

Smarter Solutions for Crime Reduction: The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Strategic Planning Initiative

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, the third highest budget line item experienced by states between 1988 and 2008 was building and operating correctional facilities, increasing annually from 12 to 52 billion (National Association of State Budget Officers 1988, 2009). Yet, during this time recidivism rates remained high. For instance, of the 272,111 inmates released from prisons across 15 states in 1994, two-thirds were rearrested on new felony offenses, and more than half returned to prison within three years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002).

In an effort to remedy excess prison expenditures and recidivism, the Council of State Governments started a justice reinvestment initiative. The Justice Reinvestment Project is a collaboration of policymakers to advance a data-driven strategy that reduces corrections expenditures, increases public safety, and invests in communities where high numbers of ex-offenders are re-entering. The Initiative provides community-based social services and subsidies such as substance abuse and mental health counseling, employment assistance, and food stamps. The challenge is to increase public safety by reducing recidivism and re-allocating the realized savings from decreased incarceration costs to the communities of greatest need.

The Justice Reinvestment Project is supported by a combination of federal, state/local, and private funds, including technical assistance. These entities provide grants to states to engage in a multi-phased approach, where policymakers:

- 1) Analyze criminal justice trends to understand what factors are driving the growth in jail and prison populations.
- 2) Develop and implement policy options to manage the growth in corrections expenditures,

generate savings in public revenues, and increase the effectiveness of current spending and investment to increase public safety and improve offender accountability.

- 3) Reinvest a portion of the savings into the justice system to further reduce corrections spending, and into the community to further prevent crime.
- 4) Measure the impact of the policy changes and reinvestment resources and hold policymakers accountable for projected results.

Program strategy

Step 1: Analyze the prison population and spending in the communities to which people in prison often return. Using mapping technology, experts provide geographic analyses to pinpoint which neighborhoods persons released from prison return to and the degree to which states invest in programs within those communities.

Step 2: Provide policymakers with options to generate savings and increase public safety. Focus supervision resources where they can have the greatest impact and hold offenders and service providers accountable for the successful completion of programs, such as drug treatment and job training.

Step 3: Quantify savings and reinvest in select high-stakes communities. Officials reinvest the savings and deploy existing resources in high-stakes neighborhoods to redevelop abandoned housing, and better coordinate services such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, job training, and education.

Step 4: Measure the impact and enhance accountability. Quantify the amount of corrections costs saved or avoided, recidivism rates, and

indicators of community capacity. Also, collect and analyze data and provide periodic reports to policymakers to determine whether agencies are implementing the new policies effectively, assess how closely the actual impact of these new policies corresponds to projections, and make any necessary adjustments.

Current justice reinvestment efforts

In the face of ever increasing correctional costs and recidivism rates, 14 states have initiated data driven criminal justice reinvestment strategies in an effort to increase public safety, hold offenders accountable, and control corrections spending.

To view a state justice reinvestment strategy for Arizona, Connecticut, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin, visit: <http://justicereinvestment.org/states/>

Reports and evaluations

[Public Safety, Public Spending: Forecasting America's Prison Population 2007-2011](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org)
at: <http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org>

Project overview

[Council of State Governments – Justice Reinvestment website](http://justicereinvestment.org/) at:
<http://justicereinvestment.org/>

References

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2002). *Recidivism of prisoners released in 1994* (NCJ Publication No. 193427). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

National Association of State Budget Officers. (1988). *State expenditure report: 1988*. Retrieved July 20, 2010, from <http://www.nasbo.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=O7DIWwkOQtI%3d&tabid=107&mid=570&forcedownload=true>

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