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HIGHLIGHTING
TRENDS & ISSUES
IN THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE SYSTEM

Successful completion rates from Community Corrections in Colorado decreased for the first time in many years

Success rates declined in FY04

The success rate for offenders completing their halfway house stay was between 62 and 63 percent between FY00 and FY03. However, for those who participated in community corrections in FY04, the success rate dropped 7 percent. Technical violations increased 4 percent and escapes increased 3 percent. The seriousness of the offenders, as measured by the average criminal history score, remained relatively stable between FY02 and FY04.

Table 1. Program completion rates and failure reasons FY2000-FY2004

FY	Successful completion	Technical violations	Escape	New crime	Mean criminal history score
2004	56.1%	24.3%	18.1%	1.5%	2.66
2003	63.1%	20.2%	15.3%	1.4%	2.67
2002	62.4%	23.3%	13.4%	0.9%	2.65
2001	62.3%	21.8%	14.4%	1.6%	2.54
2000	63.6%	20.3%	14.1%	2.0%	2.44

Source: The Office of Research and Statistics analyzed data from DCJ's Office of Community Corrections. Data were obtained from offender termination forms.

As can be seen in Table 2, success rates significantly declined for both transition and diversion populations during the study period, although transition offenders were more likely than diversion offenders to successfully complete the program. Success rates for diversion clients dropped from nearly 59 percent during FY00-03 to just over 52 percent in FY04 while success rates for transition clients dropped from 67.2 percent to 60.1 percent in FY00-03 and FY04, respectively.

Table 2: Program outcome by population type

Population/FY (n)	Successful completion	Technical violations	Escape	New crime
Diversion*				
FY04 (2,471)	52.2%	25.3%	20.9%	1.6%
FY00-03 (8,194)	58.8%	22.8%	16.7%	1.7%
Transition*				
FY04 (2,354)	60.1%	23.4%	15.2%	1.3%
FY00-03 (7,636)	67.2%	19.9%	11.8%	1.1%

** Definitions for Diversion and Transition are provided in the sidebar on page 2.*

Source: The Office of Research and Statistics analyzed data from DCJ's Office of Community Corrections. Data were obtained from offender termination forms.

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Brief description of Community Corrections:

Community Corrections in Colorado refers to a system of 33 specific halfway house facilities that provide residential and non-residential services to convicted offenders. These facilities, often referred to as programs, receive state funds but are based and operated in local communities. These programs provide an intermediate residential sanction at the front end of the system between probation and prison, called **diversion**, and reintegration services at the tail end of the system between prison and parole, called **transition**. Community corrections placements allow offenders access to community resources, including treatment and employment opportunities, while living in a 24-hour staff secure correctional setting.

Each offender must sign out and in when leaving and returning to the facility, and staff monitors the location of off-site offenders by field visits and telephone calls. Several facilities use electronic monitoring and a few programs use geographic satellite surveillance to track offenders when they are away from the halfway house.

Why did success rates fall in FY04?

Risk and need scores remained stable. There are many possible explanations for the decline in success rates, but changes in the seriousness of the offenders, or their level of need as measured by the average Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI), did not account for the increase in technical violations and escapes in FY04.

Drug violations remained relatively stable. In FY04, terminations that resulted from technical violations related to drug use increased about four percent, from 33.1 percent in FY03 to 37.4 percent in FY04, but over the course of the five-year study period, terminations due to drug use remained fairly stable at about one-third of the technical violations (see Table 3, first column).

Table 3 also shows, of the drug-related technical violations, the proportion of those violations were due to specific drugs over the course of the study period. Alcohol was the most frequently cited drug leading to termination from the halfway house program during each of the five study years. Terminations related to marijuana declined; cocaine terminations fluctuated between 27 and 33 percent; the proportion of drug violations due to amphetamines nearly doubled.

Table 3: Drug-related technical violation (TV) terminations (n=4563) and drug types involved

FY	TV drug terminations 35.5% (1622)	Alcohol terminations 38.0% (617)	Marijuana terminations 19.9% (323)	Cocaine terminations 29.6% (480)	Amphetamine terminations 20.5% (332)
2004 (1174)	37.4% (439)	37.8% (166)	15.0% (66)	27.1% (119)	27.3% (120)
2003 (836)	33.1% (277)	43.7% (121)	19.9% (55)	28.5% (79)	20.5% (57)
2002 (939)	34.8% (327)	31.8% (104)	18.7% (61)	32.4% (106)	18.3% (60)
2001 (865)	34.5% (298)	39.6% (118)	21.1% (63)	33.2% (99)	14.8% (44)
2000 (749)	37.5% (281)	38.4% (108)	27.8% (78)	27.4% (77)	18.1% (51)

Note: Drug categories are not mutually exclusive. That is, offenders can be terminated for the use of multiple drugs. Therefore, the numbers and percents in the row cells will not equal the totals for the year or the study period.

Source: The Office of Research and Statistics analyzed data from DCJ's Office of Community Corrections.

Participation in services declined. Participation in services was statistically linked to program success. Offenders who participated in substance abuse, mental health, sex offender, domestic violence, cognitive, family, or budget services were more likely to complete the program successfully. The relationship between program participation and success also was found in DCJ's prior study of community corrections' outcomes (Woodburn and English, 2002).

Although the current study again found that program participation was statistically associated with positive program outcomes, specific information on treatment delivery, the level of participation in treatment for each client, the intensity or length of services, or information on treatment completion was unavailable. Nevertheless, offenders who participated in at least one program or service were significantly more likely to successfully complete the halfway



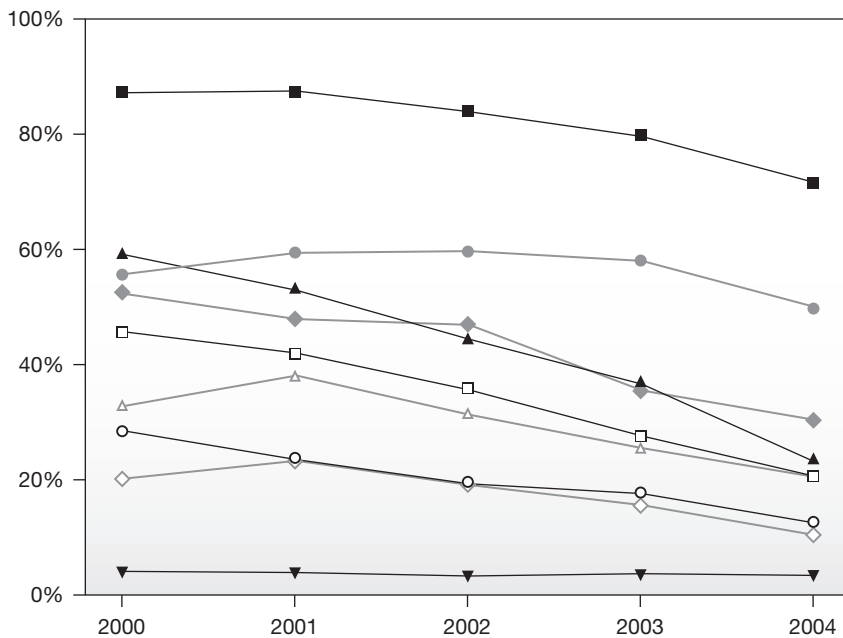
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house program; offenders who participated in at least three had the best outcomes. Success rates were higher, on average, by approximately 8-10 percentage points over the average over-all success rates for both diversion and transition clients who participated in any program. Specific programs seemed particularly beneficial to certain categories of offenders in FY04:

- Transition offenders who participated in family services had a success rate of 73.7 and diversion offenders who participated in family services had a success rate of 65.6 percent.
- Transition offenders participating in education programs were significantly more likely to succeed and less likely to escape.
- Offenders participating in budgeting programs succeeded at a rate of 61.7 percent (diversion) and 69.6 percent (transition), improving success rates by nearly 10 percentage points.
- Transition offenders participating in mental health programs improved success rates by 8 percentage points.
- Participation in domestic violence programs improved outcomes for both transition and diversion offenders by 8 percentage points.
- Diversion offenders particularly benefited from cognitive programming: those who received this service succeeded at a rate of 63.9 percent (men) and 64.0 percent (women) compared to 48.1 percent (men) and 51.3 percent (women) for those not receiving this programming.

However, program participation declined dramatically during the study period, as reflected in Figure 1. In particular, participation in budgeting services declined from 59.1 percent in FY00 to 23.1 percent in FY04; participation in domestic violence programming declined from a high of 38.1 percent in FY01 to 20.6 percent in FY04, and participation in family services decreased from 58 percent in FY03 to 50 percent in FY04.

Figure 1: Program participation declined between 2001 and 2004



“ Offenders who participated in at least one program or service were significantly more likely to successfully complete the halfway house program; offenders who participated in at least three had the best outcomes. However, program participation declined during the study period. ”

Figure 1 Key

- Substance abuse services provided
- ▲ Financial services provided
- Cognitive services provided
- ◆ Employment services provided
- Mental health services provided
- △ Domestic violence services provided
- Academic services provided
- ◇ Family services provided
- ▼ Sex offender services provided (not elective)

Source: The Office of Research and Statistics analyzed data from DCJ's Office of Community Corrections. Data were obtained from client termination forms.

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The study: Where did the findings in this EOC come from?

The Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) Office of Research and Statistics (ORS) conducts a study on community corrections about every five years. Data are from termination forms provided by each program to the Office of Community Corrections (OCC). This study includes data from 20,655 cases terminated from community corrections between fiscal years 2000 and 2004. The data were analyzed to explore who fails and who succeeds in community corrections. For this study we looked at two outcomes.

- **Successful Program Termination.** The first measure of success or failure for participants in community corrections is whether or not they successfully complete the residential placement.
- **New Filing After 1- and 2- Years.** Recidivism was measured as a new misdemeanor or felony filing within 12 or 24 months of successful program completion.

¹ University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Addiction Research and Treatment Services, Peer1/The Haven Outpatient Treatment Community, "Executive Summary: Proposal for a Differential Rate for Therapeutic Community Treatment," available from Ken Gaipa.

Table 4 source: The Office of Research and Statistics analyzed data from DCJ's Office of Community Corrections. Data were obtained from offender termination forms.

Can the state budget affect offender outcomes?

State budget cuts reduced funding for mental health and substance abuse programming in the community. Most likely, offenders were required to pay more for local treatment services as a way to offset the budget cuts to state agencies.

Further, in FY03, legislative changes led to an 8 percent decrease in the per diem rate paid to community corrections providers and a 25 percent increase in what each offender must pay for room and board (from \$13 to \$17).

There is additional evidence that these legislative changes contributed to the increase in offender failures in FY04. In FY00, DCJ's Office of Community Corrections collaborated with Peer 1 and The Haven, two community corrections programs that provide therapeutic community services to high level drug offenders, to use Drug Offender Surcharge Funds to provide an enhanced per diem rate that would offset costs that would otherwise be levied against offenders via the subsistence fees. In particular, program administrators argued that allowing offenders to delay seeking employment and paying subsistence—and therefore avoiding trips into the community to job-seek early in their placement and focusing on treatment instead—would improve program outcomes. This experiment resulted in enhanced services and increased treatment completion rates. Further, escape rates for these programs declined by one-third, from 25.4 percent in FY00 to 15.28 percent in FY01.¹

In addition, reducing the reimbursement rate to programs may have resulted in a decreased tolerance for offenders who were unemployed or otherwise unable to pay their fees. Further, given the findings from the pilot project with Peer 1 and The Haven, discussed above, the offenders' lack of ability to pay the subsistence fees may have contributed to the increase in the escape rate in FY04.

Treatment needs

The Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI) is used to assess client risk and needs. Higher scores indicate a higher need for supervision. The LSI collects information about the client regarding their criminal history, education and employment, finances, family and/or marriage, accommodations, leisure and recreation, companions, substance abuse, mental health attitude, and criminal orientation. Community correction programs use the LSI to determine a client's needs and develop a treatment plan for each client.

According to the client termination form, substance abuse was the number one treatment need across all years. In FY03, the termination forms included a one-time set of questions about substance abuse treatment participation. In FY03, 85.7 percent of community corrections offenders needed and received substance abuse treatment. Most (51.2 percent) received weekly outpatient therapy, as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Type of substance abuse treatment participation: FY03 (n=4,086)

Treatment level	n	Percent
No substance abuse treatment needed	568	13.9%
Drug and alcohol education	551	13.5%
Weekly outpatient therapy	2094	51.2%
Intensive outpatient therapy	494	12.1%
Intensive residential treatment	150	3.7%
Therapeutic community	214	5.2%
No treatment-assessed for psychopathy	15	0.4%



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Employment is strongly linked to successful termination

Finding employment is a critical step to being successful for an offender in community corrections. The success rate of offenders who were employed full-time (71.9%) was more than three times higher than the success rate of offenders who were unemployed (20%). Furthermore, offenders who were unemployed had three times as many technical violations (45.6%) and escapes (31.9%) as offenders who were employed (technical violations, 15.9%; escapes, 11.1%). Compared to those who were employed, unemployed offenders were twice as likely to commit a new crime while in the halfway house.

What happens to offenders who successfully complete residential placement in community corrections?

Most offenders remained crime-free in the two years following successful program completion. Recidivism was defined as a new felony or misdemeanor court filing within 12 months and 24 months of successful program completion. Of all offenders who successfully completed community corrections in this five-year period (12,652), 85 percent remained crime-free after being at risk for 12 months and 75 percent remained crime-free after being at risk for 24 months.

More than half of the new filings that occurred within 24 months at risk were for nonviolent felony offenses (57.5 percent). The second most common filing was for a misdemeanor or petty offense (31.8 percent). Only eleven percent (10.6 percent) of these new filings were for violent felonies.

Therapeutic communities* and programs accepting only women had significantly lower recidivism rates than the other community corrections programs that were not specialized. Therapeutic communities are eligible for an enhanced per diem rate that can replace the offender's required subsistence payments. This allows the offender to focus on treatment during the early months of placement. Given the long-term positive outcomes for more than 90 percent of those who successfully completed the TC program, the additional funding to these programs appears to be a wise investment of state dollars.

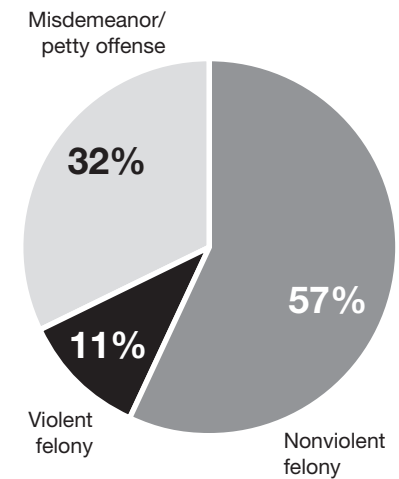
Table 5: Recidivism rates by type of specialized halfway house

Specialized halfway house	% recidivated within 12 months	% all other halfway houses within 12 months	% recidivated within 24 months	% all other halfway houses within 24 months
Drug therapeutic communities (TC)	7.9%	15.0%	17.1%	25.7%
Male TC	8.8%	14.7%	20.7%	25.3%
Female TC	4.8%	14.7%	10.1%	25.3%
Mental health TC	8.2%	14.7%	15.0%	25.4%
Female programs only	10.6%	15.1%	17.9%	26.1%

Source: The Office of Research and Statistics analyzed data from DCJ's Office of Community Corrections. Data were obtained from offender termination forms.

Recidivism is related to several factors. In this study, community corrections clients who were younger, with a higher criminal history score, a higher Level of Supervision Inventory (LSI) score, and who were not released to supervision were more likely to recidivate.

Figure 2: New misdemeanor or felony court filing within 24 months post-discharge



Source: The Office of Research and Statistics analyzed data from DCJ's Office of Community Corrections. Data were obtained from offender termination forms.

“ Compared to those who were employed, unemployed offenders were twice as likely to commit a new crime while in the halfway house. ”

** Therapeutic communities are residential treatment programs that focus on treating the whole person through the use of a peer community. The core element is the social environment: it provides opportunities to learn and change through relationships with others.*

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The full report is available at http://dcj.state.co.us/ors/pdf/docs/Comm_Corr_05_06.pdf.



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Financial outcomes

Offenders in halfway houses across the state earned over \$115 million and paid over \$36 million in room and board between FY00 and FY04. They paid at least \$2.6 million in state taxes and at least \$6.7 million in federal taxes during that time. Offenders also paid restitution and child support, and most pay for services and treatment received while in community corrections.

What works in community corrections?

- **Programming and services**
 - Education
 - Substance abuse
 - Budgeting skills
 - Cognitive training
 - Family involvement/parenting training
 - Domestic violence programs
 - Mental health
- **Substance abuse therapeutic communities**
- **Gender-specific programs**
- **Mental health therapeutic communities**
- **Lower subsistence fees levied against offenders**
- **Higher per diem rates for halfway house providers**
- **Employment opportunities**

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