

## Nebraska

The project selected Nebraska to receive intensive, nonpartisan research, analysis, and expertise. Among other factors, its leaders have demonstrated both a bipartisan commitment to explore meaningful policy change and a dedication to collecting and using criminal justice data as a basis for sound reforms.

### Progress Update »

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Nebraska's prison population increased by 34 percent between 1995 and 2005, and its corrections budget nearly tripled. The state's response has emphasized improvements to its community corrections system. Nebraska's prison population has dropped by about 100 people since last summer, a reduction that the Omaha World-Herald attributed to new day and night reporting centers established by the state's Community Corrections Council. Governor Dave Heineman praised these centers and emphasized the state's commitment to community corrections, which "can help provide better results than simply building more maximum-security prisons in our state." In addition, the Nebraska Supreme Court met in April 2007 to discuss the adoption of sentencing guidelines for drug offenders. The court heard from Kermit Brashear, the former speaker of the legislature and chair of the Community Corrections Council, and action on the guidelines is pending. The Vera Institute of Justice, a Public Safety Performance Project partner, has worked closely with the Community Corrections Council in crafting the proposed guidelines and is assisting the Probation Administration in restructuring and expanding community corrections options throughout the state. Vera has evaluated the state's intensive supervision program and is examining the impact of a potential merger of the parole and probation departments.

### State Profile »

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A profile of Nebraska that provides statistical and analytical data about its sentencing and corrections systems, describes factors shaping those systems, and highlights opportunities for reform.

[Download Nebraska state profile](#) (PDF) [Adobe Reader®](#) required.

### Case Study »

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The Nebraska prison system has been over capacity since the 1980s. If nothing changes, the system will be at 155 percent of capacity by 2015. More than half the inmates in Nebraska's prisons are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses. See how a working group established in 2001, with federally funded support from the Vera Institute of Justice, carefully evaluated the state's sentencing and corrections laws — and the impact made by the group's identification of two key areas where change could lead to better outcomes.

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### News

#### Select news clips »

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- **Two systems, one cause – Welcome emphasis on cooperation commends bill to study parole and probation**
- *Omaha World-Herald*
- May 10, 2007

Recent World-Herald editorials on Nebraska's community corrections initiative noted how a legislative bill is promoting an important step forward for the criminal justice system: closer cooperation between the state's probation and parole systems. That sensible goal would encourage greater efficiency and enhance the state's effort to promote

alternatives to incarcerating nonviolent offenders. Legislative Bill 540, which recently received first-round approval, would form a study commission to examine ways to improve coordination by these two systems...

To read the full article, visit the [Omaha World-Herald's Web site](#).

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- **Try sentencing guidelines – Their use could reduce cost to Nebraska of incarcerating drug offenders**

- *Omaha World-Herald*

- May 1, 2007

Nebraskans would be well served if their highest court embraces a set of suggestions for choosing when community corrections might be best for felony drug offenders. The Nebraska Supreme Court last week held a public hearing on sentencing guidelines developed by the Community Corrections Council, as directed by the Legislature in 2003. The guidelines would be voluntary. The high court is being asked to adopt them by court rule so that district judges might be more inclined to use them...

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- **The right trend – Community corrections initiative encourages long-term fiscal savings**

- *Omaha World-Herald*

- April 30, 2007

Last summer, the Nebraska prison population climbed to near- emergency levels. The prison numbers fortunately have fallen slightly -- an early sign that the state's community corrections initiative appears to be working. It's too early to say that all the drug-addicted offenders targeted by the initiative have turned their lives around. But thanks to the first program undertaken by the Community Corrections Council, the prison population has been reduced by 100 or so people...

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