

CRIME AND JUSTICE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Crime and Justice report was developed by the **Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and the University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Research in Law and Justice, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice** in collaboration with an advisory committee. The report is commissioned by The Chicago Community Trust to support the 2040 comprehensive regional planning effort led by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

INTRODUCTION

Every day, thousands of dedicated men and women in blue risk their lives to keep the residents of the sprawling Chicago metropolitan region safe. Their service and sacrifice are deeply appreciated.

Unfortunately, the criminal justice system in the Chicago metropolitan region and across the United States has been heavily criticized for not always meeting the “Big Three Es:” Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Equity.

The system is slow in administering justice and expensive to maintain. Too often the system that is supposed to rehabilitate offenders is unable to prevent them from returning to crime. And too often the system that is supposed to dispense justice is accused of enforcing laws in a manner that discriminates against persons of color and the poor.

Indeed, research has documented racial bias in decisions regarding arrests, searches, prosecutions, and sentencing, thus yielding today’s problem of disproportionate minority contact. Furthermore, research has documented some abusive encounters between the police and the public. This has resulted in reduced public confidence in the legitimacy of the criminal justice system.

In an attempt to enhance safety in our communities, American society has become heavily reliant on punitive, zero-tolerance strategies. This has resulted in the rapid growth of prison populations over the past two decades, mostly affecting persons of color with limited means, and often involving non-violent offenders. The result is that United States now has the highest rate of imprisonment per capita in the world.

In addition to enhancing the existing system, this report suggests a need to seriously consider alternative models of justice, such as the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) approach – which gives balanced attention to public safety, individual accountability to victims and the community, and development of skills to help offenders live law abiding and productive lives.

The report also suggests the need to create an independent system of measurement to monitor the fairness of the criminal justice system and measure public safety outcomes that are important to the community, but are not captured in current indicators. Besides crime rates, the public cares about the quality of life in their neighborhoods as measured by levels of physical and social disorder, fear of crime, and their freedom to use the local environment without concern for safety. The community also cares deeply about equity and fairness during encounters with the police and other agents of the criminal justice system.

Although a number of issues were raised in researching and writing this report, six major issues and tasks stand out:

- Refining our understanding of the causes of crime and delinquency;
- Addressing the needs of crime victims;
- Fairness and equity in law enforcement strategies;
- Community engagement and capacity building for a holistic approach to crime prevention and intervention;
- Non-criminal justice solutions for drug offenders;
- Alternatives to incarceration and offender reentry.

VISION STATEMENT

The Northeastern Illinois region will be among the safest urban areas in the nation because of crime prevention strategies; effective law enforcement; improved access to opportunity; individual social responsibility, and increased civic involvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This vision can be achieved if the following recommendations are implemented:

CAUSES OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

1. Greatly reduce the rate of domestic violence, child abuse and other health risks to minors through a comprehensive best-practices approach to delinquency prevention that includes public education and government/community partnerships, and that prioritizes competency building for at-risk youth.

NEEDS OF VICTIMS

2. Implement the principles of Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ); target BARJ programs specifically to vulnerable populations (including minorities, women, youth, and elderly persons) and provide greater support for community-based implementations of BARJ for juveniles in both prevention and diversion.
3. Build community capacity to mobilize against sexual, domestic and gang violence, with counseling and advocacy services for sexual assault and domestic violence victims in every community, including immigrant and special needs populations.
4. Develop best practice treatment programs for adolescent and adult sex offenders both in prison and community-based aftercare; a network of accountability and treatment centers for men who batter, with services available in appropriate languages; sexual assault and dating violence/domestic violence education at every level of schooling; and evaluate program efficacy and recidivism.
5. Provide comprehensive 24-hour emergency medical, forensic, advocacy and counseling response for sexual assault survivors in regionalized sexual assault treatment centers located in hospital emergency rooms.

6. Ensure better consolidation of the medical and forensic response to sexual assault victims with skilled, trained sexual assault nurse examiners and forensic personnel; ensure that evidence is analyzed in all cases; and reduce backlogs of rape kit evidence at crime labs.
7. Expand network of supervised visitation centers for families affected by domestic violence utilizing standards developed by federal Safe Havens Project.
8. Develop affordable housing for domestic violence victims and provide targeted job development, job readiness, training, placement and ongoing support for battered women to enable economic self-sufficiency.
9. Support comprehensive regional child advocacy centers for physically and sexually abused children.
10. Expand services to investigate abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of seniors.

FAIRNESS AND EQUITY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

11. Guide law enforcement agencies with a comprehensive community-oriented approach to policing that encourages problem solving, information sharing, community engagement, and performance measurement.
12. Utilize the Internet and state-of-the-art information sharing technologies to enhance communication and trust between police and community members, share information and improve responsiveness and sensitivity.
13. Solicit feedback from citizens about police performance and equity issues.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

14. Form reciprocal partnerships between criminal justice agencies, public health agencies, schools, businesses, community organizations, and other stakeholders to develop comprehensive strategic approaches to public safety, working across jurisdictional boundaries to maximize resources in crime prevention and intervention.

NON-CRIMINAL JUSTICE SOLUTIONS FOR DRUG OFFENDERS

15. Reduce drug abuse and addiction through legislation, policies, and programs that reformulate the response through a public health rather as a criminal justice lens.
16. Create a comprehensive evidence-based statewide alternative to incarceration plan to treat non-violent drug offenders.

17. Mandate individual and professional clinical assessment for all individuals entering the criminal justice system for non-violent drug offenses for substance abuse and mental health disorders by an independent entity, prior to sentencing.
18. Create new revenues to establish statewide alternatives to incarceration, increasing resources for probation and parole officers, training, smaller caseloads, individualized interventions and sanctions, more contact with drug offense probationers, and expansion of treatment.
19. Re-examine Illinois drug sentencing guidelines, reviewing the impact of particular sentencing enhancements like Drug Free Zones and of lowered drug weight and equivalent felony penalty class for possession and sales, and broadening probation eligibility for drug offenses.

ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION AND OFFENDER REENTRY

20. Sharply reduce the number of people under correctional supervision through an integrated strategy of sentencing reform, a shift in funding toward community-level, treatment-based correctional alternatives, effective risk assessment, and removal of barriers to successful offender reentry.
21. Change public attitudes about drug enforcement to reflect a greater interest in harm reduction rather than drug enforcement.
22. Reduce prison populations by investing in mental health courts, following best practices established by the Council of State Governments Justice Center.
23. Reduce prison readmissions by implementing intermediate sanctions such as day reporting centers for offenders who break the rules of their release; using short-term residential facilities for persistent rule violators with substance abuse problems; and providing performance incentives that shorten terms of supervision for offenders who comply with their conditions and fulfill obligations.
24. Reduce length of stay by implementing risk-reduction credits that allow slightly earlier release for inmates who complete treatment and education programs designed to reduce recidivism; developing risk-based release instruments based on analysis of actual recidivism patterns to help releasing authorities decide who is ready for release; and providing sufficient program availability so inmates can complete requirements.
25. Remove legal and structural barriers faced by formerly incarcerated persons to employment, housing, and health and behavioral health services.
26. Create a seamless and coordinated system of support for the formerly incarcerated, with community-based service networks in high-impact regions, increased access to

employment related training grants for smaller organizations, coordinated strategies for enhancing investments in reentry support services, and employment-related partnerships with private companies.

27. Address the social stigmas attached to a criminal record with community-based public awareness campaigns.

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