

THE FUTURE OF ADULT PROBATION: A CPOC BUSINESS MODEL TO IMPROVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE OUTCOMES IN CALIFORNIA



Introduction

Welcome to the first business plan presented by the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC). The probation system in California in all but one county is overseen by a chief probation officer whose responsibility is the oversight of both adult and juvenile offenders that are involved in the criminal justice process at the local county level. This document represents only the adult component of the probation system.

About CPOC

CPOC was established in 1960 as an association of county Chief Probation Officers meeting annually upon the call of the Director of the California Youth Authority. Orange County Probation Chief David R. McMillan served as the first President of CPOC. Sixteen years later, in 1976, incorporation of the association was accomplished under the guidance of Chief Margaret Grier, also from Orange County. The new by-laws were signed by all the Chiefs.

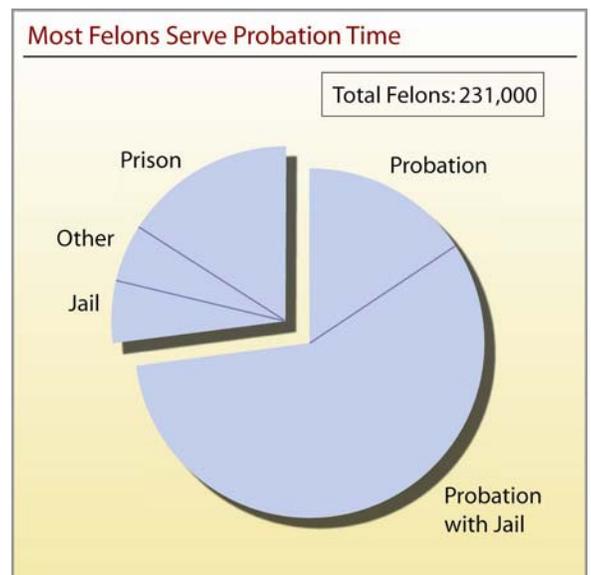
Over the past 49 years the association has evolved from a loose-knit forum discussing mutual issues in managing county juvenile facilities and supervising adult offenders, juvenile wards and dependents to a highly active, focused organization with full time executive staff and offices located across from the Capitol in Sacramento. An executive committee comprised of an executive director and six chief probation officers convenes five statewide and six regional meetings per year. In the past five years CPOC has taken a measured step towards increased visibility and active involvement in legislative matters affecting fiscal, policy, resources and standards for the effective delivery of probation programs. Recognizing the importance of measuring offender outcomes, CPOC has established a vision that incorporates evidence-based practices (EBP) to utilize risk driven supervision strategies and criminogenic needs driven treatment strategies to reduce recidivism.

What is Adult Probation?

“Probation is a judicially imposed suspension of sentence that attempts to monitor and rehabilitate offenders while they remain in the community under the supervision of the probation department.”¹

Probation occupies a unique and central position in the justice system. It links the many diverse stakeholders, including: enforcement; the courts; prosecutors; defense attorneys; community-based organizations; mental health, drug & alcohol and other service providers; the community; the victim; and the probationer

Probation began in Massachusetts in 1841 as a means to provide a spectrum of punishment and rehabilitation services for offenders. Over time, the role of probation and the clients served by the system have evolved. Yet throughout its history, probation has retained as a core



¹ Administrative Office of the Court and California State Association of Counties (2003). *Probation Services Task Force: Final Report*, Administrative Office of the Courts, California.

function and priority the provision of accountability for law violations in the community. Although changes during the past 25 years have affected the system, probation continues to deliver critical, quality services without adequate resources. Probation provides numerous exemplary programs, many in partnerships with other county agencies, which set the stage for enhancing collaborations and maximizing resources.

Probation supervises criminal offenders within local communities using a balance of supervision techniques involving offender accountability, enforcement and rehabilitation to reduce recidivism. By using these techniques, probation officers intervene and reduce the need to utilize prison and parole resources managed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). In California, probation is a separate and independent function from CDCR Parole.

Probation is the most commonly used sanction within the criminal justice process. As cited in the recent report published by the Legislative Analyst's Office, *Achieving Better Outcomes with Adult Probation*,² "...almost three-quarters of adult felon offenders convicted in California in 2007—those eligible for a sentence to state prison—were actually sentenced to probation or a combination of probation and jail." That reliance makes probation a unique and critical partner in the justice system.

"The actions of local agencies, particularly in the area of probation, affect state-level public safety programs. For example, an adult offender who fails on probation, either by violating the terms of probation or by committing a new crime, can be sent by the courts to state prison, where it now costs the state on average \$49,000 per year to incarcerate that offender."³

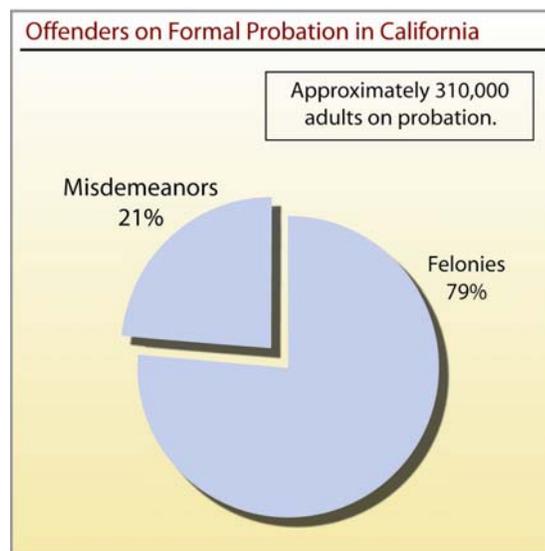
Using data driven methods, probation can achieve a high quality of results in the delivery of probation's statutory mandates, protection of the public through the reduction of recidivism among the probationers under its care.

Mission Critical Services in Adult Probation

CPOC is committed to three mission critical services that serve as guiding core principals in shaping policy and legislative agendas. Through concerted strategic planning, CPOC has established a vision of action steps taking national standards of research based practices that now make up CPOC's first business plan. We are proud to present the culmination of that work in this first publication of the 2009 CPOC Adult Probation Business Plan. Our many readers and stakeholders will now have a clear view into the value of local probation services.

Critical Service #1: Services to the Courts

When adult defendants are charged with law violations, probation conducts criminal investigations and provides information to the courts to assist in making sentencing decisions. Last year, 574 probation officers completed over 240,000 reports for the court, for an average of 420 per officer⁴. Included in this number were more than 122,000 pre-sentence investigation reports mandated by Section 1203 of the California Penal Code and over 20,000 post-sentence reports, including nearly 9,000 post-sentence reports for offenders sentenced to prison. Thousands of other reports prepared by probation officers for the courts include pre-plea reports, Proposition 36 (codified in Section 1210 of the California Penal Code) progress reports, restitution reports and probation violation reports.



² Taylor, M. (2009). *Achieving Better Outcomes For Adult Probationers*, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

³ Taylor, M. (2009). *Achieving Better Outcomes For Adult Probationers*, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the probation statistics cited in this business plan are based on the data submitted by 45 of the 58 county probation departments to the FY 2008/2009 annual CPOC survey. Please refer to the CPOC website for additional statistics.

In addition, probation officers are often assigned to the courts to provide timely on-site assistance, facilitate the transmission of the reports and provide other information requested by the bench. At the end of last fiscal year, there were only 345 probation officers who provided this critical service to the courts statewide.

Critical Service #2: Supervision of Adult Offenders

Currently close to 310,000 adults are on formal probation in California. The large majority (79%) have been convicted of a felony offense. Just over 1,450 probation officers are available for supervising these offenders. Resources to effectively supervise these convicted criminal offenders have historically been woefully inadequate.

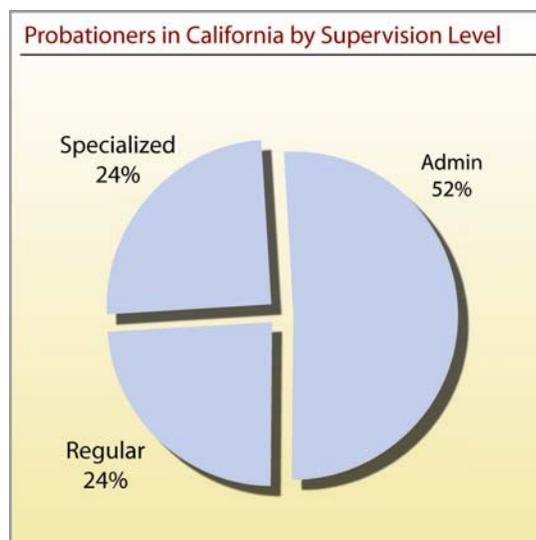
A fundamental principle of supervision supported by research is assessing both the offender’s level of risk for re-offense and the risk posed to public safety. Those two factors are significant tools for probation officers to determine the type and level of supervision of the offender in the community. At present, over one-half of the California probation departments use a formal risk assessment tool specifically designed to accomplish this and assign supervision based on the offender’s risk level.

Supervision by risk level typically falls on a continuum from minimal contact for the lowest-risk offenders, to increases in intensity as the offender's risk level increases up to intensive supervision and surveillance for the highest-risk offenders. The lower-risk probationers are supervised via administrative or banked caseloads, which primarily involve monitoring the probationer's progress through written or verbal self-report, periodic face-to-face contact and formal criminal record checks. Probationers posing a higher risk to the community are assigned to regular supervision where there is routine in-person contact between the officer and probationer, as well as referrals to services and frequent follow-up to monitor their progress. Supervision of probationers presenting the greatest risk to the community or those convicted of specific types of crimes is referred to as specialized supervision, and includes more of the supervision activities provided for regular caseloads with additional conditions associated with the probationer's crime and higher risk profile.

Due to limited resources, probation departments have been forced to prioritize the allocation of supervision services. As stated above, 50 percent of the counties have implemented risk and needs assessments to assist in determining the level of supervision. But limited financial resources is an additional factor that influences the level of supervision counties are able to provide and probation chiefs must establish criteria to ensure that the most serious offenders are supervised. As of June 2008, the distribution of adult probationers by supervision level was 52 percent in administrative or banked supervision, 24 percent under regular supervision, and 24 percent in specialized supervision. Over their probation supervision period, an offender can move either direction on the supervision and risk level continuum.

An investment in probation services that enables a department to deliver proven evidence-based practices is one of the best investments to combat recidivism. Probation has arguably the most potential to impact recidivism, given the fact that most felons are placed on probation and the time relationship of a probation term. While a law enforcement officer’s role is typically at the point of arrest, and a prosecutor’s role is typically swift, the probation officer is charged with the task to monitor behavior and develop a plan that reduces recidivism for three to five years for each offender.

While community supervision of adult offenders is essential to maintaining public safety, supervision, alone, does not prevent re-offense. The most effective way to reduce recidivism is to address criminogenic needs in higher risk offenders with treatment programs that have demonstrated effectiveness. This begins with utilizing a needs assessment to guide case planning and referral efforts and progresses to the probation officer functioning as case manager to support the offender



through treatment by monitoring engagement, continually enhancing motivation, preventing drop-out, and sanctioning when appropriate for failure to comply with treatment requirements.

Despite the necessity for treatment, funding restrictions prevent the provision of appropriate needs assessment, case planning, and treatment in many jurisdictions and for a large majority of the population for which it could be effective. Further limitations are evident throughout the state due to a lack of effective community resources and treatment programs available to meet the critical needs which are identified. Required programs are not only unavailable in many counties, but probation departments statewide lack the resources to effectively monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of those programs which do provide services to offenders⁵.

Critical Service #3: Services to Victims

Probation provides services to victims in several different ways. When there are victims involved in a crime, probation seeks their statements and presents their needs and interests to the court as part of the investigation reports. If the offender is placed on formal probation, probation officers provide information to the victims, offer support services, collect restitution and make referrals to resources. Additionally, probation officers provide an increased level of safety to victims by monitoring the probationers' activities.

The most documented service to victims is the collection of restitution owed to victims. During fiscal year 2008/2009, 31 departments reported collecting \$15.6 million in restitution from both adult and juvenile offenders on behalf of victims.

CPOC Strategic Planning

History

In early 2000, the Judicial Council and the California State Association of Counties mutually concluded a multidisciplinary task force was needed to examine probation services. Chief Justice Ronald George appointed an 18-member body composed of court, county and probation representatives in August. In 2003, the Probation Services Task Force report was issued and contained 18 recommendations. The principal findings cited probation as the linchpin of the criminal justice system and reported probation was sorely under funded with a patchwork funding model comprised of unstable short lived grants. Despite the fiscal disadvantage, probation had demonstrated the ability to provide exemplary programs. The task force recommendations in the forefront then, which remain valid today, were critical in shaping the direction for CPOC's strategic planning efforts that began shortly after the task force report was released. The key recommendations are:

- Probation must have stable and adequate funding to protect the public, hold offenders accountable, and deliver rehabilitation.
- Probation should incorporate measurable outcomes in developing goals and objectives.
- Probation departments should develop a common statewide language, delivery of services and comparisons across jurisdictions.
- Probation should develop assessment and classification systems and tools.
- Probation should establish a graduated continuum of services and sanctions

CPOC embarked on a strategic planning process in 2004 with technical assistance from the National Institute of Corrections. The first priority was to examine the growing body of research pertaining to proven practices in probation services. CPOC's vision emerged with crime reduction and prevention as core to its value and mission in public safety and the criminal justice system. Through the use of evidence-based practices probation outcomes could be established and measured. Probation officer interventions and

⁵ Taylor, M. (2009). *Achieving Better Outcomes For Adult Probationers*, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

program resources could be focused on the cases with the highest risk for recidivism based on high criminogenic needs. Reducing criminogenic needs was quickly becoming the strategy to reduce risk of recidivism. This approach has gained national recognition as "what works" in probation. It is a simple equation. Reducing recidivism enhances public safety. The "what works" boils down to eight principals for the effective management of offenders.

These evidence-based practices are well documented and currently are the basis for much discussion as counties, states, and the federal system seek to find solutions to the out of control cost of prisons and the failed efforts of many corrections systems. Enforcement of probation conditions without addressing the criminogenic reasons criminals commit crime results creates a revolving door of new and returning prisoners. CPOC is committed to seeking and implementing programs that will impact the revolving door through the use of these proven methods.

This first business plan reflects a clear vision, set of values and commitment to implementing effective probation practices. As a result, communities will be safer, offenders will be held accountable, programs will be tailored to address criminal thinking and behavior and crime reduction will be at the core of every effort undertaken. The business plan for California probation is ambitious! However, as resources are invested in probation as the "linchpin" in a successful criminal justice system, outcomes will improve. Affirming the value of investing in probation was included in the 2009 Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) report on Achieving Better Outcomes for Adult Probation. It contained two recommendations that are consistent with CPOC's strategic planning and vision for the future. The LAO stressed the need to implement the best practices identified by experts as critical for reducing recidivism rates and the need to reduce revocations to state prison⁶.

Through the strategic planning process, CPOC adopted the following initiatives aimed at achieving better outcomes in adult probation. The initiatives serve as a guide in developing statewide consistency and application of probation programs based upon the unique and diverse communities served by the 58 county probation departments.

CPOC Strategic Initiatives

1. Pursue legislative funding that provides incentivized funding for adult probation services
Develop a legislative proposal whereby local probation agencies will receive state funding based on an incentivized formula tied to reductions in prison referrals.

California is one of only two states where the primary funding for adult probation services comes exclusively from the county general funds and offender fees.

In 2009, CPOC sponsored SB 678 which was enacted to infuse probation with a state funding source to address adult caseloads with evidence based practices. The ongoing stream of funding is intended to be from the savings to the state from reduced probation failures going to state prison.

2. Advance Evidence Based practices and outcomes in California Probation Departments, including: provide ongoing statewide outcome measures on crime reduction; and provide evidence that community corrections is a cost effective strategy by producing compelling outcome data to the legislature, public, and stakeholders.

CPOC chartered a research team from county probation departments as a first step in developing a baseline of defendant information and data to build state wide outcomes.

3. Develop and promote a compelling brand and image of California Community Corrections
Hire a marketing firm to develop a brand, image, logo, tag line, and media package with the expectation that all CPOC member agencies will promote it at every appropriate opportunity.

In 2006, CPOC hired Randle Communications to educate the media and the public of probation's mission and CPOC's leadership regarding probation policy.

⁶ Taylor, M. (2009). *Achieving Better Outcomes For Adult Probationers*, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

Sample Case Flow

Step 1: Pretrial Release



Pretrial Release

Detention

Release on Own Recognizance

Conditional Release

- Treatment required
- GPS
- House arrest
- Supervision

Step 2: Court Sentencing



Probation & Sentencing Report Ordered

Risk – Needs
(Used in Sentencing)

Victim Input Gathered

Identifies:

- Risk of re-offending
- Criminogenic needs tailored conditions of probation

Step 3: Jail as Conditions of Probation



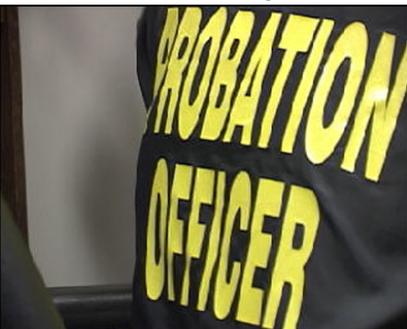
Serve Jail Sentence

Release to Supervision

- Probation & Sheriff collaborate on probation re-entry
- Re-entry plan established
- In-custody program participation tailored to criminogenic needs
- Earned early release considerations established

- Day reporting center
- Transitional housing
- Work furlough
- Community service

Step 4: Formal Probation Supervision



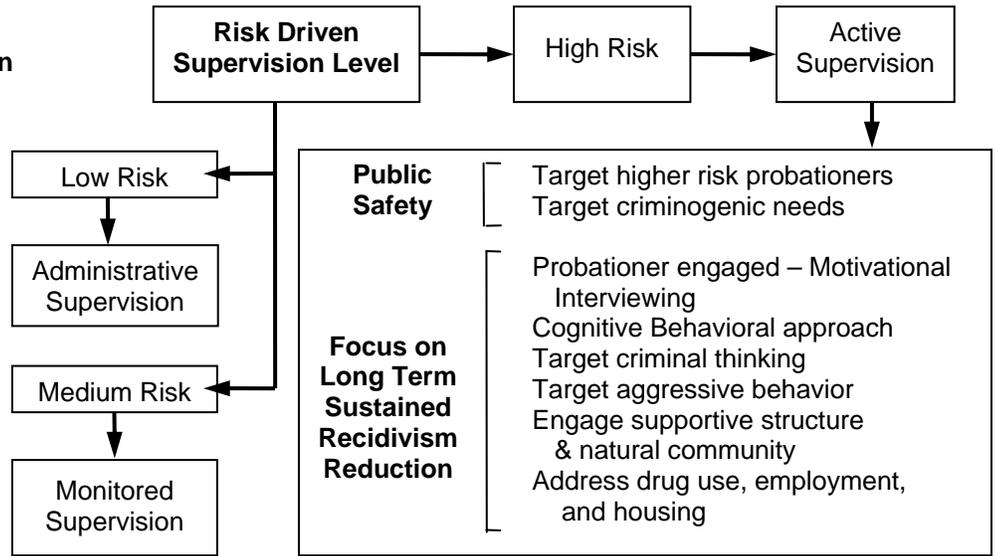
Deputy Probation Officer received case

- Case reviewed
- Risk score - supervision level determined
- Criminogenic needs identified
- Begins case planning

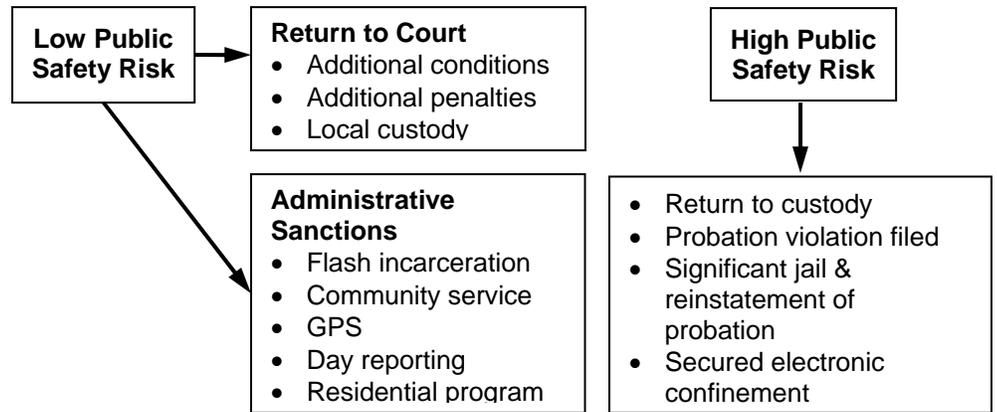
Victim Service Established

- Financial evaluation
- Restitution established

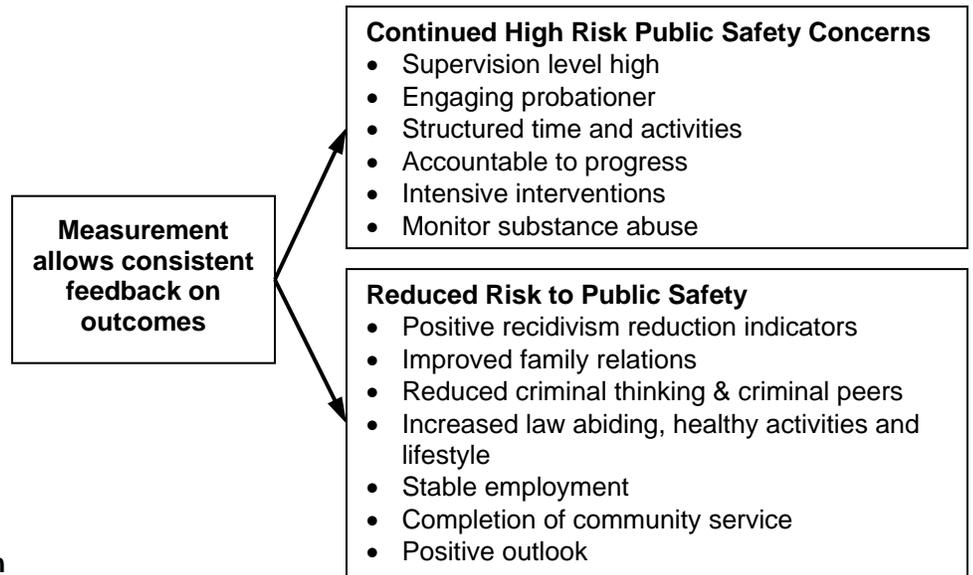
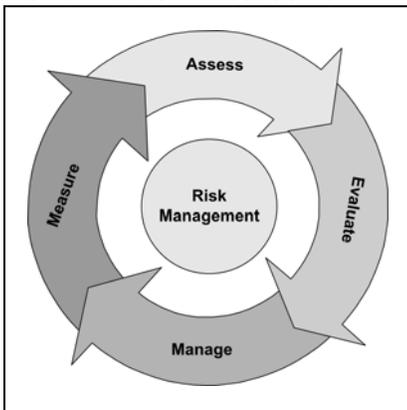
**Step 5:
Probation Community Supervision**



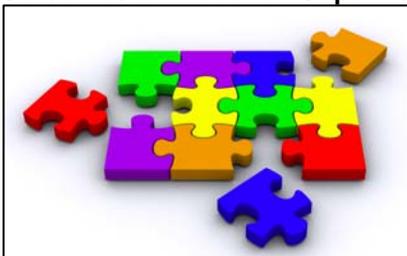
**Step 6:
Probation Violations**



**Step 7:
Risk & Needs Reassessment**



**Step 8:
Outcomes of Probation Supervision**



- Reduced risk or recidivism
- Behavior & lifestyle changes
- Impact to victim reviewed & restitution paid
- Social support intact
- Extended tracking of probationer recidivism
- Measures sustained recidivism by probationers' reduction of crime

Introducing Evidence Based Principles

In 2008, the concept of using research based proven practices in probation was gaining interest in California. That year an article titled "Evidenced-Based Practice to Reduce Recidivism: Implications for State Judiciaries," authored by Roger Warren⁷ in cooperation with The Crime and Justice Institute, National Institute of Corrections, and National Center for State Courts, was published. The article became the focus for the 2008 Summit for Judicial Leaders sponsored by the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Judicial Council held in Monterey, California. Over 200 participants attended the Summit including judges, court administrators, district attorneys, public defenders, probation chiefs and victim advocacy groups. These California justice system leaders were challenged by the two decades worth of data that has proven punishment, incarceration, and other sanctions alone do not reduce recidivism and, in fact can increase recidivism. The research data clearly revealed crime reduction and prevention was linked to offender recidivism. The skyrocketing cost of imprisonment has forced policy makers to find improved methods for achieving public safety goals through accountable and cost effective practices.

CPOC is prepared to lead county efforts toward applying these proven practices. In utilizing a continuum of interventions that incorporated evidence-based practices, probation officers working with the courts will be better equipped in: assessing probationer risk and needs; retooling conditions of probation; increasing offender accountability; and using graduated sanctions and incentives to promote positive offender change. The target outcome will be based on reducing recidivism.

NIC Evidence-Based Principles in Community Corrections

1. Assess actuarial risk and needs.
2. Enhance intrinsic motivation.
3. Target interventions.
 - a. Risk principle: Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offenders.
 - b. Need principle: Target interventions to criminogenic needs.
 - c. Responsivity principle: Be responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender when assigning programs.
 - d. Dosage: Structure 40-70% of high-risk offenders' time for 3-9 months.
 - e. Treatment: Integrate treatment into the full sentence sanction requirements.
4. Skill training with directed practice (use cognitive behavioral treatment methods).
5. Increase positive reinforcement.
6. Engage ongoing support in natural communities.
7. Measure relevant processes/practices.
8. Provide measurement feedback.

Targeting efforts to achieve the greatest potential for recidivism reduction is the future of probation. The CPOC business plan provides a menu of evidence-based practices in adult probation that counties can use as a framework for strategic planning in their respective communities. The CPOC business plan is flexible for phased in implementation based upon budget and workforce resources and unique community needs.

Other key law makers in California have concluded using evidence-based practices in adult probation is an essential direction needed in order to reform public policy that will support probation services through stable funding, and increase the capacity for local justice system partners to address and improve offender outcomes. For example, legislative leadership in the Senate from Senators Mark Leno and John Benoit sponsored SB 678 establishing EBP for adult probation as a means to reduce recidivism and reduce unnecessary demands on prison beds. Senator Leno was quoted in the Los Angeles Times on August 13, 2009 on the subject of prison crowding. "If we can keep offenders successful in their probation, we...keep them from coming back to state prison, thereby lowering the inmate population and saving the state money." The Judicial Council and CPOC collaborated to launch a three year Risk Assessment Pilot Project in six counties to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of using offender risk and criminogenic needs information in probation sentencing.

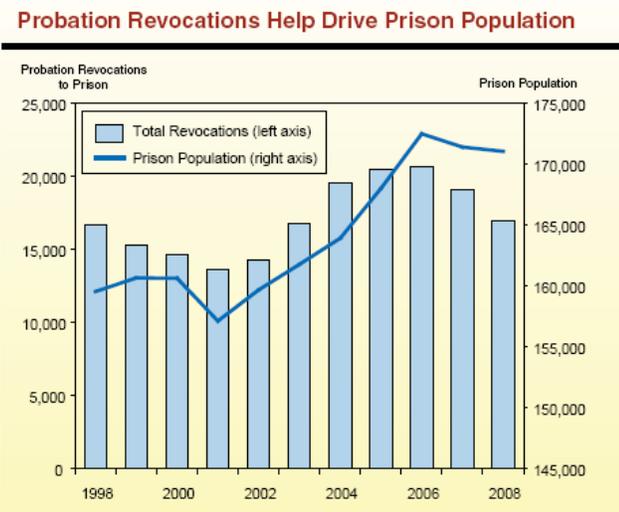
Using EBP in probation is not a "soft on crime" approach. Rather, it serves to identify the risk of re-offending, provide supervision intensity and interventions that effectively reduce recidivism, hold offenders accountable, and reduce the churning of offenders in and out of a very costly prison system.

⁷ Roger Warren is a retired Superior Court Judge, Sacramento and served at the National Center for State Courts and is currently a Scholar in Residence for the Administrative Office of the Courts in California.

Probation Outcomes

Central to evidence-based corrections is the use of data to guide practices toward the most effective and efficient use of resources resulting in the best outcomes. When CPOC initiated strategic planning in 2005, one of their first priorities was to develop uniform data reporting guidelines about probation activities and more importantly probation outcomes. Since 2006, two CPOC-sponsored groups, the Probation Business Managers Association (PBMA) and the Probation Performance Measure Committee (PPMC) have worked to establish a statewide probation reporting structure in which there is consistency across all agencies in how probation fiscal and program information is reported

Over the last several years, the PPMC has taken on the more challenging task of developing standardized reporting on probation outcomes. A key outcome of interest is answering the question, "How many probationers terminate without committing a new crime while under supervision?" While this effort is still in the early stages, largely because departments vary widely in their capacity to gather and report common information on outcomes, 25 departments were able to provide data for this measure in the most recent survey. Based on these agencies' results, 73 percent of adult probationers terminated without having committed a new crime while on probation. CPOC remains committed to the continued development of a statewide probation outcome measurement system as one of its top three strategic initiatives.



Currently, limited information is available related to probation outcomes from statistics that probation departments and the court report to the state. As reported by the Department of Justice, in 2008, 202,869 offenders were removed from probation by the courts. Of that total, 45 percent were terminated and another 40 percent had probation revoked.⁸ In many instances where probation is revoked the court will immediately reinstate it and probation supervision continues. However, for other probationers convicted of repeated violations and more serious crimes, the court sentences the offender to prison.

According to records kept by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, an average of approximately 19,000 probation violators are sent to state prison each year. These probationers make up approximately 40 percent of all annual new prison admissions from the courts.”⁹

Description of Probation Process and Interventions

Throughout the state, counties are unique and different in their use of and ability to implement evidence-based practices and components of a continuum of interventions. Based on differing needs and available resources, by utilizing the evidence-based model approach as contained in this business plan, counties can identify and integrate pertinent elements from an array of nationally recognized evidence-based practices, allowing each county to best impact and reduce recidivism within their county.

With consistent funding, probation will realize better outcomes that in turn will reduce the impact to or need for additional resources at the state level. Per the Legislative Analyst's Office, "...the absence of a stable funding source for adult probation, and the lack of fiscal incentives to promote the best outcomes for public safety or efficiency, constitute major barriers to the promotion of successful probation practices.”¹⁰

⁸ Criminal Justice Statistics Center (2009). Table: Adult Probation Active Caseloads on December 31, 2008 - Adults Placed on and Removed From Probation, January 1-December 31, 2008. California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center.

⁹ Taylor, M. (2009). *Achieving Better Outcomes For Adult Probationers*, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

¹⁰ Taylor, M. (2009). *Achieving Better Outcomes For Adult Probationers*, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

The preceding sample case flow on pages 6 and 7 illustrates the process that the adult probation system utilizes and the practices probation offers using an array of alternatives, services and modern risk assessments to determine the level and type of supervision, and intervention needed for individual offenders.

Next Steps for California's Community Corrections System

Building on the Chief Probation Officers of California's strategic initiative to advance evidence based practices and outcomes in California Probation Departments, the CPOC Adult Probation Business Model seeks to achieve four primary goals through the implementation of a more effective correctional management system of offenders in the community, specifically:

- To improve corrections outcomes, especially recidivism
- To reduce victimization
- To prevent harm
- To target funding toward interventions that bring the greatest returns

Given an environment involving highly competitive and limited resources, it is increasingly difficult to justify the expenditure and utilization of resources and strategies that are ambiguous or unknown in the ability to produce positive outcomes, or worse yet, proven to be counterproductive. One-size does not fit all in the area of corrections; incarceration cannot be the corrections system's only recourse. By integrating evidence based principles, the community corrections system can begin to set a base-line and ongoing statistical outcome measurements, which in turn can be used to create expectations involving deliverables and better accountability for improved recidivism reduction and public safety outcomes.

As a public safety system, community corrections is in a unique and effective position to assist in the reduction and prevention of victimization and/or harm to individuals and society by offenders within the system. Similar to the medical community's fundamental principle for emergency medical services of, "first do not harm," community corrections must be equally vigilant of the totality of its impact on the whole of society, victims and offenders alike. Focusing on the system's ethical commitment and responsibility to do good for the public, the Adult Probation Business Model creates an opportunity for enhanced checks and balances aimed at community protection, recidivism reduction and victims' assistance.

The final goal of creating a system that targets and directs funding toward statistically proven interventions and effective corrections strategies is a critical step. An effective corrections system is one that creates positive returns on taxpayers' investments while simultaneously increasing the level of confidence in the system to appropriately meet the diverse needs of the population it services.

Conclusion

The Chief Probation Officers of California have engaged in a unique and unprecedented effort to coalesce around a common vision to advance our profession. Advances in research and the development of evidence based practices and interventions has helped Probation Chiefs across the state develop a common script to lead probation for the future, which will result in improved public safety and fiscal outcomes at the state and county levels. These advances, combined with the strong and cohesive leadership among California Chiefs across the 59 California counties, has resulted in the business model summarized in this document.

Adult Probation is the "linchpin" in the handling of sentenced felons and many misdemeanants residing in California's counties, linking diverse stakeholders, including: justice system and law enforcement professionals; victims and victim advocates; substance abuse and mental health treatment providers; educational institutions; and employment agencies. Probation Officers make sentencing recommendations to judges. Probation officers also provide services aimed to repair the harm caused by crime to victims and

the community by holding offenders accountable. Probation officers work with treatment professionals to deliver individualized interventions that rehabilitate offenders and build skills and competencies that make offenders less likely to repeat crime and more likely to become productive citizens.

Probation is the most commonly used sanction in the justice system with three quarters of all felons under the community supervision of a probation officer, in lieu of a maximum prison sentence. Probation is not only a cost effective alternative to prison, at a fraction of the \$49,000 annual price of incarcerating one individual, it has greater potential to reduce recidivism by addressing the criminogenic risk factors associated with repeat offending. In recent years a growing body of research has informed probation practice on the best methods to reduce crime.

Unfortunately, in California, county probation departments are woefully under-funded, and while county probation delivers the best services possibly under these conditions, we are currently unable to fulfill the promise of maximum crime reduction for those individuals most at risk of committing subsequent crime in the community. Currently, an average of 19,000 probation violators are sent to prison each year, comprising forty percent of the annual admissions to prison from the courts.

The Chief Probation Officers in California have worked together to develop a strategic plan and proposal to improve probation outcomes. This plan includes a common set of proven strategies to make communities safer through targeted interventions that will reduce crime and reduce probation revocations that result in costly prison commitments.

While probation chiefs are optimistic about the future of probation and are encouraged by the recognition among legislators of the value of probation through the passing of Senate Bill 678, a cooperative and continuing effort between state and local government, along with dedicated funding stream is required in order to fully implement evidence based probation practices across California county probation departments. This front-end investment in local probation departments will ultimately save money currently spent in a costly, overloaded and largely ineffective prison and parole system, marked by parole failures and high recidivism rates. More importantly, public safety will be enhanced and a greater number of adult offenders will be redirected to productive futures free of crime.

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