



SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS

JULY 25, 2008

A PROFILE OF INCARCERATED ADULTS AT CADDO
CORRECTIONAL CENTER (MARCH 12 -- MAY 15, 2008)

The Louisiana Justice Coalition (LJC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the constitutional right to counsel and ensure the respect and dignity of each practitioner and every client by improving the delivery of public defense services and creating a receptive climate for positive change.

This study was funded by a grant from the Charles T. Beard Foundation, based in Shreveport, LA.

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A SURVEY OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE NEEDS OF INCARCERATED ADULTS AT
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INTRODUCTION

“Slipping Through the Cracks” is a study of 100 pre-trial indigent defendants in the Caddo Correctional Center (CCC) conducted by the Louisiana Justice Coalition (LJC) during the spring of 2008 in collaboration with the Caddo Parish Office of the Public Defender. The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To create a profile of clients in Caddo Parish based on their race, gender, income, age and criminal history;
- To assess the needs of the CCC prison population based on clients’ self-reported history of learning disabilities, mental illness, addiction, homelessness, incarceration, family life and employment.
- To record the scope and diversity of treatment options and alternatives to incarceration that clients request;
- To document the effect of incarceration on the lives of clients, their families, support systems and immediate communities; and
- To identify trends in the collective experience of indigent defendants who have been represented previously by a public defender.

A study of this kind is important and relevant for several reasons:

First, Louisiana has the highest rate of incarceration of any state in the nation. Louisiana’s incarceration rate is significantly higher than the nation’s state with the second highest incarceration rate (Mississippi, as of 2007). The United States has the highest rate of incarceration among industrialized nations.ⁱ Louisiana has held this distinction for a number of years, and has a prison population that continues to rise faster than the national average. In January 2008, Louisiana had more than 106,600 people in state or parish prisons.ⁱⁱ

Second, with so many people in jail and expenditures related to incarceration increasing, the costs of prisons in Louisiana make up an increasing percentage of the State budget. In 2007, \$552 million—7.5% of the State’s total general fund expenditures—went towards corrections.ⁱⁱⁱ State dollars spent on incarceration take money from other state programs, including education, health care and State infrastructure. When investments in social services face cuts, more and more people begin slip through the cracks of safety nets designed to support the homeless, the unemployed, and those suffering from mental and physical disabilities.

Third, a growing body of evidence from both practitioners and academics has affirmed the link between unmet social needs and crime.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study supports the relationships between crime and unmet social needs. This research reveals that the vast majority of pre-trial prisoners awaiting trial in jail are suffering from at least one kind of crisis, be it a crisis in housing, addiction, employment, or mental or physical health. The issues uncovered by this survey include:

1. **Addiction.** 38% reported being addicted to drugs or alcohol.
2. **Mental Illness.** 35% were diagnosed with a mental illness or personality disorder.
3. **Homelessness.** 34% reported being homeless at least once in their lives.
4. **Prior experience in jail.** 43% and 85% had a prior juvenile and adult conviction, respectively.
5. **Foster care.** 11% of prisoners surveyed reported having been in the foster care system as a child.
6. **Literacy and special education.** 10% reported very little or no ability to read or write. 23% reported being placed in special education classes when in school. More than half lacked a high school diploma or GED.
7. **Employment.** 55% of prisoners reported that they were working at the time of arrest. 66% had children and 21% of prisoners reported that they were the primary providers for others.
8. **Support Systems.** While a substantial number of pre-trial prisoners were seemingly integrated into their communities, a significant number had trouble identifying any support system at all. 53% of the prisoners we interviewed had received no visitors at the time of our interview (conducted an average of 10 days of arrest).
9. **A Local Problem.** 64% of prisoners that we interviewed had lived in either Bossier or Caddo Parish all their lives. More than 75% of those we interviewed had lived in either Bossier or Caddo Parish for “most” of their lives.

The fundamental conclusion of this study is that there is strong justification for the inclusion of social workers in the Office of the Public Defender, to help meet the needs of clients identified in this research. Such a policy would improve court outcomes for clients, maximize the mitigation resources for public defenders, create a broader range of sentencing options to be considered by criminal court agencies and provide more effective advocacy for the improvement of the entire Caddo Parish community.

ABOUT THE REPORT

METHODOLOGY

The indigent defendants interviewed in this study were randomly selected by docket number between the dates of March 12th through May 15th. Interviews took place with 14 days after arrest. No effort was made to interview clients who had bonded out of prison or been otherwise released.

All interviews were conducted by LJC staff within the CCC facility, after being trained by, and under the supervision of, the Project Director for Caddo Community Defense Project, who is a social worker. In all interviews, LJC used a nine-page questionnaire consisting of both closed and open-ended questions. LJC staff used some discretion in following the precise language and order of the questionnaire. No verification of prisoner reported information was conducted.

Most of the interviews were conducted in a private room, though some were conducted, out of necessity, in common areas within CCC. The average duration of each interview was 40-45 minutes. LJC attempted to interview every prisoner with a docket number ending in 3,6, or 9 who was in CCC between March 12th and May 15th, 2008. Participation in this research was voluntary, and three defendants declined to participate in this study. No randomly selected prisoner was intentionally refused an interview. Prisoners signed a waiver to release the information they had shared at the conclusion of the interview.

For the purpose of this study, LJC acted as an agent of the Caddo Parish Office of the Public Defender, with the permission of the District Defender, and all information collected in these interviews was passed to the defendant's attorney and is therefore protected, confidential work product of the Caddo Parish Office of the Public Defender.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY DEFENSE MODEL

Louisiana jails have increasingly become the centers of communities, housing individuals who have been unable to get the assistance that they need to avoid becoming court-involved, and processing large numbers of residents within particular communities. The first step for transforming the model of public defense and related court agencies is to gain an increased appreciation for and sensitivity to the needs extra-legal of incarcerated clients.

An individual's first contact with the criminal justice system offers a public defender a rare moment in which to assess many of that individual's most salient needs, including those that lie outside of the immediate realm of the legal system. Holistic defense seeks to replace the inevitability of incarceration with effective alternatives achieved through a strong collaboration between community service providers and the public defender office. The presence of social workers in the public defender office – integrated as part of the defense team – can address the social service needs of select clients so that they do not cycle back and forth through the criminal justice system. By aggressively addressing unmet social service needs, the community defense model increases public safety and decreases criminal justice costs while supporting individuals and their families to become healthy members of our community.

The Louisiana Public Defender Act –both the Act itself and the increased education of policy makers and increasingly sophisticated public dialogue on criminal justice issues that led to its passage –creates a tremendous opportunity finally to create a high-quality public defense system in Louisiana. LJC believes that quality defense mandates a community defense model in which public defenders are committed to achieving better outcomes for their clients and work collaboratively with social workers and social service providers. Towards this end LJC will work with the Caddo Parish Office of the Public Defender to undertake research, implement effective solutions, evaluate success and promote policy changes.

The Brennan Center for Justice makes six broad recommendations to guide public defender offices toward the implementation of the community defense model.^{iv} These are:

1. Reinvent Defender Culture
2. Reach Out To Client Communities
3. Investigate Police Misconduct and Help Clients Avoid Negative Police Interaction
4. Make Contacts with Social Service Providers and, Where Appropriate, Divert Clients at First Appearance
5. Improve Communication with Clients
6. Facilitate Client Reentry at Front and Back Ends of the Criminal Justice Process

GOAL

The ultimate goal of our work is to protect the constitutional right to counsel and implement a community defense model that empowers public defenders to provide high quality representation to each of their clients makes a broader range of options available to defendants, save tax dollars, protects public safety and restore community health.

AUTHORSHIP

This report was created by the staff of the Louisiana Justice Coalition. Its principal author is Celeste Lofton-Bagert, with support from Jamie Griswold Scoggin, MSW, GSW, and Heather H. Hall.

Prison costs are blowing holes in state budgets but barely making a dent in recidivism rates. At the same time, policy makers are becoming increasingly aware of research-backed strategies for community corrections – better ways to identify which offenders need a prison cell and which can be safely handled in the community... In exploring such alternatives, lawmakers are learning that current prison growth is not driven primarily by a parallel increase in crime, or a corresponding surge in the population at large. Rather, it flows principally from a wave of policy choices that are sending more law-breakers to prison.

-- Pew Center for the States, "One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008", pg 3

DEMOGRAPHICS

CADDO PARISH: INFORMATION ON THE GENERAL POPULATION

- An estimated 253,118 people reside in Caddo parish. 188,849 of those are 18 and over. Whites make up 49.1% of the population, African-Americans 47.6%, American Indians 0.4%, Asians 1%, and Latinos 2% of the population.
- The median per capita income is \$19,894. 17.1% of families and 22.4% of individuals live below the poverty line.
- 60.7% of the population 16 years and over is in the labor force. Participation in the labor market is virtually equal among whites and African Americans; however the unemployment rate for whites is 5.3% while the unemployment rate for African Americans is 16.6%.
- 40.6% of those with a disability are in the workforce, and 34% are employed.
- 18.3% of adults did not graduate from high school.

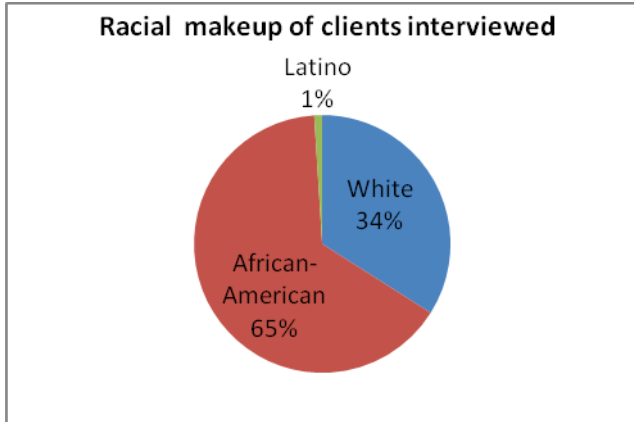
Race	% of Caddo Population	% of US Population
White	49.1	73.9%
Black or African American	47.6	12.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.4	0.8%
Asian	1	4.4%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0	0.1%
Some other race	1	6.3%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2	14.8%

Poverty	% of Caddo Population	% of US Population
% of families below poverty level	17.1	9.8%
% of individuals below poverty level	22.4	13.3%

Educational Attainment	% of Caddo Population	% of US Population
High school graduate or higher	81.7	84.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	22.4	27.0%

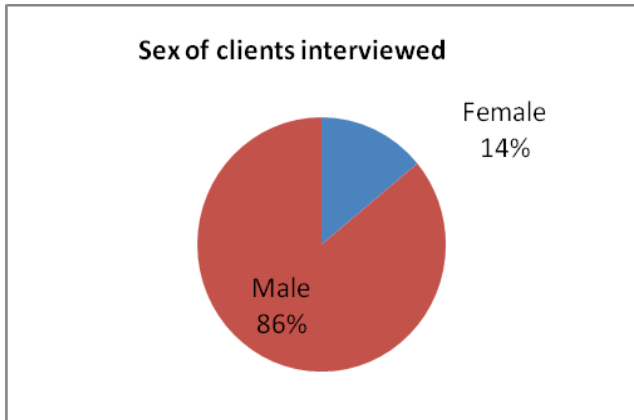
Income Category	Income Amount
Median family income (in 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars)	\$42,397.00
Per capita income (in 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars)	\$19,894.00

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON POPULATION OF CLIENTS INTERVIEWED



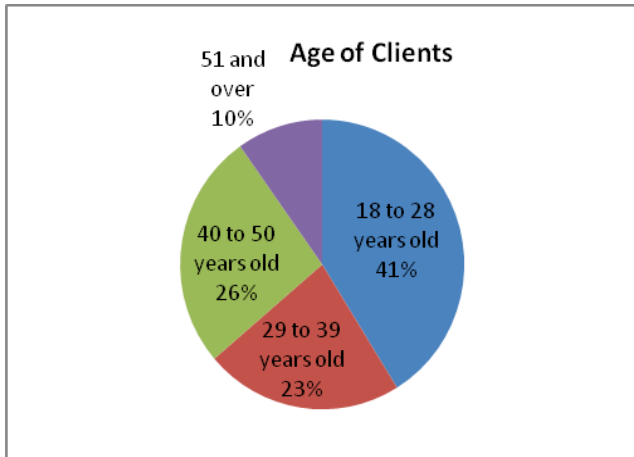
RACE:

34% of the clients interviewed by LJC were white and 65% were African-American. The 2006 population estimate for Caddo Parish was 253,118 persons, 49.1% of whom were white and 47.6% African-American. A small number of Asian, American Indian and mixed-race residents also make Caddo Parish their home. The fact that African Americans constituted 65% of the survey sample while making up only 47% of the area population suggests higher rates of incarceration of African-Americans. One client from our sample was Latino.



SEX:

14 of the prisoners that we interviewed, 14% of the total interviewed, were female. 6.6% of the Louisiana correctional population was female as of December 3, 2006.^v

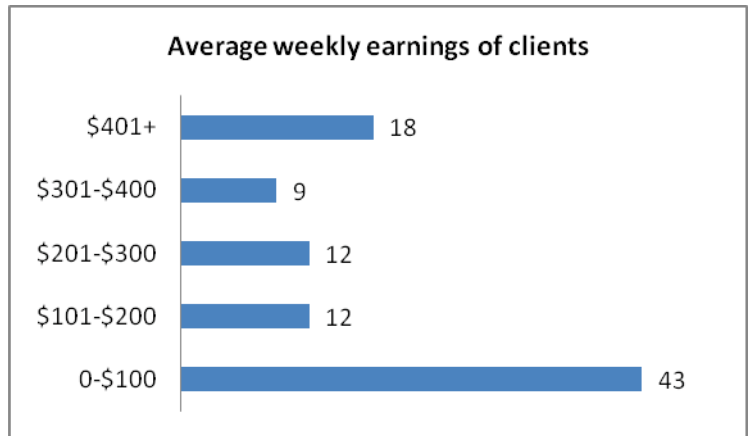


AGE:

The average age of the clients interviewed was 34, with a range of clients between 18 and 68 years. Almost half of the clients interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 29 years. 11% of the clients interviewed were teenagers between the ages of 18 and 19 years.

INCOME:

The average reported income of interviewed prisoners was \$228.17 per week. The median per capita income for Caddo parish is \$19,894 annually or \$383 weekly. Clients of public defenders make significantly less money than the general population of Caddo.



Clients reported weekly incomes of between zero and \$1,700.00 per week, but 38 clients reported no income. The fact that many clients reported no income is reflected in the frequent requests for job training, help with job placement and concerns about employment upon release. The large range of income among the clients reflects the diverse social and economic demographics of clients.

NOTE: Many clients stated that they were uncomfortable talking about their financial situation, perhaps because their ability to access a public defender may be jeopardized by reporting too much income. Also, if a client engages in illegal activity to supplement income, they may also be hesitant to report the additional income.

Income of clients, Caddo residents, U.S. residents	
Weekly income of clients interviewed	\$ 228.17
Weekly per capita income in U.S.	\$ 485.90
Weekly per capita income in Caddo	\$ 382.58

FAMILIES:

66% of the clients interviewed have children. 21% of clients reported being the main provider in their household. 53% had had a visitor at the time of the interview. For those who were not homeless at the time of arrest and who provided an answer, the average time at the current address was 6 years, while 11% had only lived at their current address for three months. The economic well-being of loved ones on the outside was a frequently cited concern among the clients interviewed.

EDUCATION:

78.7% of residents in Caddo Parish over the age of 24 years have a high school diploma, a rate that is slightly higher than that of the state (74.8%). In contrast, 30% of clients interviewed at CCC reported having completed high school. 14% of clients reported attending some college.

Clients' high school completion	
Did not complete high school	70
Completed high school	30
Obtained GED	19

Clients' college attendance	
No college	86
Some college	14

Clients' last grade completed	
8 th	11
9 th	12
10 th	21
11 th	18
12 th	31

FINDINGS

The results of this study provide further evidence to a rising consensus among criminal justice experts of the need for social services to be addressed at various points within the criminal justice system. The clients we interviewed reported issues related to employment, housing, education, mental health, developmental disabilities, drug use and homelessness. The context within which the client allegedly committed a crime is often related to:

1. **Addiction.** 38% reported being addicted to drugs or alcohol
2. **Mental Illness.** 35% were diagnosed with a mental illness or personality disorder
3. **Homelessness.** 34% reported being homeless at least once in their lives
4. **Prior experience in jail.** 43% and 85% had a prior juvenile and adult conviction, respectively
5. **Foster Care.** 11% of prisoners surveyed reported having been in the foster care system as a child
6. **Literacy and special education.** 10% reported very little or no ability to read or write. 23% reported being placed in special education classes when in school.

In addition to these findings, several important issues relating to gender, race and the special legal requirements of convicted sex offenders are also discussed in this section.

ADDICTION:

Access to treatment for drug addiction and alcoholism appears to be a major concern among the clients LJC interviewed. 46% of the total clients surveyed reported wanting drug treatment, and 73% of those who reported drug or alcohol use requested treatment. 89% of clients who reported an addiction stated that they wanted access to a drug treatment program. Of those who stated that they wanted access to a drug treatment program, some clients also mentioned specific needs such as longer treatment programs, help to transition out of treatment and one on one and group therapy

Drug and alcohol use and addiction among clients interviewed	
Clients that use drugs or drink alcohol	59%
Clients that use drugs or drink alcohol and want treatment	43%
Percentage of clients that use drugs or alcohol that want treatment	73%
Clients that report addiction	38%
Clients that report addiction and want treatment	34%
Percentage of clients with reported addiction that want treatment	89%
Clients that report past participation in drug treatment program	47%

Peter: “I know if I got out today, I would do the same thing again. I want to fix my addiction so that I stop having these problems...”

Peter is a 21 year old who turned himself in to the police after bingeing on a variety of drugs. Peter is addicted to cocaine, Oxycotin, and marijuana but has never been involved with the criminal justice system. Even though his record is “clean” Peter knows he needs help. He hurts himself by cutting and has been hospitalized for mental health issues. He wants therapy but cannot afford the costs. Peter lives with his parents, but signed up to join the United States Army following both his father’s and grandfather’s footsteps.

MENTAL ILLNESS:

Clients were asked if they had “ever been to a doctor or therapist for a mental health issues.” Of the prisoners surveyed, 36% reported being diagnosed with a mental illness. Three responded that they were unsure. The adjacent chart shows the mental health issues reported, along with the number of people who reported each issue. Many clients who suffered from mental illnesses reported multiple issues. 17% of the clients interviewed reported having attempted suicide. 22% had been hospitalized for a mental health issue. 40% of clients interviewed stated that they wanted mental health treatment.

Mental Health Issues Among Clients Interviewed	
Suicide	17
Doctor diagnosis	35
Medication for mental health issue	36
Hospitalization for mental health issue	22
Want mental health treatment	40

Clients with reported mental illnesses were much more likely to have passed through the special education system, have attempted suicide, have received medication and have been hospitalized for a mental health condition. One common practice reported among those who have attempted suicide was cutting oneself.

Due to the prevalence of mental illness among CCC prisoners, understanding how mental illnesses affect client’s behavior seems to be an important component in the ability for attorneys to meet their clients’ needs. Further, the fact that public defenders are likely to see mentally ill patients presents an opportunity for intervention and access to care. In particular, schizophrenia, bipolar, and depression are common diagnoses among the mentally ill. If undetected by the public defender or another person within the criminal justice system, these clients may end up cycling back through the justice system.

David: “The medication does everything it is supposed to do. But without it, the mania sets in -- it is impossible not to make bad judgments.”

David is an engineer at Hewlett-Packard and he is engaged to be married. Despite a relatively successful career and promising relationship, David struggles with mental illness. His mother was bipolar and David left school when she died to care for siblings and help the family. A few years ago, David was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder and prescribed Lithium and Paxil by a doctor, but his health insurance refused to cover his medication as a “pre-existing condition”. David allegedly committed crimes while off his medication. David and others like him need access to quality affordable mental health to avoid engaging in behavior that leads them to prison.

There is an emerging body of research and practice being conducted by correctional facilities and universities to determine best practices for intervening in the lives of clients with major mental illnesses, and the LJC findings indicate a need for these resources in Caddo Parish.

Ronnie: *“When I get manic I get obsessed. I was stressed out about paying my child support bill because if I don’t pay that, I can’t see my kids... When I am manic, I can’t tell the difference between right and wrong.”*

Two months before he was arrested, Ronnie switched employment to a job that offered medical insurance for his two young children.

However, the medical insurance did not cover the medication he had been taking for a diagnosed mental illness. Immediately before his arrest, he had a manic episode. Ronnie believes his arrest is directly related to his mental health issue.

Issues facing Clients Interviewed	% Among Mentally Ill	% Among Non-diagnosed
Special Education	37%	13%
Suicide	34%	8%
Medication for mental health issue	94%	3%
Hospitalization for mental health issue	54%	3%
Want mental health treatment	77%	19%

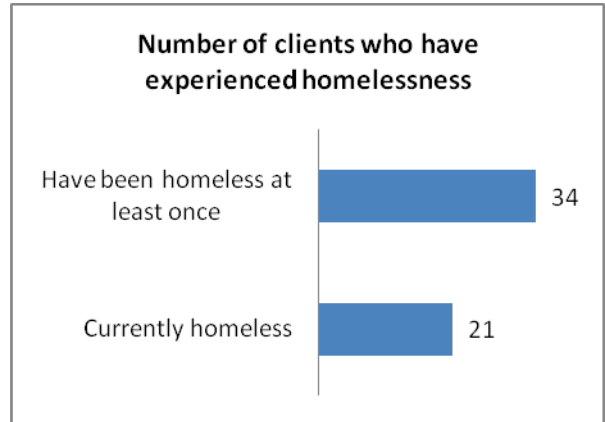
22 % of prisoners awaiting trial at CCC reported being hospitalized for a mental illness.

“If they let me out today, I wouldn’t have anywhere to go.”

-Client who left home at 9 years old after such a beating by his father that the cops were called. Twenty years later, client still doesn’t have a home.

HOMELESSNESS:

21% of clients interviewed reported being homeless at the time of the interview. Some clients were not currently homeless but expressed concern over where they would go upon release, while others were living on the streets at the time of arrest. More than one third, 34% of clients, reported being homeless at least once in their lifetimes. Homelessness represents a major issue for public defender offices. Homeless people’s arrests often are related to their lack of shelter, and public defenders’ offices often inherit the most vulnerable homeless clients. Public defenders’ contact with homeless people is an important point of opportunity for social service intervention.



Homeless Need Assessment Survey, 2004 Caddo/Bossier

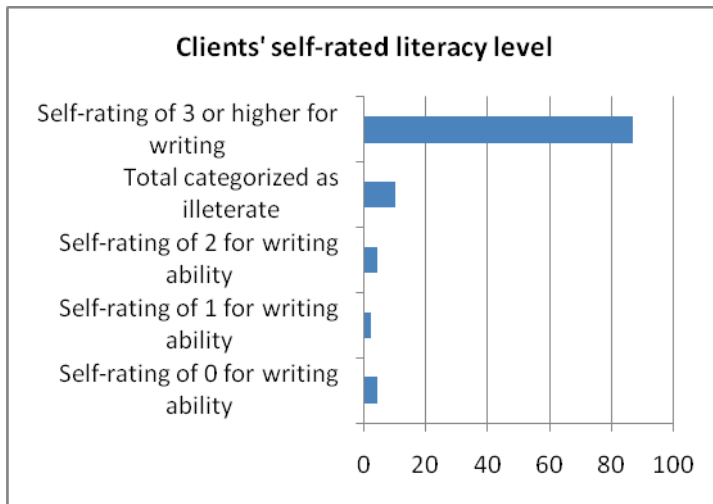
Grant funding (includes Bienville, Bossier, Claiborne, De Soto, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, and Webster parishes)	\$2,677,660
Number of shelters (2004)	15
Number Responding to Survey	15
Daily Capacity - Responding Shelters	776
# served in a 12 month period (unduplicated)	5,052
Adults served (18 years and older)	4,140
Youth (5 to 17 years)	553
Children (less than 5)	359

The chart to the left was taken from the Louisiana Department of Human and Health Services Parish Health Assessment. According to that survey, the Caddo/Bossier area has a total of 776 beds available to homeless people. More information is needed, but the frequency of homelessness among the clients interviewed may indicate a need for an increased capacity for homeless shelters.

Dale was one of the few prisoners we interviewed who was new to the Shreveport area. He came to Shreveport to work at the racetrack – he left a bad family situation when he was 12 years old and started working with horses as a runaway. He has been frequently homeless since he was 12. He is now 57. He served 4 years with the Marines in Vietnam and was honorably discharged. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1994, has been prescribed medication and has multiple hospitalizations for mental illness. Dale as been through drug treatment 15 times. The night of his arrest, he was depressed and walking around.

“That night, I was wet and cold and tired. I just wanted to lie down.”

“Life would be a lot easier if I could read.”
 --68 year old client who quit school to take care of his 13 brothers and sisters



LITERACY/SPECIAL EDUCATION:

Our findings suggest that roughly 10% of clients are illiterate. For the purposes of this study, literate clients are defined as those clients who self-reported a writing ability of 2 to 0 on a scale of 0 to 5, five being the highest possible literacy level and 0 being the lowest possible literacy level. Clients who reported literacy level of “3” or higher are considered literate. This designation of literacy is admittedly arbitrary and subjective, rendering the results documented below indications of self-perception rather than reflections of real literacy rates. Out of the 100 clients, 10 fell into the category of illiterate, while 87% of the clients reported a literacy level of 3 or higher.

Several patterns emerged between the two categories, literate and illiterate. Illiterate clients were less likely to be working, more likely to have passed through special education classes while in school, and more likely to be receiving social security benefits. Not one of the ten clients who were classified as illiterate was the main provider for others. This finding may suggest that those who cannot read or write have a more difficult time making enough money to support dependents.

Austin is 18 years old. “I had been clean for a year and then I just crashed and burned. But only for two days. Two days! Now my college registration is in two weeks, I am waiting to get back my Pell Grant application and I probably will miss the chance to go to college this semester. The phone costs \$4.00 per call, so I can’t even call my mom.”

The large number of clients who reported attending special education classes suggests that special education attendance is associated with a higher likelihood of being arrested. 23% of all clients interviewed said that they were enrolled in special education classes. According to the Louisiana Office of Public Health, “Of the total number receiving benefits [in Louisiana], nearly 1 in 3 was for a mental disorder, one in four for a muscular/skeletal disorder, and just over 1 in 10 for a circulatory disorder.” While the LJC survey did not ask clients whether they had a learning disability, 67% of the clients who received social security benefits had been enrolled in special education classes as students. Educational attainment of those who reported attending special education classes was not substantively different from those who did not.

Ashley's Story:

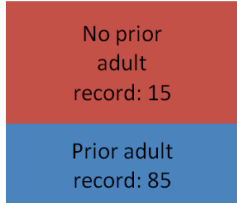
Ashley was kicked out of her house when she was 14 because of her stepfather's disapproval that she was pregnant with a bi-racial child. Soon after moving out of the house, she dropped out of school. She was placed in a group home for several years in the 90's. She now has a 3-year-old son in OCS custody.

Lee's Story:

Lee was hit by a car when he was 15 and had a major head injury, a fact that we only discovered by asking if he had any large unpaid medical bills. Lee spent 3 years in the 9th grade before dropping out of school.

Lee is now 34 years old, unemployed and has surrendered power of attorney to his parents.

Conviction history of clients interviewed



RECIDIVISM:

A previous conviction appears to be one of the strongest factors that correlate with client population interviewed by LJC. 85% of clients had an adult conviction on their record, and 43% had a juvenile conviction. In addition, 45% of those interviewed had a parole hold (parole holds prevent clients from being able to bond out) due to the fact that they were on parole when the crime was allegedly committed. The fact that so many of those who serve time come back to jail provides further evidence that reform of existing correctional system policies is urgently needed.

John was arrested in April. It was his 53^d arrest. He attributes his criminal problems to the environment he grew up in. His parents were alcoholics and fought violently, his brother was killed in a car accident. He was in special ed classes and was shot in the neck when he was 19. He has a long history of mental health issues. He says, "I am a product of my environment."

RACE AND GENDER

Characteristic	% of white clients	% of African American clients
lived in Caddo or Bossier Parish “all my life”	44%	75%
Addiction	56%	29%
Medication for mental health issue	56%	26%
Want mental health treatment	56%	32%

RACE:

According to a recent report by the Pew Charitable Trusts, one in 9 African American men between the ages of 20 and 34 is behind bars.^{vi} African Americans make up 48% and whites 50% of the population of Caddo Parish, but African Americans are more likely to be arrested, incarcerated and imprisoned than whites^{vii}. 65 % of clients interviewed by LJC were African American.

In most ways, African-American and white clients reported similar conditions and histories, with a few exceptions. These exceptions warrant further study if they are to be useful to any program implementation but are nevertheless noteworthy. First, African-Americans were much less likely to report addiction, or mental illness, which may reflect lower addiction and mental illness levels. This difference in the responses of white and African-American respondents might also have to do with cultural differences in trust between the interviewer and the client. Also, African-Americans were much less likely to state a desire for mental health treatment, even though 12 African-Americans reported being hospitalized while only 10 whites reported hospitalization. Again the difference, if any, in what wanting “mental health treatment” meant to African-American and white clients deserves closer analysis in order to better understand these survey results.

In most categories, however African-American and white responses were not widely dissimilar, indicating that there are social service needs in Caddo Parish for whites and African-Americans alike.

GENDER:

Gender is another characteristic deserving attention. 86% of the randomly selected clients were male and 14% were female. The large number of women in our random sample, relative to the 6.6%

Client characteristics	% of female clients	% of male clients
Medication for mental health issue	57%	33%
Been in foster care	36%	7%

of the prison population made up by women, may reflect the fact that female prison population in Louisiana is growing. As the chart below highlights, women prisoners were much more likely to receive medication for a mental health issue than men—possibly indicating a higher incidence of mental illness. The women interviewed were also much more likely to have been in the foster care system.

Although this study did not ask about traumatic events, the higher reported incidence of both mental illness and experience in foster care may point to a higher probability of trauma among female clients.

Danielle is a 19 year-old homeless woman without a criminal history. She grew up in the foster care system after she was removed from her parents due to their drug addiction. In August of 2005, Danielle was evacuated to Shreveport after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. In Shreveport, Danielle enrolled in a GED program. She has managed to gain employment at a casino, a restaurant, and as a cleaner, but is unemployed at present. Danielle is currently homeless and reports no social network in Shreveport. Her public defender will be the one visitor she receives in jail. The public defender's office often encounters homeless people who lack other resources or outside social networks.

SEX OFFENDERS

Another important issue uncovered through this research is the barriers to registration for convicted sex offenders. Under Louisiana law, convicted sex offenders are required to register with a local office within 72 hours of residing in any area in Louisiana. Yet of the 5 clients arrested for failure to register as a convicted sex offender, many of them expressed confusion in how to properly register. To compound this issue, some of these clients were unable to locate a place to stay, and therefore had no address with which to register.

In effect, the sex offender registration laws lead to further incarceration of those convicted of such crimes, even if no real crime is committed. In this way, registered sex offenders end up in and out of jail, a process which deters and delays re-integration into society after time served.

John came in to register four days after being released from prison and was arrested on sight. He was trying to register and didn't think the weekends counted as part of the 72 hour registration time limit. He can't stay with his sister because her house is located too close to a school so he is currently homeless. If John had a place to stay and access to good information on registration, he may not have ended up in jail.

Joe says that he needs help in locating housing and learning how to properly register. Joe was picked just one week after being released from prison. Joe hadn't yet registered because he was homeless and did not have a valid identification.

Emmett is 20 years old, and was arrested for failing to register as a sex offender. In 2007, he pled guilty to carnal knowledge of a juvenile. A car hit Emmett when he was 8 and cracked his skull. He rated his ability to read a "1" on a scale one "1-5" and was fired from his last job for being "too slow". He wants, "a job that I can do... I don't want to be in prison. I just want to be free, do positive things. Make something of myself. But I got locked up and I don't know how to make anything better."

CLIENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC DEFENSE

One of the goals of this project was to find out how clients perceive the quality of representation provided to them by a Caddo District public defender. When asked about their perceptions of any problems with the public defender offices, clients' responses generally fell into one of three categories.

First, prisoners articulated widespread recognition of the lack of resources in the Office of the Public Defender:

"A lot of prisoners are not going to get a fair shake from their public defender—not because their lawyer doesn't care, but because they don't have time to do a good job for everyone."

"Public defenders need help. They have too many cases—a public defender can't help anybody if they have to help forty other people on the same day."

"The first time I was arrested, I didn't know about the court system. I thought I would get more time with the attorney, but the only time I saw him was in court. Now I know that's how it works."

Second, prisoners identified what they see as public defenders' vested interest in processing clients quickly rather than investing in each case to the fullest, frequently citing a perception that public defenders "profit" by securing convictions:

"Public defenders want to get paid too—they don't want to go to trial—they want you to plea."

"The system seems to be all about the money. The system is so backed up, there aren't even places in the jail to put people. This can't serve the interests of anybody. As for public defenders, there aren't enough lawyers to do it right. But they still charge you – if they are going to charge you on top of what taxpayers already pay, they should at least do it right."

When asked about problems in the larger criminal justice system, the most common response was that clients felt anonymous, as if they were judged by their records and not by their entire situation:

"They look at your face, not at your case."

"The system doesn't believe people can change. Once you get in, you can't get out."

"Arthur" came to northwest Louisiana to work in the oil fields in order to support his sister-in-law and her two kids, who moved in his Art, Art's wife and their three kids because she is getting a divorce. Art was arrested for unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. He had never been arrested before and was upset about the pace of the process. He went to video court after 3 days, and was given an arraignment date 25 days later. When he asked court personnel, he was told it would be "at least another month" after arraignment before his next court date. Arthur is worried about the impact of a felony conviction on his ability to find a job that will support his family (he thinks a felony conviction will disqualify him from the oil fields) and how his family will make ends meet until he is working again. He wants to be released on his own recognizance because he cannot ask his family to pay his \$5,000 bond but doesn't know how to make a motion for reduced bond or when he will see his attorney.

*86% of prisoners interviewed for this study between March 12-May 15, 2008 are still in prison on July 10, 2008.
The cost of incarceration at CCC is over \$50.00 per prisoner per day.*

CONCLUSION

This preliminary investigation of 100 randomly selected indigent defendants in Caddo Correctional Center reveals overwhelming needs within the prisoner population and confirms the value of integrating social worker support into the Caddo Parish Office of the Public Defender. Overwhelming numbers of prisoners face life crises in mental health, addiction, employment opportunity, housing, education and physical/mental disability in addition to their criminal charge. Increased attention to these issues, and available resources to develop creative, effective defense recommendations will improve outcomes for defendants. This type of holistic defender program – when it complies with national and state standards – is the definition of ‘quality public defense’. Far from diminishing everyday legal representation, extralegal defender advocacy augments it.

The study also underscores the need for overwhelming changes to the broader criminal justice system. Caddo Parish Sheriff Steve Prator reports that it takes longer in Caddo Parish to be tried and sentenced than the national average. Bonds are high, trials are backlogged and sentences are severe. Public defenders, through the use of social workers, can elevate the quality of representation available to their clients while simultaneously championing systemic change. By developing and supporting innovative programs within the Office of the Public Defender, they will improve the performance of other agencies in the criminal justice system, leverage state resources more efficiently, and strengthen the Caddo Parish community.

The U.S. Department of Justice recommends: “The key to preventing crowding and to managing the jail population is to continuously collect, monitor and analyze admission and length of stay information, then to share the results with other justice officials and with officials in leadership positions in general government.”^{viii}

Every client presents a unique case – and every crime has a back-story that deserves attention. “Slipping Through the Cracks: A Profile of Incarcerated Adults at Caddo Correctional Center” provides raw data to illustrate the scope of extralegal issues in the lives of indigent defendants – struggles that almost always are related to a defendant’s criminal charge. LJC supports public defenders’ effort to prevent wrongful convictions, over-incarceration and excessive sentencing. Beyond guilt or innocence, social workers in public defender offices will help defenders embrace a delivery model that attempts to find effective, client-centered sentencing options that reflect a zealous effort to connect clients with social services and treatment programs available in their community.

ⁱ The Pew Center on the States, *One in 100: Behind Bars in America* 2008, pg 35.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2003*. Bulletin NCJ 205336 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, July 2004) p. 7

ⁱⁱⁱ National Association of State Budget Officers, “State Expenditure Report” series; %age point increases are based on a reanalysis of data in this series) in *Pew Report: 1 in 100*, p. 14

^{iv} “A Case for Community Defense” (December 2006) www.brennancenter.org

^v Louisiana Department of Corrections: Statistics. Accessed online on June 19, 2008. www.corrections.state.la.us/files/stats/c.pdf

^{vi} Pew Charitable Trusts. 2008. *One in 100: Behind Bars in America, 2008*. Accessed online on 5/20/2008 at <http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org>

^{vii} US Census Quickfacts. Accessed on 5/29/2008. Available at www.uscensus.gov

^{viii} U.S. Department of Justice, “Preventing Jail Crowding: A Practical Guide”