant's intrinsic motivation and increase the application of skills that reduce the risk of future drug use and criminal behavior.

Expectations of participants:

- Develop a treatment plan with the reentry court team.
- Report to the probation officer as directed.

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<sup>13</sup> The reentry court judge, upon consultation with the reentry court team, may extend the period of each phase as necessary to ensure that the goal of each phase is met.

- Have weekly phone/text conversations with the probation officer.
- Attend weekly reentry court hearings on time as directed.
- Identify future goals and the steps needed to achieve them.
- Attend substance abuse and/or mental health treatment, as deemed necessary.
- Address networks by identifying positive and negative persons in their life.
- Identify a community support group or transition coach to begin meeting with (assisted by the reentry court team, if necessary).
- Comply with all requirements for drug testing as directed by the probation officer.
- Complete 30 hours per week in one or a combination of the following:
  - Full-time employment.
  - Educational programming.
  - Community service.
  - Employment programming.
  - Acceptable pro-social activity approved by the reentry court team.
- Participate in cognitive-behavioral programming as directed.
- Make a good faith effort to be current with any court-ordered financial obligations/payment plans.
- Begin developing a relapse prevention plan that identifies high-risk situations and the skills necessary to manage or avoid each situation.
- Comply with all conditions of supervised release.

Criteria for Phase 1 Advancement: To complete Phase 1, the participant must receive credit for six satisfactory weeks and meet all the above expectations.

## **PHASE 2 (minimum of 12 weeks)<sup>14</sup>**

Goal: The participant will demonstrate a commitment to living a crime-free lifestyle and continue to acquire and develop skills that help identify, manage, and avoid high-risk situations. The participant will develop a prosocial network and work toward developing economic self-sufficiency.

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<sup>14</sup> The reentry court judge, upon consultation with the reentry court team, may extend the period of each phase as necessary to ensure that the goal of each phase is met.

## Objectives:

- Continue the appropriate treatment process as identified by an ongoing assessment of the participant's criminogenic risk/needs.
- Provide supervision that offers an ongoing review and feedback on the participant's progress with the agreed-upon case plan.
- Provide educational tools designed to reduce the criminogenic risk of the participant.
- Provide judicial oversight using both sanctions and incentives that are designed to enhance the participant's intrinsic motivation.
- Increase the application of skills that reduce the risk of illegal drug use and other criminal behavior.
- Enhance prosocial networks to reduce the risk of returning to negative associations.

## Expectations of participants:

- Report to the probation officer as directed.
- Have weekly phone/text conversations with the probation officer.
- Attend bi-weekly reentry court hearings on time as directed.
- Attend substance abuse and/or mental health treatment, as deemed necessary.
- Engage with a community support group or transition coach bi-weekly or as approved by the probation officer.
- Comply with all requirements for drug testing as directed by the probation officer.
- Continue to complete 30 hours per week in one or a combination of the following:
  - Full-time employment.
  - Educational programming.
  - Community service.
  - Employment programming.
  - Acceptable pro-social activity approved by the reentry court team.
- Participate in cognitive-behavioral programming as directed.
- Make a good faith effort to be current with any court-ordered financial obligations/payment plans.

- Complete and implement the relapse prevention plan that identifies high-risk situations and the skills necessary to manage or avoid each situation.
- Comply with all conditions of supervised release.

Criteria for Phase 2 Advancement: To complete Phase 2, the participant must receive credit for 12 satisfactory weeks, have a period of abstinence from abused substance(s) and/or addiction of at least two weeks, and meet all the above expectations.

### **PHASE 3 (minimum of 16 weeks)<sup>15</sup>**

Goal: The participant will continue to demonstrate a commitment to a crime-free lifestyle by continuing the development and mastery of skills that help to identify, manage, and avoid high-risk situations. Participant will continue to develop a prosocial network and progress toward economic self-sufficiency.

Objectives:

- Continue providing educational and therapeutic tools designed to reduce the identified criminogenic risk/needs of the participant.
- Monitor application of skills learned through the educational and therapeutic process while providing ongoing review and feedback to the participant as it relates to the agreed-upon case plan.
- Provide judicial oversight using both sanctions and incentives that are designed to enhance the participant's intrinsic motivation.
- Continue to build prosocial networks.

Expectations of participants:

- Report to the probation officer as directed.
- Have weekly or bi-weekly phone/text conversations with the probation officer.
- Attend monthly reentry court hearings on time as directed.
- Attend substance abuse and/or mental health treatment, as deemed necessary.
- Engage with a community support group or transition coach bi-weekly or as approved by the probation officer.
- Comply with all requirements for drug testing as directed by the probation officer.

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<sup>15</sup> The reentry court judge, upon consultation with the reentry court team, may extend the period of each phase as necessary to ensure that the goal of each phase is met.

- Continue to complete 30 hours per week in one or a combination of the following:
  - Full-time employment.
  - Educational programming.
  - Community service.
  - Employment programming.
  - Acceptable prosocial activity approved by the reentry court team.
- Participate in a cognitive-behavioral program as directed.
- Make a good faith effort to be current with any court-ordered financial obligations/ payment plans.
- Follow the relapse prevention plan that identifies high-risk situations and the skills necessary to manage or avoid each situation.
- Comply with all conditions of supervised release.

Criteria for Phase 3 Advancement: To complete Phase 3, the participant must receive credit for 16 satisfactory weeks. Participant must have a period of abstinence of at least four weeks preceding phase advancement and meet all the above expectations.

## **PHASE 4 (minimum of 18 weeks)<sup>16</sup>**

Goal: The participant will demonstrate the ability to apply the skills learned in all phases to live a crime-free lifestyle and articulate a relapse prevention plan that identifies potential high-risk situations, skills that reduce the identified risks, a prosocial network that supports the participant, and financial planning that enhances economic self-sufficiency.

Objectives:

- Continue providing educational and therapeutic tools designed to reduce the identified criminogenic risk/needs of the participant.
- Monitor application of skills learned through the educational and therapeutic process while providing ongoing review and feedback to the participant as it relates to the agreed-upon case plan.
- Develop a relapse prevention plan that will support a crime-free lifestyle.
- Maintain and solidify prosocial networks.

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<sup>16</sup> The reentry court judge, upon consultation with the reentry court team, may extend the period of each phase as necessary to ensure that the goal of each phase is met.

Expectations of participants:

- Report to the probation officer as directed.
- Have weekly or bi-weekly phone/text conversations with the probation officer.
- Attend monthly reentry court hearings on time as directed.
- Attend substance abuse and/or mental health treatment, as deemed necessary.
- Engage with a community support group or transition coach bi-weekly or as approved by the probation officer.
- Comply with all requirements for drug testing as directed by the probation officer.
- Continue to complete 30 hours per week in one or a combination of the following:
  - Full-time employment.
  - Educational programming.
  - Community service.
  - Employment programming.
  - Acceptable prosocial activity approved by the reentry court team.
- Attend a cognitive-behavioral program as directed.
- Make a good faith effort to be current with any court-ordered financial obligations/ payment plans.
- Comply with all conditions of supervised release.
- Follow the relapse prevention plan that identifies high-risk situations and the skills necessary to manage or avoid each situation.
- Bring one support person with them to group meetings.
- Complete a plan for continued success in the community and present that plan at the graduation ceremony.

Criteria for Phase 4 Advancement and Graduation: To complete Phase 4, the participant must receive credit for 18 satisfactory weeks. To graduate from the program, the participant must receive credit for 52 satisfactory weeks. In addition, the participant must have:

- A period of abstinence from illegal substances of at least six weeks preceding graduation from the program.
- A period of one month of employment or educational programming, or be enrolled in an employment training program leading to full-time employment.



## Appendix D: START Program Discharge/Phase Transfer Interview Questions

1. Based on a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being not likely and 10 very likely) how likely do you think you will be successful in the START program?
  - This question is designed to see if there is any relationship between perception of success and actual success (this could also be done by phase).
2. What was your strategy to be successful in the START program?
  - This question is meant to assess what the individual hopes to bring to the table as far as their strengths.
3. Which parts of the START program do you feel were most helpful to you?
  - This question is for specific feedback about the START program.
4. What parts of the START program do you feel were not helpful to you?
  - This question is for specific feedback about the START program.
5. What suggestions do you have to improve the START program?
  - This question is for specific feedback about the START program.

# Appendix E: Full List of Recommendations Identified During START SER, Ordered by Theme

Themes are bolded and underlined. Goals follow bullet points. Objectives follow hyphens.

## **Improving Mental Health and Other Programming Services**

- Teach individuals how to recognize if they have experienced trauma. Expand access and enrollment in current BOP trauma treatment programs.
  - Add a therapist to the START Team.
  - Identify or create directed counseling for mental health issues that is grief- and trauma-oriented.
  - Add additional mental health screening missed in the PSR.
- Provide programming that focuses on how to avoid reengaging in drug sales/distribution and not just drug use.

## **Increasing Information Sharing**

- Recommend that federal BOP share more information with federal probation and parole.
  - Convene START team and BOP personnel.
  - Work to ensure summary documents (BOP progress report) are shared with parole officer to ensure that information is available for selection of START participants and to share with START Team.

- Brainstorm and implement strategies to connect case managers across prison, RRC, and START program.
  - Run a new progress report 30 days prior to release, to be shared with RRC and probation and parole (BOP).
  - Create protocols or increase resources to allow BOP case managers to leave more notes during critical transition to RRC.
  - Establish feedback loop with BOP to identify and address issues with report quality (insufficient, missing, and/or conflicting information).
- Improve information sharing between state prison and probation services and the federal system, and promote regular communication.
  - Connect mental health and substance use support across institutional and community corrections.

#### **Adapting START Program Practices**

- Create a standard process for recognition of and escalation for at-risk individuals within each phase.
  - Use consequences (incentives, deterrents) that can be ratcheted up and down.
  - Reduce drug test outcome/consequence delays.
- Have client take career aptitude and/or personality tests to show potential future career options and highlight their strengths.
  - Have clients without GED equivalent complete a literacy test.
  - Review past and current career assessment and training opportunities throughout the BOP, RRC, and START program to ensure continuity.
- Match Phase 1 START participants with Phase 4 participants as mentors (to improve role models and family supports for some START participants).
- Promote Phase 4 requirement for participant to identify family or community member to attend final meetings and graduation.
- Establish standard discharge interview for successful and unsuccessful START participants.
- Review how various programs are conducted to identify what those programs are doing well, what could be improved, and how to enroll more participants in relevant programming.

- Establish a process for individuals who are participating in the START program for a second time.
- Expand reentry court.

**Adapting BOP Practices**

- Add an onsite BOP notary to facilitate incarcerated individuals obtaining the official documents needed to be successful in reentry (birth certificate, Social Security card, driver's license, state ID, etc.)
- Review process around the Detainer designation, which restricts incarcerated individual's access to programming. Allow those on Detainer to access some programming.

# Appendix F: Recommendations Endorsed by Three or More START SER Team Members

## Improving Mental Health Services

- Teach individuals how to recognize if they have experienced trauma. Expand access and enrollment in current BOP trauma treatment programs.
  - Add a therapist to the START Team.
  - Identify or create directed counseling for mental health issues that is grief- and trauma-oriented.

## Increasing Information Sharing

- Connect case managers across prison, RRC, and START program, including sharing of all relevant reports.
  - Convene START team and BOP personnel.
  - Run a new progress report 30 days prior to release, to be shared with RRC and probation and parole (BOP).

## Adapting START Program Practices

- Create a standard process for recognition of and escalation for at-risk individuals within each phase.
  - Use consequences (incentives, deterrents) that can be ratcheted up and down.

- Provide programing that focuses on how to avoid reengaging in drug sales/distribution and not just drug use.
- Have participant take career aptitude and/or personality tests to show potential future career options and highlight their strengths.
  - Review past and current career assessment and training opportunities throughout the BOP, RRC, and START program to ensure continuity.
- Match Phase 1 START participants with Phase 4 participants, or program graduates, as mentors (to improve role models and family supports for some START participants).

# Appendix G: Recommendations Ranking Tool Administered Through SurveyMonkey®

## Introduction

The START program is a federal reentry program in the Eastern District of Wisconsin for individuals identified to be at medium to high risk for recidivism. A team gathered to carry out a Sentinel Event Review of the START program. Case review focused on identifying opportunities through proposed recommendations to improve outcomes for START participants.

## Instructions

This tool is designed to prioritize recommendations. The team can score each recommendation based on a few factors: Impact, Evidence, Resources, Sustainability, Implementation, and Importance. Ranking of recommendations is voluntary and the reported results will not be linked to individuals. Aggregate scores will be shared with the START SER Team to prioritize recommendations to implement. These survey questions and the overall aggregate responses may be published in a final report.

Recommendation Assessment Calculator

1. How big of an *impact*?

1 - Little to no impact

2 - Some impact but not for all participants

- 3 - Some impact for all participants
  - 4 - Substantial impact for some participants
  - 5 - Substantial impact for all participants
2. Is there *evidence*?
- 1 - Peer-reviewed negative evidence
  - 2 - Anecdotal negative evidence/hearsay
  - 3 - Unknown/neutral evidence
  - 4 - Anecdotal positive evidence/hearsay
  - 5 - Peer-reviewed positive evidence
3. Are there sufficient **resources** (personnel, funding, technology)?
- 1 - No, resources are insufficient
  - 3 - Maybe, resources are unknown, or partially available
  - 5 - Yes, resources are sufficient
4. How *sustainable* do you expect the change to be?
- 1 - This is completely unsustainable
  - 3 - This is current unsustainable but could be with some investment
  - 5 - This has a high likelihood of continued sustainability
5. How likely will it be *implemented*?
- 1 - Unlikely, institutional (leadership/procedural) barriers outweigh institutional supports
  - 3 - Maybe, institutional barriers and institutional supports are evenly weighed
  - 5 - Likely, institutional supports outweigh institutional barriers
6. How *important* is this recommendation to you? (1-10)
- 1 - not important
  - 10 - extremely important



## Appendix H: Contingency Management and PICNIC Analysis®

*Contingency Management* involves the systematic manipulation of incentives and deterrents to promote behavior change. Contingency Management has an extensive evidence-base documenting its effectiveness in treating a variety of substance use disorders as well as for addressing other maladaptive behavior patterns.<sup>17</sup> Contingency Management has been shown to be particularly effective for substance use treatment because, for individuals with substance use problems, the real-world, built-in incentive for abstaining from substance use is likely very delayed. A good job, supportive community, and family are all potential positive consequences of a drug-free lifestyle, but those consequences may be very distant for an individual suffering from substance use disorder, while the incentives for engaging in drug use — such as the physical high, escape from stressor/trauma, and even social connection — are immediate. Therefore, a large component of effective substance use treatment programs is providing more immediate consequences for drug abstinence to bridge the gap to the real-world consequences.

One specific example of Contingency Management involves the use of Abstinence-Based Employment Wage Vouchers.<sup>18</sup> In this program, individuals with substance use issues are connected with employment opportunities and job coaching. Once the individual is employed, they can then access abstinence-based wage vouchers, which provide a supplement to increase hourly pay following a negative drug test/proof of abstinence. For example, if a participant is paid \$8 an hour by their employer, the voucher could provide an additional \$0.50 per hour, with each successive negative drug test increasing the voucher supplement by another \$0.50 per hour. After four negative drug tests, the participant would

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<sup>17</sup> Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. Practice Profile: Contingency Management Interventions for Substance Use Disorders. Retrieved May 24, 2021, from CrimeSolutions. <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedpractices/72>

<sup>18</sup> Silverman, K., et al. (2007). A randomized trial of employment-based reinforcement of cocaine abstinence in injection drug users. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 40(3), 387–410.

be earning \$10 an hour (\$8/hour through job, \$2/hour through voucher). If the participant relapses and has a missed or positive drug test, they are not kicked out of the program or reported so they lose their job; instead, the voucher amount simply resets and they are back to making \$8 an hour. They can then rebuild the hourly wage supplements once abstinence is achieved again. Contingency Management systems of this kind have been shown to have great success in promoting abstinence.

Like in the example provided, one important suggestion for Contingency Management is to have systems in place where the incentives and deterrents can be ratcheted up and down. This means that while someone is enrolled in the program there is always a chance to do better and there is always a chance to do worse. It is preferable to avoid situations with “incentive ceilings,” where the individual has already done everything they need to do, and there are no further means of recognition of improvement. For example, within each phase of the START program there is a limit on the benefits an individual can access, with some benefits only being available in the next phase (like reduced supervision requirements).

Similarly, it is best to avoid “deterrent floors,” so if the individual engages in undesirable behavior such as missing a meeting, they are not locked into getting a particular deterrent, they always have a way to improve, and there is always a worse outcome if they continue down that path. For example, if an individual misses/fails a drug test, access to both deterrents and incentives should still be available. Instead of only receiving a deterrent of increased supervision or a day in jail, the individual could be told that they need to attend their next drug test and will not be reported if they fail it, so long as they also show up for the following drug test and pass it. This provides an opportunity for the individual in the START program to attend the required meetings without fear of the deterrent being implemented. It also provides case managers and START program support staff an additional opportunity to engage with the program participant and help them get back on track. If a participant fears they will fail their drug test and will be further reprimanded, this may cause them to completely disengage from the program, which prevents them from accessing START program incentives designed to promote engagement.

Additionally, the incentive should be more than just avoiding the deterrent. While avoiding deterrents can be powerful tool for promoting compliance with program requirements, it only reinforces compliance, not active engagement. Additional incentives should be available for when someone goes above and beyond the requirements of the program.

**PICNIC Analysis®** is a tool used to classify and evaluate the use of consequences that follow behavior.<sup>19</sup> The first classification is to determine if the “type” of consequence is positive and designed to be an incentive, or if the “type” of consequence is negative and designed to be a deterrent. This distinction is fairly straightforward but it should be noted that just because something is a meaningful incentive/deterrent for some individuals doesn’t necessarily make that a meaningful consequence for everyone.

After determining whether a consequence is positive or negative, the next classification is “timing.” How long after the behavior does the consequence occur? Does it occur immediately, or does it occur sometime in the future? Behavioral science clearly shows that when consequences are delayed, they are far less effective in changing behavior.

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<sup>19</sup> Daniels, A. C., & Daniels, J. E. (2014). Performance management: Changing behavior that drives organizational effectiveness. Atlanta, GA: Performance Management Publications.

The final classification for the PICNIC Analysis® is “probability.” Is the consequence certain, in that it always follows behavior, or is it uncertain, wherein the consequence sometimes occurs and sometimes does not? Behavioral science research has demonstrated that consequences that are certain are more effective in establishing new behavior patterns.

Each consequence can be classified based on these three features, and this is where the tool gets its name, as the most effective consequences are positive, immediate, and certain — a PIC. PICs are best for establishing new behavior patterns. However, once a behavior pattern is established, consequences that are uncertain can help strengthen a well-established behavior, which makes that behavior more resilient and less prone to disruption. However, this only applies to positive consequences. If deterrents are needed, they are most effective when they are negative, immediate, and certain — a NIC. NICs are most effective for discouraging certain behaviors. For both PICs and NICs, a delayed or future consequence will be less effective in changing behavior.

The PICNIC Analysis® tool can be used to evaluate consequences and provide a guide to make them more impactful. By recognizing that a consequence is inconsistently delivered, or delayed in time, consequence delivery can be improved so that they are timelier and more consistent. However, this will be specific to each consequence and the behavior that consequence is expected to impact.

# Appendix I: Federal SER Exit Survey Questions and Results Summary

## Exhibit 13. Questions from the SER Exit Survey

Question Number	Question
Q1	Has the SER process up to this point achieved its goal?
Q2	How could the SER process be improved to achieve its goal?
Q3	Was the SER process a non-blaming review of events?
Q4	Was the SER process a forward-looking review?
Q5	What contributed to the successes of making the SER a non-blaming, forward-looking review?
Q6	What challenges did this SER encounter in conducting a non-blaming, forward-looking review or what changes could have made it more non-blaming and forward-looking?
Q7	What was your role in the SER process?
Q8	Did you feel engaged in the SER process?
Q9	What changes would have increased your interest and engagement?
Q10	Do you think your agency was important in completing the SER process?
Q11	Were any agencies or voices missing from the process? If so, whose?
Q12	Were there agencies/participants that detracted from the process?
Q13	If you responded yes to 12, what agencies detracted from the SER process and why?
Q14	Did the SER process improve information sharing from other agencies with your agency (e.g., new information, more timely information)?
Q15	Did the SER process improve your agency sharing information with other agencies?
Q16	How many of the relevant proposed recommendations do you think your agency will be able to implement?
Q17	What challenges do you think your agency might face in implementing the proposed recommendations?
Q18	Do you think your agency will be able to overcome any challenges to implementing the proposed recommendations?

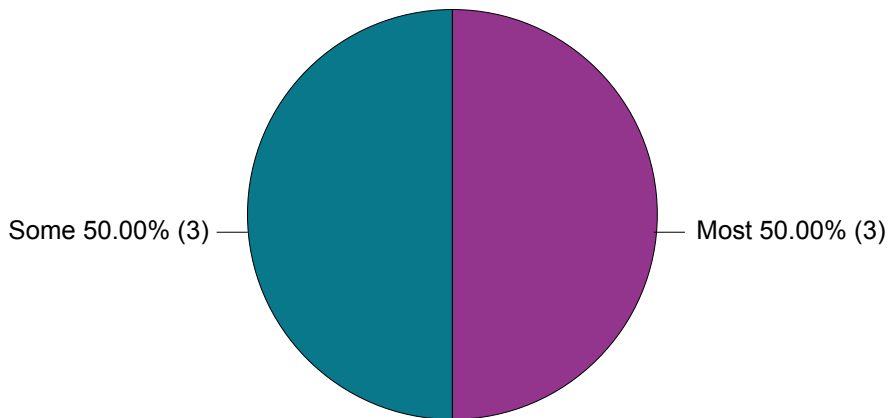
**Exhibit 13. Questions from the SER Exit Survey (continued)**

Q19	For how many of the recommendations relevant for your agency do you understand what is needed for a successful implementation of those recommendations? (timeline, metrics, types of changes made, etc.)
Q21	What do you see as the mechanism to facilitate shared responsibility of recommendations?
Q23	How could the SER process been improved to meet your expectations?
Q25	What would have made you more prepared and/or what did you do that made you prepared?
Q27	Would you recommend SER to another agency that wants to strengthen their procedures in a non-blaming, forward-looking way?
Q29	Do you think the START team will continue to implement future SERs?

**Exhibit 14. Response Distribution for Question 16**

How many of the relevant proposed recommendations do you think that your agency will be able to implement?

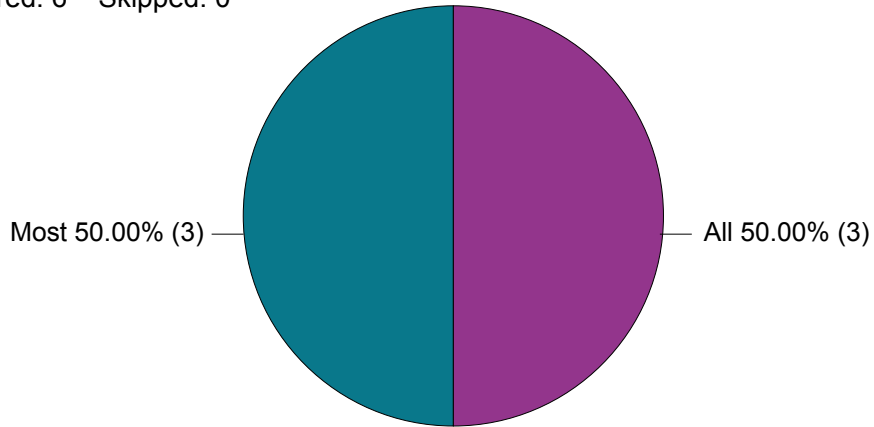
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



**Exhibit 15. Response Distribution for Question 19**

How many of the recommendations relevant for your agency do you understand what is needed for a successful implementation of those recommendations? (time, metrics, types of changes made, etc.)

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



## About the Authors

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