

ALTERNATIVE TO INCARCERATION PROGRAMS:

Cut **Crime**, Cut **Costs** and **Help** People and Communities



Alternative to Incarceration Programs (ATIs) are an integral part of the strategy that has allowed the City to **reduce crime, reduce jail and prison populations**, and help individuals and neighborhoods across the City. Instead of sentencing someone to jail or prison, **ATIs allow a judge to sentence someone to a program where they receive treatment, education and employment training in the community**, all the while remaining under strict supervision. And, if people do not succeed in these programs, the court still has the option of sentencing them to incarceration. Studies by the nation's leading criminal justice researchers have shown that ATIs **reduce jail time, and successfully treat people in the community without compromising public safety**. All the while, ATIs are meeting the diverse needs of the people they serve, while enhancing the quality of life of the City's most challenged communities.

Across the nation, states and cities face serious budget problems and are considering cuts to all sorts of programs. But cutting ATIs costs far more than it saves in the short term by driving up jail and prison populations, at great expense. Further, cuts to ATI programs could jeopardize the crime drop that is critical to New York's future. An investment in ATIs is an investment in people who, with the right mix of services, programs, supervision and opportunities for change, could return to their communities to lead crime-free lives.

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ATIS CUT CRIME

“To the extent that they are viewed as alternatives to jail sentences, these ATI programs can be recommended as more effective in reducing recidivism.”

—The New York City,
Criminal Justice Agency (2003)

■ A recent analysis by The New York City Criminal Justice Agency found that felony ATI participants were significantly less likely to be re-arrested than similar people sent to and discharged from a City jail. ATI participants were no more likely to be re-arrested than similar people sentenced to and released from probation or prison.

■ A study of the City's felony ATI programs by the Vera Institute of Justice showed that among those who successfully completed their ATI programs (the majority), graduates were less likely to be convicted of a new offense than those who did not complete the program. In general, the Vera study showed that ATI participants were no more likely to re-offend than people who were sent to prison or jail. When the amount of time ATI participants and similar people in jail actually spent in the community was accounted for (meaning, they were at risk of being re-arrested, versus being in jail) successful program graduates were projected to be less at risk of re-arrest than either the comparison group, or those who did not complete their programs. If they were re-arrested, ATI program graduates were more likely to be convicted for minor offenses than those who did not complete the program. ATIs have met and exceeded the goals set by the

City, and compare favorably with the results seen in similar programs around the country.

■ While ATIs are beginning to spread across the country, and while a variety of factors are responsible for the decline in crime, the growth of New York's ATIs has occurred as jail and prison populations have fallen, and as the city has experienced a drop in crime. Since 1994, the New York City jail population has declined by 23%, during a time when the nation's total jail population increased by 36%. During the same period, New York State's prison population barely grew (1.2%), while the country's prison population grew by 33%. Since 1994, New York City's total crime and violent crime rate dropped by 52%—twice the size of the total national drop, and significantly larger than the national violent crime drop (respectively, 22% and 29%).

“For those concerned about public safety, these results are good news; they show that many felony offenders can be sent to rigorous community programs rather than jail without increasing the risk to the public.”

—The Vera Institute of Justice (2003)

ATIS CUT COSTS

“The research results provide strong justification for the City's continuing support for ATI programs on the grounds that the programs do displace a substantial amount of jail time for both misdemeanor and felony defendants.”

—The New York City, Criminal Justice Agency (2003)

■ A recent report by the Criminal Justice Agency showed that ATI programs met the City's goals for displacing days that these defendants would have served in jail had they not been sent to an ATI program. The programs serving felons displaced an average of 116 days of jail time per participant. Among successful program completers (the majority of program participants), the ATIs displaced 334 days (over 11 months) of incarceration for each successful client—more than exceeding the city's target. ATI programs serving misdemeanants displaced an average of 14 days in jail for each successful participant—well over the city target of 11 days. Over the course of the 21 month study period, the CJA analysis showed that ATI programs displaced over 100,000 days of jail time.

■ According to the City of New York Department of Correction, the average annual cost per jail inmate is \$62,595. By contrast, some ATI services cost as little as \$1,400 to \$13,000 per person served.





ATIS HELP PEOPLE AND BUILD COMMUNITIES

■ By keeping program participants active in their communities, families and local economies, ATI programs save the City far more than the costs of incarceration. ATI programs save governments and communities millions in foster care, shelter, welfare and child support costs.

■ ATIs reduce rates of relapse— and thus reduce the financial burden on the City and State — by tapping the natural resources of families and communities and creating a 24/7 safety net around participants in the community. In a recent evaluation of one ATI program by the Vera Institute of Justice, illegal drug use declined from 80% to 42% by participating in an ATI program that involves a unique partnership between parole and probation and family members.

■ Within three months of entering an ATI program, participants attend on average nine group sessions and receive 1.6 hours of individual, one-on-one counseling each week. By the third month of the program, 61% of ATI participants were living with their immediate families. At any given time, ATI participants are receiving education, job training, drug treatment counseling, mental health counseling, and some participants received relaxation therapy or acupuncture. No matter what kind of treatment they received, a substantial majority of the ATI participants said these services were helpful.

■ ATIs provide key services, treatment and programming to a needy clientele. Less than a third of ATI program participants had a high school diploma or a GED, nearly a third reported that they needed drug treatment, and 4 out of 5 reported that they depended on others for financial support.

■ Of the families served by one ATI program, 90% of the participants had at least two members with a history of substance abuse, 80% of the families had at least two members with a history of criminal justice involvement, and half the families had at least one member with HIV/AIDS. ATIs can meet the complex needs of the whole family by helping to coordinate existing support systems, providing increased access to additional supports, and helping families recognize their own strengths and resources.

■ By keeping people out of jail, ATIs avoid the disruption that incarceration causes families and communities. ATIs allow people to remain part of the workforce, to be parents, and to play a role in strengthening the fabric of their families and neighborhoods.

■ ATIs invigorate the network of services in a community. ATI staff partner with schools, the faith community, local employers, and local treatment providers to give their clients what they need. By taking on this coordinating role, ATIs strengthen the network of organizations, institutions and people that lower crime, and build a neighborhood's quality of life. Many ATI program participants enhance the communities they serve through service projects, such as preparing meals in community kitchens, and building community centers. In just one of the City's ATI programs, participants completed almost 100,000 hours of community service last year.

■ New York City's ATIs employ hundreds of people, many of whom work in the neighborhoods most affected by high crime, and high incarceration rates. ATIs may do more to build the local economy than investments in more jail cells, or upstate prisons.

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At a time when the rest of the country is looking to emulate our ATI experience by reducing prison and jail populations and reforming policy, New York should invest in programs that are cutting crime, cutting costs and building communities.

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A large, light gray, stylized logo consisting of the lowercase letters 'a', 't', and 'i' in a bold, rounded font. The 'a' and 't' are connected at the top, and the 'i' is positioned to the right of the 't'. The logo is partially cut off on the right side of the page.

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