



Innovation:

Justice
Reinvestment
Initiative

Background: In 2007, the Texas justice system projected a prison population increase of 17,000 people in five years,¹ largely a result of increasing parole revocations and parole boards not releasing people in a timely manner.² The cost of building new prisons to deal with overcrowding was estimated at \$2 billion. Instead of embarking on such a costly process, Texas chose to work with outside organizations such as the Council of State Governments Justice Center to make changes to the budget through a Justice Reinvestment Initiative. As a result, the legislature increased funding for treatment and diversion by \$241 million, at the same time saving \$443 million in reduced costs associated with contracted beds space and new prison construction.³

How it works: The Justice Reinvestment Initiative included a mixture of reforms to reduce the number of people in prison and returning to prison while improving public safety.

- The initiative invests in community-based treatment and diversion programs for people charged with nonviolent offenses to reduce the number of people in prison sentenced with the offenses.
- The initiative added to policy reforms from 2005 to the pardon and parole system in Texas, when parole and probation officers carried an average caseload of 152 people per officer⁴ – over

twice the national average.⁵ To help lessen the burden on parole and probation officers, the legislature set maximum caseloads and allocated additional grant money to increase the number of probation and parole officers. As a result of these changes, the system became more efficient, was able to serve more parole candidates and made the reentry process more streamlined and effective.⁶

- The initiative was used to help lower the parole revocation rate (the rate by which people released on probation or parole are re-incarcerated), by giving parole boards more options for people who violated their parole.⁷ The result was that the parole board slowed the re-

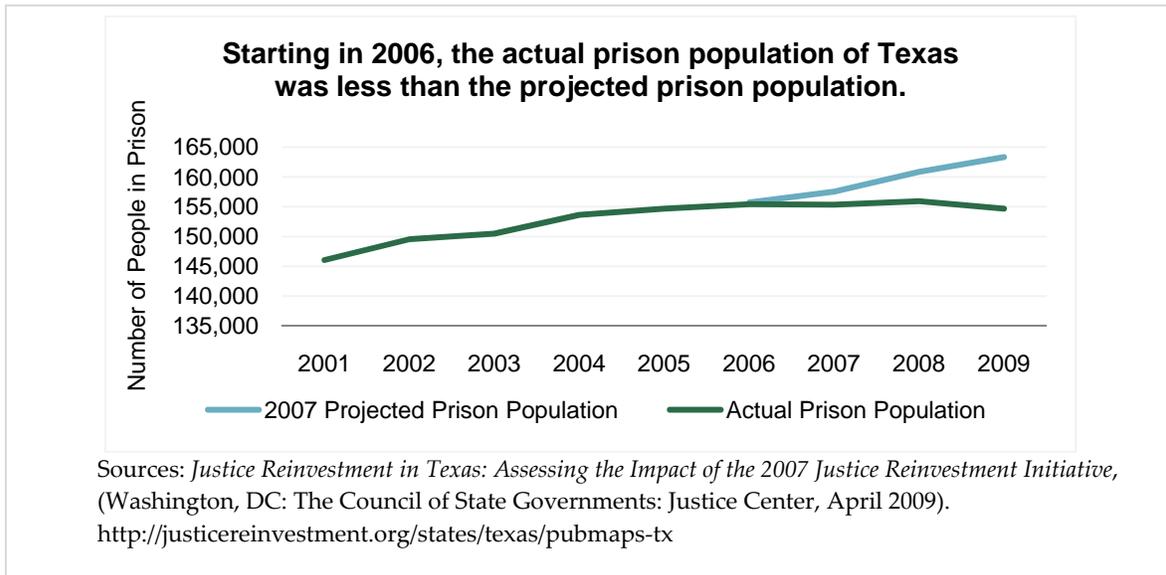
“I believe we can take an approach to crime that is both tough and smart. ... There are thousands of non-violent offenders in the system whose future we cannot ignore. Let’s focus more resources on rehabilitating those offenders so we can ultimately spend less money locking them up again.”

Texas Governor Rick Perry,
2007 State of the State Address

incarceration of people convicted of nonviolent offenses, instead using reinvestment-funded medical, psychological and drug treatment programs. This allowed the new treatment programs to be tested, and many people on probation and parole have been successfully diverted to treatment rather than having their probation or parole revoked and

returned to prison.⁸ Increasing access to treatment and/or community programs helped to decrease the prison population and create an effective reentry program that focuses on rehabilitation and community re-engagement.

Challenges: Although funding for these programs is currently secure, in tough economic times, many of these sorts of programs are the first to be cut, despite the impending possibility of increased incarceration if their funding decreases.



Results:

- More people released on parole. The number of cases reviewed by the Board of Pardons and Paroles increased by 5,400 actual cases between 2005 and 2009.⁹ The number of approved pardons and paroles increased by 3,600 actual cases with a nearly 3 percent increase between 2005 and 2009.
- Fewer people returned to prison on parole violations. Parole revocations dropped by 25 percent from 2006-2008.¹⁰
- Lower prison population. 1,257 less people were in Texas Department of Corrections prisons in the 2008-2009 year than in the 2007-2008 year.¹¹

Policy Implications: The Justice Reinvestment model is already being used in a number of states across the country, including Arizona, Connecticut, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin.¹²

2007 polls showed 71 percent of public favored alternatives to incarceration and 83 percent favored alternatives when informed that \$1 billion in new prison costs could be averted in the process.¹³

For more information on the Texas Justice Reinvestment Initiative, please visit: <http://justicereinvestment.org/states/texas>

¹ *Prison Count 2010: State Population Declines for the First Time in 38 Years* (Washington, D.C., The Pew Center on the States, April 2010).

www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/Prison_Count_2010.pdf?n=880.

² Tony Fabelo, *Texas Justice Reinvestment: Outcomes, Challenges and Policy Options to Consider* (Washington, D.C.: The Council of State Governments: Justice Center, March 2011)

<http://justicereinvestment.org/files/TXJRStateReport32011v2.pdf>

³ *Justice Reinvestment in Texas: Assessing the Impact of the 2007 Justice Reinvestment Initiative* (Washington, D.C.: The Council of State Governments: Justice Center, April 2009).

<http://justicereinvestment.org/states/texas/pubmaps-tx>

⁴ Brad Livingston and Bonita White, *Overview of Probation for the 79th Texas Legislature* (Austin, TX: Texas Department of Criminal Justice Community Justice Assistance Division, January 2005).

www.yourhonor.com/dwi/sentencing/cjad/cjad1.pdf

⁵ *Parole: Current Practices*. From “Parole, Desistance from Crime and Community Integration” (Washington D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 2007)

www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11988

⁶ *Justice Reinvestment in Texas: Assessing the Impact of the 2007 Justice Reinvestment Initiative*, April 2009.

⁷ Texas State Legislature: Legislative Budget Board, *Statewide Criminal Justice Recidivism and Revocation Rates, 82nd Cong.*, LBB Report (Austin, TX, January 2011).

www.lbb.state.tx.us/PubSafety_CrimJustice/3_Reports/Recidivism_Report_2011.pdf

⁸ *Justice Reinvestment in Texas: Assessing the Impact of the 2007 Justice Reinvestment Initiative*, April 2009.

⁹ Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, *Annual Report FY 2009* (Austin, TX, 2009).

www.tdcj.state.tx.us/bpp/publications/AR%20FY%202009.pdf

¹⁰ *Justice Reinvestment in Texas: Assessing the Impact of the 2007 Justice Reinvestment Initiative*, April 2009.

¹¹ *Prison Count 2010: State Population Declines for the First Time in 38 Years*, April 2010.

¹² Justice Reinvestment, “Work in the States,” February 2011. <http://justicereinvestment.org/states>

¹³ *Prison Count 2010: State Population Declines for the First Time in 38 Years*, April 2010.