Recidivism Rate is Up

The VADOCS 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 rose from 22.8% among the FY2009 SR Releases to 23.4% among the FY2012 SR Releases.

SR Population Only Incarcerated in Local/Regional Jails

Due to limitations in capacity in VA-DOC facilities, some SR offenders will serve their entire incarceration in a local or regional jail. The number of SR offenders in jails increased by one-third from June 30, 2009 to June 30, 2015 (from 6,570 to 8,747). The number of SR Releases who were “Jail Only” has risen from one-quarter of total SR Releases in FY2009 (25%) to more than one-third in FY2012 (37%) to approximately one-half in FY2016 (49%).

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

The three-year re-incarceration rate among Jail Only offenders increased from 25.0% for the FY2009 SR Releases to 27.7% for the FY2012 SR Releases. Among the DOC Facility offenders, the rate dropped from 22.0% for the FY2009 SR Releases to 20.9% for the FY2012 SR Releases.
In the SR Release groups from FY2009 through FY2012, 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 28.0% for the FY2009 SR Releases to 31.0% in FY2012. The rate among offenders not known to be mentally impaired, however, remained around 21% during this time period.

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 grew from 48.4% for the FY2009 SR Releases to 55.6% for the FY2012 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 21.1% for the FY2009 SR Releases to 19.2% for the FY2012 SR Releases.