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OVERVIEW:
DEPARTMENT
OF
CORRECTIONS

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**Summary of the Alaska Department of Correction's Presentation
to the Senate Judiciary Committee, January 26, 2011.**

Cost Effective Justice: What's at Stake for Alaska?

The Alaska Department of Corrections (ADOC) is committed to providing for the secure confinement of offenders and providing for their rehabilitative programming and supervised community reentry. The ADOC's overarching mission is to improve public safety while being a sound steward of state resources.

Alaska has the 11th fastest growing prison population in the United States. ¹

From 2000 to 2007, the Alaska prison population increased by 106 prisoners per 100,000 residents. Only Kentucky and West Virginia had a greater increase in per capita prison population. During that same period of time, the per capita prison population of twelve states actually decreased, while nationally the rate of incarceration increased by only 28 prisoners per 100,000 residents.² Alaska's prison growth has greatly exceeded its population growth.

From 2004 to 2009 the ADOC's total bookings have increased.

Year	CY 2004	CY 2005	CY 2006	CY 2007	CY 2008	CY 2009
Total Admissions	35,472	35,328	36,715	37,688	37,655	38,897

From 2004 to 2009, the number of prisoners occupying a state paid custodial bed or on Electronic Monitoring has steadily increased.

Year	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Daily annual average of state prisoners	4,769	4,805	4,999	5,204	5,383	5,320	5,602

¹ The PEW Center on the States, One in 31, the Long Reach of American Corrections, at 43, March 2009.

² Bureau of Justice Statistics, United States Department of Justice, Prisoners in 2007.

The January 2009, ISER Research Summary report, “The Cost of Crime” requested by the Senate Judiciary Committee found that, with no change in the level of intervention and prevention programs in place at the time of the study, Alaska’s prison population was projected to grow to 10,513 by 2030. Such an increase in Alaska’s prison population would require the state to fund an unsustainable number of new prisons, not to mention the costs of substantial increases in the state court system, and prosecution, defense, and public safety departments to handle Alaska’s growing number of offenders.

95% of Alaska’s prisoners are eventually released from prison.

As the number of prisoners grows so does the number of prisoners released. In 2000, there were 2,427 prisoners admitted into an Alaskan correctional facility and 2,599 released. In 2008, there were 3,635 prisoners admitted and 3,741 released.³

- In 2009, the ADOC released, on average, **295 convicted felons every month, up from 289 per month in 2008.**
- Of the 3,436 prisoners released in 2008, approximately 1,735 were released to Anchorage, 290 to Fairbanks and 106 to Juneau.

In summary, as of 2009, 1 out 36 Alaskans was under the jurisdiction of the ADOC.⁴

Year	1982	2007	2009
# of Alaskans under ADOC jurisdiction	1 out of 90	1 out of 38	1 out of 36

The question is: Are Alaskans getting good value for the criminal justice dollars spent? As of 2008, the state is doing better, but we could do better yet.

- In 2011, ADOC expects to spend \$136.00 per day to incarcerate a prisoner or \$49,800 per year per individual.
- In FY 2010, ADOC’s annual budget was \$261,160,400.⁵
- Yet, 2 out of 3 former prisoners return to prison within the first 3 years of release for either a probation violation or for the alleged commission of a new crime.⁶

³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, Alaska prisoner admissions and releases in 2008.

⁴ The PEW Center on the States, One in 31, the Long Reach of American Corrections, pg 43, March 2009, available at:

http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/PSPP_1in31_report_FINAL_WEB_3-26-09.pdf

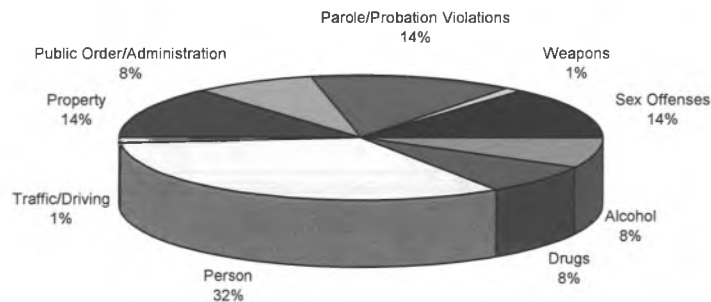
⁵ Departmental FY2010 FINAL Authorized (ADOC Management Plan with Supplemental)

⁶ 2007 Alaska Judicial Council Recidivism Study.

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As the pie chart below reflects, a snapshot of the ADOC's prison population in 2009 shows that less than 50% of offenders committed crimes against the person or a sex offense.⁷

**Institutional Offenders
by Offense Class
December 31, 2009**



Yet, 8% of its population consisted of offenders who had committed Public Order/Administration offenses. The majority of offenses in this category included bail condition violations, failure to appear and contempt of court. These are offenses that certainly require consequences, but, at what cost to the state, and is it possible to create less expensive alternatives that will serve to reaffirm societal norms and protect the public?

What's at stake for Alaska?

Currently, the ADOC is constructing the Goose Creek Correctional Center (GCCC) which will have a maximum capacity of 1536 prisoners. The cost to build this facility is approximately \$250 million and the annual operating budget is estimated to be approximately \$50 million per year.

The ADOC's goal, along with its other stakeholder partners, is to employ cost-effective measures that will promote public safety, reduce Alaska's prison growth rate and successfully reintegrate newly released prisoners back into their communities.

⁷ ADOC Offender Profile 2009, page 18 available at:
<http://www.correct.state.ak.us/corrections/admin/docs/profile2009final.pdf>
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If Alaska expands recent efforts to reduce recidivism, and employs best practice measures that have been proven successful in other states, it stands the greatest chance to slow its prison system growth while improving public safety.

Collaboration and the identification of a leader is the key to success.

Current collaborative efforts are:

- The Criminal Justice Work Group
 - Sub-group: The Alaska Prisoner Reentry Task Force
 - Alaska's Five-Year Prisoner Reentry Strategic Plan, 2011-2016, Purpose is to identify approaches to reduce recidivism in Alaska.
- Probationer Accountability with Certain Enforcement (PACE), Superior Court Pilot Project in Anchorage, July 2010 to the present.⁸
- The National Governor's Association Cross-Governmental Sentencing & Corrections Policy Forum in Annapolis Maryland, Summer 2010.
- The September 18, 2010, Cost Effective Justice Forum, Anchorage, Alaska
 - Pew Public Safety Project
 - National Governor's Association

The Texas Experience

In 2007, the famously "tough on crime" Texas legislature took dramatic, bipartisan action to control crime and corrections costs. This initiative was led by Republican Jerry Madden who was appointed by the majority leader as Chairman of the Corrections Committee. The then speaker of the house instructed Rep. Madden to develop new approaches to slow Texas' rapid prison growth. "Don't build new prisons. They cost too much".⁹ With that directive in mind, Rep. Madden, an engineer and graduate from West Point, gathered the data and the facts to develop a systematic approach to break the cycle of crime.

In 2007, Texas' prison population exceeded 100,000 persons.¹⁰At the start of 2007, the state's corrections department projected a shortfall of 17,000 prison beds over the next five years and recommended the construction of 4,000 new beds at a cost of more than \$900 million. Texas legislators requested assistance from the Pew Center on the States' Public Safety Performance Project and its partner, the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSG), to identify options to avert prison growth while protecting public safety.

Based on their nonpartisan research and the menu of policy options they prepared, the 2007 Texas legislature approved a plan that provided an historic investment of

⁸ For more information on the probation model go to: <http://akdocpio.wordpress.com/>

⁹ Anchorage Daily News editorial, *Be tough, be smart*, September 19, 2010.

¹⁰ Recent & Projected Growth of the Texas Prison Population, Justice Center (2007), The Council of State Governments, found at: <http://justicereinvestment.org/files/texas-growth.pdf>

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just over \$241 million in treatment and diversion facilities and substance abuse treatment services (just over a quarter of what was being requested to build new prisons) both behind prison walls and in community-based programs.

The components of Texas' new approach included:

- Funding for probation officers to use for outpatient substance abuse treatment for offenders.
- Funding for a mental health Pre-Trial Diversion Program
- Expansion of in-custody substance abuse Therapeutic Communities (like ADOC's RSSAT program).
- A prison dedicated to providing DWI offenders with intensive substance abuse treatment.
- Use of Intermediate sanction facilities for probationers who violate probation conditions.
- Early school intervention programs
- The Nurse Family Partnership program

With these and other measures, the Texas legislature successfully averted construction of all of the previously planned prison beds through 2012.¹¹

According to Rep. Madden, who spoke at the September Cost-Effective Justice Forum held in Anchorage, the Texas prison population completely leveled off as a result of these initiatives. No shortfall in capacity is predicted until 2013, when the system may need a relatively small number of prison beds compared to the previously predicted need for eight prisons. Moreover, following the adoption of these reforms, Texas' crime rate did not increase, but continued to fall.

Summing it up:

The Texas experience is illustrative of what Alaska is clearly able to accomplish with leadership, vision and commitment to invest wisely today in best practices that have been shown to reduce prison growth, cut state corrections spending and serve to make Alaska's community safer and healthier places to live. This is the Cost-Effective justice approach.

¹¹ The Texas "justice reinvestment" approach was a dramatic turn in Texas' criminal justice policies. The state legislature committed to ensuring accountability and the continued success of these new measures. Accordingly, the Texas legislature established the Criminal Justice Legislative Oversight Committee to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the new policies and programs and to evaluate their impact on state prison populations.



RESEARCH SUMMARY

Institute of Social and Economic Research
University of Alaska Anchorage • January 2009
R.S. No. 71

THE COST OF CRIME: COULD THE STATE REDUCE FUTURE CRIME AND SAVE MONEY BY EXPANDING EDUCATION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS?

By Stephanie Martin and Steve Colt

Alaska's prison population is among the fastest-growing in the U.S., with five times more inmates in 2007 than in 1981. Spending for the state justice system has nearly doubled since 1981—but the crime rate has dropped only about 30%.

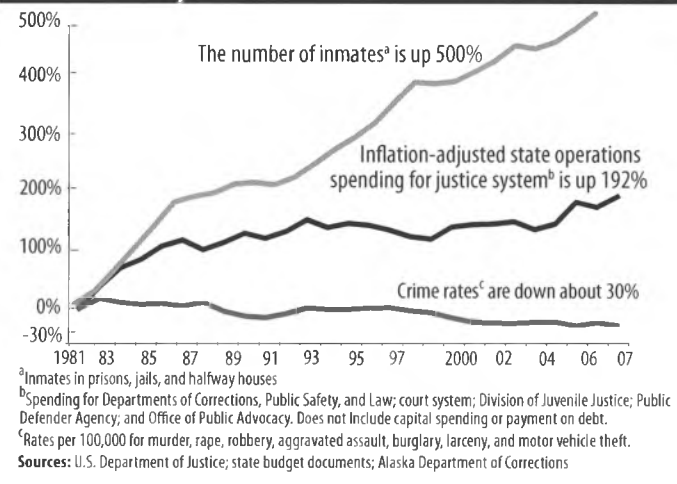
Here's the dilemma for the state, given the pattern shown in Figure 1: what can it do to hold down the number of inmates and stem the rising costs—while at the same time keeping the public safe and using tax dollars effectively?

Senator Hollis French asked ISER to project growth in the number of Alaska inmates and the associated costs—and then evaluate whether the state could reduce that growth by expanding intervention and prevention programs for people already in prison or at risk of ending up there. Alaska currently spends about \$17 million a year for such programs, but they aren't available to many of those who might benefit from them.

There are a wide range of such programs. But it is programs for adults who are already in prison or jail that have the most potential to save money and reduce crime in the next 20 years. That's because they can reach the most people.

We know that without any intervention, about two-thirds of those who serve their sentences and are released commit new crimes. Stopping at least some of them from committing more crimes would not only help improve public safety but also reduce growth in both the number of inmates and in spending.

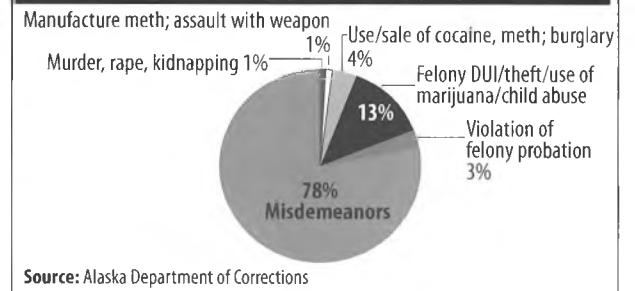
Figure 1. Percentage Changes in Alaska Crime Rate, Spending for Justice System, and Number of Inmates, 1981-2007



Also, most of those released committed misdemeanors (Figure 2). Those who commit the most serious crimes serve long sentences and make up a small share of those released in any given year.

To analyze which programs have the most potential to reduce crime and save the state money, we worked with the Alaska Criminal Justice Working Group and the Washington State Institute of Public Policy. That institute did a similar analysis for Washington state and provided us with data it collected from program evaluations nationwide (see back page). What did our study show?

Figure 2. Who Gets out of Jail or Prison in Alaska? (Total Releases, 2002-2007: 82,339)



• With no change in policies, the number of Alaska inmates is likely to double by 2030, from 5,300 to 10,500.

• If the state spent an additional \$4 million a year to expand programs it already has, the prison population in 2030 might be 10% smaller than projected—about 1,050 fewer inmates.

• The state would spend about \$124 million for expanded programs through 2030 but would avoid \$445 million in costs—a savings of \$321 million. It would save money by incarcerating fewer people and by delaying prison construction costs. (Figures 3 and 8).

• Education and substance-abuse treatment programs—in prison, after prison, and instead of prison—save the state two to five times what they cost and reach the most people. Programs for teenagers are also very effective at reducing crime and saving money, but they reach fewer people.

Figure 3. Potential Effects, Costs of, and Savings from Expanded Prevention or Intervention Programs

Immediate Costs

\$17 million: Current annual state spending on programs
 \$4 million: Additional spending every year to expand programs

Long-Term Effects on Prison Population



By 2030, expanded programs could keep 1 in 10 people out of prison who would otherwise be there

Long-Term Savings (2009-2030)

Cost of expanded programs* \$124 million
 Avoided inmate costs and delayed prison construction costs* \$445 million
 Savings: \$321 million

*Assumes 2% annual inflation through 2030

WHY CONSIDER EXPANDING PROGRAMS?

In 1980, 2 in 1,000 Alaskans were behind bars; today that share is approaching 10 in 1,000. The sharp increase started in the 1980s, when the state government began collecting large oil revenues. The state used some of that money to expand police agencies, courts, and other parts of the criminal justice system statewide. Also in the 1980s, it made sentencing for the most serious felonies more uniform and stiffened sentences.

The crime rate in Alaska has declined since the 1980s. But the number of Alaskans in prisons, jails, and halfway houses has increased much faster, as have costs for the state justice system. Alaska's prisons are full, and the 1,500-bed prison scheduled to open in 2012 is projected to be full soon after it opens.

Locking people up is expensive, whether their crimes are major or less serious. Alaska spends on average \$44,000 a year per inmate in prisons, jails, and halfway houses. Adjusted for inflation, that's actually less than in the 1980s—but it's still a lot (Figure 4).

Studies in other states have shown that some intervention and prevention programs can help cut both costs and crime, either by keeping people who have served their sentences from committing new crimes after they're released, or preventing some people from going to prison in the first place.

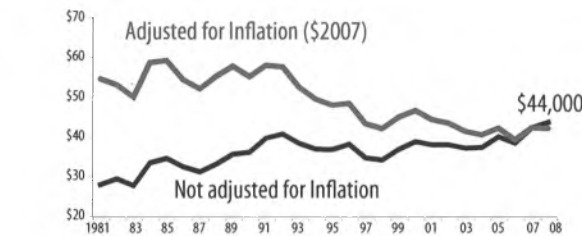
WHAT PROGRAMS DID WE ANALYZE?

The Alaska Criminal Justice Working Group gave us a list of programs to analyze. We looked for programs with the biggest potential payoff for the state—those that could reduce growth in both numbers of inmates and in spending for corrections, at a reasonable cost for the state.

Alaska already has a number of programs in place, and we found that expanding some of those would be most cost-effective. Table 1 lists the programs in our final analysis. As a guideline for what was a "reasonable" expansion, we used 10% to 20% of the eligible people not already served—except for very small programs that can't easily be expanded that much.

These programs would serve inmates, at-risk juveniles, and young children. They are all intended to reduce future crime in some way. Programs that treat substance-abuse or mental health disorders have been shown to reduce recidivism—and as Figure 5 shows, almost all current inmates have those disorders.

Figure 4. Annual State Costs Per Inmate,* 1981-2008
(In Thousands of Dollars)

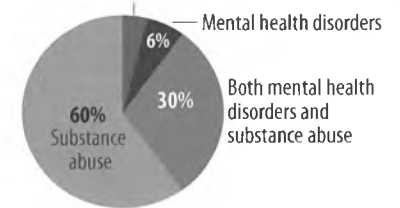


*Average cost of incarcerating people in prisons, jails, and halfway houses.

Source: Alaska Department of Corrections

Figure 5. How Many Alaska Inmates Have Substance Abuse or Mental Health Disorders?

No substance abuse or mental health disorders: 4%



Sources: Alaska Department of Corrections; Alaska Mental Health Trust

Table 1. Current Size and Potential Expansion of Intervention and Prevention Programs^a

Programs	Currently serve	Reasonable expansion	Potentially eligible (2008)
Prison-based programs			
Education (adult basic; vocational)	More than 1,000	500	Almost all inmates (4,500)
Substance-Abuse (residential; intensive outpatient)	Close to 500	500	90% of inmates (approximately 4,000)
Sex-offender treatment ^b	0	50	10% of 500 eligible inmates
Transition from prison			
Transition for inmates with mental health disorders (Institutional Discharge Project)	70	100	36% of inmates (1,600)
Alternatives to Incarceration			
Mental health, drug, alcohol courts; electronic monitoring; residential substance-abuse treatment	500	500	Approximately 5,000 ^c
Juvenile offenders			
Aggression replacement training; family therapy; residential treatment; institutional transition	Approximately 500	1,000	Approximately 3,000
Prevention			
Head Start for 3- and 4-year olds from low-income families ^d	3,025	450	Approximately 8,000 ^e

^aPrograms included in our final analysis are those for which we found evidence that expansion would have significant pay-offs for the state at a reasonable cost. We evaluated additional programs not included here, either because there wasn't sufficient evidence to assess their effectiveness or because they weren't feasible to implement in Alaska at this time.

^bTo effectively reduce crime, sex offender treatment programs need to be offered in both prison and the community. Treatment is currently available only in the community, so the number served in prison is currently zero—but there are proposals to add treatment in prison.

^cPeople facing low-level charges and with substance-abuse problems.

^dHead Start is a federal program, but the state supplements federal money and Governor Sarah Palin has proposed additional state funding.

^eWe assume all children from families with up to double the poverty-level income would be eligible.

We looked at but excluded other programs from our final analysis. The criminal justice working group decided that a few programs, while effective elsewhere, wouldn't be feasible to implement in Alaska at this time. For other programs, there wasn't enough available evidence to judge how effective they were in saving money or reducing crime, or the available evidence showed them to be largely ineffective.

How Do the Programs Compare?

As Figure 3 (front page) shows, expanding programs to serve more of the eligible people would save the state about \$321 million and reduce the projected number of inmates 10% by 2030. Figures 6 and 7 show how the various programs contribute to costs, savings, and reductions in the number of Alaskans behind bars.

- *Education and substance-abuse treatment programs for inmates save two to four times what they cost, reduce recidivism by about four percentage points, and can reach the most people.*

- *Intervention programs for juveniles who have committed crimes are very effective at saving money and reducing recidivism, but they serve a much smaller number of people.*

- *Programs that set up transition services for inmates with mental-health disorders coming out of prison are among the most effective—but they can't readily be expanded to serve the many people who could benefit from them.*

- *Alternatives to prison for some people charged with lesser offenses save the state money right away, and almost all reduce recidivism. The exception is electronic monitoring, which is inexpensive but hasn't been shown to reduce future crime.*

- *Treatment programs for sex offenders do reduce crime, but they are very expensive and so don't save the state money.*

- *Programs that prevent future crime by helping very young at-risk children are the most effective. But the effects of spending for those programs aren't apparent until many years later.*

Figure 6. How Effective Are Various Programs at Saving Money and Reducing Crime?

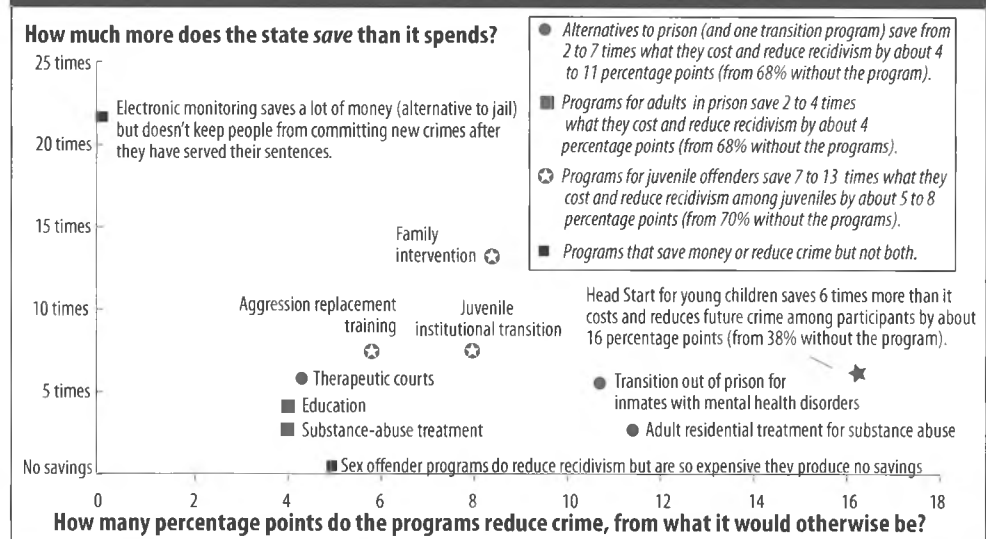
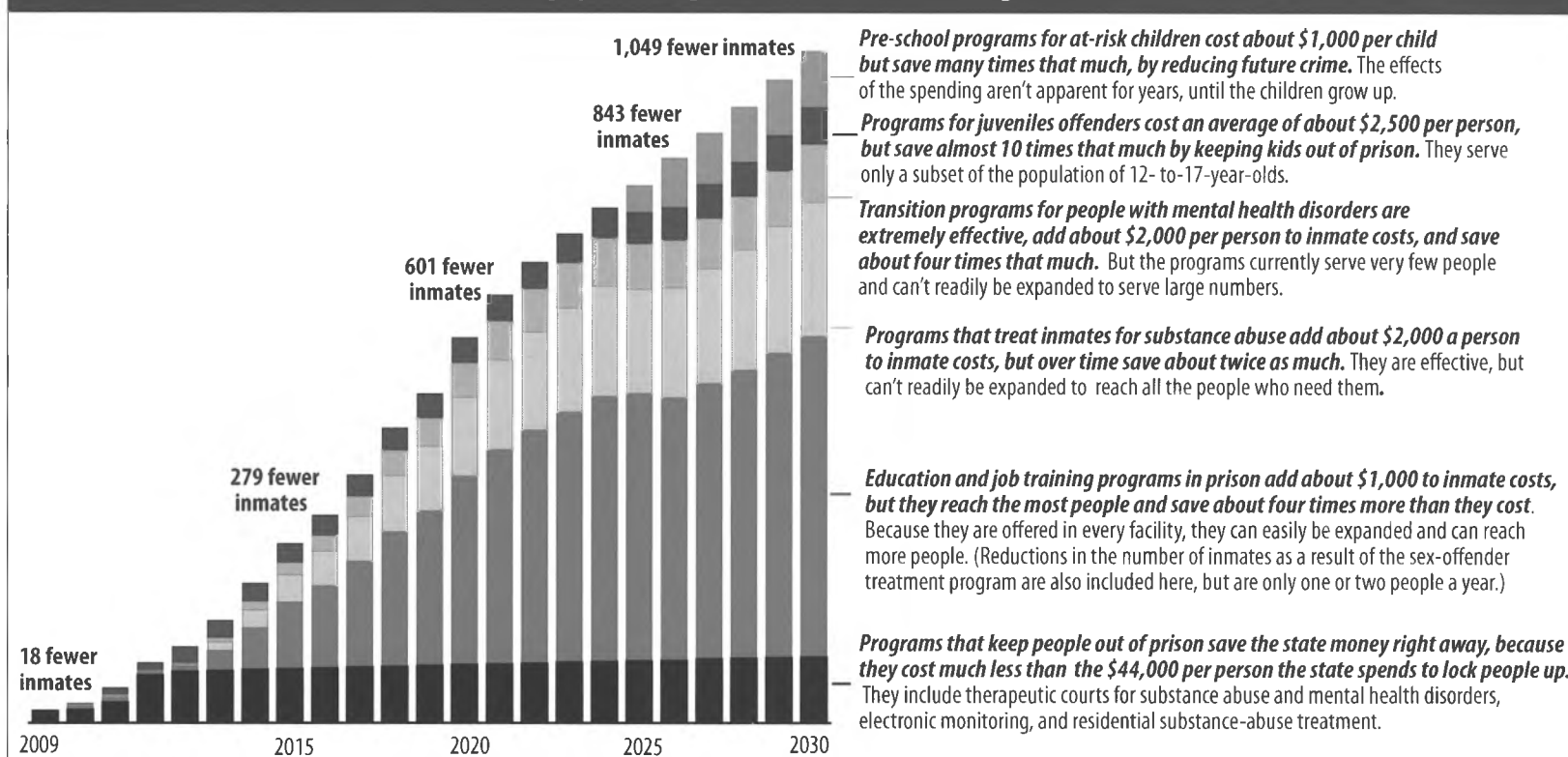


Figure 7. How Would Expanding Specific Programs Contribute to Reducing Growth in Numbers of Inmates?



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Figure 8 shows how Alaska's corrections system got where it is and where it's likely to go—if intervention and prevention programs are kept at their current levels, and if the most effective programs are expanded to serve more of the eligible people.

We found that the state could both reduce the number of Alaskans in prison or jail and save considerable money over the next 20 years, by adding about \$4 million a year to the \$17 million it currently spends to keep people from returning to prison—or prevent them from ever going there at all.

Spending more for these programs even as oil prices and state revenues are falling may not seem like a good idea. But Alaska also needs to look to the future—and over time the benefits of strategically expanding those programs that reduce crime and keep more Alaskans out of prison far outweigh the costs.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Our job was to assess whether specific programs could reduce long-term state spending for corrections by reducing growth in the number of inmates. As a starting point, we needed evaluations of how effective various programs are at reducing future crime.

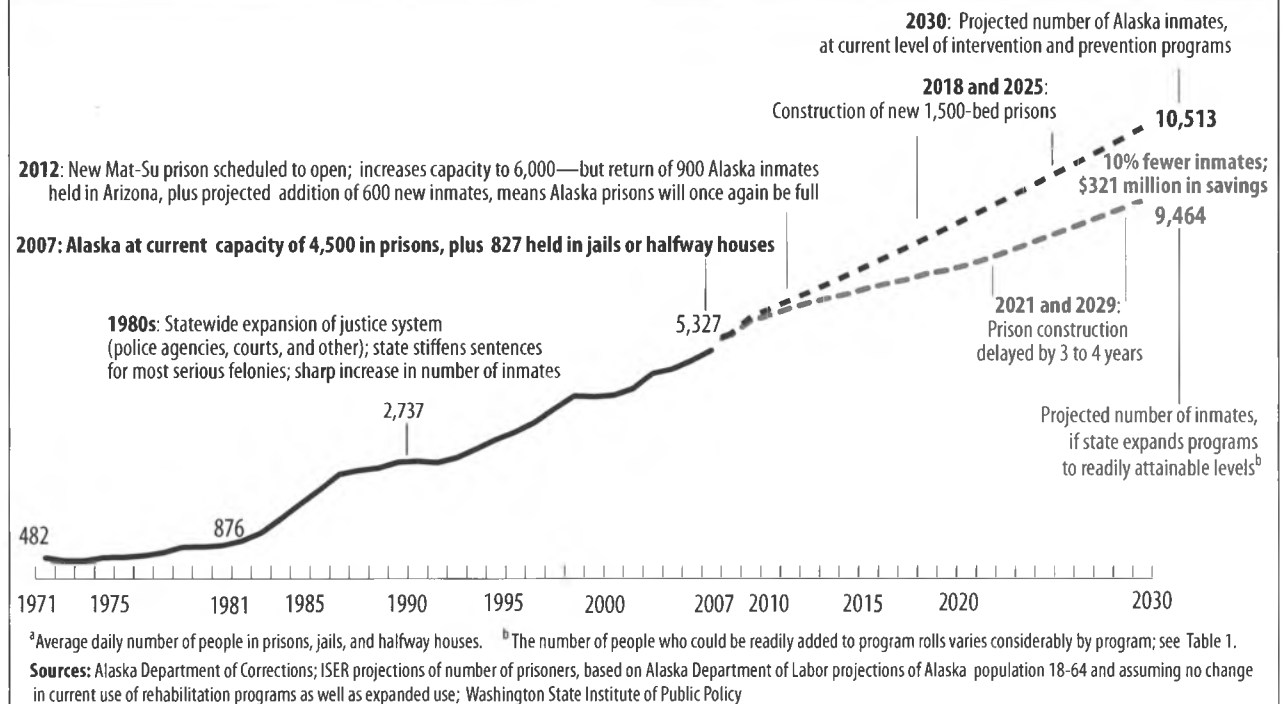
But except for some of the therapeutic court programs, most programs in Alaska have not been rigorously evaluated. Therefore, we used results of a Washington state assessment that systematically reviewed 571 program evaluations from around the country.

To be included, evaluations had to have carefully designed control groups, replicable results in multiple settings, and long-lasting effects. This method is evidence-based public policy, which merges research and practice. It is similar to clinical trials in medicine. Keep in mind that this is a new field, and only about 10% of programs in place nationwide have been evaluated at this standard.

With data from rigorous evaluations, the Washington State Institute of Public Policy created a model that estimated the effects of programs on recidivism—and then combined those results with a cost-benefit analysis to estimate the long-term effects on state spending and inmate populations.

We combined the institute's estimates of recidivism with Alaska data on program costs, eligible groups, and state population to estimate long-term effects on crime and state spending.

Figure 8. Average Number of Alaska Inmates,^a 1971-2007, and Projected Number, 2008-2030



The authors thank the members of the Alaska Criminal Justice Working Group for their help in identifying programs to evaluate and for comments on drafts of this publication. The Alaska Legislature funded this group in 2007 and authorized the Alaska Judicial Council to act as its staff.

The group is chaired by a justice of the Alaska Supreme Court and Alaska's lieutenant governor. Other members include top policymakers from the departments of Corrections, Public Safety, Health and Social Services, and Law, as well as the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority; the heads of the Alaska Public Defender Agency and the Office of Public Advocacy; the administrative and deputy directors for the Alaska Court System; the executive director of the Judicial Council, the U.S. attorney, and Anchorage's police chief.

This group meets monthly to talk about long-term justice issues, as well as to resolve any inter-branch issues that come up among the many agencies and organizations that deal with aspects of Alaska's justice system.

The authors also thank Elizabeth Drake and Steve Aos of the Washington State Institute of Public Policy for developing the methods and models we used and for helping us apply them to Alaska. For more information go to www.wsipp.wa.gov.

This research summary and many other publications on a wide range of topics are available on ISER's Web site:

www.iser.uaa.alaska.edu