124402

Crimes Committed by DC Prisoners After Imprisonment:

A Validation Assessment of the District of Columbia's Department of Corrections Community Risk Instrument

Prepared by

James Austin, Ph.D.
Paul Litsky
Dan McCarthy

May, 1989

NCCD

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY
685 Market Street, Suite 620
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 956-5651

Washington, D.C. 20534

Ref: NIC T/A #89P2001

This technical assistance activity was funded by the Prisons Division of the
National Institute of Corrections. The Institute is a Federal agency
established to provide assistance to strengthen state and local correctional
agencies by creating more effective, humane, safe and just correctional
services.

The resource person who provided the on-site technical assistance did so on a
contractual basis, at the request of the District of Columbia Department of
Corrections, and through the coordination of the National Institute of
Corrections. The direct on-site assistance and this subsequent report are
intended to assist the District of Columbia Department of Corrections in
addressing issues outlined in the original request and in efforts to enhance
the effectiveness of the agency.

The contents of this document reflect the views of Mr. Austin and Mr.
McCarthy. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or
policies of the National Institute of Corrections.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This report was conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency for the District of Columbia's Department of Corrections. The study was based on an analysis of inmates released from the DOC in 1985 to (1) determine how many crimes these prisoners commit after release and (2) develop an accurate risk assessment tool to evaluate an inmate's readiness for release. The major findings and recommendations are as follow:

1. District of Columbia inmates serve the longest terms of any other state prison jurisdiction.

2. The rate of rearrest for DOC inmates is 50-70 percent lower than for the rates reported by other state prison systems.

3. The rate of rearrest for released inmates decreased by approximately 50 percent compared to their arrest rate prior to incarceration.

4. Only 15.3 percent of all crimes committed by released inmates during the first year of release were violent crimes.

5. The vast majority of inmates do no attempt to escape nor become involved in serious institutional disciplinary incidents.

6. The proposed DOC Community Risk Instrument has a moderate level of prediction but needs to be modified and simplified.

7. The proposed revised Community Risk Instrument based on validation analysis show that nearly half of all released felons are "good" to "excellent" risks for release and would not jeopardize public safety in the metropolitan D.C. area if so released.

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 1987, the District of Columbia's Department of Corrections (DOC) requested to the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) that funds be provided to conduct a study of the types of crimes committed by sentenced felons released from prison. Results from this study would help the DOC determine how best to select inmates for release into the community once such offenders became eligible for release. The DOC had already developed a prototype Classification Community Risk Assessment instrument to assist DOC staff in making an informed judgement on each inmate eligible for release. A primary focus of the research was to validate this instrument and where it was found lacking make suggestions for modification.

The validation study was also required as part of the DOC's continuing need to meet agreed upon obligations set forth under the current consent decree. The DOC also requested that the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) be selected to conduct this research.

This report summarizes the results of the study and its policy implications. In addition to evaluating the validity of the draft DOC classification for release instrument, a number of other interesting and significant findings are also presented on the nature of crimes committed by released prisoners and their threat to public safety.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study involved analysis of a cohort of prisoners released on parole from the District of Columbia during calendar year 1985. The year 1985 was selected to allow for a minimum of a two year follow-up period. These prisoners had been incarcerated for over three years for felony level crimes. Pretrial detainees and prisoners sentenced for misdemeanor level crimes were excluded from the analysis.

To reduce the study's costs while still retaining its integrity, a systematic random sample of all sentenced felon inmates released during 1985 produced an sample size of 810 inmates. NCCD staff then developed with the DOC a process for coding all relevant data from DOC inmate files on each inmate. Due to missing and incomplete records, a total of 675 cases (or 81 percent) were retained from the original sample size.

Since the major focus of the study was to determine which background and institutional items predicted success or failure after release, it was necessary to collect detailed inmate arrest records. The source for this information was the District of Columbia Pretrial Services Agency which has access to the most compete police records for persons admitted and released from the DOC prison system. The Pretrial Services Agency forwarded computerized records for the 675 cases, which NCCD staff reformatted and merged with the inmate and institutional conduct records. Due to incomplete criminal records, the sample was further reduced to 558 cases (69 percent of the original 810 sample). A

comparison between the deleted and retained cases found no systematic bias between the two groups indicating that the final sample was representative of the original sample of released felons.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RELEASED DOC INMATES

In this section, we describe the socio-economic and criminal attributes of inmates released from the District's prison system. These data, among other things, underscore the difficulties these mostly young, Black men are likely to face as they seek to re-integrate themselves into a highly competitive society. The data also show that these offenders serve extremely lengthy prison terms compared to other state prison systems and that incidents of violence and escape committed by these inmates while imprisoned are extremely rare.

Their Social and Demographic Characteristics

Sentenced felons released from the District of Columbia Department of Corrections were similar to the characteristics of most prison inmates found in other state prison systems with the exception of race (Table 1). Although all of the state prison systems contain disproportionate numbers of Hispanic and Black inmates compared to the population at large, these differences were especially pronounced for the District. Specifically, 97 percent of the released inmates were Black. They were overwhelmingly male (95 percent) and young (average age of 30.8 years and 51 percent between 18 and 29 year old. About half of the

Table 1

Descriptive Characteristics
DOC Sentenced Felon Releases

Item	N	%	Item	N	%
Sex			**Prior Adult Convictions**		
Male	525	95.5	None	96	17.5
Female	25	4.5	1	102	18.5
			2	101	18.4
Race			3	80	14.5
Black	535	97.3	4+	170	30.9
White	10	1.8			
Other	5	0.9	**Prior Adult Probation/ Parole Failures**		
			None	232	42.2
Average Age at Release	550	30.8 yrs	1	170	30.9
			2+	143	26.0
Stable Marriage/ Support?	278	49.8			
			Drug Use History		
Marketable Job Skill?	150	26.9	No Use Reported	95	17.3
			Occasional Use	129	23.5
			Prior Abuse	242	44.0
High School/GED	226	40.5	Current Abuse	84	15.3
Primary Offense			**Average Length of Stay**	39.1 mos	
Drugs	118	21.5			
Robbery	79	14.4	**Disciplinary and Escape Incidents**		
Armed Robbery	64	11.6	No Major Incidents	436	78.1
Burglary	61	11.1	No Cl. 2 Incidents	330	60.6
Assault	58	10.5	No Cl. 3 Incidents	410	73.5
Weapons	35	6.4	No Assaults on Staff	538	96.4
Murder/Manslaughter	20	3.6	No Assults on Inmates	530	95.0
Other Crimes/ Violence	19	3.5	No Excapes or Attempts from Secure Prison	552	98.9
Auto Theft	21	3.8	No Excapes or Attempts from Work Furlough	556	99.6
Other Property	75	13.6	No Walk Aways Minimum Custody	498	89.2
Prior Weapon Use?	119	21.3			
			Prescribed Program Activity		
Prior Conviction/ Violence?	144	25.8	Completion	263	47.1
			Marginal	87	15.6
Prior Drug Conviction?	122	21.9	Partial	175	31.4
			None	33	5.9
Prior Conviction Sex w/ Minor?	12	2.2	**Voluntary Program Participation**		
			Good	186	33.3
			Marginal	204	37.5
			None	163	24.2

inmates (49.8 percent) were married or could show evidence of family support. However, only 27 percent have stable employment history or possessed a marketable job skill. A minority (41 percent) had a GED or high school diploma at sentencing and only 11 percent earned college credits while confined.

Their Crimes

The types of crimes committed by these inmates for which they were sentenced to prison for were primarily drug related (20 percent), robbery (14 percent), armed robbery (12 percent), burglary (11 percent), assault (10 percent), and weapons violations (5 percent).[1] The DOC community risk instrument contains a scale to rank order the offense severity which takes into account the nature of the crimes committed and then ranks them according to their seriousness. Most the these offenses fall into the "moderate" offense severity (41 percent) with another 37 percent classified as "high" severity. Only six percent fell into the highest severity category which reflects crimes involving actual violence. On the other end of the scale 14.1 percent of the crimes were classified as "low moderate" and only 1.7 percent were placed in the lowest severity category.

In terms of prior criminal histories, most of the inmates had prior adult felony convictions (82.5 percent) with an average of 2.2 convictions. Almost one third (30.9 percent) had four or more prior convictions. Another indicator of the seriousness of

---

[1] In those cases where an inmates was sentenced for multiple crimes, the most serous crime was recorded.

these offenders is the number of prior parole and probation failures. More than half (57.8 percent) had failed to complete either a prior probation or parole period of supervision while 26 percent had two or more failures.

Their Known Drug Histories

Most of these offenders have had extensive drug use histories. More than half of these prisoners (59.3 percent) exhibit longstanding serious abuse based on documentary evidence indicating a long-standing pattern, or habitual substance abuse behavior lasting 5 years or more. Another one-fourth (23.5 percent) have histories of occasional use that is problematic. Almost 15 percent show evidence of abuse within the past 12 months based on specimen test results, self-admission, or corroborated statements. Only 17.3 percent of the offenders have no substance abuse history. Over one fifth (21.9 percent) had a prior conviction involving the sale or distribution of drugs.

Their Criminal Violence

Inmates did not have dangerous violent criminal histories. About a quarter of the offenders (25.8 percent) had a prior conviction for an assaultive or violent offense although 21.3 percent had a prior conviction for use of a firearm or other deadly weapon. Only 2.3 percent had any prior conviction for a sexual act with a minor.

Their Length of Stay in Prison

Contrary to popular opinion, the District is anything but lenient when it comes to imposing lengthy prison terms. DOC

sentenced felons have and continue to serve considerably longer periods of imprisonment than most states. The average inmate was incarcerated for almost 40 months which is substantially above the national average of 25 months (excluding pretrial jail credits).[2]/ According to the U.S. Department of Justice, since 1960, the District's prisoners have served the longest prison terms of any other state (with the exception of one state-Hawaii in 1964).[3]/

Their Behavior in Prison

For most inmates, institutional misbehavior was a rare event. In terms of major disciplinary reports, over three-fourths (78.1 percent) had no Class 1 offenses. The less serious Class II offenses were more common with 39.4 percent of the inmates having at least one offense and an average of 1.2 reports per inmate for the 3.3 year period of imprisonment. Only 26.5 percent of the offenders had minor Class III offenses, with the average being 0.8 per inmate.

Observed assaults on staff and inmates were extremely rare events. Less than four percent of the inmates were reported for assaulting correctional officers. The less reliable measure of inmate assaults on inmates showed that only five percent were reported for such violence.

---

[2]/   Camp, George and Camille Graham Camp, The Corrections Yearbook: 1988. South Salem, New York: Criminal Justice Institute (1988).

[3]/   Cahalan, Margaret Werner, Historical Correctional Statistics in the United States, 1850-1984. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice (1986).

Escapes and escape attempts were rare. Only six inmates (1.1 percent) escaped or attempted to escape from a secure institution. Only two inmates (0.4 percent) attempted escape while on furlough status or on an escorted trip. Sixty inmates, or 10.8 percent walked away from a minimum security institution or community correctional center without proper authorization.

Inmates scored fairly high in program activity while incarcerated. Nearly half (47.1 percent) satisfactorily completed all prescribed program goals; while another 31.4 percent had partial completion. However, only about a third (33.3 percent) participated satisfactorily in a recognized voluntary program, and 29.2 percent did not participate in any voluntary programs.

CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AFTER RELEASE FROM PRISON

Contrary to public belief most inmates either terminate their official criminal careers or significantly curtail their rapidly declining involvement in criminal activities. In other words, it may not be true that they are not getting worse nor are they the "criminal thugs" portrayed by the media and public officials.

To address this issue in greater detail, NCCD employed a number of recidivism measures (see Table 2). The first of these is a simple calculation of the proportion of prisoners who were rearrested after 12 and 24 months after release from prison. Of the original 661 persons in the survey, arrest checks were conducted on 558. Of these, 81 or 14.5 percent were arrested within

Table 2

Recidivism Measures for DC Prisoners

PROPORTION REARRESTED	N	DOC Rate	National Rate*
6 months	558	14.5%	25.0%
12 months	558	23.0%	39.3%
24 months	558	37.1%	54.5%

TYPES OF CRIMES ARRESTED FOR (12 months)	N	DOC Rate	National Rate*
Crimes of Violence	22	12.8%	15.3%
Murder/Manslaughter	3	1.7%	
Rape	2	1.2%	
Robbery	13	7.6%	
Assault	4	2.3%	
Property Crimes	35	20.3%	43.3%
Burglary	16	9.3%	
Theft	17	9.9%	
Forgery	2	1.2%	
Drugs	53	30.8%	14.2%
Use	27	15.7%	
Sale	26	15.1%	
Other	62	36.0%	27.2%
UUV	8	4.7%	
Fugitive	31	18.0%	
Weapons	13	7.6%	
Misc.	10	5.8%	

Average Crimes Per Arrest (12 months)   1.8

* Source: <u>Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983</u>. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report (April, 1989). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

six months. Within a year, 129 persons were arrested, or 23 percent. By the end of two full years, 207 or 37.1 percent of those released had been rearrested.

These rates are considerably lower than rearrest rates recently released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics for 11 selected states.[4] There are two reasons why the DOC figures may be artificially lower than the national rates. First, the District is a unique metropolitan area in that it is surrounded by other urban centers located in nearby Virginia and Maryland. It is quite possible than many released prisoners may be arrested not in the District but in these towns. To control for this bias, the D.C. Pretrial Services Agency utilized a criminal justice information system for which law enforcement agencies surrounding the District enter arrest data. These entries are done on a voluntary basis. However, our analysis shows that the number of arrests recorded by these non-District agencies actually exceeds arrests reported by law enforcement agencies serving the District.

Second, the BJS rates included arrests recorded by the NCIC and maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This criminal history reporting system include all arrests that may be occurring in other states. BJS found that an additional 12-13 percent of all its arrests were located on the NCIC and were not reported by local criminal justice systems within participating

---

[4] <u>Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983</u>. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report (April, 1989). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.

states.   However, even if one were to inflate the arrests

reported here by the 12-13 percent to account for these arrests

that may occur in other jurisdictions beyond the immediate D.C.

metropolitan area, the adjusted rates (increased by 12 percent)

would still be considerably below the rate reported by BJS. It

thus appears that the DOC inmates have a substantially lower re-

arrest rate than other state jurisdictions.

For those inmates who are rearrested, the types of crimes

are overwhelmingly non-violent and lower than the BJS national

data.   Only 13 percent were for crimes and violence. Arrests for

fleeing the court's jurisdiction (fugitive) were the most fre-

quent crimes category followed by drugs (sale and use), theft,

and burglary.   Again, compared to the national data, the D.C.

inmates are rearrested disproportionately for drug offenses

(30.8 percent vs. 14.2 percent).

Finally, it was found that the rate of arrest dropped sharp-

ly when compared to the arrest rate prior to imprisonment. Speci-

fically, the average number of arrests 12 months prior to im-

prisonment was 1.116 compared to the post imprisonment rate of

.573.   In other words, there was a 50 percent reduction in the

arrest rate for this cohort after they served their prison terms.

This decline in arrests is graphically portrayed on the fol-

lowing page runs counter to popular wisdom which maintains that

these offenders actually get worse. There are a number of possi-

ble explanations for this decline which has been reported in

several other NCCD studies.   Given the long prison terms these

inmates serve, a significant factor could be maturation which simply means that as inmates age their participation in crime also declines. Closely related to this factor may be the punitive and rehabilitative effects of imprisonment itself. Whatever the "causes" for the observed decline, the fact that it exists and runs contrary to statement uttered by public officials is noteworthy.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION RELEASE INSTRUMENT

The remainder of this report focuses on NCCD's attempt to validate the DOC's classification release guidelines instrument. As noted earlier, this instrument was designed by DOC staff without the benefit of being able to actually test its accuracy in determining an inmate's risk for re-arrest. The instrument uses an number factors to classify inmates into one of four release risk categories; excellent, good, marginal, and poor on the basis of scores they receive from items on the instrument. (Examples of the instrument are shown in the Appendix A.) The scoring is complicated and is done in five parts. Base risk factors are scored yielding a base risk score. Lower risk scores convert to higher rating scores on the bases of set break points. Supplemental factors may add or subtract rating scores. Break points are again used to determine which release risk category the person is assigned to.

The base risk factors include: current offense severity, frequency of prior convictions, parole/probation failures,

Arrests Before and After Incarceration
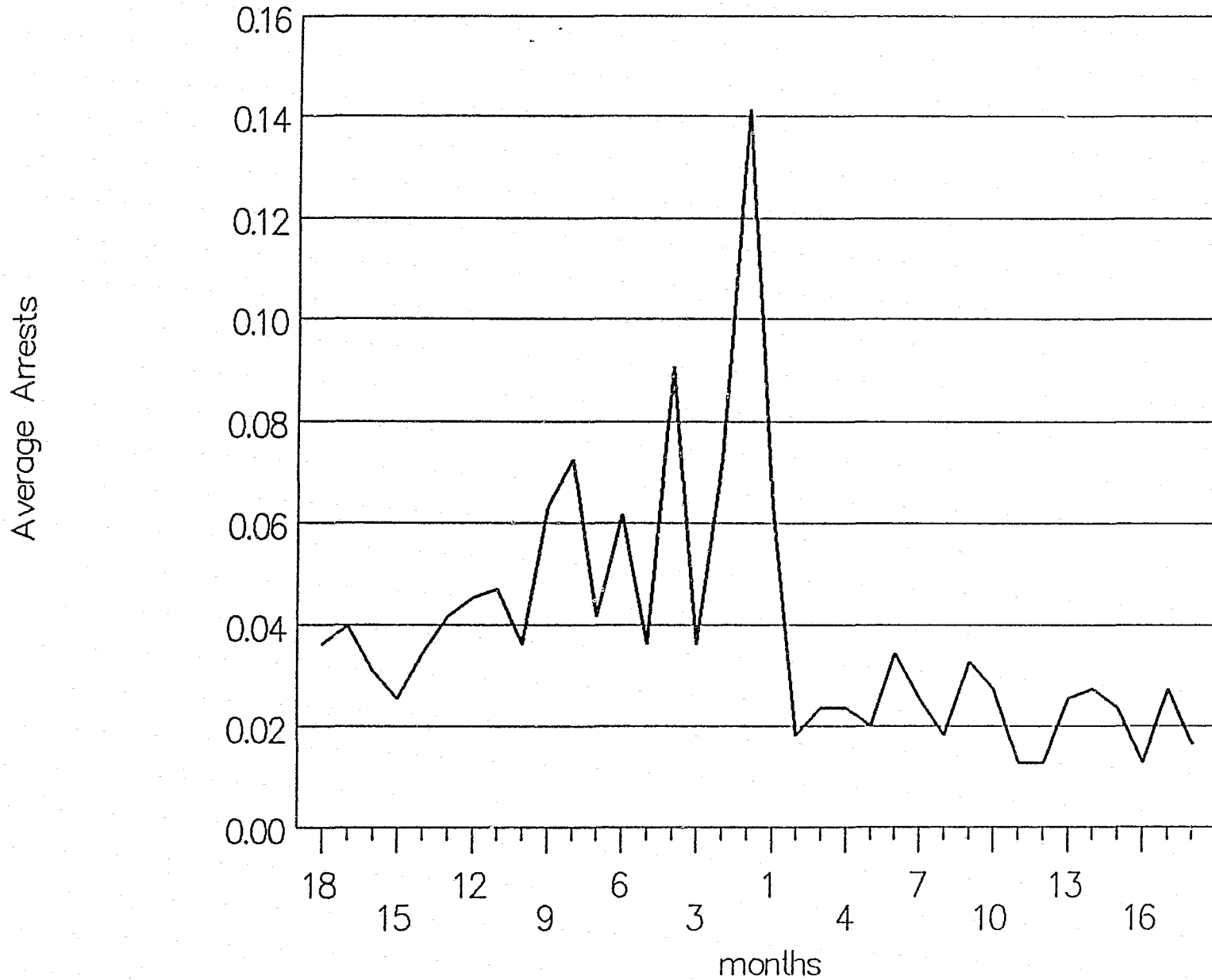
substance abuse history, and age at review. Each of these categories is assigned zero to four points, a total of 20 points possible. This means that certain factors have equivalent risks. For example, age under 21 carries a similar risk as having four or more prior convictions; one parole failure is equivalent to two prior convictions. (The average base risk score for released inmates was 10.9 points.)

Using this prototype risk instrument, each of the inmates studied were grouped into four categories based using the derived point system. As shown below in Table 3, the instrument classifies only a very small percent (2.6 percent as being a high risk for re-arrest. The vast majority (52.5 percent) are scored as a fair risk with substantial proportions categorized as either a "moderate" or "low" risk for recidivism.

Table 3

Proportion of Released Inmates Classified
By Risk Level

Assigned Risk Level	Percent
High Risk	2.6 percent
Moderate Risk	29.2 percent
Fair Risk	52.5 percent
Low Risk	15.7 percent

These risk scores are then converted to a different scale prior to the supplemental factors being added in. A high risk score converts to 40 points; moderate to 45 points, fair to 50 points, and low to 55 points. The supplemental factors include: institutional behavior adjustment, dangerous/violent history, program activity, and stability. The latter two score positive points while the former score negative points. There are 40 possible negative points, but only 15 possible positive points. Therefore, it is possible for a person with a low base risk score to end up in the poor release risk category, but a person with a high base risk score could not end up in the excellent release risk category.

The mean institution behavior score is a negative 4.1 points and the mean violent history score is negative 1.9 points. The mean program activity score is positive 3.7 points, and the mean stability score is positive 2.9 points. The sum of negative and positive points is nearly zero (0.6 points). The net effect is that the supplemental factor scores cancel each other out.

INSTRUMENT VALIDATION

Having described the methods used to score inmates, the next question centers on the accuracy of the classification scores to predict recidivism. An assessment of the validity of the current risk classification was evaluated for both 12 and 24 month follow-up periods using a simple dichotomous measure of propor-tion with at least a single rearrest (see Table 4). These

results show that the draft instrument has some level of pre-diction. At the end of one year 15.3 percent of the persons who were classified as "excellent" risks were rearrested, along with 21.9 percent of the "good" risks, 30.4 percent of the "marginal" risks, and 31.0 percent of the "poor" risks. At the end of 24 months, the distribution of people rearrested was as follows: 25.9 percent of the "excellent" risks; 35.3 percent of the "good" risks; 48.7 percent of the "marginal" risks; and 44.8 percent of the "poor" risks. Use of the 24 month follow-up period provides a stronger level of prediction and thus are used for the rest of this report.

Table 4

Proportion Rearrested
by Risk Level
12 and 24 Months Follow-up

Risk Level	N	REARREST RATES 12 Months	RATES 24 Months
Excellent	85	15.3%	25.9%
Good	329	21.9%	35.3%
Marginal	115	30.4%	48.7%
Poor	29	31.0%	44.8%
		P = .053	P = .006

The interesting finding here is that the probability of a "poor" risk being rearrested is less than 20 percent greater than the probability of an "excellent" risk being rearrested. And the

difference in arrest probabilities between "good" and "poor" risks is only seven percent. Also, the probability of arrest for "marginal" risks is actually four percent higher than "poor" risks.

To understand why the instrument does not have a strong level of predictive accuracy, one must examine the relationship of each scoring item with rearrest. (A detailed listing of the bi-variate relationships of each scoring item with 24 month rearrest rates is shown in Appendix B). Among base risk factors, two were found to be significantly correlated with rearrest; prior convictions and prior parole/probation failures. Prior convictions explains about two percent of the variance in rearrest. There appear to be two distinct groupings. Thirty percent of persons with no priors, and 28.4 percent of persons with one prior were rearrested. However, 41.6 percent of persons with two priors, 45 percent of persons with three priors, and 41 percent of persons with four or more priors were rearrested. Thus, to maximize the explanation of variance in rearrest, it is recommended that prior conviction be separated into two groups; none or one prior and two or more prior convictions.

Prior parole/probation failures explain slightly more variance than convictions. It appears that the actual number of parole or probation failures is not the determining influence on rearrest. The important factor is whether a person had ANY failures. The percentage of persons with no failures who were rearrested was 30.6 percent, compared to 41.8 percent for persons

with one failure. Probability of rearrest increased only to 43.4

percent for persons with two or more failures. Thus, a two point

scale; failure and no failure would improve rearrest prediction.

Surprisingly, neither age, offense severity, nor prior drug

use <u>as scored by the instrument</u> were correlated with re-arrest.

This is not to say that age is not a strong predictor. Rather,

the age groupings used in the base risk factors appear to be the

reason that the age factor is not significantly related to re-

arrest.   By using broad categories, especially during the crime

prone twenties, the item masks the variation inherent in age.

There is clearly a difference in the probability of arrest for

people 21 and under (58 percent) and 40 years or older (24.7 per-

cent).   However, combined, they account for only 20 percent of

the population. The two middle categories, ages 22 to 29 and 30

to 39, have similar arrest rates. In fact, the older group has a

higher rearrest rate (38 percent) than the younger group (36.9

percent).   If three year age groups were used (at least through

the late twenties), this variable will gain explanatory power.

Offense severity as scored is not related to rearrest. How-

ever, rearrest is related to certain types of offenses.   The

offenses that involve property crimes, no matter what their

inherent severity, have the highest probabilities of rearrest.

For example, 45 percent of the persons whose current offense was

petty larceny were rearrested, as were 43 percent of armed

robbers, and 42 percent of burglars.   On the other hand, 16

percent of murderers were rearrested, 0 percent of manslaughter,

28 percent of weapons, 31 percent of assaults. It is thus recommended that the offense severity scale be adjusted to reflect these results.

Substance abuse history as measured by this instrument is not related to rearrest. Persons with no drug history have nearly the identical probability of rearrest as current abusers (38 percent vs. 43 percent). The inability of the instrument coded drug use variable to predict may simply reflect substantial error in measurement on the proportion, frequency, and type of drug use history. Until such measurement can be improved, it is not recommended that drug be included for scoring purposes.

Among the supplemental factors, only dangerous/violent history was significantly correlated with arrests. Slightly higher percentages of persons with prior drug and violent convictions were rearrested. There does appear to be a relationship between institutional behavior and rearrest. Persons with Class I, Class II and Class III offenses are about 10 percent more likely to be rearrested than persons with no institutional offenses. However, the weighing scheme used apparently negates this effect.

Program activity within prison is not related to rearrest. The probability of rearrest for persons who completed their prescribed program was 35 percent. Probability of arrest for those who had no program activity goes down to 30 percent. Similarly, rearrest probability is 34 percent for those who participated in a voluntary program, and 32 percent for those who did not.

For stability factors, college credits and high school diploma are totally unrelated to rearrest. Persons with a stable marriage or family support have slightly lower rearrest rates (35 percent vs. 39 percent). Marketable job skills create a significant difference in rearrest rates. Thirty percent of those with job skills were rearrested compared to 39 percent of those without job skills.

Table 5 shows the zero order correlations between classification risk factors and total score and rearrests. This points out the largest flaw in the release guidelines. Those factors that exert the greatest influence on the total score, and therefore the release risk rating are all in part II, the "Supplemental" factors. However, those factors that have the highest correlations with rearrest are all in part I, the "base risk" factors.

The planners of these classification guidelines started with the right idea. They accurately identified many of the factors that were most highly related to risk of recidivism, and placed them in the "base risk" section. These factors would have greater explanatory power if points were assigned in a more efficient manner based on follow-up data as presented here.

The addition of supplemental factors actually decreased the explanatory power of the model (base risk score is correlated with rearrest at 0.18, but total score is only correlated at 0.15). Most of the supplemental factors are not significantly related with rearrest, but as stated earlier, they explain

Table 5

Zero Order Correlations
Between Classification Risk Factors
For Total Risk Score and Arrests Following Release

Factors	Score	Total Arrests
I. Base Risk Factors		
Current Offense	-0.04	0.04
Prior Convictions	-0.36*	0.13*
Parole/Probation Failures	-0.37*	0.15*
Substance Abuse History	-0.30*	0.08
Age at Review	-0.21*	0.03
Base Risk Score	-0.54*	0.18*
II. Supplemental Factors		
Institutional Behavior	-0.77*	0.08
Program Activity	0.45*	-0.03
Dangerous History	-0.43*	0.12*
Stability	0.49*	-0.04
Supplemental Score	0.94*	-0.11*

* Statistically significant at p <= 0.05

79 percent of the variance in determining which risk rating a person is assigned to. In fact, the factor most highly related to risk rating, institutional behavior, is not significantly related to rearrest.

REVISED CLASSIFICATION RELEASE INSTRUMENT

Based on the validation analysis presented above it seemed prudent to develop and test alternative risk criteria to improve upon the DOC's ability to assess readiness for release. Our approach was not to completely abandon the existing instrument as most of the items have been found in other validated screening devices and the staff is now somewhat familiar with the instrument. Instead, we pursued changes that would alter the weights and scale of the current instrument.

Using this approach, a revised instrument as shown in Exhibit A was developed and tested. It is a simpler format in that it consists of the following ten criteria items:

1. Current Age
2. Severity of Prior Offenses
3. Number of Prior Arrests
4. Number of Prior Parole or Probation Violations/Failures
5. Institutional Conduct
6. History of Prior Violence
7. History of Drug Abuse
8. History of Sex Crimes with Minor
9. Current Job Skill
10. Community Stability

These ten items reflect criminal history, institutional conduct, violence, drug abuse, job skill, and community stability. If one applies these items and corresponding scores to the

Exhibit A

NCCD Recommended Risk Instrument

Items	Score	Items	Score
1. CURRENT AGE		**6. HISTORY OF VIOLENCE?**	
Under 21 years	6	Yes	4
22 to 24 years	4	No	0
25 to 40 years	2		
41 and over		**7. HISTORY OF DRUG ABUSE**	
2. SEVERITY OF PRIOR OFFENSES		Yes	4
(select only one)		No	0
Property Releated	6		
Drugs	4	**8. HISTORY OF SEX CRIMES W/MINOR**	
Sex	2	Yes	4
All other	0	No	0
3. NUMBER OF PRIOR ARRESTS			
Two or More	8	**9. CURRENT JOB SKILL**	
None or One	0	No	3
		Yes	0
4. NUMBER OF PRIOR PAROLE OR PROBATION VIOLATIONS		**10. COMMUNITY STABILITY**	
One or More	8	No	2
None	0	Yes	0
5. INSTITUTIONAL CONDUCT			
(Select all that apply)			
Any Class I Violations	4		
Any Class II Violation	2	*(Add items 1-10 and apply score to the Scale indicate below)*	
Any Class III Violation	2		
Any Assaults on Staff	4	**TOTAL** ⟶ ☐☐	
Any Assaults on Inmates	4		

Risk Assessment Score:

Total Point Score: (From Above) ⟶ ☐☐

Execellent Risk for Release	0-11 points
Good Risk for Release	12-24 Points
Marginal Risk for Release	25-36 points
Poor Risk for Release	37 and above points

Indicated Risk Level: ⟶ ☐

Recommended Release Decision:

1. Deny Release

2. Recommend Release-No Conditions

3. Recommend Release with Following Conditions: ☐

☐

☐

scale shown on the instrument, one can see that the level of pre-diction improves significantly (see Table 6). Those inmates scored as "excellent" risks had a two-year rearrest rate one-half that of the sample's average (37 percent). Those classified as "poor" had a rate twenty percentage points higher. Nearly one-half of the sample is considered to be a good-to-excellent risk for release with the observed expectation that about one in four will be re-arrested at least once and principally for non-violent crimes.

Table 6

Two Year Rearrest Rate by
NCCD Revised Scored Risk Level

Risk Level	N	Percent	Rearrested
Excellent	68	12.2%	19.1%
Good	206	36.7%	29.6%
Marginal	235	42.0%	44.7%
Poor	49	9.1%	57.1%
TOTAL	558	100.0%	37.0%

NEXT STEPS

The next phase of project activities will focus on implemen-tation of the revised risk screening instrument. This work will involve reaching final agreement with the DOC on the screening instrument's format, developing a guide book to provide clear definitions and instructions on how to use the instrument, a plan for monitoring and further validation, and a training seminar for

staff who will use this new instrument. All of this work should be accomplished over the next 90 days with the instrument and associated documentation ready for implementation by September 1989.

These early results are promising. The initial instrument had some but an insufficient level of accuracy in predicting inmate rearrest after release. The revised instrument reflects the necessary changes that are needed to be made based on the follow-up analysis. This instrument should provide the DOC with greater confidence in making decisions regarding who should be released to the community without unnecessarily jeopardizing public safety.

Appendix A

DOC Proposed Risk Instrument Scoring Sheets

I. Base Risk Factors

A. Current Offense(s) Severity (select only one):

List most severe offense: _RSP_

	Points
Greatest	4
High	3
Moderate ✓	2
Low Moderate	1
Low	0

Subtotal A _____1_____

B. Frequency of Prior Convictions (select only one):
List actual number of prior convictions: _____ Juvenile _20_ Adult   (combine priors)

	Points
4 or more ✓	4
3	3
2	2
1	1
None	0

Subtotal B _____4_____

C. Parole/Probation Failure(s) (select only one):   _3_
List actual number of failures: _____ Probation _3_ Parole   (combine failures)

	Points
2 or more ✓	4
1	2
None	0

Subtotal C _____4_____

D. Substance Abuse History (select only one):

	Points
1. Evidence of Abuse within the last 12 months: ✓	4
2. Longstanding serious Abuse (5 years or more):	3
3. Occasional use that is problematic:	2
4. No substance Abuse History	0

Subtotal D _____3_____

E. Age at Review (select only one):

	Points
1. 40 or more	0
2. 30 to 39	2
3. 20 to 29	3
4. 21 or under	4

Subtotal E _____0_____

Base Risk Score (Sum of A, B, C, D, and E)   _12_

Conversion Score   _50_

II. Supplemental Factors

F. Institutional Behavior/Adjustment
[Disciplinary Reports (convictions only) and Serious Incident Reports for the last 36 months]:

1. Severity/Frequency (select as many as appropriate, up to 21 points)

	Weight	#	Score
a. For each Class I Offense	= -3	x 1	= -3
b. For each Class II Offense	= -2	x 0	= 0
c. For each Class III Offense	= -1	x 0	= 0

2. Assaults (select as appropriate):

a. Assault on Correctional Personnel	= -2	x 0	
b. Assault on Other Inmates	= -1	x 0	-3

3. Escapes, Attempted Escapes, or Walk-Aways (select as appropriate):

a. Escape or attempt, from a Secure Institution during the last 5 years:	= -3	x 0	
b. Escape from a Secure Institution while in Furlough Status or on escorted trip:	= -2	x 0	
c. For each Walk-Away from the Minimum Security Facility, CCC, etc.:	= -1	x 0	0

Subtotal F   -3

G. Program Activity:

1. Prescribed Program Activity (select one):

Satisfactory Completion of All Prescribed Program Goals:	= (+4)	
Partial Completion of Prescribed Program Goals:	= +2	
Marginal Participation in Prescribed Program:	= +1	+4

2. Voluntary Program (select one):

Good to excellent	= (+2)	+2
Marginal to Fair	= +1	

Subtotal G   +6

H. Dangerous/Violent History
(select as many as appropriate):

	Weight	#
1. Violence with any prior Conviction:	= -3	0
2. Use of Weapon with any prior Conviction:	= -3	0
3. Drug Sales or Distribution Conviction:	= -2	0
4. Sexual Act with a Minor with any prior Conviction	= -2	0

Subtotal H   0

I. Stability Factors
(select as many as appropriate):

	Weight	#
1. Stable legal marriage and/or family support:	= +3	0
2. Evidence of marketable job skill and/or a stable employment history of 2 consecutive years prior to present incarceration:	= +3	1
3. Evidence of at least 12 semester hours of college credits:	= +2	1
4. Evidence of a H.S. Diploma or GED:	= +1	1

Subtotal I   +6

PSI CRIMINAL HISTORY CONVICTION DATA

Conviction Date	Adult or Juvenile	Primary Offense (list and code)	Total Charges	Primary Disposition
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐
☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐☐	☐	____ ☐☐

Risk Category

	Low	Fair	Moderate	High
Base Risk Score	7-0	12-8	16-13	20-17
Conversion Score	55	50	45	40
Negative Behavior (-30)		-3		
Dangerous History (-10)		0		
Program Activity (+6)		+6		
Stability (+9)		+6		
Supplemental Score		9		
TOTAL RATING:		59		

Release Risk Rating Scale

- 60-70 (Excellent)
- 45-59 (Good)
- 30-44 (Marginal)
- 0-29 (Poor)