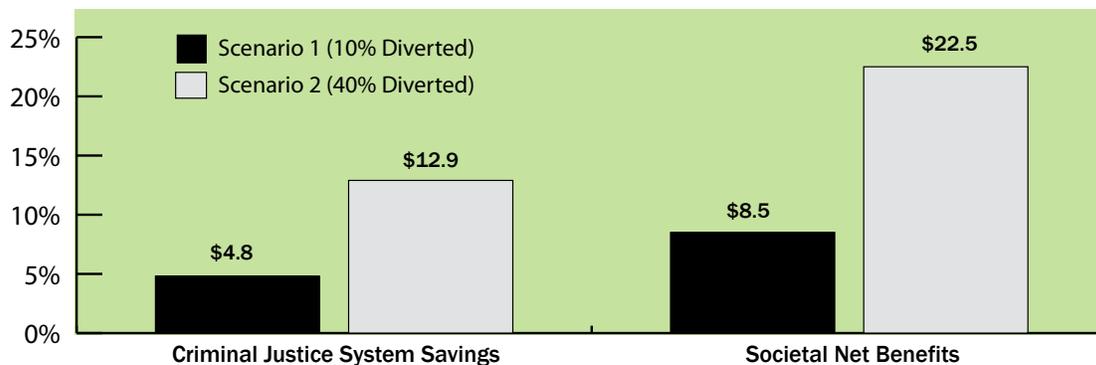




Diverting Individuals With Substance Use Disorders from Incarceration to Community Treatment Saves Billions, Prevents Crime

Across the U.S., diverting individuals with substance use disorders from re-incarceration in state prison into community-based treatment can save society billions of dollars and prevent sizeable numbers of crimes, arrests, and re-incarcerations over the course of their life, according to a study published recently in *Crime & Delinquency*. The study used a lifetime simulation model¹ in which all individuals started out incarcerated in state prison. The model then considered several policy scenarios following release from prison: Baseline scenario – all individuals who are re-arrested and sentenced are returned to incarceration; Scenario 1 – diversion from incarceration of 10% of eligible² individuals (considered attainable by authors); Scenario 2 – diversion of 40% of eligible individuals (considered ambitious by authors). The model demonstrated societal net benefits³ of \$8.5 billion and \$22.5 billion over the group’s lifetime for Scenarios 1 and 2, respectively, relative to baseline. From the perspective of the criminal justice system only, Scenarios 1 and 2 saved \$4.8 billion and \$12.9 billion, respectively, relative to baseline. The model also demonstrated considerable reductions in the number of crimes committed in Scenarios 1 and 2 (1.4 million and 3.4 million fewer, respectively, relative to baseline). This study adds to the extensive body of research indicating that community treatment as an alternative to incarceration offers substantial economic, public health, and public safety benefits.

Lifetime Criminal Justice System Savings and Societal Net Benefits of Diversion from Incarceration into Community Treatment, in Billions



Source:

Zarkin, G. A., Cowell, A. J., Hicks, K. A., Mills, M. J., Belenko, S., Dunlap, L. J., and Keyes, V. (2012). Lifetime Benefits and Costs of Diverting Substance-Abusing Offenders From State Prison. *Crime & Delinquency*, published online 5 November 2012.

Notes:

- ¹ The dynamic model followed a nationally representative group incarcerated in state prison, after their release and throughout their lifetime. It incorporated characteristics from the U.S. Dept. of Justice’s *2004 Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities*. Researchers tracked substance abuse, criminal activity, employment, and healthcare utilization until death or up to age 60, whichever came first, as individuals moved in and out of incarceration and drug treatment programs.
- ² Individuals were considered eligible for diversion if they were re-arrested for a nonviolent or drug offense, were currently abusing drugs, had no history of incarceration for a violent offense, and had never before been diverted into treatment.
- ³ Refer to the source report for an explanation of the methodology used to calculate benefits, costs, and savings.

Prepared by the Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. CHJ works to build, enhance, and sustain strong and vibrant communities by promoting policies and practices that stop the cycle of drugs and crime. We conduct research and evaluations, and offer policy analysis, trainings, and technical assistance in the fields of health and justice. For more information, visit us online at www.centerforhealthandjustice.org.