



A Framework for Evidence-Based Decision Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems

An initiative funded by the National Institute of Corrections
with support from the Office of Justice Programs

Technical assistance provided by:
Center for Effective Public Policy, Pretrial Justice Institute,
The Justice Management Institute, and The Carey Group

Starter Kit 6a: Measuring Your Performance

Appendix 3: Sample Glossary of Criminal Justice Terms

This glossary defines key terms that are commonly used in the criminal justice field.¹

- **Community corrections:** The supervision of offenders in the resident population, as opposed to their confinement in secure correctional facilities. The main types of community corrections supervision are probation, parole, and pretrial. Community corrections is also referred to as community supervision.*
- **Cost analysis:** A type of economic analysis that provides a complete accounting of the costs related to a given policy or program. Cost analysis offers the most rudimentary cost information required by both decision makers and practitioners, and also serves as the foundation of all other economic analyses.²
- **Criminogenic:** Attributes of offenders that are directly linked to criminal behavior, have predictive qualities (of a new offense), are dynamic or changeable in nature (such as employment and peer interaction), and therefore can be influenced through circumstances, programming, or changes in an offender's attitude.
- **Data:** A collection of observations or statistics used to measure and analyze interventions.
- **Data-driven:** The use of regular and ongoing data collection and analysis to track performance and inform policy and practice.
- **Defendant:** A person who has been formally charged with a crime.

BJS Posts Online Tool For The Public to Calculate Recidivism Rates

The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics has posted an online analysis tool that allows users to calculate recidivism rates for persons released from state prisons. Recidivism rates may be generated for the entire sample of 35,000 released prisoners or for released prisoners with specific demographic, criminal history, and sentence attributes. The tool uses data collected by BJS on a sample of inmates released from state prisons in 1994 and followed for three years. A new BJS study on the recidivism of state prisoners released in 2005 is due next year.

BJS says the tool defines recidivism in a variety of ways and allows users to choose the measure that best fits their needs or to compare the various measures of recidivism for the same group of releases. As one example, more than 57% of white women between the ages of 21 and 25 who were released from prison were rearrested within three years, and 17% returned to prison.

The tool is available at
<http://bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=datool&surl=/recidivism/index.cfm>

¹Definitions noted with an asterisk (*) are drawn in whole or in part from BJS's terms and definitions:

<http://bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tda>.

² Cost-benefit analysis and cost effectiveness analysis are two types of cost analyses. See the glossary below for additional terms related to cost-benefit analysis.

- **Direct expenditure:** All expenditures except those classified as intergovernmental. It includes "direct current expenditure" (salaries, wages, fees, and commissions and purchases of supplies, materials, and contractual services) and "capital outlays" (construction and purchase of equipment, land, and existing structures). Capital outlays are included for the year when the direct expenditure is made, regardless of how the funds are raised (for example, by bond issue) or when they are paid back.*
- **Evidence-based:** Conclusions drawn from rigorous research studies that have been replicated numerous times with defined, measurable outcomes about the effectiveness of an intervention or process.
- **Failure to appear:** A defendant's absence for a scheduled court hearing when the defendant was notified in advance and deemed able to attend the hearing (e.g., the defendant's absence was not a result of being held in confinement and not transported from jail to the hearing, hospitalized, etc.); "absence" from the hearing is defined as having not attended at all while court is in session (vs. late for the hearing).
- **Goal:** The desired long-term result of an effort.³
- **Incarcerated population:** The population of inmates confined in a prison or a jail. This may also include halfway houses, boot camps, weekend residential programs, and other facilities in which individuals are confined overnight.*
- **Institutional corrections:** Secure correctional facilities. There are many different types of correctional facilities, operated by different government entities. Local jails are operated by county or municipal authorities, and typically hold offenders for short periods, ranging from a single day to a year. Prisons serve as long-term confinement facilities and are usually administered by the 50 state governments and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Private correctional facilities also operate under contracts for a wide variety of local, state, and federal agencies. Other correctional facilities are operated by special jurisdictions, such as the U.S. Armed Forces, U.S. territories, and federal agencies such as Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE).*
- **Jurisdiction:** A unit of government or the legal authority to exercise governmental power. In corrections, it refers to the government (state, federal, local, or tribal) that has legal authority over an inmate. Prisoners under a given state's jurisdiction may be housed in another state or local correctional facility.*
- **Objective:** Measurable, short-term indicators or benchmarks that indicate progress toward a goal is being made.⁴
- **Offender:** A person convicted of a criminal charge.
- **Offense:** An act or actions that constitute a violation of one or more criminal statutes. Such actions may result in an individual being charged and prosecuted, and result in a court

Another Glossary

See also the *Glossary of Terms and Phrases Relating to Bail and the Pretrial Release and Detention Decision*, by the Pretrial Justice Institute:
<http://www.pretrial.org/Reports/PJI%20Reports/PJI%20Glossary%20of%20Terms%202011.pdf>.

³ For purposes of this initiative, "goal" is synonymous with the term "impact" in the logic model.

⁴ "Objective," as it is used here, is synonymous with the term "outcome" in the logic model.

disposition. Some offenses may not result in formal charges and may result instead in dropped charges, referral to a precharge diversion program, etc.

- **Operational capacity:** The number of inmates that can be accommodated based on a facility's size and space distribution, staff, existing programs, and services.*
- **Performance measure:** A quantifiable measure that is used to assess whether or not optimum performance is being achieved and to identify where adjustments in performance or strategy are necessary.
- **Recidivism:** A measure of failure of an individual or group of individuals who have been or are under criminal justice authority. Individuals who have been charged with any new offense in any jurisdiction that proceeds past a probable cause hearing are considered to have "recidivated" unless those individuals are subsequently determined to be "not guilty."
- **Research:** The systematic collection and analysis of data, using scientific methods, to study the effect of an intervention.
- **Technical violation:** A finding that an individual has not complied with a court-ordered condition (or, if this authority is delegated by the court to another entity such as pretrial justice or community supervision, a condition established by this entity) that does not constitute a new criminal offense. For the purposes of this definition, a finding of a positive ("dirty") urine test is (or is not) considered evidence of the commission of a new criminal offense.
- **Victimization:** The effect of a crime on an individual person or household. For personal crimes, the number of victimizations is equal to the number of victims involved. The number of victimizations may be greater than the number of incidents because more than one person may be victimized during an incident. For household crimes, each crime is assumed to involve a single victim, the affected household.*
- **Victimization rate:** A measure of the occurrence of victimizations among a specified population. For personal crimes, this is based on the number of victimizations per 1,000 residents age 12 or older. For household crimes, victimization rates are calculated using the number of incidents per 1,000 households.*
- **Violation (any type):** A finding that an individual has not complied with a court-ordered condition (or, if this authority is delegated by the court to another entity such as pretrial justice or community supervision, a condition established by this entity).
- **Violation (new crime):** A finding that an individual has not complied with court-ordered conditions of community release by being arrested for (or being found guilty of) the commission of a new crime that occurred after being placed on supervision.

Glossary of Cost-Benefit Terms

This glossary defines key terms that are commonly used in the field of cost-benefit analysis. *These terms are taken in whole from the Cost-Benefit Knowledge Bank for Criminal Justice (CBKB)*⁵.

- **Average costs:** Total cost divided by the quantity of output. For example, the average cost of probation is calculated by dividing total probation department expenditures by the average probation population. See also marginal costs.
- **Benefit-cost analysis (BCA):** Refer to cost-benefit analysis (CBA).
- **Benefit-cost ratio (BCR):** A common means of reporting CBA results that is calculated by dividing total benefits by total costs. If the ratio is greater than one, it means that the benefits outweigh the costs. If it is less than one, then the costs outweigh the benefits. If it is equal to one, then the costs equal the benefits and the initiative breaks even.
- **Capital cost:** The cost of purchasing and/or developing tangible property, including durable goods, equipment, buildings, installations, and land. This cost includes any interest paid on the funds borrowed to finance a capital expense.
- **Contingent valuation:** A method that uses surveys to estimate the monetary value of something that is not commonly traded in the marketplace, such as environmental preservation or crime reduction. For example, a contingent valuation survey might ask individuals what they are willing to pay for a reduction in crime.
- **Cost analysis:** A type of economic analysis that provides a complete accounting of the costs related to a given policy or program. Cost analysis provides the most rudimentary cost information required by both decision makers and practitioners, and also serves as the foundation of all other economic analyses.
- **Cost-benefit analysis (CBA):** Also known as benefit-cost analysis (BCA). A type of economic analysis that compares the costs and benefits of policies and programs over a long-term period. The hallmark of CBA is that both costs and benefits are monetized, permitting the comparison of initiatives with different purposes and outcomes.
- **Cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA):** A type of economic analysis that compares the costs relative to the outcomes of programs and policies. Cost-effectiveness analysis indicates which option produces a desired outcome for the lowest cost.
- **Cost-of-illness approach:** A method that measures tangible victim costs, such as medical costs and lost earnings, using information from hospital databases and typical salary rates.

Cost-Benefit Online Clearinghouse

The Cost-Benefit Knowledge Bank for Criminal Justice (CBKB) aims to broaden and deepen the understanding and use of cost-benefit analysis in criminal justice.

CBKB helps practitioners and jurisdictions build their capacity to conduct cost-benefit studies and apply cost-benefit analysis to policymaking. CBKB is a project of the Vera Institute of Justice and is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Visit the CBKB at: <http://www.vera.org/project/cba-knowledge-bank>

⁵ See <http://cbkb.org/basics/glossary/>.

- **Direct costs:** Costs that are directly related to a specific activity. General categories of direct costs include but are not limited to salaries and wages, fringe benefits, supplies, contractual services, travel and communication, equipment, and computer use.
- **Fiscal impact analysis:** A type of economic analysis that comprehensively examines all governmental costs and savings that will result from a proposed policy or program. Referred to as a “fiscal note” when prepared by legislative staff to report the impact of draft legislation on the government budget.
- **Hedonic valuation:** A technique to estimate the dollar value of items that are not commonly traded in the marketplace by measuring their impact on the prices of other goods and services. Hedonic valuation can be used to estimate the value of crime by measuring how changes in crime rates affect local property values, for instance.
- **Indirect costs:** Also known as overhead. Indirect costs refer to central administrative expenses, such as accounting and legal services, that are necessary for the continued functioning of an organization but cannot be directly allocated to a specific activity.
- **Intangible costs:** Costs that cannot be measured directly in dollar terms. Examples of intangible costs include pain and suffering and lost confidence in the justice system.
- **Jury-compensation method:** A method to estimate the intangible costs of crime using the money awarded to victims by juries.
- **Marginal costs:** Used to describe the costs that are incurred because of changes in units of activity at the margin of an existing level of operation. Short-term marginal costs include those costs that change with a slight change in units of activity. Long-term marginal costs are costs that change as a result of more substantial changes in activity. Marginal costs are generally a more accurate measure to use in a cost-benefit analysis than average costs. See also average costs.
- **Monetize:** To convert something, for instance, program outcomes or intangible benefits, into dollar terms.
- **Net benefits:** Total benefits minus total costs. The net benefit is a common means of reporting CBA results.
- **Overhead:** Refer to indirect costs.
- **Per diem rate:** A daily allowable expense rate, for example, the daily rate for keeping people in prisons or jails.
- **Regression analysis:** A statistical technique used to model how changes in one or more variables, called independent variables, affect changes in a variable of interest, called the dependent variable. In CBA, this technique can be used to estimate marginal costs.
- **Tangible costs:** Costs that can be measured directly in dollar terms. Tangible costs to crime victims include medical expenses, property damage and loss, and lost wages.
- **Victim costs:** The monetary value of the physical, psychological, and financial harms experienced by crime victims. Victim costs typically include tangible and intangible costs.