

IMPACT ON DETENTION CENTER POPULATION OF “JOBS NOT JAIL” ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING PROGRAM

The Jobs not Jail program (JNJ) is a community based alternative sentencing program for low-income fathers that are unemployed and/or underemployed and who owe a duty of child support for their children. JNJ currently operates in eight counties throughout South Carolina and the data collected from the three years of its active operation indicates that the program significantly lowers detention center costs and provides several benefits to those communities where it is located.

For the purposes of this report, information was gathered from two detention centers where the JNJ program has existed for three years, and information was gathered from one detention center where the JNJ program has never existed. The data compiled indicates several things. First, where a JNJ program exists, the inmate population that is incarcerated for nonpayment of child support is significantly reduced as a result of the program’s intervention, reducing by one-half the number of inmates that otherwise would be incarcerated for non-payment of child support. Second, because of the reduction in inmates, counties that have a JNJ program have a significant cost savings in incarceration costs. Third, there are many societal benefits to approaching issues of poverty in our communities in a more service oriented, and non-punitive manner.

A Closer Look Where JNJ Exists (Richland and Lexington Counties)

Richland County: Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center

• Current average daily male population	895
• Current average daily population for nonpayment of child support <u>with JNJ</u>	52 (6%)
• Average daily population for nonpayment of child support <u>without JNJ</u>	122 (14%)
• Average cost per inmate at \$60.00 per day with 5 month average length of stay	\$9,000
• Average cost per inmate diverted to JNJ six month program	\$2,500
• Of 52 currently incarcerated, how many are repeat offenders	42 (80%)

Impact of JNJ in Richland County by the numbers:

• Number ordered into JNJ from 7/1/08 – 7/1/09 who completed program	70
• Incarceration cost savings due to JNJ program	\$630,000
• Cost to operate program with 70 participants	\$175,000
• Net cost savings for Richland County (630,000 – 175,000)	\$455,000
• Child support paid by 70 JNJ participants while in program	\$107,563
• Gross earnings of 70 JNJ participants	\$336,922

Potential Cost Impact:

• Allocation to urban areas like Richland should anticipate 100 men	
• JNJ potential enrollment is 100 men with proper funding	
• JNJ cost to serve 100 men	<u>\$250,000</u>
• Incarceration cost saved for 100 men	\$900,000

- **Net savings (900,000 – 250,000)** **\$650,000**

Lexington County Detention Center

- Current average daily male population **743**
- Current average daily population for nonpayment of child support with JNJ **59 (8%)**
- Average daily population for nonpayment of child support without JNJ **111 (15%)**
- Average cost per inmate at \$55.00 per day with 6 month average length of stay **\$9,900**
- Average cost per inmate diverted to JNJ six month program **\$2,500**
- Of 59 currently incarcerated, how many are repeat offenders **44 (74%)**

Impact of JNJ in Lexington County by the numbers:

- Number ordered into JNJ from 7/1/08 – 7/1/09 who completed program **52**
- Incarceration cost savings due to JNJ program **\$514,800**
- Cost to operate program with 52 participants **\$130,000**
- Net cost savings for Lexington County (514,800 – 130,000) **\$455,000**
- Child support paid by 52 JNJ participants while in program **\$ 76,272**
- Gross earnings of 52 JNJ participants **\$178,851**

Potential Cost Impact:

- **Allocation to urban areas like Lexington should anticipate 100 men**
- **JNJ potential enrollment is 100 men with proper funding**
- **JNJ cost to serve 100 men** **\$250,000**
- **Incarceration cost saved for 100 men** **\$990,000**
- **Net savings (990,000 – 250,000)** **\$740,000**

A Comparison Where JNJ Does Not Exist (York County)

York County is a rural county with a smaller detention center population. A JNJ program has never existed in this area and as a result nearly half the inmate population represents child support defendants.

- Current average daily male population **103**
- Average daily population for nonpayment of child support without JNJ **40 (39%)**
- Average cost per inmate at \$40.00 per day with 4 month average length of stay **\$4,800***
- Average cost per inmate diverted to JNJ six month program **\$2,500**
- Of 40 currently incarcerated, how many are repeat offenders **28 (70%)**

*Overhead costs are not calculated into cost per day so number is unusually low

Community Benefits from a JNJ Program

Men who are court ordered into the JNJ program must secure employment, work and pay their child support while enrolled into the six month program. For the time period between 7/01/08 – 7/01/09, low-income men enrolled into the program paid close to \$500,000 dollars in child support to low-income mothers and children who need this support to survive. Incarcerated fathers can not contribute to the support of their children and therefore the mother and child suffer during these periods of incarceration.

Opponents of community alternatives to jail, like JNJ, will state that work release solves this problem. However, in most detention centers around the State, **work release is an ineffective means of getting these fathers to work and still requires taxpayers to support the high cost of incarceration.** Work release only works when a father has an employer who is willing and able to work with the detention center. This happens very rarely. Even in York County where the detention center had a very active and well meaning work release program, the program has fallen apart in this weakened economy. Where in the past the detention center could find employer partners to hire inmates, the current economic condition is making that task impossible. York County officials reported that in years past they were able to secure employment for about half the inmates incarcerated for nonpayment of child support. However, currently only 8 of the 40 inmates are on work release, and 5 out of the 8 had this employment when they arrived at the detention center.

The JNJ component takes a more **holistic approach** to securing long term employment and addressing all of the known evidence based risk factors that keep these men unemployed and incarcerated. Not only does the program teach job readiness and retention skills, but the program is partnering with workforce investment administrations and technical colleges to offer **fast track job training** in skills that will make these men marketable in an increasingly difficult job market.

The program also deals effectively with barriers to employment, which includes transportation and housing needs. For fathers that have lost their licenses due to nonpayment of support, the program will provide temporary transportation while assisting the father with getting a provisional license to drive to and from work. The program also offers weekly peer support classes on the life skills included in the fatherhood core curriculum which includes communication skills, building healthy relationships, parenting skills, and economic stability. The program strives for a father that not only works and pays his support, but also one who actively parents his child and understands the importance of two parent involvement for the healthy emotional development of his child.