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Cook County Sheriff's Reentry Council Quarterly Update (Volume 1, Issue 1: September, 2009)

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Cook County Sheriff Reentry Council Quarterly Update

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Sheriff Forms Reentry Council

In March 2007, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart assembled a group of staff within the Cook County Department of Corrections to examine the reentry process of those released from the jail and their transition back into the community. Following this, in November 2007, the Cook County Sheriff's Office created the Reentry Council, expanding the existing group to include agencies and community organizations from the City of Chicago, Cook County, and the State of Illinois to discuss and develop programs and efforts to assist inmates released from the Cook County Jail in their transition from incarceration back to the community.

The formation and efforts of this Council are part of a much larger effort by Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of programs oper-



**Cook County Sheriff
Tom Dart**

ated by the Sheriff's Office, and coordinate efforts with other units of government and community-based organizations. This effort seeks to create and enhance services to support the successful reintegration of inmates released from the Cook County Jail in communities throughout Cook County, thereby improving public safety for county residents. So far, the Reen-

try Council has identified some of the barriers to successful reentry and has begun developing programs and implementing improvements needed to make inmate reentry more effective and efficient. The Council has identified offenders who are high-risk for rearrest and return to the jail due to a substance abuse problem, mental health issues, lack of income, and homelessness as the primary focus of the Council's efforts. The failure to address and provide services to ameliorate these risk factors has negative consequences on communities across the county, and also perpetuates the cycle of recidivism and return to the county jail. The rearrest of those released from the jail is one of the factors that has historically contributed to the crowding in the Cook County Jail.

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Recidivism of Jail Releasees

One of the most frequently used outcome measures within criminal justice, and in particular correctional agencies, is the "recidivism rate," usually measured by either new arrests or return to correctional facilities. Using data available from the Cook County Jail, researchers at Loyola University developed preliminary indicators of recidivism for inmates released from the jail in 2007, measured as

the percent returned to the jail within one year of their release.

In 2007, there were nearly 7,000 people released from the Cook County Department of Corrections (CCDOC) after having been sentenced to a period of incarceration at the jail. Of those sentenced to CCDOC and released, 40% recidivated—were readmitted to the Cook County Jail—within one

year of their release.

Among those sentenced to the jail and released, analyses of the recidivism rate across different demographic and community characteristics revealed general patterns consistent with the existing body of recidivism research literature. For example, younger releasees generally had higher recidivism rates than

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The average daily population of Cook County Jail has remained constant in recent years

The purpose of the video is to be both educational and motivational for current inmates

Currently, 52% of those inmates released from the jail after having completed their jail sentence from the three community areas of Austin, Garfield Park and Lawndale return to the jail within a year, compared to 39% for those from other Chicago neighborhoods.

Who's in jail?

During calendar year (CY)2008, 74,985 individuals were booked into the Cook County Jail a total of 92,798 separate times. This volume of admissions represents a 1% decrease from 2007.

During 2008, as in previous years, the majority of individuals admitted to the Cook County Jail were male (86%), African-American (67%), and the average age of detainees was 33 years old. Also consistent with previous years, the majority of those admitted to the jail were awaiting a court disposition (92%), and a relatively small

proportion (8%) were admitted to the jail as a result of a conviction and jail sentence. Violent crimes accounted for the largest category—38%—of admissions to the Cook County Jail during CY 2008, followed by drug-law violations (37%), property crimes (23%), and sex offenses (2%).

Of those released from the Cook County Jail in CY 2008, 35% were released after posting bond and 50% were discharged as a result of being convicted and sentenced. Although sentences to prison accounted for the majority of

inmates discharged due to a conviction, 8% of inmates were discharged as a result of having served their sentence in the Cook County Jail and an additional 9% were discharged and placed on supervision (i.e., probation).

Those inmates discharged from the jail who were convicted and sentenced to prison spent an average of 140 days in jail awaiting the disposition of their case, whereas those released because they posted the necessary financial bond spent an average of 30 days in the Cook County Jail.

Council Creates Video on Reentry

One of the major accomplishments of the Sheriff's Reentry Council this past year was the completion of a 40-minute video produced by Robert Mindell, Director of Treatment Contract Services in the Sheriff's Department of Community Supervision and Intervention. The video was designed to complement the "Another Chance" reentry resource guide, a planning tool for detainees which informs them about how to self-assess their

needs for housing, financial support and services, how to obtain necessary documents and identification, and how to develop and prepare for service referrals. The video includes interviews with former detainees who have overcome addiction and criminality and reestablished themselves in the community. In addition, the video highlights some of the community-based service providers that work with formerly incarcerated individuals to

provide housing and employment resources for ex-offenders, along with rehabilitation personnel within the Sheriff's Office involved in the delivery of programming to inmates.

The purpose of the video is to be both educational and motivational for current inmates, and the intention is to play the video throughout the Cook County Jail's closed circuit

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Reentry Grant Funding Sought

The Cook County Jail in Illinois is the third largest jail system in the United States, and is the largest single site jail facility in the country.

Through a variety of programs, including the Day Reporting Center, the Pre-Release Program, the Department of Women's Justice Services, and the Cook County Boot Camp, the Cook

County Sheriff's Office has attempted to improve the reentry process and reduce recidivism.

Federal funding is being sought to improve the pre-release planning, coordination, and access to community-based services and programs for participants completing these programs that come from three specific, contiguous Chi-

cago community areas (Austin, Garfield Park and Lawndale). The services to be provided by community-based organizations and the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services will be based on individual reentry plans, and may include outpatient substance abuse or mental health treatment, transitional housing, educational, vocational and job training.

Recidivism of Jail Releasees

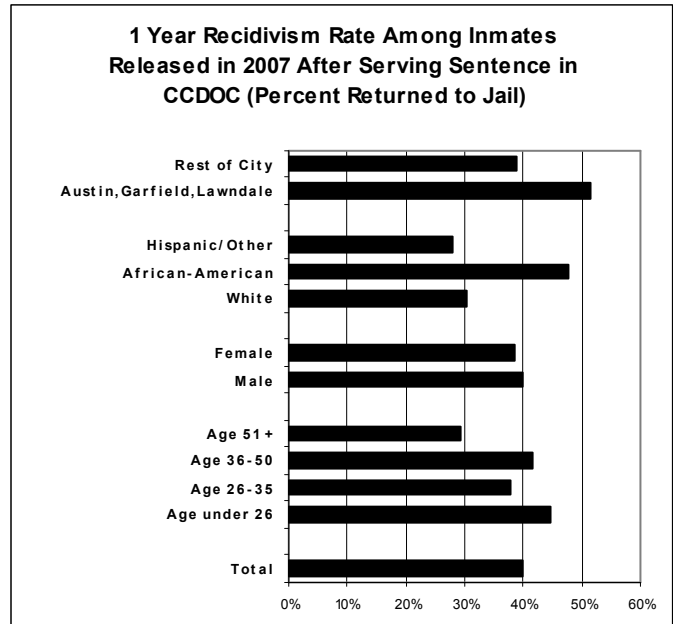
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did those that were older. Those releasees under the age of 26 had a recidivism rate of 45%, compared to 29% among those over the age of 50. Males within this group had a recidivism rate that was slightly higher than that seen among females released after serving a sentence at the jail (40% for males versus 38% for females).

The recidivism analyses also revealed that African-Americans are at the highest risk for recidivism (48%) among those sentenced to the CCDOC and subsequently

released, compared to a rate of 30% or less among whites and Hispanics.

Those sentenced to the jail and subsequently released that came from the Austin, Garfield Park, and Lawndale neighborhoods, accounting for just 8% of the releasees in this group, but recidivate at a higher rate than those from other neighborhoods (52% versus 39%). Over time, these recidivism analyses will be refined and will be used to guide policy and program development, as well as evaluate the impact of reentry programming.



Reentry Council (Continued from page 1)

The Council has made it their mission to improve programs and services within the jail that promote successful reentry, and seeks to obtain public and private resources that support successful reentry to communities. Educating the public, elected officials, and community partners about the financial and human costs of repeated arrests and detention of non-violent offenders is also a Council goal.

Successful reentry involves effective interagency coordination across the Cook County criminal justice system, across state and local gov-

ernments, and public and private human service organizations as well. The Council is responsible for identifying legislative priorities and policy reforms for the Sheriff's Office that will improve the reentry process. Over the past decade, increased attention and emphasis has been placed on inmate reentry by criminal justice practitioners, policy makers and the academic community, however, most of the focus has been on those released from state prisons. In recent years, the recognition of the sizeable population of inmates released from

county jails across the United States has resulted in a variety of strategies and programs designed to address the unique needs of this correctional population and their successful reintegration back into society. In fact, in 2007, the Urban Institute partnered with the National Institute of Corrections to launch the Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) initiative, and is developing materials for jurisdictions seeking to address the needs of this population. More information about TJC can be found at <http://www.urban.org/projects/tjc/>

The reentry challenges of the jail population is gaining increased attention by practitioners, policy makers and academics.

Reentry Video (Continued from page 2)

television system so that inmates are exposed multiple times during their stay to the positive messages and informational content the video has to offer. The video may also be used in community venues to educate community residents, service providers and practitioners about available reentry services.

The video was produced with financial assistance from the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

as well as the assistance of videographer Maceo Vidal-Haymes from DePaul University. John Fallon, Program Manager of the CSH, has been a member of the Cook County Sheriff's Reentry Council since its inception. He not only provided the financial support for the production of the video, but also contributed to it's design and content.

If interested in receiving a copy of the video, please contact Robert Mindell at rmindell@cookcountygov.com



Certifications were handed out to 36 participants in September 2009 who completed a summer-long program that saw them planting and tending to a 13,000 square foot garden located on the grounds of the Cook County Jail.



The Cook County Sheriff's Office of Reentry

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In order to support research, evaluation and planning efforts for the Cook County Sheriff's Office of Reentry, the Sheriff's Office entered into a cooperative agreement with Loyola University Chicago to support the development of an enhanced research capacity. Under the agreement, Dr. David Olson, Chair of the Criminal Justice Department at Loyola, has been assigned to work one day per week with the Office of Reentry to develop datasets and protocols that can support research and evaluation, oversee program evaluations, and develop stronger ties between the academic community interested in conducting applied research and the Cook County Sheriff's Office.

By the numbers

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics and U.S. Census Bureau conducted a census of jails throughout the U.S., and these data provide a unique opportunity to place the Cook County Jail and its population into a larger perspective.

Based on data from this census, the Cook County Jail ranked third in terms of the daily population with 10,083 inmates on June 30, 2005, behind Los Angeles (19,537 inmates) and New York (13,399 inmates). However, the jail systems in New York and Los Angeles are multiple site jails, compared to Cook County's single site jail complex. The census also revealed that the Cook County Jail utilizes more alternative custody placement resources, and ranked first among large jails in the U.S. in terms of the proportion of the total population under the custody of the Sheriff on electronic monitoring. Specifically, 13% of the total adults under the custody of the Sheriff were being super-

vised on electronic monitoring, followed by Broward County in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, which had 6% of their total correctional population on electronic monitoring. Similarly, the Cook County Sheriff's Office had the second largest proportion of those under its custody on day reporting (4% of overall population) when compared to other large jail systems in the U.S.

A separate study by the U.S. Department of Justice was released in April 2009, and documented the high rate of drug use among those being admitted to the Cook County Jail. Findings from the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) Program for 2008 revealed that roughly 85% of those booked into the Cook County Jail tested positive through urinalysis for recent illegal drug use, which was the highest prevalence rate across the 10 large metropolitan areas in the U.S. involved in the study.

Consistent with ADAM findings from previous years, the 2008 results again

illustrated the high level of opiate/heroin use among those admitted to the Cook County Jail, with 28% testing positive for this drug at the time of booking, compared to 11% in Washington DC, 7.6% in Portland and 6.8% in New York. Overall, the trend in drug use among individuals booked into the Cook County Jail has not changed considerably over the past years of the study.

