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On Good Authority is a periodic briefing on trends and issues in criminal justice. This report was written by staff Research Supervisor Tracy Hahn. It is a summary of a program evaluation conducted by Richard Schmitz, J.D., and Pinky Wassenberg, Ph.D., of the University of Illinois at Springfield. Copies of the evaluations are available from the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit.

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Evaluations of the Sheriff's Work Alternative Programs in Madison and Adams counties

Overcrowded jails have long been a problem for many Illinois counties. As a result, criminal justice policy makers and administrators have pursued options that offer alternative sanctions to traditional correctional confinement.

One initiative to alleviate overcrowding in county jails is the Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP). This program allows selected inmates to reduce the amount of time they serve in a county jail by performing work or community service.

Madison and Adams counties each implemented SWAP in 1992. The University of Illinois at Springfield, with funding from the Authority, conducted evaluations of these programs in 1996. This *On Good Authority* is a summary of those program evaluations. The full reports also are available from the Authority.

Background on SWAP

The Sheriff's Work Alternative Programs in Madison and Adams counties were established to reduce jail crowding and provide a means by which nonviolent offenders could repay their debt to the community by performing public service. The programs were designed to include persons convicted of driving under the influence, as well as those convicted of misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies. Judges were to determine whether an offender would be included in SWAP, and those selected were to be sentenced directly to the program. Madison County, however, ceased sentencing offenders

directly to SWAP in April 1995. Instead, offenders were sentenced to the county jail and the SWAP coordinator determined eligibility for the program.

The evaluators obtained data from a sample of 62 Adams County participants and 131 Madison County participants. Most of the SWAP participants in both programs were white, male, and single. The average age of participants in Madison County was 30.8 years old. The average age of participants in Adams County was 26.6 years old.

Types of offenders in SWAP

There were differences between the SWAP participants in Madison County and those in Adams County regarding the type of offense for which they were convicted and admitted to the program (Table 1).

Driving-related offenses made up the largest category of Madison County SWAP participants. The second largest category was for offenders sentenced for crimes that were procedural in nature, such as contempt of court, failure to pay court-ordered fines, and violation of probation. Offenses against persons, primarily domestic battery, resulted in SWAP participation for 17.7 percent of the sample. In addition, 13 percent of the Madison County participants were convicted of a felony, and 42 percent committed misdemeanors.

Property offenses and procedural offenses accounted for more than half of the Adams County sample. Drug offenses and offenses against persons were the next significant categories, with

Table I
SWAP admissions by offense

Offense type	Madison County percent/number		Adams County percent/number	
Driving offense	34.6%	45	8.5%	5
Drug offense	3.8%	5	17.0%	10
Person offense	17.7%	23	11.9%	7
Procedural offense	30.0%	39	23.7%	14
Property offense	8.5%	11	28.8%	17
Sex offense	0.0%	0	5.1%	3
Other	5.4%	7	5.1%	3
Totals	100%	130*	100.1%	59*

*Information was not available for all offenders on all variables. Totals may be less than the sample size.

driving offenses, sex offenses and other offenses comprising a smaller proportion of the sample. While felonies accounted for only 13 percent of the Madison County sample, they accounted for 86.2 percent of the Adams County sample, and misdemeanor offenses accounted for 6.9 percent.

The participants in the Madison County sample had an average of 4.3 prior arrests. Offenders in the sample ranged from having no prior arrests to one offender who had 22 arrests. Fifty percent of the sample had four arrests or fewer.

The participants in the Adams County sample averaged 3.7 arrests. Those with one prior arrest constituted the largest single group (27 percent) in the sample. Offenders in the sample ranged from having no prior arrests to an individual who had 18 arrests.

Participation in the program

Madison County participants were ordered to complete an average of 15.4 days in SWAP, although there was

considerable variation. The fewest days required was three, while the most days required was 182. Half of the Madison County participants were ordered to 20.5 days or less.

The Adams County offenders in SWAP were ordered to serve a certain number of hours, as opposed to days. Nearly two-thirds of the Adams County sample were required to work 160 hours or less. Another 29 percent, however, were required to work 201 hours or more. The number of hours of work ordered ranged from 16 to 675 hours.

The overwhelming majority of Madison County SWAP offenders in the sample completed 100 percent of their required days. Approximately 40 percent of the Adams County sample completed 100 percent or more of their required time. It was noted that some offenders in the Adams County SWAP who were still incarcerated volunteered to work on SWAP even after their required hours were completed. Half of the Adams County participants in the sample com-

pleted 86.7 percent or more of their required SWAP hours.

Almost all of the Madison County participants were successfully discharged from the program for time served (Table 2). A small percent were granted early release from the program, while 12 participants were listed as an unauthorized absence or "AWOL" on their SWAP time sheets.

Nearly two-thirds of the Adams County sample were satisfactorily discharged. Another 13.3 percent were discharged from SWAP to treatment programs. Fifteen percent were given an unsatisfactory discharge and 6.7 percent were given an early release.

Impact of SWAP

Beginning in April 1995, offenders in Madison County were sentenced to jail and then screened for participation in SWAP. Therefore, it is likely that these individuals would have remained incarcerated if SWAP did not exist. Between April 1995 and September 1996, approximately 305 offenders in Madison County were removed from the county jail and ordered to participate in SWAP (an average of 16.9 offenders per month). While SWAP has removed offenders from the Madison County Jail, it has not resulted in a dramatic decrease in the jail population.

For the Adams County participants, slightly more than two-thirds were housed in the county jail when not performing SWAP work. Additional construction on the Adams County Jail in 1994 increased its capacity, and, as a result, the need for SWAP to reduce the jail population was diminished somewhat. But SWAP did remove a significant portion of the Adams County jail population during the day, allowing jail staff to monitor fewer inmates more closely. It was believed that most inmates preferred performing the work assignments to remaining in the jail.

Satisfactory completion of SWAP was influenced by a number of factors. In both the Madison County and Adams County programs, those participants with shorter sentences were more likely to successfully complete SWAP than were participants with longer sentences. Similarly, those with fewer pre-SWAP

arrests were more likely to satisfactorily complete SWAP than their counterparts with more extensive prior criminal histories. In addition, those who failed to complete SWAP exhibited greater criminal involvement after participation in SWAP than did those who satisfactorily completed the program. Older offenders also appeared more likely to complete the program than their younger counterparts.

Comparing offenses with outcomes

The evaluators looked at completion of the program in relation to types of offenses committed by the participants. In Madison County, all drug offenders completed their time in SWAP successfully. Nearly 95 percent of participants with procedural offenses and 95.6 percent with driving-related offenses successfully completed the program. Seventy-one percent of participants with other types of offenses completed SWAP, while 87 percent of participants with person offenses successfully completed the program. The lowest percentage of satisfactory completion in Madison County was from property offenders (64.6 percent).

Program success also was measured by offense classification, such as felony, misdemeanor, or traffic-related. Participants in Madison County with offenses

■ Of the 31 Adams County work site providers contacted, 30 affirmed that they would use the SWAP workers again in the future.

■ In Madison County, of the 22 work site providers contacted, 16 reported being exceptionally satisfied with the SWAP workers and six were satisfied.

classified as traffic-related had the highest percentage of satisfactory completions. Eighty-seven percent of misdemeanor offenders successfully completed the program, while 82 percent of felony offenders completed the program.

While the majority of Madison County participants were not rearrested after being involved in SWAP, one-third were rearrested at least once during the nine-month follow-up period. Of the 45 individuals who were arrested at least once after being placed in SWAP, 29 percent were arrested for committing a crime against a person, such as assault. Arrests for drug and property crimes also were common among the participants who were arrested.

In Adams County, all participants admitted to SWAP with person, drug, or sex offenses either completed the program successfully, were referred to treatment, or were conditionally discharged. Nearly 60 percent of SWAP property offenders satisfactorily completed the program, while 80 percent of offenders with driving-related offenses and 64.3 percent with procedural offenses successfully completed the program. Adams County participants with other types of offenses were least likely to complete SWAP.

Sixteen percent of Adams County participants with offenses classified as felonies failed to complete the program, while there were no unsatisfactory completions noted for participants with misdemeanor, traffic, or other offenses.

Table 2
SWAP discharges

Madison County		Adams County	
Discharge type	Percentage in SWAP (n=130)	Discharge type	Percentage in SWAP (n=60)
Satisfactory	86.9%	Satisfactory	65%
Early release	3.9%	Early release	6.7%
Unauthorized absence	9.2%	Unsatisfactory	15%
		Released to treatment	13.3%
Total	100%	Total	100%

Work projects

Between May 1992 and February 1996, the Adams County SWAP provided work opportunities for 299 inmates of the county jail. Statistics regarding hours worked, projects undertaken, and projects completed were available for all but two months of the evaluation period. The Adams County SWAP undertook 436 projects, 291 of which were completed during the study period. The participants completed 35,728 hours of work during the evaluation period.

Adams County work sites included municipal departments, small businesses, not-for-profit agencies and churches. Tasks included interior building work (painting or refinishing), outdoor work (mowing or landscaping), and service projects for festivals, holidays, and

special events. Of the 31 work site providers contacted, 30 affirmed that they would use the SWAP workers again in the future. Although some providers noted that crews were occasionally left unsupervised, nearly all were pleased with the service provided by the SWAP participants.

During the period of January 1992 through September 1996, 645 offenders, an average of 24.6 per month, participated in the Madison County SWAP. A total of 365 projects were initiated, averaging 16 per month. These projects totaled 57,346 hours of public service work. Work site providers and tasks for the Madison County participants were similar to those for the Adams County program. Of the 22 work site providers contacted, 16 reported being exceptionally satisfied with the SWAP workers and six were satisfied.

Conclusion

The Madison County SWAP fulfilled both of its initial objectives: the removal of inmates from the county jail, and

providing a means for offenders to repay their debt to society. The evaluation found that the program maintained strict standards for conduct and job performance without compromising community safety.

The program enhanced discipline and compliance by imposing a sentence of double the remaining SWAP time for violators. It was also determined that SWAP had a positive impact on the community, and both governmental and charitable entities expressed gratitude for the work conducted by SWAP participants.

Although the program was designed for nonviolent offenders, the Madison County SWAP included some participants with either domestic battery or battery offenses. The evaluation recommended that SWAP re-evaluate whether these offenders are appropriate for the program.

The Adams County SWAP also provided an opportunity for offenders to perform public service and provide restitution to the community. Since most

SWAP participants in Adams County remained incarcerated while performing their required SWAP hours, and since the jail was not operating over capacity, the initial objective of reducing the jail population was not addressed.

Both the SWAP sentencing judge and probation personnel viewed the Adams County program as an alternative for incarcerated offenders who should not be sentenced to public service without the supervision of a deputy. However, comments from work site providers indicated that SWAP crews were occasionally left unsupervised because of logistical problems stemming from the use of two work crews with a single vehicle for transportation. Although providers expressed gratitude for the work done by SWAP, there was some concern over safety. Therefore, the evaluation recommended that the Adams County SWAP should also re-evaluate the type of offenders sentenced to the program or make arrangements to ensure constant presence of a supervisor with the work crews. ■

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