

Probation, Parole and Community Corrections...

A Force for Positive 
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The Case for Branding

What is a brand, and why should our profession concern itself with a discipline that sounds like something to do with cereal boxes on a supermarket shelf?

The notion of branding is sweeping across all business and organizational categories. In an increasingly busy and crowded marketplace, it is becoming critically important to find ways to effectively stand out with compelling communications, beginning with a powerful expression of who you are and what you do. The frenetic pace of business today demands organizations and companies make their case with conciseness and impact.

It all comes down to what experts call share-of-mind or awareness. We need to make sure our profession is competing effectively for this valuable “territory.”

Every organization struggles for its share of voice. Branding is the discipline of developing and maintaining a strategic, distinctive, and memorable identity shorthand. It is a mandate for being heard, understood and forming lasting impressions.

Consistency and repetition are key to establishing an effective brand. From respected organizations to consumer product brands, a brand’s power and effectiveness builds when audiences hear and perceive simple key messages over time.

When we first begin supporting our new brand, we may feel we are repeating ourselves unnecessarily. But repetition and consistency of language really work, as successful brands have shown.

To brand our field in a way that will build momentum and achieve strong awareness, here are ways you and your team can implement the program in your department and community:

- **Begin building the brand from the inside** with your teams. First explain the brand’s value in face-to-face meetings, internal e-mails, newsletters, and other venues. Use the brand logo, tagline, and messages where appropriate so employees begin to understand and support the program. Once the brand has been unveiled, consider drafting newsletter feature stories that spotlight officers and other team members whose accomplishments and activities embody the brand values. Introduce partner agencies and groups to the new brand program, and co-brand joint materials as appropriate.

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- **Use the visual logo and tagline** in all of your existing and future communications. Incorporate the look and language into your Web site. Use on business cards, automatic e-mail addresses, letterhead, newsletters, meeting materials, brochures, shirts and caps, pins and posters.
- **Commit to using the key messages** outlined here to drive awareness of our brand and favorable opinions of our profession.
- **Create a news media outreach program** to make print, broadcast, and online media aware of the new branding initiative, our value as an organization, and important programs and issues. Create a “news bureau,” driven by a quarterly calendar of news ideas. Reach out to media regularly to announce events, milestones, and feature story ideas to keep our brand in the news. Invite reporters to come in for briefings about important issues, or to participate in a “day-in-the-life” of officers to build awareness of how you contribute to the community.
- **Develop a brand speakers’ program** to advance the Community Corrections/Probation and Parole profile in your community. Officers, administrators, or other key employees can be tapped to speak at various local venues to raise awareness of your contributions to the community.
- **Seek out opportunities for public service announcements (PSAs).** Reach out to media sales and/or community affairs representatives to see if they will donate space or time to help you get the word out. Print, broadcast, or outdoor billboards are all options.
- **Consider existing branding opportunities** such as Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week (third week of July), Victims’ Rights Week (April), and agency awards (i.e., Line Officer of the Year). These are all branding opportunities. When reaching out to media or the community, brand your efforts to associate Community Corrections/Probation and Parole with positive news hooks.

Positioning Statement

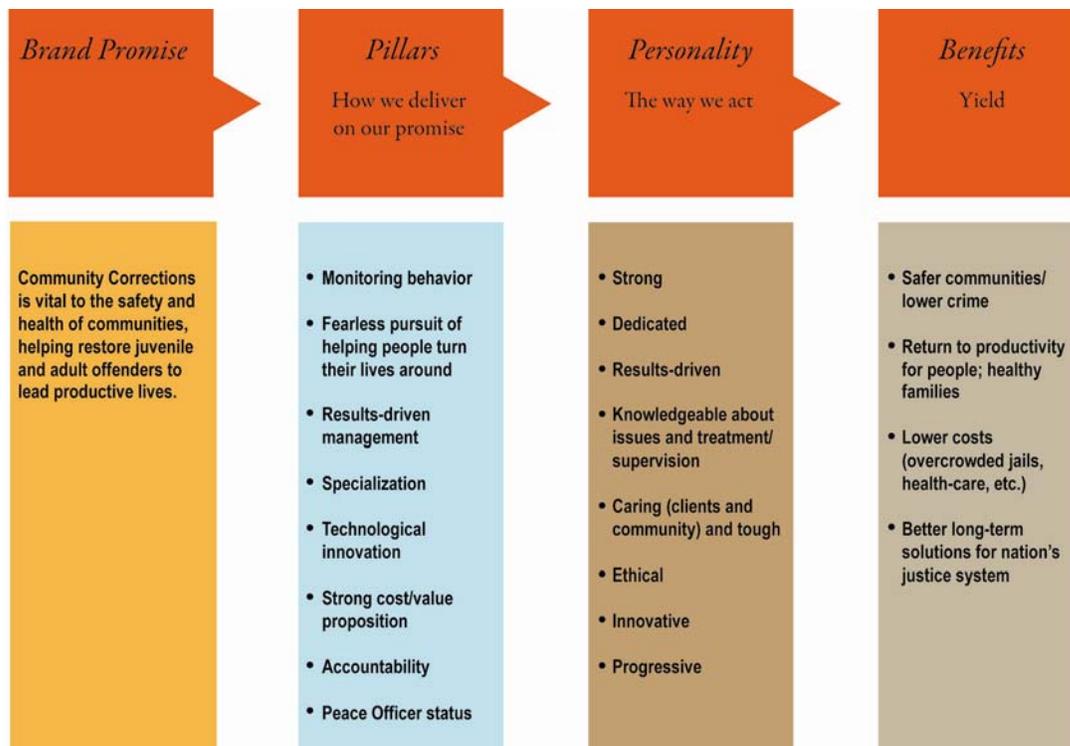
A “positioning” or summary statement is a simple, easy way to communicate who we are and what we do. Use it often. Think of it as a quick “elevator speech,” a way to inform colleagues and others who ask, “What do you do?” or “What is Community Corrections/Probation and Parole?” People want to learn about the value we provide, but their window of attention is short, so we need to have this language handy.

Community Corrections/Probation and Parole – The Core of Justice

Community Corrections/Probation and Parole is the hope and core of justice and safety in our communities. We intervene to prevent the recurrence of crime among juvenile and adult defendants and offenders by supervising them and getting them the help they need to change problem behavior.

Brand Platform

This summary chart shows 1) our brand promise, 2) the pillars on which this promise is delivered, 3) our personality (the way we act), and 4) the benefits we offer. Use it to focus your communications and ensure you maximize each opportunity to strategically support the brand.



Brand Promise

- Community Corrections/Probation and Parole is critical to the safety and health of communities and American society. It helps restore juvenile and adult offenders to productive lives.

Pillars: How we deliver on our promise

- Monitoring behavior and activity
- Peace Officer status to detain and arrest offenders who pose a threat to the community
- Enforce accountability with suitable rewards and sanctions
- Fearless pursuit of helping people turn their lives around
- Dedication to addressing the nation's massive issues related to crime
- Results-driven management
- Specialization
- Technological innovation
- Strong cost/value proposition

Personality: The way we act

- Strong
- Dedicated
- Results-driven
- Knowledgeable about issues and treatment/supervision
- Caring and tough (clients and community)
- Ethical
- Innovative
- Progressive

Benefits or Yield

- Safer communities and less crime

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- Return to personal productivity and healthy families
- Lower costs (overcrowded jails, health care, etc.)
- Better long-term solution for nation's justice system

Messages

Use these key messages to communicate about Community Corrections/ Probation and Parole. Use specific language to help seed a consistent and strong image for the field.

Key Message

The field of Community Corrections — probation and parole officers and other critical support services — is doing work that makes a critical difference in the safety of our communities and society. We provide supervision and treatment resources to protect and help people, families, and communities address the issues and problems that drive crime.

Proof Points

- Effective intervention is a proven way to prevent recurrence among offenders and keep communities safe.
- We are about:
 - A force for positive change against delinquency and crime in the community
 - Building bridges to community safety
 - Turning lives around
 - Correcting courses
 - Raising hope
 - Lowering crime

Key Message

Our field is a vital part of the nation's justice system and the most cost effective solution to long term public safety. We are dramatically under-funded compared to other parts of the system at a time when the nation desperately needs our capabilities and resources to bring more effective and modern approaches to quelling crime.

Proof Points

- Community Corrections receives less than 10 percent of total correctional funding across the country.ⁱ
- 70 percent of the adult correctional population is under the jurisdiction of probation and parole officers.ⁱⁱ
- Six in 10 adjudicated juvenile cases fall to Community Corrections for supervision.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Today's parole officer has a caseload of 106 ex-prisoners to supervise (^{iv}); the optimal caseload is about 35 (^v)
- Juvenile court caseloads have grown and changed. In 2002, U.S. courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated 1.6 million cases in which the juvenile was charged with a delinquency offense—an offense for which an adult could be prosecuted in criminal court. Thus, U.S. juvenile courts handled more than 4,400 delinquency cases per day in 2002. In comparison, approximately 1,100 delinquency cases were processed daily in 1960.^{vi}
- Probation and parole caseloads rose 270 percent from 1980 to 2006.^{vii}
- Communities and the justice system are at a critical crossroads. A large number of adults jailed under the “get tough” sentencing laws are approaching release dates and will fall under Community Corrections.^{viii}
- Agencies and services need funding and political and civic support to create and maintain an infrastructure to support community safety, especially now.

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- The current trend — jailing worst offenders and closely supervising and re-training the rest — burdens a field that’s already strained.

- Juveniles face more challenges than ever before:
 - The Census Bureau estimates that the juvenile population will increase 14% between 2000 and 2025—about one-half of one percent per year. By 2050, the juvenile population will be 36% larger than it was in 2000. Our juvenile population faces far more challenges than ever before. In 2002, poverty was more common among children under age 5 than any other age group and research has often found a connection between poverty and self-reported delinquency.
 - In the last half of the 20th century, the proportion of juveniles living in single-parent households increased. A recent study by McCurley and Snyder explored the relationship between family structure and self-reported problem behaviors. The central finding was that youth ages 12–17 who lived in families with both biological parents were, in general, less likely than youth in other families to report a variety of problem behaviors, such as running away from home, sexual activity, major theft, assault, and arrest.
 - Although the dropout rate fell over the last 30 years, nearly a half million youth quit high school in 2000. Educational failure is linked to law-violating behavior. The difficulties finding employment for high school dropouts can be documented by examining their labor force and unemployment status. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that 64% of the 2000/2001 school year dropouts were in the labor force (employed or actively looking for work), with more than one-third (36%) of those in the labor force unemployed. In comparison, 81% of the 2001 high school graduates who were not in college were in the labor force, and a far smaller proportion of this workforce (21%) was unemployed.^{ix}

Key Message

There is real urgency for the kind of forward-thinking systemic approaches to curbing crime that Community Corrections/Probation and Parole provide as the nation faces what thought leaders call a “massive and unprecedented influx” of prisoners re-entering society after a decades-long wave of get-tough sentencing trends.

Proof Points

- In the 1980s, 2.5 million prisoners reentered society from jails and prisons. This number will reach 7 million in this decade. ^(x)
- Two decades ago the total state and federal prison population was 700,000 – the same number of prisoners who will be *released* in 2009.^(xi)
- Nationally, nearly 92,000 delinquents were held in residential placement facilities on October 22, 2003.^{xii}
- Study of past trends projects that two out of three ex-prisoners will be rearrested within three years ^(xiii) and commit 9.5 million new crimes by 2013 ^(xiv)
- There is a demographic surge in the number of teens and young adults who are statistically more prone to commit crimes than the general population.
- At the heart of the threat toward communities and society is that during incarceration, our system does little to prepare people for reentry. Most, according to the National Institute of Justice, spend most of their time in a “high level of idleness,” without job and life skill training or other activities aimed at helping them lead productive lives on the outside. ^(xv)
- Now more than ever, our country needs a well supported community corrections/ probation and parole system that can help provide the necessary supervision and programs to help ex-prisoners and youth steer clear of crime and violence when they are released.

Key Message

The price tag for jails and prisons is a financial burden to taxpayers. The social costs of repeat offenders are a burden to communities. We need to focus on probation and parole as an effective alternative to jail and prisons for all but the most serious crimes and offenders.

Proof Points

- Jail and prison populations have exploded over the past 40 years and are expected to continue spiraling upward, a trend rooted in sentencing policy. (Prison populations increased by 340 percent from 1980 to 2006.)^{xvi}
- Facility crowding affects a substantial proportion of youth in custody and many juvenile offenders are in facilities that have more residents than standard beds. These facilities held more than 39,300 residents, the vast majority of whom were offenders younger than 21.^{xvii}
- Prisons are self-fueling systems, with 40 percent recidivism.^{xviii}
- Research shows little correlation between incarceration practices and crime rates.^{xix}
- The rise of U.S. inmate population has resulted in significantly increased costs for taxpayers. The average annual cost to incarcerate an inmate in the United States is \$20,674. The Federal average cost is \$23,542, and the State average is \$20,261.¹¹ [()Annual costs among local jail systems vary widely, from \$8,037 to \$66,795.^{xx} Costs for probation/parole supervision are much lower and vary from state to state and by level of supervision. In Missouri, the average cost per day to house one inmate is \$35.52. The average cost per day to monitor an individual on probation and parole is \$3.10 per offender per day — 9 percent of the cost of incarceration.^{xxi}
- State corrections budgets are outpacing spending in other state funded programs like education and social welfare. (California spends as much on incarcerating inmates as it does to educate students in public universities.^{xxii})

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- Unlike prisons and jails, funding for probation and parole has not risen to accommodate the dramatic increase in offenders supervised.^{xxiii}
- Evidenced-based practices community corrections intervention stands to reduce inmate populations by 10-50 percent.^{xxiv}

Narrative for Change

Our nation is in the midst of a massive and unprecedented infiltration of prisoners returning to our communities.

Recidivism has long plagued society, but never has America experienced such an incredible influx of prisoners re-entering our communities. Compared to the 1980s, the United States will be infiltrated with almost three times the number of people released from state and federal prisons this decade — spiking from 2.5 million to 7 million.

Americans are concerned that crime in our country is getting worse. Studies reveal that 69 percent of Americans believe that crime is a bigger threat to their personal safety than terrorism, and 78 percent think that children are more vulnerable to crime today than they were a decade ago.

Research reveals that nearly two-thirds of ex-prisoners are estimated to be rearrested within three years of their release, and this group alone will be responsible for 9.5 million crimes — including 1.3 violent ones — by 2013.

Once released, most prisoners won't have jobs, continue drug counseling, or deal with mental health problems. Many will not have successful relationships with their families or integrate successfully within their communities.

The volatile combination of this already troubled population coupled with unproductive prison terms, a jarring return home, and a parole system interested more in punishing minor acts of failure rather than rewarding success, explains why the majority return to prison.

A perfect storm is brewing, stirring the crime wave to unprecedented heights. These volatile elements include: A massive population of offenders entering society will return to troubled neighborhoods. A technology revolution and online social networking dangers now puts kids at increased risk. Finally, there will be a demographic surge of new teenagers and young adults who are statistically more prone to commit crimes. Together these trends, combine forces leaving our nation in a perilous state.

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Furthermore, the justice arena is struggling with challenging caseloads and stagnant budgets. The typical parole officer has a caseload of 106 ex-prisoners while the optimal caseload is around 35. In 2005, nearly 200,000 people or one-third of those admitted to prison were for parole violations — equal to the number of people sent to prison for any crime in 1980.

Studies reveal that keeping communities safe cannot be the sole responsibility of law enforcement and the corrections institutions. Successful re-entry requires collaboration and coordination between multiple state agencies, levels of government, and private partners to meet the educational, treatment, housing, employment and health-care needs of those being released.

There's never been a more important time for the field to identify who we are and the pivotal role we play in our communities and justice system.

Armed with powerful, distinctive branding and media outreach campaigns, we possess the tools to increase public awareness of the positive impact our programs and services offer our communities.

We can now establish a leading position as a national force for creating positive change and for turning lives around.

Backgrounder

Overview

The field of Community Corrections is composed of an estimated 80,000-100,000 probation and parole professionals (staff, supervisors, and administrators), along with educators, residential and non-residential intervention staff, volunteers, and private citizens with an interest in criminal and juvenile justice. Probation, which means offenders are placed under the supervision of a probation officer in lieu of serving time in jail or prison, is the most common form of sentencing in the United States. Through parole or supervised release, inmates are released into the community under community supervision officer monitoring.

The women and men of community corrections perform work that makes a critical difference in the safety of our communities. They provide supervision and treatment resources to help people, families, and communities address the issues and problems that drive problem behavior. Most officers in the field come from social services and/or law enforcement and have a deep commitment to helping adult and juvenile offenders turn their lives around to live productively in society, while simultaneously making them accountable for their behavior. The commitment to help communities become safer is paramount to the profession.

Sweeping Reach; Increasingly Specialized

The Community Corrections field significantly affects people, communities, and the nation. Some 70 percent of the adult correctional population is under the jurisdiction of probation and parole officers.^{xxv} Six in 10 adjudicated juvenile cases fall to community corrections for supervision.^{xxvi}



The work of community corrections is hard, dangerous, and increasingly specialized. Workloads generally have become overwhelmingly demanding and continue to expand.

Budgets are inadequate and getting tighter. The prospect of sentencing reform creates more stress on an already strained system that has little bandwidth to absorb additional workload.

While community corrections agencies supervise the vast majority of the offender population and caseloads are overflowing and growing every year, they receive less than 10 percent of correctional funding from state and local government. ^{xxvii} They also receive limited public support and appreciation.

**Reducing
Recidivism; New
Approaches**

As a result of the get-tough sentencing trends in the 1990s, the U.S. will soon witness an unprecedented reentry of former prisoners into society. This influx will require, more than ever before, a forward-thinking systemic approach in order to reduce crime and prevent prisoner recidivism. Preparing prisoners for reentry during incarceration and providing increased support for the probation and parole community will help in this effort.

Reentry youth need support for successful reintegration into the community. The large majority of committed youth indicated some degree of anger management problem (81%); most also expressed anxiety (61%) or depression (59%). Hallucinations were reported by 1 in 6 youth (17%), 1 in 4 said they had suicidal feelings or ideas (27%), and 1 in 5 said they had attempted suicide at least once in their life (21%). These data indicate that substantial proportions of the juvenile reentry population are likely to need extensive supervision and support services when they return to the community. ^{xxviii}

The field of Community Corrections is embracing a range of supervision, technology, and measurement strategies to maximize its resources, reach, and results.

Key Trends in the Field

Specialization As society has become more complex and challenging, so have the issues such as addictions, violence, and gang activities that surround juvenile and adult offenders sentenced to probation or released to parole. Agencies and personnel are specializing their services with targeted expertise and skill sets to meet the needs of the people they supervise.

Rehabilitation of offenders is on the rise, going back to a trend from the mid-19th century that was based on the principle that offenders can change and that the corrections system has a central role in helping them. This trend was interrupted in the 1970s, when rehabilitative efforts and correctional treatment were attacked as ineffective. By the 1980s, states were beginning to disassociate rehabilitation from community corrections.

Researchers, meanwhile, were proving that correctional rehabilitation was, in fact, effective, if done correctly. Situations in the United States today, utilizing evidence-based strategies, are proof positive that rehabilitation and treatment are productive corrections solutions.

Technology is changing the way supervision is conducted. Electronic monitoring devices and services are becoming much more widely used. Tools such as drug testing products, GPS tracking, voice verification, ignition interlock, pupil response, and computer monitoring software for sex offenders are helping agencies and supervisors extend their reach and effectiveness. On the other hand, these new tools also

increase the load on personnel, since round-the-clock,

real-time monitoring promises to bring more violations to the fore and determining whether these violations are actual or technological malfunctions takes time and research.

Community Justice is another theme emerging as justice expands beyond sanctioning the offender to include addressing the concerns and issues of victims and communities. Community-based problem-solving to prevent future crime is also becoming more prevalent as the justice system and community join together to take a proactive, preventive, and holistic approach to crime prevention.

Results-driven management and evidence-based practices are increasingly emphasized, and managers must demonstrate effective, measurable outcomes.

Collaboration and partnerships are increasingly important at all levels of government, including adult and juvenile probation and parole since no agency can accomplish its mission alone given the complexities of today's society. Police/probation partnerships, task forces, and specialized courts are examples of various agencies working toward a common goal.

Community Corrections Facts at a Glance

Surge in Demand

- Today's parole officer has a caseload of 106 ex-prisoners to supervise (^{xxxix}); the optimal caseload is about 35 (^{xxx})
- After the "get-tough" sentencing laws of the past 30 years that favored incarceration for most crimes, we are now seeing a deluge of prisoners who have served their time and reentering the community.
- Changes in the juvenile court delinquency caseload over the years have strained the courts' resources and programs. The volume of delinquency cases handled by juvenile courts rose 41% between 1985 and 2002. Courts were asked to respond not only to more cases but also to a different type of caseload—one with more person offense and drug cases.^{xxxi}
- In the 1980s, 2.5 million prisoners reentered society from jails and prisons. This number will reach 7 million in this decade. (^{xxxii})
- Two decades ago the total state and federal prison population was 700,000 – the same number of prisoners who will be *released* in 2009. (^{xxxiii})
- Since 1995, the number of adults on probation and parole has increased nearly 30 percent, compared with 2.9 percent for prisons and 4 percent for jails.^{xxxiv}
- The U.S. adult correctional population — incarcerated or in the community — reached 7.2 million men and women in 2006, according to the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). About 3.2 percent of the U.S. adult population, or one in every 31 adults, was either in the nation's prisons or jails or on probation or parole at the end of 2006.^{xxxv}
- At least 95 percent of all state prisoners will be released. Nearly 80 percent will be released to parole supervision.^{xxxvi}

Under-Supported

- While corrections agencies supervise the vast majority of the offender population (including increasing numbers of violent offenders), they receive

less than 10 percent of correctional funding from state and local government and limited public support.^{xxxvii}

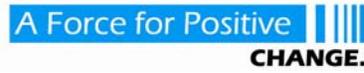
- Funding for probation and parole has not kept pace with the jump in numbers of offenders needing supervision.
- Community Corrections is utilizing technology, treatment specialization, and other advanced skills to strike at behaviors that are the root cause of crime in communities and to more effectively supervise offenders and juveniles. These technologies and methodologies require more equitable funding.

Need for Reform

- Prison populations increased by 340 percent from 1980 to 2006.^{xxxviii}
- Disproportionate minority confinement in the juvenile justice system is a chronic and pernicious problem. The statistics regarding the disparate treatment of minority youth at early stages of the process are stunning. In Colorado in the reporting year of July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005, African American youth experienced a relative rate of arrest of 3.99, meaning they are almost four times as likely to be arrested as white youth. In the same reporting period, Hispanic/Latino youth experienced a relative rate of arrest of 2.46. All minority youth had a relative rate of arrest of 2.5.^{xxxix}
- Per capita operating costs for U.S. prisons in 2001 were \$22,650, not including capital costs for prison construction and expansion.^{xl}
- The average cost per day to monitor an individual on probation and parole is \$3.10 per offender per day – 9 percent of the cost of incarceration.^{xli}
- Research shows that if evidence-based probation and parole best practices were implemented, state prison inmate populations could be reduced by up to 50 percent.^{xlii}
- A 10 percent reduction in state prison population in 2005 would have saved taxpayers \$98.3 million; a 50 percent decrease would have saved \$3.3 billion.^{xliii}
- Research findings support little, if any, correlation between crime rates and incarceration practices.^{xliv}

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- Nearly 33 percent of state prison releases in 1999 were drug offenders, 31 percent were property offenders and 25 percent were violent offenders.^{xlv}

Agencies should add their own relevant statistics to this list.

Working with the Media

The community corrections field has an opportunity to enhance and protect its brand reputation through media relations. Opportunities abound for generating positive and educational stories in local and regional media. The scope and influence of your agency work in the community, along with your compelling stories and initiatives, will offer news media a compelling news opportunity.

The launch of a new brand identity offers a strong news hook and platform for telling your division's story. All you need are:

- A pitch letter or pitch e-mail
- Research on print beat reporters and news assignment editors at television and radio stations
- Preparation of spokesperson(s)
- Graphics of logo and informational backgrounder (provided here)

The following media guidelines provide assistance and direction for identifying and telling positive stories, whether you are working to place stories with local or national news media, drafting news releases, or working with trade media in your respective region.

The basic building blocks for proactively telling stories are either a pitch query (story idea) or a news release (news announcement). Departments can send either to local or regional media and trade publications as appropriate.

Types of Media

- Local or regional newspapers, television, radio stations
- Wire services such as The Associated Press, Reuters, Bloomberg News, Dow Jones Newswire
- National publications such as *Time* magazine, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *People* magazine
- National newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*
- Radio or television networks or news services such as CNBC or CNN



- Trade publications

Trade publications primarily cover a specific industry niche and come in print format, online, or both. They reach specific narrow audiences focused on specific professions or topics. Trade media often influence mainstream media; beat reporters at general news organizations sometimes look to trades to spark story ideas.

Pitching the Media

News organizations are often inundated with press releases, so you must make your news stand out. Most reporters are looking for a story idea they can craft to fit their editorial needs. A news release or a “pitch” e-mail or fax followed by a personal call with the reporter is an effective way to communicate and get attention for your story idea.

Communicate Effectively

- Know your topic, but avoid jargon. Use language that anyone outside your field can understand
- Be concise. Editors and reporters are busy. If they don’t see news value in the first few seconds, they’ll go on to the next idea
- Use short, compelling e-mail subject lines to “hook” the reporter’s interest

Know the publication

- Does it cover crime, law enforcement, or positive community news?
- Does it focus on trends that mimic news you can offer?
- Does the editorial calendar (list of story topics for the upcoming year) feature ideas that would fit with your news?
- Which reporters cover crime, law enforcement, or positive community news?

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- What has the reporter written about the subject lately and was the tone positive or negative?

Know what you are pitching

- Who is your spokesperson?
- What are the key points you want to make?

Use your key messages

- Communicate key messages upfront in your interview. Repeat them throughout the interview as appropriate. This helps you stay on message and avoid being misinterpreted.

News Releases

News releases are intended to generate media coverage by providing newsworthy information that educates and motivates media. News releases directly inform target audiences. Write the release to your intended audience: neighbors in the community, corrections officials, or even a national audience.

A news release is your opportunity to concisely communicate the key messages and supporting facts of a story. Although your organization produces the release, it should be written from the point of view of an outside party (3rd person). To emphasize key messages, include a suggested headline and quotes from your organization leaders.

Your news release is usually only the starting point of a news story. News outlets generally will want to follow up with their own questions, conduct their own interviews with relevant people to generate fresh quotes, and write their own headlines.

When preparing a news release, it is important to anticipate potential questions the reporter might ask in follow-up interviews. This includes both easy and tough questions. It is also helpful to actually rehearse mock interviews.

Suggested guidelines for writing news releases:

Format

- Be clear. Use a font that is easy to read.
- Double-space and indent paragraphs or leave a space between paragraphs.
- Provide the name and contact information of a person the media can call for additional information. Include phone number and e-mail address.
- A news release should typically be no longer than two pages. There are exceptions, but generally, the shorter the better. If reporters want additional information they will contact you.

Headlines and Style

- Use the Community Corrections or Probation and Parole brand name in the headline.
- Use an active voice. Write in the present or future tense.
- Keep sentences short and snappy.
- Quotes should be compelling and succinct. Avoid long, rambling quotes.
- Always spell out acronyms on first reference.

Text

- The headline and first paragraph should “tell the story.” Keep important facts up front. Editors cut releases from the bottom up, so all news should be in the first paragraph. The remaining paragraphs explain the news.
- Make it clear why the reader should care. Because your audience may have a limited knowledge about the story or industry, you need to make it relevant to them. Why does community corrections matter?
- Include direct quotes from leaders in your division or department.

Responding to a Media Call

Media relations often involves responding to a media call that is unexpected. Use these opportunities to present a positive image to the media.

- If a reporter or other media person calls you out of the blue, it’s important to gain some time to prepare a response.
- Take down the reporter’s name and media organization, their contact information, and their “drop dead” deadline. Then use your key messages and fact points to craft an appropriate response, or brief a spokesperson. Call the reporter back and do the interview. If you commit to respond by the reporter’s deadline, it is extremely important to keep your promise.
- If a journalist, editor, or producer contacts a member organization for a story that is of national scope and additional information or research is needed, politely explain that there is a better spokesperson who can answer the questions and

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- that you will work to locate and have that person return the call. Then contact Diane Kincaid at APPA (859) 244-8196 before participating in an interview.

Sample Pitch Letter/E-mail

Subject line: [City/county] Probation and Parole Launches New Identity Program

Dear [Reporter]:

This month, [city/county agency name] is launching a new identity program that we believe will set the stage for greater awareness of our role in community safety. The program is an extension of a new national initiative — being rolled out in cities and towns across the country — aimed at better communicating the important work probation and parole and supporting professionals play in keeping communities safe.

Since the beginnings of the nation’s probation and parole system, our people and teams have been a critical but often overlooked link in the justice system. We provide supervision and treatment resources to help people, families and communities address the issues and problems that drive problem behavior. And importantly, we’re doing it with a suite of new technologies and processes that make us increasingly effective in responding to the steady rise in numbers of adult offenders and juveniles under our jurisdiction.

Drug testing products, GPS tracking, voice verification, ignition interlock, pupil response, and computer monitoring software for sex offenders are helping agencies and supervisors extend their reach and effectiveness. On the other hand, these new tools also increase the load on personnel, since round-the-clock real-time monitoring promises to bring more violations to the fore and determining whether these violations are actual or technological malfunctions takes time and research.

Today’s probation and parole system has an exciting story to tell and one that I hope you will consider now as we introduce our new brand identity. I’m attaching a backgrounder here with more information.

I would be happy to meet with you and tell you more. Please call or e-mail me, and I will follow up in a few days if we do not connect immediately.



[Insert Logo and Tagline]

[Month, day, year]

[Contact name, title] [Name of organization]

[Telephone] [Email address]

Probation and Parole Launches New Identity Program

Agency Educates Community about Reducing Crime

ST. LOUIS, May 14, 2008 — [City/county agency name] is launching a new identity program on [insert date] that will set the stage for greater awareness of the positive role of community corrections in [insert city]. The program is part of a national initiative aimed at educating communities about proven ways to reduce crime.

“We’re a force for positive change in [city],” said Alexa Smith, chief of XXX for the [city] Community Corrections agency. “My officers work every day to raise hope, turn lives around, and lower crime. Our new brand identity does a better job of communicating our value.”

The new Community Corrections logo is a [insert description]. The new tagline is [insert tagline].

Most parole officers in the field have a social services or law enforcement background and a deep commitment to both make offenders accountable for their behavior and help them change their lives to live productively.

Although probation and parole officers play a critical role in the justice system, their work is often overlooked or misunderstood.

Seventy percent of the adult correctional population is under the jurisdiction of probation and parole officers, but Community Corrections receives less than 10 percent of total correctional funding nationwide.

Communities and the justice system are at a critical crossroads because a large number of adults jailed under the “get tough” sentencing laws are approaching release dates and will soon fall under Community Corrections.^{xlvi}

-more-



Probation and Parole
Add One

The profession needs funding and political and civic support to maintain an infrastructure and continue to support community safety.

The commitment to help communities become safer is paramount to the profession.

###

Internal Meeting Agenda for Brand Kickoff

1. **Welcome**
2. **Exercise: Ask participants how they explain their profession.** The Point: There has not been an easy, simple way to communicate who we are and the value we bring.
3. **Goals of Meeting**
 - Acquaint you with a project that's vitally important to the future of our agency and our work.
 - Unveil new brand identity.
 - Get feedback on ways we can extend this to maximize our brand footprint among key audiences and communities.
4. **Situation**
 - Public awareness low; little understanding of the critical role and work we do to promote community safety, complexity of job, etc.
 - Funding for Community Corrections is stagnant, with the field receiving only 10 percent of expenditures allocated for the total U.S. justice system.
 - The correlation is clear: We must improve public awareness of our work to increase our funding over time.
 - We live in a media-rich, sound-bite society. We must learn to communicate our value proposition in few seconds — the time it takes to travel a few floors on an elevator.

5. ***Brand Identity Program***

- We engaged a firm last fall to help develop a simple, compelling brand identity that will be “shorthand” for communicating who we are and what we do.
- Our positioning statement: Community Corrections/Probation and Parole is the heart of justice and safety in our communities. We intervene to prevent recurrence of crime among juvenile and adult offenders by getting them the help they need to change problem behavior.
- Our emphasis will be on demonstrating the value we provide in the community and to society.
- [Unveil logo and tagline with explanation on treatment.]
- This will be the foundation of our identity communications going forward. Every activity we undertake can be positioned under this umbrella. This differentiates us from other aspects of justice.
- This is not simply a logo and tagline. We have put together a substantial program platform that will fuel our external and internal communications for years to come.
 - Positioning statement
 - Platform: Promise, Pillars, Personality, Benefits
 - Messages
 - Local applications (plan)

End Notes

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