

“Everybody in the system had to roll up their sleeves and put in the effort to make this solution work. It wasn’t easy, but it was a worthwhile process.”

John Wetzel,
Pennsylvania Secretary of Corrections
(and former Warden in Franklin County)

“County taxpayers should know we are protecting their public safety and fiscal interests. We are pleased this [program] validates our efforts to reduce criminal behavior, enhance public safety and cut costs.”

Commissioner David Keller

Franklin County Day Reporting Center achieving goals: costs, recidivism reduced



HIGHLIGHTS:

- A three-year recidivism study found Franklin County is reaping significant benefits from its DRC. Offenders referred to the DRC failed probation at less than one-third the national rate and less than half the 48 percent rate of standard Franklin County probationers.
- By adding a DRC, the county built a smaller jail, saving \$10 million in construction costs and more than \$3 million annually in operational costs.
- The DRC has increased flexibility to the county’s correctional system and lowered jail crowding. In 2009, the jail’s average daily population is below when the DRC opened.
- By leasing its extra jail capacity to other jurisdictions, the county generated \$910,000 in revenue in 2010.
- A 2009 report found the county crime rate dropped from about 75 crimes per 1,000 residents in 2006 to about 55 crimes per 1,000 residents in 2008. This drop occurred while the statewide crime rate increased steadily from 2002 to 2008.
- The percentage of county tax dollars spent on crime, courts and corrections decreased from 77 percent in 2006 to 72 percent in 2009.
- The assessed risk of DRC participant “graduates” has decreased by almost 30 percent, according to LSI-R® scores.

THE PROGRAM

Franklin County lies in a rural, south-central section of Pennsylvania. The county seat, Chambersburg, is at the hub of many major intersections, making this rural area accessible to metro areas such as Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Harrisburg. A growing population –from 129,000 residents in 1999 to 143,000 in 2008 – and easy access to urban areas contributed to increased crime during the 1990s and into the 2000s. As a result, the local correctional system was under significant pressure.

For years the Franklin County Prison suffered from chronic jail overcrowding. Its jail capacity was rated at 194 beds, but the jail inmate count had surged as high as 400 inmates in 2003. In addition, up to 30 inmates were being housed in neighboring counties at high expense to taxpayers. A national jail

planner estimated Franklin County would need at least 600 beds at a cost of \$40 million. Franklin County officials – a wide range of stakeholders in the county criminal justice system including judges, commissioners, the jail warden, district attorney, probation and others – evaluated other alternatives to both alleviate jail crowding and address the underlying issues contributing to the problem.

Franklin County decided to modify its criminal justice system by:

- Building a new jail
- Developing and opening a community-based Day Reporting Center (DRC)

Adding the DRC allowed the county to build a 468-bed facility at a cost of only \$30 million (savings of \$10 million). In April 2006, the county opened the DRC.

BI Incorporated was selected to operate the center for its expertise in operating these programs. The DRC targets parole and probation violators, repeat offenders convicted of non-violent crimes, and DUI offenders.

The DRC offers a phased supervisory approach that responds to the behaviors of the offender. The DRC is an intermediate punishment tool that can keep offenders from going to jail, allowing them to maintain employment, housing and contact with family members.

DRC participants attend classes such as anger management, substance abuse, life skills, cognitive skills, and employment and educational training. In addition to classes, offenders are screened for alcohol use on each DRC visit as well as random drug tests.

THE RESULTS

The Franklin County “solution” to jail overcrowding is paying dividends on many levels:

- The goal of reducing the jail population was achieved and has held steady. Four months after the DRC opened, the jail population dropped from 386 inmates to 286. In 2010, jail’s average daily population was 376, still below when the DRC opened in 2006.
- Housing inmates in nearby county jails was halted, saving the county \$2,000 a day.
- Immediate savings were achieved by building a smaller jail. Franklin County estimates it saved \$10 million in one-time construction costs and now saves \$3.2 million in operational costs by not managing the 150 extra beds originally recommended.
- Furthermore, in leasing its extra jail capacity to other jurisdictions the county generated \$910,000 in revenue in 2010.
- Because the DRC helps build more flexibility into the local correctional system, the average length of stay in the jail dropped from 60 days to 45 days.
- A 2009 report found the county crime rate dropped from about 75 crimes per 1,000 residents in 2006 to about 55 crimes per 1,000 residents in 2008. This drop occurred while the statewide crime rate increased steadily from 2002 to 2008.
- The percentage of county tax dollars spent on crime, courts and corrections has decreased from 77 percent in 2006 to 72 percent in 2009.
- The number of offenders participating in the DRC has remained well above 100 clients daily since its first year. As of January 2010, 172 clients were involved in the DRC, including 47 in Aftercare. In 2009, 160 participants in four different classes completed the program.
- The criminogenic risk of participants has decreased significantly for program participants who have completed the program. The average LSI-R risk score has dropped from 20.9 to 14.8 for program graduates, a 29 percent drop in assessed risk.
- Recidivism rates have dropped considerably. According to a study commissioned by the Franklin County Criminal Justice Advisory Board, DRC program graduates who participated in the program between 2006 and 2009 recidivated at a rate of only 18.2 percent. That compares to a national recidivism rate of approximately 67 percent.
- Franklin County garnered a best practices award from the National Association of Counties and an award from the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania for reducing its jail population and implementing the DRC program, and Warden John Wetzel, was tapped to lead Pennsylvania’s correctional system.

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