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From the Selected Works of David E. Olson

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Cook County Sheriff's Reentry Council Newsletter, October 2010

David E Olson, *Loyola University Chicago*



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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Cook County Sheriff Reentry Council Quarterly Update

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Congratulations Graduates!

To the stately cadence of Pomp and Circumstance, a 2010 graduating class processed to their seats. Friends and family were in attendance, as were judges and probation officers. The students that graduated on June 30th are the first of a new virtual high school program that began in February 2009 at the Cook County Jail complex at 26th and California.

The Sheriff's Virtual High School is open to 17-21 year olds that are detained on non-violent charges. The coursework is done via computer in four classrooms located in the Cook County Sheriff's Day Reporting Center



The first six graduates of the Sheriff's Virtual High School program

(DRC), the Pre-Release Center (PRC), and the Department of Women's Justice Services (DWJS). All completed classes count toward an individual's high school diploma. This means that students will receive a diploma from the high school they attended prior to

their detention rather than a generic GED, and the high school the student was attending gets credit for the graduate in their measures of student matriculation. It also means that detainees who are released before graduating can apply their credits and return to school with fewer courses to complete.

The Virtual High School program not only helps students that were a few courses shy of graduating when they were detained, it also allows those students that did not apply their energies while in school to focus and move at their own pace. According to Aventa

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Focus, Collaboration Enhances Receipt of Grant Funding

One of the goals of Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart when he took office was to enhance the ability of the Sheriff's Office to apply for and obtain external grant funding to support new initiatives and expand needed services, particularly for inmates within and discharged from the Cook County Jail.

Under the leadership of Elaine Ramos, Assistant General

Counsel from the Cook County Sheriff's Development and Government Affairs Department, the Sheriff's Office has significantly enhanced their capacity to apply for and administer external grants. In addition, through collaboration with external entities, including area universities and service providers, grant applications have been much more

competitive and have led to a number of substantial grant awards being made to the Sheriff's Office, including 3 grants totaling nearly \$2 million to provide enhanced services to participants in the Sheriff's Day Reporting Center, Pre-Release Center, Boot Camp, Women's Justice Services and the Impact Project in Division 6 of the jail.

(See additional stories on page 2)



An inmate signs to receive his state ID card

Third In-reach Service Fair Held in August

The Cook County Jail successfully completed its third in-reach service fair this past August. At the service fair, staff from the Cook County State's Attorney's Division of Child Support met with detainees who owe child support to both the State and the mothers of their children. Personalized advice was given to each, and the "Clean Slate" program, an initiative that waives a person's debt to the state

in favor of getting payments to mothers, was explained to those who were unaware of it.

Representatives from the Office of the Illinois Secretary of State were also in attendance, and operated a mobile unit for making state ID's and drivers licenses. Informal hearings were held regarding the status of an individual's driver's license, and recommendations were made for each detainee. Fifty-three

detainees from the Cook County Jail, the Department of Women's Justice Services, and the Cook County Sheriff's Day Reporting Center renewed, updated, or obtained an ID card that will be available to them upon release from jail. To date, across the 3 service fairs, hundreds of detainees have been provided assistance related to their child-support obligations, driving records and issuance of state IDs.

Grant money received to improve reentry programs and reduce recidivism in high-risk communities.

ICJIA Grant Under Federal Stimulus Program

In March of 2010, Cook County received a \$500,000 grant from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) on behalf of the Cook County Sheriff's Office. The grant, funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), is focused on reducing recidivism among

participants of the five reentry programs operated by the Sheriff's Office, including the Pre-Release Center (PRC), Department of Women's Justice Services (DWJS), Day Reporting Center (DRC), Boot Camp, and a program for the general inmate population. Specifically, the project will target 100 individuals

from three high risk areas in Chicago, namely, Austin, Garfield Park, and Lawndale.

Focus is placed on individuals from these areas as they exhibit higher levels of recidivism, higher levels of drug-law violations, and lower levels of education than the rest of the

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U.S. Department of Justice Grants Under 2nd Chance Act

On September 10, 2010, Dr. Gary Dennis from the U.S. Department of Justice, along with Congressman Danny Davis, announced the awarding of more than \$1 million in grants under the federal 2nd Chance Act to the Cook County Sheriff's Office. Both of these grants were reviewed and selected through a competitive

process alongside hundreds of applicants from across the U.S. The first grant totals \$747,000 and will be used to enhance the current re-entry programs at the Cook County Jail, and will serve three hundred detainees enrolled in Jail programs by supporting after-care treatment and post-discharge services once the participants return to their

West Side communities. The second grant, totaling \$300,000, will be utilized to provide family-based services to 120 male detainees who are fathers and who participate in the WestCare "Impact" Program in Division 6 of the Jail, which provides substance abuse treatment. Roughly two-thirds of male inmates in the Cook County Jail are parents.

Relatively Long Pre-Trial Stays in Jail Among Those Sentenced to Prison

Although the number of felony cases filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County have decreased over the past 10 years, the amount of time inmates are spending in the Cook County Jail awaiting the disposition of their cases appears to be stable, and in some cases increasing. Between 2000 and 2008 (the most recent year published data from the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts—AOIC—are available), felony filings in Cook County fell from just over 38,000 to roughly 31,000. Much of this decrease can be attributed to a substantial decrease in arrests made by the Chicago Police Department for violations of Illinois Controlled Substances Act.

However, analyses of data for those inmates incarcerated in the Cook County Jail prior to the disposition of their case and subsequently sentenced to prison reveals that the length of time spent in the county jail has not been reduced. For example, among those convicted of a Class X felony—serious, non-probationable offenses—and sentenced to prison from Cook County, the time spent in the jail pre-trial averaged less than 400 days in state fiscal year 2000 to just over 500 days in state fiscal year 2009. By comparison, those convicted of a Class X felony in the rest of Illinois spent, on average, approxi-

mately 300 days in jail prior to being convicted and sentenced to prison in 2009. At the other end of the felony continuum, those convicted of a Class 4 felony—the least serious felony class—in Cook County and subsequently sentenced to prison spent an average of just under 100 days in jail prior to conviction, compared to an average of 71 days among those in the rest of Illinois convicted of a Class 4 felony and sentenced to prison. These patterns suggest that either a larger proportion of felons in Cook County spend time in jail prior to the disposition of their case, they spend more time waiting for their case to be disposed of, or a combination of both.

Graduation (Continued from pg 1)

Learning, the virtual learning Cook County Jail participants “have the best record” of any of their Chicago schools with an average passing grade of 72 percent.

There are currently 50 students enrolled in the program. While there are approximately 8,000 individuals in the 17-21 age range that leave the jail system

each year, the Virtual High School is making a difference one person at a time.

As part of the grant received from the ICJIA (see story on page 2), classroom mentors have been hired to expand this program to more program participants and further improve the academic gains being made by participants.



A proud graduate stands with Judge John P. Kirby

ICJIA Grant (Continued from pg 2)

Cook County Jail population, and they are disproportionately represented among jail releases. These individuals will be evaluated with a risk assessment instrument and given a tailored reentry plan, which will include educational, vocational, mental health, and drug treatment services from community-based providers.

To ensure a seamless continuum of care, services will begin during the

individual's detention and will continue after reentry into the community. Currently, grant money has been used to hire three reentry specialists and four classroom mentors. The specialists will work with the 100 randomly selected participants from the three high risk areas to create personalized reentry plans. The classroom mentors will improve the quality of service dur-

ing all individuals' incarceration.

Contracts are currently being negotiated between the Cook County Sheriff's Office and community-based service providers.

The first fifteen individuals from high-risk areas have been randomly selected, and preliminary data are being collected. Eighty-five more detainees will be randomly selected during the course of this grant project. The ultimate goal of this grant project is to reduce recidivism in the Austin, Garfield Park, and Lawn-dale neighborhoods by 10 percent.

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The Cook County Sheriff's Office of Reentry

Rebecca Janowitz
Cook County Sheriff's Office
3026 South California Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60608
Phone: 773-869-3544
Fax: 773-869-7676
E-mail: rjanowitz.reentry@gmail.com

In order to support research, evaluation and planning efforts for the Cook County Sheriff's Office of Reentry, the Sheriff's Office entered into a cooperative agreement with Loyola University Chicago to support the development of an enhanced research capacity. Under the agreement, Dr. David Olson, Chair of the Criminal Justice Department at Loyola and Graduate Research Assistant Jana Krepel, have been assigned to work with the Office of Reentry to develop datasets and protocols that can support research and evaluation, oversee program evaluations, and develop stronger ties between the academic community interested in conducting applied research and the Cook County Sheriff's Office.

Jail Mortality in a National Context

As a requirement of the federal Deaths in Custody Reporting Act of 2000, jails from across the country are required to report information regarding deaths that occur in custody. A report examining data from this reporting was recently released and provides some perspective on deaths that occurred in the Cook County Jail. Nationally, a total of 8,110 inmate deaths were reported from 2000 to 2007. While the number of deaths in local jails increased annually during this period, the growth in average daily population over the same time interval resulted in a lower overall mortality rate (from 152 deaths per 100,000 inmates to 141 per 100,000 between 2000 and 2007). Cook County reported a rate of 160 deaths per 100,000 inmates, slightly higher than the national average, but slightly below the rate for the 50 largest jails in the U.S. (Figure 1).

There were three general categories used to classify deaths, including deaths from illness, deaths from suicide and deaths from homicide. Deaths from illness accounted for over half of all deaths in local jails, with heart disease being the leading contributor. This was also the case among deaths in the Cook County

Jail, with 43% of all deaths resulting from heart disease. Overall, 85% of deaths in the Cook County Jail were caused by illness.

Suicide was the single leading cause of unnatural deaths in U.S. jails, but the rate declined from 49 to 36 deaths per 100,000 inmates between 2000 and 2007. The average annual suicide rate for all jails was 42 per 100,000, but the 50 largest facilities in the U.S. reported a rate of 27 per 100,000. The Cook County Jail reported an even lower rate, averaging 12 suicides per 100,000 inmates per year. While suicides accounted for 29% of all jails deaths in the U.S. during the period reported, suicide accounted for less than 8% of the deaths in the Cook County Jail during that same 2000 to 2007 period included in the national report. Finally, the homicide rate within county jails in the U.S. during the period examined averaged 3 per 100,000, accounting for 2% of all jail inmate deaths. In Cook County, as in other large jurisdictions, the homicide rate was higher than the national average. Within the 50 largest jails in the U.S., the homicide rate was 6 per 100,000, and in Cook County this rate was 9 per 100,000. By comparison, the homicide rate in the City of Chicago in 2008 was 17 per 100,000.

Mortality Rates for Jail Inmates in the US, the 50 Largest Jails and Cook County Jail

■ All Reporting Jails ■ Cook County, IL
■ 50 Largest Jails



