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executive director/ceo's message

I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed this edition! Every now and then I reflect on how appropriate the name of this journal is – Perspectives! Consider how supervising officers work to understand and address the perspectives of those under supervision – and the efforts made to give them a new perspective on the choices they make. And more broadly, doesn't that word do a good job of capturing the essence of our journey into understanding? We learn something new. We pause, take a second look, change our focus, and see different possibilities. We reset and get out of our ruts. It is a matter of opening eyes.

The need to open our eyes is, in fact, one of the themes in this issue's first article. Dr. Mario Paparozzi brings his years of experience to share some insights on a few core problems in community supervision, such as a concern about focusing on quantity rather than quality. He extols the benefits of really understanding evidence-based practices and fully implementing them instead of being content with the status quo. Embrace, do not resist, when it comes to improved services for those under supervision. Determine which programs are following evidence-based practices. Connect the dots. Pro forma, halfway measures are not enough.

Then, Dr. Nicholas Powell does an excellent job of presenting Georgia's Person-Centered Supervision model to us. He emphasizes the urgent need for changes so that it is no longer true that "criminal justice involvement perpetuates criminal justice involvement." Georgia's model holds out hope for making that bitter truth part of the past by emphasizing direct client services and focusing on the people under supervision as unique individuals and thereby promoting their success. Dr. Powell's overview of this program and its context is thorough, impressive, and definitely worth reading.

Then, we travel across the country to California to learn from John Keene and Karen Prank about the transformation of California probation since the 2009 enactment of the Community Corrections Performance Incentives Act (SB 678), landmark legislation that came on the scene after the state suffered a "perfect storm" of problems related to parole, probation, and the criminal justice system as a whole. Many lives have been positively affected by the improvements in direct client services that have resulted from SB 678's incentive-based state funding and reduced caseload sizes. The extent to which there has been a concomitant culture shift in agencies and on the part of those working in the community supervision profession is also gratifying to read.

VERONICA CUNNINGHAM, M.S.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO

Finally, Dr. Tabrina Bratton and her colleagues Eric Gaither and Lacy Roughton take us to Arkansas, where the decision to add researchers to criminal justice staff holds out the promise for more quickly understanding how evidence-based practices are being implemented and taking steps to bring about greater fidelity to EBPs. The authors detail how a qualitative assessment of the state's important reentry program enabled restructuring and fine tuning of the program to improve its effectiveness. Such changes will have a positive impact on those being served and, in the long run, on outcomes.

Scan these articles, and you can extract little gems. Read thoroughly, and you can change your perspective. We will never have a magic wand to wave in the workplace or in the world in general, but we do have the ability to learn and to grow.

I thank all the authors for their contributions to this endeavor. I cannot end without thanking Dr. Paparozzi for his comments on how those in professions like law and medicine rely on their professional organizations to guide them in evaluating evidence-based practices. He points out the need for those in our field to have an equally strong involvement with our own professional organizations, including but not limited to APPA. His words ring true. Greater membership and participation benefit everyone!

board president's message

This will be my last time writing to all of you as President of the American Probation and Parole Association. It has been an amazing two years. We have made many strides as a profession and as an association over the past two years. We had some tough times. The worldwide pandemic forced us to reconsider how we show up to work and ways in which we engage people on supervision. We all experienced the tragedy with George Floyd and the ensuing social justice movement. We were reminded throughout both of these tragedies that we need to center people and their experiences in the work we do. For those that move through our system, remembering that their criminal behavior is just one aspect of their lives and that being placed on supervision does not suspend everything else that is going on in their lives—it often just complicates it. And for staff across the country, the same is true. Work is just one aspect of their lives and we know that to do good work, we must be in a good place ourselves.

BRIAN LOVINS, Ph.D
BOARD PRESIDENT

As I turn the page and hand over the APPA Presidency to Susan, I would like to challenge us to think about the future of community corrections in a slightly different way. We have been shaped to see our role in corrections as working for the system, much like a referee works for a league. Standing on the edge, engaging to a degree but not fully jumping in and investing in the players—just being asked to monitor the edges. While the system shapes us as referees, we really need coaches. Invested in players, developing talent, building a winning team—we want to win. But being asked to win when you are not the one playing the game is a challenge. But that is what great coaches do. They take players with disparate backgrounds, different levels of talent, a range of motivations and they teach them to love the game, teach them to respect themselves and others, and ultimately teach them how to respond to losses, and ultimately how to win with dignity.

Over time, we have built a response to crime that only works for those that can self-correct. We have amazing staff, who want to make a difference in people's lives, we just need to rethink how we use them and the context in which they are used so they can do great things. Imagine a system of probation and parole that instead of trying to gain compliance, is actually designed to move people forward. One that is developmental. One that works to help people find successful paths forward. One that wraps family and community around a person and tells them we are here to help you succeed. One that is different. I believe we need to invest in the people that do this work. I believe that we invest in the people who come through our system. I believe we can help change the lives of those in and around the system to be successful. Thank you for allowing me to be the President of APPA. It has been a pleasure serving all of you and I look forward to continuing to work with you, the Board, and the APPA staff to help us continue to be our best selves and do amazing work.

The work of all community-based supervision and service providers hinges on effectively and efficiently delivering appropriate, evidence-based, practices and programming to clients directly. Direct client service is at the forefront of community supervision, and its quality and the extent to which officers have time, resources, and willingness to engage in it have an immense impact on client outcomes. When direct client service is not delivered with quality and fidelity to best practices, unintended outcomes can result. Unfortunately, various barriers, whether political, social, or economic, tend to result in suboptimal implementation of best practices in this area. Ultimately, it may not be the design of client services programs, but rather the quality of their implementation that renders them less than optimally effective. Poorly implemented programs can even backfire and have negative consequences.

Over the last decade, there has been a renewed call to action among those who provide direct client service. This call to action is not just ensuring that individuals or organizations are "EBPing," "evidence-based," or trained in "evidence-based practices." It also seeks increased focus on identifying situations where poor implementation quality–including staff resources and support, organizational capacity, and community resources and capacity–render evidence-based and data-driven direct client service practices ineffective. The current issue of Perspectives speaks to current barriers to effective direct client service, what collaborative and effective implementation of direct client service programs looks like, and what to do when programs are not as successful as hoped. The articles in this issue share practical lessons, examples, and "how to" suggestions for ensuring best practices in client service programs.

Our first article, "Improving Client Services in Community Corrections:

editor's notes

Unmasking and Solving Impediments to Evidence-Based Practices," by Mario Paparozzi, Ph.D., discusses different barriers associated with delivering appropriate direct client services. Additionally, Dr. Paparozzi provides suggestions for what is needed moving forward. In particular, he focuses on the issues of lack of community-based resources, the quality of the current resources, and the culture of reluctance by practitioners and policymakers to embrace evidence-based practices and reimagine agency goals and embedded practices.

This is followed by "Person-Centered Supervision: Putting Principles into Practice," by Nicholas Powell, Ph.D. Dr. Powell discusses how criminal injustice involvement is too often perpetuated once begun, hence mandating a paradigm shift that can end this pathway. With that in mind, Georgia began using a Person-Centered Supervision (PCS) model for improving direct client services and promoting success by focusing on people as unique individuals. Powell provides a brief review of PCS research and model support and discusses how Georgia has assessed the use of the PCS model through environmental scans of the organization. Finally, real-life examples of agency initiatives in implementing PCS are provided along with information on their progress.

John Keene and Karen Prank delve into the impact on California probation of the Community Corrections Performance Incentives Act (SB 678), important legislation enacted over 12 years ago to shift probation reform through strengths-based policy making. They clarify how SB 678 helped create the state's current probation success by including incentive-based permanent state funding and reducing caseload sizes—changes that make it possible to improve direct client service for those on probation. The shift towards strengths-based policymaking has supported more individualized approaches to direct client service while also allowing for culture-shifting within the larger organization geared towards ensuring behavior change. Subsequent to SB 678, there have been reductions in state prison expenses, more resources to serve people directly in their communities, and increased short- and long-term safety through balancing accountability, rehabilitation, reintegration into communities. Keene and Prank emphasize that this legislation has not only impacted the way California engages with individuals serving a probation sentence, but it has also positively engaged probation staff, who rightly see themselves as part of the state's success in achieving the greater mission of probation.

Tabrina Bratton, Ph.D., Eric Gaither, and Lacey Roughton, Ph.D. conclude this issue with their article on the role researchers played in assessing of the Arkansas Division of Community Corrections Reentry program. They first discuss legislative mandates require use of "evidence-based"

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practices by criminal justice agencies, yet having this wording in statutes doesn't automatically mean that evidence-based programs will be appropriately implemented. To address this issue, the authors maintain, it is useful to have applied researchers on staff at correctional agencies, as they can play an important role in supporting effective implementation. The paper details a specific instance of how internal research on a reentry program with a high failure rate—research that was carried out via qualitative evaluation of whether the program adhered to evidence-based practices—resulted in constructive recommendations that helped restructure and improve the program. Ultimately, this article demonstrates the direct positive impact research can have on the people being served and stresses the importance of researcher partnerships for improving programs and practices.

All in all, these excellent articles encourage us to reflect on our intentions, our ability to ensure effective program implementation, and the importance of succeeding in our use of evidence-based programs and practices, especially in the arena of providing direct client services. These experts give useful examples of implementation issues that prevent us from taking full advantage of the research that went into identifying EBPs. To our benefit, they also provide suggestions for dealing with such issues. We hope that this issue increases your understanding and ability to think deeply about organizational resources, capacity, and intentional implementation. Working together, we can continue to fine-tune and improve the way direct client service is provided, an admirable goal.

instructions to authors

Perspectives disseminates information to the American Probation and Parole Association's members on relevant policy and program issues and provides updates on activities of the Association. The membership represents adult and juvenile probation, parole, and community corrections agencies throughout the United States and abroad. Articles submitted for publication are screened by an editorial committee and, on occasion, selected reviewers, to determine acceptability based on relevance to the field of criminal justice, clarity of presentation, or research methodology. Perspectives does not reflect unsupported personal opinions.

Articles must be emailed to perspectives@csg.org in accordance with the following deadlines:

- Unless previously discussed with the editors, submissions should not exceed 12 typed pages, numbered consecutively, and double-spaced. All charts, graphs, tables, and photographs must be of reproduction quality. Optional titles may be submitted and selected after review with the editors.
- All submissions must be in English and in American Psychological Association (APA) Style.
- Authors should provide a one-paragraph biography, along with contact information.
- Notes should be used only for clarification or substantive comments, and should appear at the end of the text.
- References to source documents should appear in the body of the text with the author's surname and the year of publication in parentheses, e.g., to (Mattson, 2015, p. 73).
- Alphabetize each reference at the end of the text using the following format:
  - Mattson, B. (2015). Technology supports decision making in health and justice. Perspectives, 39(4), 70-79.
  - Hanser, R. D. (2014). Community corrections (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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IMPROVING CLIENT SERVICES IN COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS:

Unmasking and Solving Impediments to Evidence-Based Practices

By Mario Paparozzi

IMPROVING CLIENT SERVICES IN COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS: UNMASKING AND SOLVING IMPEDIMENTS TO EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Since its inception, those in the probation and parole profession have faced the complex and intertwined challenges of understanding, monitoring, treating, rehabilitating, and reintegrating those placed under supervision. The aim, of course, is to succeed in each of these areas. Agencies and line staff try their best, but their efforts may be hindered by both resource issues and by preventable reasons rooted in agency culture. Impediments arise that should be obvious yet don't seem to be recognized or addressed by those who are used to the status quo.

A strong case can be made that those working in this field cannot achieve their full potential unless they unmask, understand, and solve three fundamental and longstanding problems related to providing services that target criminogenic needs: (a) community-based treatment programs and services remain in short supply; (b) the quality of programs and services in regard to their adherence to evidence-based practices (EBPs) is, for the most part, unknown; and (c) there is often a culture of reluctance by practitioners and policymakers to fully embrace EBPs, especially because new policies and practices often require a rethinking of agency goals and longstanding practices (Taxman & Belenko, 2012; Rudes et al., 2011). When it comes to the availability and quality of community-based treatment programs and services, individuals under supervision must "take what they can get," and when they do, compliance with case plans and/or mandatory conditions of community supervision is considered satisfied. This system is inherently problematic and suboptimal. These are not best practice in regard to client services.

Impact of the Bifurcated Role of Probation and Parole Officers

To understand the issue of resistance to EBPs despite their ability to make agencies more effective, it may be useful to provide some background and unpack the difference between agency goals and the strategies employed to achieve them.

Like other components of America's criminal justice system, probation and parole strive to achieve public safety and justice for all. Each component of the criminal justice system, however, employs different strategies for achieving these goals. After 50 years of research on corrections programs and practices, it is clear that rehabilitation of

probationers and parolees is the most effective strategy for reducing recidivism and thereby increasing public safety. Rehabilitation is the strategy, not the goal. This is an extremely important point, because it is directly related to how agencies and staff understand their professional roles. There must be a balance between treatment and enforcement functions in probation and parole supervision lest it morphs exclusively into social casework or police functions, neither of which is the proper sole domain of probation and parole.

Because they work with known law violators who are largely involuntarily clients, probation and parole officers have no choice but to be both caseworkers and law enforcers. The seemingly never-ending debate about the casework versus law enforcement roles of probation and parole officers is a significant obstacle to the implementation of EBPs, and unless it is resolved, organizational change will be difficult, if not impossible.

It is professionally appropriate to support providing probation and parole officers with powers of arrest and equipment for safety, including firearms, to carry out those powers. Officers may encounter dangerous situations. However, this support is predicated on having created a cadre of probation and parole officers who are committed to and can better perform the functions of case management and delivering rehabilitative services along with functions such as facilitating surveillance/monitoring and enforcing accountability of individuals under supervision. We must never forget that we are probation and parole officers first and foremost, and we strive to enhance public safety using strategies that are very different from typical law enforcement agencies. Our primary strategies are encompassed under the umbrellas of community reintegration and offender rehabilitation.

The bottom line is that providing the best possible client services is an appropriate focus and indeed is vital for parole and probation agencies to succeed. Reintegration and rehabilitation are not easy, and agencies and the probation and parole officers who work in them need to embrace EBPs and become sensitized to ways in which change is being resisted. Agencywide, staff members need to understand EBPs and do what needs to be done to implement them fully, not piecemeal.

Incorporating both personal observations and information published by experts in this field, this article attempts to

address elements of the current problems associated with delivering appropriate client services and suggests what is needed going forward. Various aspects of the role of probation and parole work will be covered, but I will always return to the need to deal with the three main issues mentioned above.

The Importance of Staff Training and Agency Focus

I began my career in community corrections 50 years ago as a Parole Officer Trainee in Newark, New Jersey. The phrase "evidence-based practice" was an alien concept within the profession. My professional training, which consisted of shadowing a more seasoned officer who had six months on the job, was anecdotally related to trying to solve problems that seemed to be impediments to the parolees on my caseload "going straight." In today's vernacular, we know this as "reentry." In those days, the problem-solving efforts made by probation and parole officers focused on marshaling available community resources to minimize short-term risk to the community and maximize the possibility of long-term behavioral reform of individuals under supervision. This scenario should sound very familiar to probation and parole officers working in the field today.

Fortunately, over the years, there have been efforts to bolster staff training by practitioners and scholars (Smith et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2011). My observation, however, is that many of these training programs devote significant attention to issues unrelated to the specific EBPs that have been shown to reduce individual offender recidivism reduction, and I am not alone in making this point (Office of the Auditor General of Nova Scotia, 2022; Rothman, 2002). Moreover, in jurisdictions where probation and parole officers are authorized to make arrests and carry firearms, staff training tends to focus on use of force, firearms, staff safety, and physical fitness. While these issues are extremely important and need to be comprehensively addressed, such classes may take up a disproportionate amount of training time at the expense of training pertaining to core probation and parole officer skills and EBPs in areas such as case management (i.e., a combination of treatment and services), monitoring client progress with treatment and service plans (surveillance), and removing individuals from the community when the risk to public safety is too great to keep them in the community (holding individuals accountable). In short, treatment/services + surveillance + enforcement (in this order) = the practice of probation and parole. Comprehensive attention must be devoted to all three, beginning in training that emphasizes use of EBPs.

Understanding Evidence-Based Practices

Before implementing EBPs, it is first necessary to understand what constitutes an EBP. Many community corrections professionals understand an EBP to be anything that has some research behind it. While this is a step in the right direction, it is not enough. Many professions (healthcare, engineering, etc.) benefit from professional associations unique to their professions that evaluate research findings and the quality of the studies that produced them. When they are satisfied with the credibility of the findings, endorsed best practices are the result.

The community corrections profession is also supported by several professional associations that endorse certain EBPs based on research findings (American Probation and Parole Association, American Correctional Association, and International Community Corrections Association, to name only a few). However, the extent to which probation and parole agencies, as well as the individuals who work in those agencies, become involved with professional associations is relatively weak,[i] which parallels their weak acceptance of EBPs. That means that many in this field—unlike members of the professions mentioned above--fail to get EBP information from their professional organizations or rely on these organizations as a conduit for evaluating research and identifying what are truly the best practices.

Risk Assessment as an EBP: A Personal but All Too Common Story

After only a few months on the job, I realized that my performance evaluations were significantly tied to the quantity of contacts that I made on my assigned caseload. These contact standards were linked to the risk level classification status of the individuals on my caseload, and they were spelled out in detail in the policy manual that I was required to abide by.

As a line officer, I submitted daily and monthly logs that accounted for the numbers and types of contacts that I made (telephone, face-to-face, office, home, employment, treatment programs, etc.) I also logged whether the contact was with the person on my caseload or someone else (e.g., a collateral contact). Only anecdotally did my supervisors pay close attention to the quality of contacts. Moreover, the credibility of treatment programs and services to which I referred my parolees was very rarely discussed. What was of paramount importance to my supervisors

was that individuals with release conditions ordered by a court or parole board be referred to treatment programs (e.g., anger management counseling, substance abuse or mental health treatment) or social services (e.g., vocational training, employment, housing) and be monitored regarding compliance with the program to which they were referred.

There is no EBP literature that establishes a causal relationship between specific numbers and types of contacts with individual offender recidivism. In contrast, there is an abundance of literature on the association between the quality of contacts and services provided and individual offender recidivism outcomes (Wodahl, et al., 2021; Gleicher, et al., 2013; Holsinger, 1999).

Interestingly, probation and parole policymakers generally continue to develop policies that require a specific number and type of contacts as if there is some EBP support for them. This is a dangerous practice, and it sets up staff and their agencies for criticism when contact standards are not met. As long as emphasis is placed on mere number and type of contacts mandated based on risk assessment rather than on their quality, the misleading message will be conveyed to everyone, including those outside the profession, that strictly meeting contact standards, both quantity and type, is of great importance and is causally related to outcomes. The possible consequence is that those on the outside may incorrectly suspect negligence if an offender under supervision commits a crime and it turns out there were missed contacts.

A similar response can also be seen within agencies. As many a probation or parole officer knows, when a case "goes bad," one of the first things looked is whether the required number and type of contacts were made. This scenario is often demoralizing from a staff perspective. Too often, probation and parole officers find themselves in trouble because they missed a few contacts or did not log the correct type of contact (e.g., telephone instead of in-person, or home versus another community location). Is there a cause-and-effect relationship between a missed contact, or a contact that was made by telephone as opposed to face to face, and a crime committed by a probationer or parolee? Well, I maintain that rarely, if ever, is the answer. Quality matters (Polaschek, 2016; Skeem & Manchak, 2008).

Over the years, people assigned to my caseload were assigned a supervision status such as intense, regular, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual. These supervision statuses derived from subjective assessments made by officers overseeing the supervision of the individual, and not

by the now recognized EBP method of actuarial risk/need assessments that focus on targeting criminogenic needs. In fact, the importance of risk/needs assessments was not new to the profession. What has changed over the years are the methods for classifying risk. For an informative summary of the use of risk assessments in community corrections since 1928, please see the excellent article by Baird (2009).

Our profession still makes use of risk level status classifications similar to those I just mentioned. However, through extensive research efforts since the late 1970s, we have learned that assigning a supervision status based on subjective opinions is not nearly as effective as using a predominantly objective risk/need assessment protocol, especially those that target criminogenic needs that are directly related to the probability of risk for recidivism of probationers and parolees. Because the current development and use of risk/needs assessment is grounded in empirical research findings (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2018; Andrews, et al, 1999; Andrews, et al., 1990), we call it an EBP.

The Problem of Organizational Culture

In the late 1970s, I was fortunate to have been selected to participate in a training program on the Wisconsin Model Classification System at the National Institute of Corrections' National Academy of Corrections. The purpose of the program was to enable the trainees to go back to their jurisdictions and implement the proposed model risk/need/case management, workload classification and supervision system. I was excited about this project, which was intended to address classification of risk level, offender needs, case management, and probation/parole officer workload both systematically and objectively.

Upon returning to my agency after the training, I had my first encounter with the problem of organizational culture as it relates to implementation of an EBP. Most of my colleagues, and all of my superiors, were not at all keen on the idea of relinquishing what they perceived to be their expertise (more like gut feelings) to an objective risk/needs assessment instrument. I recall my chief at the time asked me if I was "…some kind of a wise guy trying to change the tried-and-true longstanding methods used to assign risk and manage caseloads." He went on to tell me that there was no risk assessment instrument that could predict danger to the public better than his personal opinion. The chief also added that using risk and need assessment instruments takes a lot of time and thus, given heavy workload demands, they could not be used. Suffice it to say, the new information I tried to share fell upon deaf ears, and the project that I was

ready to help implement after the program at the National Academy of Corrections was abandoned in short order. To put it bluntly, the culture within my agency was "do things the way we've always done them" and "our gut knows best."

As I rose through the ranks over the next 20 to 30 years, I was fortunate to have landed in senior positions (Assistant Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Corrections, and Chairman, New Jersey State Parole Board) that afforded me greater opportunity. I could not only revisit the application of risk/needs assessments and case management as EBPs, but I was also in a position of helping create an organizational culture that was more generally supportive of EBPs. I devoted considerable time and effort to try and develop organizational consensus for objective risk assessments, targeting criminogenic needs, and case management. I even went so far as to work in conjunction with the governor's office on legislation that mandated the use of objective risk assessments within my agency.

I knew that changing organizational culture is complicated, and while it is essential for changing policies and practices, it must be approached with sensitivity and respect. Nevertheless, I also knew that such change is essential for EBPs to achieve their full potential in everyday practice. Without broad support from line staff, progress will be limited at best (Bertram, et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, my renewed efforts, like my earlier attempts in the 1970s, again met with a wide-ranging array of organizational resistance. The primary complaint was that staff workload was too high and thus there was not enough time to administer objective actuarial-based criminogenic risk/needs assessments. It was my observation that staff simply did not believe that these assessment tools were any better than their own "professional" expertise or common sense. Gendreau and his colleagues (2002) discussed this professional phenomenon as well. My response was that if we did not have time to assess risk and criminogenic needs, and if we did not implement and apply these EBPs to support case management, then the very foundation of probation and parole would be compromised and its purpose would not be met due to flawed policies and practices. In short, ignoring research and evidence to support our clients and the work of probation and parole leaves our profession in a questionable position with regard to its value and its ability to actually protect public safety.

Based on the literature produced by recognized scholars, an objective or actuarial risk/needs assessment is the best way to classify offender risk, target criminogenic needs which are directly related to mitigating risk for recidivism, and

enhance prospects for public safety. The evidence-based pillars of risk assessment are risk, need, responsivity, and occasional staff overrides. While the option for staff override of assessments exists, research indicates it should occur less than 10% of the time (Andrews, et al., 2004; Andrews, et al., 1990).

Progress has been slowly made. The past three or four decades have seen increasing numbers of community corrections agencies train staff on the four pillars of risk assessment and case management. Moreover, deploying objective risk/needs assessments using instruments that target criminogenic needs and, therefore, guide case management has seemingly taken hold in most community corrections agencies—a definite step forward. Still, use of these tools and procedures is not always carried out with fidelity to the principles supported by research evidence (Viglione, et al., 2015). In regard to impediments to implementation of this, or any, EPB, the reality of everyday practices must be considered.

EBPs Among Third-Party Service Providers: The Problem of Responsivity

Implementation of EBP practices that derive from the responsivity principle remain stunted. Not nearly enough has changed regarding the availability of treatment and social services that the research indicates can effectively target criminogenic needs and enhance prospects for short-term risk management and long-term behavioral reform.

Treatment and social services remain in woefully short supply, and the quality of those that do exist is largely unknown. What we do know is that when correctional treatment and service programs have been evaluated against the extent to which they adhere to EBPs that reduce individual offender recidivism, most programs need improvement (Smith, et al., 2016; Duwe & Clark, 2015; Lowenkamp, 2004; Gendreau & Andrews, 1994; Latessa & Holsinger, 1998). This fact is a significant impediment to the implementation of EBPs regarding case management and rehabilitation for two reasons. First, it forces probation and parole officers to refer offenders to treatment and social services regardless of the quality of services offered; compliance with release conditions, not the credibility of the program, is more important. Second, it makes the application of the general responsivity principle impossible because it seriously limits the ability to match the personalities and learning styles of individual probationers and parolees to community-based treatment programs and other services.

In other words, as long as they have the support of their organizational culture, probation and parole officers do have the ability to assess risk, identify criminogenic needs, and develop a case management plan to target those needs. What they cannot do—which is the same problem that I faced when I was a line officer throughout my career—is to concern themselves with whether the quality of services is appropriate (i.e., supported by program principles identified by research) or match an offender's personality and learning style with program settings and approaches that are optimum for specific offenders. The research on responsivity states that we must maximize the client's ability to learn and benefit from an interventions and services by providing cognitive behavioral treatment and tailoring the intervention to the learning style, motivation, abilities, and strengths of the offender (Bonta & Andrews, 2016). Simply put, this is an impossibility given the realities associated current community-based or in-house resources.

What Can We Do?

In some ways, the probation and parole profession has come a long way in the last 40 years. At the same time, there remain some problematic and seemingly intractable issues. Evidence-based practices have become part of the professional vocabulary among practitioners, but EBP implementation is only in a nascent stage, with limited adherence demonstrated and, as a consequence, results that are less than desired (Rhine, et al., 2006). Instead of struggling over the question of whether treatment programs should be administered in-house or brokered to community-based organizations, the focus should be on the adherence of those programs to principles of effective intervention that are supported by scientific research to enhance public safety. Research tells us that when the risk, need, and responsivity principles are implemented with fidelity and are credibly employed, recidivism reductions can range from 10% to 30% (Bonta & Andrews, 2016; Paparozzi & Gendreau, 2005; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). This is a significant public safety benefit.

The probation and parole profession never promised to reintegrate and reform each and every individual involved in the system. In spite of its best efforts, there will always be recidivists. However, what the profession has promised is to manage short-term offender risk and to attempt to achieve long-term behavioral reform for more individuals convicted of crimes than would be the case if probation and parole were abolished. Moreover, we have represented, either overtly or implicitly, that the reintegration and rehabilitation of many of those under our supervision is possible and that we are committed to carrying out that function. We need to keep

these promises and commitments.

To enable us to follow through on the above, the profession makes use of a combination of treatment programs and services, surveillance/monitoring, and enforcement. Treatment programs and other services (e.g., vocational training, employment, housing, etc.) are the two areas where EPBs are most critical if individual recidivism reduction is to be achieved. In the practice of probation and parole, this is where the primary emphasis of policy and practice needs to be.

It is no secret that staff will pay attention to what their agency counts when it assesses performance. As long as there is an emphasis on numbers of referrals to treatment programs and services, and as long as probationers or parolees are considered to have complied with conditions—even if that means attending a poor quality or inappropriate program—then the quality of the programs and services will remain secondary, without focus on what their real purpose is supposed to be: recidivism reduction. The overwhelming majority of probation and parole agencies are quite adept at articulating how busy they are making contacts of various types, writing reports, making referrals to treatment and services programs, and the like. Not nearly enough progress has been made in routinely reporting how effective probation and parole supervision is, especially related to implementation of policies and practices grounded in the principles of effective intervention. If the dots between policies and practices that derive from EBPs and recidivism reduction/increase in public safety were connected, this would provide powerful support for increased resources for more and better services, whether they are provided in the community or in-house.

For probation and parole supervision to achieve its full potential, increased professional involvement by line staff and policymakers is essential. I would like to see a future where all probation and parole agencies, as well as individual "professionals" working in the field, are actively involved in their profession. Increased personal development and professional involvement will go a long way in speeding up the process of removing impediments to the implementation of EBPs and, in turn, to maximizing the public safety benefits of probation and parole.

Ideally, any profession that involves helping people should be closer to a vocation or a calling—i.e., more than just a job. Professionals are called on to stay abreast of developments in the field, always conduct themselves with integrity, pursue ongoing education and training, and to embrace the purpose of their work. The purpose of the probation and

parole profession is to enhance public safety by exhaustively helping people to address and resolve criminogenic needs while attempting to manage risk to communities along the way. Evidence-based practices are inextricably intertwined with this purpose.

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PERSON-CENTERED SUPERVISION:

Putting Principles into Practice

By Nicholas K. Powell, PhD

PERSON-CENTERED SUPERVISION: PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

(Hawks et al., 2020; Pager, 2007; Lutze, et al., 2014 Remster, 2021). (Mele & Miller, 2005; Pager, 2007). As a result, a prevailing paradox characterizes our legal system: Criminal justice involvement perpetuates criminal justice involvement. To overcome this dilemma and shift paradigms surrounding probation and parole, Georgia developed the Person-Centered Supervision (PCS) model for improving client services. PCS promotes success by recognizing people as unique individuals with distinct strengths, needs, and goals. In short, PCS is a paradigm for putting principles into practice.

Introduction

Justice-involved people have too often received the worst society has to offer. Many have grown up with street violence and underfunded schools. Additionally, a disproportionate number are dealing with poverty, homelessness, mental illness, and addiction (Hawks et al., 2020; Pager, 2007; Lutze, et al., 2014 Remster, 2021). However, instead of addressing underlying issues, we tend to brand people as "criminals," remove them from our communities, and restrict their ability to work or receive services (Mele & Miller, 2005; Pager, 2007). What has resulted from such practices is a persistent but troubling aspect of our legal system: Criminal justice involvement perpetuates criminal justice involvement. To overcome this dilemma and shift paradigms surrounding probation and parole, Georgia developed the Person-Centered Supervision (PCS) model for improving client services. PCS promotes success by recognizing people as unique individuals with distinct strengths, needs, and goals. In short, PCS is a paradigm for putting principles into practice.

With the largest community supervision population in the nation and a legislative mandate to deploy evidence-based practices (EBP), Georgia must leverage research and technology to pursue its dual mission of accountability and rehabilitation (Kaeble, 2021; GA H.B. 310, 2015). This paper aims to accomplish three objectives using practical lessons from academic studies. First, it describes the four elements of PCS: (1) Time, (2) Relationships, (3) Dialogue, and (4) Intersections. Second, it outlines research driving the PCS model and explains how Georgia assessed each element's organizational status through environmental scans. Environmental scans identify factors that hinder or support agency goals and are the basis for effective strategic planning (National Institute of Corrections, 2021). Understanding the climate in which the elements of PCS take place situates community correction leaders to formulate actionable strategies for implementing the model. Thus, the final objective is to provide real-life examples of agency-level initiatives for applying PCS, accompanied by data regarding their progress.

[Figure 1. Elements of Person-Centered Supervision]

Element #1: Time

The first element of PCS is time. Our legal system's vision to provide fair treatment of justice-involved individuals cannot be realized if practitioners are expected to assist too many clients in too little time (see Joy, 2010). Hence, experts devote much effort and attention to reducing probation and parole caseload sizes (DeMichele et al., 2011; Jalbert & Rhodes, 2012; Worrall et al., 2004). Since time shortages obstruct EBP implementation in human service fields (Burrell & Rhine, 2013; O'Donnell, 2004), achieving reasonable caseload sizes is not enough. Therefore, departments must create sufficient time for Community Supervision Officers (CSOs) to deliver high-quality services (Burrell & Rhine, 2013; Jalbert et al., 2010).

It is essential for agency leaders to remember that, regardless of academic findings or policy priorities, the responsibility of implementing EBPs rests on the shoulders of CSOs (Kras et al., 2021; Viglione, 2018). People enter probation/parole fields to help others and serve their communities (Annison et al., 2008; Knight, 2007; Matthews, 2009). Working in community corrections, however, is riddled with stress, emotional exhaustion, and role disputes (Gayman & Bradley, 2013; Gayman et al., 2018; Powell & Gayman, 2020). More importantly, the top three sources of psychological distress for officers—excessive paperwork, unreasonable deadlines, and large caseloads—coalesce into a single underlying problem, insufficient time with clients (DeMichele et al., 2011; Lutze, 2013). Therefore, it is plausible that steps to protect the well-being of CSOs will positively influence service delivery.

There is an established link between officers' psychological well-being and their ability/willingness to perform critical job functions (DeMichele et al., 2011). For example, when asked to assist more people with mental illness, CSOs experience significant depressive symptoms and work stress stemming from exacerbated role conflict and role overload (Powell & Gayman, 2020). When psychologically distressed, officers are less supportive, more likely to perpetuate stigmas, and less competent in addressing supervisees' needs (Salyers et al., 2015; White et al., 2015). Further, officers with heightened psychological distress are more likely to deviate from EBPs, such as using risk and need assessment tools to inform supervision approaches (Schaefer & Williamson, 2018). Consequently, supervision effectiveness is unattainable without adequate time (Burrell & Rhine, 2013). For that reason, PCS concedes that CSOs need training, support, and–above all--time to deliver high-quality supervision (Day et al., 2012).

Environmental Scan #1: Workload Analysis

To better understand how the time element impacts probation and parole, Georgia partnered with a third-party research institute to conduct a comprehensive workload analysis. Workload analyses are beneficial for improving service delivery because they identify barriers to completing tasks and uncover areas for intervention (DeMichele et al., 2011). Researchers collected a wide range of data from various sources during this agency-wide study. This included:

Deploying surveys for all DCS staff to provide anonymous feedback on their time spent.

Conducting qualitative interviews with more than 20 officers from various locations. These interviews aimed to better understand the organizational realities in which CSOs are performing their assigned duties.

Accompanying officers in the field during a shift for first-hand observations

Additionally, analyses included many administrative data points entailing caseload characteristics, such as size, composition, and risk score. Findings revealed that Georgia CSOs spend more time on administrative tasks (66%) than assisting clients (34%). See figure 2 for a full breakdown.

[Figure 2. Workload Analysis]

Strategy #1: Recoup Time

The PCS model reminds us that individuals serving probation and parole terms may have made mistakes, but they are still people. By continuously keeping sight of their humanity, we can better meet them where they are to promote long-term success, support crime prevention, and enhance public safety. For this approach to work, CSOs need permission to take time. Thus, the first element of PCS concentrates on maximizing how much time officers can spend with the people on their caseloads. Figure 3 shows four practical examples of Georgia initiatives for recouping time: Video Interactions, Court Specialists, Call Reporting Unit, and the Virtual Judicial Circuit.

To complement traditional office, home, and phone interactions, DCS incorporated Video Interactions as another convenient communication option for officers and clients. The deployment of Court Specialists replaces CSOs performing court-only duties with non-sworn personnel and reassigns those officers to a caseload. By improving the officer-supervisee ratio, CSOs have more time to implement EBPs. The Call Reporting Unit (CRU) allows individuals with an assessed low risk of reoffending to report by automated phone services. Additionally, the CRU serves as a Virtual Judicial Circuit to assume administrative responsibilities unrelated to supervision services. By completing administrative tasks previously performed by CSOs, such as criminal record checks, officers have more time to assist clients.

[Figure 3. Initiatives for Recouping Time]

As described in figure 4, preliminary data surrounding officers' time with clients shows promise for Georgia's time-recouping initiatives. Before conducting the workload analysis, CSOs spent an average of six and a half minutes per client meeting. After implementing the PCS framework and executing the initiatives described in figure 3, the average time per interaction between officers and supervisees climbed to twenty-three minutes.

[Figure 4. Time Per Interaction]

Element #2: Relationships

Recouping time is not inherently good. Converting recouped time into implementing EBPs is much more critical (see Bauer et al., 2015; Blasko & Taxman,

2019). Therefore, the second component of Georgia's PCS model involves cultivating relationships, which entails seeing people as fellow human beings with whom we build genuine connections. By acknowledging positive officer-client relationships as a pivotal facet of successful community supervision outcomes (Blasko et al., 2015; Meredith et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2012), PCS reinvests the time gained from Strategy #1 (see figure 3) into relationship-building as a viable path for improving services.

In addition to employing evidence-based techniques, fruitful supervision depends on officers' ability to build rapport and trust (Lewis, 2016; Vanstone, 2004). The development of positive officer-client relationships suffused with mutual courtesy, dignity, and respect is an empirical method for supporting success among persons on probation and parole (Lewis, 2016; McNeill, 2006). Recognizing the well-documented importance of client-provider relationships in other human service professions, for instance, Blasko and colleagues conducted a randomized clinical trial to examine the role of officer-supervisee relationships in criminal justice outcomes. Their study randomly assigned more than 500 participants to either a collaborative intervention to improve relationship quality or traditional supervision. Results linked more positive relationship ratings to less drug use and fewer condition violations among supervisees (Blasko et al., 2015).

Environmental Scan #2: Home Visit Studies

Adopted from social work principles, conducting meetings in clients' homes is believed to foster an environment conducive to understanding and helping in the context of peoples' lives, which should improve service delivery (Bennett, 1938; Beder, 1998). Supervising individuals where they live limits the disruptions associated with reporting in an office environment while allowing CSOs to become more familiar with local resources (Solomon et al., 2008). However, it is unclear how the dynamics of community-based interactions between officers and clients translate into supervision outcomes (see Meredith et al., 2020). Therefore, home visit studies provide a unique opportunity for studying the nature and impact of officer-client relationships.

Informed by research literature on the importance of relationships, Georgia collaborated with an academic partner to explore the essence of interactions between officers and supervisees through a series of home visit studies. Derived from these studies were two key lessons. First, the tone of most interactions was neutral, meaning approximately 90% of conversations between officers and individuals on their caseloads consisted of behavior and condition status topics (Finn et al., 2017). The first finding is unsurprising, given the limited time available for officer-supervisee interactions (see figure 1). Second, the nature of interactions positively impacts criminal justice outcomes. Specifically, quality interactions, where CSOs engaged in meaningful conversations regarding rules and needs, were associated with a reduced risk of new felony arrests (Meredith et al., 2020).

Overall, Georgia's findings are consistent with previous studies. The quality of officer-client relationships heavily influences supervision outcomes (Blasko et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2012). Successful implementation, however, depends on an organizational structure that promotes evidence-based communication and relationship-building (Blasko & Taxman, 2019; Bourgon, et al., 2012).

Strategy 2: Body Camera Initiative (BCI)

As a strategy for improving relationship quality, Georgia CSOs and their managers are certified in the Enhanced Supervision Program (ESP). Like other core correctional practices, ESP applies the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model to transform officer-supervisee interaction dynamics from surveillance and compliance to building trust and a shared understanding of goals–or a working alliance (Lowenkamp et al., 2013; Robinson et al., 2012). Examples of ESP skills are role clarification, effective use of reinforcement, and applying the cognitive model. To support the successful implementation of ESP, Georgia's Body Camera Initiative (BCI) integrates quality assurance mechanisms into daily practice.

Whereas most law enforcement agencies adopt body cameras to reduce department liability and improve officer accountability (Hyland, 2018), Georgia's primary concern is quality assurance. After completing an interaction and documenting it in the case management system, CSOs tag which ESP skills are used and upload the corresponding video footage. Agency leaders employ this footage during audits, training, and promotional interviews to weave ESP implementation into the organizational culture.

By creating a constant feedback loop regarding the quality of interactions, the BCI ensures fidelity to ESP. From data obtained when documenting ESP, Georgia can assess the percentage of interactions in which CSOs use the skills. As shown in figure 5, with the incorporation of the BCI as a quality assurance measure, Georgia has experienced a 37% increase in how often CSOs use ESP skills during client interactions over the past two years.

[Figure 5. Enhanced Supervision Program]

Element #3: Dialogue

The third element of PCS focuses on dialogue, which calls for taking the time and effort to understand a person's situation and the context of their life now instead of only considering their criminal record or status in the eyes of the legal system. As a society, we often undervalue empathy in relations with justice-involved people and their families. Understanding peoples' situations and sharing their feelings is critical for positive change in community supervision settings (Okonofua et al., 2021). Hence, there is a rise in interest among practitioners and scholars regarding the value of applying procedural justice (PJ) concepts to probation and parole (see Blasko & Taxman, 2018). The PJ framework posits that people who view decisions and actions by CSOs as fair will be more likely to cooperate and, in turn, be more likely to complete their supervision terms without revocation (Jannetta et al., 2021; Tyler, et al., 2015). Agency leaders should remember that such notions of legitimacy must remain dialogic. In other words, to offset the power imbalance between officers and justice-involved persons, communications must be viewed as an ongoing conversation rather than a one-sided directive (see Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012).

Recognizing that lack of time, work stress, and political pressures often strain CSO-client relationships, Okonofua and colleagues recently explored empathy as a formal intervention. Their study assessed whether a formalized integration of empathy into officers' interactions with supervisees could enhance relationships and subsequently improve criminal justice outcomes (i.e., reduce recidivism). The rationale is that officers who emotionally invest in their caseloads are more effective at promoting clients' successes. The results were promising. With a 13% decrease in recidivism rates, supervisees whose assigned officers receive empathy training were less likely to return to jail (Okonofua et al., 2021). Drawing from the PJ framework and empirical support for empathy in probation and parole settings, the PCS element of dialogue encompasses space for supervisees to tell their story.

Environmental Scan #3: Applying Procedural Justice in Community Supervision

In hopes of increasing PJ as a framework for treating people with fairness and respect throughout the probation/parole process, Georgia worked with various external partners to develop and pilot a new PJ training curriculum for CSOs. Preliminary analyses of body camera footage, survey results, and administrative data suggest that PJ training may increase fairness among CSOs and improve supervision outcomes for their clients. More specifically, a key takeaway of the study was the potential benefit of reinforcing PJ principles through client surveys (Jannetta et al., 2021). To access the complete report, please visit the DCS website at https://dcs.georgia.gov/strategic-planning-research.

Strategy #3: Deploy Client Surveys

To translate the PJ study findings into practice, Georgia actively opens dialogue with supervisees by giving them opportunities to provide meaningful feedback. The use of video interactions, for example, was an initiative to recoup time (see figure 3). Although this was a convenient and safe option for officers, how supervisees received the technology needed to be determined. For that reason, Georgia distributed a pulse survey to gauge how individuals perceive video interactions as a platform for communicating with CSOs. The survey was delivered electronically to clients across five judicial circuits over two weeks. All respondents expressed a level of agreement with three see statements regarding video interactions. The responses were overwhelmingly supportive. As shown in figure 6, people reported that video interactions were convenient, comfortable, and meaningful. To access the complete survey, please visit the DCS website at https://dcs.georgia.gov/strategic-planning-research.

[Figure 6. Pulse Survey on Video Interactions]

Element #4: Intersections

PCS's fourth and final element involves the intersections of individual issues and our legal system. To foster the success of justice-involved people while strengthening and protecting communities, probation and parole leaders must tirelessly strive to understand the social context in which crime occurs. Unfortunately, we often underestimate the events and circumstances that have led to people's involvement in our legal system. A disproportionate number of supervisees are experiencing mental illness, homelessness, unemployment, and addiction (Hawks et al., 2020; Pager, 2007; Remster, 2021). Nonetheless, PCS mandates that we approach all relationships, regardless of a person's background, with the belief that everyone can reach the peak of human potential. By targeting efforts to assist clients at the intersections between the legal system and other social problems (e.g., addiction, mental illness, homelessness), we can improve service delivery, promote crime prevention, and increase public safety.

Addressing these issues in correctional settings has been linked to meaningful reductions in recidivism (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). For instance, when trying to simultaneously navigate mental health treatment and comply with probation or parole conditions, a working relationship with a CSO is an invaluable resource for supervisees with mental illness (Epperson et al., 2020). In the same vein, homelessness is not a criminogenic risk factor, but there is a known link between housing and crime (Lutze et al., 2014; Remster, 2021). Thus, it is no surprise that Georgia has associated meaningful interactions that include individualized conversations regarding supervisees' unique situations with improved outcomes (Meredith et al., 2020).

Environmental Scan #4: The Experience of People with Mental Health Needs on Community Supervision in Georgia

By acknowledging the context in which people cycle through the legal system, community supervision agencies can improve their ability to identify target areas for prevention and intervention efforts to improve services. For example, Georgia recently collaborated with a research partner to deepen understanding of the interplay between mental illness and community supervision. The study revealed that supervisees with mental health needs fare much worse than those without mental health concerns. Indeed, despite comprising only 29% of the Georgia supervision population, people with mental illness account for 42% of revocations (Powell et al., 2022).

Strategy #4: Redefine Success to Reflect PCS

For decades, despite a plethora of evidence (Clear & Latessa, 2006; Petersilia & Turner, 1993; Taxman, 2010), performance measurement of supervision in Georgia, like many other states, has revolved around the frequency of "contacts" – or meetings between officers and supervisees. To combat this shortcoming, Georgia launched a new performance measurement system to reflect the person-centered approach. Rather than only relying on conventional metrics like contact frequency or drug screens, this system monitors meaningful progress around EBPs, such as addressing needs and using ESP skills.

Let us examine the intersection of housing and probation/parole. Although not a reliable predictor of criminal activity, there is a well-established association between residential stability and legal system involvement (Lutze et al., 2014). Hence, assisting clients with housing needs should improve supervision outcomes. For that reason, Georgia's new performance measurement system operationalizes officers' progress in this area by asking, "of the people with housing needs on your caseload, what percentage are receiving help with this issue?" Paradigm shifts take time, but Georgia already sees measurable gains. As shown in Figure 7, CSOs now address housing needs 31% of the time compared to only 8% the previous year.

Addressing housing needs is one metric from a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Georgia uses to gauge progress in implementing the PCS model. Other KPIs include the intersections of addiction, mental illness, and employment. By aligning performance appraisal with PCS principles, Georgia can tailor supervision approaches to promote success on an individual level.

[Figure 7. Addressing Housing Needs]

Conclusion

It would be difficult to find someone who disagrees with the notion that there are underlying causes of crime. Regrettably, though, our current responses too often exacerbate rather than address these causes, even though that is not our intent. As a result, an

unwelcome but all too true conundrum overshadows the efforts of those working in our legal system and prevents us from meeting our goals: criminal justice involvement perpetuates criminal justice involvement. PCS shows potential for ending this pathway.

Core to PCS is the promotion of success by recognizing people as unique individuals with strengths, needs, and goals. As such, PCS can be considered a paradigm for implementing evidence-based supervision principles. Optimal implementation, however, relies on an understanding of the role of Time, Relationships, Dialogue, and Intersections, as outlined in this paper. The above-described research on the PCS model and Georgia's assessment of each element's organizational status through environmental scans have advanced our understanding in this area. Equally useful are the real-life examples of agency-level initiatives for applying PCS and the accompanying data regarding the progress that has been achieved. By examining their organizations for opportunities to mitigate time drains, elevate relationship-building, welcome meaningful feedback, and target intersections, community supervision agencies across the U.S. can also implement the PCS model and improve client services.

Summary Table

Person-Centered Supervision (PCS)			
Element	**Environmental Scan**	**Strategy**	**Examples/Findings**
(1) Time	Workload Analysis	Recoup Time	- Video Interactions - Court Specialists - Call Reporting Unit - Virtual Circuit
(2) Relationships	Home Visit Studies	Body Camera Initiative (BCI)	- Finn et al., 2017 - Meredith et al., 2020
(3) Dialogue	Applying Procedural Justice (PJ) in Community Supervision	Deploy Client Surveys	Access complete PJ Report and Pulse Survey at https://dcs.georgia.gov/strategic-planning-research/interactive-dashboards/research-reports
(4) Intersections	The Experience of People with Mental Health Needs on Community Supervision in Georgia	Redefine Success to Reflect PCS	Access DCS Strategic Plan and Research Agenda at https://dcs.georgia.gov/strategic-planning-research/strategic-plan-and-research-agenda

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Author Bio

As the Director of Strategic Planning and Analysis for the Georgia Department of Community Supervision, Dr. Nicholas Powell has dedicated his professional life to studying the social context in which crime occurs. By understanding these subtleties, he hopes to be part of solutions that not only improve criminal justice outcomes but also reduce the negative consequences of our legal system. Dr. Powell is also a Criminal Justice Professor at Georgia State University and has published several research articles on the intersections of probation/parole and mental illness.

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Transforming Probation Through Strength-Based Policy Making:

THE IMPACT OF 678

By Chief John Keene, Chief Probation Officer—San Mateo County, 2022 President—Chief Probation Officers of California & Karen Pank, Executive Director, Chief Probation Officers of California

TRANSFORMING PROBATION THROUGH STRENGTH-BASED POLICY MAKING: THE IMPACT OF 678

It has been over 12 years since the Community Corrections Performance Incentives Act, more commonly referred to as Senate Bill 678 (SB 678), passed and subsequently transformed California's probation system. As a catalyst for criminal justice reforms, the positive impacts of SB 678 cannot be overstated. These included an incentive-based permanent state funding source, reduced caseload sizes allowing probation to provide more individualized approaches to supervision and rehabilitation, and a culture shift to focus on behavior change and exiting probation supervision successfully. These impacts helped lead to the outcomes we see today: reduction in the number of incarcerated individuals and correctional costs, better collaboration between probation departments and county as well as state agencies, and more rehabilitative programming available to address each individual's criminogenic needs. Numerically, SB 678 reduced the prison population by more than 6,000 inmates within a year of implementation. It reduced state prison expenditures by an estimated $1 billion over the first decade of implementation and created funding for probation departments to invest in evidence-based practices (EBP) (Bird & Grattet, 2020). Of equal if not greater importance, SB 678 ushered in a positive evolution of probation practices. Much of what SB 678 has done and continues to inspire via other reforms is representative of California probation and its mission. Probation is the linchpin of the criminal justice system. Without a strong probation system setting the foundation, other changes can be difficult, if not impossible.

SB 678 has not just impacted the probation population, but also the probation profession itself. Probation services in California are multifaceted and play a role that is often oversimplified and misunderstood. Probation is a branch of law enforcement, but probation officers balance accountability and opportunity for people in our justice system. Probation is focused on reintegrating formerly incarcerated people back into the community while providing the tools and rehabilitation needed to move sentenced individuals out of the justice system permanently. This approach creates short-term safety via enforcement practices and long-term and sustainable safety by wholly addressing offenders' needs to help them successfully rehabilitate and not reenter the justice system. Probation professionals in California are well trained and as diverse as our state, with 72% of our officers identifying as non-white (Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), 2021).

Many professionals outside California have asked how these successes have been achieved, and research has been initiated to answer this question. In this article, we give an overview, but first we will unpack how a perfect storm ushered in the transformation of a system with incentives and collaboration, leading to continued success over the past 12 years.

California Probation Before SB 678

Simply put, probation in California before SB 678 was underfunded, and its professionals lacked important resources and tools to handle the considerable number of felony probationers on their caseloads. Probation caseloads were more than double the recommended size; consequently, the numbers of violations and revocations were high.

According to a report on SB 678 issued in 2020 by the California Probation Resource Institute,

> Historically, state funding for California's probation system has been limited and unstable. In 2009, when SB 678 was signed into law, probation departments received only about one-quarter of their funds from the state, with much of the state funding targeted at juveniles ([Legislative Analyst's Office] (LAO), 2009). Prior to the passage of SB 678, probation departments received about two-thirds of their funding from county budgets and made up the difference with grants from the federal government or other funders. (Bird & Grattet, 2020).

With huge caseloads and minimal supportive services targeted at the justice-involved population, there was little that probation officers could do except conduct essential enforcement work, which meant high revocation rates. However, enforcement alone rarely creates the long-term rehabilitative changes that probation looks for to keep people from coming back into the justice system. Meanwhile, programs featuring evidence-based practices (EBP) were quickly emerging. Many departments had the goal of implementing EBP within their adult caseloads. However, programs and practices that were proven to address behavior change in juveniles were not readily available for adults, and funding was still significantly lacking to implement individualized approaches. Today probation departments in California are knowledgeable about and

largely subscribe to use of EBP as standard operating procedure, whereas before SB 678 the use of EBP was merely an aspirational desire with no funding or political support to pursue.

According to researchers Mia Byrd and Ryken Grattet, in their report on SB 678,

During the decades leading up to the passage of SB 678, notions of the rehabilitative role of probation officers and efficacy of the probation system in improving reentry outcomes were evolving. An evidence-based practices literature emerged to inform decisions about ideal probation caseloads, risk-based supervision strategies, and needs-based programmatic interventions. This literature increasingly demonstrated that evidence-based community supervision had the potential to improve reentry outcomes and the cost-effectiveness of the criminal justice system as a whole through targeted interventions in the community that reduced the need for incarceration (Crime and Justice Institute 2009). However, funding for probation was so limited in California that most departments lacked the capacity to reduce caseloads, develop new supervision strategies, or invest in and manage treatment interventions. (Bird & Grattet, 2020)

As California experienced a myriad of economic and political pressures, the idea of incentive-based funding to help resource the front end of the criminal justice system started gaining momentum. The design of an incentive-based funding program for probation such as SB 678 was not entirely new to California. The state had first experimented with incentive-based funding through the Probation Subsidy Act of 1965, which was ended in 1978 by the legislature when state support for probation then mostly shifted to a patchwork system of short-term grants. Once it was seen that a storm was brewing and definitive steps needed to be taken, those working on designing the innovative new programs of SB 678 were able to draw on the state's own experience under the Probation Subsidy Act, but they also looked closely at emerging models in other states— particularly a new incentive-based funding model proving successful in Arizona.

The Perfect Storm and Passage of SB 678

Prior to the implementation of SB 678, California's justice system was dealing with issues like prison overcrowding, increasing correctional expenditures, and high recidivism rates. Other factors like the recession, federal court population pressures, decades of "tough on crime" policies, no state funding for community corrections, and overall neglect of the adult criminal justice system led to a financial and political "perfect storm" that motivated the crafting and passage of SB 678 (Bird & Grattet, 2020).

One key factor leading to California's high prison numbers was probation revocations, as individuals failing to meet the conditions of probation were being sent in large numbers to state prisons to complete their sentences. In 2009, an estimated 40% of new prison admissions from the previous year were people who had violated their terms of probation (LAO 2009). (After only two years of implementation, SB 678 reduced prison revocations by more than 30%, but more on that later).

Funding difficulties posed another problem, and key reports from various entities outlined the need for and purpose of providing state funding to probation departments. One of those reports was issued in 2003 by a Probation Services Task Force to examine the probation system and issue recommendations. The report found California was distinct from other states in the structure and funding of its probation system, with most states directly funding their probation systems. In California, 50% of probation costs had been funded by the state in the 1970s under the Probation Subsidy Act; by the 1990s this share had declined to 10% (Congressional Research Bureau 1996). The remaining funding for Probation Departments was funded by local county dollars. During this period, the felony probation population grew substantially, leading to significantly increased caseloads. While the American Parole and Probation Association recommended probationer-to-officer ratios of 20:1 for high-risk or specialized caseloads and 50:1 for medium-risk probationers, actual caseloads in California were at more than double those recommended levels (LAO, 2009). The report recommended increasing and stabilizing probation funding, improving collaboration among county-level agencies, and increasing the use of EBP.

Four years later, the Little Hoover Commission (LHC) released a report that called on the state to address "California's Correctional Crisis." The report framed the rapid growth in the prison population, high levels of overcrowding, and high correctional costs as problems that could be addressed by better investing in community-based supervision as an alternative to prison (LHC 2007). Illustrating this point, the report quoted Judge Rodger K. Warren's written testimony to the commission, stating that "the principal reason…judges are sentencing too many non-violent offenders to prison is the absence of effective

community corrections programs providing intermediate punishments and necessary and appropriate treatment and rehabilitative services." The commission recommended the state adopt legislation like the Probation Subsidy Act to support and incentivize these investments at the local level.

Finally, in 2009, the LAO released a report that provided additional in-depth analysis of the state of California's probation system. The LAO reported that 40% of prison admissions were due to probation revocations (LAO 2009). The report highlighted the potential to reduce prison revocations through evidence-based interventions at the level of community supervision and outlined the potential state savings that could be achieved through treating more offenders at the local level with programs and services rather than utilizing the high-cost state prison. The LAO recommended that California create a state funding mechanism to better resource probation departments and create incentives for the use of evidence-based practices (Bird & Grattet, 2020).

At the same time, Chief Probation Officers of California began working collaboratively with the Legislature, Governor, and courts to develop a way to invest in the foundation of probation to incentivize and support implementation of EBP statewide in the hope of transforming the system and improving outcomes for our communities. Senator Mark Leno (D), Chair of the Public Safety Committee, authored the bill but also reached out to and worked with the Vice-Chair, Senator John Benoit (R), as co-author, knowing it needed to be a bipartisan effort. For this historic legislation to be successful, it needed to meet the following pillars:

- Create budget savings: State and locals were facing huge deficits; therefore, utilization of an influx of federal rescue dollars as one-time startup funds would be used to create an opportunity for ongoing funding through state savings on lower prison costs if a county's practices resulted in improvement in their revocation rates.

- No sentencing changes: The focus was within the current sentencing structure and on developing options and tools for probation to work with clients before escalating behavior to return to custody options.

- Respect local control and flexibility: California is a decentralized justice system with 58 county departments and local governments which need to implement EBP in a manner that is responsive to their communities.

- Install system accountability: By using an incentive-based funding mechanism, the state was assured of budget and policy benefits without having to dictate, mandate or assume the responsibility of the details of how individual communities deployed EBP.

Ultimately, SB 678 increased and stabilized resources for probation departments, allowing them to expand staff positions, reduce caseloads, provide improved supervision, and offer a more individualized approach in working with offenders toward their rehabilitation and addressing criminogenic needs. Importantly, the legislation also incentivized counties to match state investments in evidence-based interventions to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, rather than revoking individuals to state prison for technical violations. These mechanisms were mutually reinforcing. Without adequate and stable resources, few probation departments were able to make investments in improving supervision due to high caseloads and limited capacity for training. SB 678 provided the resources necessary to make those investments feasible and guidance and incentives to transition to EBP (Bird & Grattet 2020).

SB 678 called on county probation departments to implement a comprehensive set of EBP, which included:

1. Expanding the use of risk and needs assessments.
2. Utilizing intermediate and graduated sanctions.
3. Providing intensive supervision for some offenders.
4. Expanding targeted programmatic interventions.
5. Evaluating program fidelity and effectiveness.

In the two years following the implementation of SB 678, prison revocation rates declined, and with that decline came reductions in the prison population and state spending. Crime rates remained low following these reductions in prison incarceration levels, and the use of EBP increased markedly within probation departments across the state (see Figure 4 from 2019 CPOC probation practices survey). These initial impacts demonstrate quick progress toward achieving the legislative goals of SB 678 (Bird & Grattet, 2020)

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Increasing the use of risk and needs assessments in probation allowed those providing California probation services to effectively reduce recidivism, ultimately benefiting individuals on probation while also increasing community safety.

Figure 4. Frequency of the use of risk and needs assessments

Source: CPOC Probation Practices Survey, 2019.
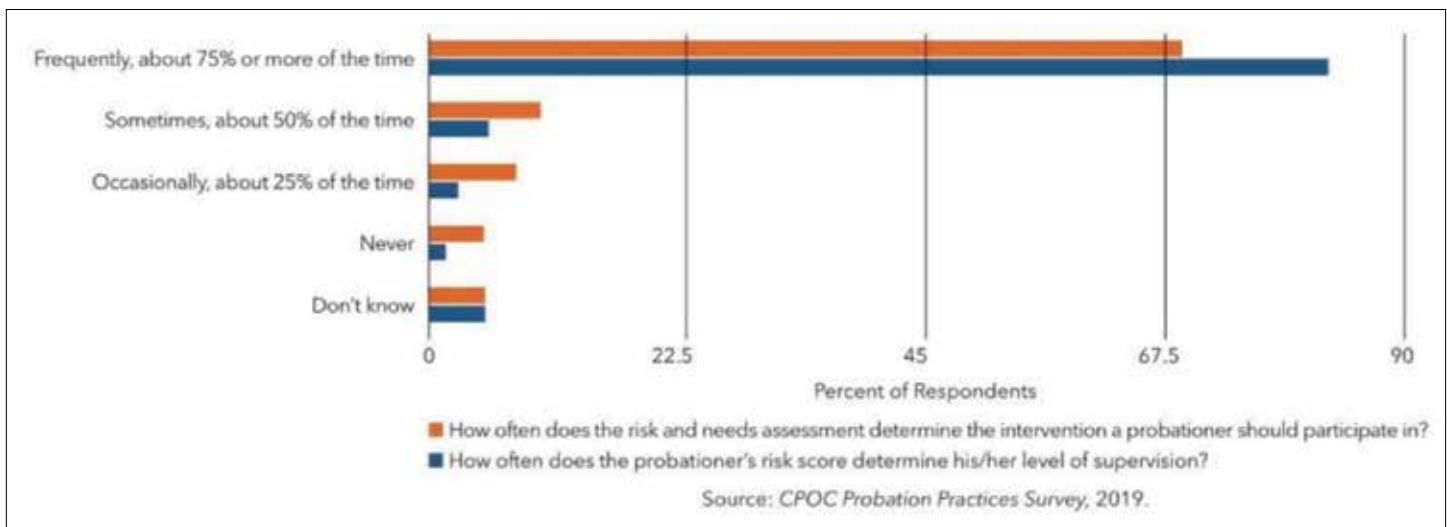
Transformation Comes from Incentives, Not Mandates

Over time many have asked why SB 678 has been successful in transforming not only those on probation caseloads but the probation profession itself. After looking back on the journey and evaluating many other opportunities to create reform and change, the answer seems apparent.

This reform harnessed the strength of probation—the willingness to embrace change for positive impact—and incentivized it by providing rewards for an investment in such changes. The way change was produced here actually resembles the guidelines we follow for those we serve or, indeed, the guidelines that work best in any other area where change is desirable, as all systems made up of humans tend to respond similarly. Invest in people so they do what is known to work, and provide incentives to them for carrying out the changes that are desired. In this way, the transformation becomes "owned" and lasting. Much like the way EBP encourages using a strength-based approach with those on our caseloads, *California chose to take a strength-based approach to policy change and reform.* Our communities continue to benefit from this approach to transformation.

Another important factor in the transformational aspect of this reform was the acceptance from policy makers that one size does not fit all. This once again a truism that could be borrowed from our planning for clients, as it also holds true for a system. California is a large and highly diverse state in multiple ways, with different counties facing very different challenges and opportunities. California ultimately is a decentralized system with 58 counties spanning from Los Angeles County with $9.8 million people to Modoc County with just over 8,000. While SB 678 helped usher in the science of EBP broadly and provided resources to deploy it, implementation of policies looked different in each county. Every county was in a different place on the continuum of change and had different support systems and community culture to factor into working toward that change. What we may have lost by not using standardized, cookie-cutter implementation guidelines, we more than gained in having 58 laboratories of change that help continue to fuel the science of corrections even today. What worked in Yuba County or Riverside County could be later adapted in another county, for example. Moreover, importantly, all counties saw successes following the enactment of SB 678

The provisions of SB 678 are now a necessary part of the California justice system, because it has had a profound impact on probation practices across the state and laid the foundation for a new, more effective approach to public safety. Because 72% of people in the adult justice system have been sentenced to felony probation or probation and jail, the implementation of SB 678 has an extremely widespread impact on the criminal justice system (Bird & Grattet, 2020).

SB 678 laid the groundwork for probation's success and continues to provide probation officers with the tools to increase accountability and opportunity for justice-involved individuals. It is worth reiterating that the successes of SB 678 were seen throughout all of California's 58 counties. Moreover, the positive effects of SB 678 have been long term. The prison population has continued to decline

because of the structural changes in eligibility, realignment implementation, and prison revocation (Bird & Grattet, 2020). It has been over a decade since the implementation of SB 678, and there have been substantially lower crime rates (California Department of Justice 2021). SB 678 also saved the state a significant amount of money by reducing correctional expenditures by over $1 billion since implementation, and in just the first year of implementation, the bill reduced state prison expenditures by approximately $179 million. Not only have crime rates decreased since the implementation of SB 678 (California Department of Justice 2021), but it has also transformed the culture of probation departments and led to substantial increases in EBP while increasing collaboration among county-level agencies, probation departments, and key agencies (Bird & Grattet, 2020).

Lessons Learned and the Next Chapter

Despite the overall optimistic outlook described above, the cautionary tale of historic trends should be kept in mind by not just policymakers, justice stakeholders, and probation professionals, but by our communities as well. Just as a perfect storm swept in transformation, unexpected factors can also knock us off course and cause California to lose the important gains it has made. We must always remember that the profession needs to continue to evaluate and assess our system to improve and add to probation's tool chest of options to keep communities safe while improving the lives of those on our caseloads.

While it is critically important to use practices that have been shown to work based on evidence, probation must remain nimble and innovative and must be willing to utilize promising new practices, as these are a critical step in the evolution of EBPs. Probation can only continue to evolve by constantly auditing practices and improving them based on what we learn. Applying science to probation can have life-changing impacts.

Is there a point of diminishing returns? Anyone in the profession knows while zero recidivism is the goal, not everyone under our supervision is ready and able to exit the justice system successfully. Will incentive-based funding eventually become punishment-based budgeting? Will there be increased resistance to investing in staff training on the practices necessary to impact behavior or an inability to hire the number of officers needed to keep the caseloads at the size where we work with humans versus numbers? And will the pendulum start swinging the other way towards harsher punishments and less support for alternatives to incarceration?

When considering possible future trends, there is one that is perhaps the most dangerous. Could we lose the ability to listen to community correction experts in our profession on how to maintain the necessary balance of accountability and opportunity in favor of playing to one side of the pendulum or the other?

These are just a few potential dangers to the gains won in a hard-fought and well-implemented policy. But if we know anything about probation, we understand that the mission feeds off the evolution, and we look forward to building upon our evolution, not simply protecting the status quo.

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IMPROVING CLIENT SERVICES THROUGH SCIENCE AND PRACTICE:

Assessing the Arkansas Division of Community Correction's Reentry Program

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IMPROVING CLIENT SERVICES THROUGH SCIENCE AND PRACTICE: ASSESSING THE ARKANSAS DIVISION OF COMMUNITY CORRECTION'S REENTRY PROGRAM

Introduction

Decades worth of corrections research underscores the importance of relying on evidence-based practices to reduce future criminality among justice-involved individuals. Unsurprisingly, the phrase "evidence-based" is frequently used by corrections practitioners to describe their interventions and guide reentry initiatives (Mears & Barnes, 2010; Tomkins & Bristow, 2021). In states like Arkansas, legislators have passed laws mandating the use of evidence-based services in community corrections agencies (e.g., parole supervision, 2011/2021; probation generally-supervision, 2011/2019). Nonetheless, high recidivism rates and failing prisoner reentry services suggest a disconnect between intention and practice. Implementation errors and a need for research initiatives and data play a role in the disconnect, especially in agencies that promote evidence-based practices (Gendreau et al., 1999; Mears, 2010).

Applied researchers, though rarely employed in corrections agencies, can help correctional leaders better ensure the agency's practices are evidence-based and enhance their innovations and operations by conducting evaluation research, providing empirically and theoretically sound recommendations for improvement, and presenting scientific research to front-line staff in an accessible manner (Mears, 2010; Mears & Barnes, 2010). Through evaluation research, applied researchers can better ensure that an agency's policies, practices, and programs are evidence-based, effective, and implemented properly (Mears & Cochran, 2015). Research can also reveal less conspicuous but important issues stifling operations, like data quality, interactions between staff and clients, and the extent to which staff use and understand relevant scientific evidence. Although applied research may highlight some negative aspects of an organization, it is a necessary first step in improving client services.

The purpose of this article is threefold. First, we discuss the role of applied researchers in the Arkansas Department of Corrections (ARDOC). Second, we describe one of the first tasks assigned to the researchers: an evaluation of the agency's Reentry Program. Finally, we explain how the evaluation results were used to improve services offered to the department's supervised population.

Leaders at the ARDOC know the importance of merging science with practice and recently expanded the department's research initiatives. They developed a quality improvement and program evaluation (QI/PE) section composed of applied researchers to better ensure effective, evidence-based programs and services are provided to incarcerated and supervised individuals. The QI/PE section is charged with two often overlapping responsibilities. First, it is to conduct applied research for the department. Second, it is to assess the extent to which the ARDOC's programs and services are effective and adhere to evidence-based practices.

These responsibilities are essential, considering that thousands of individuals are released from Arkansas facilities and placed under supervision each year (Arkansas Department of Corrections (ARDOC), 2022). Of those released, a large portion return to incarceration within a few years (ARDOC, 2022). For instance, in 2017, the ARDOC released 10,795 individuals from incarceration. Within 36 months of release, 50.6% had returned to incarceration or received a probation imposition (ARDOC, 2022).

High recidivism rates stress the need for evidence-based correctional programs and services (Mears & Cochran, 2015; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Visher et al., 2017). Scholars consistently show that when correctional innovations adhere to the evidence-based risk, need, and responsivity principles, they are more likely to reduce recidivism among participants than interventions that do not (Andrews et al., 1990). That is, interventions are most effective when they are delivered to higher-risk offenders (viz., risk), target criminogenic needs (viz., need), and are tailored to the learning styles and individual characteristics of participants such as intelligence, maturity, and mental health (viz., responsivity).

These principles remain true for reentry programs (Holliday et al., 2012). Reentry programs are designed to assist incarcerated individuals in the prison-to-community transition process and increase the odds of desistance (Petersilia, 2003). The effectiveness of reentry programs is dependent upon their adherence to evidence-based practices (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Duwe, 2015; Lutze et al., 2014). Ideal reentry programs focus on the shift from incarceration to the community and ensure that necessary, evidence-based services continue after

release from custody (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Visher et al., 2017). To promote desistance from crime, reentry programs should concentrate on the dynamic predictors of recidivism (i.e., criminogenic needs). Criminogenic needs are factors that increase the risk of reoffending, including antisocial cognitions and personality traits, substance use, education and employment history, social and familial relationships, and leisurely activities (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

Exposure to inappropriate treatment or programming can increase the risk of recidivating (Bonta et al., 2000). Program evaluations are necessary to systematically assess their quality and efficiency.

Reentry Program Evaluation

The Reentry Program of Arkansas Community Corrections\ (ACC) garnered much attention around the state and was described as an evidence-based program designed "to motivate and provide opportunities for offenders to prepare for successful reentry into society through community engagement and stakeholder partnerships aimed at increasing public safety and reducing recidivism while slowing prison growth." Individuals are selected from an Arkansas Division of Correction (ADC) prison to participate in ACC's 180-day, four-phase Reentry Program. In phase I, "the resident (i.e., program participant) becomes accustomed to their role and enters the workforce." During phases II and III, participants continue working full-time in the community and participate in "programming that targets criminogenic risk factors," including "criminal thinking patterns, education, employment, family reunification, financial wellness, housing, identification forms, medical/mental health, mentoring, parenting skills, substance and alcohol abuse, and technology." Lastly, in phase IV, participants with an approved parole plan can live in the community, but they are "still considered an ADC inmate." After day 181, the participant "has been successfully reintegrated in the community as a 'law abiding' citizen."

One of the first tasks of the QI/PE research team was to evaluate the effectiveness of the ACC's Reentry Program; however, critical components needed to conduct a program evaluation were missing. For example, program staff did not collect data, have measurable goals, or rely on validated assessment tools to identify participants' risk, needs, or responsivity factors (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Bell, 1974). Like quantitative evaluations, qualitative evaluations can identify areas needing improvement

(Kendall et al., 2018). Therefore, researchers qualitatively assessed the extent to which the Reentry Program adhered to evidence-based practices and addressed participants' criminogenic needs.

Qualitative data were gathered through onsite observations and in-depth interviews with ACC staff, reentry facility staff, and program participants. The semi-structured staff interviews included questions related to educational attainment, employment history, job duties, and attitudes toward the ACC and participants. Additionally, staff was asked about the program, available treatment services, criminogenic needs, and class content. The participant interviews focused on their experiences in the program, class content, available services, employment, treatment services, and attitudes toward facility staff. The onsite visits typically began around 8:00 a.m. and concluded around 8:00 p.m. During the onsite visits, researchers conducted interviews, reviewed program materials and course content, and observed classes. Once the data were collected, three researchers analyzed the information separately and then compared their findings to better ensure inter-rater reliability (Campbell et al., 2013).

Results and Recommendations

Decades worth of corrections literature identifies specific programming practices that decrease the risk of reoffending among formerly incarcerated individuals (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Carter & Sankovitz, 2014; Duwe & Clark, 2015; Lowenkamp et al., 2006). Namely, services should be delivered to higher-risk offenders, target identified criminogenic needs, and be tailored to participants' learning styles and individual characteristics (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Carter & Sankovitz, 2014). Program placement, risk level, criminogenic needs, and learning styles must be determined using validated assessment tools (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Carter & Sankovitz, 2014; Latessa & Lovins, 2010).

Persistence of One Size Fits All

Despite the well-established literature, at the time of the assessment, validated tools were not used, and participants were selected by ACC staff to participate in the program. This means that program placement, length, content, and treatment options were the same for everyone. For example, reentry participants, whether with or without substance or alcohol abuse issues, had to attend Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) and Alcoholics

Anonymous (A.A.) groups, sometimes multiple times a day. These findings were concerning, because risk levels can increase when participants are improperly placed in programs and subjected to treatment (i.e., course material, programming) that does not address their specific criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Moreover, services offered in programs should be evidence-based and delivered using cognitive behavioral techniques to change antisocial behaviors (Lowenkamp et al., 2006). N.A. and A.A. groups do not satisfy these requirements. In fact, the research is mixed on the effectiveness of N.A. and A.A. groups (Huebner & Cobbina, 2007; Kaskutas, 2009; Kownacki & Shadish, 1999).

Criminogenic Needs

According to reentry staff and program documentation, participants engaged in "programming that targets criminogenic risk factors," including "criminal thinking patterns, education, employment, family reunification, financial wellness, housing, identification forms, medical/mental health, mentoring, parenting skills, substance and alcohol abuse, and technology." Although the list excludes important criminogenic needs, researchers found that the only items addressed across reentry facilities were substance use, employment, and education. For reentry participants, substance use was addressed through frequent and mandatory attendance to N.A. and A.A. groups. The Reentry Program's approach to addressing employment was to require participants to obtain and maintain full-time employment for a predetermined employer. The facilities offer GED courses for residents who have not received a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) degree. However, participants with a high school diploma or GED also had to attend GED classes if they were not in an N.A. or A.A. group or at work. Substance abuse, employment, and education are criminogenic needs, but correctional staff must rely on evidence-based practices to address them properly.

In sum, researchers concluded that the Reentry Program did not adhere to evidence-based practices despite the program's description. More specifically, the evaluation revealed the reentry staff's unawareness of evidence-based practices, criminogenic factors, and relevant corrections research. The researchers did find that the facility directors and staff were passionate about their jobs and the program, which helped them build rapport with their clients. Similar sentiments emerged from the participant interviews. Positive relationships between staff

and participants can play a pivotal role in reentry (Angell et al., 2014; Kendall et al., 2018).

After the evaluation, the researchers provided ARDOC leaders with recommendations for improving the Reentry Program and its practices. First, the researchers recommended that reentry staff attend training on evidence-based practices, data, actuarial assessment tools, criminogenic needs, and course facilitation. The second recommendation aimed to align the program with the risk, need, and responsivity principles (Andrews et al., 1990). To appropriately adhere to these principles, validated assessment tools should identify reentry participants' risks, needs, and responsivity factors.

After the assessment tools are used, the results should inform program participation, treatment/classes, dosage, and how the services are delivered. Dosage differs from structured tasks (e.g., school, work) in that dosage is the duration and intensity of treatment services. Higher-risk offenders have more criminogenic needs than lower-risk offenders and require more interventions. Only individual sessions and treatment groups that target criminogenic needs using an evidence-based approach (i.e., cognitive, behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, or social learning) should count toward dosage. This means that the length and services provided by the program should vary by participant. Put differently, the program should not be the same for everyone. Finally, employment and substance abuse groups (e.g., N.A. and A.A.) should not be used to address criminogenic needs.

Ongoing Reentry Changes

Informed by the results, ARDOC leadership is in the process of revising and restructuring the Reentry Program to better align with evidence-based practices and meet the needs of program participants. Since the evaluation, ACC staff have increased training initiatives for reentry personnel and are acquiring an evidence-based curriculum. Additionally, they are transforming the reentry facilities into drug and alcohol treatment centers and developing relationships with community providers to better address participants' criminogenic and mental health needs. Finally, ARDOC leaders have approved various program tracks that differ by risk level.

Conclusion

When people are released from incarceration, the transition back to the community is fraught with challenges (Mears & Cochran, 2015). Reentry programs

seek to provide participants with services to help them overcome reentry barriers and desist from future criminal offending (Jonson & Cullen, 2015). Successful reentry programs are rooted in science and adhere to the risk, need, and responsivity principles (Andrews et al., 1990; Mears, 2010). Despite the well-established success of evidence-based practices in programming and services, correctional innovations are commonly designed with good intentions and assumptions in mind (Mears, 2010; Wilson & Davis, 2006). Some programs may have an evidence-based foundation, but implementation errors have changed the program's intention (Duwe & Clark, 2015). Program evaluations are important because they reveal a program's foundation, quality, integrity, and effectiveness.

Corrections agencies may not employ applied researchers that they can use for evaluations, or they may lack data and/or run into other program-related factors that pose evaluation difficulties. However, program evaluations are the best means to allow corrections agencies to detect and correct misguided and ineffective innovations. Although both internal and external applied research produce information for corrections agencies, there are some notable differences between the two. External researchers will perhaps be less biased than their internal counterparts, so the findings may be given more weight by stakeholders inside and outside of the agency. While that concern is understandable and, in some cases, warranted, there are advantages to hiring applied researchers. For example, internal researchers may better understand the agency's esoteric verbiage and data issues and should have easy and regular access to agency leadership. These benefits may reduce misunderstandings and expedite the data collection process. In the end, though, evaluation research is necessary regardless of where the researcher is employed.

Most incarcerated individuals are eventually released, and community correctional programs and services can impact their transition into the community, their likelihood of reoffending, and public safety (Kendall et al., 2018). The direction in which these outcomes are impacted depends on the quality of the innovations offered. Without program evaluations, the quality cannot be assessed. Thus, program evaluations should be a top priority for corrections agencies.

The Arkansas Department of Corrections is committed to providing efficient and effective services to the supervised and incarcerated individuals in its care. This requires the department to identify areas in need of improvement. This article describes a qualitative evaluation of the Arkansas Division of Community Correction's Reentry Program by researchers in the recently implemented QI/PE section. The evaluation revealed that the program did not adhere to evidence-based practices or adequately address participants' criminogenic needs. However, ARDOC leaders used the results and recommendations to inform ongoing revisions to the program.

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