

# **HEALTHIER LIVES, STRONGER FAMILIES, SAFER COMMUNITIES:**

## **How Increasing Funding for Alternatives to Prison Will Save Lives and Money in Wisconsin**

Key Findings and Recommendations

*November 2012*



# Scope of Research

- Year-long assessment to determine health impacts of increasing state funding for Treatment Alternative Diversion (TAD) programs to \$75 million.
- Health Impact Assessment used hundreds of peer-reviewed studies, existing data, and focus groups with judges, offenders and others in criminal justice system.
  - Conducted by Human Impact Partners, in collaboration with WISDOM.
  - Included advisors from the state Public Defender's Office and the University of Wisconsin, Public Policy Institute of Community Advocates.

# What is a Health Impact Assessment?

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a combination of procedures, methods, and tools to systematically judge the potential – and sometimes unintended – effects of a proposed policy on the health of the population.
  - HIA looks at the distribution of those effects within the population.
  - HIA identifies appropriate actions to manage those effects.

**Why should  
Wisconsin  
invest in  
treatment  
instead of  
prison?**



# Wasteful, unhealthy, ineffective, unfair

- Our state's incarceration rate has grown dramatically in recent decades.
- Wisconsin spends more than twice as much per year on Corrections as our neighbors in Minnesota, though we have similar populations.
- Our overuse of prisons and jails makes us less safe than we would be if we used more alternatives.
- Over-reliance on incarceration threatens health of individuals and families.
- Racial disparities in Wisconsin's prison system are among the worst in the nation.

# Incarceration is costly

- Human price – families and communities destroyed.
- Financial price – the cost of Corrections in Wisconsin has risen from under \$200 million per year in 1990 to more than \$1.3 billion in 2011.

# Incarceration fails to address problem

- 70% of Wisconsin prisoners have problems with substance abuse.
- More than 30% of Wisconsin prisoners have a mental health disorder or issue.
- Most prisoners do not have access to treatment they need.
- Prison tries to use criminal justice to solve a health problem – and fails.

# TAD can save WI taxpayers money

- TAD reduces cost of intervention.
  - Average cost of incarcerating one individual for one year in Wisconsin is approximately \$32,000.
  - Average cost of even the more expensive treatment alternative is **less than \$8,000**.
- TAD reduces costs of recidivism.
  - Non-violent participants in TAD programs have lower rates of re-offending than those released from prison.
  - Avoids criminal processing, re-incarceration, and victimization costs.



# There are effective alternatives

WI Counties have established numerous programs for managing and rehabilitating non-violent offenders while keeping them out of prison:

- Drug treatment courts
- OWI courts
- Mental health courts
- Day report centers
- Universal screening

# The alternatives work

- 1 Lower recidivism rates.** Offenders in alternative programs tend to be rehabilitated and not to re-offend, while incarcerated offenders are more likely to commit another offense upon release.
- 2 Improve health.** Treatment alternatives restore the offender to health, especially those suffering from mental illness and/or addictions.

# The alternatives work (2)

**3 Increase recovery rates.** The success rate of drug treatment courts in keeping graduates drug-free is almost twice that of other interventions.

**4 Save taxpayers a great deal of money.** A Wisconsin study shows that for every \$1 invested in TAD programs, the state received nearly \$2 in cost savings. Other states with larger investments in treatment alternatives find even higher savings.

# Do other states invest in problem-solving courts?

**Yes.**

- All 50 states have established problem solving courts.
- 26 states increased funding for drug courts between 2007 and 2009.
  - **Georgia** increased state funding for drug and mental health courts from \$1 million to \$11 million for FY2013.
  - **New Jersey** increased state budget for drug court programs in FY2013, bringing annual total to nearly \$46 million.

# Will this approach put dangerous criminals back on the street?

**No.**

- TAD eligibility is reserved for low-risk offenders.
- Graduates of TAD programs are less likely to commit another crime than those who are incarcerated.
- Shift in focus will allow law enforcement to focus resources on preventing violent crime.

**How would  
\$75 million  
for TAD  
impact  
Wisconsin?**



# Capacity:

With \$75 million in funding we predict...

- 1) Thousands of TAD slots would be created. Annually, there would be:
  - 18,000 problem-solving court slots **OR**
  - 49,000 diversion programs slots **OR**
  - Some mix of the two will be necessary
- 2) More than 3,100 state prisoners per year (out of current average of 8,000 admissions) would be eligible for problem solving court.
- 3) More than 21,000 jail admissions per year would be eligible for problem solving court.

*“For every 1 person we treat now in my county through these methods, there are 10 more who could be eligible but instead get sent to prison due to lack of resources.”*

*– Treatment court judge interviewed for HIA*



# Crime & Safety:

With \$75 million in funding we predict...

- 1) A 20% reduction in new crimes committed by the populations participating in TAD programs.
  - Recidivism is typically 12% – 16% lower for participants in problem-solving courts nationwide.
  - In TAD programs, recidivism was lower for TAD completers than for those released from Wisconsin prisons.
  
- 2) Injuries resulting from crime would decrease and stress due to crime would decrease in the general population.
  - 1 of 5 people who are convicted of a new crime after prison have been charged with committing a violent crime.

*“I don’t steal when I’m ‘normal’. But before I needed my drugs, and I needed to do what I had to do to get them – I would steal whatever I could. Now that I’ve been through drug treatment court, I am not going to be doing those things again.”*

*- Treatment court participant in focus group*

# Recovery:

With \$75 million in funding we predict...

All eligible low-risk offenders can receive substance abuse and mental health treatment that follows national guidelines. Therefore:

- 1) Rate of substance abuse recovery will increase.
  - The success rate of drug treatment courts in keeping graduates drug free is twice that of other interventions.
  - There will be 8 fewer people who die from drug overdose.
  
- 2) Fewer people will commit suicide or be injured.
  - Drug and alcohol abusers and those involved in all stages of criminal justice have higher suicide rates.
  - OWI courts reduce recidivism and therefore decrease motor vehicle fatality and injury.

*“For 20 years I had an addiction, heroin, crack – it was known by the courts that this was the driving force behind my crimes. Not once in 3 incarcerations – a total of 12 years - did I ever get treatment inside the prison walls.”*

*- Formerly incarcerated focus group participant*

# Families:


With \$75 million in funding we predict...

- 1) Between 1,150 – 1,619 parents each year will be eligible for TAD programs and able to remain in the community.
- 2) There will be fewer single parent families and less involvement with Child Protective Services.
  - Children with incarcerated parents are 4-5 times more likely to face foster system contact.

# Families (2):

With \$75 million in funding we predict...

- 3) Youth may be less likely to have problems if their parents are not incarcerated.
  - 70% of young children with incarcerated mothers experience emotional or psychological problems.
  - Youth with a parent in prison are 7 times more likely to be convicted of crimes as a young adult.
  - 36% drop out of high school (vs. 7% of youth who do not experience parental incarceration).



*“I have a 24 year old daughter who doesn’t know who I am. I contacted her when I started getting my life together, and her response to me was ‘I don’t know you, where were you for all the birthdays and Christmases?’ I don’t have a relationship with my child because of incarceration.”*


*- Formerly incarcerated participant in focus group*

# Communities:

With \$75 million in funding we predict...

- 1) 13% more non-violent offenders recovering from substance abuse will be employed.
- 2) For those employed, average incomes will rise. Serving time:
  - Reduces hourly wages after prison by 11% and annual earnings by 40%.
  - Depresses wages for black males 4.5 times more than whites.
- 3) Homelessness and need for transitional housing will decrease.
  - 23% of those who are homeless or have unstable housing have a history of incarceration.





*“Going to prison did not help me get a job. Prison was deterrent for trying to get a job - it didn’t motivate me. Prison did not give me productive feeling, it gave me animosity that triggered relapse.”*

*- Formerly incarcerated participant in focus group*

# Impact snapshot

<b>\$75 MILLION FOR WISCONSIN TAD PROGRAMS</b>		
<b>Impact</b>	<b>TAD Program Effect</b>	<b>Projected Outcome</b>
<b>REDUCE COST</b>	Decrease prison admissions	3,100 (nearly 40%) of the 8,000 prison admissions each year will be eligible for TAD programs
	Decrease jail admissions	21,000 (nearly 10%) of the 227,000 jail admissions each year will be eligible for TAD programs
	Decrease re-incarceration	Recidivism would be 12% - 16% lower for non-violent offenders in TAD programs
<b>REDUCE CRIME</b>	Decrease recidivism	20% fewer crimes would be committed by participants in TAD programs (1,100 fewer crimes over 5 years)
<b>INCREASE RECOVERY</b>	Improve access to treatment	All eligible offenders would have access to drug court treatment programs
	Improve efficacy of treatment	Drug court participants would have double the rate of recovery than those in minimal treatment
<b>STRENGTHEN FAMILIES</b>	Increase number of families that remain intact	Between 1,150 – 1,619 parents could stay out of prison and receive treatment
<b>IMPROVE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY</b>	Increase likelihood of employment	13% more non-violent offenders with substance abuse issues would be employed

# Recommendations


1. Beginning in FY 2013, expand state funding of TAD programs to \$75 million a year.
2. Allocate an additional \$20 million per year to TAD programs statewide to improve mental health, jobs, substance abuse, and family services.
3. Redefine eligibility criteria for TAD programs to include those whose parole has been revoked, those with serious substance abuse or mental health issues, and to create a sliding risk assessment of addiction.
4. Give parents priority access to TAD program slots.
5. Continue to conduct annual standardized statewide evaluations of all problem solving courts and diversion programs with more detailed outcome measures.



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For safer, healthier communities





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