

PS COMMITTEE #2  
October 8, 2009

**M E M O R A N D U M**

October 6, 2009

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Susan J. Farag, Legislative Analyst *SJF*

SUBJECT: Update – Recidivism Study

Today the Public Safety (PS) Committee will receive an update on the recidivism study that is being conducted by Justice & Security Strategies and Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (DOCR) staff. While an initial draft of the study was released last week, a finalized version is not yet available. DOCR will provide an update on the status of the study and its initial findings. Those expected to brief the Committee:

Arthur Wallenstein, Director, Department of Correction and Rehabilitation  
Dr. Craig Uchida, President, Justice & Security Strategies  
Tina Michaels, Assessment and Quality Services Manager, PRRS

**BACKGROUND**

In the Fall of 2007, the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention provided funding to Justice & Security Strategies to conduct a recidivism analysis of sentenced individuals leaving the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (DOCR). The project is led by Dr. Craig Uchida (President, J&SS), Dr. Anne Piehl (Professor, Rutgers University), and Dr. Shawn Flower (Principal, Choice Research Associates) with support from PRRS Assessment Manager Teresa Still and PRRS Division Chief Stefan LoBuglio, Ed.D.

The study sample of approximately 600 inmates were randomly selected from a cohort of more than 2000 sentenced individuals leaving DOCR's three correctional facilities – MCDC, MCCF, and PRRS in 2003/2004. The study methodology was comprehensive in both scientifically choosing a representative and randomized sample and its ability to use criminal justice data from more than a half dozen criminal justice databases at the county, state, federal level, and several at the agency level including the courts. The final report was due on June 30, 2009 and is intended to present recidivism rates, survival estimates, and hazard estimates by many categories including age, race, gender, offense type, sentence length, and recidivist event type.

## THE STUDY'S INITIAL FINDINGS

Using an all encompassing definition of recidivism (any arrest, conviction, or re-incarceration within one year and three years) yields rates comparable to those reported nationally (41% within one year; 65% within three years). A caveat regarding the data is that adverse selection may result in a higher recidivism rate in Montgomery County because our system efficiently has multi-level diversion programs for the least risky offenders – so called “cream offenders” – who never are sentenced to DOCR but are remanded to diversion programs including probation and parole. Thus, those who remain as sentenced offenders are at greater risk to recidivate.

Using a more policy-relevant recidivism rate defined as those committing serious crimes after release yields rates that are 6.6% within one year and 16% within three years. This distinction is critical and this type of analysis would allow us to drill down and look at programmatic interventions for this smaller population of recidivist who really do threaten public safety.

Recidivism rates across jurisdictions are not comparable for many reasons including the thoroughness and sophistication of the researchers, the study methodology, and the adequacy of criminal justice databases. If this study has just confined itself to using the state criminal history records the one and three year rates would be 31% and 48% compared to 41% and 65%. Unfortunately, most recidivism studies do not utilize all possible data sources. Interestingly, there is a disincentive to do so, because the more data you gather, the higher recidivism rate that you find.

The state of criminal justice data bases in the court, in Montgomery County, in the state, and nationally do not allow researchers and policy makers to use data in a productive manner. Most all jurisdictions in Maryland would have extreme difficulty conducting a similar study because of the challenges of extracting meaningful data from the collection of these databases.

## FINAL VERSION AND FINDINGS

A final report is expected to be completed and issued by November 2009.

This packet includes the following:

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Montgomery County DOCR Recidivism Analyst – Initial Results

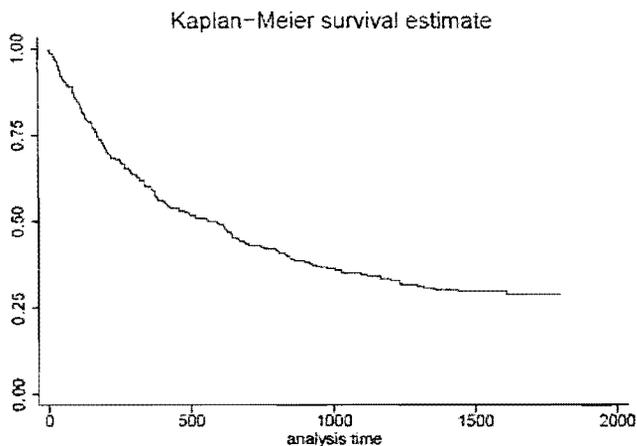
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# Montgomery County DOCR Recidivism Analysis – Initial Results<sup>1</sup>

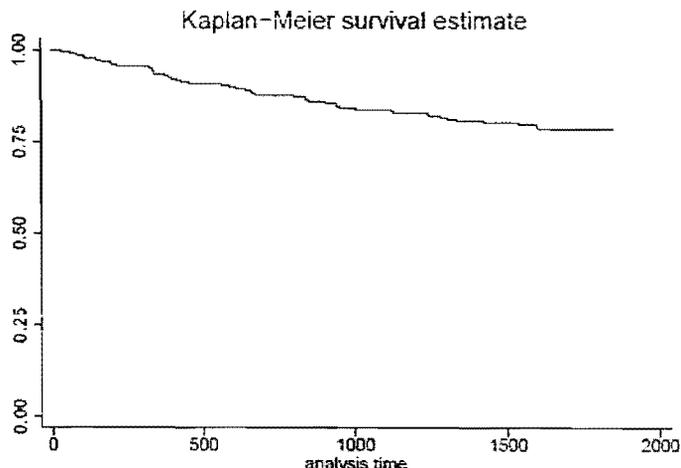
Recidivism Rates for DOCR Sentenced Inmates Released 2003/2004		
Category	One-Year (%)	Three-Year (%)
Any Arrest	40.5	65.2
Serious Arrest	6.5	16.1
Any Arrest using only MD data	30.9	47.8
N=291 male inmates released from MCDC, MCCF, or PRRS		

**Figure 1 – Any Arrest**



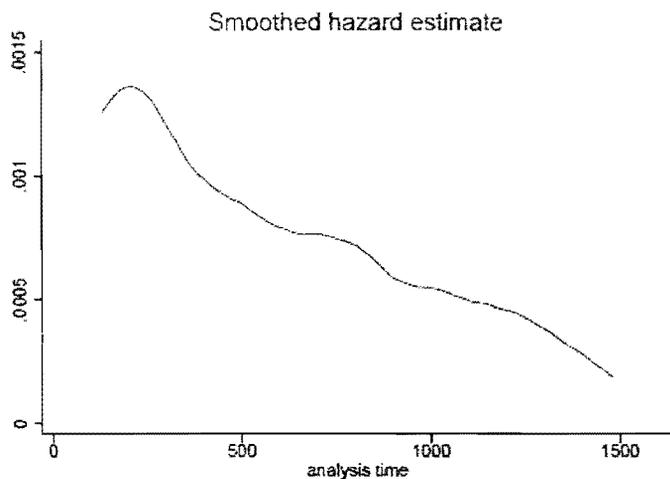
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**Figure 2 – Serious Arrest**



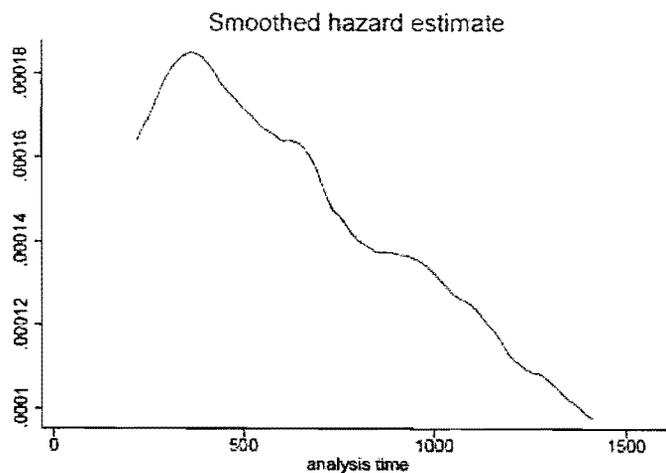
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**Figure 3 – Any Arrest**



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**Figure 4 – Serious Arrest**



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Figures 1 & 2 show the survival curves, which are the cumulative proportion surviving over time from release. At the moment of release from custody, 100% are out of custody. All those who have not been rearrested as of a given time are considered to have “survived.” The curve shows what proportion remain arrest free at any given length of time from release. Survival curves provide more information than recidivism rates for a specified time period (i.e. 1 year or 3 year) because the curve shows how rapidly the recidivism occurs. In comparing curves for different populations, one compares how much and when the recidivism occurs.

Figures 3 & 4 provide an alternate way to view the same phenomenon by plotting hazard rates, which show the rate at which people are recidivating. Hazard rates for recidivism generally rise sharply soon after release and then decline to relatively low levels.

<sup>1</sup> In the fall 2007, the Governor’s Office of Crime Control & Prevention funded Justice & Security Strategies to conduct a recidivism analysis of sentenced individuals leaving the Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. The study sample of approximately 600 inmates divided equally by gender were randomly selected from the entire cohort of 2000+ sentenced individuals leaving any of the DOCR’s three correctional facilities – MCDC, MCCF, and PRRS in 2003/2004. The preliminary analysis presented herein was conducted on the 291 male inmates included in the sample using data from the local, state, and federal criminal administrative databases. The project is led by Dr. Craig Uchida (President, J&SS), Dr. Anne Piehl (Professor, Rutgers University) and Dr. Shawn Flower (Principal, Choice Research Associates) with support from DOCR’s PRRS Assessment Manager Teresa Still and PRRS Division Chief Stefan LoBuglio, Ed.D. The final report is due 6/30/09 and will present recidivism rates, survival estimates, and hazard estimates by many categories including age, race, gender, offense type, sentence length and recidivist event type.