

# State Takes Aim At Revolving Door Of Crime

BY FRANK A. HALL

Perhaps one of the least understood terms in criminal justice is "recidivism." Recidivism refers to offenders who relapse into criminal activities following their release from prison. The Oregon Department of Corrections measures recidivism by tracking adult offenders for three years following their release from prison to see if they return to prison for any reason.

Some offenders returned to prison have not committed a new crime, but have violated conditions of their supervision following prison. The department looks at the return rate to prison one, two and three years after release. This is the "official" recidivism rate.

The good news is recidivism in Oregon has declined steadily for the past several years. The one, two and three year recidivism rates are all declining. The three-year rate has already dropped from a high of 47 percent down to 40 percent. Because the most recent one and two year rates have improved so dramatically, the department anticipates that the next three year rate will drop to approximately 30 percent.

Programs for inmates while they are in prison and immediately upon their return to the community are making a big difference and are already going a long way toward reducing recidivism. Research continues to show that intensive alcohol and drug treatment programs in the prisons with community follow-up result in a 50 percent reduction in arrests and a 70 percent reduction in convictions of offenders who complete these programs. Clearly this level of treatment and follow-up is an investment in long-term public safety, with the added bonus of being far less expensive than the cost to rearrest, prosecute and imprison offenders who do not succeed. Every inmate who comes back into the corrections system costs Oregon taxpayers \$20,000 a year that could be used for education, programs for children and the elderly and crime prevention.

In a 1992 study, researchers found that offenders who succeeded in the community were more likely than those who failed to have a job, a stable living environment and to be clean and sober. In the area of employment alone, over one-half of the successful offenders had jobs and were working more than half-time. In contrast, only one-quarter of the offenders who returned to prison had a job. The same 1992 study showed that fully 80 percent of the individuals who go to prison have failed on



Oregon Department of Corrections Director Frank Hall.

probation or post-prison supervision, either because they committed new crimes or failed to meet supervision and treatment conditions in the community.

The Department of Corrections concentrates its efforts on programs that prepare offenders for law-abiding life after prison. In addition to alcohol and drug treatment, programs include job readiness, work, anger management and other skills to improve the inmate's ability to live successfully in the free world. Although prison programs have been expanded over the past three years, there are still many offenders who cannot get into programs because of long waiting lists.

A critical corrections strategy that we have pursued focuses on offenders' cognitive skills. Known as "cognitive restructuring," this approach confronts offenders with their criminal behavior, shows them how to accept full responsibility and gives them the tools and skills to make a positive change. There are a number of programs that use a cognitive approach as a basic building block including the Oregon Summit boot camp program, most of the alcohol and drug programs, Pathfinders and Breaking Barriers. All of these programs are built around the idea of helping offenders change the way

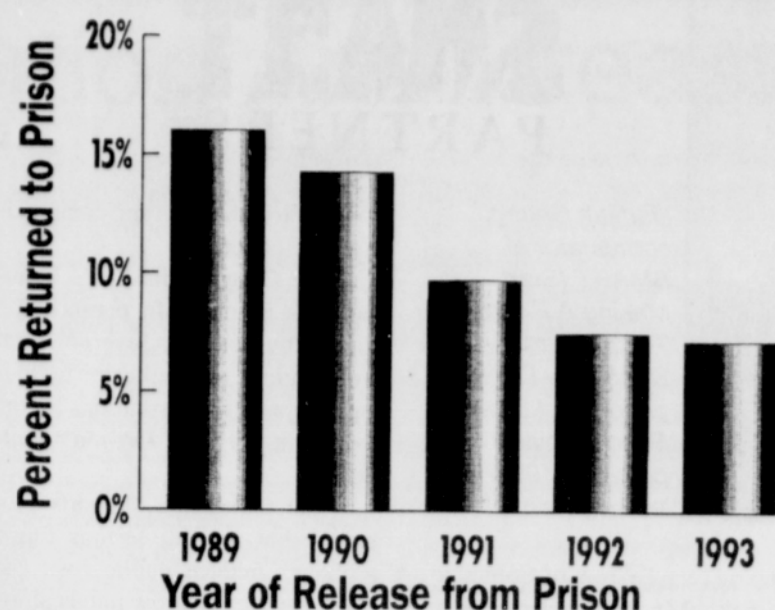
they think so they can begin to change their behavior. It has been said that rehabilitation cannot be imposed on offenders. This may be true, but the cognitive skills programs provide powerful tools that are helping many offenders begin to correct criminal thinking errors.

After offenders complete their prison sentences they are subject to strict conditions of post-prison supervision which they must comply with in order to keep their freedom. Community Corrections officers around the state use services and sanctions to hold offenders accountable.

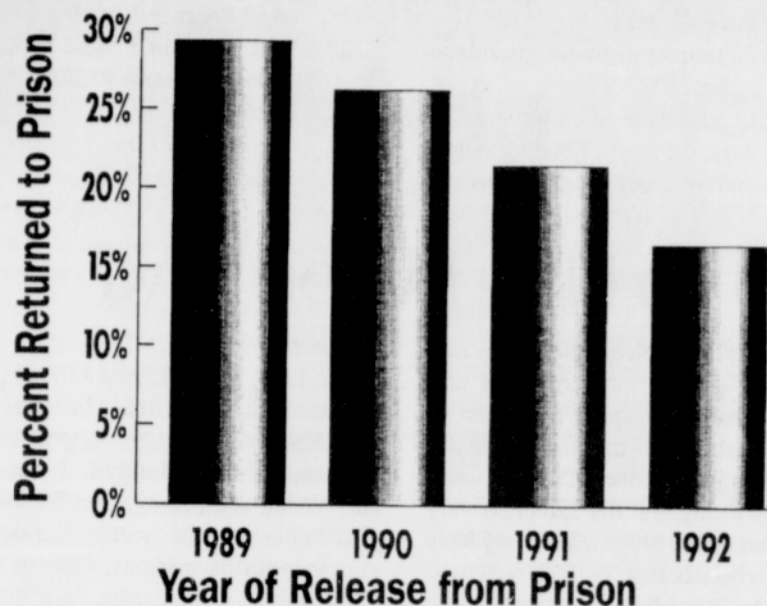
Programs offered in the community that have a documented impact on recidivism include day reporting, job search, employment, housing, community-based drug and alcohol treatment and a range of other programs and interventions. Offender accountability is central to all correctional programs, and sanctions are imposed swiftly and surely in response to violations of supervision rules. Support of a full spectrum of community-based correctional services and sanctions is a vital part of the total effort to reduce recidivism in Oregon.

(Editor's note: Frank A. Hall is the director of the Oregon Department of Corrections.)

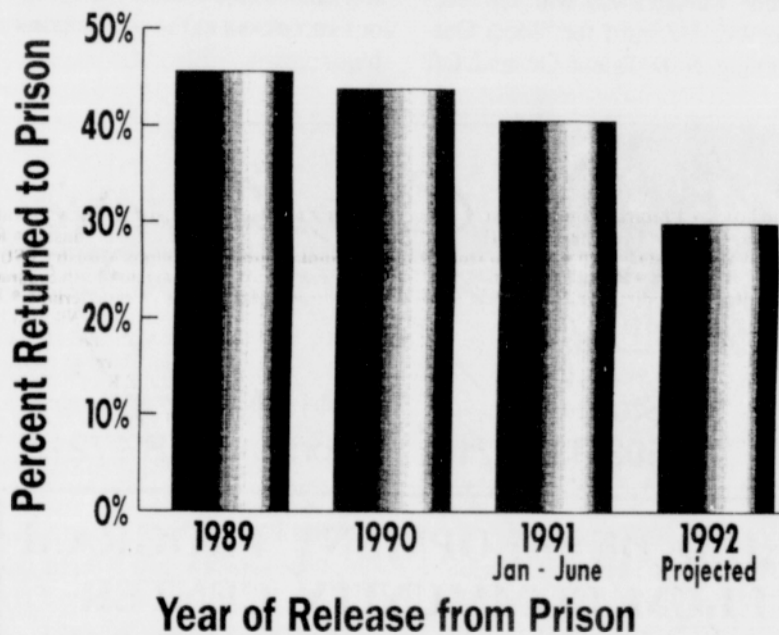
## INMATES RETURNING TO PRISON WITHIN SIX MONTHS FOLLOWING RELEASE



## INMATES RETURNING TO PRISON WITHIN ONE YEAR FOLLOWING RELEASE



## INMATES RETURNING TO PRISON WITHIN THREE YEARS FOLLOWING RELEASE



## Programs Target Minority Juvenile Justice

Grant monies have been awarded to three community-based programs aimed at reducing minority populations in the state's juvenile justice system.

The Oregon Commission on Children and Families recently awarded \$40,000 to the Mexican-American Citizens' League's Hispanic Youth On the Move program, \$60,000 to the Marion County Children and Families Commission and \$60,000 to the Lane County Department of Youth Services.

"Community-based programs like these will serve as models for other counties as we work on reducing minority over-representation in our juvenile justice system," said Jonathan Ater, chair of the commission.

The programs will address the over-representation issue by increasing services that meet the unique cultural needs of minority youth in the juvenile justice system.

The funding follows a series of developments, including a federal law requiring states to determine whether minority youth are being confined in detention to degrees higher than other populations and to address racial inequality where it is present.

## Juvenile Justice Director Retires

Multnomah County Juvenile Justice Director Hal Ogburn has announced his retirement in December after 18 years with the agency.

A national search to find a replacement will be launched immediately, according to Multnomah County Chair Beverly Stein.

Stein said Ogburn has done an outstanding job of leading the juvenile justice system through difficult times.

During his tenure he developed programs to combat the rise in youth gangs and the increasing demands on county programs as a result of the downsizing of the state's Maclaren School for juvenile offenders.

Ogburn also led the effort to replace the aging Donald E. Long Home with a new facility. Construction is currently underway with one wing already in use and completion scheduled for early 1986.

Stein said the county would be "looking for a replacement with the skills and experience to keep the community safe from juvenile crime and to implement appropriate community sanctions to provide sure and certain accountability for first-time offenders."

## Inmate Release Audit Finds Errors

Some errors were found in the calculation of inmate release dates in an audit of the Oregon State Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision Division.

The audit was completed earlier this month in 100 randomly selected files. The audits division of the Oregon Secretary of State assisted the board in designing the scope and

methodology of the audit.

The files consisted of inmates imprisoned for murder, aggravated murder, rape and sodomy. Because the board does not set prison terms for cases after Nov. 1, 1989, the audit involved cases prior to that date.

The board identified six elements that could affect the calculation

of an inmate's release date and found that in 94 percent of the cases no errors were discovered.

Four cases had errors that could have resulted in early release and two cases that contained errors that could have kept an inmate past the release date. The largest error was 31 days, one was 29 days and two were four days, two days and one day respectively.

tively.

In the course of the audit, 12 clerical errors were discovered which would not affect release dates. All the errors have been corrected.

According to chairperson Marva Fabien, the board has been performing a series of audits for almost a year.

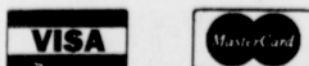
"The board is pleased with the

results of this internal audit. As with the previous audit, there was no evidence that errors resulted in the early release of inmates," Fabien said. "Given the complexity of the laws, rules and regulations in this area of the law, the results are evidence of a high level of diligence by the board in maintaining the integrity of records over the past 20 years."

Advertise in  
The Portland Observer  
call (503) 288-0033

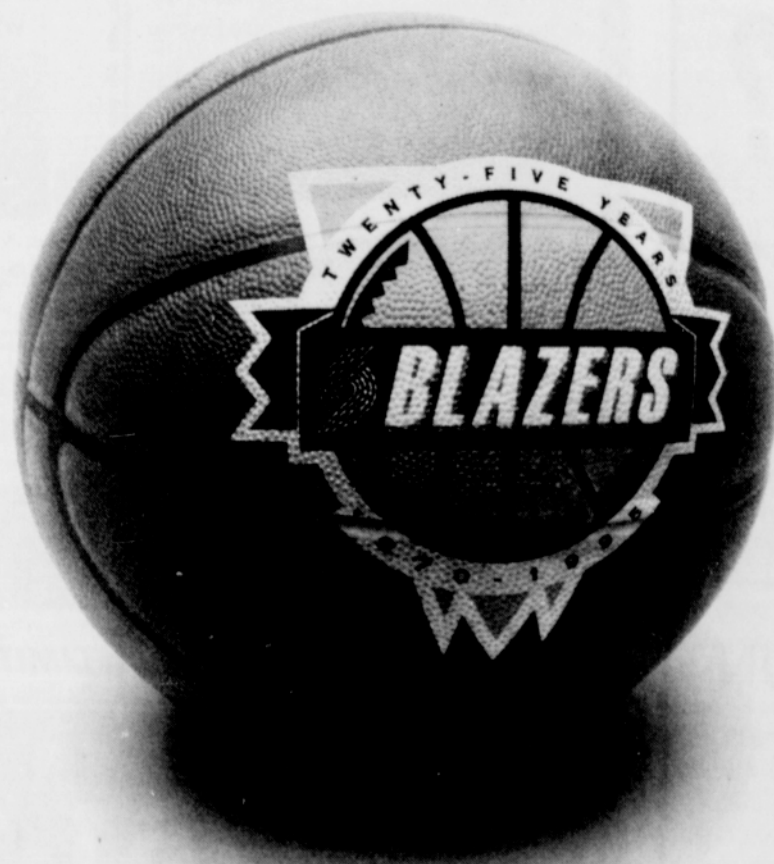
### Dad's Oil Service

Speedy Service  
Friendly Call  
For Quote



heating oils

Best Cash Prices  
104 NE Russel  
Portland, OR 97212  
282-5111



BANKING ON AMERICA

## Free checking that lasts 479 games.

That's until the year 2000 to be exact. You'll also get a free order of Blazer 25th Anniversary commemorative checks, a free Blazer checkbook cover, and more. And when you sign up for

**FREE CHECKING UNTIL THE YEAR 2000**

free Blazer Checking, vote for your all-time favorite Blazers and enter the Legendary Line-Up Sweepstakes. The grand prize is a pair of season tickets for the '95-'96 season in the new Rose Garden Arena. So stop by any Bank of America branch for free Blazer Checking until the year 2000. It's something to look forward to. *Improve Your Banking. Call 1-800-USE-BofA.*



Bank of America

Member FDIC. Go Blazers, go!!!