



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR RELEASE AT 11 A.M. EST
MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2015

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Contact: (202) 307-6873

Bureau of Justice Assistance highlights Arkansas' efforts with the Justice Reinvestment Initiative

WASHINGTON – Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Director Denise E. O'Donnell recognized today Arkansas state policymakers and stakeholder's commitment to criminal justice reform through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI).

“BJA, in collaboration with The Pew Charitable Trusts' Public Safety Performance Project and the Council of State Governments Justice Center, is excited to provide intensive technical assistance to state officials in Arkansas who have demonstrated strong bipartisan interest in implementing the Justice Reinvestment Initiative,” said O'Donnell.

Between 2005 and 2014, Arkansas' prison population increased 34 percent from 13,338 to 17,850 individuals, and in 2014 Arkansas' incarceration rate was 599 per 100,000 residents, compared to the national average of 412 per 100,000 residents. Arkansas' parole population is also growing: between 2004 and 2013, it climbed 66 percent, from 14,770 to 24,523 individuals. This unsustainable growth rate and high associated costs brought Arkansas officials together to discuss options and seek assistance in developing solutions. In October 2015, O'Donnell and Adam Gelb, Director of the Public Safety Performance Project, met with Arkansas state leaders to discuss contributing factors and possible recommendations to address the state's unique corrections system challenges.

State leaders from all three branches of Arkansas government are supportive of using a justice reinvestment approach to tackle criminal justice challenges. Representatives from a multijurisdictional segment of the Arkansas criminal justice system are committed to working together, to develop and adopt innovative solutions and evidence-based practices. The data and resources provided by the initiative will support a consensus-based process aimed at shaping and implementing policies to contain corrections costs, while holding accountable those convicted of crimes.

“Through this data-driven approach, leaders will be able to identify and address challenges facing their state's criminal justice system to reduce unnecessary incarceration and increase public safety,” said O'Donnell.

Arkansas is one of six states actively receiving technical assistance in the beginning phase of JRI to analyze their criminal justice challenges and develop solutions. Twenty-three states are currently involved in various phases of the JRI process. A number of those states have enacted JRI legislation, and are receiving technical assistance to implement reforms, as well as financial support through “Maximizing State Reform” competitive challenge grants from BJA.

###

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six components: the BJA; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at <http://www.ojp.gov>.