

Massachusetts Department of Correction
Review of Current Research - 1981

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Table of Contents

Title	Page Number
I. Introduction	3
II. Community Reintegration Reports	5
A. Community Reintegration of Prison Releases: Results of the Massachusetts Experience	6
B. Rates of Recidivism: A Five Year Follow-Up	7
III. Evaluative And Operational Studies	8
A. Mainstreaming Service Delivery to Offender Clients of the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission	9
B. Youthful Offenders Evaluation Volume I - Youthful Offenders Committed to the Mass. Department of Correction 1968 to 1979: An Overview	10
C. Youthful Offenders Evaluation Volume IV - Youthful Offenders Committed to the Mass. Department of Correction 1968 to 1979: Statistical Tables	11
IV Personnel Reports	12
A. Some Background Characteristics of the Staff of the Mass. Department of Correction	13
B. Patterns of Career Mobility and Retention Among Correction Officers of the Mass. Department of Correction	14
C. Correction Officer Pre-Service Training, Results of An Opinion Survey	15

Table of Contents

Title	Page Number
V. Trend Analyses	16
A. Women Committed to County Facilities in Massachusetts 1970 to 1980	17
VI. Annual Statistical Reports	18
A. Disciplinary Report Statistics July 1, 1979 to December 31, 1979	19
B. Commitments to Massachusetts Houses of Correction During 1980	20
C. Disposition Rates for Persons Convicted in the Massachusetts Superior Courts 1972-1979	21
D. A Statistical Description of Education-Vocation Release Participants in the Massachusetts Department of Correction During 1980	22
E. Population Movements in the Massachusetts Department of Correction During 1980	23
F. A Statistical Description of the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions on January 1, 1981	24
G. 1980 Court Commitments to the Massachusetts Department of Correction	26
H. 1980 Yearly Statistical Report of the Furlough Program	27
I. A Statistical Description of Releases From the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions During 1980	28
J. Statistical Tables Describing the Background Characteristics and Recidivism Rates for Releases From Massachusetts Correctional Institutions During 1979	31
VII. Information Bulletins	32
A. DOC Population Trends and Projections	33
VIII. Subject Index	34

Introduction

This report presents a review of the current research projects conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Correction Research Division during 1981. Included in this report are abstracts which summarize specific findings of each of the individual studies cited.

The report is divided into sections which reflect the different areas of research conducted by the Unit during 1981. The last section contains a listing of an information bulletin distributed by the Research Unit. The first section contains abstracts that are geared toward an examination of community reintegration in Massachusetts for incarcerated state prisoners. One report summarizes the results of research carried out by the Research Unit since the establishment of the reintegration component. The next report is an evaluation of recidivism utilizing a five year follow-up to determine whether the findings after five years of follow-up are consistent with those found using a one year follow-up period.

The second section consists of three evaluative and operational studies. One report looks at the mainstreaming of service to offender clients of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. The other two reports represent the first and fourth volumes of a five part study of youthful offenders who were committed to the Department of Correction from 1968 to 1979.

Section Three contains abstracts that concern studies relating to the personnel of the Massachusetts Department of Correction. The first report presents information on some background characteristics of the staff. The next two reports are concerned with correctional officers in the department. The first of these reports looks at the patterns of career mobility and retention among correctional officers and the second of these reports presents the results of an opinion survey on pre-service training for correctional officers.

Section Four focuses on a report that examined recent trends in the Department of Correction. This report looks at women committed to county facilities in Massachusetts from 1970 to 1980.

The fifth section consists of annual statistical reports. These reports describe background characteristics of individuals committed to and released from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions and Houses of Correction. Reports describing population movements in the system, recidivism, and participation in the furlough program are also included. Also, reports providing information on disciplinary statistics disposition rates for persons convicted in the Superior Courts, and participation in the education-vocation programs of the department are included. Copies of individual studies contained in these sheets may be obtained by writing to:

Research Unit
Massachusetts Department of Correction
100 Cambridge Street, 21st Floor
Boston, MA 02202

Community Reintegration Reports

The Massachusetts Department of Correction provides several studies each year dealing with the effectiveness of community reintegration programs. This past year, two studies were published that addressed this general area. One report summarized the results of the Massachusetts experience with community reintegration. The second report presented a five year community follow-up to determine recidivism rates for the individuals released during 1973.

Community Reintegration of Prison Releases:
Results of the Massachusetts Experience

#217

March, 1981

Dr. Daniel P. LeClair

This report examines the results of the Massachusetts experience with community reintegration for individuals released from prison in the state. The research has shown that since the introduction of the reintegration model in the Massachusetts correctional system, overall recidivism rates have declined. In the year 1971, one year prior to the introduction of the model, the recidivism rate for the combined population of the state prison releases was 25%. In the successive seven years, with the introduction and expansion of the model, the recidivism rate dropped to its current level of 16%. This reduction was found to be statistically significant. The data also revealed that those individuals released from 1973 to 1978 who had experienced one or more furloughs prior to their release from prison had significantly lower rates of recidivism than did individuals who had not experienced a furlough prior to release. Analyses revealed that the lower rates of recidivism for furlough participants was not due to selection factors.

Also, a series of studies published by the Department of Correction found that individuals who had completed a pre-release program had significantly lower actual recidivism rates than their expected recidivism rate as derived from base expectancy tables. Analysis indicated that the determined reduction in recidivism was due to the impact of the pre-release programs and not simply to the types of inmates selected for participation.

Rates of Recidivism: A Five Year Follow-up

#232

October, 1981

Dr. Daniel P. LeClair

The study represents a five year community follow-up to determine the recidivism rate of individuals paroled or discharged from the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions during the year 1973. A goal of the study is to determine the validity of the department's traditional use of one year follow-up studies for determining recidivism rates. Some researchers have charged that one year follow-up studies may lead to premature conclusions in that results found in the first year of follow-up may reverse themselves during the second or third year. This issue is of particular concern to the department because the results of our one year follow-up studies have been used to justify the retention and expansion of a reintegration model believed to be linked to a downward trend in recidivism.

Our analysis revealed that 44% of the population was returned to prison within five years of release. This recidivism rate of 44% is a little more than double the rate originally determined in the one year follow-up study. Variation in recidivism rates occurring among individual releasing institutions ranged from a high of 55% for MCI-Concord and a low of 28% for MCI-Framingham.

A major finding of the study is that the basic results of our one year follow-up analyses remain valid with extended follow-up periods i.e., that individuals released through community based programs have lower recidivism rates and that these lower rates persist over a five year follow-up.

Evaluative and Operational Studies

The research unit, in an effort to continually update and improve its methods and programs publishes every year several reports of an evaluative nature. This past year, three of these types of reports were published. One report provides an evaluation of the mainstreaming of service delivery to offender clients of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. The next two reports are part of a five volume evaluation of youthful offenders committed to the Department of Correction from 1968 to 1979. The first of these reports provides an overview of the total sample of youthful offenders. The other report in the series provides the statistical tables of the data.

Mainstreaming *Service Delivery to Offender Clients of the
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

#221

June, 1981

Linda K. Holt

Until 1979 the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission offered services to their offender clients in an atmosphere of specializing in offender cases in an office that dealt only with offender clients. Since 1979 that policy has been partially reversed in favor of mainstreaming. Presently some clients are serviced by generalist counselors in a mixed client setting. This study looked at rehabilitation rates under these two service delivery models and found that servicing clients in a specialist setting was more effective. Effectiveness was measured by rehabilitation rates, salaries earned after rehabilitation, and expenditures per client.

Youthful Offenders Evaluation Volume I
Youthful Offenders Committed To The Massachusetts
Department of Correction From 1968 To 1979: An Overview

#227

September, 1981

Lawrence T. Williams

This report is an overview of a five volume study of youthful offenders (youth who were seventeen years of age or younger at their commitment) committed to the Massachusetts Department of Correction from 1968 to 1979. This particular report provides a profile of the total sample of youthful offenders considered in the series of reports. Also, youthful offenders over the time frame of the study are examined to determine any significant differences in this population over time. Recidivism rates are also presented for this sample of offenders.

The analysis reveals that with the exception of more extensive criminal involvements, there have not been very many changes in this population over the time frame of the study. The youthful offenders are now receiving longer sentences but this is true of all offenders being committed to correctional institutions in the state. There is evidence presented in the report of a change in the manner in which the juvenile justice system and the adult correctional system handled these offenders. The recidivism rate of youthful offenders released from 1968 to 1978 was 30%. Their rates are consistently higher than the overall departmental yearly recidivism figures.

Youthful Offenders Evaluation Volume IV
Youthful Offenders Committed To The Massachusetts
Department of Correction From 1968 To 1979: Statistical Tables

#230

September, 1981

Lawrence T. Williams

This report presents statistical tables for the evaluation of youthful offenders committed to the Massachusetts Department of Correction from 1968 to 1979. Included in this report is a listing of all the data on youthful offenders in the sample according to the different variables collected. A separate section of the report contains all data on bind over youthful offenders committed during this same time period.

Reports Concerning Personnel of the Massachusetts
* Department of Correction

The reports in this section provide information on the staff of the Department of Correction. The first report provides a profile of the population as of September 30, 1980. The second report is concerned with patterns of career mobility and retention among correctional officers of the department. The last report presents the results of an opinion survey concerning pre-service training of correction officers of the department.

Some Background Characteristics of The
Staff of the Massachusetts Department of Correction

#214

February, 1981

Linda K. Holt

A description of all employees of the Massachusetts Department of Correction on September 30, 1980 is given. The modal staff person is a white male working as a correction officer in a major institution with 7 years of state service. Women are concentrated in two job groups: professionals and office/clerical. Their job grades are lower than males and their length of service is shorter. Minorities are concentrated in two job groups: protective services and professionals. Their length of service to the state is shorter than whites but job grades do not differ on the whole. Department of Correction staff differs from inmates in racial composition; Department of Correction staff differs from the state's labor force in proportion of females employed.

Patterns of Career Mobility And Retention Among Correction Officers
Of The Massachusetts Department of Correction

#215

February, 1981

Linda Holt

Highlights

- There were 1168 correction officers trained at the Training Academies at Framingham and Shirley since 1975. The modal graduate is a 25 year old white male with some college training and placed at a major institution.
- Attrition rates were calculated for new correction officers. Before six months after graduation 1 in 10 has left the department; before one year after graduation 1 in 5 has left the department.
- Retention of female officers and thus retention at MCI-Framingham is particularly problematic.
- There is no advantage of a residential program (Shirley) over a day program (Framingham) in terms of retaining officers or job performance.
- Attrition is caused at least partially by the relative attractiveness of other jobs, particularly jobs in law enforcement areas. It is also caused by salary policies.
- There are very few job changes for this sample. Correction officers were likely to transfer to new, small, lower security centrally located institutions. More correction officers moved to lower grade jobs in the areas of treatment or administration than were promoted to higher grade security jobs.
- Training Academy graduates are rated as meeting or exceeding all job requirements. There is no area in which they are judged deficient by their supervisors.

Correction Officer Pre-Service Training
Results of an Opinion Survey

#222

June, 1981

Linda K. Holt

A questionnaire was sent to a random sample of correction officers working for the Massachusetts Department of Correction. Various aspects of pre-service training were explored including their opinions on various training models, evaluations of the training that they received and questions about the most important and useful things learned in training. The results of this questionnaire are presented here. Officers generally rated their training as adequate but expressed a desire for a more careful integration of training and work assignments. Officers generally felt that the training model they were trained under was the best.

Trend Analyses Report

During 1981, one study was published that attempts to discern various trends that have developed over the years among women committed to county facilities in the state.

Women Committed To County Facilities
In Massachusetts 1970 To 1980

#219

May, 1981

Linda K. Holt

The focus of this report is a description of women who were committed to a term of incarceration in a county facility in Massachusetts during the period 1970 to 1980. Women represent about 3 percent of all commitments to county facilities annually. During the period 1970 to 1980 an average of 140 women are committed to these facilities each year. Presently the modal woman is committed to the Hampden county facility on a three month sentence for a property offense. She is likely to be 21 to 24 years of age, single and have a tenth grade education. Changes in the characteristics of women committed to county facilities over time are discussed in the report. Some comparisons between women committed to county and state facilities are made as well.

Annual Statistical Reports

The annual statistical reports constitute a series of reports published annually by the Massachusetts Department of Correction Research Unit. These studies contain statistics concerning individuals who were committed to a state or county institution during 1980 and a point in time profile of residents of the department on January 1, 1981. Also included in these studies is the yearly furlough report and population movements for 1980 as well as a recidivism follow-up study dealing with individuals who were released from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions during 1979.

In addition to these reports, there was a study that provided disciplinary report statistics, another study that provided information concerning disposition rates for persons convicted in the Superior Courts from 1972 to 1979, and finally a study of participants in education-vocation programs of the department.

Disciplinary Report Statistics
July 1, 1979 To December 31, 1979

#213

January, 1981

Charles Metzler

The purpose of this report is to document all disciplinary reports written in the Massachusetts Department of Correction (excluding women in the awaiting trial unit at Framingham) from July 1, 1979 to December 31, 1979.

During the six month period from July 1, 1979 to December 31, 1979, a total of 3727 disciplinary reports were written to 2261 individuals. For those who received a disciplinary report during this six month period, the average number of disciplinary reports written per person is 1.6 and the number of reports written per individual ranged from one to eighteen. About one third (30%) of all reports were from maximum security; forty-four percent were written at medium security institutions, 7% at minimum security institutions, and 20% at pre-release centers. The majority of disciplinary reports (75%) are for major violations, 24% were for minor violations, and 1% were referred to the district attorney. The majority of the reports resulted in guilty findings (73%). Of the 2734 cases with guilty dispositions, 434 (16%) were appealed and in 128 cases (29% of those appealed), action favorable to the inmate was approved. The majority of the reports had only one sanction listed. The most common sanction was isolation time.

The majority of reports were written on white (non-hispanic) inmates (59%); 38% were written on black inmates and 3% were written on hispanic inmates. The median age at time of report was 24 years old. Two thirds (67%) of the reports were written on Walpole commitments, 27% on Concord commitments, and 6% on Framingham commitments. The majority of reports (75%) were written on individuals currently serving an offense against the person.

Commitments To Massachusetts
Houses of Correction During 1980

#218

March, 1980

Charles Metzler

This report is a description of court commitments to the Massachusetts county facilities (houses of correction) during 1980. Included is information concerning the operating expenditures and average populations for these facilities during 1980.

During 1980, there were 5,411 individuals sentenced to the county facilities. This represents an increase of 18% over the number of commitments during 1979.

Institutions. Over half (55%) of the commitments were sentenced to four institutions - Billerica (18%), Worcester (16%), Deer Island (9%), and Springfield (11%).

Present Offense. The majority of individuals (83%) were committed for non-person offenses (48% for offenses against property, 7% for drug offenses, and 28% for other offenses). The single offense for which individuals were most frequently sentenced was burglary (18%).

Sentence. Sentences to county facilities may not exceed 2½ years. One half (50%) were committed for sentences of three months or less which includes commitments in lieu of fines. Of the 5,441 commitments during 1980, 260 (5%) served weekend sentences.

Age at Commitment. The median age at commitment to houses of correction is 23 years old.

Sex. The vast majority of commitments were male (98%).

Marital Status. Most individuals were single (72%), whereas only 16% were married at the time of their incarceration.

Last Grade Completed. The median last grade completed was eleventh grade. About one third of the commitments (35%) graduated from high school; whereas only 79 individuals (1%) graduated from college.