

LARGE JAIL NETWORK BULLETIN

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The Hampden County Day Reporting Center: Three Years' Success in Supervising Sentenced Individuals in the Community

*By Richard J. McCarthy,
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In Massachusetts, the county correctional system incarcerates both those in pre-trial detention and those sentenced to terms of two and one-half years or less for crimes such as breaking and entering, larceny, driving while intoxicated, and drug possession. Thus, each county facility is both a jail for pre-trial detainees and a house of correction for sentenced individuals. The sheriff of each county, an

went with the job, but to turn it instead into a pre-release center. Inmates in residence at the center are within six months of release and are able to work and participate in community activities. These activities range from Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups to individual counseling, religious services, "work-out" regimens at the YMCA, and community restitution.

In October 1986, faced like many other correctional administrators with worsening overcrowding, Sheriff Ashe instituted what the Crime and Justice Foundation refers to as the first day reporting center in the nation. The day reporting center was located in the county's

pre-release center, so that the new operation could draw on the pre-release center staff's experience in

supervising offenders in the community. In addition, pre-release center staff member Kevin Warwick was selected to direct the day reporting center.

Program Description. The Hampden County Day Reporting Center supervises inmates who are

within four months of release and who live at home, work, and take part in positive activities in the community. Participants' behavior is monitored in several ways:

- They must report into the center daily to be observed by staff;
- They must call in daily at several specified times;
- They must be at home when scheduled to be there, to receive random computer calls from an electronic monitoring system; and
- They must pass frequent random urinalysis tests that detect alcohol or drug use.

Participants also are monitored randomly by "community officers." Under this system, each participant is contacted between fifty and eighty times per week.

Day reporting center participants meet with their counselors at the beginning of each week to chart out a schedule of work and attendance at positive community activities. They are responsible for following this schedule to the letter.

It is important to note that the Hampden County day reporting center is not a "house arrest" program; participants spend a good

Total contacts under the Hampden County program range from fifty to eighty per participant, per week.

elected official, is the administrator of the jail and house of correction.

Sheriff Michael J. Ashe, Jr. has been in charge of the Hampden County Jail and House of Correction in Springfield, Massachusetts for more than fifteen years. One of his early actions as sheriff was to choose not to live in the "Sheriff's House" that

deal of time out of their homes, re-entering the community. Day reporting is also not a diversion program. Sheriff Ashe was concerned that, if used as a diversion program, day reporting would just "widen the net," so that offenders

completed the program. Twenty percent have been returned to higher security, usually for lack of accountability (e.g., not following the required schedule) or a failed urinalysis test. Under the program, one "dirty" urine (testing positive for either alcohol or

program are considerably less than costs for twenty-four-hour lock-up. Day reporting is also the ultimate "carrot" in our institutional incentive-based program participation philosophy; inmates who behave well in jail can serve the end of their sentences at home.

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drugs) results in a return to higher security. This strict policy was established because of the pre-release center's experience that alcohol or drug use was the

We have also found that individuals who earn the opportunity for home and community participation at the end of their sentences have an improved chance of successful community re-entry. When sentences are a continuum of earned lesser sanctions, the final step to productive and positive community living is much easier than when inmates are released from a higher-security setting. Day reporting also benefits the community because participants work, pay taxes, and perform community service.

who would not have otherwise gone to jail would be sentenced to day reporting.

primary reason that program participants caused problems in the community.

Day reporting participants are still on sentence, in the custody of the sheriff, and have earned their way into the day reporting program by positive behavior and program participation. Some participants "graduate" from pre-release center in-house status to day reporting. Others, on shorter sentences, come right from the main institution to day reporting. All have been assessed for entrance into the program based on the likelihood of their being accountable for their behavior in the community.

Pre-trial participants. During the past year, the day reporting program has expanded to provide some supervision of pre-trial individuals, who are released by the court on personal recognizance with the provision that they report daily to the day reporting center, even though they are not in the custody of the sheriff. These individuals do not receive the full services or supervision of day reporting, but their daily reporting is seen by the court as preferable to a release on personal recognizance with no stipulations for reporting at all.

Program success. Nearly 500 individuals have participated in the day reporting center program to date, and, because of the program's close supervision, none has committed a violent crime in the community while in the program. Eighty percent of participants have successfully

Benefits. Advantages of the day reporting center to our department are numerous. Cell and bed spaces are saved for those who need them the most. Costs of supervising participants in the day reporting

We in Hampden County would be happy to share information about our experience in implementing and operating the day reporting center with any interested jurisdictions. For more information, write to Richard McCarthy, Public Information Officer at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department, 79 York Street, Springfield, Massachusetts 01105, or call (413) 781-1560, ext. 213. ■

