

What works and What Doesn't in Reducing Recidivism: Some Lessons Learned from Evaluating Correctional Programs

By:

Edward Latessa
School of Criminal Justice
University of Cincinnati

Lesson 1

- Some things don't work

Some so called “theories” we have come across

- “Offenders lack creativity theory”
- “Offenders need discipline and physical conditioning theory”
- “Offenders need to change their diet theory”
- “Treat them as babies & dress them in diapers theory”
- “We just want them to be happy theory”
- “Male offenders need to get in touch with their feminine side theory”

Juvenile Info Network

SITE INFO

[Advisory Board](#)
[Editorial Staff](#)
[Guestbook](#)
[Submit Info](#)
[Contact Us](#)

LINKS

[Arts/Education](#)
[Associations](#)
[Books/Research](#)
[Family Links](#)
[Government](#)
[Grants/Funding](#)
[Health Links](#)
[International](#)
[National](#)
[Religious](#)
[State Links](#)
[Other Links](#)

INTERACTIVE

[Bulletin Boards](#)

DISTANCE LEARNING

[JJTAP](#)
[TRC](#)

Continued from the homepage

Dance Program Gets Juveniles Moving on the Right Track

By [Meghan Mandeville](#), News Research Reporter



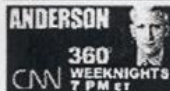
Photo: Sam Forenych

The beats blaring from the high security unit of the Santa Clara County (Calif.) Juvenile Hall have a ring of rehabilitation to them. There, in a small, secure, concrete area young male offenders dance their way toward a new outlook on life.

The Juvie Jazz dance program gives young offenders in two boys units and one girls unit an opportunity to let loose on the dance floor to the music of rappers like **Tupac**, **50 Cent** and **R. Kelly**. At the same time, the juveniles are learning how to follow instructions, work together in a group and build their self-esteem.

"I don't think they are going to be professional dancers, but I want them to see the potential they have to do different things," said program creator and instructor **Ehud Krauss**. "[My goal is] to make them better human beings [and] better kids.

Aside from juvenile offenders in Santa Clara County, Krauss, who owns a dance studio in Palo Alto, Calif., teaches dance to juveniles in San Mateo County, Calif. and autistic and handicapped kids in the area.

[Home Page](#)[World](#)[U.S.](#)[Weather](#)[Business](#)[Sports](#)[Politics](#)[Law](#)[Technology](#)[Science & Space](#)[Health](#)[Entertainment](#)[Travel](#)[Education](#)[Special Reports](#)**SERVICES**[Video](#)[E-Mail Services](#)[CNN To Go](#)**SEARCH**

Web CNN.com

Search

ENHANCED BY

Running teaches inmates value of success

'This is the highlight of our year'



Inmate Jason Upchurch runs the marathon at the Middle Tennessee Correctional Complex.

Story Tools

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AP) -- Until this week, Jordan Davis had never run 3.1 miles, much less completed a race.

Now he's finished one in a place not usually associated with running free: the Middle Tennessee Correctional Complex. It hosted a 5-kilometer, half-marathon and full marathon Wednesday, open to inmates and outsiders alike.

Jordan and older brother Johnathan finished the 5-kilometer race -- nine laps around a ballfield lined by razor wire -- in 25 minutes, 45 seconds. Jordan is serving 20 years for theft; Johnathan works at a skateboard park.

"I was about to fall out, but I feel really good now. I never thought I could do anything like that," said Jordan Davis, 21.

That feeling of achievement is the whole point of the race, said Winnie Binkley, recreation director for the prison, which organized the "Jaunt in the Joint."

"Most of these guys have been told they can't succeed. They've never had positive reinforcement," Binkley said. "Last year there were three guys who said it was the first time they had ever started something and finished it."

The race was first organized three years ago by inmate Craig Nunn, who was the only runner to complete the entire 26.2 miles. Last year, he wrote a letter inviting the Nashville Striders running club to participate.

This year, 33 Striders provided timing clocks, Gatorade, T-shirts for participants and medals. A similar number of prisoners joined the "freeworders," as inmates call non-inmates.

advertisement

[Student Loans?](#)[Your E-mail Alerts](#)[Most Popular Stories](#)[Download Netscape7.1](#)

FREE SPIRIT DRUM CIRCLES

Patricia Prince Thomas Drum Circle Facilitator

To; Marta Daniel

Subject; Drum Circles

I am enclosing the latest research and articles on drum circles. I have been researching drum circles for the past year since experiencing one at the Southeastern Conference. I am amazed that something so basic actually boost the immune system and its fun. I am enclosing an e-mail from a friend that works in a New Zealand prison. She introduced the first drum circle in a New Zealand prison and she describes it as WOW. The staff was amazed because most clients continued drumming for two hours without stopping to smoke.

I am uncertain as to how parolees will respond to a drum circle , however I am sure it will be very positive. I realize that substance abuse and cognitive behavioral programs are probably your number one priority. I would like to introduce drum circles to the prison system. It may be cost effective preventing depression therefore saving money on antidepressants. In addition research indicates that it is stress reducing which may prevent Disciplinary Reports.

I am willing to demonstrate a drum circle free of charge to any prison within a 150 mile radius of Athens. I realize that you are very busy and I appreciate your taking the time to read over the materials that I have enclosed.

Sincerely,
Patricia Thomas MA., MAC., LPC.,

Patricia Thomas



Gardening Conquers All

How to cut your jail recidivism rates by half

Lisa Van Cleef, Special to SF Gate

Wednesday, December 18, 2002

©2003 SF Gate

URL: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/archive/2002/12/18/greeng.DTL>



In 1982, Catherine Sneed was lying in a hospital bed, so ill with kidney disease that her San Francisco County Jail co-workers were coming to say their good-byes -- prematurely, it turns out. While in the hospital, Sneed read Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" and came to the pivotal realization that people feel most hopeful when they have a connection to the land, and that vital connection was missing at the county jail.

Sneed, a high school dropout who put herself through law school, became a jail counselor rather than a lawyer because, she says, she wanted to keep people out of jail rather than put them in. She attributes her recovery to that Steinbeck-inspired epiphany which then led to her determination to start [the Garden Project](#).

Today, the county jail's Garden Project has employed more than 4,300 ex-prisoners and served thousands of incarcerated men and women, teaching them essential job and life skills and providing literacy courses and computer training all while they work the jail's 12-acre organic garden in San Bruno or the project's second garden in Hunters Point.

The garden serves as a setting where the participants not only acquire horticultural skills and an awareness of the role plants play in our lives but also learn the basics required in the working world, such as adhering to a schedule, working with a group and accepting responsibility for specific tasks.

Sneed says her goal is to provide Garden Project apprentices an alternative to the cycle of crime that has more than half the parolees returning to jail within a year. Her program shows them that "getting up every day and going to work, doing the best you can while there and getting a paycheck is easier than dealing drugs, easier than prison," she adds.

And it works. According to San Francisco County Sheriff Mike Hennessy, "The Garden Project is a tremendously effective crime-prevention program. It not only helps individuals rebuild their lives, but recidivism studies we've conducted also show that while 55 percent of our prisoners are rearrested within a year, those who go through the Garden Project have a recidivism rate of 24 percent, and that's after two years.

"The participants of the Garden Project are what we call 'frequent fliers' -- those people who were in and out of jail many times," Hennessy points out. "You don't find too many other programs this successful."

DOGSLEDDING AS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE METHOD –

London Free Press – 07/03/11

The Hollow Water First Nation, who live 200 km northeast of Winnipeg, have used dogsledding as a restorative justice program, which tries to restore relationships between victims and perpetrators in criminal cases. Exercising wilderness skills was seen as a way of rebuilding the perpetrator's self-esteem, explained Marcel HARDESTY, restorative justice program director.

Other things that don't work

Lakota tribal wisdom says that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount. However, in corrections we often try other strategies, including the following:

- Buy a stronger whip.
- Change riders
- Say things like “This is the way we always have ridden this horse.”
- Appoint a committee to study the horse.
- Arrange to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
- Create a training session to increase our riding ability.
- Harness several dead horses together for increased speed.
- Declare that “No horse is too dead to beat.”
- Provide additional funding to increase the horse’s performance.
- Declare the horse is “better, faster, and cheaper” dead.
- Study alternative uses for dead horses.
- Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.

Ineffective Approaches

- Programs that cannot maintain fidelity
- Drug prevention classes focused on fear and other emotional appeals
- Shaming offenders
- Drug education programs
- Non-directive, client centered approaches
- Talking cures
- Self-Help programs
- Vague unstructured rehabilitation programs
- “Punishing smarter”

Lesson 2

- Almost anything you want to fix starts with assessment

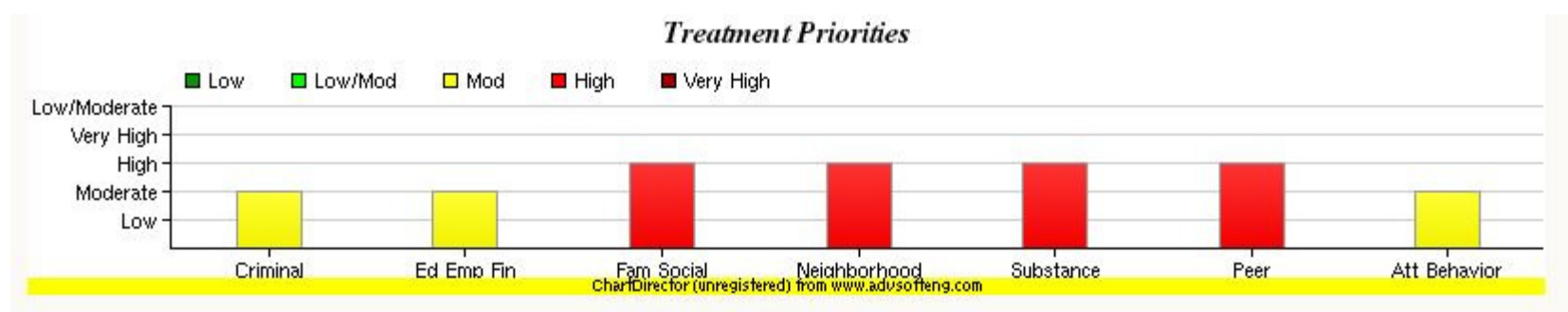
Assessment helps us...

- Meet the risk and need principles – “who” to target and “what” to target
- Reduces bias
- Helps us know if interventions have worked
- Avoid watermelon thumping

One example of a new non-proprietary assessment is the Ohio Risk Assessment System

- The Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) consists of 4 basic instruments:
 1. Pretrial
 2. Community Supervision
 3. Prison Intake
 4. Reentry

ORAS-Community Supervision Assessment



ORAS-CST Re-assessment Education and Employment

1. **Highest Education**
High School Graduate or Higher
2. **Ever Suspended or Expelled From School**
No
3. **Employed at the Time of Arrest**
No*
4. **Currently Employed**
Yes, Full-time, Disabled, or Retired
5. **Better Use of Time**
No, Most Time Structured
6. **Current Financial Situation**
Stable/Minimal Problems

Total: 1



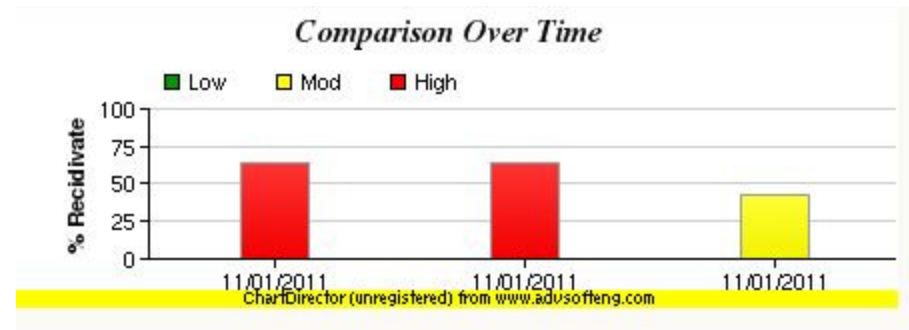
ORAS-CST Re-assessment Peer Association

Peer Associations

1. **Criminal Friends**
Some*
2. **Contact with Criminal Peers**
At Risk of Contacting Criminal Peers*
3. **Gang Membership**
No, Never
4. **Criminal Activities**
Mixture*

Total: 3

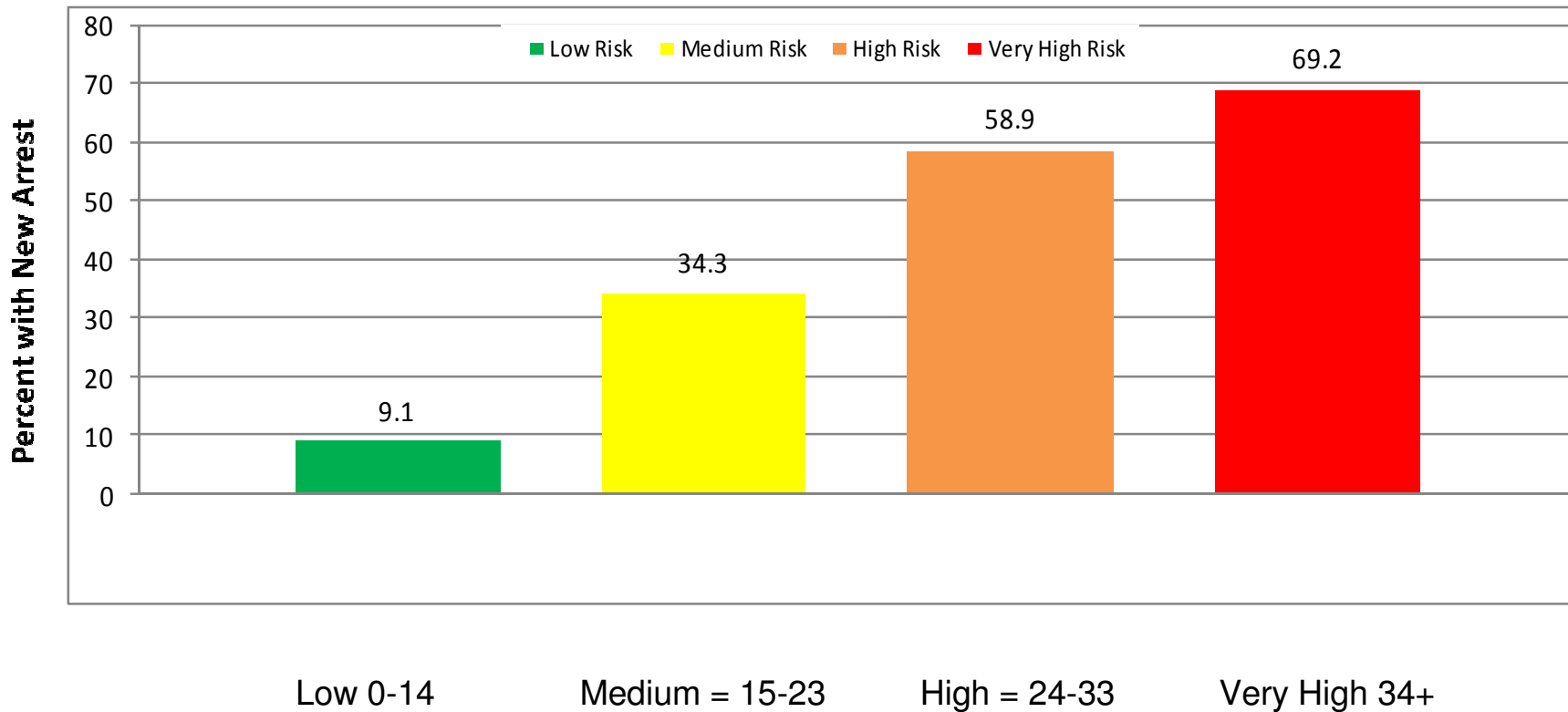
Need Level: Moderate



Lesson 3

- If you want to reduce recidivism focus on the offenders most likely to recidivate

Example of Risk Level by Recidivism for a Community Supervision Sample (males)



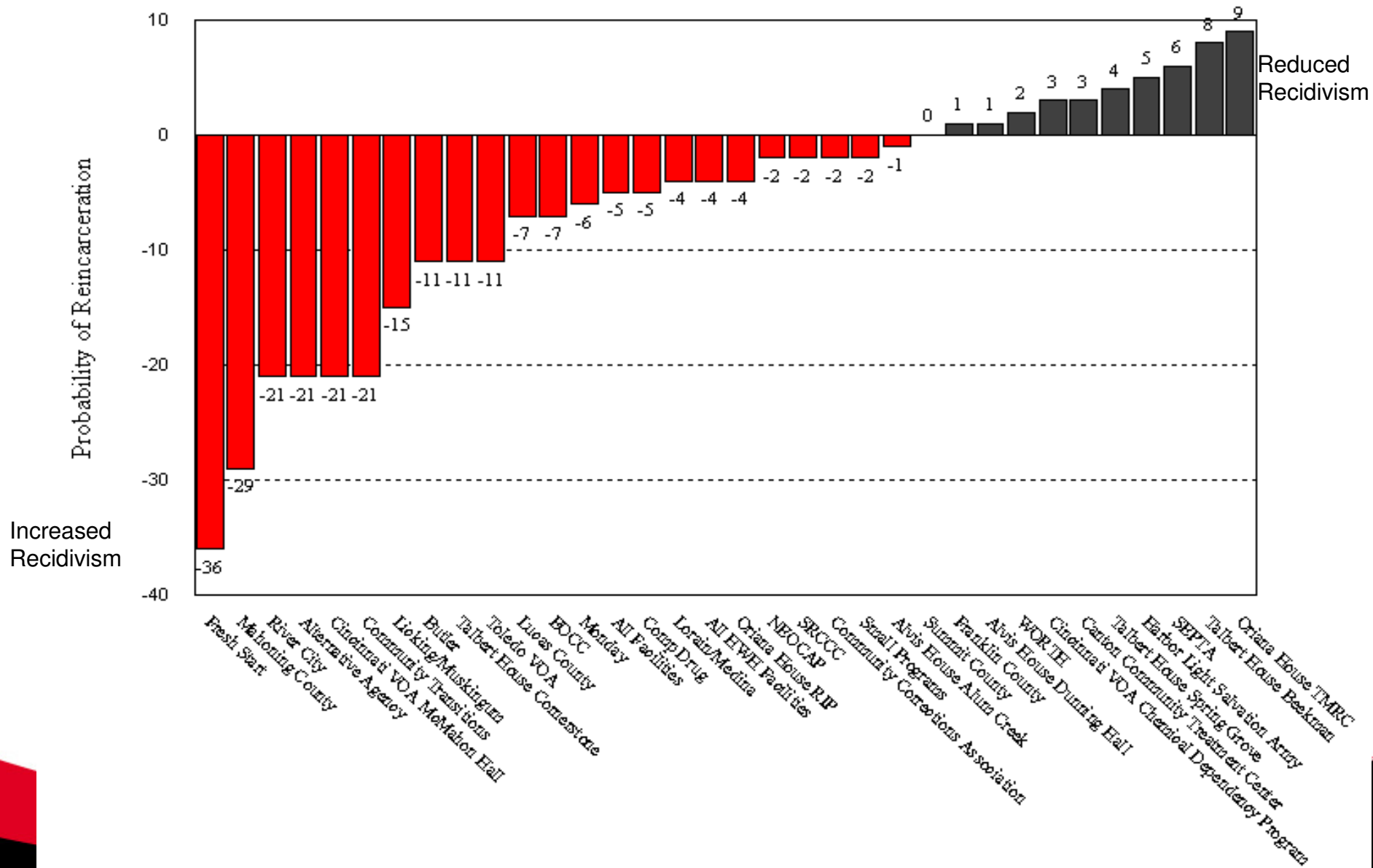
Lesson 4

- Some times we fail because we provide intensive programs to the wrong offenders

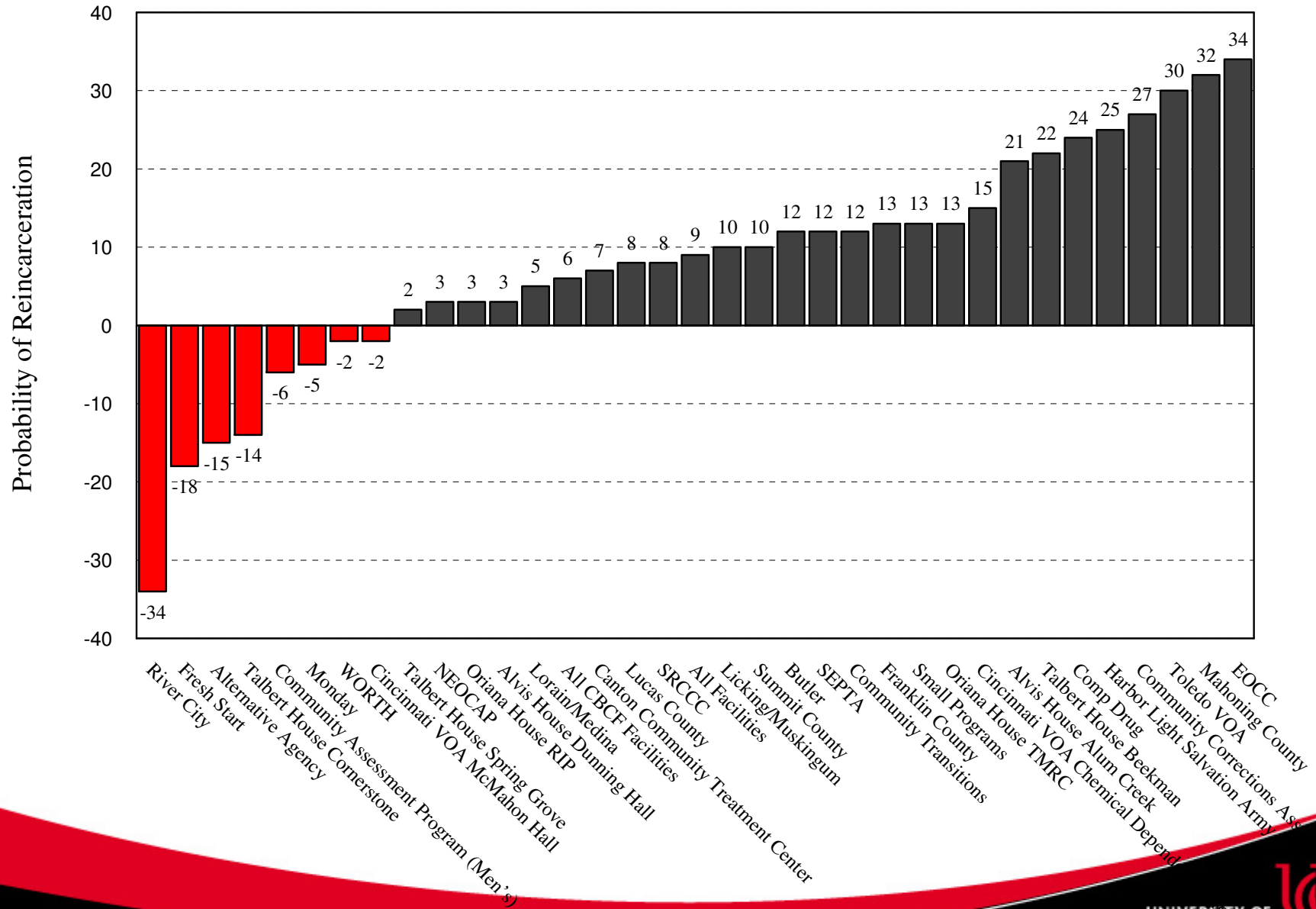
2002 STUDY OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMS IN OHIO

- **Largest study of community based correctional treatment facilities ever done up to that time**
- **Total of 13,221 offenders – 37 Halfway Houses and 15 Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs) were included in the study.**
- **Two-year follow-up conducted on all offenders**
- **Recidivism measures included new arrests & incarceration in a state penal institution**

Treatment Effects for Low Risk Offenders



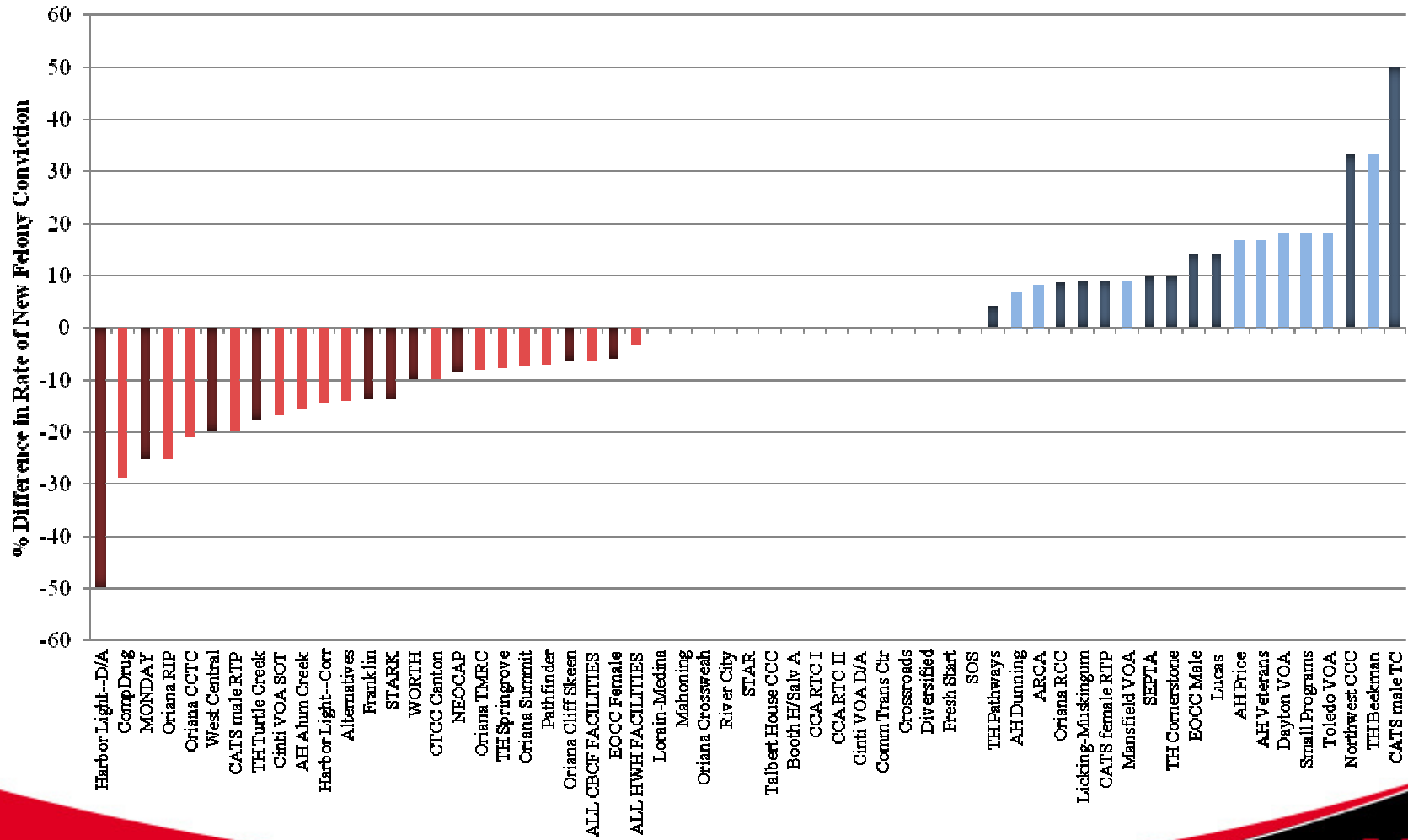
Treatment Effects For High Risk Offenders



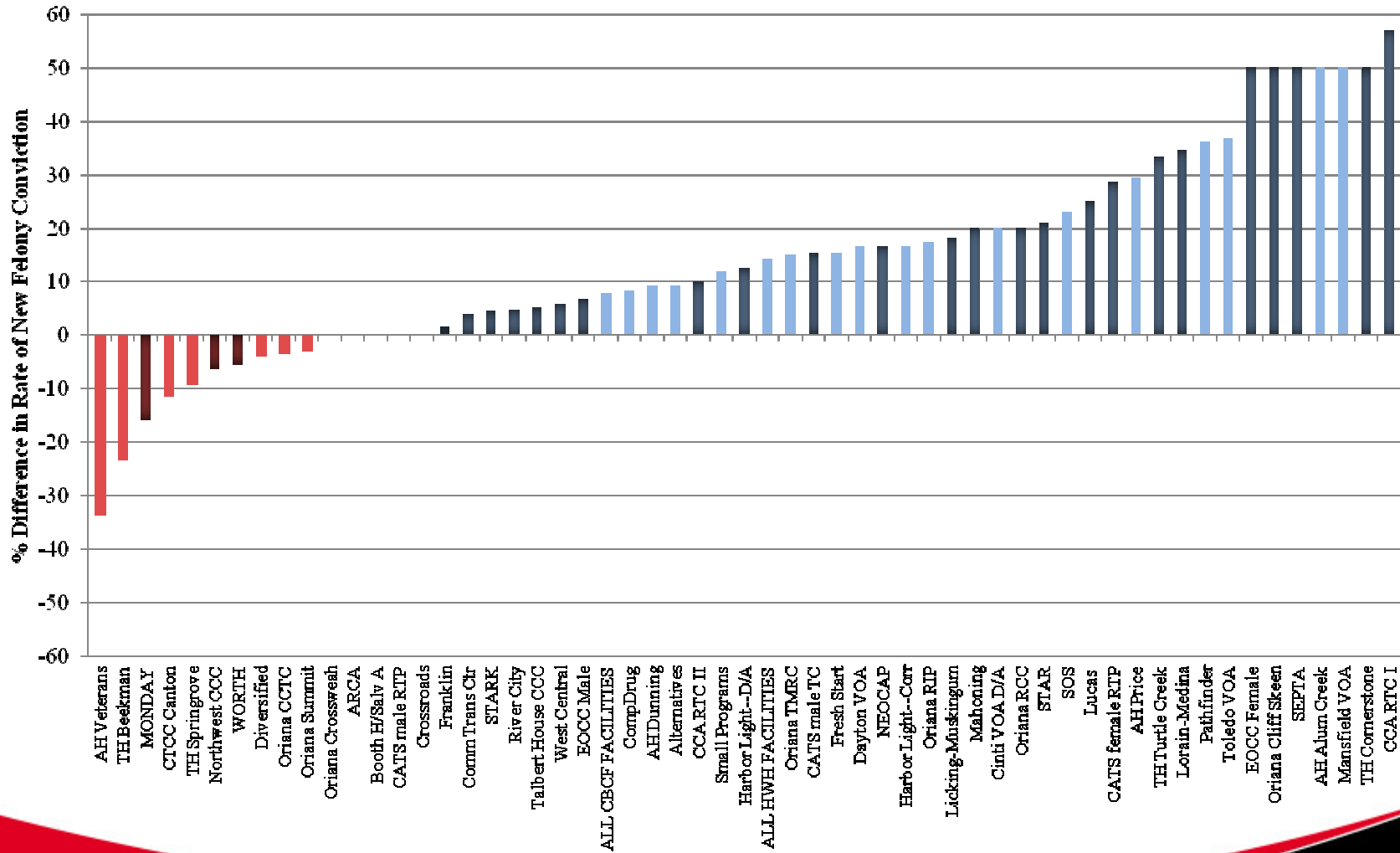
2010 STUDY OF COMMUNITY CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMS IN OHIO

- **Over 20,000 offenders – 44 Halfway Houses and 20 Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCFs) were included in the study.**
- **Two-year follow-up conducted on all offenders**

Treatment Effects for Low Risk



Treatment Effects for High Risk



Lesson 5

- Sometimes we fail because we do not provide enough treatment

The question is: What does more “intensive” treatment mean in practice?

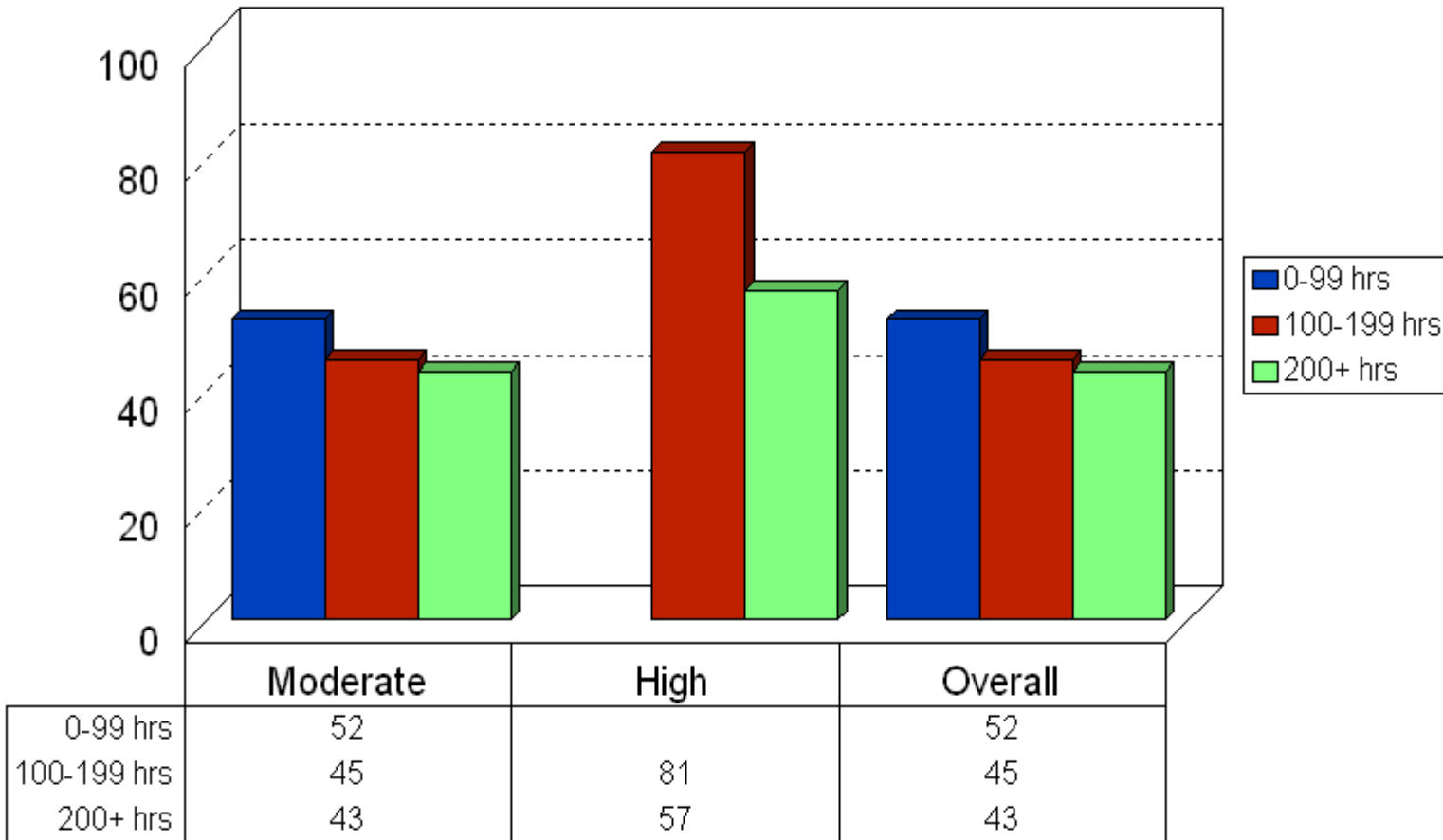
- Most studies show that the longer someone is in treatment the greater the effects, however:
- Effects tend to diminish if treatment goes too long

Just starting to see research
in corrections examining the
dosage of treatment needed
to achieve effect

Results from a 2010 Study (Latessa, Sperber, and Makarios) of 689 offenders

- 100-bed secure residential facility for adult male felons
- Cognitive-behavioral treatment modality
- Average age 33
- 60% single, never married
- 43% less than high school education
- 80% moderate risk or higher
- 88% have probability of substance abuse per SASSI

Recidivism Rates by Intensity and Risk Level



Provide Most Intensive Interventions to Higher Risk Offenders

- Higher risk offenders will require much higher dosage of treatment
 - Rule of thumb: 100 hours for moderate risk
 - 200+ hours for higher risk
 - 100 hours for high risk will have little if any effect
 - Does not include work/school and other activities that are not directly addressing criminogenic risk factors

Lesson 6

- Everyone thinks they are an expert in criminal behavior

Major Set of Risk/Need Factors

1. Antisocial/procriminal attitudes, values, beliefs & cognitive emotional states
2. Procriminal associates & isolation from anticriminal others
3. Temperamental and anti social personality patterns conducive to criminal activity including:
 - Weak socialization
 - Impulsivity
 - Adventurous
 - Restless/aggressive
 - Egocentrism
 - A taste for risk
 - Weak problem-solving/self-regulation & coping skills
4. A history of antisocial behavior

Major Set of Risk/Need Factors

5. Familial factors that include criminality and a variety of psychological problems in the family of origin including:
 - Low levels of affection, caring, and cohesiveness
 - Poor parental supervision and discipline practices
 - Outright neglect and abuse
6. Low levels of personal, educational, vocational, or financial achievement
7. Low levels of involvement in prosocial leisure activities
8. Substance Abuse

Recent study by Bucklen and Zajac of parole violators in Pennsylvania found a number of criminogenic factors related to failure*

*Conducted by Pennsylvania Dept. of Corrections

Pennsylvania Parole Study
Social Network and Living Arrangements
Violators Were:

- More likely to hang around with individuals with criminal backgrounds
- Less likely to live with a spouse
- Less likely to be in a stable supportive relationship
- Less likely to identify someone in their life who served in a mentoring capacity

Pennsylvania Parole Study Employment & Financial Situation Violators were:

- Less likely to have job stability
- Less likely to be satisfied with employment
- Less likely to take low end jobs and work up
- More likely to have negative attitudes toward employment & unrealistic job expectations
- Less likely to have a bank account
- More likely to report that they were “barely making it” (yet success group reported over double median debt)

Pennsylvania Parole Study

Alcohol or Drug Use

Violators were:

- More likely to report use of alcohol or drugs while on parole (but no difference in prior assessment of dependency problem)
- Poor management of stress was a primary contributing factor to relapse

Pennsylvania Parole Study Life on Parole - Violators:

- Had poor problem solving or coping skills
- Did not anticipate long term consequences of behavior
- Acted impulsively to immediate situations
- More likely to maintain anti-social attitudes
- Viewed violations as an acceptable option to situation
- Maintained general lack of empathy
- Shifted blame or denied responsibility

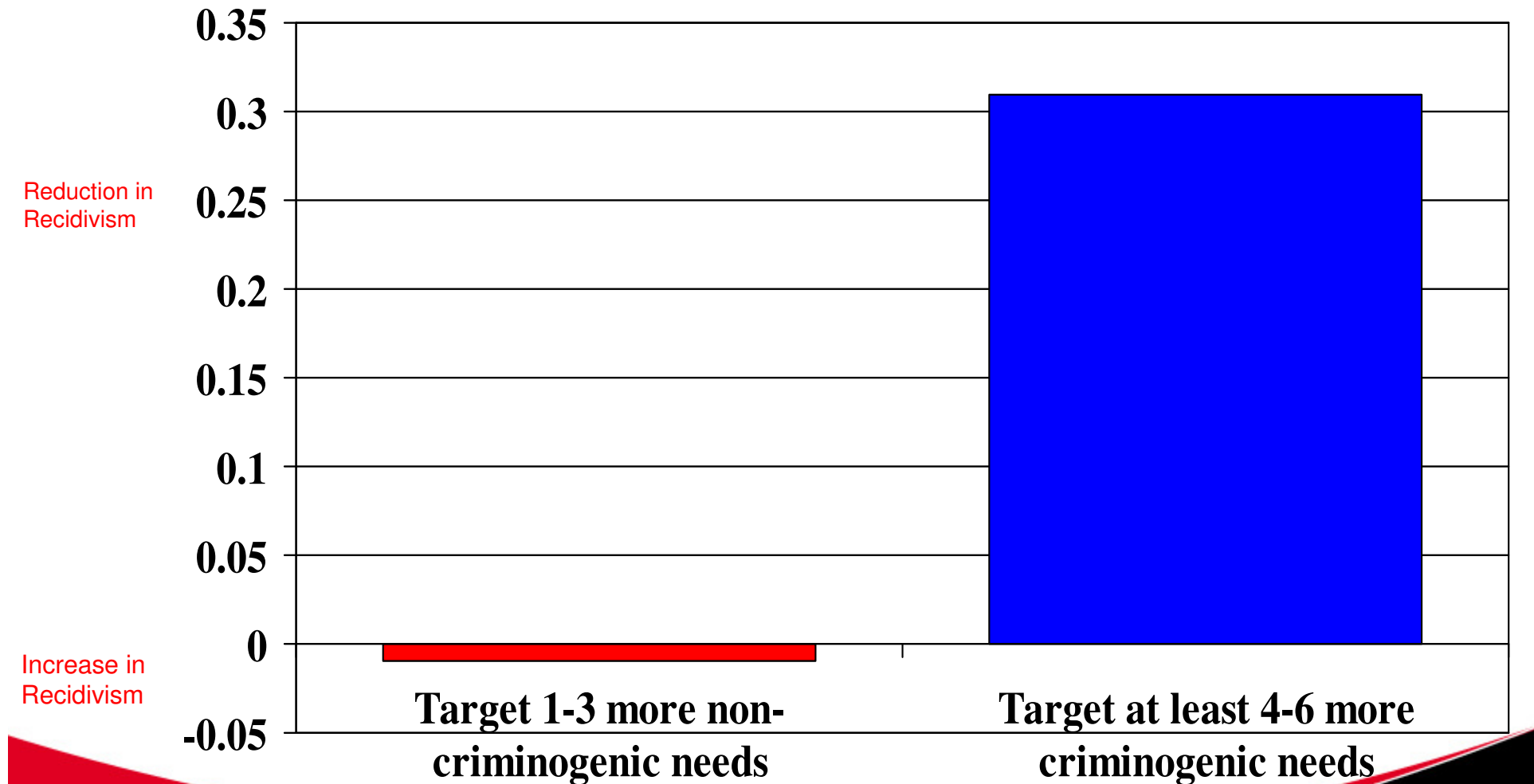
Pennsylvania Parole Violator Study:

- Successes and failures did not differ in difficulty in finding a place to live after release
- Successes & failures equally likely to report eventually obtaining a job

Lesson 7

Offenders are not usually higher risk because they have a risk factor... they have multiple risk factors

Targeting Criminogenic Need: Results from Meta-Analyses



Criminal Thinking and Mental Illness*

Morgan, Fisher and Wolff (2010) studied 414 adult offenders with mental illness (265 males, 149 females) and found:

- 66% had belief systems supportive of criminal life style (based on Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Scale (PICTS))
- When compare to other offender samples, male offenders with MI scores similar or higher than non-mentally disordered offenders.
- On Criminal Sentiments Scale-Revised, 85% of men and 72% of women with MI had antisocial attitudes, values and beliefs – which was higher than incarcerated sample without MI.

Conclusion

- Criminal Thinking styles differentiate people who commit crimes from those who do not independent of mental illness
- Many incarcerated persons with mental illness are both mentally ill *and* criminal
- Needs to be treated as co-occurring problems

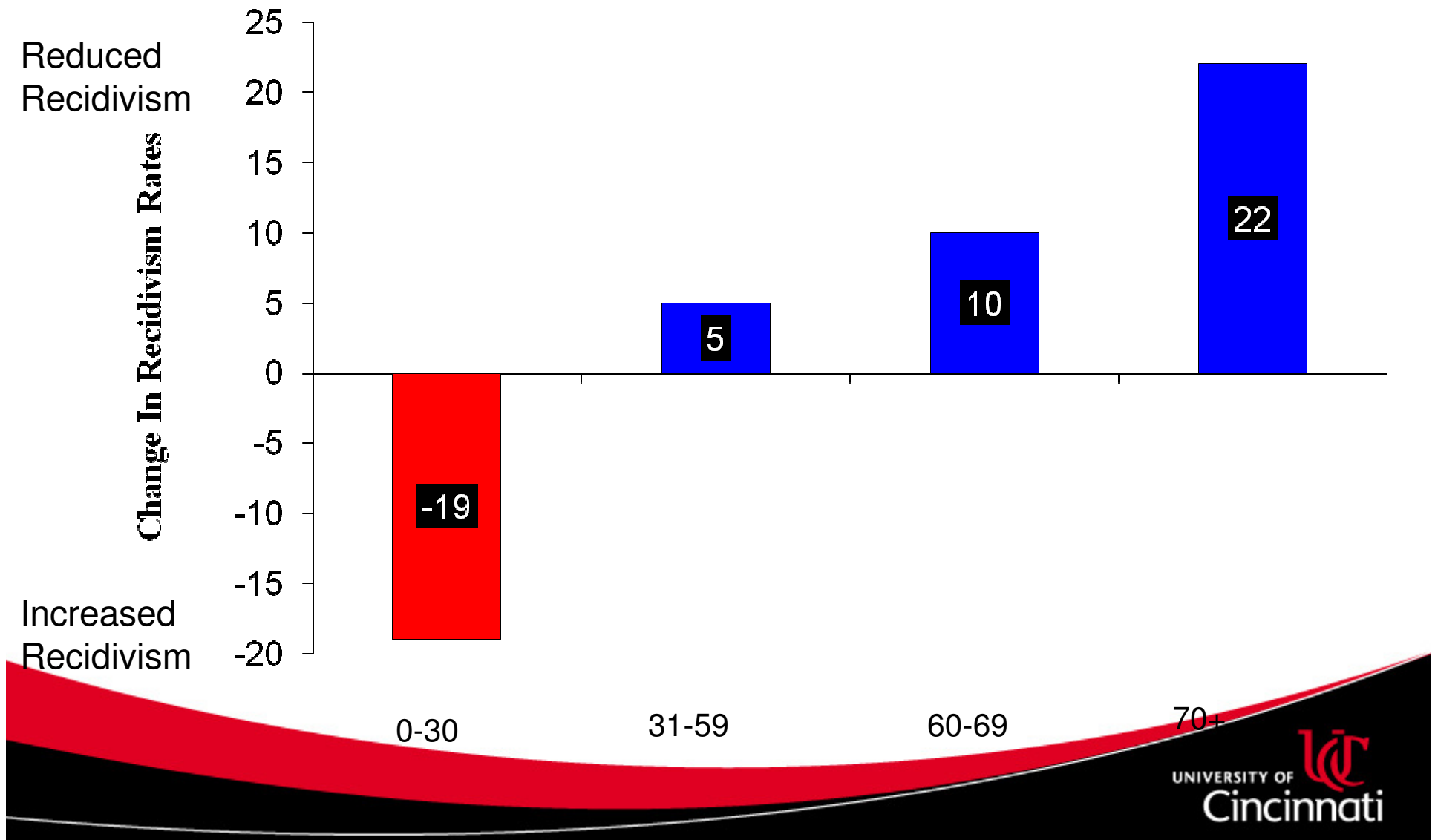
Lesson 8

- Doing things well makes a difference

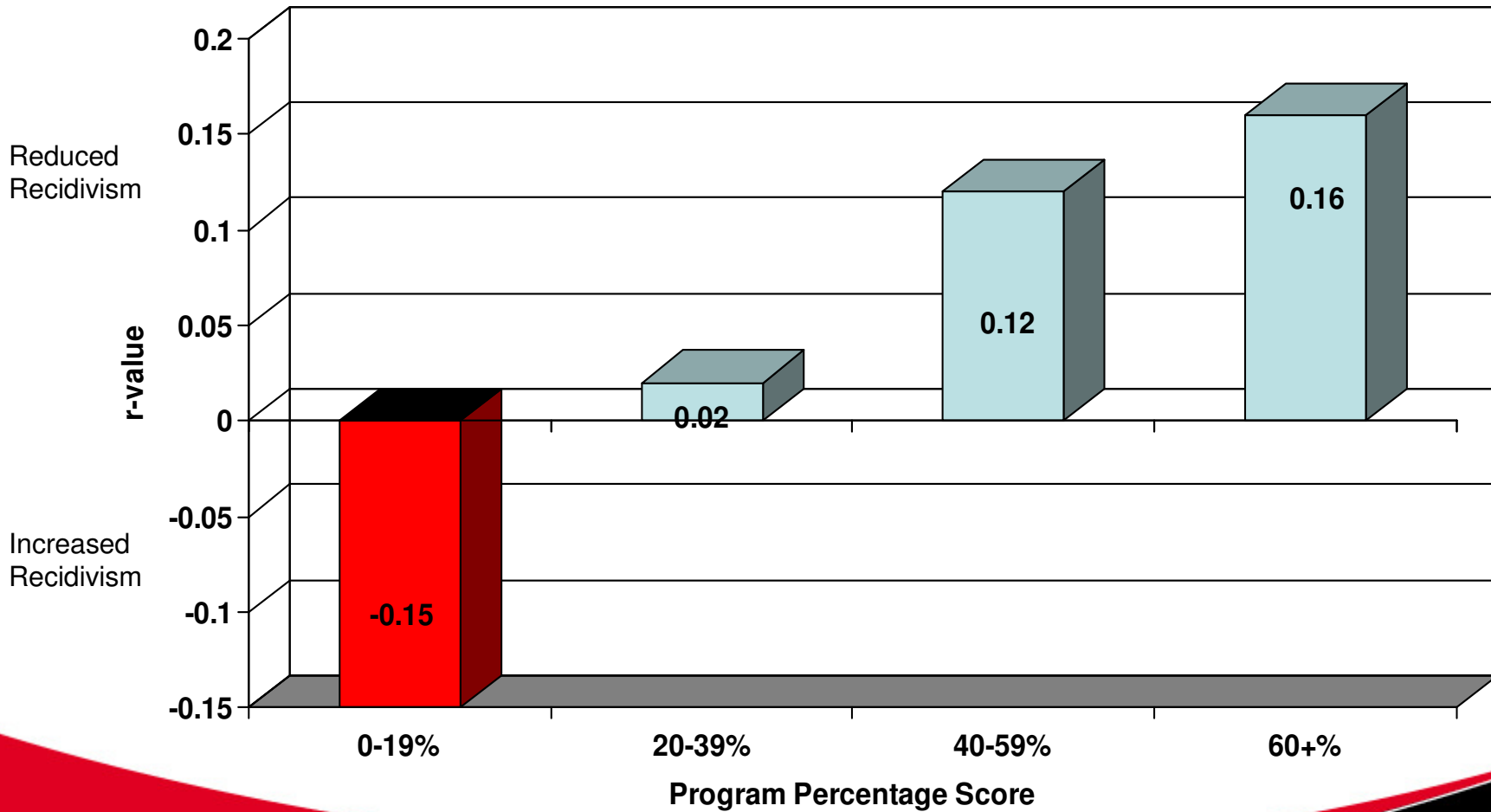
Program Integrity and Recidivism

- Several large studies we have done have found a strong relationship between program integrity and recidivism
- Higher the program's integrity score – greater the reductions in recidivism

Program Integrity—Relationship Between Program Integrity Score & Treatment Effects for Residential Programs



Program Integrity—Relationship Between Program Integrity Score And Treatment Effects for Community Supervision Programs



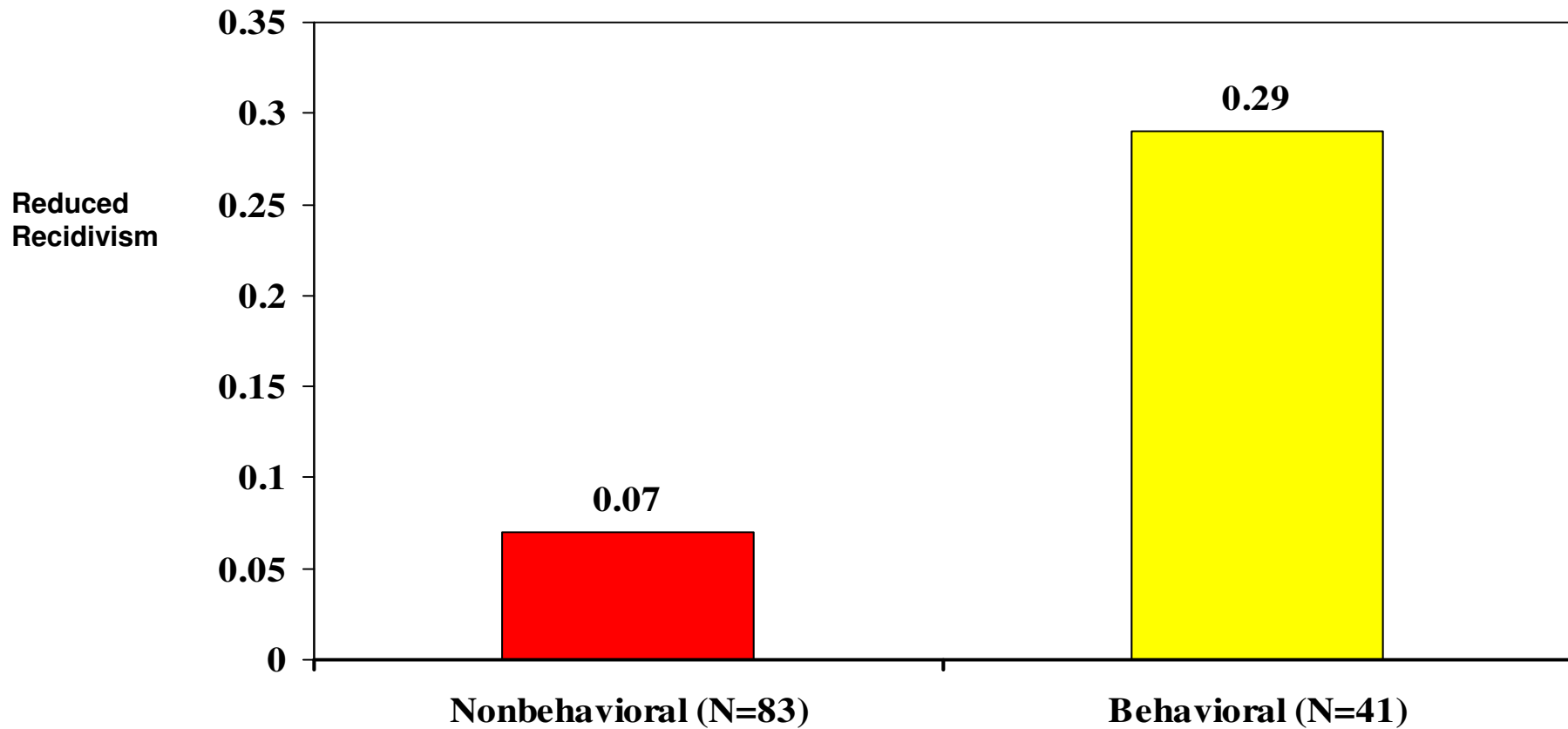
Lesson 9

- We can change offender behavior – we just need to go about it the right way

Effective Correctional Interventions

- Use behavioral approaches: Structured social learning model with cognitive behavioral treatment
- Focus on current risk factors
- Action oriented

Results from Meta Analysis: Behavioral vs. NonBehavioral



Andrews, D.A. 1994. An Overview of Treatment Effectiveness. Research and Clinical Principles, Department of Psychology, Carleton University. The N refers to the number of studies.

If we put them together we have the Principles of Effective Intervention

- Risk (who)
- Need (what)
- Treatment (how)
- Fidelity (how well)

Thank you