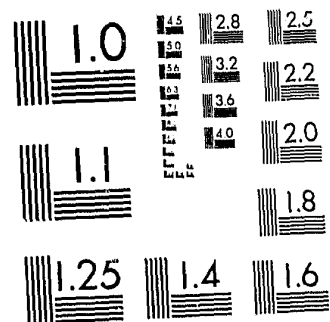


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CONVICTION CRIMES OF

FAMILY REUNION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

At the request of Reverend Dr. Earl Moore (Assistant Commissioner for Ministerial and Family Services), this brief survey examined the conviction crimes of all Family Reunion Participants released as of February 1980.

Programmatic Implications. From a programmatic viewpoint, the findings of this survey indicate that commitment for a very serious offense (such as murder, homicide or rape) does not preclude an inmate from program participation. All major offense types are represented in the surveyed program participants although these serious offenses constitute a smaller percentage of the program participants than the overall population.

With respect to the return rate among program participants, it is noteworthy that none of the sex offenders participating in the program were returned to Department custody, which suggests that these offenders were carefully screened prior to their participation.

Overall, the statistical findings of this survey suggest that although the program's selection criteria consider conviction crime, the program staff do not completely exclude inmates convicted of serious crimes from program participation.

Possible Relationship of Conviction Crimes of Participants to Return Rate. In view of the very low return rate among Family Reunion Program participants reported in the previous survey, questions have been raised on possible differences in the characteristics of these participants (such as conviction crime) and the overall inmate population, which might account for this significant difference.

Based on the findings of this report, it does not appear that the conviction crimes with the lowest return rates are clustered in the surveyed Family Reunion Program participants, which might account for their lower rate. As such, it does not appear that low return of the Family Reunion program participants can be attributed to their conviction crimes alone.

September 1980

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82474

CONVICTION CRIMES OF
FAMILY REUNION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

At the request of Reverend Dr. Earl Moore (Assistant Commissioner for Ministerial and Family Services), this brief survey examined the conviction crimes of all 540 Family Reunion Program Participants released as of February 1980.

Background. A previous research report analyzed the return rate of all 540 Family Reunion Program participants released as of February 1980.

This report found that only 4% (20) of these 540 program participants had been returned to the Department's custody with a new sentence and/or by the Board of Parole for a rule violation.

Based on the overall return rate of Department releases, this report found that the number of program participants actually returned (20) was approximately 67% less than the expected number (59).

Comparison of Family Reunion Program Participants to Overall Inmate Population. In view of these very positive findings, questions have naturally arisen concerning the characteristics of this group of Family Reunion Program participants (other than program involvement) which might be related to this very low return rate.

In general terms, these questions have concerned whether or not the surveyed program participants would have been less likely to be returned to Department custody regardless of their program involvement.

This issue was extensively discussed in the previous report. As emphasized in this earlier survey, Family Reunion Program participants are selected following a multi-phase screening process that involves a number of criteria. Certainly not the least important of these criteria is that the inmate must necessarily have family members willing to visit him or her which indicates a certain degree of family cohesion.

As such, the Department has not attempted (or claimed) to select a representative cross-section of the inmate population for the Family Reunion Program. The purpose of the program's selection process is obviously to enable appropriate inmates to meet with their family members in private for an extended period of time on the facility grounds in order to maintain

* Follow-up Survey of Post-Release Criminal Behavior of Participants in Family Reunion Program (May 1980).

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and strengthen their ties. The selection criteria (which concern such factors as conviction crime) may result in differences between the characteristics of program participants and the overall inmate population.

As indicated in the previous report, the ideal approach for addressing this issue from a research perspective would be the establishment of a control group identical to the experimental group in all ways except program participation. Such a control group could be most feasibly generated by randomly excluding from program participation certain inmates approved for the program for the sole purpose of creating this comparable control group. However, this Department has traditionally not refused eligible inmates the opportunity to participate in programs for research purposes due to ethical (as well as legal) reasons.

Research Implications of Present Report. While such a rigorous control group approach did not appear to be appropriate, the preceding report did indicate that supplemental surveys would attempt to determine if

- a) The surveyed group of Family Reunion Program participants differs from the overall inmate population on such major factors as conviction crime, and
- b) The possible impact of any identified differences on the differences in return rate.

Programmatic Implications. In addition to the research implications of this survey, this survey was undertaken in concert with the program staff in order to generate information relevant to their on-going assessment of the selection criteria.

In light of the current expansion of this program to additional facilities, a review of the relation of conviction crime to return to Department custody was seen to be particularly timely in examining the appropriateness of the existing criteria.

Survey Method. The current survey utilized the Department's Central Office EDP system to compile the conviction crimes of all 540 Family Reunion Program participants released as of February 1980.

Conviction Crimes of Program Participants Released and Not Returned as of February 1980. The table on the following page indicates the conviction crimes of the 520 program participants released and not returned by February 1980 according to the five program sites.

CONVICTION CRIMES OF
FAMILY REUNION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS
RELEASED AND NOT RETURNED
AS OF FEBRUARY 1980

CRIME	WALKKILL	WOODBOURNE	ATTICA	BEDFORD HILLS	GREAT MEADOW	TOTAL
MURDER	4	-	-	3	-	7
HOMICIDE	45	4	5	12	-	66
ROBBERY	126	27	22	10	9	194
RAPE	2	-	5	-	1	8
SEX OFFENSES	3	-	7	-	-	10
ASSAULT	10	4	5	3	1	23
GRAND LARCENY (NOT AUTO)	2	3	2	7	1	15
BURGLARY	21	10	14	1	2	48
DANGEROUS DRUGS	51	14	12	24	2	103
DANGEROUS WEAPON	10	3	2	-	2	17
ALL OTHER FELONY	5	4	9	6	3	27
YOUTHFUL OFFENDER	-	-	2	-	-	2
TOTAL:	279	69	85	66	21	520

Conviction Crime: Program Participants Released and Returned. The table below indicates the conviction crimes of the 20 program participants who were returned following their release.

<u>Crime</u>	<u>Number</u>
Murder	-
Homicide	4
Robbery	7
Rape	-
Sex Offenses	-
Assault	1
Grand Larceny	1
Burglary	3
Drugs	-
Dangerous Weapon	2
All Other Felonies	1
Youthful Offender	1
Total:	20

Similar to the preceding table on program participants not returned, the largest percent of the program participants who were returned to Department custody were originally committed for robbery.

It is noteworthy that none of the program participants who were originally committed for murder, rape or other sex offenses were returned to Department custody.

Comparison to Overall Inmate Population. The table below compares the conviction crimes of the 540 surveyed program participants to the commitment crimes of the Department's overall inmate population as of December 31, 1979.

<u>Crime</u>	<u>Total Inmate Population (12/31/79)</u>	<u>Family Reunion Program Participants</u>
Robbery	34.8%	37.3%
Murder & Homicide	19.4%	14.0%
Burglary	11.3%	9.2%
Dangerous Drugs	10.4%	19.8%
Rape & Other Sex Offenses	6.2%	3.5%
Assault	4.5%	4.3%
Dangerous Weapons	3.2%	3.5%
All Other Felonies	6.3%	8.1%
Youthful Offenders	3.9%	.3%
TOTAL:	100.0%	100.0%

As indicated by the table on the previous page, the largest single conviction crime category in both the overall inmate population and the surveyed program participants is robbery.

Based on this comparison table, the major differences between the conviction crime distributions of the total inmate population and the Family Reunion Program participants involve murder and homicide; dangerous drugs; and rape/sex offenses.

As might be expected, murder/homicide and rape/sex offenses comprised larger percentages of the overall inmate population (19.4% and 6.2%, respectively) than of the surveyed Family Reunion Program participants (14.0% and 3.5%, respectively).

Correspondingly, a greater percentage of the Family Reunion Program participants was committed for drug offenses (19.8%) than the overall population (10.4%).

Due to the fact that the Family Reunion Program sites are adult facilities, a significantly smaller percentage of the program participants were Youthful Offenders (.3%) than the total population (3.9%).

Discussion and Conclusion

Possible Relationship of Differences in Conviction Crime Distributions and Return to Department Custody. As discussed in the introduction to this brief report, questions have been raised on possible differences between the characteristics of the surveyed Family Reunion Program Participants and the overall inmate population, which might account in part for the significantly lower return rate among program participants.

In response to these questions, this supplemental report examined the differences between the conviction crimes of the total population and the Family Reunion Program participants with reference to the attached table from the Department's most recent follow-up study.* This table indicates the percentage of releases committed for the various offenses who were returned to Department custody.

It is noteworthy that offenders committed for murder, homicide and rape have the three lowest return rates and that these offenses are under-represented in the sample of Family Reunion Program participants. On the other hand, Youthful Offenders, who have the highest return rate, are also under-represented among the program participants.

* Donnelly and Bala, 1972 Releases: Five Year Post Release Follow-up (1979)

As such, it does not appear that the conviction crimes with the lowest return rates are clustered in the surveyed Family Reunion Program participants, which might account for their lower rate. Based on the findings of this report, it does not appear that low return of the Family Reunion program participants can be attributed to their conviction crimes alone.

Programmatic Implications. From a programmatic viewpoint, the findings of this survey indicate that commitment for a very serious offense (such as murder, homicide or rape) does not preclude an inmate from program participation. All major offense types are represented in the surveyed program participants although these serious offenses constitute a smaller percentage of the program participants than the overall population.

With respect to the return rate among program participants, it is noteworthy that none of the sex offenders participating in the program were returned to Department custody, which suggests that these offenders were carefully screened prior to their participation.

Overall, the statistical findings of this survey suggest that although the program's selection criteria consider conviction crime, the program staff do not completely exclude inmates convicted of serious crimes from program participation.

END