

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/a-new-sentencing-commission-in-illinois>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

A mentor once told me "If you have 10 projects up and running and 5 are successful, you're doing a fantastic job." After thinking for a long time that our project in Illinois would be one of the "unsuccessful" ones, we were pleasantly surprised when things took a turn for the best this past spring and legislative reform came in a package of bills, including one creating a sentencing advisory council and another ushering in a series of crime reduction measures.

For the past several years, the Center on Sentencing and Corrections (CSC) has worked with Illinois officials and the [CLEAR Commission on rewriting the states's criminal code and other initiatives](#). In early 2008, CLEAR proposed creating a Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, an entity that would collect and analyze data from local criminal justice agencies to help provide policymakers make sound planning decisions. CSC worked closely with CLEAR and key legislators to draft legislation and educate policymakers about it. At the same time, at the urging of Senate President John Cullerton, CSC worked with [Chicago Metropolis 2020](#) (a leading non-profit organization in Illinois) to draft the Crime Reduction Act of 2009, a comprehensive bill based on evidence-based principles that calls for a number of reforms, including the use of a risk- and needs-assessment tool across the criminal justice system, the use of individualized case plans to guide case management decisions, and increased professional development services to support staff in deploying these practices.

The work we performed in Illinois often did not follow the model we use in other jurisdictions, but the results exceeded our modest expectations. We were thrilled to hear that Governor Quinn signed all of the bills last week. We learned that we can achieve success through many means, and patience - with the system and personalities - is often rewarded with positive results.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

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