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## *Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing*

# Research Bulletin

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## Pennsylvania's Motivational Boot Camp: Summary of 2001 Legislative Report

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In 1990, the Pennsylvania Legislature passed Act 215, which established Pennsylvania's Motivational Boot Camp Program. This Act also included a mandate to the Sentencing Commission to report annually on the progress of the Boot Camp Program. This Bulletin provides a summary of the *2001 Legislative Report* that includes: 1) information on the type of offender who was eligible, referred, and admitted to Boot Camp from 1992-1999, and 2) initial findings from two Boot Camp offender surveys.

### What is the Motivational Boot Camp Program?

The Motivational Boot Camp, which is located in Quehanna, Clearfield County, is a six-month alternative program to prison. The impetus behind the legislation was the recognition of the severe prison overcrowding situation. Further, there was legislative interest in offering an alternative to prison that would provide a more intense rehabilitative setting conducive to achieving the goal of crime reduction.

The Boot Camp is designed to instill discipline and structure through regimented sixteen-hour days consisting of work and program activities. A typical day begins at 5:30 with reveille, followed by an hour of physical training. The remainder of the day is tightly scheduled with education, counseling, and work. Offenders who have not graduated from high school attend mandatory education classes, while those who have a degree are assigned to work duties. About 84% of offenders educated at the Boot Camp receive their GED.

The Boot Camp opened in June 1992. By 1999, 2093 offenders had been admitted to the program, which has about an 80% graduation rate. Currently, the Boot Camp has approximately 230 offenders with a new platoon of about 50 offenders arriving each month. Offenders who voluntarily [12%] or involuntarily [8%] withdraw from the program return to prison for the remainder of their minimum sentence prior to being reviewed by the Parole Board for release. Those who graduate from the program are automatically released to parole supervision until the expiration of their maximum sentence. Effective February 2002, all offenders graduating from the Boot Camp Program are required to participate in a structured re-entry program for a minimum of 90 days following graduation from the Boot Camp.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

- ◆ From 1992-1999, there have been 2,093 offenders admitted into the Motivational Boot Camp Program. About 80% have successfully completed the program, with 12% voluntarily withdrawing and 8% involuntarily removed.
- ◆ Offenders are most likely to come from Philadelphia [22%] and Allegheny [10%] Counties.
- ◆ Most offenders are young [mean age of 25 years], Black [51%], male [98%], and single [76%].
- ◆ About 61% of the offenders had been employed at the time of their arrest. Their mean monthly income was between \$1200-\$1400.
- ◆ Most offenders had been convicted of drug offenses [70%] and had used drugs daily the month before their arrest [51%].
- ◆ The mean age at first drug use was 15 years and the mean age of first arrest was 17 years.
- ◆ After going through the program, offenders were significantly less likely to see drug use as a problem, feel that drugs would get them into trouble with the law, or interfere with their work.
- ◆ Offenders indicated that they developed a greater sense of self control and enhanced decision-making skills at the time of graduation from the program.
- ◆ Most offenders were excited about 'starting over' [94%] and indicated that they thought they would be able to get a job [91%] or attend college [73%] in the future.

**Table 1. Number of Offenders Statutorily Eligible, Recommended, and Admitted into Boot Camp [1992-1999].**

COUNTY	Number eligible by statute	Number referred by judge	Number admitted by DOC	COUNTY	Number eligible by statute	Number referred by judge	Number admitted by DOC	COUNTY	Number eligible by statute	Number referred by judge	Number admitted by DOC
Adams	134	14	13	Elk	48	3	2	Montour	36	0	3
Allegheny	1714	199	217	Erie	995	223	115	Northhampton	150	35	17
Armstrong	61	8	4	Fayette	421	56	34	Northumberland	205	32	12
Beaver	185	29	20	Forest	10	1	2	Perry	65	16	12
Bedford	19	1	1	Franklin	273	39	25	Philadelphia	4087	904	469
Berks	967	142	83	Fulton	28	6	5	Pike	44	5	2
Blair	78	3	2	Greene	130	9	8	Potter	33	10	2
Bradford	179	5	9	Huntingdon	14	1	4	Schuylkill	85	5	2
Bucks	251	5	5	Indiana	83	17	11	Snyder	93	14	2
Butler	112	10	8	Jefferson	40	8	10	Somerset	152	29	7
Cambria	163	39	13	Juniata	13	3	0	Sullivan	23	4	1
Cameron	6	0	2	Lackawanna	358	20	23	Susquehanna	31	3	0
Carbon	79	14	3	Lancaster	355	33	52	Tioga	61	13	13
Centre	120	20	21	Lawrence	179	3	1	Union	60	10	5
Chester	312	62	54	Lebanon	131	4	5	Venango	179	38	31
Clarion	40	8	7	Lehigh	596	137	80	Warren	71	25	12
Clearfield	148	11	9	Luzerne	126	7	14	Washington	108	4	9
Clinton	44	8	3	Lycoming	508	136	85	Wayne	72	12	8
Columbia	37	3	0	McKean	58	8	8	Westmoreland	216	15	19
Crawford	128	27	13	Mercer	342	62	31	Wyoming	45	7	4
Cumberland	235	37	16	Mifflin	36	1	5	York	626	131	101
Dauphin	1263	119	121	Monroe	139	2	4				
Delaware	851	169	154	Montgomery	689	74	60	<b>TOTAL</b>	19140	3098	2093

Note: Some counties have more admissions than referrals, which is most likely a result of the DOC contacting the judge about potentially good candidates who had not initially received a judicial referral for Boot Camp. These referrals would not be indicated on the Guideline Sentence Form.

## Who Goes to Boot Camp?

Statute requires that the judge recommend potential offenders, who then voluntarily apply to the program upon arrival at the Department of Corrections [DOC]. The DOC makes the final determination concerning admissions to the program. The major reasons that offenders are not accepted into the program are because they have medical problems and/or outstanding detainers.

Table 1 shows the number of offenders who were statutorily eligible, judicially referred, and admitted into the Boot Camp Program from 1992-1999. Statewide, about 16% of offenders statutorily eligible are recommended by judges and about 68% of those recommended are admitted into the Program.

Philadelphia and Allegheny Counties have the largest number of offenders admitted into Boot Camp, representing 22% and 10% of the admissions, respectively. Though the larger counties have the most offenders attending Boot Camp, many of the rural counties have both higher rates of judicial referrals and DOC acceptances into the Boot Camp.

## Boot Camp Offender Survey

The focus of the *2001 Legislative Report* was the presentation of the initial findings from two Boot Camp Offender Surveys. The first survey, a Self-Report Survey, was designed to include questions relevant to factors that previous studies have found to be related to criminal behavior [e.g., substance abuse, prior criminal activity, employment history, and family stability]. This survey is given to offenders upon admission to the Boot Camp. The second survey, the Boot Camp Evaluation Survey, measures attitudinal changes along several dimensions that are addressed through the programmatic features of the Boot Camp [e.g., self-control, motivation for change, self-efficacy, and decision making]. The survey is given to offenders at both admission and graduation.<sup>1</sup>

These initial findings are based upon the 293 offenders who responded to the Self-Report Survey and the 255 offenders who responded to both Boot Camp Evaluation Surveys from October 2000 through April 2001. The responses from these surveys not only provide a more in-depth profile of the Boot Camp offender, but also will be useful in our future recidivism research.

1. Both surveys will also be given to offenders after they are on parole for six months.

**Responses from the Self-Report Survey.** Table 2 presents some of the responses from the Self-Report Survey, which consisted of 48 questions addressing five areas: demographics, education and employment, family background, involvement in criminal activity, and drug and alcohol use.

The typical Boot Camp offender was young, Black, male, unmarried, and the parent of at least one child. About 61% of the offenders were employed, with the average length of employment being 23 months. Most were employed in construction and factory work with an average monthly income between \$1200-\$1400. About 51% of the offenders said that their jobs were their primary source of income and 40% said that their income came primarily from illegal sources. While over half of the offenders had completed high school, their parents were even more likely to have done so [58% vs. 75%].

The percentage of offenders living with both parents

<b>Mean Age</b>	<b>25 years</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	98%
Female	2%
<b>Race</b>	
Black	51%
White	32%
Hispanic	16%
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Never Married	76%
Common law	11%
Married	8%
Widowed/Divorced	5%
<b>Children</b>	
Yes	61%
No	39%
<b>Employed</b>	
Yes	61%
No	39%
Monthly income [mean]	\$1200-\$1400
<b>Completed high school</b>	
Yes	58%
No	42%
<b>Arrested as juvenile</b>	
Yes	55%
No	45%
<b>Current offense</b>	
Drugs	70%
Burglary/Theft	13%
Robbery/Assault	9%
Other	8%
Age of first arrest [mean]	age 17
<b>Drug use during month prior to arrest</b>	
None	29%
Daily	51%
Once a week or less	21%
Age at first drug use [mean]	age 15
<b>Used drugs day of offense</b>	
Yes	52%
No	48%
<b>Used alcohol day of offense</b>	
Yes	25%
No	76%

versus one parent during their childhood was virtually the same [43% vs. 42%], with 16% indicating that they were raised by grandparents.

Most offenders were in Boot Camp on drug convictions [70%] and had previously been involved in drug dealing [68%] and drug use [46%]. A large percentage of offenders [52%] reported using drugs the day they committed their offense, while a smaller percentage [25%] reported drinking alcohol that day. Offenders reported being younger when they first used drugs [mean age of 15] than when they were first arrested for committing a crime [mean age of 17].

**Responses from Boot Camp Evaluation Survey.** The Boot Camp Evaluation Survey consisted of 101 questions and addressed six major areas: attitudes toward the Boot Camp Program, indicators of self-control, self-efficacy and decision-making skills, motivation for treatment, association with family and friends, and opportunities for the future. Upon entering the Boot Camp, offenders expressed high expectations, which were not always met. It is noteworthy, however, that even when this was the case, the overwhelming majority still reported favorable opinions about the program and indicated that they had learned more self-discipline [84%], found the programs to be helpful [84%], had become a better person [77%], were less likely to get into trouble again [71%], and were proud to have been accepted into the program [94%].

One of the initial objectives of the Boot Camp was to instill self-discipline, and offenders did indicate a decrease in impulsive behavior [Table 3]. Offenders reported that, after attending Boot Camp, they were significantly less likely to act on the spur of the moment or ignore preparing for the future, and much more likely to delay immediate gratification for a distant goal.

The area in which offenders appeared to experience the most change was with respect to their enhanced decision-making capabilities [Table 3]. After going through the program, they were significantly more likely to consider how their actions affected others, plan ahead, make good decisions, think about the results of their actions, and think of alternative solutions to a problem. In addition they were significantly less likely to have trouble making decisions or to make decisions without thinking about the consequences.

	<b>Admission</b>	<b>Graduation</b>
<b>Impulsivity</b>		
I often act on the spur of the moment	44%	29%
I don't devote much thought to preparing for the future.	22	5
I often do whatever brings me pleasure here and now, even at the cost of some distant goal.	34	17
<b>Decision-Making</b>		
I make decisions without thinking about consequences.	41	23
I consider how my actions will affect others.	71	82
I plan ahead.	73	89
I make good decisions.	42	71
I have trouble making decisions.	18	8
I think about probable results of my actions.	74	84
I think of several different ways to solve a problem.	79	89
<b>Opportunities for the Future</b>		
My chances for going to college are low.	23	14
My chances for getting a job are good.	83	91
My chances for holding a steady job are good.	90	94

\* Difference in admission vs. graduation responses statistically significant at .01 or higher.

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[Continued from page 3]

One of the legislative intents behind the establishment of the Boot Camp was to reduce crime by addressing the underlying problem of substance abuse. Survey responses did provide evidence that offenders had benefited from the program as they were significantly less likely upon graduation than upon admission to see drug use as a problem [18% vs. 33%], feel that drugs would get them into trouble with the law [35% vs. 48%], or interfere with work [30% vs. 39%].

Two major factors influencing an individual's involvement in crime are the strength of the family bonds and the association with delinquent friends. Most offenders expressed strong family bonds in that they spent time with their family on a daily basis, often ate together, had fun together, expressed love, and received help with problems. The majority of offenders had at least a few friends who had been in trouble with police because of drugs or alcohol, had quit school, used a weapon in a fight, been stopped by police, or had damaged property on purpose. Evidence of their 'desire to change' was the offender's willingness to give up old friends to solve their drug problem [68%].

When asked about their future, most offenders were optimistic in that they were significantly more likely to believe that they could attend college, secure employment, and keep a job after going through Boot Camp. Further, they were significantly more likely to be excited about 'starting over'.

### What is Next?

As the Boot Camp survey is an ongoing endeavor, we will continue to report on the results of these surveys in upcoming legislative reports. We anticipate that next year's report will expand upon the findings presented in this report in three major ways. First, we will update the results from the two surveys with an additional year of data. Second, the larger sample size will allow us to conduct further analyses, such as looking at predictors of success relating to both crime and substance abuse. Third, we will be able to examine the lasting benefits of the Boot Camp Program by analyzing the responses from the surveys given to Boot Camp graduates after they have been on parole for six months.

**Full Report Available.** The entire report upon which this Research Bulletin is based, *Pennsylvania's Motivational Boot Camp: 2001 Legislative Report*, can be found on the Commission's website <http://pcs.la.psu.edu> or obtained by contacting Cathy Dittman at the Commission on Sentencing at [814] 863-2797, ext. 1 or [cwd2@psu.edu](mailto:cwd2@psu.edu). If you have questions concerning the report, please contact Dr. Cynthia Kempinen at [814] 863-2543 or [cak16@psu.edu](mailto:cak16@psu.edu).