Justice Reinvestment Initiative at the Local Level

Getting to Know Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

Eau Claire County, Wisconsin is in the west central region of the state, with a population just under 100,000 and covering 648 square miles, eight of those square miles covered by water. County government is overseen by the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors, a 29 member body with a chair and a co-chair. The median household income reported by the US Census in 2011 was $45,846; over 92% of county residents over the age of 25 are high school graduates, and just over 30% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Employment grew slightly between 2000 and 2009, despite a decline in employment statewide during that same period.

The Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance and its Statistical Analysis Center report that for 2010, the reported violent crime rate for Eau Claire County was 172 per 100,000 population, in contrast with the state-wide rate of 250. Similarly, the reported rate of property crime was 2,370 per 100,000 population, while the state’s rate for similar crimes was 2,514.

Throughout the past decade, demands and costs for Eau Claire County services have been increasing at the same time that revenues have been constrained, resulting in sizeable funding gaps during annual budget processes. As a result, in 2001, Eau Claire County established a performance management and performance budgeting process into their yearly budget cycle. Three areas of focus have been established by county leaders to support this effort: funding and budget analysis, including the need for cost benefit analysis, increasing the use of technology across the system, and establishment of evidence-based decisionmaking practices.

Keys to Success in Eau Claire County

The foundation of Eau Claire County’s Justice Reinvestment work will be:

- Building on the county’s firm and formal commitment to cost benefit analysis and evidence-based decisionmaking;
- The involvement and leadership of the Eau Clare County CJCC and EBDM/JRI Policy Team;
- The insight of county leadership that this work is even more important as greater jail capacity becomes available; and
- The vision to consider opportunities for change through the entire system to reduce costs while protecting community safety.
JRI Phase I in Eau Claire County

In the fall of 2011, Eau Claire County submitted a letter of interest to participate in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative at the local level. The Eau Claire Criminal Justice Collaboration Council (CJCC) submitted the letter, noting that they had been established in 2006 by the county board resolution to “enhance public safety through system and community collaboration.” Their membership includes three members of the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors, three Circuit Court Judges, the District Attorney, representatives of the Department of Corrections, the Sheriff’s Department and the Eau Claire Jail, the Public Defender’s office, Probation and Parole, Health and Human Services, and others. They also pointed out that the County’s commitment to the use of good information and analysis was consistent with the JRI model, positioning it to undertake the work of Phase I.

On site work began in March 2012 and quickly focused upon gathering the data from the appropriate agencies in order to paint a picture of current population and cost drivers. At that time, the county was anticipating the opening of new jail capacity in the summer of 2012 and was interested in a strategy to utilize that capacity in the most cost-effective way possible. As the data was being assembled and analyzed, the policy team worked with the CEPP site coordinator on a strategy for developing sound performance measures so that they could understand the impact of any changes they might make. Data presentations began to be made to the policy team in May 2012, and proceeded through a number of iterations, shaped by questions of the policy team.

This effort is looking not only at jail populations, but also at the probation population, and at the population currently diverted from prosecution. It has also focused on law enforcement activity, making efforts to obtain a risk profile of those who come into contact with the police so that possible changes in cite and release practices might be within the scope of the team’s analysis. Further analysis is underway, and the model developed will be used to simulate changes that the policy team wants to consider—changes that would seek to reduce costs, and improve outcomes. Given their work on performance measurement and cost analysis, the team will be well-positioned to make informed changes, document the impacts, and reinvest those resources.
# Justice Reinvestment Initiative at the Local Level

## Topics of Interest

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<th>1. Understanding in detail the profile of the population moving through the system and understanding use of jail bed days.</th>
<th>2. Exploring population currently moving through the diversion program for insights on enhancing use and effectiveness.</th>
<th>3. Explore the population at “first contact” with law enforcement to understand the risk profile.</th>
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<td>Early Insights</td>
<td>The team indicates that the process has provided an unprecedented level of information and understanding of the system operations.</td>
<td>Hope to understand the effectiveness of this process and whether changes in criteria might be prudent. including the possible use of early screening to determine a larger population that might be appropriate for diversion.</td>
<td>The use of a PROXY risk assessment at the point of first law enforcement contact could inform decisions about cite/release, and be used for other decisionmakers in the system.</td>
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