

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH 1978

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INTRODUCTION

This document is the third in a series of annual reports describing research studies conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Correction. The evaluations abstracted in this report were carried out by the Department's Research Division during 1978 and may be obtained by writing to:

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This report is divided into five sections, reflecting various concerns of the Department of Correction during the past year. The area of recidivism remains one of the major interests of the Department, as indicated in the first section. Abstracts included here reflect overall recidivism rates for all Massachusetts Correctional Institutions for the years 1975 and 1976, as well as the recidivism rates of residents released from MCI-Bridgewater during the period 1971-1975.

The next two sections reflect an organizational change in the Research Unit during the past year. The staff was reorganized to concentrate on two major areas of analysis: program evaluation and operational research. The program evaluation component deals with analyses of programs geared toward the reintegration of individuals back into the community such as pre-release or work release. Abstracts include an analysis of the effects of work release at MCI-Concord, a comparison of completion/non-completion rates for releasees from pre-release facilities, and an assessment of the relationship between recidivism rates and the graduated societal reintegration experience within the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions.

Operational research studies differ from program evaluations in that they provide statistical descriptions or trend analyses of programs or specific populations, but do not necessarily evaluate them in terms of recidivism or program completion. Studies represented in this report include a trend analysis of commitment patterns to Houses of Correction, a trend analysis of youthful offenders committed to Massachusetts Correctional Institutions, a statistical report of the furlough program, and an explanation of the development of a validated base expectancy table. Finally, seven annual statistical reports are now available and a brief description of each of these is presented at the end of this section.

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Special reports published by the Research Unit during 1978 include a study of the reception and diagnostic process of the Department, an overview of mandatory sentencing in terms of background information and important issues and an evaluation of the New Line Classification System (an initial intake for court commitments to MCI-Concord). These abstracts are presented in the final section of this report.

OVERALL RECIDIVISM STUDIES

AN ANALYSIS OF RECIDIVISM AMONG RESIDENTS RELEASED FROM
MCI-BRIDGewater DURING 1971-1975

April, 1978

Linda Druker

To assess the success and failure rates of its correctional institutions, the Massachusetts Department of Correction has been using recidivism statistics as one measure of effectiveness. Although the Department of Correction has conducted extensive recidivism analyses for all state correctional facilities, MCI Bridgewater was consistently excluded from that research, particularly due to small sample size from that institution. The purpose of the present study is to supply the necessary recidivism data for MCI Bridgewater in order to complete the relevant recidivism research for the years 1971-1975. Overall recidivism rates for releasees from Massachusetts correctional institutions were found to decrease from 1971 to 1973, level off in 1974, and increase slightly in 1975, although the increase was not statistically significant.

An analysis was conducted on the 162 individuals who were released from MCI Bridgewater into the community during the five year period of 1971-1975. The overall recidivism rate for that period was calculated to be 27%. When compared with the overall recidivism rates for all state correctional institutions during the same period, it was concluded that the inclusion of MCI Bridgewater in recidivism analyses neither raises nor diminishes the total rates of recidivism for all state institutions.

AN ANALYSIS OF RECIDIVISM RATES AMONG
RESIDENTS RELEASED FROM MASSACHUSETTS CORRECTIONAL
INSTITUTIONS DURING THE YEAR 1975

July, 1978

Randi Mershon

The following study presents an analysis of differential recidivism rates for individuals released from Massachusetts correctional institutions in the year 1975. Included within the analysis is a comparison between the findings of the 1975 releasees and the findings of the years 1966, 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1974.

The present analysis supports many of the basic findings that have emerged in past research studies by the Department of Correction. One trend that has persisted is the occurrence of lower recidivism rates in recent years. For releases in 1966, the mean recidivism rate was 30%. For 1971 it was 25%; for 1972, 22%; for 1973, it was 19%; for 1974, 19% and 20% for 1975. Since the recidivism rates for 1973, 1974 and 1975 are consistent, it is possible that a levelling off of the downward trend exists.

Another trend previously identified and supported by the present analysis was that participation in the furlough program significantly reduces the incidence of recidivism. The analysis revealed that the reduction in recidivism is directly caused by the furlough program and not by a selection bias in choosing inmates for participation in the program. This finding is consistent with the results of the recidivism studies for 1973 and 1974.

Moreover, as pointed out in past research studies, the security level of the institution from which an individual is released is directly related to the incidence of recidivism. As the security level of the institution decreases, so does the probability of recidivistic behavior. Therefore, individuals released from maximum and medium security institutions have a higher chance of recidivating than do releasees from minimum security institutions and pre-release centers. After controlling for selection biases, we again find that the recidivism differential held true.

Also consistent with past recidivism research is the fact that a lower proportion of recidivists are being returned for a technical violation of parole conditions and instead are being returned for reason of a new arrest or a new court commitment. A possible explanation for this may be the implementation of the Morrissey vs. Brewer decision. This trend also emerges in its effect upon recidivism rates in recent years.

AN ANALYSIS OF RECIDIVISM RATES..1975 (continued)

July, 1978

Randi Mershon

In sum, the present analysis substantiates previously published research findings which had attributed the reduction in rates of recidivism to the interactive effects of three events: (1) the inception of the furlough program; (2) the introduction of graduated release program (i.e., pre-release centers, half-way houses, work-release programs, and education-release programs); and finally, (3) the implementation of the Morrissey vs. Brewer decision in the parole revocation process.

AN ANALYSIS OF RECIDIVISM RATES AMONG
RESIDENTS RELEASED FROM MASSACHUSETTS
CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN 1976

December, 1978

Randi Mershon

This study presents an analysis of recidivism rates for individuals released from Massachusetts correctional institutions in the year 1976.

Consistent with past departmental recidivism research, the recidivism rate in 1976 showed a downward trend. For release in 1966, the mean recidivism rate was 30%. For the years 1971 through 1975 the rates were 25%, 22%, 19%, 19% and 20%, respectively. In 1976, the recidivism rate dropped to 16%.

This report attributes the reduction in recidivism rates to three factors: 1) participation in the Home Furlough Program; 2) release from a pre-release center; and 3) the combined effect of the two programs.

More specifically, controlling for selection biases, the results of this study substantiate prior evidence that individuals who had participated in the Furlough Program prior to release had lower rates of recidivism, as did individuals released from a pre-release center. Moreover, those individuals having experienced both the Furlough Program and a Pre-Release Center had the lowest recidivism rate. Therefore, the existence of graduated release programs again emerges as the most significant contributing factor in the reduction of recidivism rates.

REINTEGRATIVE PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

WORK RELEASE IN AN INSTITUTIONAL SETTING: THE EXPERIENCE
AT MCI CONCORD

June, 1978

Shari Wittenberg

As part of its emphasis on the reintegration of the offender into society, the Massachusetts Department of Correction has expanded its work release programs which allow residents to work in the community while serving their sentence. The purpose of the present research was to evaluate the rehabilitative effectiveness of a work release program in an institutional setting (MCI Concord). Base Expectancy rates were calculated for a sample of 109 individuals who are identified as successful work release completers in an effort to assess whether successful completion of the work release program while incarcerated would significantly reduce the recidivism rates of participants after their release into the community. Since the difference between the recidivism rate that was expected for work release completers (32%) and their actual recidivism rate (19%) was found to be statistically significant, it was concluded that the successful completion of the work release program did favorably affect the reintegration of the offender into the community by reducing recidivism rates. A differential recidivism analysis of this work release sample revealed that participants who had experienced fewer court appearances and who had spent less time incarcerated were less likely to recidivate after release into the community.

A sample of 196 individuals who had participated in the work release program while at MCI-Concord were divided into work release completers and work release non-completers for the purposes of identifying any specific characteristics that distinguished one sub-sample from the other. A multivariate analysis revealed seven variables that differed between work release completers and non-completers, particularly concerning employment history and previous arrests. These variables were used for a profile of work release non-completers that could be valuable in future selection criteria.

COMPLETION/NON-COMPLETION RATES FOR
RELEASES FROM DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
PRE-RELEASE CENTERS, 1975-1976

July, 1978

Joseph Landolfi

Recognizing the valuable rehabilitative potential of community resources, the Massachusetts Department of Correction has implemented an extensive network of community based correctional facilities, entitled, The Community Reintegration System (CRS). The purpose of the present research was to document and analyze 1975 and 1976 CRS individual program termination data.

Several interesting findings resulted from the research. First, 817 individuals participated in and terminated from the various centers in 1976, an increase over the previous year of approximately 44%. Secondly, notwithstanding the large increase in pre-release participants, the overall CRS successful completion rate went up from 60% in 1975 to 62% in 1976. Finally, the majority of individual pre-release centers reported an increase in the number of successful terminations during the year 1976.

SOCIETAL REINTEGRATION AND RECIDIVISM RATES

August, 1978

Daniel LeClair

The present research examines the hypothesis that prison releasees who experience graduated societal reintegration by participating in pre-release centers and the furlough program, will have lower recidivism rates than those releasees who have not received the benefits of such programs. A sample of 3244 males released from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions from 1973 through 1976 was drawn for purposes of this analysis.

Preliminary analysis revealed that individuals who are released through a pre-release center to the community have significantly lower recidivism rates than those individuals who are released directly from a correctional institution. Further analysis demonstrated that the greatest reduction in recidivism within this group occurred for those individuals receiving both furloughs and pre-release placements. In this case an expected recidivism rate of 22.2% reduced to an actual recidivism rate of 9%. The difference was found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2=74.87, df=1, p < .001$).

It was concluded that participation in graduated reintegration programs will reduce the probability that an individual will recidivate upon release from prison, and that the furlough program is a critical element in the reintegration process.

OPERATIONAL RESEARCH STUDIES

PATTERNS IN COMMITMENTS TO
MASSACHUSETTS HOUSES OF CORRECTION
A TREND ANALYSIS

June, 1978

Charles Metzler

This report identifies trends in commitments to Massachusetts houses of correction (county facilities) for the years 1932 to 1976. In overall commitment totals, the trend was strongly downward, from a high in 1934 of 16,298 to a low of 2,903 during 1974. The age at commitment has also shifted over this period with more commitments at younger ages in recent years than in the past. Moreover, the proportional distribution in offense categories has recently shifted with the highest percentage in property and drug offenses instead of in "other" offenses. Finally, a significant trend now occurs in the sentence distributions with commitments receiving longer sentences and fewer commitments in lieu of fines.

YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS COMMITTED TO MASS.
CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS - A TREND ANALYSIS

July, 1978

Elaine McCarthy &
Randi Mershon

The present study is an attempt to isolate trends of youthful offenders committed to Massachusetts Correctional Institutions. The study is divided into two sections: Part I will place particular emphasis upon short-term trends of offenders aged 14-21, with additional focus upon trends in the total population and the over 21 population as a basis for comparison; Part II will be concerned with long-term trends in the commitment of offenders 20 years old and younger.

Part I utilizes a population index in order to isolate the trend and minimize the distorting influence of atypical population changes, whereas Part II makes use of time series analysis and statistical trend tests.

The short-range analysis resulted in three major findings. First, there is a definite progressively upward trend for offenders of all ages in the short run. Secondly, the trend is more severe and pronounced for individuals 14 to 21 than for the other groups. Thirdly, 1973 appears to be an atypical year for those in the 14 to 21 years group and the over 21 years group with an abnormally inflated and deflated trend, respectively.

The long-range analysis showed that there has been a downward trend in the commitment of offenders 20 and younger. Secondly, although the proportion of youthful offenders is lower now than in the past, there appears to be an upward trend in recent years.

1977 YEARLY STATISTICAL REPORT OF THE FURLOUGH PROGRAM

December, 1978

Charles Metzler

The furlough program has been an integral part of the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions since the program began in November, 1972. A total of 41,563 furloughs were granted between the inception of the program and December 31, 1977. During that period, 439 of those furloughs resulted in escapes (a resident failing to return to his correctional facility within two hours of his designated time) thus yielding an overall escape rate of 1.06%. The present report contains a statistical description of the furlough program for the year 1977 as well as a trend analysis of the program since its inception in 1972.

An analysis of available statistics revealed that although the number of furloughs granted over the years has fluctuated, the escape rate has decreased from 1.9% in 1972 to 0.5% in 1977, remaining relatively stable during the last two years of that time period. It was also noted during that period that the number of furloughs granted from lower security pre-release centers increased, as less furloughs were granted from higher security correctional institutions. Finally, this report presents frequencies and escape rates of background characteristics for each furlough granted during 1977. Information included in these tables consists of present offense variables, personal background characteristics, criminal history statistics, and furlough variables.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VALIDATED BASE EXPECTANCY TABLES

December, 1978

Charles Metzler &
Shari Wittenberg

The use of Base Expectancy Tables is an important factor in correctional research, especially when evaluating the effectiveness of a particular treatment program. Therefore, it is important to understand the construction, application and implications of such predictive devices.

The present paper explains the process of constructing a Base Expectancy Table using the sample of 1975 releasees from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions as a data base. Two tables were produced as a result: one based on information known when an individual is released to the street (Post-Incarceration Table) and one including information known when an individual is first committed to prison (Pre-Incarceration Table).

When these tables were applied to the 1976 releasee population, both the Pre-Incarceration Table and the Post-Incarceration Table validated. These tables will be used as controls in future research done by the Massachusetts Department of Correction.

ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORTS

The following statistical reports are prepared yearly by the Department of Correction and are now available:

Statistical Tables Describing the Background characteristics and Recidivism Rates of Releases from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions in the Year 1975, Charles Metzler

This report is a statistical description of characteristics of the 806 residents released to the street from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions during 1975 with corresponding recidivism rates. The tables included in this report contain statistical data describing the characteristics of inmates released from each MCI in 1975, as well as the rates of recidivism cross-tabulated with each of the categories of the statistical data for these individuals.

A Statistical Description of Commitments to Massachusetts Houses of Correction During 1973 Through 1975, Charles Metzler

The data contained in this report represents a brief description of commitments to Massachusetts Houses of Correction (county facilities) for 1973, 1974 and 1975. Variables included in this report give information regarding present offense, sentence, month committed, age at incarceration, sex and marital status for each resident.

Population Movements in the Massachusetts Department of Correction During 1977, Charles Metzler

The information in this report is a description of admissions releases and transfers within the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions during the year 1977. The data is broken down into several specific categories including: type of admission, type of release, institutional transfers, returns from hospitals, releases to hospitals, transfers from houses of correction, returns of Department of Correction inmates from houses of correction, transfers to houses of correction on a from and after sentence, admissions from out of state and releases to out of state.

Statistical Tables Describing the Background Characteristics and Recidivism Rates of Releases from Massachusetts Correctional Institutions in the Year 1976, Charles Metzler

The tables in this document reflect statistical data describing the characteristics of inmates released from each Massachusetts Correctional Institution in 1976 as well as the rates of recidivism cross-tabulated with each of the categories of the statistical data for these individuals. Characteristics described here include institution release variables, history of present offense variables, personal background characteristics,

criminal history variables, furlough variables and release follow-up variables for each of the 925 individuals (815 men and 110 women) released from MCI's during 1976.

A Statistical Description of Court Commitments to the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions During 1977, Charles Metzler

This report is a statistical description of characteristics of court commitments to the Massachusetts Department of Correction during 1977. There were 1145 individuals committed to Massachusetts Correctional Institutions during that year. The tables in this document present information on the history of the present offense, personal background characteristics, and criminal history of admissions from the courts to MCI-Walpole, MCI-Concord and MCI-Framingham.

A Statistical Description of Releases from the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions During 1977, Charles Metzler

The data presented in this report represents information concerning the 1193 individuals released from the Massachusetts Department of Correction to the streets during 1977. The tables contain information on present offense variables, personal background characteristics, criminal history variables, furlough participation, and release variables for each of these releasees. This document is broken down into two sections where each of the aforementioned variables is presented for: 1) all non-pre-release institutions, and then for 2) all pre-release facilities within the Massachusetts Correctional system.

A Statistical Description of Residents of the Massachusetts Correctional Institutions on January 1, 1978, Charles Metzler

This point-in-time profile of residents contains information on the 2750 residents who were incarcerated in Massachusetts Correctional Institutions on January 1, 1978. The statistical descriptions included in this report are broken down by institutions and are divided into two sections: non-pre-release institutions, and pre-release facilities. The specific variables discussed in this report include personal background characteristics, present offense variables, criminal history variables, and variables reflecting participation in the furlough program.

SPECIAL REPORTS

A STUDY OF THE RECEPTION AND DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS
OF THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

April, 1978

This is a study of the reception and diagnostic process of the Massachusetts Department of Correction. It includes an analysis of the flow of individuals through the Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC) and the Northeast Reception and Diagnostic Center (NRDC), including their placement six months after their initial classification; a comparison of those who were formally classified at the RDC or NRDC with those who were not formally classified at these facilities, including an assessment of the impact of the initial classification on the subsequent movement through the correctional system; an analysis of the security levels of the initial placements made by the RDC and NRDC, including the significant variables associated with placement in maximum, medium, or minimum security facilities; and, an examination of the success rates of placements in minimum security facilities, along with an analysis of the variables that distinguished between successful and non-successful placements. The sample consisted of the 1199 men sentenced to Walpole or Concord during 1976.

Flow of Individuals Through the Correctional System

The majority of the 1199 men sentenced directly to the Department of Correction during 1976 (83%) went through the formal classification process at the RDC or the NRDC. The RDC was effective in diverting men from maximum security inasmuch as 55% of the RDC placements were to medium security facilities and 16% were directly to minimum security facilities. Diversion from maximum security was less apparent at the NRDC primarily because Concord was defined as maximum security in this study. However, it is noteworthy that 34% of the NRDC placements were directly to minimum security facilities.

There was a fairly substantial degree of movement through the correctional system. Six months after the initial placement, only 30% of the RDC cases and 31% of the NRDC cases were in maximum security, and 20% of the RDC cases and 61% of the NRDC cases were either in minimum security or had been paroled. Classification at the RDC or NRDC tended to facilitate movement through the correctional system since fewer than a third of those initially classified at the RDC or NRDC were in maximum security after six months, while slightly over half of the non-classified individuals were still in maximum security after six months.

The median length of time between commitment to the DOC and initial placement by the RDC/NRDC was eleven weeks (9.5 weeks for the RDC and 13.4 weeks for the NRDC).

Comparison of Classified vs. Non-Classified Men

Walpole commitments who were not initially classified at the RDC or NRDC were likely to have more serious criminal histories--as consistently reflected by significant differences on six criminal history variables--than those who were initially classified at the RDC. Concord commitments who were not initially classified at the NRDC or the RDC were likely to have shorter sentences and to be older than those who were initially classified at the NRDC.

Background Variables and Initial Placement

For the most part, the significant relationship between background variables and the security level of the initial placement were not unexpected. For example, men with longer sentences and more serious criminal histories were more likely to be placed in maximum security, while men with shorter sentences and less serious criminal histories were more likely to be placed in minimum security. However, the finding that blacks and Boston residents were over-represented in RDC maximum security placements was not expected and further study of this phenomenon was recommended.

Success Rates of Minimum Security Placements

In general, the RDC and NRDC seem to do an effective job of screening and placing men in minimum security facilities, since the overall success rate was 87%. This finding, in conjunction with the results of other research which indicates that those released from minimum security facilities have significantly lower recidivism rates, suggests that it would be both feasible and productive for the DOC to assign more men to minimum security facilities.

Significant differences on success rates were found on three interrelated variables--age (younger men had higher success rates), type of sentence (those with indeterminate sentences had higher success rates), and facility of initial classification (those initially classified at the NRDC had higher success rates). Further analysis to determine whether age or facility of initial classification

was more important in relation to success rates was inconclusive. However, it is clear that the NRDC is particularly effective in placing younger men in minimum security facilities.

Finally, it was concluded that the RDC and the NRDC could probably increase the number of younger men placed in minimum security facilities without adverse effects. Younger men were significantly underrepresented among the minimum security placements of the RDC and the NRDC, yet they had significantly higher success rates than older men.

Also, the data suggested that the RDC could probably increase the number of blacks placed in minimum security facilities. Blacks were significantly underrepresented among RDC minimum security placements, yet race was not associated with success rates. However, further research into the relationship between race and such factors as offense, length of sentence, and seriousness of criminal history would be required before this could be presented as a firm conclusion.

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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH
1977

January, 1978

Shari Wittenberg

This collection of abstracts represents research carried out by the Department of Correction Research Division during 1977. The reports abstracted in this document encompass a variety of topics: the first section deals with recidivism, a major evaluative theme of the Research Unit; the second section contains reintegrative program evaluations such as furloughs and state hospital programs. The next two sections deal with prediction studies and special studies, and the final section provides a complete listing of the statistical reports published annually. Complete reports are available upon request from the Department of Correction.

MANDATORY SENTENCING: AN OVERVIEW

September, 1978

Shari Wittenberg

This report was prepared in response to numerous requests from the public concerning background information on mandatory sentencing, a topic which is a current issue in Massachusetts as well as in many other states in this country. This document begins with an overview of the problem of sentence disparity in our criminal justice system and discusses possible solutions to the problem such as various forms of presumptive and mandatory sentencing as they have been proposed in recent literature.

Some issues that need to be considered in proposing revisions for sentencing standards are as follows: probation, plea bargaining, parole, good time, sentencing councils, appellate review of sentences, effects on correctional facilities, and sentencing legislation. These issues are briefly discussed and examples of sentencing legislation are presented for those states who have already adopted forms of mandatory sentencing: Maine, California, Indiana, and Illinois.

It should be noted that this report represents an overview of the problem of mandatory sentencing as it is documented in relevant literature, and does not reflect the opinion or policy of the Massachusetts Department of Correction.

IMPACT EVALUATION-VOLUME III NEW LINE
CLASSIFICATION DURING ITS FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION

May, 1978

Ellen Chayet

The New Line is an intake classification capability designed for court commitments to the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Concord, a facility at that time housing the younger, relative newcomer to adult crime. Operationalized with LEAA discretionary funding from June, 1975 through May, 1976, the New Line was formulated in response to two salient and disturbing trends in Concord's population; one, that the facility was simply becoming increasingly overcrowded; and two, there was disproportionately high rate of population turnover. Both observations implied that appropriate custody assessment and sound treatment planning would be difficult to effect.

In this context, New Line goals were to both conduct an intake classification assessment that was thorough and efficient, and would divert as many men as possible from residency at Concord; and to consolidate and utilize the varied institutional programs for offenders not suitable for transfer. A rate of ten percent diversion was projected as minimal by program planners.

This evaluation focuses on two areas: a description of the classification operations during its first year of funding; and an analysis and profile of the men diverted from the facility.

Client intake commenced in June, 1975; through the end of May, 1976, a total of 377 individuals were screened. Of these 265 men (70.3%) were classified by New Line, with the remainder referred to more appropriate capabilities. On the average, the classification process lasted 12.5 weeks. If the individual was to be diverted, he remained at the New Line for just over two weeks. The staff recommended diversion was a bit lower (104 individuals for a rate of 39.2%). Nearly seventy percent of these men who were diverted from maximum custody were transferred to a minimum security placement, community-based facility, or directly paroled.

The client profile yielded some interesting distinguishing characteristics of men diverted as compared to those designated to remain at Concord. Among these findings were that individuals who were transferred from the facility were significantly more likely to have been older when committed, to have been older when first arrested, to have evidenced a longer employment history, and to have been better educated. They were less likely to have been booked on a sex-related charge, to have previously been arrested, to have ever been arrested for a sex or property crime, and to have ever been incarcerated as an adult.

IMPACT EVALUATION VOLUME III...(continued)

May, 1978

Ellen Chayet

The study concludes that New Line met many of its original goals by sustaining a high rate of diversion, including a large percentage placed in lower custody or community-based facilities. Further, analysis of the client profile indicated that placement decisions appear to have been appropriate. The New Line activities seem to be consistent with a reintegrative philosophy of corrections, and a concern for individualized treatment needs.