



# Justice Reinvestment

Justice reinvestment is a data-driven strategy for policymakers to:

- reduce spending on corrections,
- increase public safety, and
- improve conditions in the neighborhoods to which most people released from prison return.

**STATE SPENDING ON CORRECTIONS HAS RISEN FASTER OVER 20 YEARS THAN SPENDING ON NEARLY ANY OTHER STATE BUDGET ITEM—INCREASING FROM \$10 BILLION TO \$45 BILLION A YEAR.<sup>1</sup>**

Despite mounting expenditures, recidivism rates remain high and by some measures have actually risen. These failure rates are a key reason prison populations continue to swell nationally; the fastest growing category of admissions to prison are people already under some form of community-based supervision (many of whom were recently released from jail or prison). Any real effort to contain spending on corrections must have as its centerpiece a plan to manage the growth of the prison population. Unless policymakers act, state spending on corrections will grow by at least \$20 billion over the next five years.<sup>2</sup>

**ELECTED OFFICIALS CONCERNED ABOUT CRIME ROUTINELY REFER TO THE RECORD NUMBERS OF PEOPLE RETURNING TO THE COMMUNITY FROM PRISON OR JAIL: IN 2004 ALONE, MORE THAN 670,000 PEOPLE WERE RELEASED FROM PRISONS, AND AN ESTIMATED 9 MILLION WERE RELEASED FROM JAILS.<sup>3</sup>**

Of those released from prison, half are returned within three years. Even more are rearrested.<sup>4</sup> To increase public safety, policymakers must improve the success rates for people released from prisons and jails.

**IN EVERY STATE THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF “HIGH-STAKES” COMMUNITIES TO WHICH MOST PEOPLE RELEASED FROM PRISONS AND JAILS RETURN; THESE ARE ALSO THE COMMUNITIES WHERE TAXPAYER-FUNDED PROGRAMS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY FOCUSED.**

State and community agencies often provide costly uncoordinated services to the same neighborhoods, and to the same families, without successful outcomes. To improve results and accountability, policymakers must identify which distinct programs overlap in particular neighborhoods, integrate these efforts, and then employ place-based strategies to increase the capacity for receiving people returning from prison and for engaging individuals at risk of becoming involved in crime.

1. National Association of State Budget Officers, *State Expenditure Report 2006* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of State Budget Officers, 2007). National Association of State Budget Officers, *State Expenditure Report 1987* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of State Budget Officers, 1987). From 1991 to 2001, state spending on corrections grew faster than any other state budget item except Medicaid expenditures, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, “State Spending in the 1990s,” report available at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/fiscal/stspend90s.htm>.

2. Public Safety Performance Project, *Public Safety, Public Spending: Forecasting America’s Prison Population 2007–2011* (Washington, D.C.: Public Safety Performance Project, The Pew Charitable Trusts, February 2007).

3. The number of people released from prisons has been steadily increasing—from about 600,000 in 2000 to more than 670,000 in 2004. See P. M. Harrison and A. J. Beck, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005*, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ213133 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006). The jail numbers (2004) come from A. J. Beck, *The Importance of Successful Reentry to Jail Population Growth*, presented at the Jail Reentry Roundtable of the Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., June 27, 2006.

4. Two out of three people released from prison are rearrested within three years. See P. A. Langan and D. J. Levin, *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994*, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ193427 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002).

# How Justice Reinvestment Works

**1 Analyze the prison population and spending in the communities to which people in prison often return.**

Justice reinvestment experts review prison admission data to determine what is driving increases in the population. Using mapping technology, these experts provide geographic analyses to pinpoint which neighborhoods receive people released from prison and how state spending on programs often converges on the same families and communities.

“We’ve got a broken corrections system. Recidivism rates are too high and create too much of a financial burden on states without protecting public safety. My state and others are reinventing how we do business by employing justice reinvestment strategies that can put our taxpayers’ dollars to better use.” — **U.S. SENATOR SAM BROWNBACK (R-KANSAS)**

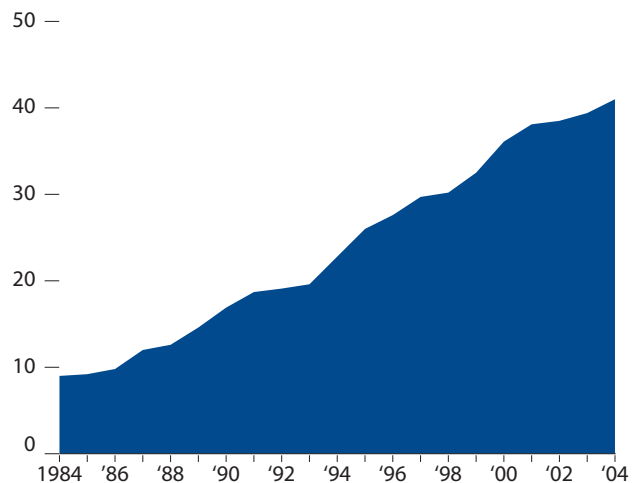
“It’s always been safer politically to build the next prison, rather than stop and see whether that’s really the smartest thing to do. But we’re at a point where I don’t think we can afford to do that anymore. . . . We have to look for a better solution to the problem, and that isn’t more new prisons.” — **TEXAS STATE SENATOR JOHN WHITMIRE (D-HOUSTON), CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**2 Provide policymakers with options to generate savings and increase public safety.**

The justice reinvestment experts generate various options that recognize the uniqueness of each state’s criminal justice system and tailor them to that jurisdiction to better manage the growth of a state’s prison population and increase public safety. These options include strategies to reduce parole and probation revocations; focus supervision resources where they can have the greatest impact; and hold offenders (and service providers) accountable for the successful completion of programs such as drug treatment and job training.

## State Spending on Corrections by Year

BILLIONS OF DOLLARS



Data Source: National Association of State Budget Officers, *State Expenditures Report, 1985–2004*

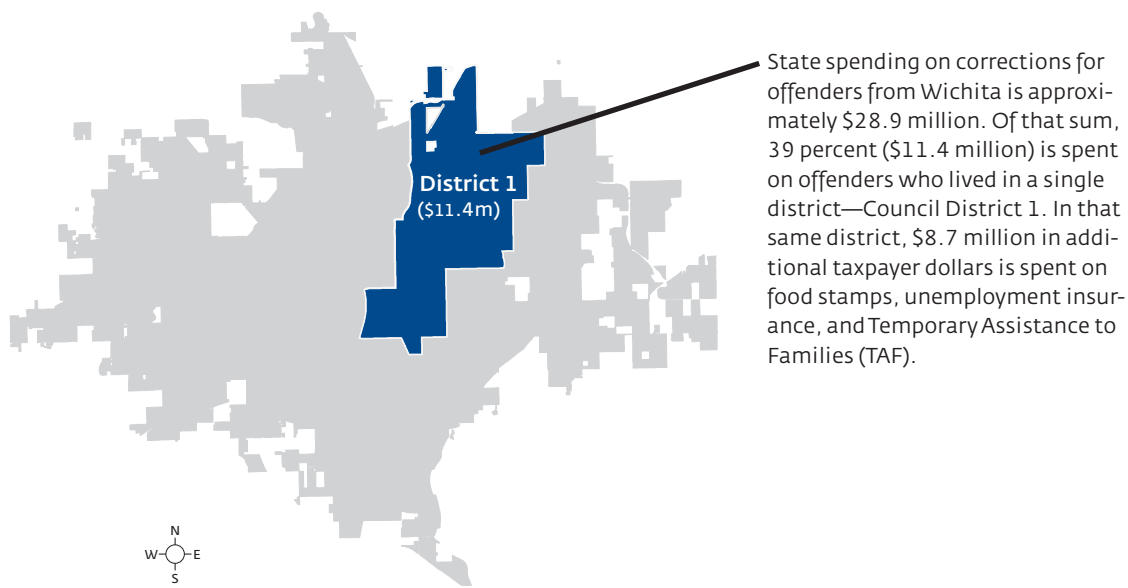
### 3 Quantify savings and reinvest in select high-stakes communities.

State and city leaders work with the justice reinvestment team to determine how much they will save, and avoid spending, by adopting some or all of the options identified by the experts. Policymakers and the team's experts develop plans for reinvesting a portion of these savings in new or enhanced initiatives in areas where the majority of people released from prisons and jails return. For example, officials can reinvest the savings and deploy existing resources in a high-stakes neighborhood to redevelop abandoned housing and better coordinate such services as substance abuse and mental health treatment, job training, and education. These efforts are viewed generally as benefiting everyone in the community, regardless of their involvement in the criminal justice system.

### 4 Measure the impact and enhance accountability.

For each policy adopted, an appropriate state agency is charged with setting performance measures and projected outcomes, such as the amount of corrections costs saved or avoided, recidivism rates, and indicators of community capacity. The agency may also be charged with establishing systems that can span multiple agencies to collect and analyze data and provide periodic reports to policymakers. Policymakers can use these measures to determine whether agencies are implementing the new policies effectively, assess how closely the actual impact of these new policies corresponds to projections, and make any necessary adjustments.

#### Overlapping Spending in District 1, Wichita, Kansas



Data Sources: Kansas Department of Corrections, "Prison Admissions 01/01/04–12/30/04." Kansas Department of Labor, "Unemployment Insurance Recipients in December 2004." Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, "Temporary Assistance to Families Recipients in December 2004" and "Food Stamp Recipients in December 2004."

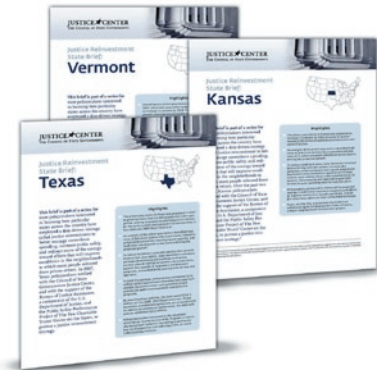
# Pursuing a Justice Reinvestment Strategy

The Council of State Governments Justice Center, with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, and private grantmakers such as the Public Safety Performance Project of The Pew Charitable Trusts' Center on the States, is providing intensive technical assistance to a limited number of states that demonstrate a bipartisan interest in justice reinvestment.

Several states have implemented a justice reinvestment strategy, including Texas, Vermont, Kansas, and Arizona. The Justice Center is currently developing a series of briefs for state policymakers interested in learning how these, and other states, employed this strategy.

## For More Information:

- Justice Reinvestment Website:  
[www.justicereinvestment.org](http://www.justicereinvestment.org)
- *Justice Reinvestment State Brief: Kansas*
- *Justice Reinvestment State Brief: Texas*
- *Justice Reinvestment State Brief: Vermont*



**BJA** Bureau of Justice Assistance

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To learn more about the Bureau of Justice Assistance, please visit: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/>.



Launched in 2006 as a project of the Pew Center on the States, the Public Safety Performance Project seeks to help states advance fiscally sound, data-driven policies and practices in sentencing and corrections that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and control corrections costs.

To learn more about the Public Safety Performance Project, please visit: <http://www.pewpublicsafety.org/>.

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