Institute for Law and Justice
1018 Duke Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Phone: 703-684-5300
Fax: 703-739-5533

Executive Summary
Needs Assessment Survey of
Illinois Criminal Justice Agencies

October 17, 1997

Prepared for
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Prepared by
Tom McEwen
Rachana Pandey

Executive Summary
Needs Assessment Survey
of
Illinois Criminal Justice Agencies

Introduction

This executive summary highlights the findings of a survey conducted to assess the problems and needs of criminal justice agencies in Illinois. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Law and Justice, Inc. (ILJ) in Alexandria, Virginia, under contract to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. The results are based on responses from 434 police chiefs, 49 state's attorneys, 14 judges, 45 jail administrators (sheriffs), 37 public defenders, and 72 adult probation office directors. Areas covered in the survey included opinions on violent crimes, drug offenses, firearms, and needs in the areas of operations, information systems, and training.

Violent Crimes

Impact on Workload

Police chiefs, judges, state's attorneys, and public defenders were asked to indicate the extent to which violent crimes (homicide, rape, aggravated assault, domestic violence, and child abuse) have impacted workload in their agencies. The aim was to find out whether these agencies have been able to handle their workload adequately or whether they have experienced problems created by the severity and frequency of violent crimes.

As seen in Exhibit 1, cases involving domestic violence and child abuse are the most significant contributors to workload problems for all four respondent groups. Domestic violence cases are of particular concern with more than 90 percent from each group indicating that these cases contribute to their workload problems. Moreover, 78 percent of jail administrators indicated that domestic violence arrests have contributed to jail overcrowding. Child abuse cases

closely follow with around 90 percent of judges, state's attorneys, and public defenders and 70 percent of police chiefs citing these cases as contributors to workload problems.

Exhibit 1: Violent Crimes Contributing to Workload Problems

Type of Violent Crime	Police Chiefs	Judges	State's Attorneys	Public Defenders
Homicide	15.4	58.3	53.1	50.0
Rape	30.6	75.0	67.3	61.1
Aggravated Assault	58.4	58.3	61.7	64.9
Domestic Violence	92.6	100.0	97.9	97.3
Child Abuse	70.1	91.7	93.7	88.9

Comments provided by respondents in open-ended sections of the surveys highlighted the problems associated with domestic violence and child abuse cases:

> Domestic violence cases, with or without criminal charges, are becoming a burden. Sexual abuse toward children is continuing to grow. (judge)

> Domestic violence and domestic cases usually consume the most time. If probable cause is present, officers make arrest. (police chief)

> Domestic violence misdemeanor courtroom has doubled the normal misdemeanor caseload. Floating misdemeanor attorney assigned there. (public defender)

In addition to these offenses, more than 60 percent of judges, state's attorneys, and public defenders cite rape cases as contributors to their workload problems (in contrast, only 30.6 percent of police chiefs do so), and around 60 percent of all four groups said aggravated assault was a contributor.

Actions to Reduce Violence

Respondents made several comments on ways in which they were dealing with the workload problems created by violent crime offenses. Police chiefs, for example, mentioned use of their court liaison officers to assist victims in obtaining orders of protection, assignment of a

domestic violence officer through federal grant funding, and establishment of a domestic violence unit incorporating sworn officers and social agencies.

In addition, respondents were asked their opinions on the effectiveness of broader actions to reduce violent crime: more severe punishments, more drug treatment availability, more youth prevention programs, better employment opportunities, and better educational opportunities. Results are presented in Exhibit 2 on the following page.

Probation directors were pessimistic about all the suggested actions with their highest rating (only 37 percent) going to more severe punishments. The other respondent groups were much more positive; for example, more than half from each group cited *more youth prevention programs, better educational opportunities*, and *providing better employment opportunities* as potentially effective actions to reduce violent crimes. By comparison, they were less optimistic about the effectiveness of more drug treatment on violent crimes. Further, public defenders tended to agree with probation directors about the lack of effectiveness of more severe punishments, but the majority of the other respondent groups thought that this approach would be effective.
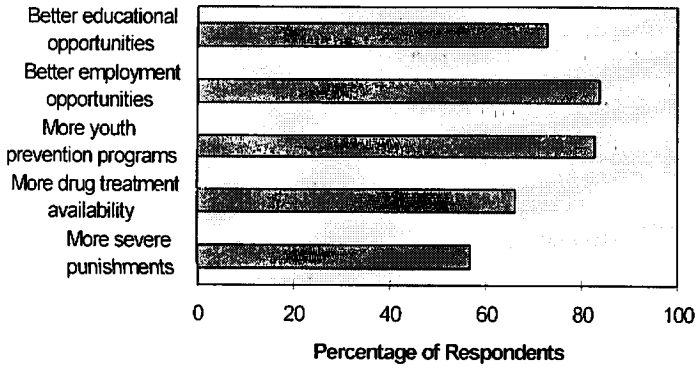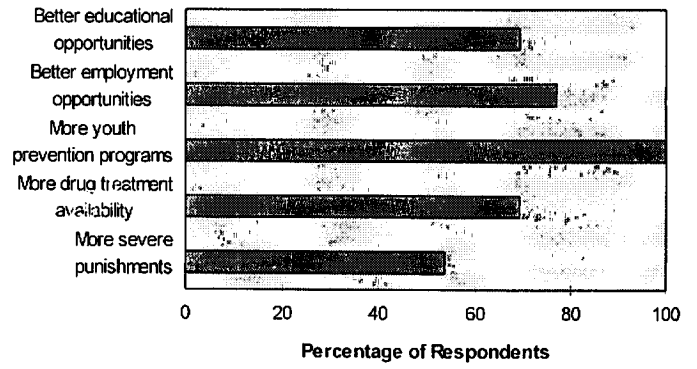
Drugs

Impact on Workload

Police chiefs, judges, state's attorneys, and public defenders were also asked about workload problems created by the incidence of drug crimes. More than 80 percent of respondents from all four groups said that drug possession cases contribute to their workload problems. In addition, drug sales were cited as workload problems for more than 90 percent of judges; 80 percent of public defenders; 75 percent of state's attorneys, and 60 percent of police chiefs. About 90 percent of jail administrators indicate that arrests for drug possession and for drug sales contribute to jail overcrowding.
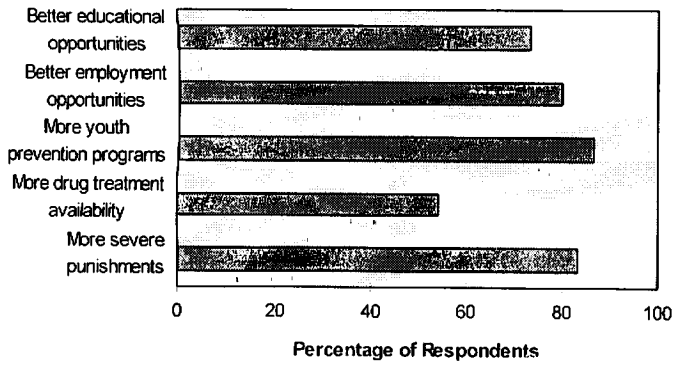
Exhibit 2: Actions to Reduce Violence

Police Chiefs

Percentage of Respondents

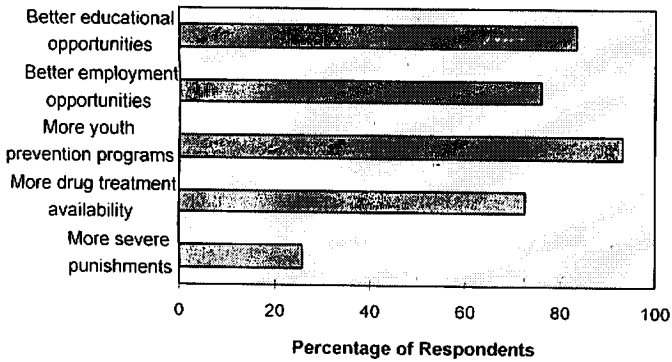### Judges

Percentage of Respondents

State's Attorney

Percentage of Respondents

Jail Administrators

Percentage of Respondents

Public Defenders

Percentage of Respondents
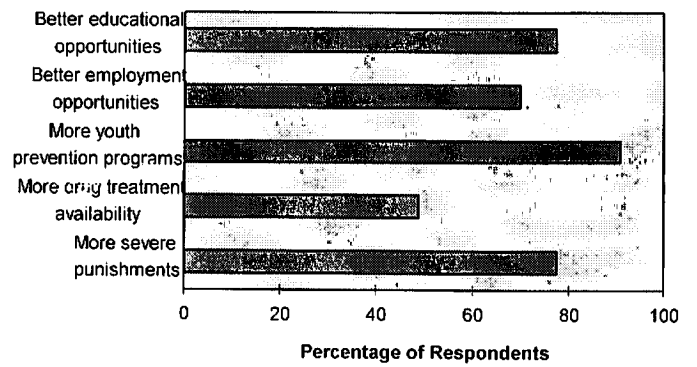
Probation Directors

Percentage of Respondents
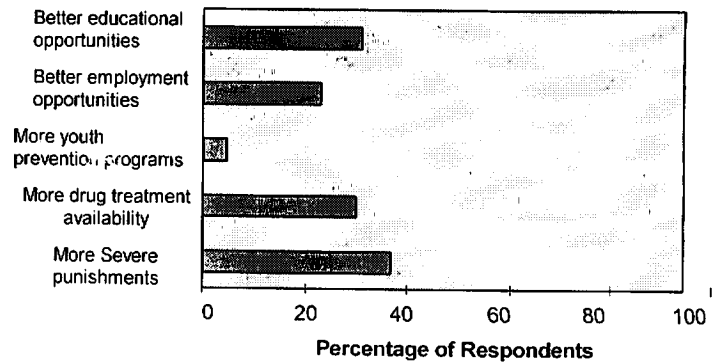
Comments from respondents reiterated the fact that drug crimes contribute greatly to workload problems. Of particular concern to respondents is the increasing use of drugs among juveniles and its relation to increased juvenile violence. Representative comments are as follows:

> I think drug-related crime is the most significant factor in adding to our workload. (police chief)

> Crack cocaine has overwhelmed our criminal justice system. We are attempting to obtain early resolutions on drug-related cases through a specialized drug court. (judge)

> Drug use among juveniles seems to be directly related to juvenile crime and violence. (police chief)

Actions to Reduce Illicit Drug Use

As with violent crimes, respondents were asked about the effectiveness of several general approaches to reduce drug use. More than half in each respondent group believe that four of the general approaches could be effective: *better educational opportunities, better employment opportunities, more youth prevention programs,* and *more drug treatment availability.* The approach of more severe punishments again showed mixed results with judges, public defenders, and probation directors pessimistic, while the majority of police chiefs, state's attorneys, and jail administrators thought more severe punishments could be effective.

Many respondents suggested that a comprehensive approach to the drug problem, including punishment, education, and prevention-oriented actions would be most helpful in curbing drug use.

> A comprehensive approach is required which involves drug interdiction, active enforcement and treatment. A community consensus through continuing education must be actively pursued. (police chief)

> The only change I see that can help prevent drug use is with a joint effort of the family and school, police, and local government. (police chief)

Exhibit 3: Actions to Reduce Illicit Drug Use

Police Chiefs

Better educational opportunities
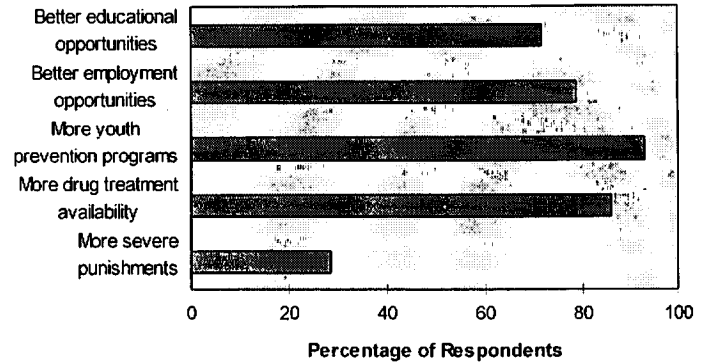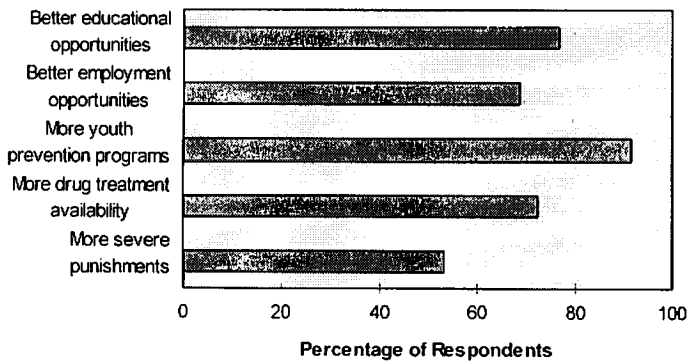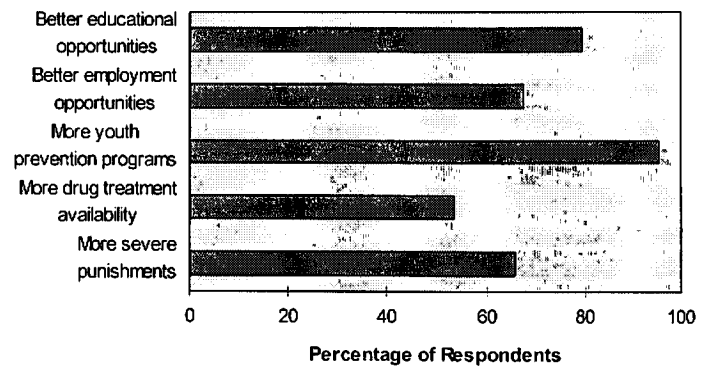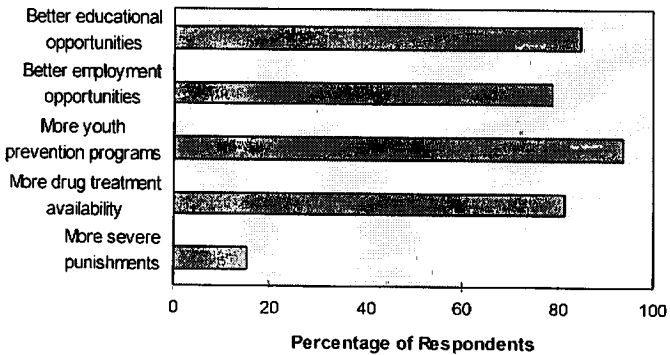Better employment opportunities
More youth prevention programs
More drug treatment availability
More severe punishments

0 20 40 60 80 100
Percentage of Respondents

Judges

Better educational opportunities
Better employment opportunities
More youth prevention programs
More drug treatment availability
More severe punishments

0 20 40 60 80 100
Percentage of Respondents

State's Attorneys

Better educational opportunities
Better employment opportunities
More youth prevention programs
More drug treatment availability
More severe punishments

0 20 40 60 80 100
Percentage of Respondents

Jail Administrator

Better educational opportunities
Better employment opportunities
More youth prevention programs
More drug treatment availability
More severe punishments

0 20 40 60 80 100
Percentage of Respondents

Public Defenders

Better educational opportunities
Better employment opportunities
More youth prevention programs
More drug treatment availability
More severe punishments

0 20 40 60 80 100
Percentage of Respondents

Probation Directors

Better educational opportunities
Better employment opportunities
More youth prevention programs
More drug treatment availability
More severe punishments

0 20 40 60 80 100
Percentage of Respondents

Drug Enforcement Activities by Police Departments

Because of the historical emphasis on drug enforcement, police chiefs were asked what types of enforcement were operational in their agencies. Among responding police agencies, 70 percent or more currently have the following drug enforcement activities.

- Programs in public schools to increase awareness of drug abuse (92 percent)
- Multi-jurisdictional drug units (MEGs/Task Force) (88 percent)
- Directed patrol activities for drug enforcement (82 percent)
- Asset forfeiture efforts (81 percent)
- Nuisance abatement efforts (81 percent)
- Neighborhood Watch efforts focused on drugs (77 percent)
- Police/school liaison officers (75 percent)
- Civil enforcement (74 percent)
- Street-level "buy-bust" efforts (74 percent)
- Computer system for intelligence information (70 percent)

Even though police chiefs apparently have a multifaceted approach to drug enforcement, they also expressed needs for improving their efforts. For example, more than half of the responding police chiefs expressed a need to improve (1) computer systems for intelligence information, (2) directed patrol activities for drug enforcement, (3) Neighborhood Watch efforts focused on drugs, and (4) street-level "buy-bust" efforts.

Comments from police chiefs revealed several other obstacles in effective drug enforcement:

> The major issue hindering our drug enforcement efforts is lack of funds. We need more equipment, something a department this size has very little of. Then, add a very "old" City Council who doesn't believe that the police have anything to do but write tickets.... They do not believe that there is a drug problem in our area.

> Training needed on conducting basic narcotic enforcement operations and cultivating informants.

> Task forces are good ideas, but they have a tendency to keep all
> the information to themselves, not sharing it with the local
> authorities of jurisdictions.

On a positive note, task forces and the DARE program were given good reviews by several respondents. For example:

> The DARE program is a wonderful tool to reach the young
> student. Also, I believe a similar program for parents should be
> made available, so they know how to continue the teaching in
> the home.

Firearms

The extent to which firearm crimes created workload problems for police chiefs, judges, state's attorneys and public defenders varied. Most judges (more than 90 percent) said crimes committed with firearms were a factor in their workload problems. In contrast, only around 35 percent of police chiefs said the same. Among state's attorneys and public defenders, around 60 percent mentioned firearm crimes as a contributor to their workload problems. Around fifty percent of jail administrators said firearm crimes contributed to jail overcrowding. In their comments, respondents often stated that availability of firearms is a significant factor in violence. As one police chief succinctly put it, "Guns......Violence."

Operational, Information, and Training Needs

To determine needs and problems of Illinois criminal justice agencies in the areas of operations, information systems, and training, respondents were provided with a list of activities in these areas and asked to indicate their needs. The lists were developed according to the responsibilities of each respondent group. Respondents were asked to indicate whether

- Their agency has the item or needs it to be developed

- There is a need for improvement in the item and the degree of improvement needed (a little, moderate, or major)

- The agency does not require the particular item.

The analysis of the survey responses focused on the needs indicated for moderate or major improvement, and on whether there is a need for development of the activity in the first

place. The needs of the different agencies were then prioritized in terms of overall needs expressed by at least two-thirds of respondents.

Operational Needs

In order to assess operational needs in police departments, the survey instrument for police chiefs included the categories of field operations, investigative activities, and special activities. The areas in which at least *two-thirds* of police chiefs marked a need for improvement and development are listed below.

Field Operations

- Strategies to reduce juvenile crime (84.0%)

- Strategies to reduce drug problems in the community (78.3%)

- Strategies to reduce domestic violence (76.8%)

- Community policing (71.2%)

- Problem-solving process (70.1%)

- Community programs to reduce fear of crime (67.5%)

Investigative Activities

- Informant development (75.8%)

- Major case technique strategies (73.0%)

- Interviewing techniques (72.5%)

- Preliminary follow-up investigations by patrol officers (70.6%)

- Crime scene evidence collection (67.1%)

Special Activities

- Domestic violence (71.9%)

- At-risk youth programs (70.2%)

For each of these activities, more police chiefs indicated a need for improvement, rather than a need for development. For example, 60.8 percent of police chiefs said their community policing program needed moderate or major improvement, while only 10.4 percent said the program needed to be developed. An exception to this pattern occurs with the need expressed by

police chiefs for at-risk youth programs. The number of those who stated a need for development of the program in their agency (37.1%) was about the same as the number who perceived a need for improvement of the program in their agencies (33.2%).

Other respondent groups—state's attorneys, judges, public defenders, and probation directors—pointed out needs for improvement or development in several common areas under the general category of diversion and sentencing alternatives. These include:

- Drug treatment programs (81.3% of state's attorneys marked a need for development or improvement, 71.5% of judges, 82.9% of public defenders, 70.0% of probation directors)

- Sex offender treatment programs (76.6% of state's attorneys, 78.6% of judges, 94.4% of public defenders, 71.4% of probation directors)

- Community service programs (71.4% of state's attorneys, 71.5% of judges, 80.5% of public defenders, 70.0% of probation directors)

- Pretrial diversion programs (70.8% of state's attorneys, 71.5% of judges, 75.7% of public defenders)

- Electronic monitoring (70.2% of state's attorneys, 71.5% of judges, 69.4% of public defenders)

- Home detention programs (69.4% of state's attorneys, 78.6% of judges, 68.6% of public defenders)

- Alcohol treatment programs (73.4% of state's attorneys, 69.5% of public defenders)

- Intensive supervised probation (79.6% of state's attorneys, 69.4% of public defenders)

- Deferred prosecution (69.3% of judges, 66.7% of public defenders)

The following areas of pretrial practices were selected as needing improvement by judges, state's attorneys, and public defenders:

- Police training related to search and seizure (91.7% of judges for development or improvement, 83.6% of state's attorneys, 75.0% of public defenders)

- Timeliness of drug/crime lab processing (85.7%t of judges, 67.3% of state's attorneys, 72.2% of public defenders)

- Police training related to obtaining confessions (84.7% of judges, 83.6% of state's attorneys)

- Police preparation of crime reports (83.3% of judges, 89.6% of state's attorneys)

- Early information on defendant background (71.4% of judges, 85.7% of state's attorneys)

Other needs identified by individual respondent groups were as follows:

- Program space (66.0% of jail administrators)

- Treating mentally ill inmates (68.1%t of jail administrators)

- Fine collection procedures (92.3% of judges), fee collection management (85.7% of judges), restitution collection management (78.6% of judges)

- Law libraries (78.6% of judges)

- Sex offender assessments (67.7% of probation directors) and sex offender treatment (71.4% of probation directors)

Again, for most of the needs mentioned, the need for improvement was greater than the need for development.

Information Systems

Responses from criminal justice agencies (police chiefs, judges, state's attorneys, probation directors, and jail administrators) with regard to information systems reveal a number of areas in need of improvement and development. In comparison with operational activities, considerably more respondents indicated a need for development of information resources rather than a just a need for their improvement.

This is particularly true in the case of state's attorneys. At least two-thirds of state's attorneys expressed needs in the following areas: prior criminal history of defendant, information on codefendants, victim/witness names, speedy trial status, defendant tracking information, case-load report analysis, and bail/jail status of defendants. In all these areas, with the exception of prior criminal history, a majority of respondents felt that the systems need to be developed rather than improved. For example, in the case of defendant tracking information, 46.5 percent of state's attorneys reported a need for development while 30.3 percent revealed a need for improvement.

Information system needs marked by police chiefs included computer systems to support investigations, to track final disposition of court cases, to support problem solving, and crime analysis and case investigation systems.

For judges, the following needs in the area of information systems emerged: prior criminal history of defendant, defendant tracking, treatment agency client-space availability, attorney schedule conflicts, and fines and other fee payments.

A significant information systems need for probation directors was linkage with other agencies. Jail administrators expressed a need in the area of inmate disciplinary records. With regard to public defenders, there was no area under information systems in which two-thirds or more of respondent indicated a need.

Comments from respondents noted the benefits of information systems, but cited cost as a major hindrance in setting them up. A common complaint concerning information systems was the lack of integration and sharing of information among various criminal justice agencies. For example, a state's attorney stated:

> Some information is on sheriff's computers; some on circuit
> clerk system; some on our computers—more integration
> needed.

Training Needs

Police chiefs, judges, state's attorneys, probation directors, and jail administrators disclosed numerous training needs. For all training areas, most criminal justice agencies already had the training program in place, but improvements were needed.

There were fifteen areas in which more than two-thirds of police chiefs expressed a need for training. These included problem-solving process, report writing, conflict resolution, emerging legal issues, civil liability prevention, juvenile issues, drug investigations, search and seizure procedures, community policing, team building, communications, use of less than lethal weapons, bilingual capabilities, gang issues, and use of force. While most of these areas reflect a need for improvement, a number of respondents (17.7 percent) marked bilingual capabilities as a development need.

Judges were asked to indicate training needs for staff and for judges. For staff training, important areas of training need were case records management and HIV infections and AIDS. More that two-thirds of judges believed they needed training in computer access to legal resources, individual case management techniques, HIV infections and AIDS, and writing opinions.

State's attorneys have training needs in the areas of training for newly hired attorneys, trial practice skills, dealing with child witnesses, computer training for access to legal resources, and dealing with the public.

Probation directors expressed a need for training in the supervision of special need offenders, sex offenders, special risk offenders, substance abusing offenders, and of HIV infected and other contagious disease clients. They also revealed training needs in the areas of caseload management, counseling techniques, and cross training with treatment staff. To a greater extent than other groups, a number of probation directors indicated a need for development of training programs in their agencies.

For jail administrators, the areas of liability issues, stress management, handling special needs prisoners, and control of gang-related activities emerged as significant training needs.

In their comments, a number of police chiefs were concerned about the limited time their officers had to attend training. A related concern was the difficulty in training part-time officers. Respondents from all groups mentioned a lack of funds as an obstacle in obtaining adequate training.