U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Corrections

Inmate Behavior Management:
Northampton County Jail Case Study
December 2013

Scott Hoke, Ph.D.

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Message from the Director

Violence, vandalism, and other unwanted inmate behaviors prevail in many jails nationwide, and they frustrate jail practitioners who must ensure the safety and security of inmates, staff and the public.

Jail environments are one of the few environments in our communities where this type of behavior is expected and accepted. The environment created by these behaviors should not be considered acceptable, and it is jail administrators' responsibility to operate their facilities in a way that prevents these behaviors from occurring. Effectively managing inmate behavior creates a safer environment for the inmates and staff and allows the jail to provide a valuable service to the public. Community safety is enhanced by strong jail management and facilities should aspire to create environments where compliance, respect, and cooperation are fostered.

In an attempt to create a system of strong management, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) introduced an initiative that was designed to teach administrators, managers, and corrections officers the most effective methods to control inmate behavior and optimize operational efficiency. NIC calls the initiative Inmate Behavior Management or IBM. The comprehensive management system has six identifiable elements that work together to control inmate behavior and create an efficient and effective organization (Hutchinson, Keller, and Reid 2009):

1	Assessing risks and needs
2	Assigning inmates to housing
3	Meeting inmates' basic needs
4	Defining and conveying expectations for inmates
5	Supervising inmates
6	Keeping inmates productively occupied

Inmate Behavior Management: Northampton County Jail Case Study provides an example of how one facility planned and implemented the IBM management system and transitioned to a philosophy that refused to accept negative behavior as a natural result of the process of confinement. The experiences and results detailed in this report can be considered a valuable resource for any jail administrator who wants to make similar changes.

This report is a tribute to the dedicated staff and administration at the Northampton County, PA Department of Corrections. The vision provided by the administration and the hard work given by the staff is proof that any organization can positively influence the conditions of confinement and the quality of a correctional work environment.

Morris L. Thigpen
Director
National Institute of Corrections

NIC
National Institute of Corrections

PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to detail the steps or key elements identified during the successful implementation of the Inmate Behavior Management (IBM) system in Northampton County, PA. The IBM system is a comprehensive operating system and, as such, may require a significant level of planning and evaluation. This can be seen as overwhelming by those who have tried to make other significant changes and either failed or struggled. The process of organizational change can be simplified, however, and the strategies employed in Northampton County can be used as a reference on how to best plan for the successful implementation of the IBM system. This document is primarily intended for readers who have some familiarity with the IBM system and are considering implementation.

One of the most important things to remember about implementation is that it is a process, not an event (Fixen et al. 2005). It can be accomplished only through careful planning and preparation. This document can be used to establish your strengths and weaknesses and create an effective implementation plan.

REVIEW OF THE IBM PHILOSOPHY

The fundamental goal of any jail is to provide a safe and secure environment for inmates, staff, and visitors (Hutchinson, Keller, and Reid 2009). Effectively managing inmate behavior is critical to achieving this goal. Traditionally, though, jails have tried to control inmates through physical containment—relying on bars, locks, steel doors and furnishings, security glass, alarm systems, and various restraints to achieve security. Staff safety was believed to depend on maintaining physical barriers between staff and inmates. Staff had little interaction with inmates and were not expected to manage their behavior.

Although inmates were confined to their cellblocks, they were, to a large degree, unsupervised and uncontrolled. As a result, jails have been neither safe nor secure. Much of the research into the area of inmate misconduct suggests that the level of violence and disorder that occurs in correctional facilities far exceeds the level of violence and disorder that occurs in the general community (Hewitt, Poole, and Regoli 1984; McCorkle 1992; Wolff et al. 2007). One study reports that the rate of assault for a male inmate is 18 times higher than it is for a male in the general, non-incarcerated population and 27 times higher for a female inmate (Wolff et al. 2007).

Two major developments serve as keys to advances in the area of increasing safety and security in jail.
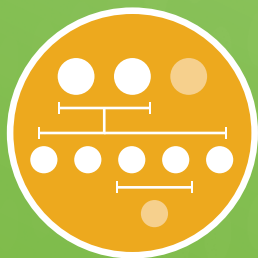
1 The establishment of objective inmate classification systems enables jails to more effectively assess the risks and needs that individual inmates present and to separate inmates into more manageable groups.

2 Podular direct supervision prompted many jail practitioners to rethink their fundamental beliefs about jail design and operations.

Over the past 3 decades, however, jail practitioners have begun to implement more effective approaches to achieving safety and security. Two major developments have been keys to advances in this area. First, the establishment of objective inmate classification systems has enabled jails to more effectively assess the risks and needs individual inmates present and to separate inmates into more manageable groups. Separation of inmates based on risk and need assessment has been shown to reduce the amount of inmate violence and disorder (Austin 1993; Austin, Baird, and Neuenfeldt 1993; Brennan 1993).

Second, podular direct supervision has prompted many jail practitioners to rethink their fundamental beliefs about jail design and operations. Podular direct supervision jails combine an inmate management strategy with a specific jail design to convey positive expectations of inmate behavior, facilitate extensive staff interaction with inmates, and promote management of inmate behavior. In these jails, an officer is stationed within the inmate dayrooms, with no physical barriers between the officer and the inmates. The officer is the authority in the unit, interacts continuously with inmates, and manages them in a way that promotes positive behavior. Jurisdictions that have fully implemented all of the principles of podular direct supervision have experienced significant reduction in negative inmate behavior (Bayens, Williams, and Smykla 1997; Farbstein and Wener 1989; Wener 2006; Wener, Frazier, and Farbstein 1987).

Although many local jurisdictions that have built new jails have opted for direct supervision, most jails were built in the era when physical containment was emphasized and staff were not expected to interact with and manage inmates. Without a comprehensive management system, these jails continue to experience high levels of negative inmate behavior. Also, some jurisdictions that have built direct supervision jails have not fully implemented the inmate management strategy for which these jails were designed. As a result, these jails continue to experience the types of negative inmate behavior commonly seen in traditional jails.

In 2004, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) introduced the concept of inmate behavior management to help all jails, regardless of design, achieve their fundamental goal of maintaining a safe and secure environment. IBM serves as a comprehensive approach, combining multiple managerial elements into one operational system.

The comprehensive management system has six identifiable elements that work together to control inmate behavior and create an efficient and effective organization (Hutchinson, V., Keller, K., and Reid T. 2009). These six elements are identified as:

1. Assessing risks and needs

2. Assigning inmates to housing

3. Meeting inmates' basic needs

4. Defining and conveying expectations for inmates

5. Supervising inmates

6. Keeping inmates productively occupied

Although this document does not serve as a detailed understanding of the IBM system (see Hutchinson, V., Keller, K., and Reid T. 2009), it focuses on the process of implementation. The following showcases how Northampton County managed the process and identifies the key elements present in their model.

For more information on the Inmate Behavior Management system:
Hutchinson, V., Keller, K., and Reid T. 2009. Inmate Behavior Management: The Keys to a Safe and Secure Jail.

Chapter 2: *Implementation Design*

SITE DESCRIPTION

Northampton County, PA, has an inmate population that fluctuates between 700 and 850. The jail is a combination of linear and podular direct designs. The linear portion of the jail was built in the 1870s and 1920s and the podular direct portions were built after 1984. As with the majority of jails, it houses a variety of offenders—pre-trial and sentenced, civil, and criminal. In March 2001, it implemented an objective jail classification system (the point-additive model), which separated inmates into minimum, medium, and maximum custody levels. The jail is operated by the county governmental body and has a staff of approximately 250 employees.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This document presents the strategies utilized in Northampton County based on the implementation research conducted by Fixen et al. (2005). Officials in Northampton County did not use this research in the development of their implementation model, but the model does an excellent job of identifying the core components of successful program implementation. There is a large body of research that relates to the process of implementation, and although this document is not intended to serve as a summary of it, the identified core elements of the implementation process can be used as a logical frame of reference.

Fixen et al. (2005) suggest that program implementation has six core components:

Staff Selection	Pre-Service and In-Service Training	Ongoing Consultation and Coaching	Staff and Program Evaluation	Facilitative Administrative Support	System Interventions

Having some knowledge of these core components is important because, as the authors of the research suggest, weaknesses in one component can often be compensated by strengths in another. Although officials in Northampton County did not employ techniques that addressed each of the elements, they did make decisions and establish procedures that provided strength to several of them. Those strengths are summarized below.

The selection of staff is important at every stage of program implementation but becomes critically important at the organizational level. Northampton County selected its organizational team based on the implementation, training, and project management needs of the organization. Teamwork is also important in understanding the success of the implementation process. The Inmate Behavior Management (IBM) system is a comprehensive management system, and implementation will result in changes to nearly every aspect of a jail's operation. It is important, then, to seek input from a number of different administrators rather than confining the development to a small, core group of people.

Staff Selection

When developing an implementation team, it is important to consider people who may not hold administrative positions. Whoever can influence the successful implementation of organizational changes should have input in development. Each member of the team should be in a position or have the authority to make decisions. When creating an organizational team, it is important that the members of the team have, or are given, the ability to make decisions regarding the implementation process.

It is also important to consider who will be providing staff training when developing the organizational team. Training is critical to the success of jail operations and those who conduct training should have some level of expertise in the area they instruct. Northampton County gave careful thought regarding who would be conducting the training and what operational concepts needed staff development. They developed a training team with a great deal of experience and expertise in critical areas of operation and one that possessed a great deal of knowledge about the IBM system. Allowing someone to train staff who does not have a great deal of knowledge about the concepts of the IBM system can lead to skepticism among the line staff. The decision by officials in Northampton County to have members of the implementation design team conduct the staff training ensured each had a strong grounding in the principles of the system.

The last area for consideration with respect to staff selection is the designation of a project manager or group of project managers. In a document produced by the Center for Court Innovation, Cissner and Farole (2009) point out that failing to select a project manager often leads to implementation failure. A project manager is given the responsibility to ensure that the development and implementation processes continue to move forward at an acceptable pace. He or she is also looked to as a valuable source of information by the staff. If questions arise about the concepts or operation of the IBM system, the project manager should be able to answer them promptly.

Northampton County enjoyed success in selecting a project management team rather than naming one individual administrator. The disadvantage of selecting one individual is that the jail operates under a 24-7 model and coverage by one individual is limited. The team approach allowed broader coverage and tried to ensure that a wide variety of problems could be addressed as they arose. Selecting a team of project managers also demonstrates to staff that there is a great deal of understanding across levels of administration. Skepticism can develop when staff believe that relatively few people understand the concepts of the system.

Pre-Service and In-Service Training

One of the more innovative strategies Northampton County used regarded staff training. The IBM management approach was quite different from their old management system and the administration made a detailed effort to gauge staff resistance and concern. The housing units selected for implementation were not well controlled and the administration wanted to alleviate any staff concerns and provide any additional training that staff saw as important.

To accomplish this goal, the administration provided a survey to the staff after they received the 16-hour training module. Interestingly, the administration did not ask for the survey to be completed immediately; instead, they asked the staff to think about the questions and return the form to them as quickly as possible. This allowed the staff to think about the questions, process what had been presented, and talk to their fellow officers about any concerns. Considering the depth of implementation assistance NIC has provided to all of its partnering jails regarding the IBM system, this was the most detailed attempt to judge staff concern and potential resistance. In discussing the implementation process with the organizational team, each member felt this survey was a critical tool in the success of their transition to the IBM system. Not only did the administrative team recognize the importance of addressing staff concerns and answering questions prior to implementation, they also wanted to know if there

Northampton County Department of Corrections IBM Staff Questionnaire

1	What topic area(s) would you add to the training that was not presented?
2	Do you feel enough time and instruction was devoted to each element?
3	If not, what elements do you feel need more time and instruction?
4	Do you feel the teaching method was effective?
5	How can we improve the presentation?
6	What is needed to make the IBM system a lasting success?
7	What do you feel is the best way to introduce this concept to the inmates?
8	What "outside the box" idea do you think can help make IBM work?
9	Last but not least, provide one thing you would like to see improved upon at our jail?

was additional training that the staff would view as helpful to the transition. The IBM system requires different staff skills and the administration wanted to ensure that staff felt they possessed the skills to accomplish the task successfully.

Finally, officials in Northampton County also dedicated time to provide training and instruction to the inmates. Since this system was markedly different than the previous operational structure, the administration felt that inmates needed to be briefed on changes that were being made and expectations they faced. This is an excellent approach because all too often the inmates are provided little if any information about how the jail operates, what is expected from them, and what they can expect from staff. It also served the same function as staff training in that it can be used both as a mechanism to gauge resistance and as a mechanism to answer any questions that arise from the recipients' perspective. This training should be done by the housing unit officers, as inmates should see them as the unit managers.

Ongoing Consultation Coaching

Staff and Program Evaluation

In the implementation of any organizational change, attention to post-implementation issues is critical to ongoing success. Northampton County took a unique approach to assessing post-implementation issues by conducting a series of small group interviews, known as focus groups, to gauge the success and stage of implementation. The focus groups kept the staff and administration engaged and allowed the officers a voice in how, and to what degree, changes would occur. One officer commented that he never imagined that the Director of Corrections would invite him to a meeting about how to improve the operation and organization of the facility.

The focus groups comprised the officers assigned to the supervision of one particular housing unit. Officers from each of the jail's three shifts were brought together to discuss the progress being made, answer any unresolved questions, and develop operational changes to improve the functioning of the unit. It is important to limit the participants to those who have a desired characteristic in common (Krueger and Casey 2009). In this instance, this was supervision of the

same unit. Since housing units often take on unique personalities based on the characteristics of the inmate population, it is important not to co-mingle officers from different units. Bringing officers from each of the shifts and platoons together allows for the development of a more consistent product. Do not exclude officers because of scheduling issues; make a concerted effort to relieve officers from their responsibilities to attend the focus group.

Focus groups can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Kreuger and Casey 2009). The use of the word structured means the individual responsible for running the meeting begins with a detailed set of questions to be asked and does not vary from the format. Semi-structured means that questions are established in advance but the moderator is free to vary from those questions based on participant responses, and unstructured means that although there is specific content to be covered, there are no predetermined questions. Semi-structured focus groups may be the best choice if the moderator is not familiar with the focus group process because the predetermined questions serve as an outline that can be continually returned to if the direction of the conversation changes based on the group's answers. One of the unique features of the Northampton County focus group was that the questions and responses were typed and distributed to those who participated in the meeting. That ensured there was no confusion regarding the meeting's results, and it allowed those who were not able to attend to understand what transpired.

Northampton County Focus Group Questionnaire

1. What problems or concerns arose during the implementation of the IBM system on your housing unit that should be addressed prior to instituting IBM on other units?

2. What changes, adjustments, additions, or subtractions do you feel need to be made to the training curriculum now that you have had the opportunity to work on an IBM unit?

3. What elements from the IBM system do you feel are the most difficult to implement and monitor?

4. What activities do you feel have been the most successful in keeping inmates productively occupied?

5. Are there any concerns voiced by the inmates on your unit regarding the implementation of the IBM system?

6. What unit do you feel IBM would best be implemented on next? Why?

7. What is your impression of the changes that have occurred on your unit since the IBM system has been implemented?

8. Do you feel the implementation of the IBM system has been a success on your unit? Please give examples to support your answer.

9. Do you have any specific requests, concerns, or problems that you feel need to be addressed for continued success of the IBM system throughout the jail?

⚙ Facilitative Administrative Support

The final issue to be discussed may be more astute and observant than it is innovative, but it is nonetheless deserving of attention. In managing the process of organizational change, it is important not to live and die by pre-established deadlines. As noted earlier, organizational change is a process, not an event, and one should never simply establish arbitrary deadlines that have to be maintained at all costs. The individual managing the implementation process must have a feel for its progress, making adjustments when necessary.

Northampton County delayed the implementation of the IBM system three times before finally making the change. In the end, however, the administrative team felt that the delays were essential to the success of the system. On each occasion, one member of the implementation team felt that the supply chain had not been sufficiently established to satisfy the requirements of Element 3: Meeting Basic Needs. Failure to meet the demands of this element would reflect poorly on the officer by not providing one of the essential tools in managing behavior, and it could also have given rise to inmate skepticism. One of the administrators noted that issues surrounding basic needs are the most visible to the inmates, and if they were not handled appropriately, the inmates would be the first to notice and voice displeasure.

This decision demonstrates a great deal of understanding about organizational change in general and the IBM system specifically. All of the system's elements are interrelated and the success of one often relies on the success of the others. Since the inmate sees the officer as the face of the institution, failing to provide officers with the ability to meet the inmate's basic needs would have adversely affected the relationship between the two groups and would have compromised the officer's ability to regulate behavior effectively. In the process of organizational change, as long as one moves forward, the process has not stopped. Northampton County viewed changes to the supply chain as progress and were not discouraged by the ultimate delay in implementation.

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SUMMARY

The strengths of the Northampton County implementation process are summarized below. Any agency that decides to implement the IBM system should look to these strengths as a resource in the development of its own formalized plan.

1. Staff Selection

Give careful thought to the selection of the organizational team. Select individuals who can influence the implementation process, can provide quality staff training that demonstrates mastery of a skill or understanding of the core concepts, and can provide project management services during the system's operationalization. Team members need to have the authority and responsibility to make decisions about the implementation of the IBM system. Each needs to have a solid understanding of the IBM system's core concepts and should be seen as a resource by members of the organization who are not as deeply involved in the process.

2. Pre-Service and In-Service Training

Make a concerted effort to try and gauge staff resistance and staff concern. This is especially important if the IBM system is dramatically different from your old method of operation. Consider the use of a post-training staff survey, as Northampton County did. It is important to give the officers and other staff time to process what they have been taught. Do not require that they complete the survey immediately following the training sessions. Allowing staff time to process improves the quality of the feedback.

Remember to provide training to the inmates. They stand be to be significantly affected by the organizational changes. If the officers are to be seen as the greatest resource in your organization, make sure that the officers and not the administrators provide instruction to inmates.

3. Ongoing Consultation and Coaching   Staff and Program Evaluation

Attempt to measure the implementation process's progress and solicit input from staff regarding necessary operational changes. Consider the use of focus groups as an excellent way to judge progress and solicit input from your staff. As was seen in Northampton County, staff will embrace the process and will feel as if their input is valued, increasing their buy in to the new system.

4. Facilitative Administrative Support

Do not establish drop-dead dates for the transition from implementation planning to operations. Your staff must have the necessary tools for successful implementation. Delays don't necessarily mean you are standing still or moving backwards. Appropriate delays in the process can be a sign of progress and will ultimately demonstrate a greater understanding of the core concepts of the IBM system and produce a more successful product.

RESULTS

The results presented in this document come from the implementation of the IBM system in two specific housing units. One set comes from a 58-bed, male, medium custody, podular direct unit; the second comes from the female housing unit. For part of the study period, the females — regardless of custody assignment — lived in the same unit, but in 2006 they were transferred to a system with multiple living areas. In each case the housing design was podular direct.

With respect to the male unit (E Tier), the institution tracked formal and informal misconduct reports over time, with the totals aggregated into monthly counts. In Northampton County, formal misconduct reports result from behavior that the officers consider serious enough to warrant immediate removal from the unit pending the disposition of a behavioral hearing. Behavior of this type is typically violent, aggressive, or disruptive to the orderly running of the unit. Informal misconduct is behavior that is considered less serious by the officers and does not require the inmate's removal from the unit. A disciplinary sanction is agreed upon by the officer and inmate, with the inmate waiving his right to a formal hearing. The sanctions typically include things like cell restriction, extra work assignments, loss of institutional employment, or loss of institutional pay.

The results in Northampton County are interesting because they come from podular direct housing units. These units, despite their design, were considered some of the most poorly run in the institution by both the officers and administration. When the units were opened in 1984, there was no attempt made to teach the officers how to run a podular direct housing unit, highlighting a fact that is commonly cited in direct supervision literature: the benefits of direct supervision result from both the architectural design of the unit and the implementation of active supervision strategies (Bayens, Williams and Smykla 1997; Farbstein and Wener 1989; Wener 2006). Development of the design without the implementation of the active supervision strategy does not guarantee positive inmate behavior.

The results are also interesting, specifically as they relate to the male unit, because both formal and informal misconduct reports can be tracked. Without informal misconduct trends, it is possible to suggest that inmate behavior did not improve. Rather, the reporting practices of the officers changed. Information relative to informal misconducts allows one to track reporting practices as well as behavior in order to better interpret the data being collected.

The results come from the implementation of the IBM system in two specific housing units:

1 **58-bed, male, medium custody, podular direct unit**

2 **Female, podular direct unit**

Exhibit 1: *E Tier Monthly Formal Misconduct Reports January 2000 – May 2006*
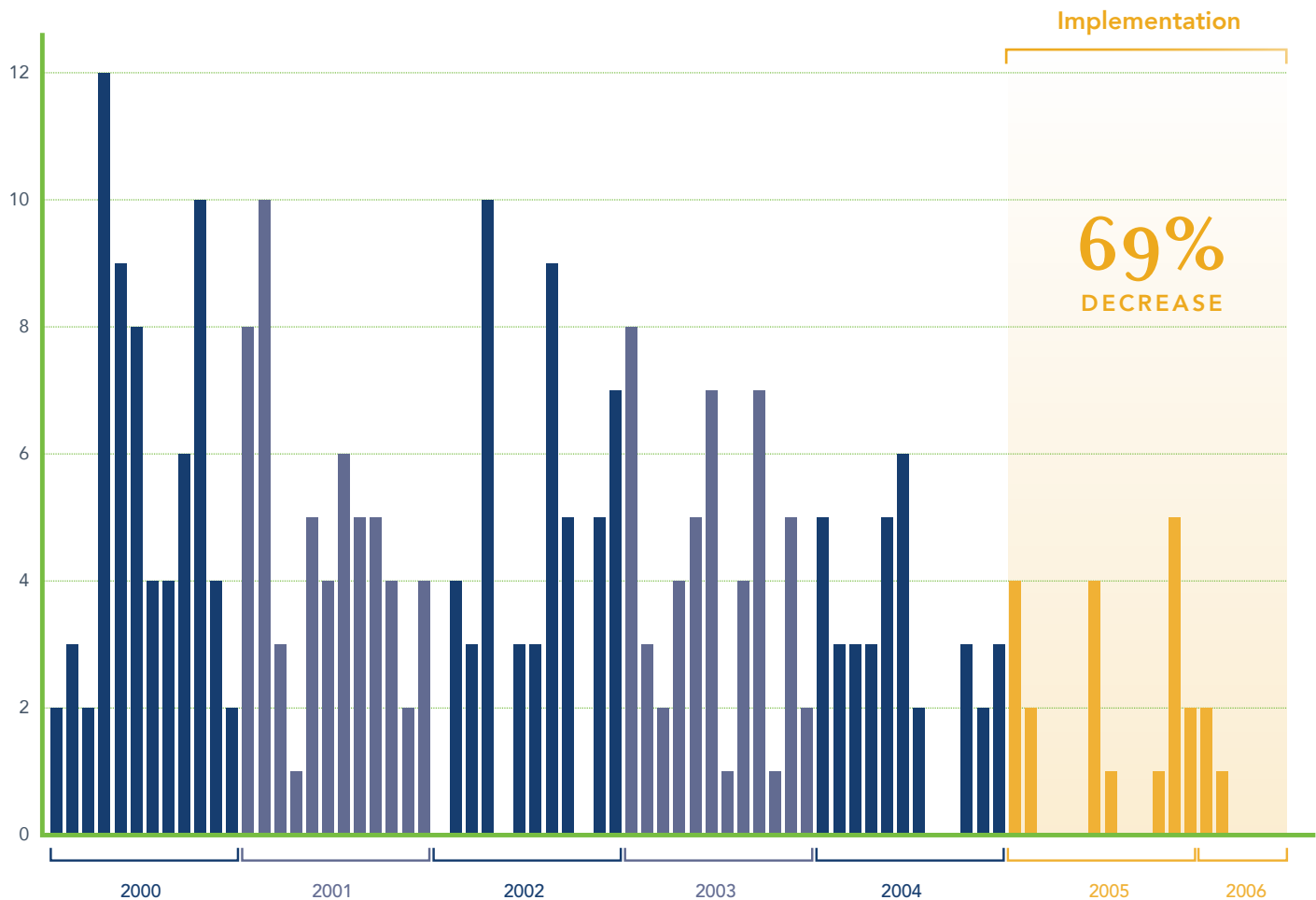
E Tier

Exhibit 1 depicts the aggregate monthly totals for both formal and informal misconduct reports. It was the writing of the misconduct report that was tracked, not the disposition of the disciplinary hearing. This was done because the jail was trying to measure the perception of disorder held by the officer, not the decision rendered by the misconduct board. If the officer writes a report, the assumption is made that he or she perceived that the inmate's behavior warranted some type of response and it was the perception that was considered to be the most accurate reflection of inmate behavior.

In the 56 months that preceded the implementation of the IBM system, the male housing unit had an average of slightly more than four formal misconducts per month. In the 21 months following the implementation that number dropped to approximately one per month, which represents a decrease of 69 percent. Also, in the 56 months that preceded the implementation there were only three months in which there were no written, formal misconduct reports. In the 21 months that followed there were nine such months.

Exhibit 2: *E Tier Monthly Informal Misconduct Reports January 2000 – May 2006*
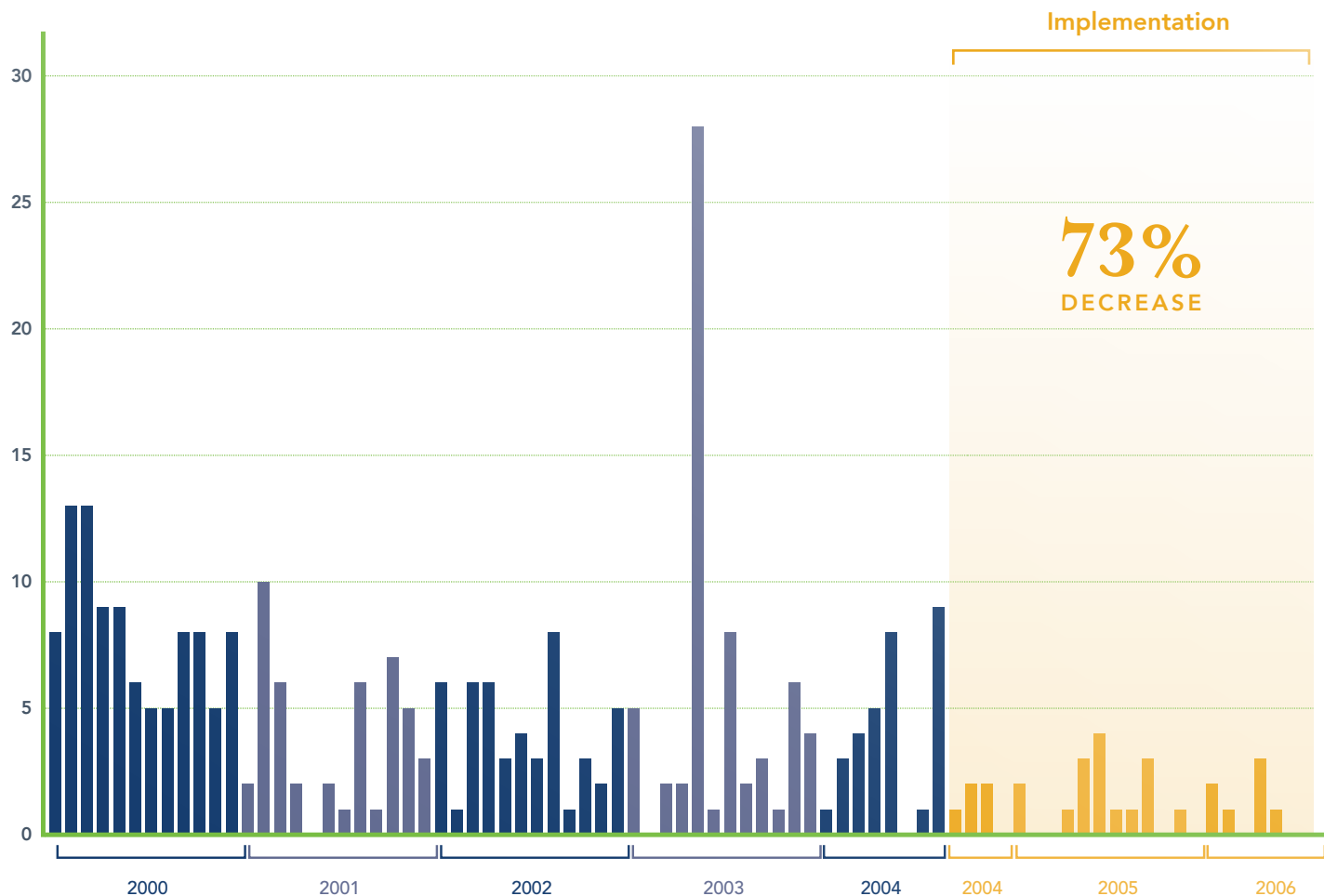
Exhibit 2 details the trends related to informal misconducts. In the 56 months prior to implementation, there was an average of five written, informal misconduct reports per month and in the 21 months that followed that number was reduced to one per month—a decrease of 73 percent. The change in overall misconduct, a total of formal and informal reports, is presented in exhibit 3. The total amount of written misconduct reports dropped from slightly more than nine per month to fewer than three per month.

Exhibit 3: E Tier Total Monthly Misconduct Reports January 2000–May 2006
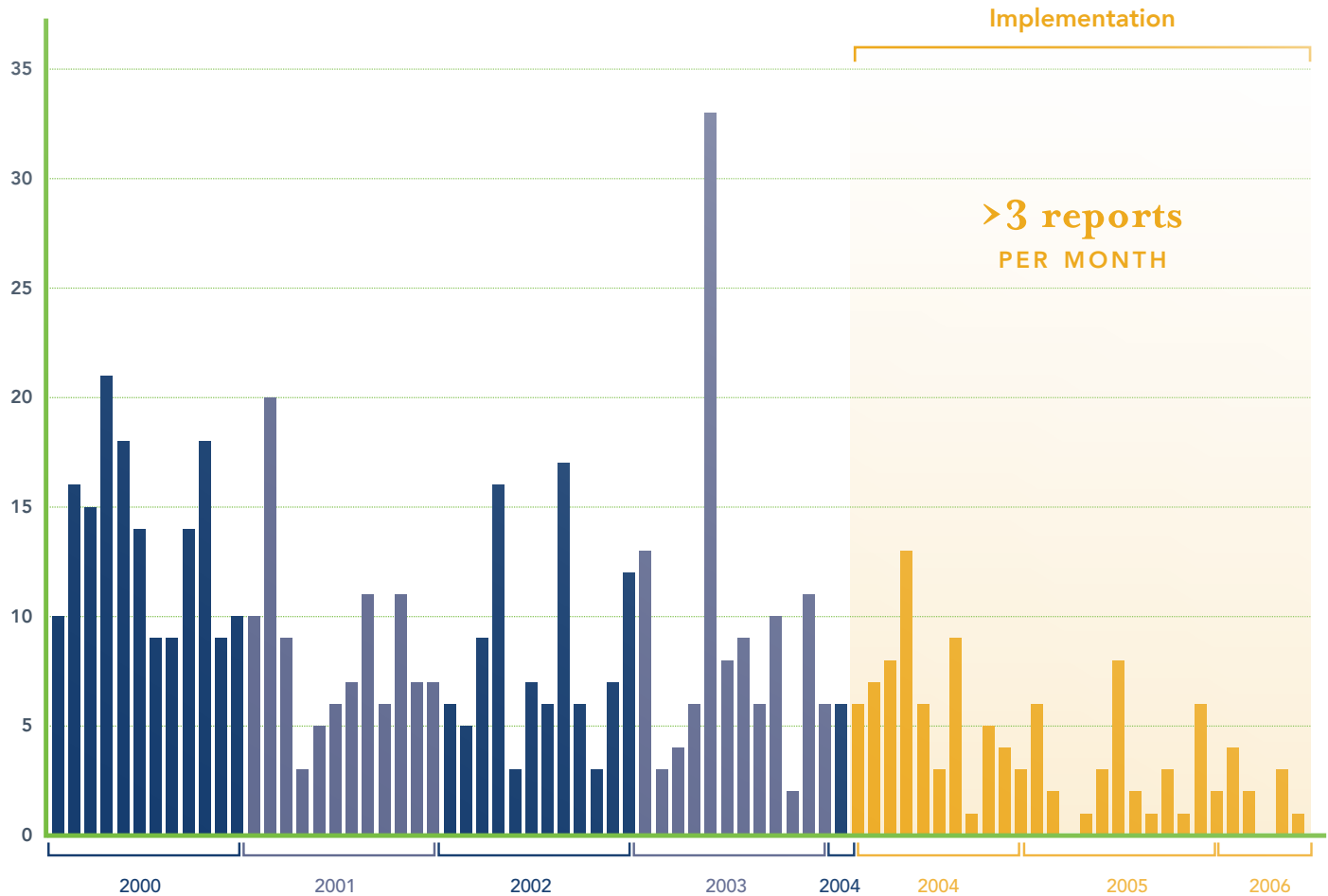
Female Unit

The rate of female misconduct is reported in a count per 100 inmates. It was necessary to standardize the counts because, unlike the male unit, the population in the female unit fluctuated greatly during the course of the study. The population was as low as 38 at one point and as high as 108 at others. The male unit did not fluctuate and remained at a capacity of 58 for the entire study period. In addition, with respect to the rate of female misconduct, it is only possible to present formal misconducts results. The method for tracking informal reports changed during the study period, which made it difficult to collect accurate data.

Exhibit 4 depicts the changes in the rate of formal misconduct in the female unit over time. The data from the female unit are interesting because it is possible to see the effect some of the individual stages of the IBM system have on inmate behavior. At point one, in June 2006, the jail opened a new housing wing for the women in which they were now able to be separated to a greater degree by custody level. Prior to June 2006, they all lived in the same unit regardless of classification. Although different custody levels occupied different cells, they performed many other functions, like recreation and meal service as a group. In effect, the jail was able to implement elements one and two fully in June 2006, with elements three through six being fully implemented at point two, November 2009.

In the 62 months that preceded the full implementation of elements 1 and 2 (June 2006) there was an average of 15 formal misconduct reports written each month. In the 41-month period between June 2006 and November 2009, the number of monthly, formal misconduct reports dropped to approximately six per month, a reduction of 60 percent. In the 22 months that followed the implementation of elements 3 through 6 in November 2009, the number of written, formal misconduct reports dropped even further to slightly more than three per month. This represented an overall reduction in female misconduct of 80 percent over the study period. It not only provides strong evidence as to the success of the IBM system but also provides verification that implementation of the complete IBM system produced the greatest benefit to the organization.

Exhibit 4: E Tier Monthly Formal Misconduct Reports April 2001–August 2011
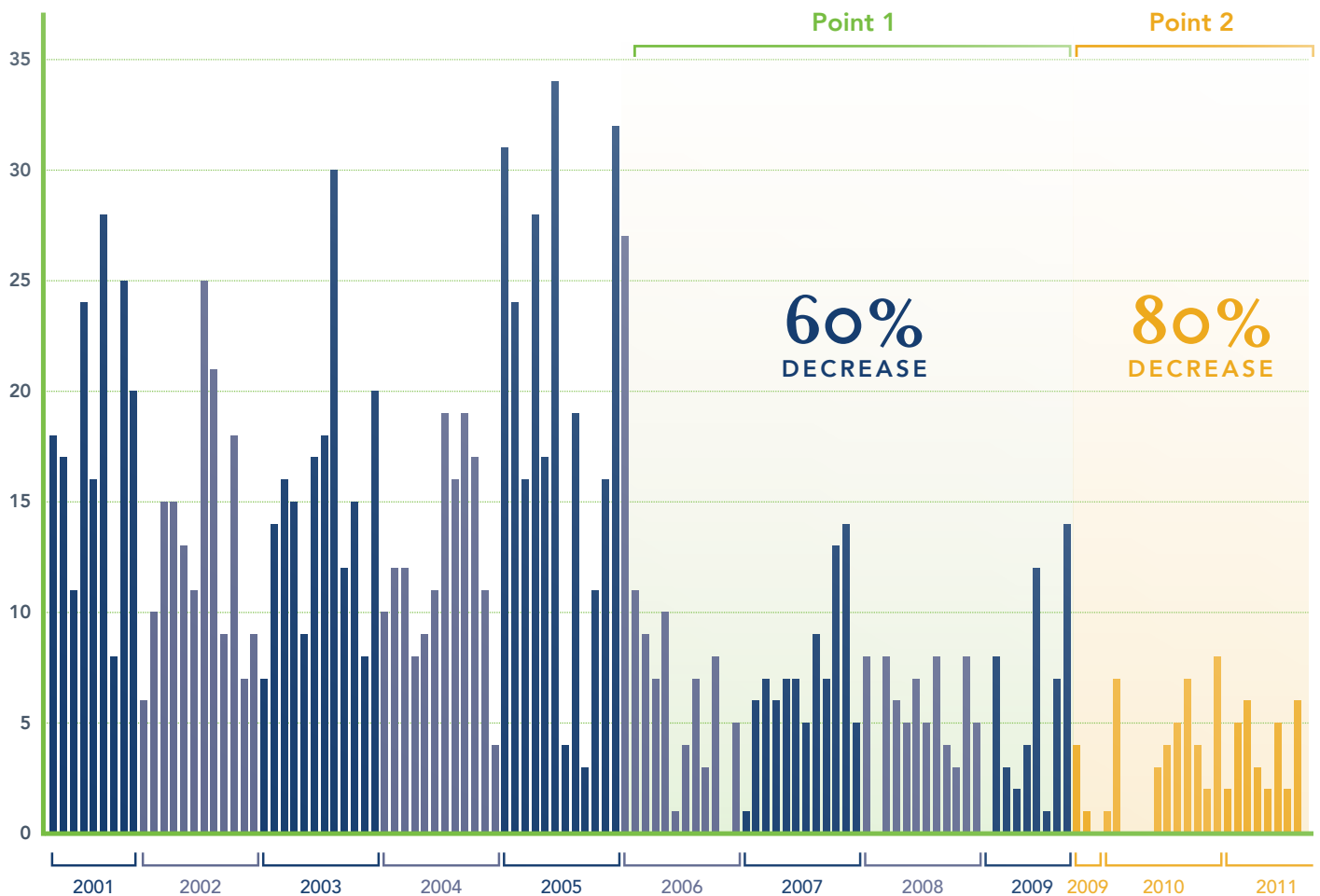
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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