The Iowa General Assembly, during its 2010 legislative session, created the Public Safety Advisory Board (PSAB). The purpose of the PSAB is to provide the General Assembly with an analysis of current and proposed criminal code provisions. The mission of this PSAB is to provide research, evaluation, and data to the General Assembly to facilitate improvement in the criminal justice system in Iowa in terms of public safety, improved outcomes, and appropriate use of public resources. The Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP) provides staff support for the PSAB. The duties of the PSAB are enumerated in Iowa Code, Section 216A.133A.

The following policy recommendations to the Governor’s Working Group on Justice Policy Reform are the result of many justice policy issues studied and researched by the PSAB.

Implementation of Results First in Iowa's Corrections and Juvenile Justice Systems
The Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative is a joint project of the Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation that works with states to implement an innovative cost-benefit analysis approach to help them invest in policy and programs that are evidence-based and proven to work. The principal tool of the approach is a cost-benefit analysis model initially developed by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, and now supported by the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative. Currently, 19 states are participating in Results First, and have used the model to target $80 million in funding for effective programs that are projected to generate as much as $38 in social benefits for each $1 invested.

In 2012, the Iowa Department of Corrections (DOC) launched Results First to evaluate adult corrections programs and calculated the rate of return on investment for Iowa adult offender programs in three program areas: institutional programs, community programs for prison releases, and community programs for higher risk probationers. Based on the results, changes were implemented to improve services for offenders. It is time to update the analysis.

The PSAB is recommending completing an updated cost-benefit analysis for correctional services and expanding Results First to juvenile justice, mental health, substance abuse, and child welfare services in Iowa.

Changes to Iowa’s Robbery Mandatory Minimum Sentencing
A 2013 analysis studied mandatory minimum sentences imposed by §902.12 of the Iowa Code (the “70% rule”) and has concluded that the current law does not meet the public safety needs of Iowans. Evidence also suggests that 70% sentences disproportionately affect minorities. 37% of offenders serving mandatory minimums are African-American, however African-Americans compromise approximately 26% of the total prison population.

1 https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/Violent_Offender_70Pct_Report%5B1%5D.pdf
The PSAB offers the following recommendations:

- As in current law, robbery should remain a forcible felony that requires incarceration.
- Continue the current 15% cap on earned time for robbery offenses covered by §902.12. While this option contributes to larger prison populations, it increases public safety by permitting the incapacitation of the more dangerous and violent offenders.
- Establish a mandatory minimum term of seven years for Robbery in the First Degree and three years for Robbery in the Second Degree. These recommended minimum sentences are consistent with the average length-of-stay for robbers prior to establishment of the 70% sentence. They would require imprisonment of robbers for a period consistent with the seriousness of robbery offenses while allowing the Board of Parole discretion to consider possible release between expiration of the mandatory minimum and the maximum 85% term. While allowing for earlier release of lower-risk inmates, this proposal also would permit lengthy incarceration of those individuals at high risk to reoffend or those individuals who pose a significant threat to public safety.

This proposal modifies the “one size fits all” mandatory minimum of current law, providing more discretion to the DOC (in recommending early release) and the Board of Parole (in considering work release or parole) over a time period longer than currently permitted. It will reduce unnecessary incarceration of lower risk offenders by allowing the Board of Parole to consider earlier release based upon institution programming and behavior, offender maturation, recommendations by DOC, and other factors.

**Modifying Penalties for Powder and Crack Cocaine**

In Iowa, prohibited acts involving more than 10 grams but less than 50 grams of crack currently carry the same penalty as offenses involving more than 100 but less than 500 grams of powder cocaine. Iowa data presented to the PSAB suggest that this disparity in penalties contributes to disproportionate incarceration of African-Americans. Data were also presented pertaining to the amounts of crack and powder cocaine seizures. Research was presented illustrating that the physiological and psychotropic effects of crack and powder cocaine are the same, and that the drugs are now widely acknowledged as pharmacologically identical.

As a result of an analysis examining the effects of the sentencing discrepancy between crack and powder cocaine, the PSAB continues to support modifying the penalties for crack and powdered cocaine.

Amend Iowa Code §124.401 for the amounts of crack cocaine.

a. §124.401(a)(3) to greater than 125 grams
b. §124.401(b)(3) to greater than 35 grams and not more than 125 grams
c. §124.401(c)(3) to equal to or less than 35 grams

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Modifying Special Sentence for Sex Offenders

In Iowa, offenders convicted of a sex offense must serve a mandatory community-based supervision term known as the special sentence, upon completion of the original sentence. Offenders convicted of an A, B, or C felony receive lifetime supervision. Sex offenders convicted of a D felony or lower sex crime are to be supervised under the special sentence for 10-years. A 2014 analysis examining the effectiveness of this supervision found that baseline sex offender re-offense is low regardless of whether special sentence supervision is utilized. This analysis also found that the cost to implement the special sentence is exceptionally high.

Following the results of this analysis, the PSAB is recommending that the:

Imposition of the special sentence would remain as it is today, with the added provision to give the court the opportunity to review and reduce the special sentence. The change to current policy will allow the court to remove an offender from the special sentence supervision based on an evidentiary hearing that reviews information believed to be pertinent to special sentence placement (the nature of the sex offense, the offender’s institutional behavior, sex offender treatment compliance, court mandate compliance, victim impact, risk assessment, etc.). This information would then be utilized by the judge to render a judgment as to whether or not continued special sentence supervision is appropriate.

This is a joint recommendation of the PSAB and the Sex Offender Research Council.

Appropriate use of Risk Assessments for Drug Traffickers

As a result of a 2011 analysis on the effects of mandatory minimums for drug traffickers, the PSAB recommends that a validated risk assessment be made a standard part of pre-sentence investigation reports and that sufficient training is provided to those in the criminal justice system (defense, prosecutors, and the judiciary) so that they are utilized appropriately.

Continuation of Study of Juvenile Sentencing Options in Adult Court

Due to recent legislative changes, including the passage of an act in 2013 relating to the sentencing options available to the court for juveniles on youthful offender status, the PSAB will continue to study the impact of juvenile sentences in adult court and any disproportionate impact on racial minorities.

Changes to Iowa’s Child Kidnapping Laws

A 2013 analysis revealed that while child kidnapping in Iowa is rare, a review of the effectiveness of kidnapping laws reveals weaknesses in Iowa’s Criminal Code. Currently, the Code does not distinguish between adult and child victims and does not provide for penalty enhancements for repeat offenders. The PSAB believes Iowa’s Criminal Code should be strengthened by addressing these weaknesses.

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3 https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/An%2520Analysis%2520of%2520the%2520Sex%2520Offender%2520Special%2520Sentence%2520in%2520Iowa_2014%5B1%5D.pdf
4 https://www.humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/PSAB_MandatoryMinimumReport2011%5B1%5D.pdf
5 https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/Child%2520Kidnapping%2520Report%2520FY2014-Final%5B1%5D.pdf
The PSAB specifically noted that Iowa Code §710.3 is narrowly defined and rarely imposed, as it penalizes only kidnapping involving a ransom or dangerous weapon. This section of the Code should be revised to include language making non-parental/custodial kidnapping of a child/minor or any subsequent kidnapping conviction an automatic Class B felony subject to the mandatory minimum contained in §902.12.

Additionally, policymakers should clearly define the age of the child/minor so as not to exclude minor victims over the age of 14, as many kidnapping victims are in their mid-teens.
Thomas Walton, Chair  
Nyemaster Goode, P.C.  
700 Walnut, Suite 1600  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Ofc (515) 283-8003  
Home (515) 787-9819  
Fax (515) 283-6048  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
twalton@nyemaster.com

John Spinks, Jr., Vice Chair  
Oakridge Neighborhood Services  
1401 Center Street  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
Ofc (515) 244-7702  
Home (515) 783-9431  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
jspinks56@gmail.com

Mardi Allen  
Dickinson County Board of Supervisors  
1802 Hill Avenue  
Spirit Lake, IA 51360-1259  
Ofc (712) 332-2066  
Fax (712) 332-2066  
Cell (712) 330-3303  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
mardiallen@yahoo.com

Kim Cheeks  
Office on the Status of African Americans  
Iowa Department of Human Rights  
321 E. 12th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 281-3274  
kim.cheeks@iowa.gov

DeAnn Decker  
Iowa Department of Public Health  
Division of Behavioral Health  
Lucas State Office Building  
321 E. 12th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 281-0928  
deann.decker@idph.iowa.gov

Thomas Ferguson  
Prosecuting Attys. Training Coordinator  
Office of the Attorney General  
Hoover State Office Building  
1305 E. Walnut  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 281-5428  
Fax (515) 281-4313  
Cell (319) 240-0231  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
tom.ferguson@iowa.gov

John F. Hodges, J.D.  
Iowa Board of Parole  
510 E. 12th St., Suite 3  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 725-5757  
john.hodges@iowa.gov

Mary Ingham  
Crisis Intervention Service  
206 Third NE  
Mason City, IA 50401  
Ofc (515) 423-0490  
Fax (641) 424-8915  
Cell (641) 425-1724  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
mary@cishelps.org

Mary Kovacevich  
Wells Fargo Home Mortgage  
800 Jordan Creek Parkway  
West Des Moines, IA 50266  
Ofc (515) 324-6348  
Cell (515) 705-8478  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
marykovacevich@gmail.com

Michelle Leonard  
Dallas Center Police Department  
1402 Walnut  
P.O. Box 335  
Dallas Center, IA 50063  
Ofc (515) 992-3086  
Fax (515) 992-3764  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
dallascenterpd@dallascenter.com

Steven Lukan  
Office of Drug Control Policy  
215 E. 7th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 725-0305  
steven.lukan@iowa.gov

Amber Markham  
Iowa Department of Public Safety  
215 E. 7th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 725-6185  
markham@dps.state.ia.us

Lettie Prell  
Iowa Department of Corrections  
Jessie Parker Building  
510 E. 12th Street, Suite 4  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 725-5718  
lettie.prell@iowa.gov

Sheri Soich  
Office of the Attorney General  
Hoover State Office Building  
1305 E. Walnut  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Ofc (515) 281-6655  
Home (515) 277-1213  
Cell (515) 710-5665  
ssoich@ag.state.ia.us

Kurt Swaim  
State Public Defender’s Office  
321 E. 12th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ofc (515) 725-2012  
Term Expires 1/10/2011  
kswaim@spd.state.ia.us

Tony Thompson  
Iowa State Sheriffs & Deputies Assn.  
Black Hawk County Sheriff’s Office  
225 E. 6th  
Waterloo, IA 50703  
Ofc (319) 291-5008  
Cell (319) 240-4071  
Term Expires 4/30/2018  
tthompson@bhcso.org
Public Safety Advisory Board
As of 9/24/2015

Doug Wolfe
Department of Human Services
1305 E. Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
Ofc (515) 242-5452
Fax (515) 281-6248
Cell (515) 360-0388
dwolfe@dhs.state.ia.us

Ex-Officio:

Rep. Clel Baudler
Iowa House - District 20
2260 Hwy 25
Greenfield, IA, 50849-8100
Ofc (515) 281-3221
Term Expires 1/8/2017
clef.baudler@legis.iowa.gov

Rep. Bob Kressig
Iowa House - District 59
3523 Verralta Drive
Cedar Falls IA 50613
Ofc (515) 281-3221
Home (319) 266-9021
Term Expires 1/8/2017
bob.kressig@legis.iowa.gov

Hon. Romonda Belcher
Fifth Judicial District
500 Mulberry Street, Room 212
Des Moines, IA 50309
Ofc (515) 286-3157
Term Expires 6/30/2016
romonda.belcher@iowacourts.gov

Hon. Jeffrey Neary
Third Judicial District
620 Douglas Street
Sioux City, IA 51101
Ofc (712) 279-6034
Term Expires 4/30/2018
jeffrey.neary@iowacourts.gov

Sen. Charles Schneider
Iowa Senate - District 22
7887 Cody Drive
West Des Moines, IA 50266
Cell (515) 554-3213
Term Expires 1/8/2017
charles.schneider@legis.iowa.gov

Sen. Steven Sodders
Iowa Senate - District 36
202 Fifth Ave SE
PO Box 723
State Center, IA 50247
Ofc (641) 754-6380
Home (641) 483-2383
Cell (641) 751-4140
Term Expires 1/8/2017
steve.sodders@legis.iowa.gov

San Wong, Director
Iowa Department of Human Rights
Lucas State Office Building
321 E. 12th Street, 2nd Floor
Des Moines, IA 50319
Ofc (515) 242-6171
san.wong@iowa.gov

Staff:

Steve Michael, Administrator
Livision of
Criminal & Juvenile Justice Planning
Iowa Department of Human Rights
Lucas State Office Bldg., 2nd Floor
321 E. 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
Ofc (515) 242-6122
steve.michael@iowa.gov

Kile Beisner, Research Coordinator
Cfc (515) 281-7960
kile.beisner@iowa.gov

Sarah Johnson
Cfc (515) 725-2884
sarah.johnson2@iowa.gov
Equality doesn't mean Justice

This is Equality  This is Justice
October 15, 2015

To: Governor’s Working Group on Justice Policy Reform

The Iowa Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC) supports the confidentiality of all juvenile court records and juvenile arrest reports in Iowa.

The JJAC agrees with the U.S. Supreme Court in a number of decisions (Roper v. Simons, Graham v. Florida, Miller v. Alabama) recognizing that youth are different than adults, are more malleable, and amenable to treatment. When this is coupled with the original goal of the juvenile court to rehabilitate and reintegrate youth into society, it is vital that Iowa stop allowing public access to juvenile court records. Even when a youth’s juvenile court records are sealed or expunged, in the electronic age of the internet and data mining, those juvenile court records are still accessible. The negative effects include restricting their access to:

- education,
- housing,
- employment,
- military service.

Each of these restrictions limits the opportunities for youth to become successful members of society.

It is the belief of the JJAC that public access of juvenile court records and law enforcement records relating to the arrest of a youth create long term consequences for the youth. Members of the JJAC support cross-agency sharing of juvenile records between court, law enforcement, schools, treatment providers and designated research agencies to provide the necessary supports, services and research for youth.

Thank you for your support and interest in juvenile justice issues.

Sincerely,

Joel Illian, chair
Juvenile Justice Advisory Council
641-660-3339
joeltillian@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Chief John Quinn, chair
Policy and Programs Sub-Committee
Juvenile Justice Advisory Council
515-987-1073
jquinn@waukee.org

Lucas State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
515-242-5823