

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC POLICY FORUM RESEARCH ON WORK RELEASE
AND
USE OF GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM TECHNOLOGY
April 16, 2008**

Work Release

- There is very little research on the topic of work release program effectiveness and best practices. In fact, a 2004 report by researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and the University of Wisconsin-Superior entitled “ Alternatives to Incarceration: An Evidence-Based Research Review”, noted that “only one comprehensive study was identified that scientifically evaluated the effectiveness of work release.”
- That study, entitled “Work Release: Recidivism and Corrections Costs in Washington State”, which was published by the National Institute of Justice in December 1996, found the following:
 - During the 1970s work release programs expanded considerably, but by the mid 1990s they had declined. In fact, while 43 states had existing statutes authorizing work release, only about one-third of U.S. prisons reported operating such programs, with fewer than 3% of U.S. inmates participating.
 - Washington is a state that has made a significant commitment to work release. Washington’s work release program is the responsibility of the Division of Community Corrections within its state Department of Corrections (DOC). Division staff administer the program and establish guidelines for selection of participants, but actual operation of work release facilities is contracted out.
 - The report notes that Washington’s work release program “has benefited enormously from a particularly close relationship with private industry.” It cites the DOC’s relationship with Pioneer Human Services, an organization running four of the State’s work release facilities, which had “grown to a full-service organization, providing job training at a manufacturing facility it runs, pre-release and post-release employment...housing for offenders with special needs...and electronic monitoring.”

- In terms of admission, DOC makes an initial evaluation as to whether an offender meets certain state-imposed criteria. If an offender is deemed eligible, the work release facility's Community Screening Board, consisting of work release staff and local citizens, must agree to accept the inmate for admission. The report notes that "in most cases" the Board accepts the DOC recommendation.
- DOC community corrections officers (CCOs) are stationed at the work release facilities in addition to contract staff. The primary role of the CCO is "to provide case management services, which includes providing informal advice and conducting intake interviews...for example, they review each client's progress as well as discuss personal problems, such as substance abuse."
- The study found that nearly 25% of all prisoners released in Washington made a successful transition to the community; less than 5% of participants committed new crimes while on work release; 56% were considered successful in that they incurred no program infractions or arrests, while 13.5% were moderately successful (infractions not serious enough to return them to prison) and 30% were unsuccessful (returned to prison).
- Drilling down even further, the study found that older offenders were more successful than younger offenders; whites were more successful than African Americans and Hispanics; offenders with no prior criminal record were more successful than those with a prior record; and offenders convicted of person crimes were more successful than those convicted of property or drug crimes.
- In terms of recidivism, the study found that 22% of work release participants were rearrested within one year, compared to 30% of offenders assigned to a control group. This difference was deemed not statistically significant.
- The study notes that "unfortunately, the costs savings accrued through work release and other community-based programs have not been as substantial as proponents had hoped". It notes further that "it all depends on how offenders behave in the program and how program administrators choose to punish infractions (particularly drug use). If infractions and rule violations are punished with incarceration, initial cost savings are reduced or eliminated...in effect, close surveillance may end up generating many program failures who are eventually returned to prison. In that case, the

state incurs the cost of their work release program in addition to eventual reuse of a prison cell.”

- o Specifically, results of analysis of 2,452 inmates in Washington found that “when all incarceration time served is taken into account, inmates who participated in work release served, on average, about 4 months less time in a prison or prerelease facility than inmates who did not participate. However, for every 3 days in work release, offenders spend about 1 day back in an institution—either prison or a prerelease center... inmates who participated in work release cost the State about \$4,000 less than inmates who did not.”
- o The report is careful to conclude that while Washington’s work release program “did not reduce offender recidivism rates or corrections costs”, it has “been successful on several fronts”. Successes included the 25% of prisoners who made a successful transition to the community through work release and that fact that “while in the program, these inmates maintained employment, reconnected with their local communities, paid for their room and board, and most remained drug free”.
- A later study (November 2007) involving Washington state by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, entitled “Does Participation in Washington’s Work Release Facilities Reduce Recidivism?”, found that work release participation lowers total recidivism by 2.8%. It was found to have a marginal effect on felony recidivism (1.8% reduction) and no effect on violent felony recidivism.
- So what does this tell us? For one thing, it emphasizes the need to be clear about policy objectives. If the primary objective of a work release program is to reduce incarceration costs, then a jurisdiction’s ability to achieve that objective may be linked to the procedures it puts in place for addressing infractions. If a primary objective is to better transition offenders into the community, then the Washington state findings suggest that emphasis needs to be placed on case management, job training and other supports for participants. If a primary objective is to reduce recidivism, then only marginal gains may be anticipated.

ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION/COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS IN GENERAL

- There is considerably more research available regarding other community-based alternatives to incarceration. While the Public Policy Forum’s initial charge was to focus primarily on work release and potential use of Global Positioning System (GPS) monitoring, we thought it would be useful to cite some basic findings regarding other alternatives that may be relevant to the Community Justice Council’s consideration of work release in general, and GPS monitoring in particular.

- The study cited above by researchers from UW-Eau Claire/UW-Superior states that “independent of whichever alternative program is ultimately implemented, an appropriate treatment component should also be included. By themselves, increased supervision or enhanced enforcement does little to address the core individual causes of criminality.”
- This study also cited an approach that utilizes a model called “SARA – Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment”. The study notes that “as applied to the management of a county jail, administrators would first identify potential problems (such as jail overcrowding), analyze the problem by collecting data about the types of offenders who are in the jail and targeting a subpopulation of offenders (for example, DWI offenders), respond by providing an appropriate alternative program (home detention and electronic monitoring), and finally comprehensively evaluate the impact of such a program (in terms of how the program is implemented, outcomes of participants, number of jail beds saved, and the cost of the program compared to jail).” Substituting the words “Community Correctional Center” for “jail” in this example may provide for an appropriate evaluation framework for the GPS proposal in Milwaukee County.

- Electronic monitoring has been used in community corrections for a much longer period of time than GPS, and thus there is more information available analyzing its use. One paper from the American Probation and Parole Association notes that “the use of technology with offenders is not a substitute for staff. It should be viewed as a tool to support and enhance the supervision process.” A 2002 report from the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center adds that “electronic monitoring is just a supervision tool and in no way replaces the supervising officer...if an electronic monitoring program does not have clear goals; if the supervising officer’s caseload is too large to permit proper analysis of electronic monitoring data; or if sanctions for noncompliance are not defined, readily available, and implemented when necessary, the success of the electronic monitoring program may be lessened.”
- In November 2007, the Pew Center for the States published an interview with Dr. Joan Petersilia, referred to as “one of the nation’s most respected experts on community corrections,” on “What Works in Community Corrections”. Dr. Petersilia happens to be one of the authors of the 1996 Washington state study on work release described above. The following are some interesting excerpts from that interview:
 - “Probably 99% of all community corrections programs in the U.S. today have not been scientifically evaluated...but from (corrections) literature, we know that intensive community supervision combined with rehabilitation services can reduce recidivism between 10 and 20 percent.”
 - “At the core of any good community corrections program is the use of an objective risk and needs assessment...the ‘risk’ part of the assessment instrument assesses risk to reoffend, and that information is critical to assigning probationers or parolees to levels of surveillance and supervision, such as specialized caseloads, frequent drug testing or electronic monitoring. The ‘need’ portion of the assessment instrument identifies the subset of the offender population that research has shown will benefit from being in rehabilitation treatment programs.”
 - “Effective corrections programs must get the right offender in the right program. And then of course, we must continually evaluate costs and program outcomes and revise accordingly.”
 - “There are two major trends that I see in community corrections today. The first has to do with technology to monitor compliance with court-ordered conditions, such as drug testing, global positioning systems, alcohol breathalyzers, and so on. The second has to do with ‘wrap-around services’ ...where mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, housing, and

medical services agencies are planning an offender's case management plan together."

Global Positioning System (GPS) for Community Supervision

- There is very little research available regarding the effectiveness of GPS as a community supervision tool, particularly when it comes to its use as a tool for work release candidates, as opposed to its use for a specialized set of offenders, such as sex offenders. Most of the research that we were able to identify came from vendors and others who have an interest in advocating for the use of GPS.
- However, we were able to uncover a comprehensive analysis entitled “Global Positioning System (GPS) Technology for Community Supervision: Lessons Learned”. This August 2007 report was prepared for the Center for Criminal Justice Technology of the U.S. Department of Justice. A full version is available at <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/219376.pdf>.
- This report offers a comprehensive look at use of GPS technology, focusing on seven jurisdictions that have used it for a range of objectives, including pre-trial, post-conviction and probation and parole, and for a range of GPS clients. The report covers current practices and considerations, current state of technology, how to set and use standards for GPS in community supervision, and lessons learned. It is a must read.
- We have attached a summary of the lessons learned. These are neatly summarized by area of impact and should be carefully reviewed, as they are directly relevant to Milwaukee County’s use of GPS technology for its work release program. The following is a summary of what we consider to be the most relevant lessons learned for the Community Justice Council’s consideration:
 1. Agencies considering implementation of a GPS monitoring program need to developed detailed statements of their goals and develop measurable definitions for those goals.
 2. There are liability issues associated with use of GPS – availability of data implies an obligation to act, which implies a need for significant staff capacity.
 3. The type of GPS technology used (active vs. passive) and the type of monitoring model employed (vendor vs. in-house vs. third party) both have a significant impact on cost and staffing needs. Both of those decisions must be predicated on overall program objectives.
 4. GPS offers an opportunity not only to monitor a client’s whereabouts for the sake of making sure they are where they are supposed to be (or not where they are prohibited to be), but also to proactively help guide clients to make better decisions. Again, the overall program objective is key – safety/punishment vs. case management.

5. While the extent to which GPS modifies client behavior is not yet known, agencies using it have found that it can be a viable sanctioning and sentencing alternative while continuing to provide for victim and public safety.
6. In addition to vendor costs, GPS operating costs must be included when comparing GPS to other forms of supervision, including incarceration. The agency infrastructure associated with a GPS program must be considered as part of the overall cost, including both staff and technological infrastructure to support GPS.
7. No national standards for GPS use in community supervision exist or are likely to emerge in the near future. Consequently, agencies contemplating its use must establish their own standards based on the goals they have established.