



The Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) Initiative

Theory of Change Models

August 2009

INTRODUCTION

“Theory of Change” models [will be] created by the Urban Institute, drawing upon materials gathered from each of the Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) sites, either directly during site visits or through telephone conversations and emails with TJC coordinators in each initiative.

The diagrams are designed to portray the underlying (perhaps unstated) theory of change informing each program site’s strategy to refine or reform local reentry systems based on implementation of the TJC model. In other words, what is being done to reform local reentry processes and develop a seamless system to support jail-involved individuals as they transition from jail to the community, and why are these activities expected to result in better outcomes?

The initial draft of each graphic was distributed to the TJC program site to begin a dialogue between the Urban Institute and that site. Over time, the models [will be] modified to reflect more accurately each site’s change strategy and to explain the developmental process of conceptualizing and implementing systems change specific to jail transition.

What is a Theory of Change Model

A Theory of Change Model (TOM) links outcomes and activities to explain how and why the desired changes are expected to result. Unlike logic models, which typically focus on the underlying logic of a single or discrete program and its core components, TOC models map the goals and objectives of complex initiatives, and explore the range of appropriate programmatic and systemic approaches that may be need to achieve the initiative’s goals. Further, TOC models examine the causal link and identify indicators of change. According to Clark and Anderson (2004), TOC models are best used when designing a complex initiative and evaluation of appropriate outcomes at the right change sequence is critical.

TOC model elements identify:

- Problems or Issues – i.e. the issues the initiative is working to resolve or address
- Community Needs or Assets – i.e., resources that may be leveraged to assist in achieving change
- Results or Outcomes – i.e., desired results, vision of the future that describes what will be achieved
- Influential Factors – existing policy constraints or resource issues etc that may influence change (good or bad)
- Strategies – best practices or strategies that can be employed or will be employed to achieve the desired outcomes; this could include structures, approaches, programs etc
- Assumptions – articulates the HOW and WHY the strategies will achieve the outcomes desired.