

Rhode Island

The project selected Rhode Island to receive intensive, nonpartisan research, analysis, and expertise. Among other factors, its leaders have demonstrated both a bipartisan commitment to explore meaningful policy change and a dedication to collecting and using criminal justice data as a basis for sound reforms.

Progress Update »

Over 50 percent of people released from prison in Rhode Island are returned to prison within three years. The high recidivism rate undermines public safety, and it contributes to a rapidly growing prison population. In the spring of 2007, the average daily population of Rhode Island's unified jail and prison system reached an all-time high: 3,800 prisoners.

The Council of State Governments Justice Center, a Public Safety Performance Project partner, has generated research, data analyses and a comprehensive series of policy options to help Rhode Island policymakers improve public safety and avert additional prison spending. The options include establishing a risk-reduction program credit for people who participate and complete treatment and educational programs, standardizing the rate of earned time for good behavior so that offenders with longer sentences don't receive more good time than offenders with shorter sentences, making parole decision-making evidence-based, expanding substance abuse treatment services and front-loading probation supervision so that offenders receive the most attention during the time they are most at risk of reoffending.

State Profile »

A profile of Rhode Island that provides statistical and analytical data about its sentencing and corrections systems, describes factors shaping those systems, and highlights opportunities for reform.

[Download Rhode Island state profile](#) (PDF) [Adobe Reader®](#) required.

State Research & Analysis »

Increasing Public Safety and Generating Savings: Options for Rhode Island Policy Makers

The Council of State Governments Justice Center, a Public Safety Performance Project partner, prepared this two-page analysis of Rhode Island's prison population along with the prison bed and spending implications of several policy reform options.

[Download Rhode Island policy options](#)

News

Select news clips »

- **R.I. prison census soars over weekend**
- *The Providence Journal*
- May 16, 2007

Dozens of new inmates slept on mattresses on the floor of the Intake Service Center over the weekend as the state prison's population soared to an all-time high of 3,881. The continuing rise in the census compounds a vexing budget deficit that already has state decision makers struggling to find ways to reduce the inmate population by 500 to save about \$4 million next fiscal year...

To read the full article, please visit the [Providence Journal's Web site](#).

- **Reinventing R.I. prison**
- *The Providence Journal*
- April 16, 2007

It was no coincidence that the crime rate dropped in recent years as more people were put behind bars. People locked behind bars are not free to commit crimes, at least, not on the streets. But the tougher approach to crime swept in many people who may not belong in prison, such as minor drug offenders. And it isn't cheap. With Rhode Island spending an average of \$40,000 per inmate per year, confronting a sharp projected increase in prison population, and facing a mandate to spend \$300 million more to expand capacity, it is reasonable to ask whether the state can approach crime and punishment in a more sensible manner...
To read the full article, visit the [Providence Journal's Web site](#).

- **Group suggests ways to lower ACI's population**
- *The Providence Journal*
- April 4, 2007

Divert more convicts from prison to alcohol and drug treatment. Increase the number of criminals on home confinement. Parole scores more prisoners than has been the recent practice. And for those prisoners who don't qualify for any of these get-out-of-jail alternatives: offer them the opportunity to earn more good-time days, toward early release, than current law allows...
To read the full article, visit the [Providence Journal's Web site](#).

- **A Growing challenge at the ACI**
- *Providence Business News*
- February 17, 2007

For some departments in state government, shaving the budget is difficult. But for the R.I. Department of Corrections, it's virtually impossible, says Director A.T. Wall. In fact, to meet Gov. Donald L. Carcieri's request for a fiscal 2008 budget that was 15 percent lower than 2007's, Wall said, his department had to propose shutting down several facilities and selling the property – a prospect that the governor immediately rejected.
To read the full article, visit the [Providence Business News Web site](#).
**This is a pay service.*

- **Plan to reduce inmate population raises concern**
- *The Boston Globe*
- February 2, 2007

Gov. Don Carcieri's plan to reduce the number of prison inmates in Rhode Island by 500 has worried some law enforcement officers who say it puts financial priorities ahead of public safety. The proposal calls for putting offenders on probation or home confinement instead of prison. It would save \$4 million and close several housing units at the Adult Correctional Institution in Cranston.
To read the full article, visit [The Boston Globe's Web site](#).

- **Legislators investigate cost of drug treatment for inmates**
- By Elizabeth Gudrais, *The Providence Journal*
- January 10, 2007

PROVIDENCE — With Rhode Island's prison population at an all-time high, lawmakers are asking whether the state can move some inmates into drug treatment programs to save money and address a social problem at the same time. To read the full article, visit the [Providence Journal Web site](#).

- **State Directors offer an array of cuts as deficits loom**
- By Katherine Gregg and Elizabeth Gudrais, *The Providence Journal*
- December 8, 2006

PROVIDENCE — With state government staring at the potential for multimillion-dollar deficits this year and next, prison administrators are contemplating widespread layoffs and the release of hundreds of inmates. To read the full article, visit the [Providence Journal Web site](#).

- **ACI costs climbing along with population: The Department of Corrections needs an extra \$12.7 million in the current fiscal year to pay the cost of housing a record number of prisoners**
- By W. Zachary Malinowski, *The Providence Journal*
- November 18, 2006

The state prison population has reached "historic highs," and corrections officials need an additional \$13 million this year to cope with the surging number of inmates, according to a top administrator at the Adult Correctional Institutions.

To read the full article, visit the [Providence Journal Web site](#).