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BSCC Committee Releases Recidivism Definition

SACRAMENTO, Nov. 13, 2014 – The Board of State and Community Corrections has made final its definition of "recidivism," a first step toward promoting consistency statewide in local data collection.

The approval comes after 11 months of work by a committee of public safety officials and subject-matter experts to craft the definition mandated by AB 1050. The statute calls for the definition to be used to help counties evaluate and implement evidence-based practices and programs in local corrections systems.

The definition reads as follows:

Adult Recidivism Definition

Recidivism is defined as conviction of a new felony or misdemeanor committed within three years of release from custody or committed within three years of placement on supervision for a previous criminal conviction.¹

Supplemental Measures

This definition does not preclude other measures of offender outcomes. Such measures may include new arrest, return to custody, criminal filing, violation of supervision, and level of offense (felony or misdemeanor).

Recidivism Rates

While the definition adopts a three-year standard measurement period, rates may also be measured over other time intervals such as one, two, or five years.

¹ "Committed" refers to the date of offense, not the date of conviction.

The committee continues to work on other definitions as required by the legislation. AB 1050 amended Section 6027 of the Penal Code to require the Board to: "Develop definitions of key terms, including, but not limited to, 'recidivism,' 'average daily population,' 'treatment program completion rates,' and any other terms deemed relevant in order to facilitate consistency in local data collection, evaluation, and implementation of evidence-based practices, promising evidence-based practices, and evidence-based programs."

It is hoped that counties and law enforcement agencies will use the standard definitions for these key terms once all are developed and approved by the BSCC.

Since Public Safety Realignment launched in 2011 California has been investing hundreds of millions of dollars at the local level so that low-level, non-violent offenders and parole violators would serve their terms in county jails, closer to support systems and the rehabilitative programming that officials of the 58 counties determine work best for their communities. A central goal of Realignment is reducing recidivism.

The BSCC is mandated by AB 109 to collect and maintain data about state and community correction policies, practices and needs. Having standard definitions will promote consistent statewide reporting.

In the coming weeks the BSCC will publish the definition on its website and alert counties that a definition has been adopted. The agency also will offer technical assistance to counties seeking to use the definition in local data-collection efforts.

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