



AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Criminal Justice Section

State Policy Implementation Project

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS

Community corrections has three forefront goals: (1) public safety, (2) holding individuals accountable, and (3) controlling correction costs. With these objectives in mind, community corrections reduce recidivism, save money, and encourage stability in family life and employment.

Community corrections can encompass a wide variety of programs, including community service, day reporting centers, probation, home confinement, restitution (to the victim and community), drug and alcohol treatment, and means-based fines. It is important to provide supervision in a setting that is best matched to an individual's treatment and rehabilitation – an individualized assessment is necessary before proper placement into programs that directly relate to the risk and needs of an individual.

In contrast to unnecessary incarceration, community based sanctions offer a number of advantages: individuals can remain employed within the community, taxes can be collected on an individual's earnings and restitution is more likely to be paid, families remain intact, and individuals avoid the negative influences of incarceration and reduce recidivism. For example, a 2002 [study](#) conducted by the University of Cincinnati found that in Ohio the placement of high-risk individuals in halfway houses decreased recidivism by 9%, whereas the same placement of low-risk individuals led to higher recidivism rates.

The ABA has adopted policy that urges states to fund programs that enable an individual, in appropriate cases, to be placed under community supervision, in addition to various sentencing standards related to community corrections.

A community corrections program that recognizes the distinct needs of each individual will enable states to save money and enhance community safety, while reducing prison populations and state crime rates.

Community corrections reduces recidivism. The University of Connecticut conducted a [study](#) that compared individuals placed in alternative community sanctions to incarcerated individuals; the outcomes proved that those placed in alternative programs showed substantially lower re-arrest rates, some as high as 3 to 1. In a 2005 study, the Connecticut General Assembly found that two-thirds of the state's Alternative to Incarceration network had not recidivated at the one-year follow-up point. In Kansas, community corrections programs have contributed substantially to a 7% drop in the prison population, a 50% reduction in parole revocations, and a 36% reduction in new crimes committed by parolees.

Alternatives to incarceration are more equipped to fulfill the variety of needs of individuals at a lower cost than incarceration. In Cook County, Illinois, almost 70% of crimes in the county are drug-related, and 82% of persons arrested test positive for a controlled substance. Drug treatment develops crucial coping skills and deters future drug related crime; it costs approximately \$20,000 less per person per year than prison incarceration. In 2007, Texas established 3,800 combined beds for residential and out-patient treatment within communities at a savings of over \$210 million for the 2008-2009 fiscal biennium. New Jersey's community corrections program, assists parolees with job placement, various types of training, anger management, and substance abuse treatment. In combination with the addition of risk assessment centers, it is estimated to have saved New Jersey taxpayers \$14 million in fiscal year 2010.

The ABA urges states to adopt community corrections programs.



Kansas: A Successful Program that Reduces Recidivism and Saves Money

Community Corrections in the United States

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. In 2010, there were over 1.4 million individuals housed in state prisons. However, while placing an offender in prison is often necessary, incarceration forces the offender to cut all ties to the community – including employment, family, and education. The loss of these connections creates significant impediments to an offender’s subsequent return to the community and can serve to isolate the individual and promote recidivism.

Unlike incarceration, community corrections programs present an alternative that provides necessary supervision while also allowing the individual to live productively, pay taxes, and receive supervision and treatment. Not only does community corrections reduce recidivism and promote community involvement, it also saves money. With budgets shrinking in states across the country, community corrections provides a safe, cost effective alternative to implement criminal justice reform. As significant budget cuts take effect, states are increasingly interested in community corrections programs – both for reduced recidivism rates and for reduced state spending. Kansas has been one state that has implemented a statewide community corrections program that both enhances community safety and costs significantly less than incarceration.

Kansas Community Corrections

Saving Money with Successful Results

Since implementing the state’s new incentive funding program in 2007, the state has measured reduced revocation against 2006 rates. Prior to participation in the state’s incentive funding program, county community corrections programs must promise to reduce revocation rates by 20%. In 2006, there were 1,971 revocations from community corrections. In order to meet the 20% reduction required by the grant program, state programs needed to reduce revocations to 1,577 in 2008. Kansas’ programs exceeded this requirement with only 1,539 revocations – a 21.9% reduction. These numbers were reduced even further in 2009, with a 25% reduction in revocations to 1,479 individuals.

In addition to reduced revocations, the number of individuals who successfully completed the program increased by 28%, and the population of participants increased by 10.4%. Overall, the state’s prison population has decreased from its 2004 high by 7.5%. These results have saved millions of dollars and allowed the state to close over 500 prison beds.

The cost of imprisonment in Kansas is an average of \$18,770 per inmate, per year. In contrast, the cost of community corrections programs is an average of \$2,793 per inmate, per year. With these substantial savings, the state’s new policies allowed the legislature to reinvest \$7 million of the projected savings into additional treatment programs and efforts to improve community based programs in high-crime areas. If community corrections activities remain successful for ten years, the state will save over \$80 million and avoid the high costs associated with building space for 1,292 prison beds.

History

Kansas first passed the Community Corrections Act grant program in 1978, with the goal of reducing the number of adult and juvenile offenders committed to state institutions. The program's principle was that many offenders could be effectively dealt with at the local level, without endangering public safety. The program would then reduce prison populations and restrict such confinement to more serious offenders.

Instead of institutional placement, offenders were placed in local correctional programs, which more adequately treated the individual without removing them from community life. The first full community corrections program in Kansas started operation in 1986 in the 28th District, and the Act was mandated for all counties in 1989; juvenile services were added in 1994. As is the case now, primary functions of the Kansas community corrections program include supervision, enforcement, and intervention. Through the use of intensive supervision probation (ISP), counties are able to monitor all offenders in the program. Supervision takes place through random drug testing, electronic monitoring devices, and continuous communication with law enforcement officers. Intervention programs encompass a wide variety of counseling, education services, and employment services.

However, even though Kansas' initial community corrections program was structured to reduce recidivism and save money, the forthcoming results were less than expected. The prison population was projected to increase 22 percent by 2016 at a cost of \$500 million. Initially, an analysis of the prison population revealed that probation and parole violators accounted for 68% of admissions between 2003 and 2004. By 2006, probation violators filled almost one in five prison beds at an annual cost of \$37.4 million. Recognizing the need for better programs, Kansas requested analyses and policy ideas from the Council of State Governments Justice Center. The subsequent changes to the community corrections program have largely proven to be a success.

Current Program

Following the Council of State Governments' recommendations, the Kansas legislature passed into law a comprehensive package of criminal justice reform meant to avert up to \$80 million over five years. A portion of the bill is a performance-based incentive grant program for state community corrections offices: if local community corrections programs promise to reduce recidivism and develop plans to meet a reduction rate of 20%, the state will fund the programs.

The grant program requires the Kansas Department of Corrections to (1) adopt criteria that targets offenders who are medium and high risk for violations or recidivism, (2) reduce caseloads for community corrections officers, and (3) provide supervision and services to individuals to promote successful completion of the program. Before receiving funding, counties must implement evidence-based programming and practices in addition to administrative sanctions, reentry services and support, and parole and probation officer training. In 2007, \$4 million dollars was appropriated to fund participating programs throughout the state, and yearly funding is distributed based on staff levels, administrative costs, client numbers, and caseload projections.

Before being admitted into a community corrections program, offenders take part in an evidence-based assessment that identifies the risks and needs of each offender based on topics such as criminal history, education and employment background, and prior alcohol and drug use. If eligible, the offender will then be placed in one of the 31 county operated intensive supervision probation programs throughout the state. Once admitted, the offender may be required to participate in several different supervision programs for problems related to substance abuse, anger management, larceny, life skills, and domestic violence.

Conclusion

With such successful results, the Kansas Community Corrections Association recently released a legislative platform for the 2011 Kansas Legislature in support of continuing current programs. The recommendations come at a crucial time, since Kansas is currently facing budgetary problems.

Due to the state's budget issues, funding for several counties' community corrections programs have flattened, regardless of increased offender participation. These budgetary problems have led to higher caseloads and lower supervision. In 2010, revocations increased significantly back to 1,801. Although this number is still an 8.6% reduction from the 2006 rates, it reflects the state's current budget problems.

For example, in Leavenworth County, the adult community corrections program has been asked to take an 11% budget cut. The cuts would leave the county with a grant request of only \$153,952, which is almost \$20,000 below the county's actual operating costs. Because of the cuts, the county will be cutting evaluations and counseling services. Without these services, revocation and recidivism rates will only continue to climb. Across the state, counties will be spending less to help monitor offenders, and nine of the 27 community mental health centers may have to close.

The recommendations from the Kansas Community Corrections Association address these budget issues. The association supports the KDOC's request for a \$3.2 million enhancement to meet current community corrections needs and provide a 3% cost of living increase; it opposes funding reductions, based on the millions saved after the 2008 funds were provided to the program; and it opposes the KDOC proposal to consolidate parole services and community corrections. It remains to be seen how Kansas will handle its increased revocation rates and decreasing budget. With such successful results, many of Kansas's legislators and advocates are in favor of continued funding. If successful in obtaining funds, community corrections in Kansas will continue to flourish in the future.