

Swift, Predictable, & Brief (SPB) Pilot Program (UPDATED)

Background

Under the statutory authority of Pennsylvania's Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) legislation (Act 115 of 2019), the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) implemented the Swift, Predictable, and Brief (SPB) pilot program in April 2024 in order to address technical parole violations through sanctions that are immediate, consistent, and short in duration as an alternative to lengthy reincarceration periods or full parole revocation. The SPB pilot is modeled after Hawaii's HOPE probation program, and more generally modeled after what has come to be known as Swift, Certain, and Fair (SCF) supervision, an approach to supervision adopted in several other state and local jurisdictions.

The SPB pilot was launched on April 14, 2024 in the Philadelphia Parole District Office among parolees eligible for (or already on) an Intensive Supervision Caseload (ISC). ISC parolees are those who had a violent instant offense followed by a previous parole revocation, a parole revocation that is assaultive or violent in nature, a significant history of domestic violence, or a criminal history or supervision history that poses an elevated risk to the community. ISC parolees in the Chester, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh Parole District Offices served as the comparison group for the evaluation. ISC cases were excluded from SPB if they were severely mentally ill, had serious medical conditions, were interstate cases, or were special probation/parole cases.

SPB participants were given a program orientation outlining the rules/expectations of supervision and consequences for violations. Participants were closely and frequently monitored and were all under global position monitoring (GPS) tracking. All supervision violations (other than new criminal charges and six specific technical charges more severe in nature) were responded to immediately with 3–7 days incarceration at SCI Phoenix. A total of 403 parolees participated in SPB during the pilot period.

Study Design

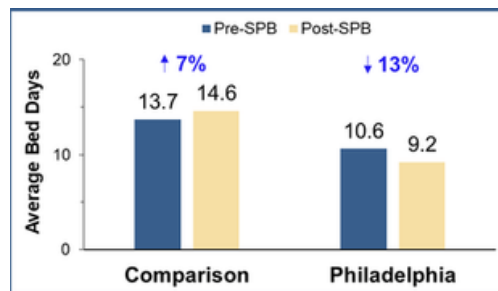
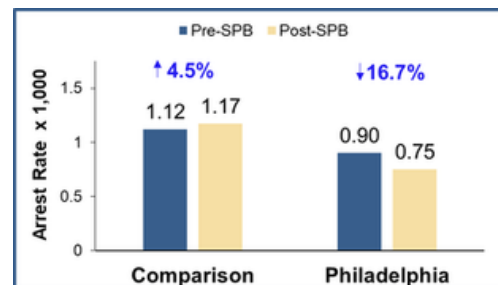
The analysis covers roughly a two-year pre- and post-SPB implementation period. A difference-in-differences (DiD) design logic was used to evaluate the SPB pilot, where changes in key outcomes for the SPB site were compared to changes in key outcomes for the comparison group sites from the two-year period before versus the two-year period after SPB implementation. The sample includes 249 cases before SPB versus 403 cases after SPB for the Philadelphia district, and 231 cases before SPB versus 356 after SPB for the comparison districts (Chester = 28 cases before vs. 64 cases after; Harrisburg = 76 cases before vs. 98 cases after; Pittsburgh = 127 cases before vs. 194 cases after).

Outcomes examined in this evaluation were:

1. Arrest Rates – measured as a rate of the total number of arrests per parolee days free, broken down by period (pre- vs. post-SPB implementation) and site (Philadelphia vs. comparison sites).
2. Bed Days – measured as a rate of the total number of days spent in state custody per person, broken down by period (pre- vs. post-SPB implementation) and site (Philadelphia vs. comparison sites).

Results

The arrest rate for the comparison group sites increased from the pre-SPB period to the post-SPB period by approximately 4.5%, whereas the arrest rate for the SPB site decreased by 16.7%. It is thus estimated that **the SPB pilot reduced the arrest rate by 20.2% for participants**, although a 95% confidence interval suggests SPB could've led to anywhere from a 46% reduction to an 18% increase in arrests. The impact on arrests specifically for violent crimes appears even larger, with an estimation that **the SPB pilot reduced the violent arrest rate by 42.4% for participants**, with a 95% confidence interval of between a 70% reduction to an 11% increase.



The analysis of in-custody bed days showed the average number of bed days for the SPB group decreased by 13% whereas it increased by 7% for the comparison group. This translates into a total estimated **reduction of 3,850 prison days** among the SPB participants (or 9.5 days per participant), resulting in an **estimated cost savings of \$194,502** (or \$483 per participant). Savings are slightly offset by an increase of 21 hours of additional transport overtime (an estimated \$1,276 total).

Conclusion

This updated analysis strengthens findings from the previous SPB analysis by building on a larger sample size from one more year of data collection, and also includes new analysis of violent arrest rates that were not previously examined. Fairly strong and consistent evidence from these findings suggest that the SPB pilot reduced total arrests, violent arrests, and the number of days in prison. SPB pilot results show promise and suggest consideration of program continuation or expansion.