IN AUGUST 2009, THE BROWARD SHERIFF’S OFFICE IN FT. LAUDERDALE, Florida, partnered with Florida State University’s College of Criminology and Criminal Justice and its Center for Criminology and Public Policy Research to conduct research that would assist the sheriff’s office in planning and preparing for the future. The research would examine three key elements:

- A 10-year jail population forecast for the county’s jail population.
- A cost-benefit analysis for jail alternatives compared to incarceration.
- The determination of the level of predictive accuracy and validation of the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions risk assessment tool used to inform the pretrial release decision-making process.

Why are these important? Because building and operating a jail is a costly pursuit and effective alternatives must be found. The challenges associated with planning and operating a jail system with cost-effective practices and policies while simultaneously maintaining public safety are daunting. The Broward Sheriff’s Office has reduced pretrial jail stays by implementing a risk assessment screening tool and by developing a continuum of jail alternatives such as day reporting and reentry, probation, drug court, pretrial services, and others.

One indication of the impact of changes in policies and practices was the closure of one jail in October 2009. Deferring the construction of a new jail and closing another has saved taxpayers millions of dollars. In Broward County, 25 cents of every local tax dollar is dedicated to the operation and maintenance of jails. Findings from the research discussed in this article provide evidence that the agency is on the right track with responsible, cost-effective policies and practices.

According to correctional population data provided by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, between 1980 and 2009 there was only one year in which the U.S. jail population decreased—between 2008 and 2009 (from 4,244,046 to 4,203,967). In 1980, the U.S. jail population was 182,288; by 2009, it had increased to 760,400 (317 percent).
According to the Urban Institute, U.S. jails process an estimated 12 million admissions and releases each year. More than 80 percent are incarcerated for less than one month (Solomon, Osborne, LoBuglio, Mellow, & Mukamal, 2008). Solomon and colleagues (2008) estimate that 12 million individuals entering and leaving the country’s jails annually amounts to approximately 34,000 individuals daily and 230,000 weekly. The authors point out that in three weeks, this country’s jails process as many individuals as the country’s prisons do in an entire year (Solomon et al., 2008).

Jail capacity is not the only factor that has changed over the past few decades. Out of necessity, the functions of jails have evolved from basic custody and control to include a plethora of tasks and services that jails are not always equipped to address. Individuals who cycle in and out of jails present a variety of challenges for administrators and staff. Many detainees are unstable and are experiencing personal crises such as unemployment, emotional instability, homelessness, and mental health issues; others present with problems of language barriers and developmental issues. Today, jail administrators and personnel must:

- Be equipped to process arrestees in a timely manner.
- Conduct risk assessments for appropriate pretrial release decisions.
- Conduct needs assessments for appropriate placement decisions.
- Provide other services, including the diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and other physical health ailments and diseases such as AIDS/HIV and hepatitis.

Also, the Federal government often calls upon jails to serve as holding facilities for individuals with immigration issues. More recently, the operational directives for jail administrators have expanded to provide services to improve transition from confinement to the community. The demands that counties face in the day-to-day operations of jails are intimidating under the best of circumstances. Now imagine operating a jail and delivering this litany of services under the current fiscal restraints that have resulted from the economic recession that this country has been mired in for the past few years.

County governments must continue to support ongoing efforts to downscale jails and find alternative means for managing these populations without jeopardizing public safety. Society simply cannot afford to respond with bricks and mortar year after year. While incarceration rates are on the decline, governments have a rare opportunity to develop alternative strategies. Without modifying the past policies and practices that led to high rates of incarceration, this downward trend of incarceration rates could very well fluctuate, or worse, spike back up. Jail administrators and county officials must employ creative strategies and develop effective partnerships to meet the challenges they face.

County officials have become skilled at working with community organizations, local agencies, and universities to augment their services and provide supporting data and research. Local policymakers have begun to meet these challenges by re-examining the criteria that inform decision-making processes for incarcerating offenders in jails by assessing the length of time offenders are held and by utilizing alternatives for nonviolent offenders and offenders with mental health and substance abuse problems. For county officials, this means reserving the most costly approach—jail sentences and jail stays while awaiting trial—for the most serious and dangerous offenders.

Effective strategies to reduce jail populations and overall recidivism rates rely heavily on current, accurate, and reliable data for planning and operating all aspects of the criminal justice and correctional system. Moreover, the ability to plan for future fluctuations in jail population demographics and special needs populations (i.e., those with physical and mental health challenges) also depends on accurate and timely data.
Broward County Resident Population

Broward County has approximately 1.77 million residents with more than 180,000 residents residing in Ft. Lauderdale, the county’s largest city. Broward is the State’s second most populous county and is densely populated with 1,460 people per square mile. Broward County’s residents account for more than 9 percent of Florida’s total population. The median household size and the median age are similar to State averages—2.5 persons per household and 37.8 years (38.7 years is the statewide average). The county’s ethnicity breaks down as 48 percent White non-Hispanic, 24 percent Black, and 23 percent Hispanic. Approximately 25 percent of residents in the county are foreign-born; the State average is approximately 17 percent. Approximately one-third of the county’s residents speak a language other than English at home.

Examining historical and projected demographic data for Broward County (2000 through 2020) indicates that the rate of population growth is expected to slow between 2010 and 2020 compared to the previous decade. Whereas the resident population increased by 7.8 percent between 2000 and 2009, it is projected to increase by only 4.9 percent between 2010 and 2020. The data indicate that Black and Hispanic populations are projected to continue to increase over the next decade, while the White resident population is projected to continue to decrease between 2010 and 2020. However, the rates of increase for the Black and Hispanic populations projected for 2010 to 2020 are significantly lower than the rate of growth in the previous decade. Specifically, the Black population increased by 23.2 percent in the previous decade and is expected to increase by 8.7 percent in the next decade. Similarly, during the previous decade, the Hispanic population increased by 58.3 percent and is projected to increase by 16.9 percent during the current decade.

Broward County Jail Population Trends

Average daily population (ADP) data for Broward County jails indicate that the jail population increased 317 percent in the 1980s, 44 percent in the 1990s, and 25 percent from 2000 to 2006. However, since 2006, the county has experienced a decline. From 2006 through 2010, the annual ADP declined from 5,661 to 4,498—a 21 percent decrease.

Forecast of Jail Population 2010 through 2020

The purpose of forecasting jail populations is to help correctional administrators and officials better understand the dynamic nature of their jail populations and correctional systems and to enhance the policymaking process. A tool such as a jail population forecast can lead to more informed policies governing the correctional system. The forecast report presents a substantial amount of data, analysis, and narrative to facilitate administrators’ understanding of the trends in the jail population, including historical and future demographic shifts in the resident population. Empirical research in this field has demonstrated that shifts in at-risk sex, race, and age subpopulations have a significant impact on fluctuations in jail populations.

The jail population forecast was developed with data reflecting jail bookings (admissions), jail releases, jail ADPs, and demographic data (including jail population demographics from the prior decade and demographics for the county as a whole, as well as projected resident demographic data). Three methodologies were used to develop the forecast:

- **Demographic-based model**: A model that employs projected trends in demographic resident population data to project future jail populations.
- **Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) model**: A time-series analysis that uses historical trend data for jails to predict future jail populations; it is influenced more by recent data than data from the distant past.
- **Average**: The average of annual projected jail populations from the demographic-based model and the ARIMA model.

The two primary methodologies produced relatively similar forecasts for the period 2010 through 2020. Findings from the average of these two models follow:

- By 2020, the jail ADP is projected to be 4,745 inmates (an average of the two models).
- The male population is projected to decline from 4,328 in 2009 to 4,188 in 2020.
- The female population is projected to decrease slightly from 560 in 2009 to 558 in 2020.

Analyzing Broward’s jail data for bookings, releases, and ADP demonstrated that both policies and practices directed at reducing the jail population had already been implemented. The sheriff’s office made a concerted effort to expand the capacity of jail alternatives for pretrial and sentenced offenders. To maintain public safety while appropriately diverting offenders to jail alternatives, the agency identified a tool that could inform pretrial decision making. For accountability, Broward officials wanted to verify the risk assessment tool.

Validation of the Risk Assessment Instrument

Risk assessments and screening instruments have been used in criminal justice and correctional settings for several decades. These tools have been applied in a number of ways: pretrial decision making in regard to detention/release; bail setting; determining the conditions of community supervision for probationers and parolees; and the appropriate placement of offenders in State and Federal prisons. Today’s fourth-generation risk assessment tools provide...
significant improvements over earlier instruments by employing sophisticated statistical calculations and by incorporating both gender-specific calibrations and multi-theoretical factors that assess risk and document individualized needs.

One fourth-generation tool is the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) instrument. COMPAS is a statistically based client assessment, classification, and case management system developed by the Northpointe Institute for Public Management. It is designed to assess key risk and need factors in correctional populations with information obtained through official records, standardized interviews with clients, and self-report questionnaire information provided by clients. COMPAS was purchased and implemented by the agency in May 2008 in order to:

- Assist the First Appearance Judge with release decisions by conducting risk assessment screenings with recommendations.
- Determine appropriate supervision levels for pretrial, probation, and day reporting and reentry divisions.
- Determine or identify the needs of offenders in all divisions for case management purposes to positively impact the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Florida State University conducted a validation study of the predictive accuracy of COMPAS strictly for assessing risk. The study did not evaluate how the instrument was administered or the selection of offenders screened by COMPAS, nor did it include the needs assessment component of the instrument.

COMPAS is composed of 22 different scales that empirical research has identified as predictive of future behavior. The 22 scales are grouped into five main categories: criminal involvement, relationships/lifestyles, personality/attitudes, family, and social exclusion. COMPAS assesses three categories of risk: recidivism, violence, and failure to appear at a court hearing. For the purpose of this validation study, recidivism was defined as re-arrest for any pretrial offense after being released from jail; violence was defined as pretrial re-arrest for a violent offense after being released from jail; and failure to appear was defined as not showing up for a court hearing after being released from jail.

The data used to conduct the validation study of COMPAS included booking data, release data, COMPAS data, and failure-to-appear data. The study compared predicted levels of risk with actual levels of violations for recidivism, violence, and failure to appear.

Findings confirmed the accuracy of the instrument. The validation study indicated that COMPAS had high levels of accuracy in predicting general recidivism, violence, and failure to appear for court. Although the strength of the support varied across the measures, subcategories, and follow-up periods, when the analysis was considered in total, COMPAS performed well in predicting risk for offenders released from jail pretrial. The data demonstrate the strongest level of support in the category of recidivism.

Broward’s jail population has been on the decline, and long-term projections indicate that this trend is likely to continue. Although declining crime rates may account for a portion of the decline in jail ADP, the increased use of jail alternatives also has resulted in fewer jail terms. Furthermore, a tool with high levels of predictive accuracy is being used to screen offenders to make appropriate recommendations for the First Appearance Judge. What is the cost of the increased reliance on jail alternatives? Do they truly save the county’s tax-payers money? The final section of this article describes the cost savings associated with the use of jail alternatives for qualified offenders instead of jail stays.

Cost-Benefit Analysis of Jail Alternatives

One barometer researchers and policymakers use to measure the “cost of doing business” is a cost-benefit analysis. In other words, a cost-benefit analysis provides information about whether the financial benefits of a particular decision (e.g., one program over another) outweigh its costs. After agency officials were consulted, the analysis compared the costs savings of shifting inmates away from jail and toward one of four jail alternative programs: drug court, pretrial, probation, and day reporting/reentry. To do this, data on the ADP of jails and within each of the alternative programs were obtained. In addition, the average daily cost for each of the correctional strategies over a period of time was provided and included in this analysis.

Table 1. ADP for Jail and Jail Alternatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jail</td>
<td>5,481</td>
<td>5,661</td>
<td>5,305</td>
<td>5,364</td>
<td>4,888</td>
<td>4,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Court</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretrial</td>
<td>1,013</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>1,916</td>
<td>2,203</td>
<td>2,626</td>
<td>2,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>5,123</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>4,354</td>
<td>7,247</td>
<td>7,468</td>
<td>6,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRRD*</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>1,054</td>
<td>992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 2010 numbers are projections based on incomplete data.

*DRRD: Day Reporting and Reentry Division
The cost-benefit analysis compared the dollar cost of sending individuals to the various programs with sending them to jail. The final estimates represent the amount of dollar savings that would result from subtracting the cost of a program times the ADP of that program from the jail costs. The total savings in jail bed costs per year were calculated by multiplying by 365 the number of individuals in a program in year $y$ by the daily jail costs for that year and subtracting that number from the cost of that program.

Table 1 shows the ADP for the jail population and jail alternatives. The expansion of Pretrial in 2008 appears to have contributed to a decrease of more than 1,000 incarcerated individuals by 2010. Furthermore, the average length of stay in jail was reduced to 26.79 days. This is a specific example of how an alternative to incarceration can directly reduce jail population.

Table 2 provides an estimate of the total costs for each program from 2005–2010. Table 3 displays the cost per day/per inmate for incarceration and for each of the alternative programs. As can be seen, because the cost per day/per inmate was rather high, total costs for jails hovered around $200 million per year. This can be compared to the other four programs, which entailed much lower per-day/per-client costs.

Table 4 presents the results of the main portion of the cost-benefit analysis, showing cost savings for the populations served by each program per year. For example, in 2005 the agency saved $27,185,350 by serving offenders in Drug Court rather than placing the same group of offenders in jail. Each cell of Table 4 displays the difference in cost between serving a group of offenders in that program and the cost of placing the same group of offenders in jail. These figures demonstrate how much money was saved because these offenders were not placed in jail.

The cost savings of placing individuals in any of the four alternative programs varies tremendously, but they all share the finding that Broward County spent substantially fewer dollars to place individuals in these programs (for one year) than it would have if these individuals had remained in jail.

As a point of comparison, Table 5 projects percentages of savings if a percentage of clients had been diverted from jail. As the percentage of offenders who are diverted from jail increases (from 30 percent to 50 percent to 60 percent), costs savings increase.

These shifts in population from jail to jail alternative programs did not occur overnight or by accident. The Broward Sheriff’s Office has made a concerted effort to reduce its reliance on incarceration and to expand jail alternatives. These efforts can be traced back to 1999 when the agency formally established its Department of Community Control (DOCC). Although the agency had a variety of programs in the jail for inmates and the Pretrial Services Program to supervise defendants in the community, no formal structure existed. DOCC now has five divisions: Drug Court Treatment, In-Custody Behavioral Services, County (misdemeanor) Probation, Day Reporting and Reentry Division, and Pretrial Services. In total, DOCC oversees an ADP of more than 10,000 offenders and is responsible for more than 40,000 offenders on an annual basis. DOCC
American Jails

JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2012

19

has become an integral part of the local criminal justice system, and prosecutors, defense attorneys, and the judiciary rely on it to provide alternative programming and sentencing options.

Table 6 shows a long-range view of the population shift from jail incarceration to jail alternative programs and the corresponding expansion of jail alternatives. It shows that the expansion of jail alternative programs began shortly after DOCC was established, and it exploded in 2008.

Conclusion

The Broward Sheriff’s Office has been proactive in developing and providing alternatives to incarceration that ensure public safety and cost efficiency. In addition to providing alternatives to jail, the agency has initiated the use of an effective screening tool to increase efficiency and accuracy when making placement recommendations. Other jurisdictions throughout the country dealing with overcrowded jail conditions could benefit from considering the suitability of implementing some of Broward County’s jail alternatives and practices as a proven means to ensure public safety and cost efficiency. ■

Reference


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Table 4. Cost-Benefit Estimates for Four Jail Alternative Programs Compared to Jail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Total (Rows)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug Court</td>
<td>$27,185,350</td>
<td>$29,741,062</td>
<td>$32,320,489</td>
<td>$27,735,084</td>
<td>$31,491,898</td>
<td>$29,251,061</td>
<td>$177,724,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretrial</td>
<td>$30,388,502</td>
<td>$44,266,843</td>
<td>$69,469,345</td>
<td>$81,920,418</td>
<td>$105,040,019</td>
<td>$104,503,979</td>
<td>$435,589,108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>$163,837,074</td>
<td>$137,750,078</td>
<td>$162,746,739</td>
<td>$279,550,371</td>
<td>$312,574,363</td>
<td>$250,727,227</td>
<td>$1,307,185,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRRD*</td>
<td>$4,939,633</td>
<td>$12,847,769</td>
<td>$29,504,686</td>
<td>$32,078,178</td>
<td>$42,012,747</td>
<td>$36,608,446</td>
<td>$157,991,462</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Columns)</strong></td>
<td>$226,350,561</td>
<td>$224,605,753</td>
<td>$294,041,261</td>
<td>$421,284,052</td>
<td>$491,119,028</td>
<td>$421,090,715</td>
<td>$2,267,185,854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 2010 numbers are projections based on incomplete data. *DRRD: Day Reporting and Reentry Division.

Table 5. Cost Savings by Percentage of Clients Diverted from Jail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Clients Diverted from Jail</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>$67,905,168</td>
<td>$67,381,721</td>
<td>$88,212,378</td>
<td>$126,383,416</td>
<td>$147,335,708</td>
<td>$126,327,215</td>
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<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>$113,175,281</td>
<td>$112,302,868</td>
<td>$147,020,631</td>
<td>$210,639,026</td>
<td>$245,559,513</td>
<td>$210,545,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>$135,810,337</td>
<td>$134,763,441</td>
<td>$176,424,757</td>
<td>$252,766,831</td>
<td>$294,671,415</td>
<td>$252,654,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Population Shifts in Jail and Jail Alternative Programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>9-Yr. Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSO Department of Detention</td>
<td>4,820</td>
<td>4,794</td>
<td>5,127</td>
<td>5,481</td>
<td>5,305</td>
<td>5,364</td>
<td>4,888</td>
<td>4,498</td>
<td>-7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSO Department of Community Control</td>
<td>6,978</td>
<td>7,376</td>
<td>7,559</td>
<td>7,498</td>
<td>8,515</td>
<td>11,588</td>
<td>12,551</td>
<td>11,145</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL DOCC</strong></td>
<td>11,798</td>
<td>12,170</td>
<td>12,686</td>
<td>12,979</td>
<td>13,242</td>
<td>13,820</td>
<td>16,952</td>
<td>17,439</td>
<td>15,643</td>
<td>33%</td>
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