

AN EXAMINATION OF  
COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS CENTERS AND  
ELECTRONIC MONITORING  
AS PRE-PAROLE ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

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## ABSTRACT

Although the public wants government to get tough on crime, they also are reluctant to put more tax dollars toward building more prisons. Reducing the number of criminals on the street seems desirable, yet the cost of incarcerating all these offenders has to be weighed against the effectiveness of incarceration.

The purpose of this paper will be to compare two alternatives to incarceration--community correction centers and electronic monitoring. The two programs will be examined as pre-parole options in which convicted felons who have spent some time in prison are supervised in the community prior to parole.

The costs of the two programs will be compared and the literature will be reviewed for research on the effectiveness of these programs. The results of this paper will conclude that preliminary evidence suggests that electronic monitoring is a more cost-effective program than community correction centers but that further research is needed.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

The focus of this paper will be a comparison of two community programs in which prisoners participate as an alternative to remaining in prison until they are paroled. Community Correction Centers, also referred to as halfway houses, are facilities that house convicted felons who have been in prison but have not yet been paroled. These facilities are staffed by correctional employees who are on duty 24 hours per day, seven days per week monitoring the offenders under custody.

The second program, electronic monitoring, also referred to as tether, is a electronic surveillance system to keep track of offenders while they live in their own home or the home of a relative. This system also allows correctional personnel to tell 7 days per week, 24 hours per day whether or not an offender is living up to imposed curfews.

The eligibility criteria for participating in both programs is very similar, and in some cases identical. Both programs require offenders to work in the community or attend school in addition to attending treatment programs. The purpose of both programs is to ensure that the prisoners are financially and socially self-sufficient prior to parole, thus easing the transition from prison to parole.

This paper will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do the costs of these two programs compare? In addition, how do the collection of fees from these two groups of offenders compare?
2. How do the programs compare in terms of effectiveness?

## METHODOLOGY

Cost data have been collected for three fiscal years: FY95, FY96, and FY97 using MAIN, the State of Michigan's accounting system which was implemented beginning October 1, 1994. This cost information includes fixed costs such as salaries, fringe benefits, rent, and utilities. In addition, variable costs which fluctuate in response to offender populations are examined. These variable costs include such things as inmate meals and inmate transportation.

The actual cost of operating the Flint Correction Center will be used as the basis for examining correction center costs, although the cost of operating other centers in Michigan will also be discussed. The total annual cost of operating the center will be divided by the average number of prisoners residing in the center to obtain the average cost per prisoner.

Cost data for electronic monitoring will be based on the total cost of the program in Michigan for each of the three years, divided by the average number of inmates in the program each year to obtain the average cost per prisoner. Although the inmates in Genesee County are supervised by agents at the Flint Correction Center, the monitoring of all inmates on

tether is a central operation based in Lansing. Therefore, the costs of monitoring inmates in Genesee County cannot be isolated.

Revenue data have also been collected from MAIN for the same three fiscal years. Fees collected from prisoners residing in the Flint Correction Center and inmates on electronic monitoring in Michigan will be examined. The two will be compared in terms of the their impact on offsetting program costs.

Originally, in order to compare effectiveness, data were to be collected using inmates who entered both community programs in Genesee County during calendar year 1995. Follow-up data was to be collected using CMIS, the Michigan Department of Correction's tracking system of parolees and prisoners.

Effectiveness was to be measured by determining how many of these offenders returned to prison within a two year period following their community placement in the Flint Correction Center or on electronic monitoring. Administrators within the Michigan Department of Corrections initially agreed to allow access to this data, but unfortunately later retracted this permission before the study was to begin.

As an alternative, the literature will be reviewed for research involving the effectiveness of these two programs in

addition to other community programs. The cost data and the effectiveness data collected will be analyzed to determine what conclusions can be made about the cost-effectiveness of these programs.

For example, if the recidivism rate of the two programs turn out to be similar, and one program is less expensive than the other, than the less expensive program will be the more cost-effective. The relevant characteristics of the two sets of participants will also be compared to determine the feasibility of a cost-effectiveness comparison.

If there are differences in the characteristics of the participants or between the level of recidivism for each program, a cost-effectiveness analysis may be inappropriate. For example, the program with the lower cost per inmate per day may have a higher total cost to reach the same level of reduced recidivism as the other program. If an analysis of the available data is inconclusive, recommendations will be made for future research.

In addition, no effort will be made in this study to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of these programs. When an a crime is committed, the victim usually loses something of value, sometimes including their life. These costs to the victim and society are difficult to quantify in monetary terms. The benefits of these programs to individuals and

society would also be difficult to quantify and are also beyond the scope of this project.

## INTRODUCTION

A conflict exists between getting tough on criminals and spending taxpayer dollars. On the one hand, there is a public outcry to be tough on crime and to "lock them up and throw away the key." On the other hand, the public feels that too many of their tax dollars are going towards prisons and prisoners.

In 1994 there were more than one million inmates in federal and state prisons in the United States. Four million others were under some other form of correctional supervision such as parole or probation (Mergenhausen 36). In comparison, only a total of 1.9 million were in prison or some other type of correctional supervision in 1980 (Austin 1). The number of state and federal prisons tripled between 1980 and 1994 to accommodate these inmates. During the same period, the United States population increased thirteen percent and crime rates increased eight percent (Austin 1).

In Michigan, the number of felons under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Corrections more than doubled in the ten years between 1985 and 1995 (Clark 38). In January of 1997 there were 42,674 inmates in Michigan prisons. In addition, there were more than 60,000 adult felony probationers under supervision, 2100 prisoners in community correction centers, and 2900 offenders on the electronic monitoring program (Michigan Department of Corrections,

Information Kit).

One development that has had a major impact on the prison populations is the adoption of sentencing laws mandating fixed prison terms for certain offenses and lengthening prison sentences imposed by judges. The trend has been toward determinate sentencing, where specific sentences are given rather than minimums and maximums. Thus, sentence length is determined by a judge with no discretionary release by a parole board. On average this has resulted in longer confinement. In addition, some of these laws abolish parole altogether. Eliminating parole eliminates the option for parole boards to release prisoners when prison capacities are reached. Even without these sentencing changes, parole boards have also become more conservative thus keeping more offenders behind bars for a longer period of time (Gorczyk and Perry 78).

Another cause of the rising prison population is that the "war on drugs" has increased the probability that a person arrested on a drug charge will go to prison. More than 26 percent of inmates in U. S. prisons are incarcerated for drug offenses, up from eight percent in 1980 (Mergenhagen 39).

As prison populations continue to increase, so also have the costs of building and operating prisons continued to increase. Prison construction costs are as high as \$100,000 per cell, with annual operating costs between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per inmate (Austin 1).

The Michigan Department of Corrections budget for fiscal year 1997 was 1.3 billion dollars and was funded almost entirely by state revenues. The state taxpayer pie has only so many pieces to divvy up. As the corrections slice get larger, other state services are seeing cuts in their budgets.

Corrections in the 90's faces this continued problem of prison overcrowding and increasing costs. There are two conflicting trends here--escalating demand for prisons with dwindling resources. There is a need for more effective, less expensive ways to punish offenders and protect the public.

Many alternatives to incarceration do exist. At a cost of \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year per prison bed, these beds are reserved primarily for violent offenders and repeat offenders of other crimes, as well as for those serving mandatory sentences for drug offenses. The remaining criminal offenders participate in other less costly community programs. Not only do these programs cost less, offenders in the community programs usually work in the community and a portion of their earnings go towards fees to offset program costs. The goals of these programs include reducing prison overcrowding, protecting the public, lowering recidivism rates, and reducing costs.

Alternatives to prison, sometimes referred to as community programs, include a variety of approaches such as community service, probation, parole, correction centers (also referred to as halfway houses), electronic monitoring, boot

camps, day centers, and vocational training programs. This paper will focus on electronic monitoring and correction centers as alternatives to prison for prisoners prior to being paroled. That is, convicted felons who have been in prison are supervised in a community correction center or by an electronic tether prior to being paroled, as an alternative to staying in prison up until the time of parole.

## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOR PRISONERS

About 98% of offenders in prisons will eventually return to the community. (Michigan Department of Corrections, 1997 Annual Report 57). The purpose of community programs is to provide a structured transitional period in the community that improves the prisoner's parole performance. Prisoners in community programs are required to be steadily employed, with the intent of becoming financially and socially self sufficient prior to being released on parole. In addition, these prisoners participate in treatment programs within the community, such as substance abuse and mental health programs and must submit to regular drug and alcohol testing.

Community programs were not established with the intent of replacing prisons. In 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement Programs and the Administration of Justice praised community programs as "an important means for coping with the mounting volume of offenders." The commission stated that tasks of community programs "include building or rebuilding social ties between the offender and the community, integrating or reintegrating the offender into community life-restoring family ties, obtaining employment and education, securing in the larger sense a place for the offender in the routine functioning of society" (Hylton 354).

Michigan was one of the pioneers in fully developing the

use of community placement for prisoners prior to parole and currently has one of the larger programs in the country (Michigan Department of Corrections, 1997 Annual Report 57). These programs provide structured settings that include not only supervision and surveillance, but also support and guidance to prisoners nearing parole.

Michigan offers two pre-parole programs to prisoners who meet the criteria for placement. Prisoners are either housed in a correction center supervised by corrections staff or are placed on electronic monitoring and live in their own or a relative's home. These programs currently exist in every Michigan county with approximately 1400 prisoners residing in correction centers and 800 prisoners on electronic monitoring.

In addition to costing less than prisons, prisoners in community correction centers and on electronic monitoring are required to reimburse the State for a portion of the funds used on their behalf. In Michigan, prisoners in correction centers must reimburse the State \$20.00 per day, while prisoners on electronic monitoring must pay \$7.30 per day. In both cases, the total amount paid cannot exceed more than one half of the inmate's net income. Prisoners who are able-bodied but not employed are required to perform 20 hours of community service for each week they are unemployed and unable to make the required payment.

## CORRECTION CENTERS

Community Correction Centers, also referred to as halfway houses, are facilities that house convicted felons who have been in prison but have not yet been paroled. The correction center program began in Michigan in 1963 when a supervised home for prisoners was established in Detroit as a joint federal and state project. The intent was to provide a structured transitional period in the community that would improve the prisoner's parole performance. Correction centers have custody staff on duty 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to monitor inmates.

The Flint Correction Center is one of Michigan's oldest and largest community corrections facilities. It was originally established in the mid 1970's and consisted of inmates located at the Flint Salvation Army, the Flint YMCA, and the Flint YWCA. The Salvation Army portion of the residential program was moved to the old Imperial 400 Motel in downtown Flint in the late 1970's. By 1980 the Imperial 400 program was moved into the YMCA, joining the existing program there. Later, the female program also was moved to the Flint YMCA.

The current residential capacity at the Flint Correction Center is 118 males and 16 females. The Flint Correction Center employs 29 full time staff providing coverage 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

In addition to the screening criteria used for community placement, the Flint Correction Center's lease with the YMCA has a unique clause which stipulates that the YMCA staff may review the prisoner's background prior to being placed there. Prisoners who meet the eligibility criteria established by the Michigan Department of Corrections may be rejected by the Flint YMCA staff at its discretion. Historically, inmates with any assaultive incident in their background are rejected as residents by the Flint YMCA. As a result, these prisoners are placed directly on electronic monitoring since they meet the department's criteria for community placement.

#### ELECTRONIC MONITORING

Electronic monitoring is a fairly new concept. It started with a small experiment in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1983. The first continuously operating program began in Palm Beach, Florida in 1984. By 1987 there were more than a dozen states with programs monitoring approximately 2300 offenders. By 1989 this increased to 6500 offender monitored in 37 states. In Michigan, the program was first used in 1986 as a pilot in Washtenaw County on probationers.

Electronic monitoring (also referred to as tether) is a high technology surveillance system to keep track of selected offenders in the community. Several components make up the

monitoring system. A small battery operated transmitter slightly smaller than a pack of cigarettes is attached to the ankle of the prisoner. This transmitter sends signals to a Field Monitoring Device (FMD) which is plugged into the home's phone line. This device regularly sends the information received to a correction's monitored host computer in Lansing.

When the offender is home, the device calls the computer randomly with reports. When the offender leaves or returns, reports are made with the exact times. Any unauthorized departure or attempt to tamper with any of the equipment is communicated to the host computer. Prisoners who violate their curfew are immediately placed as escapees on the state's Law Enforcement Information network (LEIN). In addition, Electronic Monitoring Center staff must immediately telephone the supervising field agent with this information.

The inmates on electronic monitoring in Michigan are supervised by agents in each county. However, the monitoring of all tethered offenders in Michigan is a central operation based in Lansing. In Genesee County there are an average of 45 inmates on electronic monitoring at any given time that are supervised by agents at the Flint Correction Center.

#### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR COMMUNITY PLACEMENT

In order to minimize risk to the public, prisoners are screened and must meet stringent standards prior to being

placed in community programs such as community correction centers and electronic monitoring. Prisoners are drug tested as a prerequisite to community placement and must be screened for drug use at regular intervals while in community programs. Prisoners must be within two years of their earliest release date to be eligible for community placement.

In Michigan, prisoners who fall under any of the following are not eligible for community placement:

1. Is currently serving a prison sentence for escape or has been found guilty of a major misconduct for escape or attempted escape during a sentence for which the prisoner is still serving.
2. Has been found guilty of a major misconduct for escape or has been sentenced for escape or attempted escape in the last five years.
3. Is currently serving a prison sentence for a sex offense or murder in connection with a sex offense as specified in MCL 769.2a.
4. Is serving a prison sentence of life, unless a parole date has been set by the Parole Board.
5. Is classified pursuant to PD 05.01.130, Prisoner Security Classification, to a true security level greater than Level I or placed at a security Level I due to a waiver or departure.
6. Has a pending felony charge, is subject to a felony or immigration detainer, or a consecutive jail or prison sentence with another jurisdiction.
7. Is classified as very high assaultive risk pursuant to PD 05.01.135, Statistical Risk Screening (See Table 1).
8. Has been found guilty of a parole violation within one year of the date of application; the "date of application" is defined as the date a prisoner's application is received by the Community Residential Programs Section (CRPS) in Central Office.

9. Has been convicted of a felony committed while under the jurisdiction of the Department, including parolees, and the date of the application is within two years of the date of sentence for that offense. (Michigan Department of Corrections, Policy Directive 06.03.101 1-2).

Prisoners generally begin their community placement as residents in the more structured setting of the correction center before being placed on electronic monitoring. However, prisoners who are eligible for the community programs but are from areas that do not have correction centers are placed directly on electronic monitoring. About 37% of those on electronic monitoring in Michigan fall into this category.

Eventually, most who are originally placed in correction centers are placed on electronic monitoring and allowed to reside in their own homes or in the homes of relatives. Generally, this is an earned privilege which occurs with the approval of the supervising agent and the supervisor. The decision usually takes into account the prisoner's criminal history, overall community adjustment, and parole eligibility date. Sometimes the shift occurs because of a lack of bed space in the center to make room for new prisoners eligible for community placement.

Thus, prisoners who qualify for community placement can be placed in either a correction center or on electronic monitoring making the relevant characteristics of the two sets of participants similar. The exception to this is that prisoners "convicted of a crime of violence or any assaultive

crime as specified in Administrative Rule 791.4410 and whose minimum sentence imposed for the crime is ten years or more" (Michigan Department of Corrections, Policy Directive 06.03.101 6) are not eligible for placement on electronic monitoring during any portion of their sentence.

## COST CONSIDERATIONS

Table 2 shows expenditure data for the Flint Correction Center for three fiscal years. As with most organizations, the personnel costs make up the largest percentage of the budget. The Flint Correction Center employees 29 full time staff consisting of 4 supervisors, 2 clerical employees, 16 corrections officers, and 7 agents. The total personnel expenditures for these 29 employees was \$1,685,205 for FY97. These expenditures include salary, wages, FICA, retirement benefits, and insurance benefits.

Corrections Officers are on duty 24 hours per day, seven days a weeks monitoring the inmates under custody. Their primary function is to maintain security of the center. They are responsible for tracking when inmates leave for work and when they return and issuing escape notices when inmates do not return as scheduled. They conduct searches of inmates and inmate rooms. They also conduct drug tests on inmates. In addition, they issue misconduct violations and other disciplinary action to the inmates.

Functions performed by agents include assisting offenders with meeting needs for education, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, vocational training, and job placement. In performing these duties, the agents must meet with the offender a minimum of once per week. In addition, they make home calls, visit employers, monitor

income level, collect fees, and conduct drug testing on offenders.

The majority of these costs are fixed costs that do not fluctuate even though the inmate population may fluctuate. For example, personnel costs, rent, insurance, employee uniforms, telephone, maintenance, data processing, and office supplies stay the same in the short run although the inmate population may fluctuate. In the long run, if the inmate population were to substantially decline and stay at that level, staffing could be reduced and the center could possibly relocate to a smaller, less expensive facility thus reducing fixed costs.

Variable costs that fluctuate with increases and decreases in the population of inmates include inmate meals and inmate transportation. Variable costs make up approximately 8% of total expenditures. Since the Flint Correction Center has a 134 bed capacity, and variable costs comprise a small amount of the budget, the cost per inmate per day would decrease as the inmate population approached this maximum number. Under current populations, the average daily cost per inmate is approximately \$61 for the Flint Correction Center residential program.

Table 3 shows the expenditures for the electronic monitoring program in Michigan for the last three fiscal years. By comparison, the electronic monitoring program costs about \$7 per offender per day. Like the Flint Correction

Center residential program, the personnel expenditures make up the largest percentage of the electronic monitoring budget.

The Department of Corrections electronic monitoring program in Michigan consists of 98 employees. Of these, 32 are employed in the central monitoring unit in Lansing. These employees enter data into the system detailing curfew information about each offender on an electronic tether. When an offender is not home when they should be, the tether device transmits a signal back to the system and these employees immediately notify the agent in charge of supervising the offender. The remaining 66 employees in this program are parole and probation officers throughout the various counties in the state that specialize in supervising offenders on electronic tethers.

In this program, the majority of costs are also fixed costs that do not fluctuate with the number of offenders in the program. One of the largest variable costs is the cost of the individual tether devices which is used for each offender. The cost of this device is approximately \$1250. In Table 3 however, the "electronic monitoring equipment" line includes both these individual units along with equipment purchases made for the central monitoring unit. This makes an analysis difficult of how fluctuations in the population would effect total costs.

Offenders in both community programs---community residential programs and electronic monitoring---are required

to pay a fee to reimburse the Department of Corrections for state funds used on their behalf while in the programs. The per diem rate is established annually by the department based on the annual appropriations of each program. For example, the per diem rate in FY97 for an offender on electronic monitoring was \$7.30, while the rate for an offender in a residential program was \$20 per day.

The offender is required to pay this per diem rate, up to a maximum of 50% of his/her net income. Offenders who are able bodied but unemployed are required to perform 20 hours of community service per week in lieu of this payment.

Table 4 shows that the Flint Correction Center residential program collected \$322,949 from offenders in FY97. This represents approximately 13% of total program costs. Taking these collections into consideration reduces the average cost per offender per day to \$53.38 for the residential program.

The table also shows that in the same year, \$3,936,657 was collected from offenders on electronic monitoring. This represents approximately 51 percent of total program expenditures and reduces the average cost per offender per day on electronic monitoring to \$3.55.

#### LIMITATIONS OF COMPARING COSTS OF TWO PROGRAMS

One of the problems in comparing the costs of these two

programs is that we are looking at only one particular residential correction center in the state and comparing it to a statewide electronic monitoring program. Because the state has one central electronic monitoring unit in Lansing, it would be difficult to isolate the costs of monitoring only the offenders in Genesee County.

The cost of various correction centers in Michigan varies from location to location. Factors such as real estate, rental rates, and food costs vary within the state affecting operational costs. If all fifteen corrections centers in the state are considered, the average cost per filled bed per day comes to \$49.54 according to Department of Corrections data, thus there would not be a significant difference. (See Table 5).

In addition, the electronic monitoring program participants include not only offenders classified as "prisoners" but also includes parolees and probationers on electronic monitoring within the state. The state program also monitors juvenile offenders for the Family Independence Agency, and offenders under district court, probate court, and local sheriffs' departments jurisdictions to deal with county jail crowding and other local criminal justice needs.

The breakdown of the total offender population being monitored by the Department of Corrections is 56% probationers, 30% prisoners, 8% parolees, and 6% offenders monitored for the Family Independence Agency and other local

communities. Although the data includes all these different populations, the cost for each category of offender should be similar since the staff time would be the same to monitor each offender and the equipment would also be the same regardless of the category of offender.

Another problem with comparing the costs of the two programs is that the 7 agents at the Flint Correction Center supervise both residential prisoners and prisoners on electronic monitoring in Genesee County. According to Dave Witter, Supervisor, the agents spend approximately 80% of their time supervising residential prisoners and 20% of their time supervising tethered prisoners. Taking this into consideration reduces the average daily cost of the residential program by approximately two dollars, still leaving a wide gap between the cost of the two programs. (Agents make up 24% of the workforce at the Flint Correction Center. Taking 24% of total personnel costs and then multiplying by 20% for the time spent on electronic monitoring prisoners reduces total residential program costs by about \$81,000 per year. This amounts to a reduction of about \$2 per prisoner per day.)

Another problem with the expenditure data is that they do not reflect costs of social service support programs prisoners participate in within the community that are paid through other grants or funds. Examples of these include drug rehabilitation programs, alcohol therapy, mental health

services, and vocational training programs. In addition, substance abuse testing and medical expenditures are paid for out of different appropriations within the Department of Corrections budget. However, these costs are excluded from both the residential program and the electronic monitoring program. Also, since both groups of offender have similar characteristics in order to qualify for both programs, the cost per offender for the above programs should be similar for both sets of prisoners.

EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS  
LIMITATIONS OF AVAILABLE RESEARCH

Of course, costs are only one consideration when evaluating community programs. Another major consideration is the effectiveness of such programs. In my review of the literature I did not find any studies that directly compare the effectiveness of prisoners in community correction centers with that of prisoners on electronic monitoring. Many of these studies lump various types of community programs together. Other studies examine specific programs such as electronic monitoring, but use a population other than prisoners, such as probationers.

Although there are several studies that deal with the issue of community programs, many authors feel that the research has many limitations. One author indicates "while the research on alternatives offers important information on policy, the quality of the research is, in general, poor" (Austin and Krisberg 377).

Another author states that it is difficult to determine what works in correctional programs because there is little agreement about the definition of what is meant by "works". "Policies and programs need to be developed, defined, and evaluated based on an established, explicitly stated theory. This is just not the case in corrections" (Lauen 27).

There are conflicting goals among and between everyone

involved in corrections such as the legislature, the courts, and correctional administrators. Some of the varying goals include incapacitation, deterrence, retribution, and rehabilitation.

Although many of the studies evaluate effectiveness of programs by measuring recidivism rates, the studies vary in how recidivism is measured. Recidivism is defined as "a relapse into prior criminal habits, especially after punishment" (Jackson, Keijser, and Michon 47). Some studies measure recidivism by self-reported delinquency, some by reconvictions, some by court appearances, some by rearrests, and some by any new contact with the criminal justice system.

Another problem with the studies relates to the inconsistencies with when recidivism is measured. Studies vary as to when the measurement period starts and ends. For example, one study may do a two year follow up to see how many offenders returned to prison whereas another may do a five year follow up and produce different results.

In addition, a problem exists in setting up true experimental studies in a correctional setting with a comparison group that does not participate in the particular program being evaluated. For example, if a group of offenders have similar criminal characteristics, it would not be practical to separate this population into two groups with one group receiving a more lenient treatment. This would lead to

many lawsuits by the offenders receiving the harsher treatment charging unequal treatment.

#### PRIOR RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

In spite of these limitations, prior research can still provide valuable information regarding the effectiveness of these programs. The following is a summary of some of the studies reviewed and some of the claims made by various authors regarding the effectiveness of community programs.

The Michigan Department of Corrections claims that statistics support the effectiveness of the electronic monitoring program in Michigan. They indicate that in fiscal year 1997 a total of 11,000 offenders participated in this program. This figure includes probationers, parolees, prisoners. Of these, only 1.6% were arrested for a new felony and only 6.2% absconded or escaped while they participated in the program. According to the Department of Corrections, "These outcomes are lower than those for similar offenders in the community who are not tethered" (Michigan Department of Corrections, 1997 Annual Report 60).

One study of electronic monitoring focused on the program developed by Pride, Inc. of West Palm Beach, Florida, a nonprofit corporation (Lilly et al. 42-46). The study involved 415 offenders from 1984 through 1989. These offenders were sentenced to one year of probation beginning

with a period of home confinement to electronic monitoring. Prior to this program, these offenders would have been sentenced to one year probation, beginning with an equivalent period of time in a county jail.

During the entire term of probation, 43% of the offenders were referred to court for violations. About half of these were for new violations and the other half were for technical violations. Technical violations include nonpayment of restitution or fines, failure to attend treatment, positive drug or alcohol test, and other general probation violations.

Only 2 of the new violations (one for burglary and one for battery) and 26 of the technical violations occurred during the electronic monitoring phase of the probation. This was surprising because the likelihood of violations for probations is usually highest at the beginning of the probationary period (Lilly et al. 45). Although this study did not involve a follow up of these offenders with recidivism data, the researchers concluded that electronic monitoring was "both effective and cost effective in terms of outcome, and that it has an unrealized potential for much greater impact" (Lilly et al. 46).

One study of halfway houses shows that they ease the shock of transition from prison into the community. Data suggest that individuals who go through a halfway house adjust more successfully (Bennett 88). These offenders are twice as likely to stay crime free than those released directly into

the community from prison. Halfway houses help offenders find jobs and break the cycle of violence and addiction. They provide specialized treatment and intervention through close supervision and support as the offender adjusts to the community.

A quasi-experimental study of pre-parole release centers (correction centers) in Massachusetts conducted by Daniel P. LeClair in 1978 found that those offenders who were successfully released from these centers have a significantly lower recidivism rate than those released directly from prison (Austin and Krisber 388). LeClair compared the reincarceration rates of the center inmates with those released directly from prison from 1973 through 1976 using a matched sample. The matched sample was based on a statistically similar "criminal base expectancy score". Of the 884 center inmates in the study, 11% returned to prison. Of the 2360 offenders released directly from prison, 22% returned to prison.

Another study conducted by Gordon P. Waldo and Theodore G. Chiricos involved an experimental study of work release programs using a randomly selected sample and control group (Austin and Krisberg 388). The researchers randomly assigned the offenders to a work release program or to a control sample that remained in a conventional correctional program during six months in 1969. The two samples were found to have no significant differences in terms of background, prior record,

or current offense variables.

Recidivism was measured in terms of arrests, charges, reincarceration, and seriousness of offense. The offenders were followed for a period of 46 months following release from the programs. Waldo and Chiricos concluded that although work release programs may be less costly and more humanitarian, there was insignificant variance in recidivism rates between the two groups.

In fact, this seems to be a common theme found in much of the literature referred to as the "interchangeability theory" (Lauen 32). That is, it doesn't matter what level of supervision offenders receive; the results are about the same in terms of recidivism. This theory was based upon an examination of 231 studies of various correctional programs from 1945 to 1967 that concluded that correctional treatments had no effect, positive or negative, on the rates of recidivism (Lauen 31).

One study conducted by Leslie Wilkins in 1967 in England compared probation, prison, reformatories and simple fines. Participants were matched by the following variables: sex, age, previous criminal records, number of charges, and type of current offense. Wilkins concluded that there were no significant differences in effectiveness of these programs based on reconviction rates (Lauen 32).

Another study conducted in Colorado in 1983 also supports the interchangeability theory (Lauen 32). In this study of

adult offenders, three sets of offenders were matched by various variables. The three groups participated in different programs--probation, correction center, and prison. The overall conclusion of the study was that it didn't matter which type of sentence was received, the results were not significantly different.

A study comparing the recidivism of Florida's Community Control Program and prison over a five year period had similar results (Smith and Akers 267). The Community Control program involved intensive supervision in which offenders are confined to their residence during all nonworking hours, except with prior approval from a supervising officer. The officers monitor the offenders through 28 monthly contacts which include home visits, phone contacts, collateral visits, and job visits. Participants in the program must be employed or attend an educational program, must pay supervision fees and perform community service. In addition, the participants are randomly tested for drug and alcohol use.

The study compared the recidivism of these offenders to comparable offenders sentenced to prison. Recidivism was measured by tracking the Community Control participants for a period of 54 months from the time they were placed in the program in 1983. The comparison group was studied for 54 months following their release from prison. Recidivism was measured in terms of rearrests, reconvictions, and imprisonment during these periods.

The researchers concluded that sentencing to the Community Control group or prison did not make a difference in terms of recidivism. Both groups had high recidivism rates when compared to prior studies. Nearly 4 out of every 5 offenders recidivated during the study follow up period.

Another author concludes that a number of evaluations have been conducted comparing community programs with prison and most conclude that community programs are no more successful than prisons in reducing recidivism (Hylton 347). This author goes on to quote many other researchers who support the interchangeability theory.

For example, Stanley Cohen states "It has not been established that any community alternative is more effective in reducing crime (through preventing recidivism) than traditional imprisonment." David Greenberg adds, "Despite manifestly high hopes for corrections in the community, evaluations suggest that most such programs are no more effective than those conducted in prison." Thomas Bloomberg concluded "that diversion does not appear more effective in controlling recidivism than customary processing through the justice system." (Hylton 347)

## PUBLIC OPINION OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

In addition to the studies mentioned above, it is important to consider the opinions of the public and various other members of the correctional system in determining the merit of various community programs. Thus, many other studies and surveys focus on public perceptions.

Public opinion is often cited as the reason for tougher laws that send more to prison. Getting tough on crime means sending more offenders to prison for longer sentences. While the public has been supportive of this tough-on-crime legislation, there has also been a trend toward conservatism in terms of public expenditures. There has been a dominant tax-cut mentality at both the state and federal level for the last fifteen years.

In Michigan, a recent survey shows that most Michigan residents are in favor of building additional prisons (Associated Press A3). Of those surveyed, 56 percent indicated they were in favor of building new prisons, 31 percent were opposed, and 13 percent were undecided. A few months ago Governor Engler asked lawmakers to authorize five new prisons, responding to a shortage of beds in Michigan. Three minimum security prisons would cost \$30 million each, while two multi-security facilities would cost \$70 million each.

The public is generally reluctant to accept offenders

living within their community (Veneziano 152). For example, it is usually very difficult to find sites for halfway houses as residents usually oppose these in their neighborhoods. Yet the successful implementation of these community programs depends on this public approval. This is important because in most situations these offenders are reliant on employment and other opportunities from the community. Public acceptance is also important because taxpayers ultimately must fund these community programs.

The public often has limited knowledge or the wrong perception of community programs (Elrod and Brown, "Predicting Public Support" 463). In these cases, education about the programs may help overcome resistance to these programs.

In my review of the literature I have found that there have been numerous studies which attempt to assess public attitudes and perceptions about community programs as an alternative to prison. Often, these have found that "the public is often less punitive than many policy makers thought" (Elrod and Brown, "Predicting Public Support" 463).

One particular study's findings were "contrary to popular beliefs that the public has become disillusioned with community corrections and good time programs" (Skovron, Scott, and Cullen 163). In this study data were collected using a random digit dialing survey in Cincinnati and Columbus in February and March 1986. According to U. S. Census data the cities were similar in both population and other demographic

characteristics.

Among the questions asked were the following:

Do you favor or oppose shortening sentences to reduce prison overcrowding?

Do you favor or oppose allowing prisoners to earn early release through good behavior and participation in educational and work programs in prison?

Do you favor or oppose developing local programs to keep more nonviolent and first-time offenders active and working in the community?

Do you favor or oppose giving the Ohio Parole Board more authority to release offenders early?

Do you favor or oppose increasing taxes to build more prisons? (Skovron, Scott, and Cullen 155)

Of the respondents, 87% of the Columbus sample and 90% of the Cincinnati sample approved of local programs for first-time and nonviolent offenders. In addition, over 70% in both groups favored early release for good behavior and participation in work and educational programs.

By contrast, a 1979 California poll found that 88% of the public think that too many convicts are paroled that shouldn't be allowed to go free. In addition, 60% of the respondents said they disagreed with the statement "the crime problem would be reduced if fewer offenders were sent to prison and instead were re-educated and readjusted outside of prison" (Austin and Krisberg 386).

A different study evaluated the opinions of key participants in community corrections in Oregon, Colorado, and Connecticut. The study involved sending questionnaires to participants who do not have daily contact with clients and

those that do. Included were programs directors and managers, judges, prosecutors, sheriffs, parole and probation officers, residential facility staff, and counselors and treatment staff.

In all three states there was found to be a fairly high level of commitment to community correction programs by the survey participants. Colorado and Connecticut were found to have a higher percent who believed in the effectiveness of community corrections for dealing with convicted felons. Of those surveyed, 79% in Colorado, 69.2% in Connecticut, and 61.2% in Oregon described these programs as successful (Musheno et al. 152).

Another study supports the notion that the public is in favor of correctional alternatives. However, this study found that the support is contingent on the seriousness of the offense committed by those participating in the programs (Elrod and Brown, "Electronic House Arrest" 339). The study in June 1993 examined public attitudes about electronic house arrest. 1000 surveys were mailed to randomly selected households in Oneida County, New York. A total of 521 completed survey were returned and used in the analysis.

91.7% of the participants answered yes to the question "should electronic house arrest be used as an alternative to incarceration?" 73.2% answered yes to the question "is electronic house arrest restrictive enough to prevent recidivist crimes?" However, the majority of those surveyed

felt that the program should be used for "minor" offenders with only 15.1% of the respondents supporting placing "serious" offenders on electronic house arrest.

Studies have also been done that compare criminal offenders' perceptions of community programs versus prison. These studies show that the offenders often judge the alternative programs as more punishing and more severe than prison (Petersilia 23).

In one study, selected non-violent offenders were given a choice between prison or an intensive probation program. This program consisted of drug testing, mandatory community service, and frequent contacts with the probation officer. One third of the offenders selected prison.

In a different study, inmates compared prison to a similar intensive probation program and determined that three years of the program equalled one year of prison. Although these programs leave the offender in the community, they do not represent freedom because of the heavy surveillance and treatment (Petersilia 23).

## CONCLUSION

With the prison populations continually rising, the cost of building and operating prisons continually increasing, and dwindling tax resources, correctional alternatives must be examined to alleviate this crisis. The purpose of this paper was to compare two alternatives to incarceration--community correction centers and electronic monitoring--as pre-parole options.

In the four years that I have been employed by the Department of Corrections, I have seen two correction centers closed in the region which I work. The inmates in these centers were placed on electronic monitoring. In addition, when inmates qualify for community placement in Michigan, often the decision of whether the inmate will enter a center or go directly on electronic monitoring depends on whether or not there is a center in the area where the inmate will parole.

It was found that participants in the two programs meet similar criteria, participate in similar educational and treatment programs, and are supervised by the same agents. The major difference is that when one group of offenders isn't at work, school, or treatment, they live at home while the other group lives in the correction center. In the correction center, corrections officers provide the custody and control functions while in the home, the electronic tether performs

this function.

These issues raise several questions: If the inmates qualify for either program and both programs are similar, why have both? How do these programs compare in terms of cost? How do these programs compare in terms of effectiveness? How does the public perceive these programs?

When the costs of the two programs were compared in Genesee County, there was a significant difference. The average daily cost per offender in a correction center was about \$60.00 whereas the cost on electronic monitoring was about \$7.00 per day. When revenues collected from these offenders were considered, the cost of the center was reduced to \$53.38 in FY97 and the cost of electronic monitoring was reduced to \$3.55.

Since it is obvious that electronic monitoring is much less costly than community correction centers, the next issue is how do the two compare in terms of effectiveness? Although no studies were found that directly compared the two programs, the research seems to overwhelmingly support the interchangeability theory. That is, it doesn't matter what level of supervision offenders receive, the results are about the same in terms of recidivism.

One last issue that was examined was public opinion. In order for programs to be successfully implemented in the community, there must be public acceptance. This is important because in most situations these offender rely on employment

and other opportunities from the community. In addition, public acceptance is important because taxpayers ultimately fund these programs. Public resistance can slow or prevent implementation of these programs.

Once again there were no studies that compared the two specific programs addressed here. The majority of studies compared public attitudes of prison as compared to community programs in general. Other studies examined public attitudes on a specific community program such as electronic monitoring.

Although it is commonly thought that the public is generally reluctant to accept offenders living within their community, most research does not support this claim. The majority of studies found that the public is more supportive than previously thought. One particular study found that 91.7% of those surveyed felt that electronic monitoring should be used as an alternative to incarceration in some cases.

Based on the analysis of cost, effectiveness, and public perceptions it appears that community correction centers should be eliminated and electronic monitoring should be used instead for pre-parole community placement. However, since there were no studies found that directly compare the effectiveness of the two, further research is needed before this conclusion can be made.

The preferred research method would be an experimental design. Offenders who meet the criteria for community placement would be randomly assigned to the two programs for

a similar period prior to parole. Data would be collected during the period in community placement and the period following community placement to answer the following questions:

1. What was the rate of technical violations for each group while in the community program?
2. What percentage of each group escaped while in the community program?
3. What percentage of each group committed a new crime while in the community program? How did the seriousness of the crimes compare?
4. What percentage of each group successfully reached parole?
5. What percentage of each group had technical violations or committed new crimes while on parole?
6. What percentage of each group returned to prison within 2 years of release from the community program? How many in 5 years?

If the findings truly support that both programs are equally effective, or if electronic monitoring were found to be more effective, then it would make sense to choose electronic monitoring since this is the least expensive option.

Further research is also needed to assess how public attitudes compare for these two programs. The following questions could be asked in a survey:

1. Should electronic monitoring be used as a pre-parole alternative instead of leaving the offender in prison up until the time of parole?
2. Should community correction centers be used as a pre-parole alternative instead of leaving the offender in prison up until the time of parole?

3. Would you feel safer if the offender remained in a community correction center as opposed to being placed on electronic monitoring?

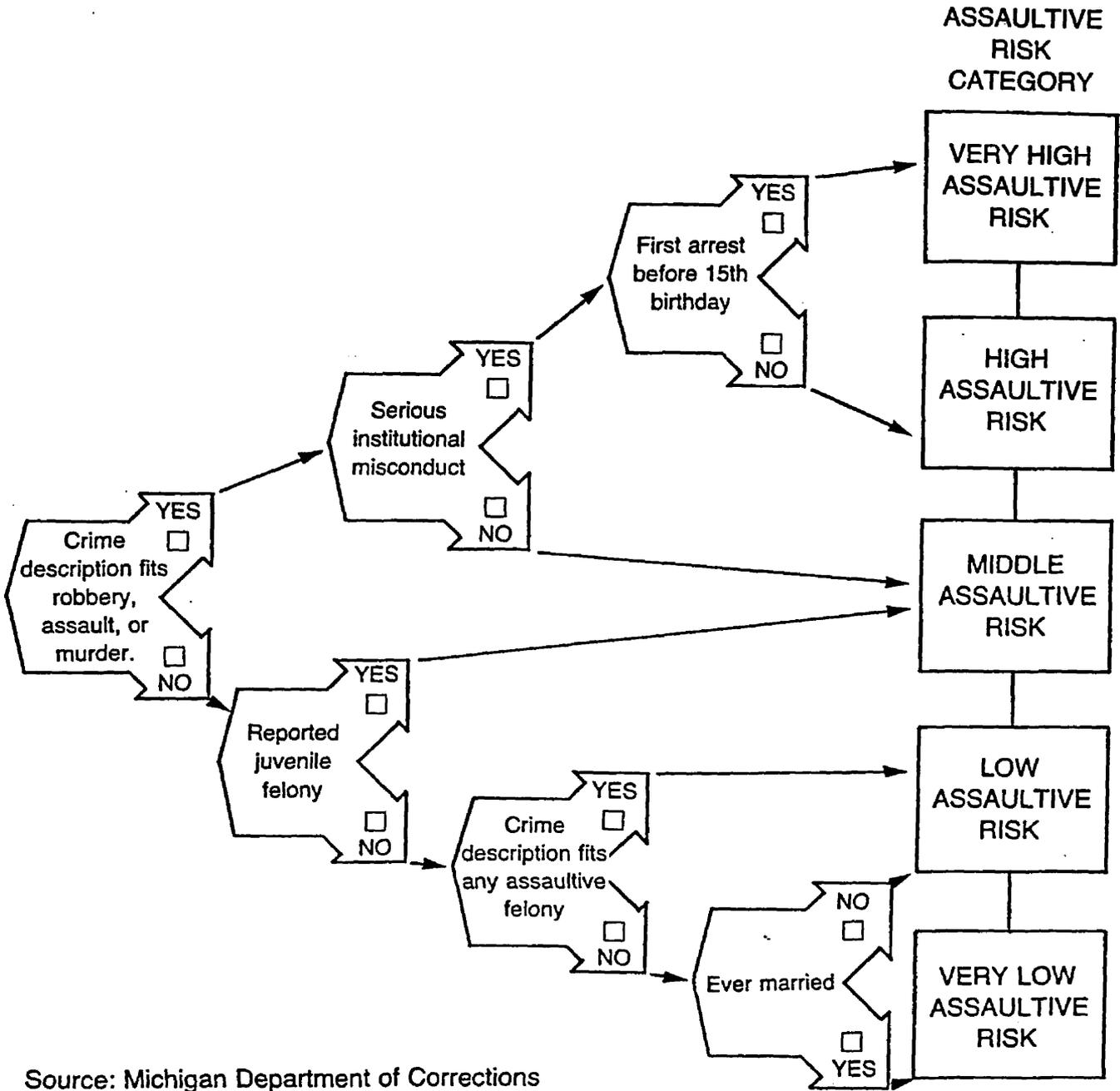
4. Is an offender living at home on electronic monitoring more apt to commit a crime than an offender living in a community correction center?

5. Which better rehabilitates offenders--electronic monitoring or community correction centers?

If public attitudes are found to favor electronic monitoring than this would further support the argument of replacing community correction centers with electronic monitoring. If the effectiveness data supported electronic monitoring but public attitudes did not, educating the public might be helpful. Policymakers could also develop other strategies to help overcome public resistance.

TABLE 1

# Michigan Assaultive Risk Scale



Source: Michigan Department of Corrections

**TABLE 2**

**FLINT CORRECTION CENTER  
RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES**

	<u>FY95</u>	<u>FY96</u>	<u>FY97</u>
<b>Personnel Expenditures:</b>			
Salary and Wages	\$ 1,113,776	\$ 1,156,857	\$ 1,196,929
FICA and Retirement Benefits	\$ 303,278	\$ 316,402	\$ 315,279
Insurance Benefits	\$ <u>207,477</u>	\$ <u>182,697</u>	\$ <u>172,997</u>
<b>Total Personnel Expenditures</b>	\$ 1,624,531	\$ 1,655,956	\$ 1,685,205
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>			
Rent	\$ 494,590	\$ 506,862	\$ 519,116
Insurance/Bonds	\$ 37,874	\$ 36,807	\$ 35,782
Inmate Meals	\$ 155,200	\$ 175,161	\$ 192,596
Inmate Transportation	\$ 2,127	\$ 2,015	\$ 3,000
Employee Travel	\$ 14,545	\$ 15,382	\$ 14,467
Employee Uniforms	\$ 2,065	\$ 4,201	\$ 3,432
Telephone	\$ 9,113	\$ 9,187	\$ 7,778
Maintenance and Upkeep	\$ 4,800	\$ 7,531	\$ 77,890
Data Processing Costs	\$ 3,939	\$ 4,218	\$ 1,911
Office Supplies	\$ 5,767	\$ 5,829	\$ 2,949
Miscellaneous	\$ <u>28,512</u>	\$ <u>27,905</u>	\$ <u>19,553</u>
<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	\$ 758,532	\$ 795,098	\$ 878,474
<b>Total Personnel and Operating Expenditures</b>	\$ 2,383,063	\$ 2,451,054	\$ 2,563,679
<b>Average Daily Number of Participants</b>	107	111	115
<b>Average Daily Cost Per Participant</b>	\$ 61.02	\$ 60.50	\$ 61.08

Compiled from data provided by the Michigan Department of Corrections

**TABLE 3**

**STATEWIDE ELECTRONIC MONITORING  
EXPENDITURES**

	<u>FY95</u>	<u>FY96</u>	<u>FY97</u>
<b>Personnel Expenditures:</b>			
Salary and Wages	\$ 3,883,329	\$ 4,069,599	\$ 4,203,287
FICA and Retirement Benefits	\$ 912,496	\$ 989,117	\$ 987,728
Insurance Benefits	\$ 681,005	\$ 654,253	\$ 611,159
<b>Total Personnel Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 5,476,830</b>	<b>\$ 5,712,969</b>	<b>\$ 5,802,174</b>
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>			
Rent	\$ 72,967	\$ 67,146	\$ 9,420
Electronic Monitoring Equipment	\$ 1,576,566	\$ 1,397,819	\$ 1,285,682
Supplies	\$ 130,757	\$ 52,551	\$ 49,213
Employee Travel	\$ 62,914	\$ 62,639	\$ 62,343
Utilities	\$ 1,061	\$ 1,116	\$ 1,292
Telephone	\$ 392,593	\$ 417,583	\$ 266,381
Maintenance and Upkeep	\$ 12,334	\$ 6,183	\$ 3,076
Data Processing Costs	\$ 20,455	\$ 10,099	\$ 38,087
Miscellaneous	\$ 37,501	\$ 33,525	\$ 153,092
<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 2,307,148</b>	<b>\$ 2,048,661</b>	<b>\$ 1,868,586</b>
<b>Total Personnel and Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 7,783,978</b>	<b>\$ 7,761,630</b>	<b>\$ 7,670,760</b>
<b>Average Daily Number of Participants</b>	<b>2679</b>	<b>2770</b>	<b>2880</b>
<b>Average Daily Cost per Participant</b>	<b>\$ 7.96</b>	<b>\$ 7.68</b>	<b>\$ 7.30</b>

Compiled from data provided by the Michigan Department of Corrections

**TABLE 4****PARTICIPANT FEES COLLECTED**

	<u>FY95</u>	<u>FY96</u>	<u>FY97</u>
Flint Correction Center-Residential	\$ 206,437	\$ 254,588	\$ 322,949
Statewide-Electronic Monitoring	\$ 3,291,563	\$ 3,300,928	\$ 3,936,657

**DAILY COST PER PARTICIPANT  
FLINT CORRECTION CENTER-RESIDENTIAL**

	<u>FY95</u>	<u>FY96</u>	<u>FY97</u>
Total Expenditures	\$ 2,383,063	\$ 2,451,054	\$ 2,563,679
Less Fees Collected	\$ (206,437)	\$ (254,588)	\$ (322,949)
Net Expenditures	\$ 2,176,626	\$ 2,196,466	\$ 2,240,730
Average Daily Number of Participants	107	111	115
Average Daily Cost per Participant	\$ 55.73	\$ 54.21	\$ 53.38

**DAILY COST PER PARTICIPANT  
STATEWIDE-ELECTRONIC MONITORING**

	<u>FY95</u>	<u>FY96</u>	<u>FY97</u>
Total Expenditures	\$ 7,783,978	\$ 7,761,630	\$ 7,670,760
Less Fees Collected	\$ (3,291,563)	\$ (3,300,928)	\$ (3,936,657)
Net Expenditures	\$ 4,492,415	\$ 4,460,702	\$ 3,734,103
Average Daily Number of Participants	2679	2770	2880
Average Daily Cost per Participant	\$ 4.59	\$ 4.41	\$ 3.55

Compiled from data provided by the Michigan Department of Corrections

TABLE 5

Michigan Department of Corrections												
Correction Center Cost Per Bed Per Day												
Expenses Through September 30, 1997												
Index	Name	# OF Employees	Total Costs	Salary & Wages 25290	CSSM	# of Beds	Avg Daily Count	CSSM Exp. per Bed	CSSM Exp. per Filled Bed	Total Exp. per Bed (per day)	Total Exp. per Filled Bed (per day)	
<b>Region I:</b>												
14310	Downtown**	33	\$849,118.09	\$585,800.79	\$263,317.30	150	138	\$14.63	\$15.90	\$47.17	\$51.28	
14320	Western	25	\$2,234,219.12	\$1,407,288.35	\$826,930.77	114	115	\$19.87	\$19.70	\$53.69	\$53.23	
14330	Woodward*	40	\$2,718,675.03	\$2,276,870.88	\$441,804.15	150	135	\$8.07	\$8.97	\$49.66	\$55.17	
<b>SubTotals:</b>		<b>98</b>	<b>\$5,802,012.24</b>	<b>\$4,269,960.02</b>	<b>\$1,532,052.22</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>\$10.14</b>	<b>\$10.92</b>	<b>\$38.40</b>	<b>\$40.97</b>	
<b>Region II:</b>												
14680	Adrian	8	\$637,004.91	\$572,361.68	\$264,643.23	38	34	\$19.08	\$21.32	\$60.35	\$67.45	
14720	Monroe*	7	\$482,513.36	\$449,075.70	\$33,437.66	22	25	\$4.16	\$3.66	\$60.09	\$52.88	
14970	Saginaw	17	\$1,889,604.13	\$1,085,490.93	\$794,113.20	100	88	\$21.76	\$24.72	\$51.77	\$58.83	
15120	Flint	30	\$2,429,062.06	\$1,641,304.78	\$787,757.28	134	124	\$16.11	\$17.41	\$49.66	\$53.67	
15430	Pontiac	32	\$2,576,531.55	\$1,679,599.75	\$896,931.80	150	134	\$16.38	\$18.34	\$47.06	\$52.68	
15450	Port Huron	8	\$704,599.60	\$508,266.45	\$196,333.15	42	27	\$12.81	\$19.92	\$45.96	\$71.50	
<b>SubTotals:</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>\$8,919,315.61</b>	<b>\$5,946,099.29</b>	<b>\$2,973,216.32</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>\$16.76</b>	<b>\$18.86</b>	<b>\$50.28</b>	<b>\$56.57</b>	
<b>Region III:</b>												
16130	Battle Creek	10	\$690,660.01	\$510,193.09	\$180,466.92	42	39	\$11.77	\$12.68	\$45.05	\$48.52	
16140	Jackson	11	\$872,686.15	\$621,448.46	\$251,237.69	50	45	\$13.77	\$15.30	\$47.82	\$53.13	
16450	Benlon Harbor	13	\$1,468,876.32	\$742,101.51	\$726,774.81	85	81	\$23.43	\$24.58	\$47.34	\$49.68	
16460	Kalamazoo*	12	\$1,062,424.26	\$751,826.51	\$310,597.75	80	76	\$10.64	\$11.20	\$36.38	\$38.30	
16850	Grand Rapids	28	\$2,713,970.96	\$1,735,708.82	\$978,262.14	160	147	\$16.75	\$18.23	\$46.47	\$50.58	
17000	Muskegon	20	\$1,596,098.52	\$1,166,045.38	\$430,053.14	76	71	\$15.50	\$16.59	\$57.54	\$61.59	
<b>SubTotals:</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>\$8,404,716.22</b>	<b>\$5,527,323.77</b>	<b>\$2,877,392.45</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>\$15.99</b>	<b>\$17.17</b>	<b>\$46.71</b>	<b>\$50.17</b>	
<b>Grand Totals:</b>		<b>294</b>	<b>\$23,126,044.07</b>	<b>\$15,743,383.08</b>	<b>\$7,302,660.99</b>	<b>1393</b>	<b>1279</b>	<b>\$14.52</b>	<b>\$15.81</b>	<b>\$45.48</b>	<b>\$49.54</b>	

\*=Building owned by Michigan Dept. of Corrections  
 \*\*=Downtown CC closed 1/31/97

Source: Michigan Department of Corrections

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