Recidivism Rate is Down

The VADOC studies recidivism to gather information on the success of offenders re-entering society once released from State Responsible (SR) incarceration. Virginia’s official recidivism measure is re-incarceration with an SR sentence within three years after release. The three-year SR re-incarceration rate dropped from 23.4% among the FY2012 SR Releases to 22.4% among the FY2013 SR Releases.

SR Population Incarcerated Only in Local/Regional Jails

Due to limitations in capacity in VADOC facilities, some SR offenders will serve their entire incarceration in a local or regional jail. The number of SR offenders in jails increased by 19% from June 30, 2010 to June 30, 2015 (from 7,342 to 8,747), and then that total dropped by 8% on June 30, 2016. The number of SR Releases who were “Jail Only” has risen from 27% of total SR Releases in FY2010 to more than one-half in FY2017 (55%).

Recidivism of “Jail Only” Offenders vs. “DOC Facility” Offenders

The three-year re-incarceration rate among Jail Only offenders increased from 25.7% for the FY2010 SR Releases to 27.7% for the FY2012 SR Releases, and then it declined to 25.6% for the FY2013 SR Releases. Among the DOC Facility offenders, the rate dropped from 21.8% for the FY2010 SR Releases to 20.3% for the FY2013 SR Releases.
Mental Impairment

In the SR Release groups from FY2010 through FY2013, the re-incarceration rate of mentally impaired offenders (offenders with a mental health code in VirginiaCORIS indicating either minimal, mild, moderate, or severe impairment) was substantially higher than the re-incarceration rate of offenders not known to be mentally impaired. The three-year re-incarceration rate among mentally impaired offenders rose from 28.5% for the FY2010 SR Releases to 31.0% in FY2012, and then it dropped to 30.9% for the FY2013 SR Releases. The rate among offenders not known to be mentally impaired, however, dropped from 21.4% for the FY2010 SR Releases to 20.1% for the FY2013 SR Releases.

Compounding Limited DOC Capacity with Mental Impairment

When both Location Type and Mental Impairment are considered together, mentally impaired Jail Only offenders had double the re-incarceration rate of any of the other groups. This group’s three-year re-incarceration rate dropped from 53.7% for the FY2010 SR Releases to 52.2% for the FY2013 SR Releases. The group with the lowest rates each year consisted of the DOC Facility offenders with no known mental impairment—their rate dropped from 20.8% for the FY2010 SR Releases to 18.2% for the FY2013 SR Releases.