

# The Evidence-Based Decision Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems Initiative



*Funded by the National Institute of Corrections<sup>1</sup> with support from the Office of Justice Programs<sup>2</sup>*

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**One less offender.  
One less crime.  
One less victim.**

In June 2008, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) awarded the Center for Effective Public Policy,<sup>3</sup> in partnership with the Pretrial Justice Institute,<sup>4</sup> the Justice Management Institute,<sup>5</sup> and The Carey Group,<sup>6</sup> a cooperative agreement to address "Evidence-Based Decision Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems." The goal of the initiative is to build a system wide framework (arrest through final disposition and discharge) that will result in more collaborative, evidence-based decision making and practices in local criminal justice systems. This effort is grounded in two decades of research on the factors that contribute to criminal reoffending and the methods the justice system can employ to interrupt the cycle of re-offense. The initiative seeks to equip criminal justice policymakers in local communities with the information, processes, and tools that will result in measurable reductions of pretrial misconduct and post-conviction reoffending.

The principle product of Phase I of this initiative is the Evidence-Based Decision Making Framework in Local Criminal Justice Systems ("the Framework"<sup>7</sup>). The Framework identifies the key structural elements of a system informed by evidence-based practice. It defines a vision of safer communities. It puts forward the belief that risk and harm reduction are fundamental goals of the justice system, and that these can be achieved without sacrificing offender accountability or other important justice system outcomes. The Framework both acknowledges the importance of the key premises and values underlying our criminal justice system and puts forward a set of principles to guide evidence-based decision making within that context. The principles themselves are evidence-based. The Framework also highlights some of the most groundbreaking of the research – evidence that clearly demonstrates that we *can* reduce pretrial misconduct and offender recidivism. It identifies the key stakeholders who must be actively engaged in a collaborative partnership if an evidence-based system of justice is to be achieved. It also begins to outline some of the most difficult challenges we will face as we seek to deliberately and systematically implement such an approach in local communities.

Key features of the Framework include:

- 7 Ways to Reduce Recidivism
- Four Core Principles Underlying Evidence-Based Decision Making
- Risk and Harm Reduction
- Key Research Findings in Effective Justice Practices and Risk Reduction
- The 1 Million Fewer Victims Campaign

The Framework represents the work of the initiative staff, funding organization, and a multi-disciplinary Advisory Committee.<sup>8</sup>

In August 2010, the Evidence-Based Decision Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems Initiative selected seven jurisdictions to serve as EBDM "Seed Sites" as part of Phase II of this initiative. They are:

- Mesa County, Colorado
- Grant County, Indiana
- Ramsey County, Minnesota
- Yamhill County, Oregon
- City of Charlottesville/County of Albemarle, Virginia
- Eau Claire County, Wisconsin
- Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

In addition to working with the seven Seed Sites, initiative staff will be developing a variety of products during this phase of the initiative. These include:

- A curriculum on evidence-based decision making and the initiative;
- A fact sheet summarizing the findings of the EBDM public opinion survey;
- A "starter kit" for the EBDM seed sites (and others) who are interested in building their capacity to engage in evidence-based decision making; and
- Guides for pretrial justice officials and prosecutors on evidence-based decision making.

NIC has awarded a cooperative agreement to the Urban Institute, which will begin their work in coordination with the initiative team. They will develop processes to evaluate the effectiveness of the technical assistance delivered to the Seed Sites and help to determine the readiness of the sites for full implementation of the Framework.



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<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Corrections - <http://nicic.gov/EBDM/>

<sup>2</sup> Office of Justice Programs - OJP - <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/>

<sup>3</sup> Center for Effective Public Policy - <http://www.cepp.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Pretrial Justice Institute - <http://www.pretrial.org/>

<sup>5</sup> Justice Management Institute - <http://www.jmijjustice.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Carey Group - <http://www.thecareygroupinc.com/>

<sup>7</sup> "the Framework" - <http://www.cepp.com/documents/EBDM%20Framework.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Initiative staff and Advisory committee - [http://www.cepp.com/EBDM.OneLess/ebdm\\_advisorycommittee.htm](http://www.cepp.com/EBDM.OneLess/ebdm_advisorycommittee.htm)