

Research & Planning

June 22, 2009

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Authority: To review, research and evaluate existing systems and programs within the scope of the criminal justice commission

The Importance of Baseline Data

With growing emphasis on measuring and reporting on results related to program funding, the development of baseline data becomes that much more important. It is a vital part of any successful monitoring and evaluation program for the following reasons.

1. Developing baseline data requires program managers to define (or operationalize) their goals in measurable terms and identify's existing data sources and/or data collection strategies.
2. Baseline data helps measure changes in the program's activities, outputs and outcomes. For example, a pre-release re-entry program may include a number of activities, outputs, and outcomes. An activity may include one-on-one counseling with inmates about to be released from the county jail on how to prepare resumes and obtain gainful (and lawful) employment. An output in this case may be a well prepared resume; and securing gainful employment upon release may serve as an intermediate outcome. The ultimate (or long-term) outcome being that the released inmate chooses a crime free career and that the rate of recidivism decreases. **Ideally, these activities, outputs, desired outcomes and data collection strategies are in-place prior to the program commencing.**
3. Baseline data enables program managers and policymakers to better understand a specific phenomenon over a period of time. It is one way to illustrate the existence of a social/legal problem that may require intervention. For example, **monitoring** the average length of days an accused spends in pre-trial detention may signal that every component of the pre-trial detention process is working well. Baseline data helps policymakers and program managers define acceptable standards over time; or standards that are defined by statute, jail capacity, and/or budgetary constraints. The Corrections Task Force relies on baseline data to monitor the average daily count in our jail each month to help alleviate overcrowding which is limited by capacity

*Criminal Justice
Commission Mandate:*

*a) to provide overall
coordination to law
enforcement and crime
prevention efforts in the
county;*

*b) to provide an
efficient, cost effective
and timely criminal
justice system in the
county; and*

*c) to effect the
reduction of crime in
the county on a
permanent basis.*

and monitored by statutory requirement.

4. Having access to baseline data enables policymakers and program managers to **evaluate** the outcome of various interventions intended to help alleviate different social/legal problems. For example, an exploratory analysis may examine if an "Alternatives to Incarceration" program is having the desired impact on the county jail population? We may expect that the program may 1) reduce the average number of days a misdemeanor spends in the county jail after being sentenced, and 2) that recidivism decreases overtime.
5. Most recently, the **Corrections Research Database** (initial data source maintained by the Palm Beach Sheriff's Office) was used to inform the development of re-entry strategies and grant applications sponsored by the Criminal Justice Commission.

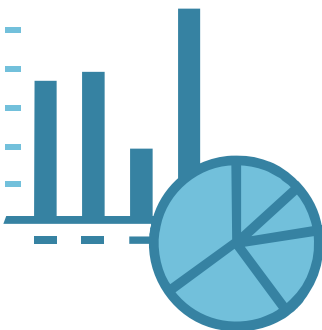
While the above examples should not be seen as exhaustive, they try to illustrate that developing and maintaining baseline data is not simply an academic exercise. It is a vital starting point for any monitoring and evaluation program, and is the pillar of the **evidence based** approach espoused by the Chairman of the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners and the Criminal Justice Commission.

Damir Kukec
Research and Planning Manager
Criminal Justice Commission

Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Planning Council

(June, 2009): Chair Jeff F. Koons
Research Staff: Jenise Link (561) 355-1503

The Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Reinvestment Act Strategic Plan was presented to the Criminal Justice Commission on April 27th and to the County Commission on May 19th. The Planning grant Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Children and Families ended on May 19, 2009. The Planning Council will be meeting soon to discuss the next steps in this project.



Law Enforcement Planning Council

(June 4, 2009): Chair Chief Clay Walker

Research Staff: Wayne English (561) 355-2326

The Law Enforcement Planning Council (LEPC) met on June 4, 2009 with 67 people in attendance representing local, state and federal agencies. Sherry Howard gave a legislative update. One of the important bills that passed this year was the Prescription Drug Monitoring law.

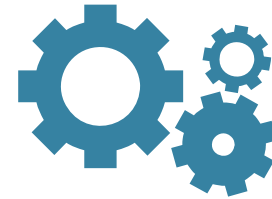
Liz Parker gave an overview of the Fast Track Program which helps to reduce the jail population by disposing of the case at first appearance with a felony conviction and court costs. All cases are non-violent low level felonies.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding ticket dismissals. A new form is being designed that will require the signature of a court official on a dismissal request form. The Traffic Committee chaired by Chief Crane also will look at a possible model policy for dismissals.

Captain Bob Price of the Lake Worth High School Criminal Justice Academy gave an overview of the Academy. An Advisory Board chaired by Chief Walker has just been instituted. Internships for the students are very important and agency sponsors are needed. Guest speakers and trainers are also needed to interact with the students. Any equipment or assistance would be appreciated.

Michelle Spangenberg gave an overview of the Courts Mental Health Specialty Division. She noted that in January 2009 the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit implemented the Mental Health Specialty Division, which handles all "Incompetent to Proceed" cases. These cases are identified as such by the Mental Health Case Manager, a position funded through the CJC and the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners.

The Sheriff reported that because of budget cuts he will not be transporting prisoners for the municipalities after October 1, 2009. It was noted that the transportation of prisoners from the municipalities costs approximately \$80,000. The Sheriff did state that they will assist the municipalities with transportation in exigent circumstances.



"Errors using inadequate data are much less than those using no data at all."

Charles Babbage

Court System Task Force

(June, 2009): Chair Jack Goldberger

Research Staff: Journey Beard (561) 355-1881

Although there was no Court System Task Force meeting in June, the Task Force was still working on a number of issues. On June 8th, the Criminal Justice Commission Executive Committee referred the issue of neighborhood accountability boards to the Court System Task Force

(CSTF). The CSTF is being asked to study the possible creation of **neighborhood accountability boards** for first-time youthful offenders within Palm Beach County. We will begin immediate discussions with interested parties, and will be studying similar programs in other areas during the summer.



Violation of Probation Hearings, Michelle Spangenberg, Court

Administration: The committee will be meeting on June 30th at 12:30 in the Judicial Dining Room to discuss the possibility of expanding this project to include misdemeanor cases.

Drug Court, Nicole Saunders, Justice Services: There was a productive meeting of the Citizens Advisory Board for Adult Drug Court. Past Graduates shared their perceptions of the program and provided insight on improvements that could be made. As a result, this group will continue to meet as an alumni group. They will mentor current drug court participants and host events such as potlucks and picnics. Looking ahead, the hope is to generate interest in fundraising. Nicole is currently working on a Family Drug Court BJA Grant with the SAMH office of DCF. It would serve individuals involved in the child welfare system. To date, there has been no final word received concerning the Drug Court Co-Occurring Track Grant.

Delinquency Drug Court, Cristy Altaro, Court Administration: This Court serves youth, on juvenile probation, who have substance abuse issues. To be eligible, youth must be between 12-17 years old, and on juvenile probation with a VOP. Delinquency Drug Court is starting to grow again, and are screening new referrals and have identified a group of new candidates, two of which we hope will enter the program on June 17th. Additionally, there is another youth entering the program this week.

Rescission of No Contact Orders, Bea Lovelace, Clerk & Comptroller's Office: Bea has been working on the Circuit Court No Contact Order (NCO) report, as discussed during the May meeting. From 11,200 cases reported last month, the backlog has been reduced to 4,300 cases. These are closed NCO cases, some of which should have properly had a written Rescission Order filed. It appears that, when a NCO case was 'no-filed' by the State Attorney's Office, a Rescission Order was usually noted in the BANNER report. However, if the State Attorney's Office orally announced a 'nolle prosequere' in the NCO case, a written Rescission Order may not have been completed and BANNER would not indicate any Rescission Order. We'll be working with PBSO Central Records to determine how their NCO records coincide with BANNER.

Corrections Task Force

(June 2009): Chair Doug Duncan
 Research Staff: Jenise Link (561) 355-1503.

The Corrections Task Force did not meet during the month of June. However, staff continued to move forward a number of issues related to alternatives to corrections, preparing a draft survey related to day reporting and building baseline data concerning admissions to and releases from the county Jail.

Research Ideas & Questions

The Research and Planning Unit is always looking for information and data that may be of interest to the Palm Beach County Board of Commissioners, the members of the Criminal Justice Commission, our staff, as well as the general public. We appreciate receiving research ideas and questions that focus on monitoring and evaluating Palm Beach County's Criminal Justice Systems and programs funded in whole or in part by the Criminal Justice Commission. We know that we can benefit from the experience of others; therefore, we are interested in highlighting best practices and successful programs from other parts of the country and from around the world. We are also open to the possibility of undertaking joint research projects with both government and non-government sectors. If you have any questions, we encourage you to contact the Research and Planning Staff or contact the Criminal Justice Commission for further assistance.



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