

PROJECT SUMMARY

After demonstrating efficacy at improving interview skills, self-confidence, and access to employment across 5 randomized controlled trials, the research team sought and was awarded funding from the National Institute of Justice (2019-MU-MU-0004) to evaluate whether participants randomized to use Virtual Reality Job Interview Training (VR-JIT) within a prison-based pre-employment services would demonstrate better interview skills and employment outcomes (and reduced recidivism) within 6 and 12 months as compared to pre-employment services-as-usual. The study is led by Dr. Matthew Smith, Associate Professor at the University of Michigan's School of Social Work in partnership with the State of Michigan Department of Corrections.

METHODS

The study is a 2-arm randomized control trial in which returning citizens 18 to 29 years old characterized at moderate-to-high risk of violent re-offense will be randomized to receive pre-employment services-as-usual within the Michigan Department of Corrections Vocational Villages or in combination with VR-JIT. A total of 43 returning citizens participated in this feasibility study. They completed mock job interviews and self-report measures on interview anxiety and self-confidence prior to and after the intervention period. Participants also completed a 6 and 12-month follow-up phone call asking about job interview completions and employment and probation status.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

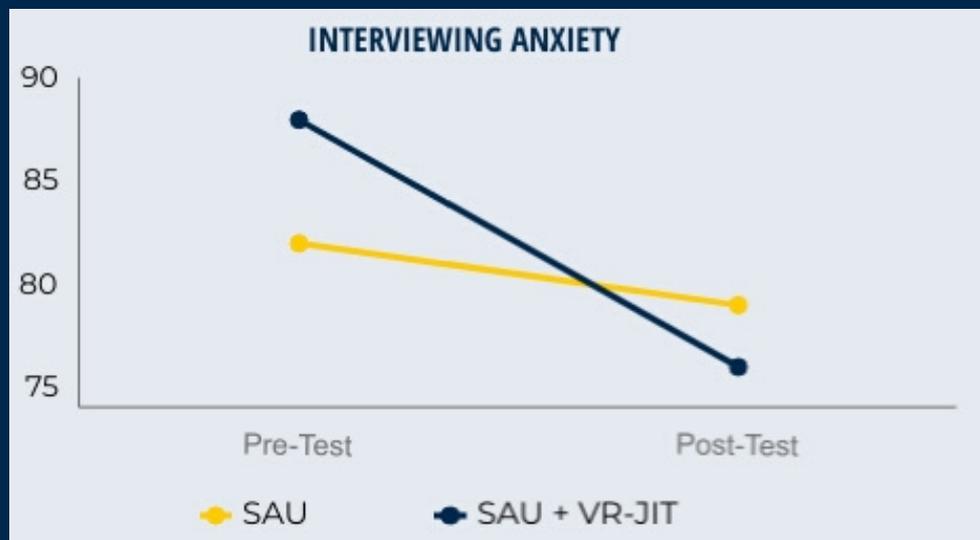
90%

OF RETURNING CITIZENS REPORTED VR-JIT WAS ENJOYABLE AND EASY TO USE

95%

OF RETURNING CITIZENS REPORTED VR-JIT HELPED IMPROVE THEIR JOB INTERVIEW SKILLS

Returning citizens practicing with VR-JIT demonstrated a 12.8% decrease in self-reported interviewing anxiety between pre-test and post-test, compared to a 3.8% decrease in self-reported interviewing anxiety for returning citizens receiving usual services at the Vocational Villages.



TESTIMONIALS

“The realistic training made me feel as though I was actually interviewing for a job.”
- Returning Citizen

“Learning what were right and wrong responses to say and when to ask questions.”
- Returning Citizen

“It is beneficial to have returning citizens in the thought process of what is appropriate or not because our staff doesn't do that. The tool also takes the burden off of staff for mock interviews because we only have so much time for them.”
- Prison Instructor