

Prisoner Reentry: An Overview of Virginia's Actions and Plans

Presentation to SJR 273 Joint
Subcommittee

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Prisoner Reentry in Virginia

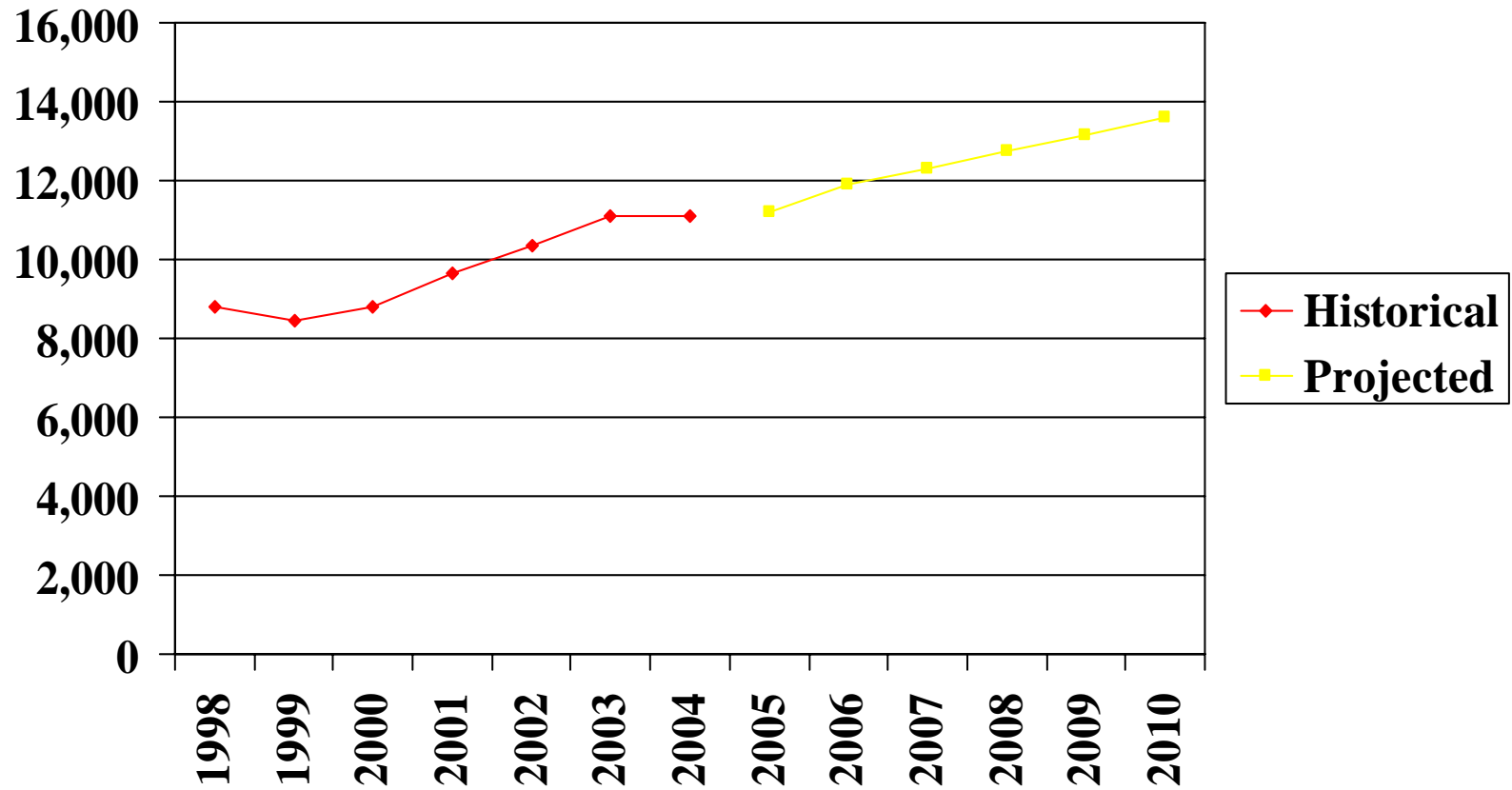
- How many are there?
- Who are they?
- Why is reentry an issue that needs to be addressed?

Inmates coming in

- Between FY 1998 and FY 2004 the number of offenders who were committed by the courts to the Department of Corrections increased by 26% (from 8,816 commitments to 11,102)
- Based on information presented during this year's inmate population forecasting process, the number of commitments is expected to grow at an average rate of 3.4% over each of the next 6 years

Prison commitments

(fiscal year)



Crime and arrest rates have been declining

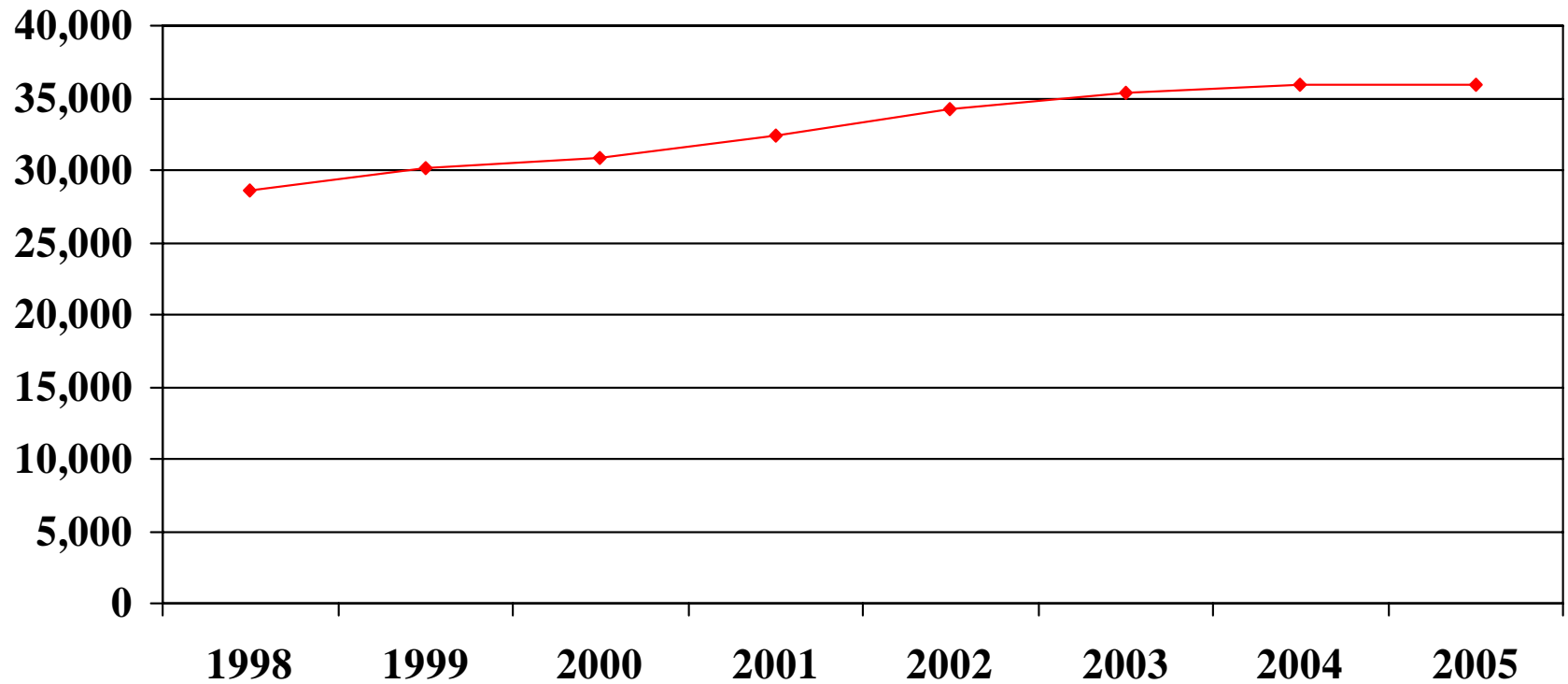
- From 1998 to 2004 the number of violent index crimes per 100,000 people decreased by 13.7%
- The number of property index crimes per 100,000 people decreased 18.4%
- Arrest rates also declined during this period

State Responsible (SR) inmate population

- Between fiscal years 1998 and 2004 the SR inmate population grew by 25% (from 28,650 to 35,900)
- A revised forecast of future inmate populations is currently being developed, and will be completed by September 15, 2005

State Responsible Inmate Population

(By fiscal year)



Females are increasing as a proportion of the prison population

- In 1998, women made up 6.2% of the prison population
- In 2004, they comprised 7.7% of the prison population

Why does the prison population grow at the same time that crime and arrests are decreasing?

- Average time served for those released in 1998 was 38 months
- Average time serviced for those released in 2004 was over 44 months
- Increase in number of probation technical violators (not included in crime or arrest statistics) returned to prison

- Since 1994 sentencing reform, most offenders supervised after incarceration are on probation (suspended sentence) rather than parole
- In 1998, 30.9% of state inmates had been in prison before
- In 2004, 32.6% of state inmates had prior prison records
- Under sentencing guidelines, repeat offenders receive longer sentences than first time offenders

Last year, 11,432 inmates were released from prison

- 38% were Caucasian

- 61% were African-American

- The average age at time of release was 35.3 years

- More than half had never been married

What was the crime for which they had been incarcerated?

- 49% had been convicted of a non-violent offense
- 24% had been convicted of a drug offense
- 27% had been convicted of a violent offense

Note – this represents the offenses for which they were most recently incarcerated, and does not include any prior criminal history

- 52% entered prison without a high school diploma or GED
- 13.6% had no prior history of employment

- Three of four had a history of alcohol or drug abuse
- 19% had been diagnosed with a chronic or communicable disease
- An estimated 15% had some form of mental illness or mental disorder

What programs did they participate in while incarcerated?

- 46% participated in either academic or vocational programming
- 64.3% participated in some form of substance abuse treatment or education:
 - 34.8% in education
 - 17.7% in support programs (such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous)
 - 11% in a therapeutic community program
 - 1% in counseling

To what communities did they return?

(Based on 2003 data)

- 8% returned to Norfolk
- 7% returned to Richmond City
- 5% returned to Newport News
- 4% returned to Virginia Beach
- 4% returned to Fairfax County
- 4% returned to Henrico County

What does the future hold?

- Unless we change the way we plan and carry out reentry strategies, we will see continued growth in the numbers of offenders returned to prison
- The prison population will continue to increase, even when overall crime decreases

What is the cost of maintaining the prison population?

- Total operating appropriation for the Department of Corrections is \$1.7 million this biennium
- Does not include the costs of housing state inmates in local jails
- Does not include the costs of Correctional Education
- Does not include the costs of services provided to offenders by Community Services Boards, local Departments of Social Services, Housing, Rehabilitation, non-profit and faith based organizations, etc.

What does the increased population add to that cost?

- The current capital budget includes \$196.6 million for new prison construction
- Debt service for these prisons will be about \$35 million in each of the next 10 biennia
- Operating costs for these prisons will add about \$60 million each year once they open
- Additional prison construction will be required if growth continues
 - *A 1,000 bed medium security prison costs \$75 million to construct and costs more than \$20 million per year to operate*

Virginia has a well run correctional system

- Compared with other states, Virginia's DOC has low rates of serious incidents and escapes
- We lock away offenders whose crimes warrant incarceration (although most inmates will eventually return to their communities)
- We provide many other sanctions for less serious offenders
- But we can do a better job of public safety and reduce the number of victims of crime if we do more to prevent inmates from reoffending

Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy

- 2 summers ago, Virginia joined with 6 other states and the NGA Center for Best Practices to form a reentry policy academy
- Most states face the same issues as Virginia – most states are involved in similar efforts
- Council of State Governments created the Reentry Policy Council, consisting of 100 state and local officials
- President Bush included reentry as a critical issue in his State of the Union speech
- Several bills are before Congress seeking to address reentry

Workgroup Structure

4 Working Committees:

1. Social Reintegration
2. Employment and Education
3. Financial Obligations, Financial and Community Resources, and Housing
4. Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse

Reentry Workgroup

- Work group consists of multiple state agencies, across secretariats, plus:
 - Local agencies (social services, health, CSBs, WIBs, sheriffs, etc.)
 - Non-Profits
 - Faith Based groups
- We are also coordinating and assisting with other efforts, outside of our work group

Where do we need to go?

- Risk Assessment instruments
- Increase and improve planning for education and job skills training in prisons
- Better prepare inmates and families
- Begin reintegration prior to end of sentence
- Improve access for those who may qualify for disability services
- Increase use of evidence based practices to make better use of existing resources
- Improve coordination of medical/mental health treatment
- Improve coordination of available services in communities

4 most critical areas

1. Stable employment
2. Stable housing
3. Mental Health/Substance Abuse treatment
4. Family reintegration and support

Issues

- Resources
- Useful data
- Barriers to housing and employment
- Many entities provide services or assistance – how can we coordinate what we do?

Where do we go from here?

In addition to the SJR 273 joint subcommittee, new Code Section 2.2-221.1 (Chapter 153 of 2005 Acts) provides that:

“the Secretary of Public Safety shall establish an integrated system for coordinating the planning and provision of offender transitional and reentry services...”