

# CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

## Sentencing Structure, Policy and Practices Committee

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Committee submits the following as potential research projects:

#### 1. Who is in jail in Connecticut?

- a. What does our inmate population look like with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, age, zip code of residence and length of sentence;
- b. For each of the major crimes: how many persons are serving time for that charge and what is the average sentence;
- c. For each inmate: what is the charge of conviction and what was the original arrest charge

#### 2. End of Sentence Services

- a. Connecticut does not permit parole for murder and some other serious offenses which complicates the ability to provide end of sentence services to persons convicted of these offenses. How many other states forbid parole in this fashion?
- b. Do states that forbid parole have a mechanism to assist offenders in the transition from prison to the community?

#### 3. Penal Code

- a. How has Connecticut's codified criminal law changed since the adoption of the Model Penal Code in the 1970s? What new and or different crimes has the legislature added?
- b. What has been the historical development of mandatory minimum sentences in Connecticut – particularly since the adoption of the MPC?

#### 4. Sex Offenders

- a. What is the evidence (if any) that some percentage of sex offenders continue to engage in illegal sexual misconduct after being prosecuted and punished for a sex offense?
- b. Are the rates of recidivism (or rates of continuing misconduct) different depending on whether the initial conviction involved (1) pedophilia, (2) acquaintance sexual assault or (3) violent sexual assault?

# CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

## Recidivism Reduction Committee

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For each of the research endeavors listed below, a careful review of existing research will inform any decision about whether to gather data. For each item below, important or even sufficient information may already exist.

The objective of the proposed research is to enrich existing knowledge concerning policies, practices and management of offenders, in order to maximize the likelihood that their encounters with the criminal justice system contribute to their transformations into law-abiding members of society.

The proposals below are listed in the order of the degree of support that they received within the committee. However, all of these proposals received broad support.

#### **Proposal A**

**We need a deeper, more longitudinal understanding of offenders -- going well beyond the demographic and criminal justice data that we currently gather. We need to understand the pathways of offenders' lives as they have passed through institutional settings including schools, juvenile services, courts, prison and community supervision. Their histories in health, mental health and substance abuse, employment, income, housing and neighborhoods should be tracked, as well as and their social and family support. Their participation in and response to programs and services in and after prison, including community supervision, should be examined, as well as their juvenile histories and their adult charges, convictions and sentences.**

This research should focus on offenders under age 30, because that is where recidivism is highest and interventions can have the most impact on outcomes. The analysis should include several groups of specific interest:

- A group of incarcerated first-time offenders.
- A similar group of first time offenders - who have not recidivated within three years post incarceration.
- A similar group of offenders who have re-offended more than once within three years.
- A group that that is similar to the incarcerated first-time offenders, but who were not sentenced to prison.
- A group of re-offenders who have served short sentences.

This analysis will seek to find factors, including specifically interactive factors, as well as important turning points, that associate with greater or lesser probability of recidivism as well as other indicators of degrees of harm and of success.

**Proposal B**

**Assess the adult correctional system's strengths, achievements, gaps, and areas of weak impact. Include DOC facilities, community corrections, and the nonprofit sector. Focus on outcomes, execution, cost, and evidence base.**

This would be a major undertaking with significant challenges – some stemming from the fact of crossing many organizational boundaries. This proposal's strong support within the committee derives from the fact that many clients and providers seem to believe that the "system" would be more effective if its coordination was improved, and the issue of coordination raises related issues of organizational effectiveness.

**Proposal C**

**Study the impact of supportive social ties - including family ties - on recidivism and other indicators of harm and success. Compare social-tie effects of incarcerated vs non-incarcerated offenders, and trace the granular effects of incarceration on families and other sources of social support. Examine current DOC practices that support or weaken social ties, with a view toward security considerations. Also review the data of the impact of conjugal and full family visits on incarcerated offenders.**

**Proposal D**

**Study the relationship of current offender assessments to factors of success and failure. Can assessments be made more accurate and useful for program and release planning?**

## **CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION**

### **Research, Measurement and Evaluation Committee**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As a result of recommendations made by the Sentencing Task Force in 2007, The General Assembly passed Public Act 08-01 in January of 2008, an act designed to increase public safety by incarcerating more serious offenders for longer periods of time and decreasing the likelihood of incarceration for less serious offenders. The act significantly enhanced community-based resources for less serious offenders, including the pretrial population and created a “Diversion Program for Offenders with Psychiatric Disabilities” (subsection 41) to be implemented by Court Support Services Division. The CCSD’s Supervised Diversionary Program (SDP) has been serving offenders with psychiatric disabilities since October 1, 2008. Data has been collected and a preliminary analysis of these data revealed that most courts have been receiving SDP application; appropriate clients have been accepted into the SDP; and the successful completion rate for offenders diverted to SDP has been 75%. The Research, Measurement and Evaluation Committee recommends the Sentencing Commission support a continuation of this study to include a larger number of clients and to determine its long term impact on offenders with psychiatric disabilities. In addition, the committee recommends that researchers talk to judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, and other relevant court personnel to determine the extent to which they are aware of SDP and their perceptions of the program.