



Arkansas House Newsletter

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Substance Abuse Task Force Hears Success Of Public Safety Act

In 2011, there were 1000 fewer revocations of probation and paroles in Arkansas than the previous year. The Director of the Department of Community Correction, David Eberhard, informed the Task Force on Substance Abuse Treatment of the decline in a committee meeting Friday morning. Eberhard also added his agency has seen a decrease in all levels of crime in individuals it currently supervises. According to Eberhard these promising results show "definite correlations" to the passage of Act 570 of 2011: To Improve Public Safety and Slow Corrections Growth.

Act 570 outlined a number of goals for the Department of Community Correction (DCC) aimed at identifying where the risks and needs were within the department in regards to its offenders. The DCC implemented the Ohio Risk Assessment System, a system which classifies offenders as either low, medium, or high risk offenders based on a number of statistically relevant risk factors ranging from things like the age at which the offense was committed to whether the offender is employed or not.

The hope was that in determining which offenders fall into which categories, the DCC could direct most of its time and resources on those that needed it most: the high and medium-risk offenders. Eberhard said that the DCC has even talked about in the future using kiosks for managing the cases of low-risk offenders to save time and money. Offenders would simply identify themselves with a fingerprint, update their information, and potentially submit a sample for a drug test if needed.

In addition, the act required that the department create guidelines for responding swiftly to matters of noncompliance. This provision requires the DCC to work with offenders on issues of noncompliance, rather than jumping straight to revoking parole or probation. Eberhard reported that this, too, was having positive

effects, causing the county jail back-up to decrease.