

# National Standards for Community Supervision

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## Executive Summary

Community supervision is a critically important component of a functional criminal legal system. For decades, supervision agencies have become increasingly professionalized and motivated to align with evidence-based practices. Therefore, having standards to guide decision-makers in this field is crucial.

Professional standards describe a competent level of practice within specific fields. They reflect a desired and achievable level of performance against which a practitioner's actual work can be compared and evaluated. The main purpose of professional standards is to direct and maintain effective practice.

As the "voice of the community corrections industry," the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) serves as the field's leading professional membership association. It is only fitting that APPA would establish National Standards for Community Supervision as a valuable resource to provide guidance at every level. To this end, APPA received funding from the U.S. Department of Justice's National Institute of Corrections and partnered with the Crime and Justice Institute to bring together practitioners and research leaders in the field to provide input and develop appropriate Standards. This workgroup met to discuss best practices, to assess the research supporting those practices, and to determine what guidelines would be helpful for agencies and practitioners. The workgroup also discussed ideas for commentary that would further explain and provide guidance within the Standards. While there was not always unanimous consensus within the workgroup, the National Standards for Community Supervision aim to capture a wide variety of experience considering the research that does exist. These Standards, the first-ever to be formally published by APPA, are meant to serve as a starting point in a larger process that continues to provide updated guidance over time.

APPA would like to recognize and thank the National Institute of Corrections for generously funding this work and the Crime and Justice Institute for facilitating workgroup meetings, contributing to the commentary, and consolidating workgroup feedback. The partners would also like to thank every workgroup member who gave time, expertise, insights, and thoughtful consideration when contributing to the Standards.

The partners hope this resource provides helpful guidance for the field, with the understanding that these guidelines may be revisited as research continues to inform evidence-based practices for effective supervision in the community.



## I. The Community Supervision Agency

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- 1.1 Agencies should develop and implement a strategic plan which includes: a vision statement, setting forth what the agency seeks to achieve in the future; a mission statement, setting forth what the agency does; and a purpose statement, explaining why the agency does the work; goals, specific aims the agency commits to achieving; values, the underlying guiding principles that drive policy, decision-making, and operations.
- 1.2 Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for creating and maintaining an implementation and sustainability team.
- 1.3 Agencies should review and revise job descriptions to ensure that they address the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for effective implementation of evidenced-based practices in community supervision. Job descriptions for staff should include behavior change duties, core correctional practices, and evidence-based practice responsibilities.
- 1.4 There should be written policies, procedures, and established practices for entry level and promotional staff selection criteria.
- 1.5 Agencies should have written policies and procedures and established practices for comprehensive training and skill development of new and existing staff.
- 1.6 Agencies should develop and implement policies, procedures, and practices for the monitoring and coaching of community supervision officers and for providing performance feedback.
- 1.7 Agencies should have policies, procedures, and established practices that encourage and facilitate collaboration with agencies that serve individuals on community supervision or that have knowledge and resources that can support the community supervision process.



## II. Sentencing to Probation and Parole Release

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- 2.1 Agencies should work with the courts and releasing authorities to ensure that terms and conditions of supervision are reasonable, tailored to the individual, not overly burdensome, and include a focus on criminogenic factors.
- 2.2 Agencies should provide recommendations concerning terms and conditions in presentence reports submitted to the court and in pre-parole investigations submitted to the releasing authority.
- 2.3 Where restitution is imposed by a court, agencies with responsibility for collections and enforcement should make all reasonable efforts to collect the restitution and forward it to the victim in a timely manner.
- 2.4 Ideally, other financial sanctions such as fines, fees, surcharges, and penalties should not be imposed as a condition of probation or parole. Where supervision fees are collected, they should be reinvested back into treatment and services for people on supervision, as opposed to supporting agency operational costs.
- 2.5 In collaboration with the court or releasing authority, agencies should develop and implement a policy to provide for early discharge from community supervision.
- 2.6 Agencies should work with the court and releasing authority to develop and implement a system of incentives for people on community supervision.



## III. Assessment

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- 3.1 Agencies should adopt and implement empirically developed and validated risk and needs assessments.
- 3.2 The risk and needs assessment should be developed using actuarial statistical methods.
- 3.3 Jurisdictions should use third- or fourth-generation risk and needs assessments that incorporate both static and dynamic risk factors.
- 3.4 Agencies should consider the use of risk screening instruments to quickly and efficiently identify individuals who score as low risk and can be assigned to minimal supervision caseloads.
- 3.5 Agencies should consider adoption of specialized risk and needs assessments when assessing specific populations on community supervision for whom generic risk and needs assessments have proven less accurate. Specialized assessments and resulting specialized caseloads are recommended for women and individuals convicted of certain crimes including sex offenses, intimate partner violence/domestic violence, driving under the influence, and violent crimes. Agencies should also consider the adoption and use of supplemental assessment tools to assist in developing individualized case plans.
- 3.6 Agencies should have policies, procedures, and established practices in place to ensure that the assessment process identifies and addresses specific responsivity factors that have an impact on an individual's responsiveness to supervision, interventions, services, and treatment.
- 3.7 Agencies should develop and implement written policies, procedures, and established practices for systematically assessing all incoming people on community supervision, which includes a timeframe for assessment completion and submission to supervisors.
- 3.8 The initial assessment should include administration of the risk and needs assessment, any supplemental assessments as needed, and development of a supervision case plan that addresses the level of supervision with a proposed supervision contact schedule, indicating the frequency and types of contacts for the initial period of supervision.
- 3.9 Where the CSO makes recommendations that differ from the standard supervision recommendations based on the risk and needs assessment score, the CSO should submit reasons in support of the override to the supervisor for review and approval. Agencies should develop policies for reviewing and approving risk and needs assessment overrides to limit their use.
- 3.10 The CSO should present and discuss the results of the assessments (including the top assessed criminogenic need areas, strengths, and other relevant factors), the requirements of the court or releasing authority order, and the supervision case plan with the individual on supervision.



## IV. Transition to the Community/Pre-Release

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- 4.1 Agencies should develop and implement written policies, procedures, and established practices to support the transition of incarcerated individuals to life in the community.
- 4.2 Preparation for reentry should include assistance in addressing any need that will support successful supervision and reintegration into the community, with a particular focus on stability factors such as housing and employment.
- 4.3 The CSO should develop an individualized reentry plan that takes into account the individualized programming the individual received while incarcerated, as well as the skills acquired.

- 4.4** In developing the reentry plan, the CSO should involve any agency that provides a service to the individual in the community and, with the individual's permission, should include family involvement.
- 4.5** Individuals being released to community supervision should be provided a written health care discharge plan that identifies medical and mental health services available to the individual in the community.
- 4.6** Agencies should ensure that upon release, each individual confined for more than three months possesses or is provided with photographic identification and resources to meet their immediate needs.
- 4.7** CSOs should provide each individual being released to the community with specific information about when and how to contact any agency having supervisory responsibility for the person in the community.
- 4.8** Agencies should work with correctional facilities to plan, whenever possible, for releases from the correctional facility at a reasonable time of day. Where possible, collaboration between supervision agencies and service providers should ensure individuals are provided transportation to an appropriate and reasonable destination and be given contact information for all relevant community service providers.
- 4.9** Agencies should provide funds for and encourage the use of community residential centers, prerelease programs, and housing opportunities for crisis situations where individuals on community supervision may need temporary housing.



## V. Supervision Practices

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- 5.1** Agencies should develop and implement a caseload structure driven primarily by the results of the risk and needs assessment process. Active supervision, which includes regular reporting to a CSO, should be provided to individuals with moderate- and high-risk scores.
- 5.2** Agencies should establish separate caseloads for individuals who have low scores on the risk and needs assessment. Supervision in this category should be minimal, allowing for more resources to be spent on moderate- and high-risk individuals on supervision.
- 5.3** Agencies should organize supervision caseloads geographically to promote efficiency, with considerations involving resource allocation, resource distribution, and knowledge of community-based services.
- 5.4** Agencies should review the composition of their total caseload to determine whether the number of individuals on supervision with common profiles or offense types is sufficient to support grouping them into specialized caseloads.
- 5.5** As soon as possible following sentencing or release from a correctional facility, the CSO should meet with the individual who is starting supervision and explain all terms and conditions of community supervision.
- 5.6** Community supervision is provided through interpersonal contacts between the CSO and the person on community supervision.
- 5.7** Agencies' policies should provide that the nature and frequency of supervision contacts are based upon the case plan and responsiveness to treatment and supervision. Agencies should establish minimum contact standards to ensure accountability, but the CSO should develop a tailored contact schedule for each case and have it approved by the supervisor.

- 5.8** The CSO should complete collateral contacts as needed to secure information about persons on community supervision that is important to the supervision process and to encourage ongoing support in the community.
- 5.9** Agencies should develop and implement policies governing home visits by CSOs. The policy should define the purpose of home visits, describe how they will be accomplished, and articulate how information obtained during a home visit will be used to focus on behavior change of the person on community supervision.
- 5.10** Agencies should develop and implement clearly defined policies and protocols, approved by the court or releasing authority, that govern searches of persons on community supervision and their property.
- 5.11** Agencies should develop and implement policies and practices governing the use of technology-based and/or electronic tools for supervision.
- 5.12** Agencies, in collaboration with the court or releasing authority, should develop a policy to govern early discharge from community supervision.
- 5.13** Agencies should develop policies and training to ensure that CSOs exercise care in their conversations with individuals on community supervision to avoid influencing their political, religious, or legal decisions and should avoid inquiry into matters unrelated to their supervision.
- 5.14** CSOs should maintain accurate records of the progress for each person on community supervision.
- 5.15** Agencies should establish and maintain effective communications with law enforcement for the exchange of information as deemed appropriate by the agency.
- 5.16** Agencies should have a written policy that addresses the responsibilities of the supervision agency in relation to victims and survivors.
- 5.17** Agencies' policies related to victim services and notification should comply with federal guidance.



## VI. Caseload Size

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- 6.1** Agencies should adopt caseload standards to govern the assignment of cases to CSOs and to determine the number of individuals on supervision CSOs will be responsible for supervising.
- 6.2** Caseload standards should be driven by the risk and needs assessment, identifying the level of risk of reoffending and the criminogenic needs requiring intervention, which will inform the time required on cases.
- 6.3** The recommended standards for adult community supervision caseloads are: Intensive 20:1, Moderate to High Risk 50:1, Low Risk 200:1, Administrative – No Limit Suggested
- 6.4** A full-time supervisor should supervise six to eight CSOs.
- 6.5** Agencies should conduct a time study-based workload analysis to establish weighted workload values for caseloads and better determine staffing needs.



## VII. Engagement and Building Relationships

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- 7.1 Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for systematically enhancing the intrinsic motivation to change.
- 7.2 Agencies should work to ensure that CSOs engage persons on community supervision as active participants in assessment, case planning, and the supervision process. CSOs and persons on community supervision should work collaboratively to mutually identify targeted behavior to change, goals, solutions, and action steps.
- 7.3 Agencies should ensure that CSOs have sufficient skills to build positive, trusting relationships with the individuals on their caseload to advance supervision goals. Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices that incorporate incentives and sanctions for the individuals on supervision.
- 7.4 Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices that incorporate incentives and sanctions for individuals on supervision.
- 7.5 Staff should use models of change to assess individuals' readiness for behavior change.



## VIII. Case Planning

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- 8.1 Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for creating written case plans for all persons on community supervision at the moderate, high, and intensive levels of supervision.
- 8.2 The content of the case plans should be driven by the results of the assessment, including risk factors, criminogenic needs, specific responsivity factors, strengths, and protective factors.
- 8.3 The case plan should be developed in collaboration with the person on community supervision. Individuals on supervision should be involved in the focus on criminogenic needs, development of goal statements, and determining action steps.
- 8.4 The case plan should contain behavioral objectives that focus on an individual's behavior, not CSO activities. The behavioral objectives should conform to the SMART model, be focused on two to three objectives per case plan, and each objective should be broken into action steps developed in collaboration with the person on community supervision.
- 8.5 The case plan should be updated regularly with the person on community supervision as part of the reassessment process, including supervisor review and approval.
- 8.6 The outcomes of the case plan objectives should be tracked and recorded as part of an agency's performance measurement system.
- 8.7 Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for supervisor review and approval of initial and subsequent assessments, case plans, and supervision strategies.
- 8.8 Supervisors should conduct regular case reviews with their CSOs and observe their CSOs in interactions with individuals on supervision, examining and discussing a designated number of cases in depth. These reviews should address the use of evidence-based practices, compliance with agency policy, officer skill levels, and areas in need of improvement.

- 8.9** Agencies should have policies, procedures, and established practices for the CSOs to identify needs and engage individuals in appropriate treatment, services, and resources based on severity of the assessed needs and risk classification, as part of case planning. Once needs are identified, CSOs should make appropriate connections to community partners as an individual's needs require.
- 8.10** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices in place to ensure that CSOs document monthly communication with treatment providers including attendance, engagement in treatment, and progress toward current treatment goals.
- 8.11** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for increasing skills of persons on community supervision and addressing factors related to their stability and behavior, as part of the case plan. These factors include education and employment, behavioral health, treatment, medical needs, financial needs, ongoing community support, and housing.



## **IX. Effective Interventions**

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- 9.1** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, training, and established practices that clearly establish the CSO's role as a combination of behavioral change agent and enforcement agent, using incentives, sanctions, and other behavior responses to encourage prosocial change.
- 9.2** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, training, and established practices that use behavior change strategies and programs that are evidence-based.
- 9.3** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, training, and established practices that require use of evidence-based and evidence-informed practice models by treatment and service providers with whom supervision agencies contract for referral services.
- 9.4** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for systematically engaging persons on community supervision in skill training with directed practice.
- 9.5** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for systematically engaging persons on community supervision in ongoing community support.
- 9.6** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for the use of incentives and reinforcement in the community supervision process to support behavior change and compliance by persons on community supervision.
- 9.7** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices guiding the individual meetings between individuals on community supervision and their CSOs. Meetings should have a specific goal, utilize a proactive strategy, work to advance behavioral change efforts, and enable the officer to monitor compliance with the conditions of community supervision.



## X. Influencing Behavior

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- 10.1** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices that govern the responses to behavior and that ensure the principles of swiftness, certainty, fairness, transparency, and consistency are observed for all responses to behavior.
- 10.2** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for the use of incentives and reinforcement in the community supervision process to support behavior change and compliance by persons on community supervision.
- 10.3** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for systematically engaging persons on community supervision in skill training with directed practice, including the use of incentives to reward practice and mastery.
- 10.4** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices for systematically engaging persons on community supervision in ongoing community support.
- 10.5** Agency policy should incorporate structured mechanisms for determining responses that are proportional to the seriousness and history of the noncompliant behavior and the risk level of the person on community supervision.
- 10.6** Agency policy for responding to noncompliant behavior should include options such as administrative conferences with supervisory or management staff, the person on community supervision, and the CSO. Where the court or parole board is amenable, these administrative conferences might involve the court.
- 10.7** In accordance with law and with authorization of the applicable court or paroling authority, agency policy should prescribe what types of violations must be reported to the court or paroling authority and what types may be resolved internally. All noncompliance and alleged violations of supervision conditions should be investigated by the supervising CSO and the results documented in the case record.
- 10.8** When the noncompliance with conditions rises to the level of filing a violation of probation or parole with the court or releasing authority, agencies should ensure that policy and procedure conform with the requirements set forth by the United States Supreme Court in *Morrissey v. Brewer* (408 U.S. 471, 1972) for parole and *Gagnon v. Scarpelli* (411 U.S. 778, 1973) for probation.
- 10.9** Agencies should ensure that individuals on supervision in probation or parole revocation proceedings are represented by counsel. If the individual is indigent, counsel should be appointed.
- 10.10** Warrants for the arrest and detention of a person on community supervision should only be requested upon consideration of variables including: adequate evidence of serious and/or repetitive violation of assigned conditions, commission of a new offense, or risk to public safety posed by the individual's continued presence in the community.
- 10.11** The person on community supervision should be notified in writing of the probable cause hearing at least three days in advance. The notice should include the time and place of the hearing and information on the person's rights (in probation cases) outlined in *Gagnon v. Scarpelli* and *Mempa v. Rhay*, including the right to disclosure of evidence, present evidence and favorable witnesses, confront adverse witnesses, receive effective assistance of counsel, with counsel appointed if the individual is indigent, and request postponement of the hearing.
- 10.12** Administrative staff or a field officer may, at the request of the court or releasing authority, conduct a probable cause hearing and make findings as to the probable cause for revocation.
- 10.13** When violations have been sustained, alternatives to revocation and incarceration should be considered and utilized to the extent that public safety allows.





## XI. Performance Measurement

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- 11.1** Agencies should develop and implement a comprehensive performance measurement system which should include process measures of supervision activities consistent with risk-need-responsivity theory, as well as performance outcomes for agencies and individuals on supervision.
- 11.2** Process measures should track compliance with policies and procedures by staff at all levels, ensuring fidelity to the risk-need-responsivity theory model.
- 11.3** Outcome measures should assess the impact or results of staff activities.
- 11.4** Outcome measures should assess the impact or results for individuals on supervision. Agencies should collect and report on outcome measures related to recidivism reduction, accountability, and other socially valued outcomes.
- 11.5** A standard definition of recidivism should be developed and utilized across an agency. Using this definition, agencies should measure and report on recidivism of the community supervision population. This definition should clearly distinguish new criminal activity from technical violations (failure to comply with the conditions of community supervision) and determine what behavior counts towards recidivism.
- 11.6** Agencies should report recidivism data by risk level, offense type, time on community supervision, gender, race/ethnicity, geographic region, and other relevant criteria.
- 11.7** Agencies should collect and report data on the discharge status of persons completing community supervision, including those with successful discharge, early discharge for good performance, revocation, incarceration, and death.
- 11.8** Agencies should have written policies, procedures, and established practices to systematically measure the progress of persons on community supervision and provide feedback.
- 11.9** Agencies should support and engage in internal research relevant to their programs as well as research conducted by outside professionals.