

Returning Home:  
A Descriptive Evaluation of  
Prepare in  
New York City

**Final Descriptive Evaluation Report for  
the Osborne Association**

October 8, 2020

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### Recommended Citation:

Tomberg, Kathleen A., Gina Moreno, Patricia Cobar, and Nicole Alexander (2020). *Returning Home: A Descriptive Evaluation of Prepare in New York City*. New York, NY: Research and Evaluation Center, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York.

### Acknowledgements:

This project would not have been possible without the input and support of the staff at Osborne, including Michelle Portlock, Stacy Biscignano, Ken Bloomfield, Matthew Burstein, Taniesha Delph, Gyasi Hedden, Michelle Howard, Virginia Johnson, Sharon Livingston, Ronald Rodgers, Joseph Ross, Idalmin Santana, Jenny Santiago, Rosalind Smith, Dwight Stephenson, Cortez Sutton, Ben Tallerson, Anthony Tirotta, and Steuben Vega. The research team at the John Jay Research and Evaluation Center (JohnJayREC) also appreciates the time and input of all Prepare participants who shared their experiences with us.

The authors are very grateful for the support and advice of the Office for the Advancement of Research and the Office of Sponsored Programs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, as well as assistance received from all current and former colleagues from the Research and Evaluation Center who contributed to this report: Jeffrey Butts, Victor St.John, Arlana Henry, Edda Fransdottir, and Jason Szkola.

Finally, JohnJayREC would like to thank Mathematica for their guidance and assistance during the development and execution of this project, as well as the continued support of the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U. S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS).

### Disclosure:

JohnJayREC does not have any conflict of interest to report.

This publication was prepared under Grant Number 90FO0011-05-00 from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U. S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policies of HHS, ACF, or OFA.

**Structured Abstract:** “Returning Home: A Descriptive Evaluation of Prepare in New York City”

The Osborne Association’s Prepare program aimed to improve relationships between formerly incarcerated fathers and their children using a family-centered approach focusing on parenting and workforce skills, supplemented with one year of follow-up support. The workshop portion of the program ran for four weeks (later shortened to three weeks) out of both the Bronx and Brooklyn Osborne offices. The Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (JohnJayREC) partnered with Osborne as the local evaluator of the program.

JohnJayREC conducted an evaluation consisting of an outcome analysis of administrative and survey data supplemented with data collected from interviews, focus groups, and observations with program participants and staff. The research team attempted to answer four research questions – (1) Is the program successful in helping individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline? If so, how?, (2) Is the program successful in helping individuals obtain and maintain employment? If so, how?, (3) Is there a relationship between obtaining and maintaining employment and improved relationships between children and co-parents? If so, what?, and (4) Do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes? If so, how? JohnJayREC examined data from 578 participants from cohorts one through 47, with findings focusing on the 263 individuals in the final analytic sample. The research team conducted 27 individual participant interviews, 45 staff interviews, and five focus groups during the project period. JohnJayREC documented a series of recommendations and suggestions to improve the program and shared them with Osborne over the course of the project period.

JohnJayREC’s findings suggest Prepare was successful in helping individuals reconnect with their families and in finding a job. Participants reported that obtaining and maintaining employment improved their ability to have a relationship with their children and families, and improvements in family related scales correlated with job placement. Positive relationships with the program staff also corresponded with having a higher likelihood of getting a job, and participants reported that similarly supportive relationships with their peers also motivated them to continue working for positive change. Participants had almost universally positive things to say about Prepare, including high levels of satisfaction with the services, information, and support they received from the program. Most participants said they would recommend the Prepare program to others coming home from incarceration, and in many instances, they already had.

JohnJayREC was not able to statistically support all that was found in the interviews and focus groups in the outcome analysis. This was in part due to complications quantifying family reconnection constructs and due to two unfulfilled data requests. The research team planned to use data from the New York State Department of Labor to measure employment and data from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to measure recidivism, two outcomes of interest for Osborne, but the data had not been received as of October 2020. The questions raised during the study’s analyses suggest a number of interesting pathways for future studies, including alternative ways to quantify improvements in family relationships and connectedness,

and a closer, quantifiable examination of how bonds between participants in a program can impact participant success.

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# Descriptive Evaluation of Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Grant In New York City

## I. Introduction

In 2016, the Osborne Association began a new reentry program called “Prepare” for fathers and father figures returning home from prison. Building on the experience of Osborne’s previous fatherhood and workforce programs, Prepare aimed to improve relationships between formerly incarcerated fathers and their children using a family-centered approach. The program focused on parenting and workforce skills, as well as job placement assistance, supplemented with one year of follow-up support. By helping men become better fathers and co-parents, Osborne aimed to help program participants reintegrate into society successfully and permanently. The Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (JohnJayREC) served as the local evaluation partner to help Osborne understand the effectiveness of the program.

Historically, programs in the United States that aim to maintain social ties between incarcerated parents and children focused on convicted or formerly convicted mothers (Hoffmann et al., 2010). These types of programs have largely ignored the fathers’ role, but recently there has been an increase in programs aiming to foster relationships between incarcerated or formerly incarcerated fathers and their children. Many of these programs overlook the non-relationship obstacles that impede a father’s ability to develop healthy relationships with his child(ren), including lack of housing access, inadequate medical and mental health support, and economic instability (Armstrong et al., 2018; Raphael, 2011). The Osborne Association’s Prepare program directly addresses financial stability and the maintenance of familial ties that together help combat recidivism (Visser & Yahner, 2008; Berg & Huebner, 2011).

### A. Study overview

JohnJayREC designed the study to provide a deeper understanding of Prepare’s efforts and participant outcomes. To understand the program implementation, researchers conducted observations of program activities, interviews and focus groups with program participants, and interviews with staff. The team also analyzed participant surveys and administrative data to understand participant outcomes and identify avenues for future research.

### B. Description of the intended intervention

The Osborne Association’s Prepare program was a family-focused program aimed at helping justice-involved fathers and father figures re-engage with their children and improve both parties’ well-being. This program focused on parenting and workforce skills, supplemented with one year of follow-up support. In addition to addressing parenting and healthy relationship skills,

the program's four weeks of workshops focused on hard and soft job skills necessary for employment, job search skills, and support with how to answer interview questions about their justice involvement. Table I.1 outlines the intended intervention components and target populations. The program aimed to equip graduates with the skills to find and retain work that could lead to economic stability and mobility for participants and their families. Relationship education for fathers aimed to improve co-parenting and intimate relationships for justice-involved fathers. See Appendix A for the program logic model.

**Table I.1. Description of intended intervention components and target populations**

Component	Curriculum and content	Dosage and schedule	Delivery	Target Population
24:7 Dads	Fatherhood curriculum: Teaches men how to proactively and intentionally engage with their children. It focuses on five key attributes of a good father – knowing your strengths and weaknesses, caring for yourself, knowing how to father, developing parenting skills, and having good relationships.	12 Modules Each Module is 1 hour and 30 minutes for a total of 18 hours	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Family Works	Fatherhood curriculum: Fosters a supportive environment for parents to share experiences and challenges of raising their children. It encompasses identification of tasks associated with parenting and the impact of incarceration on participants and their families. It includes lessons dedicated to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and lessons on healthy communication and problem-solving skills.	6 Modules Each Module is 1 hour and 30 minutes for a total of 9 hours	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures

Component	Curriculum and content	Dosage and schedule	Delivery	Target Population
Strengthening Relationships	Relationship curriculum: Focuses on repairing weakened relationships between fathers and their children and/or partners due to incarceration. The goal is to evoke introspection on how a father can better mitigate the effects of incarceration by developing healthy expectations, strengthening communication, and understanding the role of conflict in relationship building.	6 Modules Each Module is 1 hour and 30 minutes for a total of 9 hours	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Connected Couples	Relationship curriculum: Targets team parenting and relationship satisfaction. Discussions touch on the topics of communication, co-parenting, expectations, loyalty, intimacy, fidelity, finances, forgiveness, incarceration, and violence.	2 Sessions Each Session is 1 hour, if a partner enrolls in the Prepare program	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures and their partners
MRT-Job Readiness	Job readiness curriculum: Focuses on changing behaviors through the alteration of a person's thoughts. Focuses on job attainment and job retention.	6 Modules Each Module is 1 hour and 30 minutes for a total of 9 hours	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Ready, Set, Work! (RSW)	Job readiness curriculum: Focuses on skills that are necessary to enter the job market. Lessons place emphasis on setting realistic employment goals, interviewing skills, external barriers that participants face, and resume development.	10 Modules Each Module is 2 hours for a total of 20 hours	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Financial Literacy		1 Module, 1.5 hours long Usually part of RSW	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures

Component	Curriculum and content	Dosage and schedule	Delivery	Target Population
Medicaid		1 Module, 1.5 hours long Usually part of RSW	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Technology		1 Module, 1.5 hours long Usually part of RSW	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by one trained facilitator in every session	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Mock Interviews	Practice job interviews to help program participants practice their new skills and answering questions about their criminal justice background.	2 Days, approximately 5 hours each day	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by Osborne staff	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Case Management	Assessment and individualized service planning, including identification of goals and needs, and appropriate service referrals.	6 Sessions throughout the workshop, each lasting approximately 30 minutes	Individual meetings with Osborne staff at the Osborne Association's offices	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Resume Work	Participants learn how to create a resume.	2 Modules Each Module is 1.5 hours and usually part of RSW	Group lessons provided at the Osborne Association's offices by Osborne staff	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures
Job Placement	Participants meet with a Career Specialist to apply for jobs and get assistance setting up interviews.	Varies, approximately 45 minutes per session	Individual meetings with a Career Specialist	Formerly incarcerated fathers and father figures

In the short-term Prepare aimed to help participants improve their relationships and marriage skills, improve their parenting and co-parenting skills, have increased frequency of father/child engagement, have increased financial responsibility, progress towards greater economic stability, and have reduced recidivism. In the long term, Prepare aimed to improve family functioning of participants, improve adult and child well-being for participants, increase participants' economic stability and mobility, reduce participant poverty, and reduce participants' recidivism. Text Box A summarizes these outcomes.

### C. Implementation of Prepare

Prepare was offered in Osborne's Bronx and Brooklyn offices and each office had a team that worked with participants. JohnJayREC's team observed the program in action over the course of the evaluation period and reviewed the curriculums used for each portion of the program. The team also spoke extensively with Prepare staff to understand the program design process and its implementation as the evaluation period progressed. Some of these conversations were part of

formal interviews, some were part of update meetings with program staff, and some were casual conversations that occurred throughout the engagement with Osborne.

Program Managers led teams of two to three additional facilitators and a shared set of employment specialists who worked with multiple of Osborne's workforce programs. Fifty-nine percent of the facilitators were male, and 41 percent were female. The majority of facilitators (86%) held master's degrees, though this is not a requirement. Facilitators participated in trainings for each of the program curriculums and received one-day "refresher" trainings mid-way through Prepare.

Additionally, program leadership observed facilitators and gave feedback to improve their delivery of the program materials. Most of the Prepare staff had experience with incarceration, something often cited as a strength of the program by participants. Table I.2 details the training and development staff received to support the intervention components.

### Text Box A: Prepare Participant Outcomes

#### Short Term Outcomes:

- Improved healthy relationships and marriage skills
- Improved parenting and co-parenting skills
- Increased frequency of father/child engagement
- Increased financial responsibility of fathers
- Progress toward greater economic stability, including skill attainment, and employment
- Reduced recidivism

#### Long Term Outcomes:

- Improved family functioning

**Table I.2. Staff training and development to support intervention components**

Component	Education and initial training of staff	Ongoing training of staff
24:7 Dads	All facilitators participated in initial webinar training offered by the curriculum developer.	All staff participated in a one-day refresher training in September 2017.
Family Works	Ann Adalist-Estrin, co-creator of this curriculum, conducted a one-day training with Osborne staff when the program began.	Some staff received a one-day refresher training in July 2018.
Strengthening Relationships	Ann Adalist-Estrin, co-creator of this curriculum, conducted a one-day training with Osborne staff when the program began.	Some staff received a one-day refresher training in July 2018.
Connected Couples	Ann Adalist-Estrin, co-creator of this curriculum, conducted a one-day training with Osborne staff when the program began.	Some staff received a one-day refresher training in July 2018.
MRT-Job Readiness	All staff facilitating MRT-Job Readiness completed the full 5-day MRT training course.	Observation and feedback
Ready, Set, Work! (RSW)	RSW training is three weeks long, spread over several months. Staff are selected for this training based on their experience providing workforce services.	Observation and feedback
Financial Literacy	Part of RSW training and reinforced by an outside trainer.	Observation and feedback
Mock Interviews	Part of RSW training	Observation and feedback
Case Management	Initial onboarding training	Bi-weekly supervision Trainings related to population served

Component	Education and initial training of staff	Ongoing training of staff
Resume Preparation	Part of RSW training	Quality review and feedback
Job Placement	Staff have an average of 12 plus years of experience.	Relevant trainings to keep abreast of changes in the industry
Economic stability workshops	Part of RSW training and reinforced by an outside trainer.	Observation and feedback

The workshop portion of Prepare lasted four weeks. Classes were held daily from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Three core workshops focused on parenting and relationship skills (24:7 Dad, Family Works, and Strengthening Relationships) and two other core workshops focused on workforce skills (MRT-Job Readiness and Ready, Set, Work!). Connected Couples was a supplementary workshop to engage participants with their significant others when their partner enrolled in the program. Many additional, single session speakers discussed other relevant topics like financial literacy, child support, Medicaid, rights as a formerly incarcerated individual, and technology. Mock interviews helped prepare participants for the job search and interview process after graduation. Participants also received case management and resume support services. In the spring of 2020, facilitators condensed the workshops into three weeks after finding that this was adequate time to convey all the essential and relevant information.

The Osborne Association attempted to add a complementary co-parenting course for mothers in June 2017 in response to an announcement from the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN). The goal was to engage mothers in a co-parenting intervention to see if their participation would improve the co-parenting relationship they had with fathers in Prepare. Osborne had a very difficult time recruiting women into the program and ultimately only six women completed the course. For more details on this effort, see Appendix F.

Osborne provided additional certification opportunities for Prepare graduates, such as the 30-hour OSHA course on work hazards, a flagger course on routine construction operations, and a scaffolding course to be able to work on scaffolding, many of which are required for various construction jobs. Osborne covered costs of trainings and certifications for Prepare graduates. For a time, Prepare participants were also able to complete a very popular City University of New York Hostos Community College training which offered additional introductory trainings for hard skills in areas like carpentry, electrical work, and plumbing. None of these certifications were a required part of the Prepare program. Still, many Prepare graduates took advantage of these offerings to improve their marketability and expand their job opportunities prior to receiving job placement assistance from Osborne. Prepare participants also received one year of follow up services post-graduation and were supported with job placement and any additional job search needs.

Family events, such as recreational trips and sporting events, were part of the original Prepare proposal. However, a grant restriction against any events at off-site locations limited the program's ability to schedule events that would be convenient and appealing for participants and their families. In 2017, a single event held at Osborne's Bronx office for Mother's Day provided

dinner and opportunities for children to make gifts for their mothers. The event was sparsely attended despite ample advertisement, outreach, and positive RSVPs from many participants and their family members. After this, the program shifted focus away from these types of events. Many staff and participants listed these types of events and family outings as something missing from the program.

## II. Descriptive study

JohnJayREC conducted an outcome study to measure Prepare's ability to help participants reconnect with their families and get a job, as well as the relationship between the two. Additionally, the study aimed to understand how bonds between participants and staff, and between participants, influenced their outcomes. Qualitative data (interviews and observations) contextualized findings and program operation, and provided the Osborne Association with recommendations for how to improve or modify the programs.

### A. Research questions

JohnJayREC's study focused on four research questions:

1. Is the program successful in helping individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline? If so, how?
2. Is the program successful in helping individuals obtain and maintain employment? If so, how?
3. Is there a relationship between obtaining and maintaining employment and improved relationships between children and co-parents? If so, what?
4. Do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes? If so, how?

According to Osborne program goals, successful program completion should result in reconnecting with families, and obtaining and maintaining employment. Being placed in a job should also facilitate reconnection with families. Finally, frequent positive interactions with staff and other participants should help support positive outcomes for participants.

### B. Study design

The JohnJayREC research team collected information from Prepare program participants and staff to document the implementation of the program and create outcome measures.

Observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and administrative data collected over the course of the project resulted in rich data covering all aspects of the program.

#### 1. Sample formation

The study sample was comprised of the entire pool of Prepare program participants from cohorts one through 47 and all 17 Prepare program staff. To be eligible for the Prepare program, individuals must be a father or father figure, a New York City resident, released from jail or prison within six months of signing up for the program, and 18 years old or older. The program was designed specifically for fathers, but mothers who met the other criteria were allowed to enroll. Osborne staff did not actively recruit women into the program. The final analytic sample was 94 percent men and four percent women (2% of the sample was missing gender).



Prepare staff received participant referrals from a variety of sources, including former program participants, Osborne staff from other programs, and justice service providers. Osborne staff conducted outreach at the Department of Parole, the Department of Probation, Federal and State halfway houses, and other community-based organizations. Two Federal halfway houses in Brooklyn and the Bronx became important sources of program participants.

It was essential to include all Osborne staff that worked with Prepare participants in the interview sample. Each staff person had a slightly different role within Prepare, based on their title, training, and/or work location. Speaking with everyone ensured that the JohnJayREC team heard the gamut of staff experiences. The Prepare Program Managers assisted JohnJayREC in recruiting program staff to participate in these interviews. The interviews were done privately with each staff member and everyone was informed that their participation was completely voluntary and what they said would only be shared with the Osborne Association as part of an aggregate, de-identified report. The research team did not meet with any resistance or concern from Prepare staff about their participation in these interviews.

Each component of the study draws from this pool, and eligibility criteria for inclusion in each component differed (see Figure II.1). Table II.1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the program staff who participated in interviews. Characteristics of the program participants will be detailed when the formation of the analytic sample is discussed.

**Figure II.1. Eligibility criteria by group**

Study component	Eligibility criteria		
	All program participants	Graduated program participants	Program staff
Observations	✓		✓
Surveys	✓	✓	
Individual Interviews		✓	✓
Focus Groups	✓	✓	
Administrative Data Analysis	✓		

**Table II.1. Characteristics of Prepare staff interview participants**

Characteristic	Staff interview participants
<b>Female (%)</b>	41%
Missing Gender	0%
<b>Race/ethnicity (%)</b>	
Hispanic	24%
Non-Hispanic White	24%
Non-Hispanic Black	53%
Non-Hispanic Asian	0%
<b>Sample size</b>	17

Source: The Osborne Association

Notes: 1) Due to rounding, the sum of percentages for each characteristic may exceed 100%.

2) Breakdowns of the participant interviews and focus groups are not available. A breakdown of sample characteristics for the entire study population will be provided in the outcome analysis section.

Program participants received incentives to increase participation in the surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Survey completion incentives ranged from \$25 at pre-survey, \$50 for exit survey, and \$50 for the Follow-Up survey, totaling \$125 per person for completing all three surveys. Focus group and interview participants received an additional \$25 incentive per interview. Incentives were paid in gift cards (e.g., American Express prepaid gift cards) and distributed by the Osborne Association. Prepare staff were not compensated for their participation in any of the interviews.

The City University of New York Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this project. Consent forms were developed and used with everyone participating in a survey, interview, or focus group for this project to ensure that everyone involved was fully aware of their rights and assured of confidentiality. JohnJayREC developed an information sheet for everyone enrolling in this program informing him or her about the study and the possibility of being observed at some point during the program.

## **1. Data collection**

The JohnJayREC team's data collection plan included five components – observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and administrative data collection.

### *a. Observations*

A series of observations granted the research team first-hand access to the program and its implementation. The team's plan ensured observation of every workshop component (including all class sessions, as well as graduations and the family event), all facilitators, and both program offices throughout the project period. For the first year of the evaluation, the team attempted to observe at least one program workshop per cohort until all workshops, all facilitators, and both program locations were observed at least once. In the second year of the evaluation, the team continued to observe workshop sessions and program graduations every two to three months to note adaptations made to the program model. In the final two years of the program, the research team scaled back observations and only scheduled observations when new staff were brought onto the team to facilitate.

### *b. Interviews and focus groups*

Researchers conducted annual interviews all five years with staff to collect information about their efforts to engage participants and their families, including challenges, successes, and lessons learned. These interviews gave insight into areas that needed improvement and provided context for participant experiences.

Participant interviews and focus groups also elicited feedback about the program and areas for development. JohnJayREC used convenience sampling to select participants. No attempt was made to speak with a representative sample of Prepare participants. The research team's goal was to speak with individuals who would be willing and comfortable sharing their experiences

for the evaluation. All Prepare graduates were invited to participate in an interview once they were at least three months post-graduation.

Interviews sought their perceptions of family support, program engagement, prospective employment, bonds with their cohorts, and staff impact, and asked for input on strategies to effectively engage families in programming. These interviews were conducted in three waves. The first occurred in Summer 2018, the second in Spring 2019, and the third in Fall 2019. By spacing the interviews out, the team hoped to speak with participants from a range of cohorts. This helped the team better understand how program implementation may have changed throughout the evaluation period. Once the research team reached saturation in the information collected from the interviews, the interviews were concluded and no more were scheduled.

The research team also invited graduated and current participants to participate in focus groups. Five focus groups were conducted between the second and fourth year of the evaluation. Current participants were ideally situated to share their thoughts on the program's workshops and curriculum delivery. Graduated participants spoke on topics similar to the individual interviews. Once the research team reached saturation in the information collected from the focus groups, no additional focus groups were scheduled.

### *c. Quantitative data*

The outcome analysis utilized survey data and Osborne administrative data. Prepare staff facilitated pre- and post-program surveys via nFORM at the Osborne offices in the beginning (baseline) and at the graduation of the program (exit). JohnJayREC administered a Follow-Up online survey three months post-graduation. The Follow-Up survey used many of the nFORM questions, providing another time point for comparison. These surveys measured parental engagement, co-parenting, economic stability, and any changes in participant perceptions and experiences on these topics. The survey analysis supplemented an additional analysis of Osborne's administrative program data that covered engagement and services received. Prepare staff collected administrative data throughout the project and documented participants' engagement with the program, services received, and self-reported employment. Table II.2 describes the sources of data used to address outcomes study research questions. Table II.3 describes the timing and frequency of each qualitative data collection procedure and for which research questions they provide context.

**Table II.2. Sources of data used to address outcomes study research questions**

Data source	Timing of data collection	Mode of data collection	Start and end date of data collection
Prepare participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>nFORM pre-survey – At start of the workshop portion of the program</li> <li>nFORM exit survey – At the completion of the workshop portion of the program</li> <li>Follow-Up survey – Three months post-graduation</li> </ul>	Online survey	September 2016 through April 2020

Data source	Timing of data collection	Mode of data collection	Start and end date of data collection
Osborne Association	Prepare staff collected data throughout the project, beginning when participants entered the program and continuing through their follow up year.	Administrative data collected by the Osborne Association	September 2016 through May 2020

**Table II.3. Data used to address process/implementation research questions**

Implementation element	Research question	Data source	Timing/frequency of data collection	Party responsible for data collection
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline?</li> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals obtain and maintain employment?</li> </ul>	Observations of workshops to understand the classroom dynamic of the program and contextualize the outcome findings	Intermittently throughout the first 40 cohorts of the program Approximately 25 observations were conducted	JohnJayREC research team
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline?</li> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals obtain and maintain employment?</li> <li>How does obtaining and maintaining employment improve relationships between children and co-parents?</li> <li>How do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes?</li> </ul>	Program participant interviews to get participant perceptions on how the program worked (including strengths, needed improvements, staff interactions, and job placement) and contextualize the outcome findings	Between 1 month and 12 months post-graduation 27 interviews were conducted	JohnJayREC research team

Implementation element	Research question	Data source	Timing/frequency of data collection	Party responsible for data collection
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline?</li> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals obtain and maintain employment?</li> <li>How does obtaining and maintaining employment improve relationships between children and co-parents?</li> <li>How do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes?</li> </ul>	Program participant focus groups to get participant perceptions on how the program worked (including strengths, needed improvements, staff interactions, and job placement) and contextualize the outcome findings	Some pre-graduation; some between 1 month and 12 months post-graduation Five focus groups were conducted	JohnJayREC research team
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline?</li> <li>How does the program successfully help individuals obtain and maintain employment?</li> <li>How do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes?</li> </ul>	Program staff interviews to get staff perceptions on how the program worked (including strengths, needed improvements, and client interactions) and contextualize the outcome findings	Five rounds of interviews with all staff, 1 round per year 45 interviews were conducted	JohnJayREC research team

Note: Please note, these are not all the data collection measures used in this study. Additional sources of data will be described in the outcome analysis section.

Two critical outcomes for the Prepare program evaluation were obtaining and maintaining employment and reduced participant recidivism. In addition to Osborne's participant self-reported data, JohnJayREC requested employment data from the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) and recidivism data from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (NYS DCJS). NYS DOL data would have provided the research team with quarterly individual wage level data to confirm full-time employment for participants. NYS DCJS data would have provided the research team with top-charge data for participants re-arrested within two years of graduating the program. At the time of this report, the NYS DOL and NYS DCJS data requests were still pending approval, and the research team had not yet received the data.

Recidivism and employment data from NYS DOL and NYS DCJS were not able to be incorporated into this study.

A copy of all of the data collection instruments JohnJayREC created can be found in Appendix G.

## 1. Analytic sample, outcomes, and descriptive statistics

The team created three outcome measure scales to answer the study's research questions. This section outlines the construction and characteristics of the analytic sample, the characteristics of the Prepare population, and the creation of the outcome measure scales.

### a. Analytic sample

JohnJayREC's analytic sample drew from the entire population of individuals who enrolled in Prepare and consists of the individuals who completed all three survey waves. The entire population includes both males and females, as well as individuals who self-reported as not having any children. Four samples were identified and are broken down as follows. Sample One (n=578) includes everyone who enrolled in the program, which was defined as completing the intake process with Osborne, filling out all intake forms, completing the Applicant Characteristics Survey, and being assigned an intake date. Sample Two (n=568) includes everyone who completed the nFORM entrance (baseline) survey at the start of the workshops. Sample Three (n=457) includes everyone who completed the nFORM exit (post-program) survey at the end of the workshops. Sample Four (n=263) includes everyone who completed the JohnJayREC three-month post-graduation (Follow-Up) survey. This survey was offered in English (n=259) and Spanish (n=4). Sample Four is the final analytic sample. Members of this final sample have a unique participant identifier (External ID), a valid intake date, and completion dates for all three surveys. Table II.4 summarizes the size of the samples.

**Table II.4. Outcomes study analytic sample and attrition**

Sample	Number of individuals
<b>Sample 1: Enrollment</b>	
Enrolled in the program	578
<b>Sample 2: Baseline</b>	
Completed a baseline survey	568
Attrition rate from enrollment 2%	
<b>Sample 3: Post-Program</b>	
Completed post-program survey	457
Attrition rate from baseline 20%	
<b>Sample 4: Follow-Up (final analytic sample)</b>	263
Completed JohnJayREC's 3-month Follow-Up survey	
Attrition rate from post-program 42%	
Attrition rate from baseline 54%	

Source: Osborne administrative data, nFORM pre-survey, nFORM exit survey, and JohnJayREC Follow-Up survey

The research team had some attrition issues with the Follow-Up survey. The team found two percent attrition from enrollment to baseline, 20 percent attrition from baseline to post-program survey, and 42 percent attrition from post-program survey to Follow-Up survey. There was 54 percent attrition from baseline to the final analytic sample.

The team attempted to minimize sample attrition through various means. Participants received a \$50.00 gift card for completing the follow up survey. JohnJayREC made sure this was clear to participants in the initial survey invitation email, as well as all three follow up reminder emails. Prepare staff worked with the research team to minimize attrition as well, by reaching out to participants whose email addresses bounced back and by reminding participants about the survey when they came into the office. Finally, JohnJayREC had the Follow-Up survey translated into Spanish so that it would be more accessible to individuals who were more confident with Spanish than English.

A few factors contributed to the attrition. The biggest contributor was likely unfamiliarity with, discomfort with, and lack of consistent use of email. Many Osborne staff reported that program participants did not check their emails daily, or even weekly in some cases, and did not always see the survey invitations in a timely manner, despite Osborne's encouragement. Some participants changed their email address between signing up with Osborne and the initial survey invitation, and their email addresses bounced back. Another contributing factor was employment and disconnection with the Osborne Association. Prepare staff reported that participants who found work early did not always stay in touch with Osborne during the post-workshop follow up period. It is believed that they were less interested in gift card opportunities once they were employed.

See Appendix B for a summary of how the final analytic sample differs from the baseline sample.

*b. Sample characteristics*

Baseline characteristics of the sample can be found in Table II.5, including a comparison of each characteristic at baseline, post-program, and follow up points. There were no meaningful differences between the enrollment sample and the baseline sample. Descriptives for Sample One, enrollment sample, are not reported. The average age of participants was consistent across all samples (between 39 and 41), as was the percentage of female participants (3-4%). Most participants were either non-Hispanic Black (61-62%) or Hispanic (29-32%). Approximately half of every sample was single (51-52%), with the percentage of married or partnered participants rising slightly from 27 percent at baseline to 31 percent in the analytic sample. Most participants had their High School diploma or GED (49-55%) or less (20-24%). Almost all participants had between one and five children (87-89%) with a small percentage having no children (4-5%). About half the participants reported living in a private residence (43-48%) with a notable percent living in a correctional facility or halfway house (32-33%). The samples were all very similar to each other, with no characteristics varying by more than six percentage points.

JohnJayREC also examined the samples for missing data. Percent missing data for each participant characteristic for each sample (Baseline, Post-Program survey, and Follow-Up survey) is included in Table II.5. There was no need to impute missing baseline data, as the percent missing was consistently below ten percent.

See Table B.1 in Appendix B to see how the final analytic sample differs statistically from the baseline sample (Sample Two).

**Table II.5. Characteristics of participants in the outcomes study at baseline**

Characteristic <sup>1</sup>	Average at Baseline (Sample 2) <sup>2</sup>	Average at Post-program (Sample 3)	Average at Follow Up (Analytic Sample)
<b>Age</b>	39	40	41
<b>Female</b>	3%	3%	4%
Missing gender	3%	3%	2%
<b>Race/ethnicity (%)</b>			
Hispanic	29%	30%	32%
Non-Hispanic White	4%	3%	3%
Non-Hispanic Black	61%	61%	62%
Non-Hispanic Asian	1%	1%	0%
Other race	2%	1%	2%
Missing race	4%	3%	1%
<b>Relationship status (%)</b>			
Married or partnered	27%	28%	31%
Single	52%	51%	51%
Divorced	6%	7%	9%
Separated	4%	5%	4%
Widowed	1%	1%	0%
Missing	10%	8%	5%
<b>Education Level (%)</b>			
Some high school or less	24%	22%	20%
High school / GED	49%	51%	55%
Some college / no degree	13%	14%	13%
Associate degree or higher	7%	8%	8%
Missing	7%	5%	3%
<b>Number of children (%)</b>			
None	4%	4%	5%
1-5	87%	88%	89%
6 or more	3%	3%	4%
Missing	6%	4%	2%
<b>Housing<sup>3</sup></b>			
Own/other (private) residence	43%	44%	48%
Correctional facility/Halfway house	32%	33%	33%
Other type of residence <sup>4</sup>	9%	10%	8%



Characteristic <sup>1</sup>	Average at Baseline (Sample 2) <sup>2</sup>	Average at Post-program (Sample 3)	Average at Follow Up (Analytic Sample)
Missing	15%	14%	9%
<b>Scale Constructs<sup>5</sup></b>			
Family Engagement	14.9	14.9	15.7
Family Relationships	15.1	15.3	14.9
Staff Engagement <sup>6</sup>	N/A	N/A	10.2
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>263</b>

Source: Osborne administrative data, nFORM pre-survey, nFORM exit survey, and JohnJayREC Follow-Up survey

Notes: 1) Due to rounding, the sum of percentages for each characteristic may exceed 100%.

2) The baseline sample is defined as Sample 2, the group of individuals who completed the nFORM Entrance survey. Differences in characteristics are not meaningful between sample that enrolled into program (Sample 1) and the sample at baseline (Sample 2), so descriptives from Sample 1 are not included in this table.

3) Correctional facility/ Halfway house includes transitional housing.

4) Other type of residence includes homeless, mental health/mental retardation and developmental disability (MH/MRDD) community residence, other group residential setting, substance abuse treatment facility, supportive housing, and other.

5) For all scales, items were reverse coded so that higher values represent more positive attitudes/ experiences. Mean of the sum scale values are represented in the tables. Responses of only those participants who reported having one or more children were included in the creation of scales.

6) Staff engagement questions were not asked as part of the baseline or post-program survey.

### *c. Survey and administrative data preparation*

The Osborne administrative data, nFORM survey data, and JohnJayREC survey data was inspected for duplicate responses, missing values, and unusual or out-of-range values. Values were re-coded so that higher values represent positive opinions or experiences. For example, values for dichotomous variables were coded with a zero for no and a one for yes. Once all data was collected and cleaned, each data file was merged to create a participant-level file to track changes in family engagements before and after the intervention, as well as all demographic, case management, job placement, and program participation data. All data was identified using Osborne participant ID numbers (External ID), which was used to link data from different sources. Questions about the administrative and survey data Osborne collected were resolved with the assistance of the Osborne Association.

### *d. Construction of outcome measures*

JohnJayREC conducted an exploratory factor analysis using the survey to identify and create multi-item survey scales measuring the study's pre-determined outcomes. Three scales were created – two measuring family engagement and relationships and one measuring staff engagement. The reliability of the scale(s) were assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Values above 0.9 are considered excellent, those above 0.8 are good, those above 0.7 are marginally acceptable, and values lower than 0.7 are not considered useful. For all scales, items were reverse coded so that higher values represent more positive attitudes and experiences. Sum

mean values are represented in the tables. For each scale generated, items were summed within a scale to create a sum scale score. The number of observations for each construct reflects the number of cases with complete responses across all scale items. Only responses of participants who reported having one or more children were included in the creation of scales.

Table II.6 includes the Cronbach's alpha, sum mean, minimum, and maximum for all three waves of the survey for each scale. Table II.7 describes the outcome measures, along with the source of the information and timing of data collection.

**Table II.6. Outcome measurement scales reliability**

	Family Engagement					Family Relationships				
	Cronbach's alpha	n	Sum Mean	Min	Max	Cronbach's alpha	n	Sum Mean	Min	Max
Baseline	0.83	163	14.9	6	24	0.78	256	15.1	4	16
Post-Program	0.81	145	14.9	8	23	0.68	227	15.3	5	16
Follow-Up	0.86	91	15.7	8	24	0.78	175	14.9	4	16

	Staff Engagement				
	Cronbach's alpha	n	Sum Mean	Min	Max
Follow-Up	0.91	258	10.2	4	11

**Table II.7. Outcome measures used to answer the outcomes study research questions**

Outcome name	Description of the outcome measure	Source of the measure	Timing of measure
Family Engagement	<p>A scale was created using the following survey items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past month, how often did you see your child?</li> <li>• Over the past month, how often have you talked to your child about what he/she did wrong?</li> <li>• Over the past month, how often have you had a meal with your child?</li> <li>• Over the past month, how often have you taken your child places he/she needed to go, such as school or to the doctor?</li> <li>• Over the past month, how often have you helped your child with his/her bedtime routine or homework?</li> <li>• Over the past month, how often have you talked to your child about things he/she is especially interested in?</li> </ul> <p><b>Cronbach's alpha: 0.83</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline survey</li> <li>• Post-Program survey</li> <li>• Follow-Up Survey</li> </ul>	Baseline is at start of workshops, Post-Program is at workshop graduation, Follow-Up is 3 months post-graduation

Outcome name	Description of the outcome measure	Source of the measure	Timing of measure
Family Relationships	<p>A scale was created using the following survey items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am happy being with my child.</li> <li>• My child and I are very close to each other.</li> <li>• I try to comfort my child when he/she is upset.</li> <li>• I spend time with my child doing what he/she likes to do.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cronbach's alpha: 0.78</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline survey</li> <li>• Post-Program survey</li> <li>• Follow-Up Survey</li> </ul>	Baseline is at start of workshops, Post-Program is at workshop graduation, Follow-Up is 3 months post-graduation
Staff Engagement	<p>A scale was created using the following survey items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am treated with dignity and respect by Osborne staff.</li> <li>• I believe Osborne staff cares about me.</li> <li>• I feel like I am part of the decisions about what happens to me while I am at Osborne.</li> <li>• I would recommend Osborne to people who are dealing with similar issues and concerns as me.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cronbach's alpha: 0.91</b></p>	Follow-Up Survey	Follow-Up is 3 months post-graduation
Job Placement	Individuals included in the Osborne job placement file with a valid job start date were considered as being placed in employment.	Osborne administrative data	At time of job placement, at retention milestones, and job separation
Bonds with Staff	Counts of service contacts	Osborne administrative data	During the program and one-year post-graduation
Notes:	Cronbach's alphas are calculated using the baseline survey, which was the largest sample, with the exception of the alpha for Staff Engagement. The Staff Engagement questions were only asked during the Follow-Up survey.		

The research team planned to utilize NYS DOL data to capture the type, duration, and salary of jobs obtained by Prepare participants. JohnJayREC utilized the Osborne participant self-reported job placement data in lieu of the NYS DOL data, as the research team was unable to obtain the NYS DOL data before the end of the project. For the following analysis, “job placement” was defined as any successful job placement after intake into the Prepare program. Job placement was coded as a binary indicator (0 = No job placement via Prepare, 1 = Job placement via Prepare) with a one being assigned to individuals who appear in the Job Placements file.

The research team utilized number of service contacts in the analysis of how staff engagement impacted participant outcomes. The team equated increased numbers of contacts with staff with a closer relationship with program staff.

See Appendix C for details on the methods used to clean and prepare data for the outcomes analysis, the limitations around family relationships scales, and the use of service contacts as a proxy for staff bonds. See Appendix H for mean scores by survey wave for the individual survey items included in the scales.

*e. Qualitative data sampling and preparation*

The research team used the qualitative data collected from individual interviews, focus groups, and observations to understand how the program worked, strengths and challenges, areas for improvement, staff interactions with participants, participant interactions with each other, and the job placement process. This information provided context for the findings of the outcome analysis as well as information about participant bonds not captured in the surveys.

Program participant interviews were drawn from Sample 3 and included some individuals from Sample 4. Focus groups were drawn from Samples 2, 3 and 4. Both data collection measures utilized convenience sampling and no effort was made to speak with a representative group of participants. JohnJayREC prioritized speaking with participants who were interested and willing to engage with the research team and share their experiences.

Qualitative data collected were analyzed for themes to provide context for the outcome analysis and offer recommendations for program improvements. Additionally, de-identified quotes from participants and staff supplement, contextualized, and illustrated the outcome findings. Table II.8 describes the qualitative data collection measures for the study.

**Table II.8. Measures used to address process/implementation research questions**

Implementation element	Research question	Measures
Context	How does the program successfully help individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reports of re-engagement with children by program participants in interviews</li> <li>• Self-reports of re-engagement with children by program participants in focus groups</li> <li>• Reports of re-engagement with children from program staff in interviews</li> </ul>
Context	How does the program successfully help individuals obtain and maintain employment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reports of employment assistance by program participants in interviews</li> <li>• Self-reports of employment assistance by program participants in focus groups</li> <li>• Reports of employment assistance by program staff in interviews</li> </ul>
Context	How does obtaining and maintaining employment improve relationships between children and co-parents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-report of improved relationships with children by program participants in interviews</li> <li>• Self-report of improved relationships with co-parents by program participants in interviews</li> </ul>

Implementation element	Research question	Measures
	How do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-report of connections with staff by program participants in interviews</li> <li>• Self-report of connections with staff by program participants in focus groups</li> <li>• Self-report of connections with peers by program participants in interviews</li> <li>• Self-report of connections with peers by program participants in focus groups</li> <li>• Reports of connections between program participants by program staff in interviews</li> <li>• Self-reports of re-engagement with children by program participants in interviews</li> <li>• Self-reports of re-engagement with children by program participants in focus groups</li> <li>• Self-reports of employment assistance by program participants in interviews</li> <li>• Self-reports of employment assistance by program participants in focus groups</li> <li>• Reports of employment assistance by program staff in interviews</li> </ul>

## C. Analysis approach

### 1. Creation of scales

Once the scales were identified, the team generated the new scale variables for each wave of the survey. Individuals received a scale score if they had valid responses to all items in the scale. The two family scales have a “missingness” problem, while the staff engagement scale did not. See Appendix C for more details.

#### a. Model specification and covariates

JohnJayREC utilized pre-post difference tests to look for changes in family engagement and family relationships before and after program participation. Depending on the distribution of the data, the team ran a paired t-test or a Wilcoxon signed rank test using a 95% significance level.

Using Stata, the research team conducted an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to test for the relationship between family engagement and family relationships before and after the intervention (time) while controlling for gender, age, educational level, employment status, and number of children.

As a double check, the research team used non-parametric methods as well. Non-parametric methods were applied to the data when values tended to cluster at either end of the scale or the distribution was skewed. The Mann-Whitney U test was added because the distributions of responses to the staff engagement scales tended to cluster at the higher end. OLS regression,

logistic regression, and t-tests (both the paired-sample and two-sample tests) are parametric and assume that the dependent/outcome variable being examined is normally distributed.

Analytic methods and model specifications varied based on how the outcome measures and covariates were operationalized to answer a research question. The specific tests used in each analysis are detailed in the discussion of the findings for each research question. See Table II.9 for a summary of statistical tests used to answer each research question.

**Table II.9. Summary of analytic methods and model specifications by research question**

Research question	Method / Model	Reason
1	Paired sample t-test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compared pre- and post-means for a group of individuals</li> </ul>
2	Chi-square test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both the dependent &amp; independent variables are categorical variables (job placement or not, in the final analytic sample or not)</li> </ul>
3	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created contingency tables with two categorical variables (job placement or not, positive change in family scale or not)</li> </ul>
4	Two sample t-test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One variable is categorical (job placement) and the other is continuous (staff engagement scale score)</li> <li>• One variable is categorical (job placement) and the other variable is continuous (number of service visits with Osborne staff)</li> </ul>
	Multivariate analyses (Logistic regression)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependent/outcome variable is categorical (job placement) and the other is continuous (number of service visits with Osborne staff). Education level was used a covariate.</li> </ul>
	Multivariate analysis (linear regression)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tested the relationship between self-reported family engagement level (continuous) and number of service contacts (continuous) and staff engagement survey responses (continuous) adding age at intake as a covariate</li> <li>• Tested the relationship between self-reported family relationship level (continuous) and number of service contacts (continuous) and staff engagement survey responses (continuous) adding age at intake as a covariate</li> </ul>

#### *b. Qualitative methods*

Process data provided the Osborne Association with recommendations and provided a broader understanding of participant experiences with the program. All interviews and focus group sessions were recorded. Members of the research team listened to these recordings and wrote detailed summaries of each interview and focus group. The focus group data was analyzed one focus group at a time, in line with accepted standards of focus group analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The individual program participant interviews were analyzed as a group and the individual Prepare staff interviews were analyzed as a group.

For each set of data, members of the research team reviewed the summaries and identified themes. The themes were then examined and organized by research question so that the most common themes could be identified. The entire research team assessed the themes to either revise or affirm program report text.

After this process, the research team paired the themes from the interviews with the quantitative analysis findings to present a well-rounded set of findings for each research question.

### III. Findings

Analysis of administrative and survey data attempted to quantify Prepare's ability to help participants reconnect with family and obtain employment, as well as how staff engagement influences those outcomes. Interviews and focus groups with program participants and interviews with program staff provided the research team with additional insight into the Prepare program to help explain and support these findings. JohnJayREC used a dual-pronged approach to answer research questions, pairing statistical analyses with qualitative evidence.

#### A. Research Question 1: Is the program successful in helping individuals re-engage with their children and families, relative to their level of engagement at the baseline? If so, how?

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**Prepare appears to have successfully helped program participants re-engage with their children and families, as demonstrated by the significant increase in Family Engagement scores from baseline to follow up (14.6 to 16.1). ▲**

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JohnJayREC compared Family Engagement and Family Relationship scale scores within the set of individuals in the final analytic sample ( $n=263$ ) at baseline and follow up using a paired sample t-test. Of those 263 individuals, only 43 received a Family Engagement scale score and 106 received a Family Relationship scale score. Scale scores were only calculated for respondents with non-missing responses to all survey items within a scale on the Entrance survey and the Follow-Up survey. Any respondent missing valid survey responses on the scale items at either survey time was not given a scale score and was not included in this analysis. Respondents may not have valid survey responses if they did not have any children under the age of 18 or they skipped items included in the scales. See the equivalence tables in Appendix B for more details on how the individuals included in the analysis differed from individuals who were excluded from the analysis.

The research team found a statistically significant increase in the mean Family Engagement scale score at follow up compared with baseline (14.6 increasing to 16.1). There was no change in the mean Family Relationship scale score (15.4) between baseline and follow up. Non-parametric analyses (i.e., Wilcoxon signed rank test) corroborated results from the parametric paired-sample t-test, at the 95% significance level. See Table III.1 for the results. Participants reported an increase in family engagement activities from baseline to follow up, and maintained positive family relationships during that time. The small  $n$ 's for both of these analysis samples reduces the generalizability of these findings to the entire population of Prepare participants. The significant findings instead suggest that the program could be effective and warrants more in-depth study.



**Table III.1. Changes in family scales from baseline to follow up**

Outcome	Sample size	Mean outcome at baseline	Mean outcome at follow up	Difference in means	p-value of the difference
Family Engagement	43	14.6	16.1	+ 1.4**	0.01
Family Relationship	106	15.1	15.1	- 0.4	1.00

\*\*Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

Notes: Participants in the final analytic samples – those who completed three rounds of surveys – were included in this analysis. Results from non-parametric analysis corroborate the results in the table above. Responses for family outcomes are considerably smaller because the final analytic sample was filtered for participants who self-reported having children.

Familial engagement and relationship findings align with data collected during focus groups and interviews. Almost all Prepare participants who participated in the interviews and focus groups reported that Prepare successfully helped them re-engage with their children and families. Generally, participants entered Prepare without a lot of enthusiasm for the parenting pieces of the program. Some program participants and many Prepare staff reported that program participants were more interested in the promise of employment training, job placement assistance, and the eventual certification opportunities than learning parenting and relationship strategies. Prior to graduation, participants often identified the family components of the program as a supplemental exercise, not the main takeaway of the program. After graduating Prepare, many participants reported that the parenting and relationship workshops were incredibly helpful in adjusting back into the daily lives of their children and families. They described improved communication with their children and a better understanding of their families' perspectives, which helped them reconnect and successfully re-engage with their families. Ultimately, almost all participants cited Prepare's emphasis on families and improving relationships with children and co-parents as a program strength and selling point when participants recommended Prepare to others.

**When you get into a heated dispute with your wife or significant other and you use the method that the curriculum says to use, you are like "oh ok it really works." So it teaches you at the end of that how to be humble, how to be mild mannered with your partner and hear them out. Like today we learned active listening, respect, and it is very helpful.**

**-Program Participant**

**We talked about how to connect with your kids mentally – how to uplift and connect with your kid. We learned about how the tone of your voice could be discouraging and how not to holler at your kids. Know that you can talk to your kids . . . make your kids feel like they are something. You are their superhero. So if you be polite and respectful to them, they will catch on to being a better productive member of society. Yea, I learned a few tricks. I learned a lot of things.**

**-Program Participant**

## B. Research Question 2: Is the program successful in helping individuals obtain and maintain employment? If so, how?

**Seventy-seven percent of Program participants were successfully placed in a job. Almost all participants who participated in interviews and focus groups reported feeling equipped for the job search after they graduated from Prepare due to the curriculum, additional certification opportunities, and experienced job specialists.**

JohnJayREC compared the job placement outcome between individuals in the final analytic sample (n=263) and individuals who participated in Prepare but are not in the final analytic sample (n=305). See Table III.2 for the results. The research team used a Chi-Square test of independence to assess if there was a significant association between group and employment outcome. Results indicate that participants in the final analytic sample were more likely to have a job placement than the other group (77% versus 41%, Chi-Square = 75.858, p-value = 0.000).

**Table III.2. Employment outcome by group**

Employment outcome	Group		Total
	Enrolled in study but not in analytic sample	Analytic sample	
Job Placement	125	203	<b>328</b>
No Job Placement	180	60	<b>240</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>568</b>

Osborne placed approximately three quarters (77%) of individuals from the final analytic sample in a job, whereas 41 percent of individuals not in the analytic sample received a job placement. A two-sample test of proportion verified that the proportion of individuals successfully placed in a job was significantly higher in the analytic sample (z-value = 9.71, p-value = 0.000). This suggests that individuals who stayed fully engaged with Prepare through the follow up period, including staying engaged with the study, had more success being placed in a job than those who did not. Program effectiveness and individual traits are two of many factors that could be related to a participant's engagement with Prepare and being placed in a job.

JohnJayREC also examined employment data for all participants who completed the core curriculum between 21 and 29 days of their program start date (n=463). This includes everyone from the analytic sample and the rest of the participants who graduated the program but did not complete the Follow-Up survey. Of these participants, 306 were placed in a job and 157 were not. Approximately a quarter of participants were placed in maintenance positions, with food and hospitality (18%) and construction (18%) being the next two most popular job sectors. See Table III.3 for a breakdown of job sector placements.

**Table III.3. Job sector placed in**

Job sector	n	%
Maintenance	77	25.2
Food and hospitality	55	18.0
Construction	54	17.7
Other <sup>1</sup>	37	12.1

Job sector	n	%
Warehouse	32	10.5
Customer service / Retail	23	7.5
Transportation / Delivery	15	4.9
Missing data	13	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: 1) Other includes other, non-profit, healthcare, auto mechanical, entertainment, security, waste management and manufacturing.

The research team reviewed the starting wage and number of days to job placement from graduation for the 306 placed individuals. The Osborne Association collects this data from program participants as part of their follow up work post-graduation. Participants are required to bring in documentation, including employment verification letters and/or paystubs, to document their employment and wage. The average starting wage was \$15.40 per hour with a range between \$9.00 and \$44.20 per hour for the 282 individuals with wage data, as detailed in Table III.4. Of the 306 individuals with job start dates on or after their program completion date, it took an average of 72 days for them to be successfully placed in a job, with the number of days ranging from zero to 732 days. Six individuals took more than 300 days to be successfully placed and they drove up the average days to placement. See Table III.5.

**Table III.4. Starting wage**

N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
282	15.4	4.5	9	44.2

Note: Table only includes participants who have wage data.

**Table III.5. Days to job placement**

N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
271	72.3	80.6	0	732

Note: Of the 306 placed individuals, 28 have job start dates prior to their program complete dates and seven did not have job start dates. These individuals were not included in the table above.

Six participants have "days to job placement" values that exceed 300 which increases the overall mean.

A little over half of all participants (328 out of 568) were placed in a job by Osborne at the time of this report. Interview and focus group participants reported that successful job placement resulted from a combination of participant preparedness, job availability, and interview success. Program participants reported feeling equipped for the job hunt after they graduated from Prepare due to the curriculum, additional certification opportunities, and experienced job specialists. Participants often cited in-workshop resume development and mock interviews as program strengths. Some individuals had never created a resume before. Mock interviews helped participants increase their self-confidence and feel prepared to discuss their job history and justice background respectfully and professionally. Program participants who spoke with the research team reported that tips on body language, access to free interview attire, and transportation assistance all prepared participants for interviews and, in turn, helped them secure employment.

Program participants often cited the dedication of the program's employment specialists as a strength of Prepare. Program staff described their effort to put individuals on a career track whenever possible. Specialists worked hard to place individuals in jobs that matched their skill set and interests, rather than convenient opportunities. Despite some participants saying that they will take any job, the Prepare employment specialists reported that they were careful with placements to avoid people quitting over issues like a long commute or a poor fit. The participants recognized this dedication and almost every program participant interviewed, individually or otherwise, had many positive things to say about the high level of support they felt during the job placement process.

In some situations, program participants were not fully satisfied with their employment experience through Prepare. A few individuals the research team spoke with were unhappy with the scope of positions the job specialists had access to and expressed a desire for more white-collar and administrative opportunities. Typically, the jobs offered were construction, hospitality, janitorial services, and, most recently, COVID-19 related positions. Some dissatisfied participants also expressed frustration that the salary opportunities were lower than those they had before incarceration. Others felt it took too long to find a position. Some participants entered the program believing they would be placed immediately, not after completing the workshops. In other instances, program participants were still unemployed three months post-graduation because the placement process was moving slowly, or they did not stay in their initial job placements.

In all these cases, Osborne staff reported working closely with individuals to help them secure the types of positions they wanted. However, Osborne staff also encouraged individuals to pursue their own search for opportunities whenever possible. Increasing the search maximized the chance of obtaining a desired position. While employment was not a guaranteed outcome of the program, many participants eventually secured a job with Osborne's assistance.

**It gave me confidence. I was scared. Never had a legit job – I'd worked with my father and uncles before, but I had never went out on my own and looked for a job so they gave me confidence that I could do it. And with what they [staff] went through – they been through what I been through –look at where they are now. They were a perfect example.**

***-Program Participant***

**They sat with me and asked me my goals: what was I thinking as far as a job . . . where do I want to be in 5 years. I explained that I wanted to have a good job and be off probation. They explained that they would help me find a job and that getting off probation was my responsibility. And they did. Been done with the program for almost a year now and still come back to the office – like once a month to check on them, and to show them that I'm still working.**

***-Program Participant***

**C. Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between obtaining and maintaining employment and improved relationships between children and co-parents? If so, what?**

**Program participants reported that obtaining and maintaining employment improved their ability to have a relationship with their children and families. More individuals placed in a job showed improvement on family engagement scales (23 out of 36) and family relationship scales (25 out of 26) than individuals who were not.**

JohnJayREC examined the analytic sample (n=263) and compared their scores on the Family Engagement and Family Relationship scales at baseline with their scores on these scales at follow up. The goal was to estimate if within-person change or improvement in scores over time is associated or correlated with job placement. A change score was computed by subtracting an individual's Follow-Up survey score from their Entrance survey score. As described above in the discussion about Research Question 1, of those 263 individuals in the analytic sample, only 43 and 106 had Family Engagement and Family Relationship scale scores, respectively, at both baseline and follow up time periods. These small *n*'s reduce the power of any statistical test that can be run, as well as limits the generalizability of these findings to the entire Prepare population.

Of the 43 participants with Family Engagement scale scores, 28 had a positive change from baseline to follow up, 13 had a negative change, and two had no change. Table III.6 compares those with positive changes to those without positive changes, which includes both those with no change and those with negative change, and looks at whether individuals in these two groups were placed in a job or not. Of these 43 individuals, 37 were placed in a job and six were not. Of the 37, 23 saw an improvement in their Family Engagement scale score from baseline to follow up.

**Table III.6. Change in Family Engagement scale scores from baseline to follow up by job placement**

	No positive change in Family Engagement score <sup>1</sup>	Positive change in Family Engagement score	Total
Job placement	14	23	37
No job placement	1	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>43</b>

Notes: 1) This category includes individuals with no change in their scale scores (n=2) and individuals with a negative change in their scale scores (n=13)

When the team examined the breakdown of Family Relationship scale score changes, 30 participants had a positive change from baseline to follow up, 25 had a negative change, and 51 had no change. Similar to Table III.6, individuals with positive scale score changes were compared to individuals without a positive score change. The majority of both groups were placed in a job. See Table III.7.

**Table III.7. Change in Family Relationship scale scores from baseline to follow up by job placement**

	No positive change in Family Relationship score <sup>1</sup>	Positive change in Family Relationship score	Total
Job placement	61	25	86
No job placement	15	5	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>106</b>

Notes: 1) This category includes individuals with no change in their scale scores (n=51) and individuals with a negative change in their scale scores (n=25).

The reported findings related to both of these scales are promising. Without a larger sample, it is impossible to conclude that Prepare is primarily responsible for the positive correlations between job placement and family reconnection. The limited findings do suggest that an impact study of Prepare may reveal positive relationships between program participation and positive outcomes for participants.

Without the more nuanced employment data requested from the Department of Labor, JohnJayREC lacks a measure of job placement that captures enough variability in employment outcomes. It is therefore challenging to conduct more rigorous tests and detect statistically significant change. The team attempted two-sample t-tests, which are detailed in Appendix D, but felt the methodology was not strong enough to present as a main project finding.

Almost all participants in focus groups and interviews believed finding and maintaining a job was a critical avenue to improving relationships with their children and families and the simple correlations begin to support that. Participants believed having a steady source of legitimate income allowed them to support their children and families in a meaningful way. About half of the participants who spoke with the research team reported that struggling to find a job made some aspects of family re-engagement more difficult. Being restricted financially limited how they could provide for their families and some reported feelings of inadequacy because they could not financially contribute. These individuals did not want to return to previous illegal means of income and felt frustrated.

Many program participants who spoke with the research team reported that contributing financially opened doors to increased familial involvement, and in some instances, provided participants with a source of pride and self-satisfaction. About half of the interview and focus group participants reported that their families more readily accepted them back into their lives because they were engaged in a positive program and working. Legitimate employment also relieved participants of stresses their previous illegitimate activities caused, like concerns around physical harm or arrest. Despite the fact that the research team was not able to detect statistical significance in the connection between job placement and familial engagement, it was promising that job placement correlated with increases in participant scores on both family scales.

When you have a job you are bringing in money and money puts a smile on everyone's face: kids, grandma, everybody. And being a man, you want to be able to provide for your love ones so a job is the foundation. A job makes you feel proud. Every man wants to be able to go into his wallet and pull out something so sometimes not having a job can make you feel a little worthless. You get down on yourself. It is imperative. That's number one.

*-Program Participant*

They talk to you about family . . . next step is certifications to get a job, so you're killing two birds with one stone because you're doing it for what? You are not working for no reason; you are doing it to take care of yourself and your family. So instead of running around in the street because you're not focused and you have other things to worry about like getting hurt, dodging police, or whatever the case may be, you come here and worry about family and work. Those go together, you get to take care of family and take care of yourself. You don't have to get in trouble or worry about none of that, get your certifications, get yourself a job and whatever you do after that is on you.

*-Program Participant*

Asides from money, which is very important, [employment] also helped the family to see you in a different light. They see that you are doing what you came to do, which is to reintegrate and be the best you can be . . . the parenting program has its effect on that . . . it actually shows that you go through the parenting program and now you are working . . . and I think it has an impact on the family because it shows that you are stable and you're doing what you're supposed to do. Doesn't matter what kind of job, but you have a job and that shows responsibility as a parent.

*-Program Participant*

**D. Research Question 4: Do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes? If so, how?**

**Strong bonds between staff and participants motivated and encouraged participants to succeed in the program, and were associated with a higher likelihood of job placement (10.2 versus 10.1).**

During early program observations and conversations with Prepare staff, JohnJayREC noted that there appeared to be strong bonds that formed between Prepare staff and the program participants, as well as between program participants. To measure interactions between staff and participants, the research team used the number of service contacts between staff and clients from the Osborne case management data and the Staff Engagement scale from the Follow-Up survey as proxy measures for bonds between participants and staff. The team went on to examine how Staff Engagement scores and number of service contacts related to both participant job placements and scores on the two family scales.

*a. Job Placement*

As seen in Table III.8, participants that received job placement via Prepare had a slightly higher average Staff Engagement scale score than the group that did not receive a job placement (10.2



versus 10.1), though this finding is not significant at the .05 level. Similar results were observed with the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric equivalent to the two-sample t-test. This test accounts for the skewed distribution of survey scale responses where values tended to cluster at the higher end of the scale rather than being evenly distributed. The average scores for both groups were very close to the maximum score on this scale (11.0) and corresponded with the qualitative data collected about experiences with Prepare staff.

**Table III.8. Two-sample t-test of Staff Engagement Scale score by job placement**

Outcome	Mean for group with job placement	Mean for group without job placement	Difference in means	p-value of the difference
Staff Engagement	10.20 (n=200)	10.09 (n=58)	+ 0.11	0.61

Table III.9 lays out the findings of a two-sample t-test of number of service visits with Osborne staff by job placement groups. On average, participants with a job placement (n=203) had 13 service contacts with Osborne staff while participants without a job placement (n=60), had nine visits. This difference was significant at the .05 level. Similar results were observed with the Mann-Whitney U test. JohnJayREC tried both the parametric t-test and the non-parametric equivalent to see how robust these findings were. The research team's confidence in the findings increased because the results did not change from the parametric to the non-parametric test. While this is not an impact study, the findings suggest that there could be a connection between a participant's engagement with staff and having a higher likelihood of finding a job.

**Table III.9. Two-sample t-test of number of service visits with Osborne staff by job placement**

Outcome	Mean for group with job placement	Mean for group without job placement	Difference in means	p-value of the difference
Number of service contacts	13 (n=203)	9 (n=60)	4**	0.00

Notes: \*\* Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test

JohnJayREC planned a regression model with covariates to examine the relationship between number of service contacts and job placement. Before building the model, researchers tested the bivariate association between job placement and a number of other characteristics such as education level, marital status, age, and number of children. Among these, a positive and significant association was observed between education level and job placement. Educational level was coded as an ordinal variable where 1 = Some High School or Less, 2 = High School/GED, 3 = Some College/No Degree, 4 = Associate Degree or Higher.

Results from the logistic regression model in Table III.10 suggest that an increase in/more service contacts significantly raises the odds of job placement (versus not being placed in a job) by a factor of 1.17. An increase in education level was also significantly associated with higher odds of job placement. Plainly, participants with more service contact are 1.17 times more likely to be placed in a job. Participants with higher levels of education are 1.54 times more likely to be placed in a job. Both of these findings are significant at the .05 level.



**Table III.10. Logistic regression table with job placement**

Job placement	Odds ratio
Number of service contacts	1.17 **
	(0.04)
Education level	1.54 **
	(0.32)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>254</b>

Notes: Standard errors reported in parentheses

\*\* Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

*b. Family Engagement and Relationship Scales*

In the model-building process for this analysis, the research team conducted bivariate analyses (correlations) between Family Engagement scale scores, number of service contacts with Osborne staff, Staff Engagement scale scores, and other demographic covariates like marital status, education level, age, and number of children. Only significant covariates like age were included in the model. As suggested by the results in Table III.11, age at intake has a negative and significant correlation with Family Engagement scale scores at the .05 level. In other words, younger participants tended to have higher Family Engagement scale scores.

**Table III.11. Linear regressions with Family Engagement survey response as the dependent/outcome variable**

Model 1 uses number of service contacts as independent variable and age at intake as covariate	
Family Engagement	Coefficient
Number of service contacts	-0.08
	(0.08)
Age at intake	-0.10 **
	(0.05)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>91</b>

Notes: Standard errors reported in parentheses

\*\*Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

Model 2 uses Staff Engagement survey response scores as independent variable and age at intake as covariate	
Family Engagement	Coefficient
Staff Engagement survey response	0.11
	(0.73)
Age at intake	-0.11 **
	(0.03)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>91</b>

Notes: Standard errors reported in parentheses

\*\*Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

Next, the same set of variables was also correlated using the Family Relationship scale, but no significant bivariate associations were observed. See Table III.12 for the results.

**Table III.12. Linear regressions with Family Relationship survey response as the dependent/outcome variable**

<b>Model 1 uses number of service contacts as independent variable and age at intake as covariate</b>	
<b>Family Relationship</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>
Number of service contacts	0.007
	(0.00)
Age at intake	0.01
	(0.02)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>175</b>

Notes: Standard errors reported in parentheses

<b>Model 2 uses Staff Engagement survey response scores as independent variable and age at intake as covariate</b>	
<b>Family Relationship</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>
Staff engagement survey response	0.13
	(0.10)
Age at intake	0.01
	(0.02)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>174</b>

Notes: Standard errors reported in parentheses

### *c. Qualitative Context*

Despite the limited statistically significant findings from the above-described analyses, and the lack of a quantifiable proxy for bonds between participants to analyze, almost all participants consistently reported forming strong bonds with both the Prepare staff and members of their cohort. These bonds became sources of support and encouragement for participants even after they graduated from the program.

Most Program participants described how Prepare staff's dedication and compassion fostered strong connections with program participants. JohnJayREC consistently heard that staff's honesty, transparency about their life struggles, and "realness" helped participants feel comfortable and connected. Their empathy, respectfulness, and openness promoted a connection with participants that motivated participants through the program and past graduation. Program participants continued to stay in touch with the Prepare staff, sometimes just dropping by the office to say hello and share updates on their families. The research team heard this from about half the program participants and almost all the Prepare staff. Strong bonds encouraged other participants to keep trying when the job placement process took longer than anticipated or when they had difficulty finding the right fit for themselves.

**They make us feel wanted after being gone for so long because people do forget about us when you're gone, but that's what I like about Osborne, they always check on you. They keep looking for you even when you graduate.**

***-Program Participant***

**They don't just teach, they also talk about their experiences. They are very transparent. Direct conversations are had. They are a unique set of individuals and they all bring their own set of skills and they are never trying to belittle you or make you feel bad. It's because they see better in you. It's always positive and welcoming.**

***-Program Participant***

Bonds between participants within the program also served as a source of inspiration and support. Most participants described a brotherhood amongst members of their cohort, sharing things in the workshops they would be hesitant to discuss outside of the group. All Prepare staff witnessed these connections between participants forming as well and described them during interviews. Staff cited the intense emotional aspect of the program as contributing to the creation of these bonds. Staff believed that the short program duration meant that these emotional conversations began happening quickly, further fueling the fast formation of these bonds. Some participants reported that they maintained relationships with some of their cohort members after graduation. This was more common amongst participants who did not have strong connections with their families.

This sense of comradery and acceptance helped boost the confidence of many participants as they worked to reconnect with their children and families. All participants appreciated the unique understanding of their situations and that others were going through the same things. It was very valuable to hear from their peers, and share reentry and familial reengagement experiences. Knowing they were not alone in their struggles gave them a source of motivation. Almost all program participants felt motivated by these bonds to continue engaging with the program and seek out help when things become hard or opportunities slowed down.

**It helps me seeing these guys every day that come willingly to perform in this program, it helps me a lot. It makes me feel like I am about something. As I am trying to get better, they are trying to get better. And, if I can help them get better, he can help me get better. If I can help him out and he can help me out in whatever way, we can always do it together.**

***-Program Participant***

**When I come here I can really have a voice and have a productive conversation. When I go to my neighborhood it is like [I get responses like] "oh that is crazy." I feel awkward, but when I come here I feel good because we're all on the same page. Back home they are just throwing rocks at the penitentiary walls. You quick to give me some drugs, but you're not quick to give me some interview clothes.**

***-Program Participant***

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## IV. Recommendations

As part of the interviews and focus groups, JohnJayREC asked program staff and participants about what they believed was missing from Prepare and for their recommendations to improve the program. The team shared these recommendations with the Osborne Association throughout the project period. Suggestions typically revolved around providing more resources for clients, suggested curriculum improvements, and additional staff support.

### A. Participant resources

Participant access to, and training with, technology was one suggestion that came up frequently. Individuals incarcerated for extended periods experienced a steep learning curve with current technology like smart phones and online job applications. Most participants and most staff believed that a computer lab and more hands-on training with new devices and software would make participants more prepared for online job searching, applying, and training.

Most staff and about half the participants also recommended more varied job training options for participants. Many of the current available opportunities focus on construction related certifications. Whenever possible, staff helped program graduates access trainings in other areas, like culinary arts, but these opportunities were in short supply. A few participants specifically recommended a wider selection of training and job offerings similar to what is offered by other service providers. Most participants were interested in having options to find the best fit job for them that would pay them the salary they need to support themselves and their families.

### B. Program changes

JohnJayREC heard suggestions from some staff and participants to change or add to workshop materials. Some changes would aim to increase participant engagement, like incorporating videos and more visuals to the workshops. Similarly, some staff proposed updating anecdotes and language to help better capture the attention of clients. Other changes suggested by most participants focused on keeping the program culturally relevant by covering current events and trends to help participants catch up with the culture they missed while incarcerated.

Almost all participants and staff also recommended adding additional elements to the program to help it better serve its target population. Both participant and staff believed that a mental health component with counselors would help participants process the stress of reentry and lingering trauma. There was also a demand from participants and staff for social activities with partners and families to help them reconnect with their children. Activities, like picnics, baseball games, and trips to museums, would be occasions for participants to put program skills into practice and offer bonding opportunities.

Interviews produced several recommendations around incentives and financial support. Some participants recommended alternatives to gift card incentives. A few said that cards affiliated with a single store were restrictive and a few others found it difficult to find American Express friendly retailers to spend those cards. Some staff believed it would be beneficial if Prepare

provided financial support or work gear to participants at the start of employment. There were occasions when participants struggled with initial employment related expenses, like MetroCards or purchasing necessary safety equipment, like hard hats or boots, before first paychecks.

### C. Staff support

A recurring recommendation from almost all program staff throughout the evaluation was the need for more administrative support. Having additional staff to help with intakes, data entry, and other non-facilitation tasks would allow program facilitators to focus more on the delivery of program and client follow up, and reduce staff burnout. Data entry was a burdensome task for Prepare staff, especially when the same data had to be entered into two separate data systems.

## V. Limitations

A number of limitations restrict the scale of the project's findings. The JohnJayREC research team was only able to achieve a 52 percent response rate on the Follow-Up survey, which in turn limited the number of individuals eligible to be in the final analytic sample. As described in the attrition discussion in Appendix B, the 263 individuals in the final analytic sample differs significantly from the 305 individuals not in the analytic sample in terms of age, gender, relationship status, and educational attainment. See Table B.1 in Appendix B for a full comparison. This sample of 263 was further reduced for some analyses because not everyone in this group completed all the survey items included in some of the scales. Individuals were excluded when they skipped items or they did not have any children under 18 and therefore were not eligible to complete these items. These small subsets of the analytic sample are not the same as the analytic sample or the larger population of Prepare participants. Their changes in opinion, even when statistically significant, cannot be generalized to the entire Prepare population. Additionally, the small  $n$ 's limited the statistical power of tests utilized to answer some research questions.

The surveys utilized in the study did not include any direct questions about the bonds that seemingly formed within cohorts and between program participants and program staff. The research question focusing on participant bonds was developed later in the study so no questions on this topic were included in the Follow-Up survey. The research team had to rely solely on qualitative data to understand the impact cohort bonds had on participants. The team attempted to create a quantitative proxy for participant-staff bonds using the number of staff contacts. This is an imperfect measure, however, as it is possible that some individuals had a high number of staff contacts because they were disengaged from the program and staff were attempting to reengage them. See Appendix C for a more detailed discussion about this.

The qualitative data was also limited by the methods used to recruit participants. Convenience sampling was used to select program participants for interviews and focus groups. The research team did not make any attempt to create a representative sample for these interviews or focus groups, instead choosing to focus efforts on recruiting individuals who were motivated to speak with the team and were willing to share their experiences. Individuals who had disengaged from Prepare were unlikely to see the flyers posted at Osborne offices recruiting individuals, engage with program staff who shared information about these opportunities, or read emails from the research team about this project. Therefore, the research team did not collect the thoughts and opinions on these participants, whose opinions may be different from those who the team was able to speak with. It would be inappropriate to assume that the experiences reported by interview and focus group participants are the same as everyone who participated in Prepare.

JohnJayREC requested data from the New York State Department of Labor and New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to analyze as part of the evaluation. Neither data set was received before the end of the project, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so the research team was only able to use the available Osborne administrative data. This limited the planned analyses. The administrative data about employment collected by Osborne is restricted to what participants

report. Osborne requests that participants bring in proof of employment to document their jobs, including employment verification letters and paystubs. While this means that the data Osborne collects is accurate, it is not always up to date and may be missing, depending on how engaged participants stayed with the program post-graduation. Department of Labor data is more thorough and updated quarterly, which would have allowed the research team to do a more nuanced analysis of employment outcomes. Division of Criminal Justice Services data would have allowed the research team to do additional analyses to see what percentage of participants recidivated after graduation, and what factors may have been associated with recidivating.

These limitations should be considered when future, more rigorous evaluations are planned to examine the effectiveness of Prepare.

## VI. Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, participants consistently reported high levels of satisfaction with the services, information, and support they received from the Prepare program. Anecdotally, the program was successful in helping people reconnect with their children and families, and obtaining and maintaining employment. Individuals who were able to find and keep a job also reported that having work further helped them reconnect with their children and reintegrate into their families. Having employment made them feel good about themselves and their ability to contribute financially. Participants felt supported by staff who are often compassionate, patient, and transparent throughout the process. They also felt supported by their peers who helped motivate them through their shared challenges. Most participants said they would recommend the Prepare program to others coming home from incarceration, and in many instances, they already had. Almost everyone had nothing but praise for the Prepare program and its staff. JohnJayREC was not able to statistically support all that was found in the interviews and focus groups in the outcome analysis findings. The data supported reports of reconnection with family, but was not able to make a strong connection between job placement and familial reconnection, or staff engagement and familial reconnection.

Family reconnection is a complicated construct to quantify. The research team attempted to harness the nFORM survey and utilize familial measures already built into the pre- and post-program surveys. Unfortunately, these questions were restricted to individuals with children under the age of 21. This, paired with the missingness issues already outlined, left the research team with an unexpectedly small  $n$  for the final analyses. The research team also did not have any data collected at all three survey points that measured changes in participants' relationships with their adult children.

Job placement is a simpler construct to quantify and is a more concrete outcome to achieve. Osborne's dedicated employment specialists have a vast network of connections and years of experience working to help individuals like the Prepare participants obtain and maintain employment. It was not surprising that individuals who graduated from the program, stayed connected with staff, and came into the program with some level of educational achievement had the most successful placements.

Prepare found great success at engaging participants during the workshops, even when the COVID-19 pandemic effectively shut down New York City and forced the program to suddenly become virtual (See Appendix E for a summary of Prepare's first virtual cohort experience). Participants in the virtual group reported learning a lot of techniques and methods that they were able to apply to their interactions with their families and to their approach to the job search process. Staff and participants also shared helpful feedback on ways to improve the program with recommendations focusing on additional resources for participants, some updates to the curriculum, and additional support for program staff.



**The knowledge here is useful. The guys teach you some positive steps on how to maintain and manage your anger, and keep your focus on what your responsibilities should be: finding work, staying free. . . If it wasn't for the program I would be gone already. It's a good program, it really is.**

***-Program Participant***

**Yes, I have [recommended the program] because I think they are sincere. For me they came in and told me this is what I can do for you and this is what I cannot do. And they kept their word . . . if I feel like talking, I stop by and their door is always open. They may say give us five minutes, but they always make time. Sometimes [former participants] come by just to hang out and sometimes we go to the classroom and talk to the new students. They really make it feel like family, they really care. They always call and check on me to make sure I'm alright (because I hadn't come for a while because I work the graveyard shift). They make me feel wanted like they really care.**

***-Program Participant***

Despite many participant's initial reluctance to sit through parenting workshops, Prepare's staff was able to draw the participants in and deliver the material in an accessible, interesting, and thought-provoking way. At the end of their time in the program, participants self-reported increased confidence in their own parenting and job search abilities. This confidence empowered them to continue working hard on their paths to reconnect with their families. The questions raised during the study's analyses suggest a number of interesting pathways for future studies, including alternative ways to quantify improvements in family relationships and connectedness, and a closer, quantifiable examination of how bonds between participants in a program can impact participant success. Overall, the findings appear promising and a more rigorous impact evaluation that addresses the limitations of this study would be able to draw stronger conclusions about the effectiveness of Prepare.

## VII. References

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## **VIII. Appendices**

### **A. Logic model for Prepare** LOGIC MODEL HERE

- B. Attrition analyses and tables
- C. Additional details on methods used to clean and prepare data for the outcomes study
- D. Additional details of the outcomes analysis organized by research question
- E. Summary of virtual group
- 1. Summary of FRPN study**
- 2. Data collection instruments**
- 3. .Scale items by survey wave**

## **APPENDIX A: LOGIC MODEL**

## LOGIC MODEL

## **Appendix B:**

### **Attrition analyses and tables**

## A. Entire analytic sample and Research Question 2

JohnJayREC table compared the analytic sample (Sample 4) with everyone from the baseline sample (Sample 2) that was not part of the analytic sample. These two groups are mutually exclusive and no individual is in both samples. JohnJayREC compared how the proportions of each characteristic changed to understand if attrition made the two samples significantly different. See Table B.1 for a summary of how the entire analytic sample differed from those not in the analytic sample. The entire analytic sample was examined to answer the second research question.

While the analytic sample is very similar to the rest of the participants who did not complete the Follow-Up survey in terms of race and ethnicity, the two groups differ significantly on a few of the other characteristics. The analytic sample was two years older on average and had more females, both statistically significant at the .05 level. The analytic sample contains significantly more married or partnered individuals, as well as divorced individuals. More individuals in the analytic sample had a high school diploma or GED and fewer only had some high school. Both these differences were significant at the .05 level.

**Table B.1. Summary statistics of key baseline measures and baseline differences for the analytic sample compared with enrollees who did not complete follow up data collection**

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample <sup>1</sup> (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals enrolled in the study but not in the analytic sample <sup>2</sup> (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
<b>Age</b>	40.6	38.5	2.1 ** (0.02)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	94%	94%	0% (0.79)
Female	4%	1%	3% ** (0.03)
Missing	2%	5%	3% ** (0.02)
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	32%	27%	5% (0.16)
Non-Hispanic White	3%	4%	1% (0.75)
Non-Hispanic Black	62%	61%	1% (0.81)
Non-Hispanic Asian	0%	1%	0% (0.65)
Other race	2%	2%	0% (0.68)

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample <sup>1</sup> (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals enrolled in the study but not in the analytic sample <sup>2</sup> (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
Missing	1%	6%	5% ** (0.00)
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married or partnered	31%	23%	8% ** (0.03)
Single	51%	54%	3% (0.50)
Divorced	9%	4%	4% ** (0.03)
Separated	4%	5%	0% (0.81)
Widowed	0%	1%	1% (0.39)
Missing	5%	13%	9% ** (0.00)
<b>Education Level</b>			
Some high school or Less	20%	28%	8% ** (0.03)
High school / GED	56%	43%	13% ** (0.00)
Some college / No degree	13%	12%	1% (0.76)
Associate degree or higher	8%	7%	1% (0.63)
Missing	3%	10%	7% ** (0.00)
<b>Number of children</b>	2.0	2.0	0.0 (0.95)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>305</b>	-

\*\* Significantly different from zero at the .05 level

Notes: 1) The analytic sample includes individuals who participated in the intervention (Prepare) and completed ACS, Baseline, Post-Program and Follow-Up surveys.

2) Individuals enrolled in the study but not in the analytic sample are defined as having completed a Pre-Program Entrance (Baseline) survey, but not the Follow-Up survey.

## B. Research Question 1 and 3

The research team also examined the differences of the smaller groups included in each research question analysis to see how those groups differed from the rest of the analytic sample who self-reported having children under 18 (n=178). Respondents without children under 18 (n=85) were dropped from this comparison, as they were not eligible to answer the survey questions that went into the Family Engagement and Family Relationship scales. In answering Research Question 1,



the research team was only able to include 43 individuals in analysis around Family Engagement and 106 individuals in analysis around Family Relationships.

Table B.2 compares the 43 individuals with Family Engagement scale scores at baseline and follow-up with the remainder of the analytic sample with children under 18 who did not have valid scores at both survey points (n=135). The two groups did not differ significantly on age, gender, race/ethnicity, or marital status. As expected, they were significantly different in terms of number of children and level of education achieved. Those who answered all scale survey items on both surveys had significantly higher educational attainment and had significantly more children.

**Table B.2. Summary statistics of key baseline measures and baseline differences for the analytic sample with Family Engagement scale scores at baseline and follow up compared with enrollees eligible to be in the analytic sample without Family Engagement scale scores at both survey points**

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
<b>Age</b>	40.7	39.1	1.6 (0.32)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	95%	92%	4% (0.44)
Female	5%	7%	2% (0.63)
Missing	0%	1%	1% (0.42)
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	33%	33%	1% (0.93)
Non-Hispanic White	5%	3%	2% (0.59)
Non-Hispanic Black	63%	60%	3% (0.74)
Non-Hispanic Asian	0%	1%	1% (0.57)
Other race	0%	2%	2% (0.32)
Missing	0%	1%	1% (0.57)
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married or partnered	28%	35%	7% (0.40)
Single	49%	48%	1% (0.94)
Divorced	9%	10%	0% (0.95)

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
Separated	5%	5%	1% (0.89)
Widowed	0%	0%	0%
Missing	9%	2%	7% ** (0.04)
<b>Education Level</b>			
Some high school or less	7%	23%	16% ** (0.02)
High school / GED	74%	53%	22% ** (0.01)
Some college / no degree	16%	13%	3% (0.63)
Associate degree or higher	2%	7%	4% (0.28)
Missing	0%	4%	4% (0.16)
<b>Number of children</b>	2.7	2.1	0.6 ** (0.02)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>1,351</b>	

\*\*Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

Note: 1) n=135 denotes participants who did not have both Entrance and Follow-Up survey scale scores, which means some have scores at either time period.

Table B.3 compares the 106 individuals with Family Relationship scale scores at baseline and follow-up with the remainder of the analytic sample without valid scores at both survey points (n=157). The two groups did not differ significantly on age, gender, race/ethnicity, or level of education attained. The group with Family Relationship scale scores at both time points were significantly more likely to be married and significantly less likely to be single. It could be that being partnered increased the likelihood that someone would completely answer all the questions asked about family relationships.

**Table B.3. Summary statistics of key baseline measures and baseline differences for the analytic sample with Family Relationship scale scores at baseline and follow up compared with enrollees eligible to be in the analytic sample without Family Relationship scale scores at both survey points**

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
<b>Age</b>	39.2	39.8	0.6 (0.68)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	92%	94%	3% (0.46)
Female	8%	4%	3% (0.36)
Missing	1%	1%	0% (0.78)
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	35%	30%	4% (0.55)
Non-Hispanic White	5%	1%	3% (0.23)
Non-Hispanic Black	60%	61%	1% (0.92)
Non-Hispanic Asian	0%	1%	1% (0.22)
Other race	0%	4%	4% ** (0.03)
Missing	0%	1%	1% (0.22)
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married or partnered	40%	24%	16% ** (0.03)
Single	41%	60%	19% ** (0.01)
Divorced	9%	10%	0% (0.95)
Separated	4%	7%	3% (0.34)
Widowed	0%	0%	0%
Missing	7%	0%	7% ** (0.03)
<b>Education Level</b>			
Some high school or less	15%	25%	10% (0.10)
High school / GED	59%	56%	4% (0.61)

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
Some college / No degree	16%	11%	5% (0.35)
Associate degree or higher	7%	4%	2% (0.49)
Missing	3%	4%	1% (0.63)
<b>Number of children</b>	2.3	2.0	0.3 (0.18)

\*\*Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

Note: 1) n=72 denotes participants who did not have both Entrance and Follow-Up survey scale scores, which means some have scores at either time period.

### C. Research Question 4

Table B.4 compares the 91 individuals with Family Engagement scale scores at follow-up with the remainder of the analytic sample without valid scores at follow-up (n=172). A greater proportion of the analytic sample were without Family Engagement scale scores at follow-up, and therefore not in the analytic sample. The two groups did not differ significantly on age, gender, race/ethnicity, or marital status. The group not in the analytic sample had a lower level of educational attainment and had significantly fewer children. Having fewer children may have contributed to individuals not being eligible to complete the survey items that made up the Family Engagement scale.

**Table B.4. Summary statistics of key baseline measures and baseline differences for the analytic sample with valid Family Engagement scale scores at follow-up compared with enrollees eligible to be in the analytic sample without Family Engagement scale scores at follow up**

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
<b>Age</b>	40.2	40.7	0.5 (0.70)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	95%	94%	0% (0.92)
Female	4%	4%	0% (0.90)
Missing	1%	2%	1% (0.69)
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	29%	34%	5% (0.39)
Non-Hispanic White	5%	2%	3% (0.18)
Non-Hispanic Black	65%	60%	4% (0.49)
Non-Hispanic Asian	0%	1%	1% (0.47)
Other race	1%	2%	1% (0.69)
Missing	0%	1%	1% (0.30)
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married or partnered	24%	34%	10% (0.09)
Single	56%	48%	8% (0.23)
Divorced	10%	8%	2% (0.63)
Separated	4%	4%	0% (0.90)
Widowed	0%	1%	1% (0.47)
Missing	5%	5%	1% (0.76)
<b>Education Level</b>			
Some high school or less	13%	24%	11% ** (0.04)
High school / GED	62%	52%	9% (0.15)

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
Some college / No degree	16%	12%	5% (0.27)
Associate degree or higher	8%	8%	0% (0.97)
Missing	1%	5%	4% (0.13)
<b>Number of children</b>	2.4	1.9	0.5 ** (0.01)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>172</b>	N/A

\*\* Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test

Note: Size for analytic sample denotes number of participants who had non-missing Follow-Up survey scale scores

Table B.5 compares the 175 individuals with Family Relationship scale scores at follow-up with the remainder of the analytic sample without valid scores at follow up (n=88). The two groups did not differ significantly on gender or race/ethnicity. Participants in the analytic sample were significantly younger. A significantly greater proportion of those not in the analytic sample had a lower level of educational attainment and had significantly fewer children. Having fewer children may have contributed to individuals not being eligible to complete the survey items that made up the Family Relationship scale.

**Table B.5. Summary statistics of key baseline measures and baseline differences for the analytic sample with valid Family Relationship scale scores at follow-up compared with enrollees eligible to be in the analytic sample without Family Engagement scale scores at follow up**

Baseline measure	Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)	Difference (p-value of difference)
<b>Age</b>	39.2	43.2	4.0 ** (0.00)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	93%	98%	5% (0.09)
Female	6%	1%	5% (0.08)
Missing	2%	1%	1% (0.72)
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	33%	30%	4% (0.56)
Non-Hispanic White	4%	2%	2% (0.47)
Non-Hispanic Black	61%	65%	4% (0.51)
Non-Hispanic Asian	1%	0%	1% (0.48)
Other race	1%	3%	3% (0.08)
Missing	1%	0%	1% (0.31)
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Married or partnered	34%	25%	9% (0.15)
Single	49%	56%	7% (0.28)
Divorced	10%	7%	3% (0.43)
Separated	3%	6%	2% (0.39)
Widowed	0%	1%	1% (0.16)
Missing	5%	6%	1% (0.70)
<b>Education Level</b>			
Some high school or less	17%	27%	11% ** (0.04)
High school / GED	58%	51%	7% (0.31)

<b>Baseline measure</b>	<b>Mean for the analytic sample (standard deviation)</b>	<b>Mean for individuals not in the analytic sample (standard deviation)</b>	<b>Difference (p-value of difference)</b>
Some college / No degree	15%	10%	5% (0.30)
Associates degree or higher	7%	8%	1% (0.88)
Missing	3%	3%	0% (0.99)
<b>Number of children</b>	2.2	1.7	0.5 ** (0.02)
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>88</b>	

\*\* Significantly different from zero at the .05 level, two-tailed test

Note: Size for analytic sample denotes number of participants who had non-missing Follow-Up survey scale scores



**Appendix C:**  
**Additional details on the methods used to clean and prepare  
outcome data**

JohnJayREC has some additional details to supplement the discussion in the main report about constructing outcome measures.

## A. Constructing outcome measures

As part of the planning for the final analysis, JohnJayREC examined and categorized all the survey items that could potentially make up scales to measure participant outcomes. Examining how these pre-categorized items held together as a scale was the first step in the research team's creation of outcome measures.

JohnJayREC attempted to load four candidate survey items measuring family engagement onto a single scale, but they did not hold together as a single construct. The team then performed an exploratory factor analysis on these four items with ten additional family relationship items. Out of these fourteen items, 10 loaded onto two factors. Four items were left out because they failed to combine into scales with sufficient reliability. The final Family Engagement scale consists of six items and the final Family Relationships scale consists of four items.

The four survey items from the Follow-Up survey relating to staff engagement loaded onto one scale, named Staff Engagement.

## B. Unique issues with the family scales

### 1. Multiple sets of questions

The family engagement and relationship portion of the surveys asked respondents with more than one child under the age of 21 a duplicate set of questions about their second child. This meant that some respondents had two sets of responses that needed to be collapsed into a single scale score. For respondents who answered questions pertaining to both Child 1 and Child 2, their response values were averaged out. For instance, for the item "In the past month, how often have you had a meal together with your child?", if the respondent answered "1-3 times a month" (which is scored as two on this 4-point item) for Child 1 and "Every day or almost every day" (which is scored as four) for Child 2, then the response value for this item is averaged out to be a three. The research team used these average responses for corresponding survey items to create scale scores for individuals with multiple young children.

### 2. Missing responses

JohnJayREC found that many participants in the analytic sample were missing scores on the two family scales. Of the 568 participants who took the Entrance survey, 394 responded that they have one or more child(ren) younger than 21 (230 one child and 162 two children). Of those 394 individuals, 41 percent answered all six items within the Family Engagement scale, thus receiving a scale score, and 20 percent skipped all six items on the scale. Of those same individuals, 65 percent answered all four items within the Family Relationship scale and 31 percent answered none of the items in the scale. Such "nonattitude" responses could accurately reflect the absence of an opinion, or they may be random choices by respondents who feign

engagement in a survey while randomly completing items to reach the end and secure the financial incentive.

### **3. Multiple children and missing responses**

The research team had some instances when a respondent indicated they have more than one child under the age of 21, but only provided valid responses about one child. In these instances, the valid responses were preserved and the missing responses were not used in the average item scores that went into an individual's scale score.

### **C. Limitations of staff contact proxy measure**

JohnJayREC created the Staff Engagement scale by drawing on items from the Follow-Up survey focusing on participant perceptions of how the staff treated them and if they would recommend the program to others. The team also decided to use number of contacts with program staff as an additional measure of bonds with staff. The belief is that if participants feel close to staff and trust them, they will continue to engage with staff throughout the program and follow up period, compared to individuals who did not feel bonded with staff. This lined up with the anecdotal reports from interviews and focus groups of participants returning to visit staff in the office past the end of the program to share updates on their life and family.

There are some limitations around using staff contact as a proxy measure. In instances where a participant has disengaged with the program, staff will make multiple efforts to contact the individual to attempt to re-engage him or her. Staff cannot discharge an individual as non-completing without seven attempts to reengage. Therefore, it is possible that some individuals with a high number of contacts were very unengaged and the high number of contacts reflects Prepare staff's attempts to re-engage them. In future studies examining how bonds between staff and participants influences outcomes, researchers should devise more direct measures of bonds with staff to analyze.

**Appendix D:**  
**Additional details of the outcome analysis organized by research question**

The research team had additional details for some of the analyses run to answer the more complicated research questions – Research Questions 3 and 4.

**A. Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between obtaining and maintaining employment and improved relationships between children and co-parents? If so, what?**

JohnJayREC attempted to conduct two-sample t-tests to examine whether the changes in the Family Engagement and Family Relationship scale scores differed significantly between those who had job placement and those who did not in the final analytic sample. However, the small *n* of individuals without job placement weakened this analysis and caused the research team to seek alternative ways to understand the relationship between job placement and family connections.

For both family scales, participants without a job had larger improvements in their scale scores than participants who were not placed in a job. See Table D.1 for the mean score changes. However, the difference was not statistically significant and did not show a significant relationship between having employment and changes in family relationships.

**Table D.1. Change in family scale scores crossed with job placement for the analytic sample**

Outcome	Mean for group with job placement	Mean for group without job placement	Difference in means	p-value of the difference
Family Engagement	1.38 (n=37)	1.83 (n=6)	0.45	0.78
Family Relationship	-0.01 (n=86)	0.03 (n=20)	0.03	0.94

These findings should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind. First, it is important to note that the samples are unbalanced. There are approximately five times as many individuals in the job placement group than in the without job placement group. Additionally, there is an overall low *n* in the groups being compared because many individuals in the analytic sample were missing responses for the items in these scales. This could be the result of skipping items or because the individual did not have any children under the age of 18 (which the questions focus on). JohnJayREC anticipated being able to do a more nuanced analysis once the NYS DOL data was received and cleaned. These things together dissuaded the research team from utilizing this analysis as the main finding for this research question.

**B. Research Question 4: Do interactions between staff and clients, as well as between clients, influence client outcomes? If so, how?**

JohnJayREC did a secondary analysis to examine correlation of the individual items within the Family Engagement and Family Relationship scales with the number of service contacts and the scores on the Staff Engagement scale. The team did not find any significant associations at the

five percent level of significance. Further correlations revealed that the item<sup>1</sup> asking how close they felt to their child was positively related to Staff Engagement scale scores at the 10 percent level of significance. The item<sup>2</sup> asking how often a participant used physical punishment on their child in the past month was negatively related to Staff Engagement scores at the 10 percent level. In other words, higher staff engagement scores correlated with participants feeling closer with their child and using physical punishment less often.

The item<sup>3</sup> asking how often a participant saw their child in the past month was negatively related to the number of service contacts a participant made with Osborne staff at the 10 percent significance level. The more service contacts a participant had with Osborne staff, the lower their responses for this survey item, meaning they reported seeing less of their child. While this finding is seemingly negative, it is reasonable that someone spending extra time at the Osborne offices would have less time to visit with their child in person. This extra time engaged with the program could have dividends in the end by the lessons learned from staff in the program and by increasing the odds of job placement.

These findings, however limited they may be, do add some insight into how positive engagement with staff appears to have positive impacts on how participants are interacting with their families.

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<sup>1</sup> Please tell us how often you've felt or acted this way in the past month with your child. My child and I are very close to each other.

<sup>2</sup> Over the past month, how often did you ... Hit, spanked, grabbed, or used physical punishment with your child?

<sup>3</sup> In the past month, how often did you see your child?

## **Appendix E: Summary of Virtual Group**

The Osborne Association made fast and drastic changes to the administration of the Prepare program in response to the COVID-19 crisis in New York City. At the end of March 2020, all workshops transitioned to virtual seminars led and facilitated by Prepare staff. The transition was quick, but successful. Staff members initially worried that getting participants to join the program would be difficult due to restrictions around technology within the halfway houses many participants resided in. Osborne's long-standing relationship with these agencies helped ease this challenge and ultimately participation in the virtual group was not an issue. Of the 16 participants enrolled in the cohort, 15 successfully graduated.

Staff began to prepare for the shift from classroom to virtual learning by scanning manuals and classroom materials, and ensuring that all staff had an Osborne phone and the supplies needed for facilitation. Planning the virtual sessions had some complications. Staff found that most of the participants did not have access to smart devices or cameras, rendering them unable to administer the workshop exclusively through videoconferencing. A participant suggested Osborne provide these devices for future cohorts. Many participants could only access the session through audio-only phone calls. Additionally, it was unreasonable to expect people to stay on a phone call for six hours per day, so Prepare staff had to adapt the curriculum to be delivered in much shorter pieces.

The inaugural virtual cohort lasted three weeks, with workshops held five days a week, for two one-hour sessions per day. Morning sessions took place from 10:00-11:00 AM, and the afternoon sessions were from 2:30-3:30 PM. Each participant also received at least three hour-long one-on-one sessions with a facilitator during the cohort, a two-hour individual session for resume preparation, and a two-hour individual session for mock interview preparation. Participants received a total of 37 hours combined of direct instruction and individual sessions during the virtual program. Staff prioritized the most important parts of each curriculum during the adaptation of the program material. For example, the one-minute pitch (how to quickly present one's work skills and experience), mock interviewing, and answering questions regarding their history of justice involvement were highlighted from the Ready, Set, Work! curriculum. This allowed all critical material to be covered in the new format.

Prepare staff had to work through several logistical challenges with the switch to virtual facilitation. Background noise was an issue during group sessions, as many participants did not have access to a quiet place, safe from distractions, for the entire hour. Staff also needed to be sure participants stayed for the entire session, so attendance was taken at the beginning and the end of each workshop. Facilitators utilized multiple open-ended questions and random calling upon participants to keep participants engaged during the calls. Just like in the physical classroom, some participants were very open to sharing and others needed an extra push to open up. Staff and facilitators were very impressed with the level of engagement from participants.

A few changes were made to the mock interview process for virtual facilitation. The mock interviews became individual exercises instead of ones done in front of the entire cohort. Participants received mock job postings to interview for, which was new. This allowed for both the interviewer and the interviewee to tailor questions and responses to the specific field (e.g.,



construction, food handling, maintenance) participants were interested in. Holding the interviews virtually also gave participants more realistic practice, as many companies and organizations are turning to virtual interviews to hire potential candidates. Osborne volunteers signed up to conduct the virtual interviews and provided feedback directly to the program participants and Prepare staff.

Osborne staff endeavored to make the virtual experience for their first virtual cohort as authentic as possible. After participants completed the course, Prepare staff organized a virtual graduation. The graduation had completion certificates with each participants' name and photo, several motivational guest speakers, traditional commencement music, and graduate testimonials. The graduates invited friends and family members to witness their achievement. At the end of the ceremony, the audience showed their support by unmuting their devices to give a roaring round of applause for the graduates.

Osborne staff reported feeling prepared and supported through the transition from in-person to virtual facilitation of Prepare. They identified some challenges that need to be worked out moving forward, including a better way to complete paperwork requiring signatures, distribution of incentives, and how to balance program timing with halfway house requirements. They also described plans to integrate lessons learned from the first cohort into the next virtual group. For example, it was helpful to have all staff join the last ten minutes of each group session to debrief so all staff had a clear understanding of which participants needed what. Osborne was also pursuing the possibility of borrowing laptops from Hostos Community College so participants could have access to devices with webcams. Smart devices are required for remote OSHA30 classes, which many participants continue to be interested in completing. Overall, staff considered the virtual group process very successful. Participants also felt that experiencing Prepare virtually did not compromise their learning and development. Prepare program leadership is considering the possibility of continuing some remote learning even when in-person workshops can start again.

## **Appendix F: Summary of FRPN Study**

## **The Osborne Association and the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network Co-Parenting Research Partnership: Project Summary**

Michelle Portlock, the Osborne Association

In September 2017, the Osborne Association received approval from the Office of Family Assistance to participate as one of the research sites in a study by the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN), “Evaluation of How to be Co-Parents.”

### **A. Research purpose**

The primary purpose of FRPN’s research was to study the effects of mothers’ participation in a six-week co-parenting intervention on the co-parenting relationship between mothers and nonresident fathers who are attending fatherhood programs. The research collaboration was a strategy for Osborne to enhance its implementation and evaluation of the Prepare program. Prepare consistently met intake targets for fathers, but had difficulty from the start in recruiting partners to participate in the parenting and relationship components of the program.

### **B. Challenges and lessons learned**

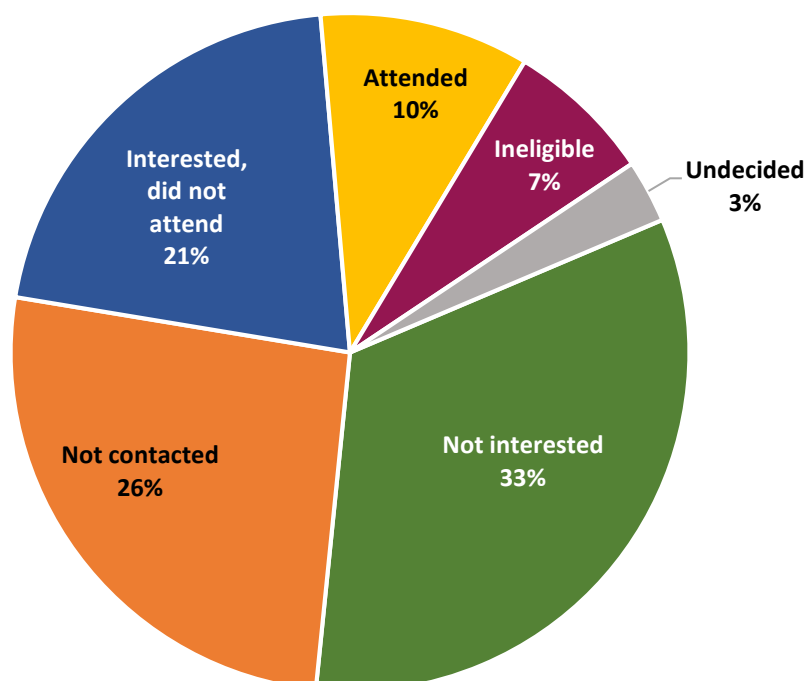
Osborne’s participation in the FRPN project confirmed their previous experience – that it is very difficult to recruit partners into co-parenting or relationship services, particularly when couples are no longer in a relationship. As it was implemented at Osborne, the FRPN research design required men to enroll in the study first, and to provide a phone number for a mother of their child(ren), so that project staff could reach out to the mothers to invite their participation in a co-parenting class. Many men were no longer in touch with the mothers of their children and could not provide a contact number for her. Many others did not think that the mother would want to participate in a program associated with them, as a result of past conflict. This speaks to the damaged state of the co-parenting relationships, either a result of separation due to incarceration or other past difficulties in the relationships.

Over the course of eight months, the project team made outreach attempts to over 383 men who were either currently or previously enrolled in Osborne programs. In addition to outreach that was conducted in person to current Osborne groups, over 1,260 attempted contacts were made by phone or text to both fathers and mothers. Despite this outreach effort, only six women ultimately participated in the two cycles of the co-parenting class that were held (3 participants in each). See Table F.1 and Figure F.1.

**Table F.1. Summary of outreach and enrollment**

	Men	Women	Total
Total # individuals targeted by outreach	383 (150 in person, 233 by phone)	58 (all by phone)	441
# of attempted phone contacts	887	374	1,261
Total # of individuals contacted	264	43	307
# of class participants	NA	6	6

When recruitment proved challenging, Osborne worked with FRPN to make changes to outreach strategies and eligibility requirements, but these changes did not have a significant impact. The small number of women who enrolled in the course was disappointing. The effort that was made to contact and enroll women partners in the program was only made possible by the additional staffing provided by the FRPN partnership. With the funding for the study, Osborne hired a team of part-time research assistants to conduct outreach, administer the research surveys, and observe the co-parenting course for fidelity to the curriculum. The Prepare program staff would not have been able to dedicate so much time to contacting partners, yet there was still very low return for this investment of time.

**Figure F.1. Result of outreach to women**

FRPN experienced similar recruitment challenges at other research sites. In addition to Osborne, five other programs in states around the country participated in the study: California, Colorado,

New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. All sites were below target for study enrollment until FRPN made a significant change to the recruitment process. At the California and South Carolina programs, the recruitment strategy was reversed, and the programs conducted outreach directly to women first, rather than first engaging with fathers. This strategy proved to be much more successful, and women who engaged in the program recruited future participants.

Osborne was the only provider in the study working exclusively with individuals with criminal legal system involvement, though other programs did work with this population to some extent. FRPN's analysis found that across sites, a father's incarceration within the past year increased the likelihood of a mother's interest in participating in the co-parenting class. It is not clear, however, whether recent father incarceration was associated with a reduced likelihood of eligibility for study participation. For example, a father needed to be able to provide a phone number for the mother in order to be eligible for study participation. It is possible that recent incarceration could be reflective of disconnected relationships, with a father unable to provide current contact information for their child's mother. Orders of protection also made individuals ineligible, which may have been the situation with some of the fathers at Osborne who were recently incarcerated.

One challenge that Osborne encountered with enrolling Prepare participants in the study was not anticipated: project staff found that some participants were confused and/or reluctant about the study because they were already expected to complete multiple surveys during their program enrollment. Prepare participants complete three surveys in nFORM, as well as a 3-month follow-up survey with JohnJayREC. It is possible that this group was "over-surveyed" and not as receptive to the FRPN project as a result.

## **Appendix G: Data collection instruments**

This appendix G needs to be done in surveys