5-year impact in Illinois

By prospectively reducing truth in sentencing percentages, Illinois could avoid spending $2.9M over 5 years, give 534 life years back, and decrease the prison population by almost 300 people over the next five years. The change would enable people currently required to serve 100%, 85%, or 75% of their sentence to earn programming credit and supplemental sentence credit for good conduct that could reduce their sentence to 85%, 72%, and 50%, respectively. Because it takes several more years for the effects of a prospective policy to occur, the immediate impact would be much greater if the policy were applied retroactively.

Incarceration cost avoided (cumulative)

15% of people in IL are Black
56% of people in IL prisons are Black

In the late 1990s, Illinois’ truth in sentencing laws placed restrictions on the ability for incarcerated individuals to earn sentence credit. Those convicted of first degree murder are required to serve 100% of their sentence, those convicted of many other violent crimes must serve at least 85% of their sentence, and those convicted of certain drug-related offenses must serve at least 75% of their sentence. After truth in sentencing was enacted, the length of time people remained in prison for the same crimes nearly doubled, contributing to a 22% increase in IDOC expenditures over the past ten years.

Average sentence length for people incarcerated in Illinois

Similar policies in other states

Texas
The state allows parole eligibility at 50% of sentence-served for people sentenced to more serious 3G felony offenses. All other individuals are eligible for parole after serving 25% of their sentence.