The Nebraska Center for Justice Research (NCJR) was established in 2014 with a mission to develop and sustain criminal justice research capacity internal to the State of Nebraska. Our goal is to assist the Legislature, justice agencies, practitioners, foundations, and stakeholders with research and evaluation to reduce recidivism, promote the use of evidence-based practices, and improve public safety. This annual report summarizes the activities and financial status of NCJR in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

In this past year, NCJR once again crafted our Adult Justice in Nebraska report to provide a foundation of data trends in areas such as law enforcement and corrections for the Legislature at the beginning of the legislative session. NCJR also completed a report assessing the effectiveness of the ShotSpotter audio shot detection system in Omaha as part of the Bureau of Justice Assistance’s Project Safe Neighborhoods initiatives. NCJR Director, Ryan Spohn, completed a report for the Bureau of Justice Assistance that summarized the results of a multi-state “immersion” training of the Blue Courage initiative, which focuses on law enforcement officer health, well-being, and professional success. Finally, NCJR staff produced 16 monthly and quarterly reports for Nebraska’s Vocational and Life Skills inmate reentry initiative.

In regards to NCJR’s academic mission, our faculty and graduate students placed multiple publications in academic journals and presented at the annual conferences of the American Society of Criminology, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, the Omaha-area Heartland Juvenile Service Association, and the Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association.

From a budgetary standpoint, we continue to be encouraged by the well-balanced budgetary profile of NCJR that includes state funding, contracts with local agencies, federal grants, and funding by local foundations. The diversity of our funding profile not only broadens the impact of our research, training, technical assistance, and evaluation activities across the state, but also allows us to provide “matching” funding for products that benefit from both public and private dollars. Our state appropriation is only 35% of our budget, suggesting that for every state dollar invested, NCJR attracts two additional dollars in external funds.

In summary, 2018-2019 was another productive year with a substantial output of research, evaluation, and academic products. In addition, we continue to build research partnerships, collaborations, and relationships with agency and community stakeholders. We look forward to learning from these experiences and increasing our capacity to serve the Nebraska community in subsequent years. On a very sad note, we lost a very special friend, colleague, and faculty affiliate in Dr. Benjamin Steiner, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, who passed this year.
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Mission Statement

The Nebraska Center for Justice Research’s mission is “to develop and sustain research capacity internal to the State of Nebraska, assist the Legislature in research, evaluation, and policymaking to reduce recidivism, promote the use of evidence-based practices in corrections, and improve public safety.” Our research focus is to use data, research, and evaluation to reduce recidivism, promote the use of evidence-based practices, and improve public safety in Nebraska with an emphasis on reducing prison overcrowding.

NCJR Facilities

NCJR currently occupies approximately 1,000 square feet in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice (SCCJ), located in the College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS) building on the University of Nebraska Omaha campus.

Statement of Goals

NCJR is a non-partisan non-profit research entity housed in the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s College of Public Affairs and Community Service. The team is comprised of social science researchers who strive to serve the residents of Nebraska with honor and integrity by producing scientific studies held to the highest ethical standards. In pursuit of this overarching goal, we:

1. Conduct non-partisan examinations of justice-related issues for the state of Nebraska.
2. Propose and conduct scientific evaluations of policies and activities of Nebraska state agencies in order to assist them to serve Nebraskans efficiently and effectively.
3. Provide the public and legislature with regular reports regarding our activities.
4. Contribute to the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice’s graduate program by funding students via applied research projects.
5. Promote sustainability of statewide justice reinvestment activities.
6. Increase research credibility by producing useable technical reports and meaningful academic publications.
7. Continue our national reputation as a top-tier research and evaluation Center by ensuring our deliverables are produced with the utmost methodological rigor.

For more information visit: justiceresearch.unomaha.edu
SELECTED ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS  
2016-2019


* Includes academic peer-reviewed publications, technical reports, and policy and research briefs.
GRANTS AWARDED

2014-2019


2016-18 Project Safe Neighborhoods, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Research partner with City of Omaha.

2015-17 Project Safe Neighborhoods, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Research partner with City of Omaha.


2014-15 Project Safe Neighborhoods, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Research partner with City of Omaha.

GRANTS SUBMITTED


2018 Spohn, Ryan and Emily Wright. Evaluation of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation’s Nebraska Expectant and Parenting Project. The Nebraska Children & Families Foundation.

CONTRACTS AND PROJECTS

2016-2018

Role: Principle Investigator


Role: Project Evaluator


2017-19 Douglas County Operation Youth Success Evaluation. The TerraLuna Collaborative.

2017-19 Minority Health Initiative Evaluation, Colfax and Platte Counties, NE. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

2016-17 Blue Courage Police Training Assessment. The International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training.

2016-17 Douglas County Operation Youth Success Evaluation. The TerraLuna Collaborative.


Spohn, Ryan. 2019. Immersion State Blue Courage Training Evaluation. For the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards & Training (IADLEST)


Wright, Emily M., Spohn, Ryan, and Joselyne Chenane. 2018. Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (Youth Impact!): Executive Summary. For the Sherwood Foundation.


Spohn, Ryan, Emily M. Wright, and Joselyne Chenane. 2017. Evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (Youth Impact!): Results Summary. For the Sherwood Foundation.


Hamilton, Zachary and Alex Kigerl. 2016. Nebraska Department of Correctional Services Classification Tool Development. Nebraska Center for Justice Research.


ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

2016-2019


Spohn, Ryan and Emily Wright. 2018. “The Process and Results of a Metropolitan University Collaborating with Community Partners to Improve Service to Crossover Youth.” Presented at Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities Annual Conference, Chicago, IL.


Ellison, Jared and Ryan Spohn. 2016. “Assessing the Consequences of Colorado’s Legalization of Recreational Marijuana on Nebraska.” Presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.


NUMBER OF PRESENTATIONS PER YEAR*

*Includes invited and academic presentations, as well as panels and discussions.
INVITED PRESENTATIONS 2016-2019

Spohn, Ryan. 2019. “Beyond Police, Courts, and Corrections.” For UNO’s School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, February 1, Lincoln, NE.


Spohn, Ryan. 2018. “Reentry as a Component of PSN.” Presented at the National Project Safe Neighborhoods Conference, Bureau of Justice Assistance, December 5 and 7, Kansas City, MO.

Wright, Emily M., Ryan Spohn, and Joselyne Chenane. 2017. “Evaluation of Douglas County Youth Impact!” Presented at the quarterly meeting of the Nebraska Juvenile Services, April 11, Lincoln, NE.


POLICY AND RESEARCH BRIEFS


WEBINARS

Bilchik, Shay, Michael Umpierre, Amy Latshaw, Monica DeMent, Cara Shirts, Dawn Rockey, Larry Gendler, Emily Wright, and Ryan Spohn. 2018. Crossover Youth Practice Model 101. Webinar with the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University and the Nebraska Court Improvement Project, June 22.


PANELS AND DISCUSSIONS 2016-2018

Spohn, Ryan. 2018. “Beyond Police, Courts, and Corrections.” For UNO’s School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, February 7, Omaha, NE.


Spohn, Ryan. 2016. “Sustainability Panel.” For the statewide Crossover Youth Practice Model Meeting, September 6, Omaha, NE.

Spohn, Ryan. 2016. “Evidence-Based Practice Panel.” For the Nebraska Children’s Commission Meeting, January 20, Omaha, NE.
NCJR BUDGET FY 2013-2019

Total Budget Breakdown, Fiscal Year 2013-2019

NCJR is established by the Nebraska Legislature in October 2014 and receives an annual state appropriation to aid in research and evaluation efforts.

Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Breakdown

- **Contracts**: 52%
- **State Appropriation**: 35%
- **Transformation Project**: 11%
- **Grants**: 2%

Contracts and Grants from FY 2013-2019

Representatives of the Douglas County Crossover team and Dr. Ryan Spohn meet to discuss the successes of the Youth Impact! Model.
Although CACs like Project Harmony have existed for several decades, little research has examined their effectiveness in supporting children with comprehensive services to prevent re-victimization as they navigate the criminal justice system. Project Harmony is one of the largest CACs in the nation, which makes it the ideal candidate for evaluation and a potential model for other CACs. As a first step, this grant would examine various services provided by Project Harmony to determine whether the programs are being implemented as intended. The core services within the agency would be studied using a mixed methods design, including interviews, focus groups, surveys, and existing agency data. Findings from this evaluation would then be used to assess the viability of Project Harmony and eventually, other CACs, can implement best practices. Ultimately, this study would provide insights into how Project Harmony and eventually, other CACs, can implement best practices when dealing with abused or neglected youth. Additionally, in 2018, Dr. Kulig was one of only a few who received an Inquiry Awards Grant sponsored by the College of Public Affairs and Community Service (CPACS). The CPACS Inquiry Awards promote research in Nebraska and neighboring states that help to understand and address issues deemed relevant by the public. Dr. Kulig’s 2018-2019 Inquiry Awards grant supported a study that examined the prevalence and effectiveness of human trafficking courts across the United States for addressing the needs of “victim-defendants.” Findings from this study suggest that, while trafficking courts have rapidly increased over a relatively short period, there is a lack of clear theory guiding intervention with trafficking “victim-defendants.” Furthermore, only a limited number of evaluations have been conducted to determine whether the goals of these specialty courts are actually achieved. More details about the study findings are available in a recent Victim & Offenders special issue on problem-solving courts; a booklet tailored for Nebraska legal actors is also forthcoming.

Dr. Kulig has also done research outside of Nebraska. In a study funded by the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services, Dr. Kulig worked with a research team from the School of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati (Dr. Valerie Anderson and Dr. Christopher Sullivan) to estimate the prevalence of human trafficking in Ohio. The research team collaborated with multiple state and local agencies across the state to obtain existing agency records and to provide an estimate of the number of known victims and at-risk individuals. The research team identified 1,032 known victims of sex trafficking and 4,209 at-risk individuals based on the examination of existing data sources predominantly between 2014 and 2016. Beyond the prevalence estimate, the research team found that the existing Ohio data systems were not currently set up for comprehensive data sharing cross agencies or with researchers. Agencies across Ohio are collecting different levels of information on human trafficking (e.g., individual level details with identifiers compared to aggregate reports), and this makes it difficult to compare and integrate findings across the state. Due to the difficulty in obtaining statewide numbers on the prevalence of human trafficking in Ohio, this effort has led to what the research team believes to be a conservative estimate relative to the true number of victims. Full technical reports for this project have been published and there is a forthcoming publication in the American Journal of Public Health.

The School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and NCJR are excited by the work Dr. Kulig is doing within the Omaha community and beyond, and we look forward to seeing her continue to contribute valuable research in the area of victimization.
RESEARCH STAFF HIGHLIGHT

NCJR’s Newest Research Staff
Dr. Michael Campagna and Dr. Katelynn Towne

Research Associate Dr. Michael Campagna, received his Ph.D. from Washington State University in Criminal Justice and Criminology. His interests include barriers to the reentry process, improving case management through the use of risk/needs assessments, restrictive housing, and using developmental theory to examine desistance.

An addition to NCJR last summer, Dr. Campagna has taken the lead on data management and analyses for various projects, including the Vocational Life Skills (VLS) initiative. During the winter, the Nebraska Board of Parole requested NCJR conduct an evaluation of their parole sanctioning process, by which Dr. Campagna will be the primary investigator. He is also involved in the Youth Impact! Project, the DCDC jail case management project, Since bring brought onboard, he has presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, the Omaha Evaluators, and filled in as an adjunct instructor for the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. He enjoys developing new research partnerships and mentoring graduate students. His ultimate goal is to assist Nebraska in creating a collaborative, data-driven environment of criminal justice agencies and community organizations that seek to reduce recidivism and improve quality of life for Nebraskans.

Research Coordinator Dr. Katelynn Towne, received her Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia in Sociology. Her interests include social inequity on the criminal justice experience, victimization, and the role of media on attitudes towards police.

An addition to NCJR last summer, Dr. Towne has brought a considerable and essential skillset to NCJR with her background in mixed-methodology. In addition to managing data and providing technical assistance for quantitative aspects of the VLS evaluation, she has been coordinating qualitative efforts by interviewing formerly incarcerated persons who have struggled and excelled with VLS reentry programming. She presents findings of this evaluation in reports and at professional meetings. Since joining NCJR, she has presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences annual conference and the Policing and Society Conference. She enjoys engaging the community with evidence-based practice possibilities and aims to reduce recidivism.

We at NCJR are happy to have both Drs. Campagna and Towne working to produce quality research that benefits the community.
The REAL program, which stands for respond, empower, advocate, and listen, is a program area that is evaluated by NCJR as part of a larger part of the Vocational and Life Skills Reentry Initiative.

This service is free and voluntary. Peer specialists do not diagnose individuals; instead, they are there to help identify the needs and issues that may have precipitated the mental health crisis. Often, persons with mental illness identify issues with finding and maintaining stable housing, employment, and finding mental health and/or substance use counseling and treatment. The REAL program ensures…

...peer specialists respond to persons with mental illness (PMIs) after a crisis, empower PMIs by helping them develop long-term mental health plans, advocate for PMIs when attempting to secure resources, and listen to PMIs’ needs, wants, and frustrations rather than coerce them into decisions (emphasis added, Bonkiewicz, Moyer, Magdanz, and Walsh 2018:490).

If you have questions about this program or other Vocational and Life Skills grant-funded programs, please contact Dr. Campagna (mcampagna@unomaha.edu) or Dr. Towne (ktowne@unomaha.edu).
It is the mission of the Nebraska Board of Parole and the Division of Parole Supervision to continue its research, understanding and implementation of evidence-based approaches as it pertains to the release of clients who have appropriately been prepared for community supervision. The Board and the Division of Parole Supervision are dedicated to maintaining public safety, reducing recidivism and addressing the need of victims, while integrating clients into society through a balance of best practice supervision and treatment strategies.

NEBRASKA BOARD OF PAROLE SANCTIONS EVALUATION 2019

STATE OF NEBRASKA BOARD OF PAROLE MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the Nebraska Board of Parole and the Division of Parole Supervision to continue its research, understanding and implementation of evidence-based approaches as it pertains to the release of clients who have appropriately been prepared for community supervision. The Board and the Division of Parole Supervision are dedicated to maintaining public safety, reducing recidivism and addressing the need of victims, while integrating clients into society through a balance of best practice supervision and treatment strategies.

For those who have been granted parole, they must abide by certain rules (e.g., refrain from engaging in criminal conduct or find and maintain employment) to maintain their conditional release from prison. A variety of sanction may be employed in response to parole violations. For example, if a parolee is found to have committed a minor form of noncompliance, they may receive a written warning or greater curfew restrictions; however, a parolee who partakes in a more severe form of noncompliance may be at risk of receiving custodial sanctions or the highest level of noncompliance – a revocation of their parole. Therefore, to abide by their mission statement, the Nebraska Board of Parole (NBP) has asked NCJR to examine the effects of sanctions delivered by parole to clients.

The NBP Sanctions Evaluation will examine outcomes for all client sanctions after a parole violation had been determined. The study period will be between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2018 and include all clients served by parole during this time frame. Parole has reorganized and changed supervision policies, risk assessments, and administration within this period, therefore each consideration will be accounted for in the analysis through consultation with NBP. An advanced matching procedure will accompany the analysis, to ensure the control group is as close as possible to the experimental group on key demographics and criministics characteristics. Further, a measure of graduated sanctioning will be developed and examined for how it affects revocations, violations, and new crimes. Criminal history, institutional records, and risk/needs variables will inform the study.

Utilizing data regarding criminal history, institutional records, and risk/needs of the clients, a combination of quasi-experimental, correlational, and descriptive analyses will be employed to examine the following evaluation questions:

- Does return to jail for a parole violation deter future violations or new crimes?
- Does utilization of community services moderate the effectiveness of sanctions?
- What combinations of sanctions deter future violations?
- What is the rank of effectiveness by type of sanction?
- Does sanction effectiveness vary by original crime type?
- Does sanction effectiveness vary by race, gender, or age?
RESEARCH REPORT HIGHLIGHT

Adult Justice in Nebraska (2018)

This report compares criminal justice data across Nebraska from 2012 to 2018. Completed in January, 2019, the document presented the most recent and comprehensive system-wide data available. NCJR will continue to provide updates to this report each year and submit the findings to the Nebraska state legislature. Our hope is that the report serves as a reference guide for providing a clearer understanding of recent trends in crime and criminal justice activities in the state of Nebraska. The report was made possible by the financial support provided to NCJR by LB 907.

You Can Find this Report on Our Website

COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHT

NCJR is a founding member of the Inter-University Network of Criminal Justice Research Centers (INCJRC)

Since November 2018, NCJR along with a dozen other academic criminal justice research centers across the nation created a collaborative group to provide networking opportunities for justice-focused researchers. We at NCJR are excited to participate in this network of respected centers and look forward to working collaboratively with members of this group on future research.

To find more information on INCJRC and affiliated centers, please visit: www.incjrc.net

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Psychology
Psychology
Psychology
Social Work
Social Work
Social Work
Sociology

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Criminology & Criminal Justice

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Ebonie Epinger
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HOURS/WEEK: 80

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Sara Toto
Kelsey Ciagala

HOURS/WEEK: 80

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Ebonie Epinger
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Sara Toto

HOURS/WEEK: 80