



Washington State Department of Corrections

OFFENDERS ON THE
“EARNED RELEASE DATE HOUSING VOUCHER”
PROGRAM

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Abstract

The objective of the Earned Release Date (ERD) Housing Voucher Program is to assist offenders release at or near their ERD. The aim of this report is to describe the participants of the voucher program beginning July 2009 through October 2010. This report describes the demographics of the housing voucher population, their release to the community relative to ERD, and the offenders' recent history of homeless or transient status in the community. Additionally, this report provides an analysis of offender violations, sanctions, new offenses, and reincarceration during and after voucher funding. A comparison group comprised of offenders who did not receive housing vouchers was established in order to determine how voucher recipients differ from other offenders. The comparison group consists of offenders released during the same time period as voucher recipients. Non-voucher releases are separated into those that received supervision following release and those that did not; comparisons are between voucher recipients and supervised non-voucher releases.

The distribution of demographics varies between voucher recipients and supervised non-voucher releases; voucher recipients are older and are more likely to have been convicted of a sex offense (33% vs. 12%). During 2010, voucher recipients had fewer average days past ERD than non-voucher releases (71 vs. 84 days) and contributed fewer days past ERD than non-voucher releases (42,671 vs. 54,264 days). The average length of follow up time is 274 days. Voucher recipients are more likely to report being homeless prior to incarceration and following release. Voucher recipients are more likely than supervised non-voucher releases to have a violation after release.

A very small proportion of each group was convicted of new crimes during the follow up period. Overall, voucher recipients are more likely than non-voucher releases to be convicted of a new offense and to face reincarceration after release. Among offenders with at least one year of follow up, voucher funding status did not predict a new conviction or reincarceration for a new offense. This report could be improved by using a more appropriate comparison group and by incorporating other indicators of successful reentry.

Introduction

The objective of the Earned Release Date (ERD) Housing Voucher Program is to assist offenders release at or near their ERD, which is expected to save DOC resources. It is possible that the ERD Housing Voucher Program may also promote a smooth transition to the community, thereby reducing homelessness and recidivism. This report briefly describes the demographics of the housing voucher population, release to the community relative to an offender's ERD, and recent history of homeless or transient status. In addition, this report provides an analysis of offender violations, new offenses, and reincarceration of voucher recipients during and after voucher funding. A comparison group comprised of offenders who did not receive housing vouchers was established in order to determine how voucher recipients differ from other offenders. The comparison group consists of offenders released during the same time period as voucher recipients. Non-voucher releases are separated into those that received supervision following release and those that did not; comparisons are between voucher recipients and supervised non-voucher releases.

Methods

The methods used to create this report are described in the Appendix.

Results

Demographics

Table 1 presents basic demographic information comparing voucher recipients (n=1,151) and non-voucher releases (n=7,100). The majority of offenders are under 50 years old, male, white, and classified as high risk/high violent (HV) or high risk/nonviolent (HNV). The majority of voucher recipients' most serious crimes are sex offenses and assaults (33% and 30% respectively); for supervised non-voucher releases, assaults and property crimes are the two most common (33% and 23% respectively). Compared to supervised non-voucher releases, voucher recipients are older, more likely to be male (92% vs. 88%), more likely to be classified as HV (60% vs. 45%), more likely to be black (24% vs. 17%), less likely to be Hispanic (4% vs. 8%), and more likely to have committed a sex crime as their most serious crime (33% vs. 12%).

Table 1. Demographics of Voucher Recipients and Non-voucher Releases; July 2009 – October 2010

Total N=9,707*	Voucher Recipients n=1,151		Non-voucher Releases n=8,556 Does not include violator releases; must have been incarcerated at least 120 consecutive days immediately prior to release			
			With Supervision** n=7,100		Without Supervision n=1,456	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
AGE GROUP AT RELEASE ‡						
29 And Under	286	25%	2786	39%	589	40%
30-39	329	29%	2118	30%	397	27%
40-49	361	31%	1529	22%	344	24%
50-59	145	13%	549	8%	99	7%
60-69	27	2%	98	1%	23	2%
70 And Up	3	0.26%	20	0.28%	4	0.27%
Total	1,151	100%	7,100	100%	1,456	100%
SEX ‡						
Female	89	8%	829	12%	182	12%
Male	1062	92%	6271	88%	1274	88%
Total	1,151	100%	7,100	100%	1,456	100%
RISK LEVEL ‡						
HV	687	60%	3214	45%	630	43%
HNV	275	24%	1952	28%	584	40%
MOD	83	7%	1234	17%	174	12%
LOW	106	9%	696	10%	67	5%
Unclassified	0	0%	4	0%	1	0%
Total	1,151	100%	7,100	100%	1,456	100%
ETHNICITY ‡						
Asian / Pacific Islander	20	2%	219	3%	40	3%
Black	273	24%	1210	17%	205	14%
Hispanic	51	4%	577	8%	89	6%
N. Am Indian / Eskimo / Aleut	64	6%	308	4%	65	4%
Other / Unknown	2	0.17%	65	1%	7	0.48%
White	741	64%	4721	66%	1050	72%
Total	1,151	100%	7,100	100%	1,456	100%
MOST SERIOUS CRIME TYPE ‡						
Assault	349	30%	2347	33%	361	25%
Drug	75	7%	948	13%	36	2%
Manslaughter / Murder	20	2%	276	4%	23	2%
Property	201	17%	1600	23%	835	57%
Robbery	121	11%	974	14%	127	9%
Sex Crime	380	33%	884	12%	39	3%
Other / Unknown / Missing	5	0%	71	1%	2	0.14%
Total	1,151	100%	7,100	100%	1,456	100%

* This does not include non-voucher releases that released with a violator code, released due to execution, death, or vacated sentence, who were out on bond, or who were incarcerated for less than 120 consecutive days immediately prior to their release. For offenders with more than one qualifying release, the first release was used.

** Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

‡ Chi-square test comparing voucher recipients with supervised non-voucher releases is significant at $p < 0.0001$. This analysis did not control for any variables.

Earned Release Date (ERD)

Table 2 presents data about offenders' release to the community, relative to their ERD. The majority of voucher recipients (68% in 2010) released after their ERD; during 2010 less than half (43%) released more than 30 days after ERD. In contrast, most supervised non-voucher releases (84% in 2010) released by their ERD. Voucher recipients who released after ERD during 2010 released an average of 71 days past ERD, down from 113 days during July – December 2009. Supervised non-voucher releases who released after ERD released an average of 103 days after ERD during July – December 2009 and 84 days after ERD during 2010. During the same time period, average days past ERD decreased in most crime categories for both voucher recipients and non-voucher releases. During 2010 voucher recipients contributed 42,671 days of incarceration after ERD; non-voucher releases contributed 54,264 days.

Table 2. Release Relative to Earned Release Date (ERD); July 2009 – October 2010

n=9563*	Voucher Recipients	Non-voucher Releases	
		With Supervision**	Without Supervision
July – Dec 2009	n=256	n=2,878	n= 527
% released within:			
ERD	5%	76%	98%
14 days after ERD	9%	82%	100%
30 days after ERD	16%	86%	100%
Average # of days released past ERD			
Total	113 (n=243)	103 (n=679)	11 (n=7)
Assault	91 (n=68)	84 (n=211)	
Drug	52 (n=14)	64 (n=35)	
Manslaughter / Murder / Other	69 (n=5)	82 (n=34)	
Property	76 (n=43)	62 (n=83)	
Robbery	116 (n=17)	89 (n=93)	
Sex Crime	156 (n=96)	151 (n=222)	
Jan – Oct 2010	n=886	n=4,122	n=894
% released within:			
ERD	32%	84%	99%
14 days after ERD	44%	89%	100%
30 days after ERD	57%	92%	100%
Average # of days released past ERD			
Total	71 (n=601)	84 (n=646)	3 (n=9)
Assault	50 (n=178)	60 (n=188)	
Drug	37 (n=27)	21 (n=22)	
Manslaughter / Murder / Other	73 (n=14)	85 (n=33)	
Property	40 (n=65)	58 (n=59)	
Robbery	51 (n=72)	57 (n=91)	
Sex Crime	103 (n=245)	123 (n=253)	

*Does not include releases due to execution, vacated sentence, out on bond, or death. Calculations for the average number of days released past ERD and for “% released within:” do not include releases more than 15 days before the ERD; after removing the above-mentioned release types, releases more than 15 days prior to ERD can indicate a data issue such as an ERD not being updated to reflect a change to an offender’s sentence, etc. The following outliers were removed from the “days past ERD” variable (numbers represent the number of days an offender was released past ERD): 765 and 1202 for voucher recipients in 2009; 199 and 215 for unsupervised non-voucher releases in 2009; 114, 135, 142, 211, and 229 for unsupervised non-voucher releases in 2010; 1014, 3146, and 5503 for supervised non-voucher releases in 2010.

** Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

History of Homelessness

Table 3 presents offenders' history of homeless or transient status. Residence data from a pre-release Offender Needs Assessment (ONA) were available for 1,105 (96%) of voucher recipients and 6,717 (95%) of supervised non-voucher releases. Twenty-two percent (22%) of voucher recipients and 26% of supervised non-voucher releases had residence data for an ONA created after spending at least 180 days on community supervision following release. Voucher recipients were more likely than supervised non-voucher releases to report being homeless before incarceration (15% vs. 6%) and after release (19% vs. 8%). Reporting homelessness prior to incarceration is a strong predictor of reporting homelessness after release. The increase in the proportion of voucher recipients reporting homelessness before incarceration and following release is not statistically significant.

Table 3. Recent history of being homeless or transient from the Offender Needs Assessment (ONA)*

	Voucher Recipients		Non-voucher Releases			
			With Supervision**		Without Supervision	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Reported on most recent pre-release ONA						
	n=1,105		n=6,717		n=1,368	
Homeless ‡	168	15%	412	6%	92	7%
Transient	173	16%	872	13%	155	11%
Reported on first ONA after 180 days in the community						
	n=253		n=1820		N/A	
Homeless ‡	47	19%	141	8%		
Transient	38	15%	201	11%		

*Each ONA is for an offender's most recent 6 months in the community. N varies for this table because not all offenders had a pre-release ONA and/or an ONA after at least 180 days in the community. The ONA allows offenders to report more than one residence type for the given 6-month period. Therefore, some offenders may have reported being both homeless and transient on the same ONA.

** Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

‡ Statistically significant logistic regression results comparing odds of reporting homelessness between voucher recipients and supervised non-voucher releases; controlled for risk class, age, and sex; $p < 0.0001$.

Follow up time

The average follow up time for violations, new offenses, and reconfinement in this report is 274 days, with a range of 30 days to 517 days. Average follow up time for voucher recipients is 224 days (range 32 to 489) and supervised non-voucher releases have an average of 283 days (range 31 to 517).

Violations

Violation data are reported in Tables 4, 5, and 6. Voucher recipients were more likely than non-voucher releases to have at least one violation during the overall follow up period (53% vs. 41%), during voucher housing / within 64 days after release, and after voucher housing / 65 or more days after release. While using voucher housing, 416 voucher recipients had 1,280 violations. After voucher housing, 458 voucher recipients had 2,454 violations. Within 64 days of release, 1,709 non-voucher releases had 5,218 violations; 2,344 non-voucher releases had 13,052 violations 65 or more days after release. Table 4 presents the distribution of number of violations; most offenders had no violations. Table 5 shows the distribution of number of violations among offenders with at least one violation. The distribution is very similar between voucher recipients and non-voucher releases. Among offenders with at least one violation, it was most common for offenders to have 2 to 5 violations.

Table 6 presents the distribution of violation categories. Over 40 percent of all violations were drug/alcohol violations. Violations for reporting requirements, geographic restrictions (e.g., unapproved travel, unapproved residence change), and complying with affirmative conduct conditions (e.g., obey all laws, obtain domestic violence evaluation) ranged between 9% and 17% of total violations for each group/time combination. The distribution of violations by category varies slightly between voucher recipients and non-voucher releases. Non-voucher releases appear to have a higher proportion of drug and alcohol violations than voucher recipients.

Table 4. Number of violations of community supervision; July 2009 – November 2010

Number of violations	Voucher Recipients n=1,151				Supervised Non-voucher Releases* n=7,100			
	During voucher		After voucher		Within 64 days of release		65 or more days after release	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
0 ‡	735	64%	693	60%	5,391	76%	4,756	67%
1	123	11%	80	7%	523	7%	422	6%
2 – 5	244	21%	211	18%	960	14%	1,042	15%
6 – 10	41	4%	109	9%	208	3%	540	8%
11+	8	0.70%	58	5%	18	0.25%	340	5%
Total	1151	100%	1151	100%	7100	100%	7100	100%

* Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

‡ Statistically significant logistic regression results comparing odds of having at least one violation between voucher recipients and supervised non-voucher releases; controlled for risk class, age, sex, reporting homelessness prior to incarceration, and length of follow up; $p < 0.0001$.

Table 5. Number of violations among offenders with at least one violation; July 2009 – November 2010

Number of violations	Voucher Recipients n=613		Supervised Non-voucher Releases* n=2,882	
	During voucher n=416	After voucher n=458	Within 64 days of release n=1,709	65 or more days after release n=2,344
1	30%	17%	31%	18%
2-5	59%	46%	56%	44%
6-10	10%	24%	12%	23%
11+	2%	13%	1%	15%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

Table 6. Violation Categories for Community Supervision; July 2009 – November 2010

CATEGORY ‡	Voucher Recipients n=1,151				Supervised Non-voucher Releases* n=7,100			
	During voucher		After voucher		Within 64 days of release		65 or more days after release	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Affirmative Conduct	127	10%	273	11%	556	11%	1,743	13%
Contact	19	1%	62	3%	96	2%	230	2%
Drug/Alcohol	508	40%	1,027	42%	2,349	45%	6,277	48%
Financial	38	3%	36	1%	230	4%	215	2%
Geographic	211	16%	330	13%	665	13%	1,221	9%
Offender Program	17	1%	23	0.94%	21	0.40%	103	0.79%
Other	87	7%	178	7%	241	5%	794	6%
Prohibitions	10	0.78%	25	1%	73	1%	212	2%
Reporting	188	15%	421	17%	870	17%	2,026	16%
Sex Offender	75	6%	79	3%	117	2%	231	2%
Total	1,280	100%	2,454	100%	5,218	100%	13,052	100%

* Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

‡ Chi-square test comparing voucher-funded releases with supervised non-voucher releases is significant at $p < 0.0001$. This analysis did not control for any variables.

Recidivism – New Offenses

Table 7 presents new offenses by crime type. During voucher housing 15 of 1,151 voucher recipients (1.3%) committed 18 new offenses. Assault, drug offenses, and sex offenses accounted for two-thirds of the new offenses; property crimes and crimes categorized as “other” accounted for the remainder. Thirty-seven (37) voucher recipients committed 42 new offenses after completing voucher housing. Half of these offenses were drug and assault crimes, followed by property crimes (17%) and sex offenses (14%). Among non-voucher releases, 93 of 7,100 offenders (1.3%) committed 103 offenses within 64 days after release. The offenses consisted of: 27% property crimes, 19% “other” crimes, 18% assault, and 17% drug offenses. Sixty-five (65) or more days after release, 265 non-voucher releases committed 333 new offenses. More than half were either property or drug crimes and 23% were assaults. Voucher recipients were more likely than supervised non-voucher releases to be convicted of a new offense. Among offenders with at least one year of follow up time ($n=2,659$), 20 of 195 (10.3%) voucher recipients and 234 of 2,464 (9.5%) non-voucher releases were convicted of new crimes. Among this subgroup, voucher funding status did not predict being convicted of a new crime. However, pre-incarceration homelessness, sex, age, risk class, and length of follow up were all significantly associated with being convicted of a new crime among offenders with at least one year of follow up. For DOC sentence dates between January 2007 and August 2010, the average time

between offense date and sentence date is 11.3 months. Therefore, it is unlikely that this report captures all crimes committed by voucher and non-voucher releases during this follow up period.

Recidivism – Reincarceration

Table 8 presents information about reincarceration. The majority of reincarcerations were sanctions for violations of community supervision ('violator') as opposed to new offenses ('regular inmate'). In general, voucher recipients were more likely than non-voucher releases to be reincarcerated. Forty-five percent (45%) of voucher recipients and 33% of non-voucher releases were reincarcerated at least once during follow up. Among offenders with at least one year of follow up time 70% of 195 voucher recipients and 43% of 2,464 non-voucher releases were reincarcerated at least once after release. Within this subgroup voucher recipients were not more likely to be reincarcerated as a 'regular inmate.'

Table 7. New Offenses by Crime Type ; July 2009 – November 2010

Crime Type	Voucher Recipients n=1,151				Supervised Non-voucher Releases * n=7,100			
	During voucher		After voucher		Within 64 days of release		65 or more days after release	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Assault	4	22%	9	21%	19	18%	75	23%
Drug	4	22%	13	31%	19	18%	94	28%
Manslaughter / Murder	0	0%	1	2%	3	3%	1	0.30%
Other	3	17%	5	12%	20	19%	50	15%
Property	3	17%	7	17%	28	27%	93	28%
Robbery	0	0%	1	2%	6	6%	8	2%
Sex Crime	4	22%	6	14%	8	8%	12	4%
Total	18	100%	42	100%	103	100%	333	100%

* Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

Table 8. Percent of offenders reincarcerated after release; July 2009 – November 2010

Percent of offenders with at least one reconfinement:	Voucher Recipients		Supervised Non-voucher Releases*	
	Total n=1,151	1+ yr follow up n=195	Total n=7,100	1+ yr follow up n=2,464
Overall	45%	70%	33%	43%
During voucher / within 64 days of release	15%	17%	11%	10%
After voucher / 65 or more days after release	38%	67%	28%	41%
As a regular inmate (i.e., not as a violator)	6%	15%	6%	12%
As a violator	43%	67%	30%	38%

* Includes offenders who had a supervision gain code within 30 days of release, not including monetary only supervision.

Further Research

This description and analysis of the ERD Housing Voucher Program population could be expanded in two major ways: using a more relevant comparison group and including more measures of successful reentry.

This report’s methodology limits the interpretation of the outcomes of voucher recipients. The behaviors of the comparison group may not accurately project the trajectory of the voucher recipients if they had not received voucher funding. Logistic regression analysis controlled for some measurable differences between voucher recipients and non-voucher releases. However, these variables (e.g., most serious crime, age, etc.) may not fully account for relevant differences between offenders that need and use housing vouchers and those that do not (i.e., unmeasured baseline differences between groups, such as mental health challenges, may contribute to behavioral differences between groups). Therefore, it is difficult to understand the effects of housing vouchers on offender outcomes based solely on this report. Other variables that may be useful in clarifying the potential effects of receiving a housing voucher include: pre-voucher behavior (e.g., violations during previous community supervision), physical and mental health status including chemical dependency, time incarcerated versus time in the community, etc. In addition, this report does not include reentry measures other than contact with DOC for negative behaviors. Future reports should include information about employment outcomes and other measures of success (e.g., maintaining sobriety, family re-unification, etc.).

This report does not assess the housing voucher process. Without such assessment programs may not have the information necessary to improve processes and functioning.

Summary

Housing voucher recipients were older, less likely to be female, more likely to be classified as high risk/high violent, and more likely to have committed a sex crime than supervised non-voucher releases. During 2010 most voucher recipients were released more than 2 weeks after their ERD, but contributed fewer days past ERD than non-voucher releases. Voucher recipients were more likely to report being homeless on pre-release and post-release ONAs. Voucher recipients were more likely than supervised non-voucher releases to have at least one violation following release. Drug and alcohol violations were the most common violation category for voucher recipients. Voucher recipients were more likely than supervised non-voucher releases to be convicted of a new crime and to be reincarcerated. However, housing voucher status did not predict the likelihood of a new conviction or reincarceration for a new conviction among offenders with at least one year of follow up. This report could be improved by using a better comparison group and further exploring measures of successful reentry.

Appendix: Methods

Definitions of Groups

Information in the tables is presented separately by group: Offenders with voucher funding (“voucher recipients”) and offenders with no voucher funding (“non-voucher releases”). The non-voucher releases group is further divided by whether or not the offender received community supervision after release.

The “voucher recipients” group includes offenders who received funding for at least one rental period that started between July 1, 2009 and October 31, 2010, as recorded in Agency Financial Reporting System (AFRS) by October 31, 2010. Subsequent voucher checks entered into AFRS by October 31, 2010 are included in voucher recipients’ rental periods (the total days on voucher housing).

The “non-voucher releases” group includes offenders incarcerated for at least 120 consecutive days immediately prior to a non-violation release between July 1, 2009 and October 31, 2010 who did not receive a housing voucher upon release. Ninety-six percent of voucher recipients were incarcerated for at least 120 consecutive days immediately prior to releasing on a housing voucher. This group does not include releases due to execution, death, vacated sentence, or being out on bond. For offenders with more than one qualifying release in this time period, the first release was used. The “supervised” subgroup includes offenders with a supervision gain code (such as intake) within 30 days after their release; this does not include monetary only supervision.

Due to the restrictions listed above, the total number of releases in this report does not match the total number of releases reported by the Department of Corrections for the same time period.

Earned Release Date (ERD)

ERD calculations do not include releases due to execution, death, vacated sentence, or being out on bond. Calculations for the average number of days released past ERD and for “% released within:” do not include releases more than 15 days before the ERD. After removing the above-mentioned release types, releases more than 15 days prior to ERD can indicate a data issue such as an ERD not being updated to reflect a change to an offender’s sentence, etc. The following outliers were removed from the “days past ERD” variable (numbers represent the number of days an offender was released past ERD): 765 and 1202 for voucher recipients in 2009; 199 and 215 for unsupervised non-

voucher releases in 2009; 114, 135, 142, 211, and 229 for unsupervised non-voucher releases in 2010; 1014, 3146, and 5503 for supervised non-voucher releases in 2010.

Housing

Homeless and transient data come from the Offender Needs Assessment (ONA). This report includes responses to the ONA item “Residence during the most recent 6 months in the community” collected at or prior to release and/or after the offender has spent at least 180 days on community supervision without returning to confinement for a non-violation admission. Offenders may select multiple residence types to describe their living situations during the given 6 month period. ONA data are current through November 30, 2010.

Violations, New Offenses, and Reincarceration

Violation, new offenses, and reincarceration data are current through November 30, 2010. New offenses only include Washington State DOC convictions for offenses committed after the release date used for this report. Events are reported as occurring in one of two time periods within each group (voucher recipients and supervised non-voucher releases). For voucher recipients the time periods are 1) during voucher funding and 2) after voucher funding. Offenders received voucher funding for an average of 64 days. Therefore, corresponding time periods for supervised non-voucher releases are 1) within the first 64 days following release and 2) 65 or more days after release. Reincarceration includes DOC confinement as the result of a new conviction or as a sanction for violating terms of community supervision.

Statistical Analysis

Both chi-square tests and logistic regression were used to test for differences between voucher recipients and supervised non-voucher releases. The chi-square tests did not control for any variables. Logistic regression models controlled for offender sex, risk class, age, length of follow up, and whether or not the offender reported pre-incarceration homelessness, unless noted otherwise. Observations missing a value for a control variable were not included in the logistic regression analysis but were still reported in the frequency and/or percent table corresponding to the variable of interest.