

Increasing Public Safety and Generating Savings:

Options for Rhode Island Policymakers

Background

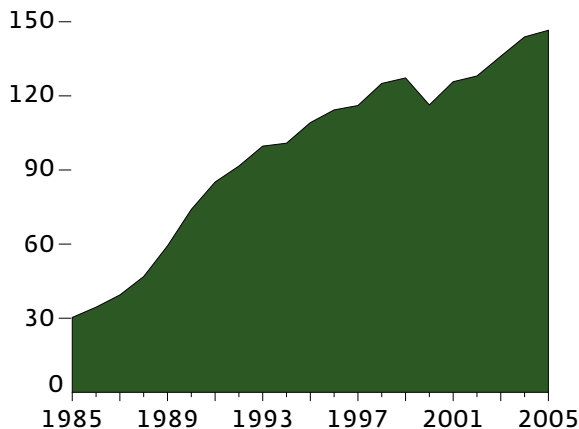
Governor Carcieri and legislative leaders requested technical assistance from the Council of State Governments to determine why the Rhode Island prison population is increasing and to provide policy options to avert further population growth, to increase public safety, and to generate savings to the state.

Prison population is growing

- From 1994 to 2004, the prison population increased 15%.
- The prison population is projected to increase at an even faster rate—18%—over the next 10 years.

Over the past 20 years, state spending on corrections increased from \$30 million to \$146 million.

EXPENDITURES FROM GENERAL REVENUE
(FISCAL YEARS 1985 – 2005) RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (IN MILLIONS)



High rates of failure among released prisoners drive population growth

- 31% of offenders released from prison are back within 1 year—a 10% higher rate than the national average. 50% of offenders released from prison are reincarcerated within 3 years.
- The violent crime rate is 40% lower than the national average.

Parole

- The rate of people on parole is very low—fewer than 400 are on parole supervision.
- The parole grant rate recently declined by about 10%, and may be contributing to the increasing prison population.
- Once granted parole, approximately 25% of offenders are not released as scheduled. 42% of these are waiting for an available residential substance abuse treatment bed.

Probation

- The state has one of the highest rates of people on probation (about 26,000 or 3% of the adult population), with half on inactive status.
- Probation sentences for felony offenders average about 5 years.
- 3,553 persons are admitted to the ACI each year for some type of probation violation—the vast majority of violations are technical.



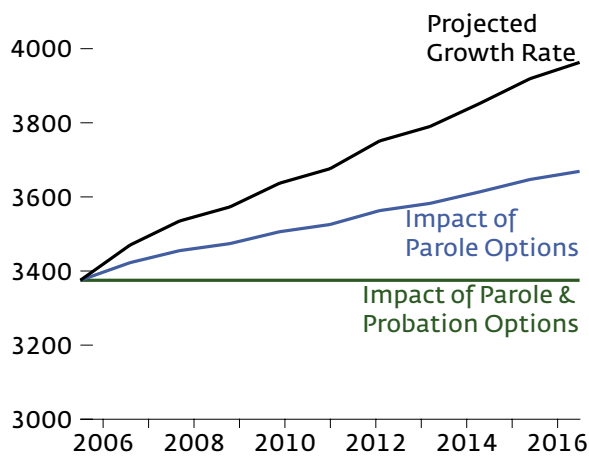
Options for policymakers

Realizing the following goals could partially or fully avert the projected prison population growth.

Options	Impact
1. Increase level of supervision through better use of parole for offenders released to the community.	125 beds
2. Make offenders (and providers) more accountable for successful completion of treatment programs.	200 beds
3. Target community supervision resources to reduce probation violations by 25%.	500 beds

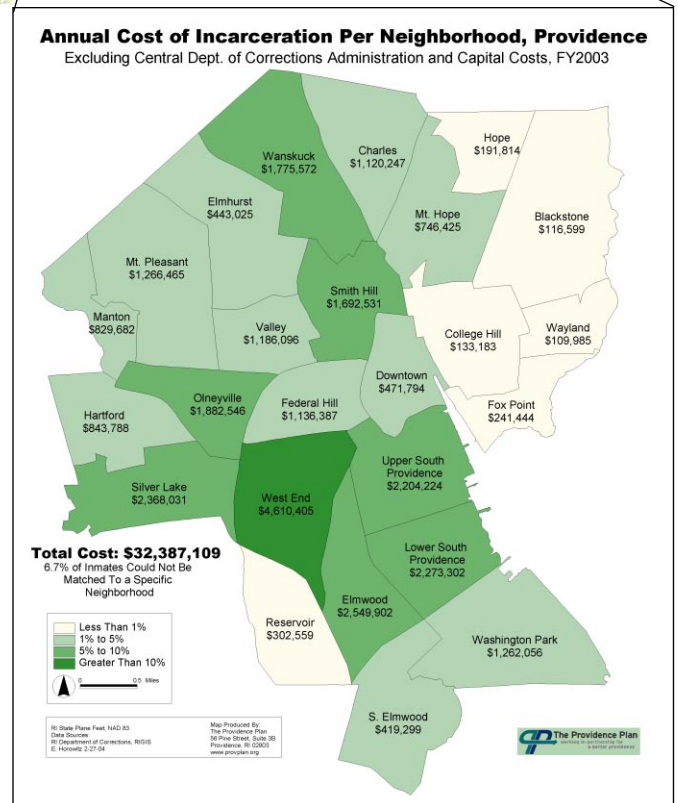
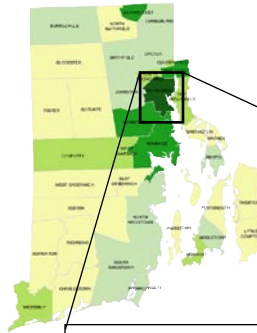
Unless policymakers act, the projected prison population will cost the state a cumulative \$173 million in additional spending over the next 10 years.

PROJECTED PRISON POPULATION (2006 – 2016)
RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Opportunities for neighborhood-based strategies

- 1 in 19 adult men in Rhode Island is on probation or parole; in South Providence, 1 in 4 adult men is currently on probation or parole.
- State spending on corrections for offenders from Providence is about \$32 million. Of that, \$11.6 million is spent on offenders from four South Providence neighborhoods.



Governor Carcieri and legislative leaders commissioned this report from the Council of State Governments. Dr. James Austin, Wendy Naro, Roger Ocker, and Keith Hardison of the JFA Institute researched and drafted the report, based on data from the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC). The Providence Plan produced the map of prison expenditures based on FY2003 data from RIDOC. Points of view, recommendations, or findings stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Council of State Governments.

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