



**CJJP**

*Criminal & Juvenile Justice Planning*

# **The Public Safety Advisory Board** **Annual Report**

**to the Iowa General Assembly and the Governor**

**December 1, 2014**

Sarah Johnson, M.A., Justice Systems Analyst  
Steve Michael, M.P.A., Division Administrator

Staff support is provided to the Iowa Public Safety Advisory Board by the Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Iowa General Assembly, during its 2010 legislative session, created a new body, the Public Safety Advisory Board (PSAB). The purpose of the Board is to provide the General Assembly with an analysis of current and proposed criminal code provisions. The mission of this Board is to provide research, evaluation, and data to the General Assembly to facilitate improvement in the criminal justice system in Iowa in terms of public safety, improved outcomes, and appropriate use of public resources.

The duties of the Board, as enumerated in the Iowa Code, consist of the following:

- a. Reviewing and making recommendations relating to current sentencing provisions. In reviewing such provisions the board shall consider the impact on all of the following:
  1. Potential disparity in sentencing.
  2. Truth in sentencing.
  3. Victims.
  4. The proportionality of specific sentences.
  5. Sentencing procedures.
  6. Costs associated with the implementation of criminal code provisions, including costs to the judicial branch, department of corrections, and judicial district departments of correctional services, costs for representing indigent defendants, and costs incurred by political subdivisions of the state.
  7. Best practices related to the department of corrections including recidivism rates, safety and efficient use of correctional staff, and compliance with correctional standards set by the federal government and other jurisdictions.
  8. Best practices related to the Iowa child death review team established in section 135.43 and the Iowa domestic abuse death review team established in section 135.109.
- b. Reviewing and making recommendations relating to proposed legislation, in accordance with paragraph "a", as set by rule by the general assembly or as requested by the executive or judicial branch proposing such legislation.
- c. Providing expertise and advice to the legislative services agency, the department of corrections, the judicial branch, and others charged with formulating fiscal, correctional, or minority impact statements.
- d. Reviewing data supplied by the division, the department of management, the legislative services agency, the Iowa supreme court, and other departments or agencies for the purpose of determining the effectiveness and efficiency of the collection of such data.

It should be noted the PSAB considers the impact that various policies and recommendations have on the disproportionality of racial minorities in the justice system. The PSAB carefully explores and considers such impact and makes policy recommendations in an effort to reduce this disproportionality.

The following report is a compilation of the PSAB's deliberations for submittal to the General Assembly as required. The PSAB respectfully submits this report, and welcomes the opportunity to provide any additional assistance to the Legislature upon request.

## II. OVERVIEW OF CY 2014 DELIBERATIONS

The Public Safety Advisory Board (PSAB) met three times during CY 2014. The Board held formal meetings on May 19, September 24, and November 19.

During the Board's last three public meetings, members were presented with research on the following topics:

- Juvenile Offenders Serving Life Sentences<sup>1</sup>
- The Effects of Earned-time for Inmates Charged with Robbery<sup>2</sup>
- An Analysis of the Sex Offender Special Sentence in Iowa<sup>3</sup>

Reports on Juvenile Offenders Serving Life Sentences and the Effects of Earned-time for Inmates Charged with Robbery were presented to the PSAB for informative purpose and legislative action is not recommended at this time by the Board.

The Analysis of the Sex Offender Special Sentence in Iowa was a report adopted by the Sex Offender Research Council (SORC). The PSAB also had interest in the report as it addressed sex offender recidivism and public safety.

At a joint meeting of the PSAB and SORC on November 19, 2014, both entities recommended the following policy changes to Iowa's special sentence:

Imposition of the special sentence would remain as it is today, with the added provision to give the court the opportunity to review and reduce the special sentence. The change to current policy will be to allow the court to remove an offender from the special sentence supervision based on an evidentiary hearing that reviews information believed to be pertinent to special sentence placement (the nature of the sex offense, the offender's institutional behavior, sex offender treatment compliance, court mandate compliance, victim impact, risk assessment, etc.). This information would then be utilized by the judge to render a judgment as to whether or not continued special sentence supervision is appropriate.

The SORC and PSAB also recommend that additional funding should be directed towards early and effective treatment for sex offenders.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjip/images/pdf/LiferReport%20-%202014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjip/images/pdf/In-Prison%20Misconduct%20Report%20May%202014.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Johnson. S. 2014. An Analysis of the Sex Offender Special Sentence in Iowa. The Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

### III. OVERVIEW OF PAST DELIBERATIONS

**The PSAB continues its support for the following stemming from past activity:**

1.) Changes to Iowa's Child Kidnapping Legislation<sup>4</sup>

A 2013 analysis revealed that while child kidnapping in Iowa is rare, a review of the effectiveness of kidnapping laws reveals weaknesses in Iowa's Criminal Code. Currently, the Code does not distinguish between adult and child victims and does not provide for penalty enhancements for repeat offenders. The PSAB believes Iowa's Criminal Code should be strengthened by addressing these weaknesses.

The Board specifically offered that Iowa Code §710.3 is narrowly defined and rarely imposed, as it penalizes only kidnapping involving a ransom or dangerous weapon. This section of the Code should be revised to include language making non-parental/custodial kidnapping of a child/minor or any subsequent kidnapping conviction an automatic Class B felony subject to the mandatory minimum contained in §902.12.

Additionally, policymakers should clearly define the age of the child/minor so as not to exclude minor victims over the age of 14, as many kidnapping victims are in their mid-teens.

2.) Changes to Iowa's Robbery Mandatory Minimum Sentencing Legislation<sup>5</sup>

A 2013 analysis studied mandatory minimum sentences imposed by §902.12 of the Iowa Code (the "70% rule") and has concluded that the current law does not meet the public safety needs of Iowans. Evidence also suggests that 70% sentences disproportionately affect minorities (37% of offenders serving mandatory minimums are African-American, however African-Americans makes up approximately 26% of the total prison population). The Public Safety Advisory Board offers the following recommendations:

- As in current law, robbery should remain a forcible felony that requires incarceration.
- Continue the current 15% cap on earned time for robbery offenses covered by §902.12. While this option contributes to larger prison populations, it permits the incapacitation of some of the prison system's most dangerous and violent offenders, increasing public safety.
- Establish a mandatory minimum term of seven years for Robbery in the First Degree and three years for Robbery in the Second Degree. These recommended minimum sentences are consistent with the average length-of-stay for robbers prior to establishment of the 70% sentence. They would require imprisonment of robbers for a period consistent with the seriousness of robbery offenses while allowing the Board of Parole discretion to consider possible release between expiration of the mandatory minimum and the maximum 85% term. While allowing for earlier release of lower-risk inmates, this proposal

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/images/pdf/Child%20Kidnapping%20Report%20FY2014-Final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/images/pdf/Violent\\_Offender\\_70Pct\\_Report.pdf](http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/images/pdf/Violent_Offender_70Pct_Report.pdf)

also would permit lengthy incarceration of those individuals at high risk to reoffend or those individuals who pose a significant threat to public safety.

### 3.) Appropriate use of Risk Assessments for Drug Traffickers<sup>6</sup>

As a result of a 2011 analysis on the effects of mandatory minimums for drug traffickers the Board continues to recommend that a validated risk assessment be made a standard part of pre-sentence investigation reports and that sufficient training is provided to those in the criminal justice system (defense, prosecutors, and the judiciary) so that they are utilized appropriately.

### 4.) Modifying Penalties for Power and Crack Cocaine<sup>7</sup>

In Iowa, prohibited acts involving more than 10 grams but less than 50 grams of crack currently carry the same penalty as offenses involving more than 100 but less than 500 grams of powder cocaine. Iowa data presented to the PSAB suggest that this disparity in penalties contributes to disproportionate incarceration of African-Americans. Data were also presented pertaining to the amounts of crack and powder cocaine seizures. Research was presented illustrating that the physiological and psychotropic effects of crack and powder cocaine are the same, and that the drugs are now widely acknowledged as pharmacologically identical.

As a result of an analysis examining the effects of the sentencing discrepancy between crack and power cocaine, the PSAB continues to support modifying the penalties for crack and powdered cocaine.

Amend Iowa Code §124.401 for the amounts of crack cocaine.

- a. §124.401(a)(3) to greater than 125 grams
- b. §124.401(b)(3) to greater than 35 grams and not more than 125 grams
- c. §124.401(c)(3) to equal to or less than 35 grams

### 5.) Implementation of Results First in Iowa's Corrections and Juvenile Justice Systems

"The Iowa Public Safety Advisory Board has used the Iowa Results First model to estimate the costs and benefits associated with implementing alternative sentencing strategies and reinvesting projected taxpayer savings in effective programming."<sup>8</sup>

The PSAB continues to support the use of the Results First model to evaluate which types of criminal justice programs are better investments than others.

### 6.) Continuation of study of juvenile sentencing options in adult court

Due to recent legislative changes, including the passage of SF 288<sup>9</sup> (signed by the Governor on April 24, 2013), the PSAB would like to continue to study the impact of juvenile sentences in adult court and any disproportionate impact on racial minorities.

---

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/images/pdf/PSAB\\_MandatoryMinimumReport2011.pdf](http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/images/pdf/PSAB_MandatoryMinimumReport2011.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/cjpp/images/pdf/PSAB%202011%20Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2013/10/04/the-pewmacarthur-results-first-initiative-in-iowa>

<sup>9</sup> <http://coolice.legis.iowa.gov/CoolICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&ga=85&hbill=SF288>