

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/empirical-strategies-to-strengthen-policy-environments-in-the-justice-sector>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

In this paper, Vera Director Chris Stone explores how testing potential solutions to problems of injustice and objectively evaluating the results of those experiments can strengthen the complex and shifting environment in which public policy is created. In his view, real-world experiments not only promise to solve particular problems, they create an appetite among government leaders at all levels for an objective and grounded approach to reform that actually makes the policy environment more legitimate and effective. To make his point, Stone describes three Vera experiments and their impacts. He begins with the 1961 test of strong community ties as an alternative to money bail that established the Institute and led to the United States Bail Reform Act of 1966. Empirically based reforms in South Africa and Russia provide contemporary examples of this approach.

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