

Colorado Probation Research in Brief

Early Termination of Supervision: No Compromise to Community Safety

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Key Words: Early termination, Rearrest, Termination, Assessment, Community Safety

Summary/Conclusions

The current study examined rearrest rates of early terminations of offenders from Federal supervision programs. From the 3,814 cases that were early terminated in 2008, researchers matched Risk Prediction Index (RPI) scores for 1,436 full term cases. The study analyzed 2,872 individuals for a period of three years following the end of supervision. Researchers discovered the rearrest rate for successful full term offenders (19.2%) was nearly double that (10.2%) of the early term comparison group.

Limitations of Information

The population of the study consists of individuals under Federal supervision, which may not be consistent with the Colorado Probation population. It is unclear how the population of this study would score on the Level of Service Inventory (LSI). The RPI score used to classify offenders is a static risk assessment, which does not account for any dynamic factors that may change through supervision. Therefore, any change of risk level before termination was not accounted for in this study. Lastly, the study primarily consisted of low and medium risk offenders.

Caveat: The information presented here is intended to summarize and inform readers of research and information relevant to probation work. It can provide a framework for carrying out the business of probation as well as suggestions for practical application of the material. While it may, in some instances, lead to further exploration and result in *future* decisions, it is not intended to prescribe policy and is not necessarily conclusive in its findings. Some of its limitations are described above.

Utilizing Early Term Effectively

Federal researchers were interested in the difference in rearrest rates between offenders who terminated early from supervision and those who stayed on supervision for the full term of their sentence. Utilizing data from 15,266 termed cases in 2008, a research team sorted the cases to find ones that were similar in risk level and age. This total excluded any case with missing information (e.g. RPI scores, criminal history scores), juveniles, sex offenders, and violent offenders. From the 3,814 early terminations, only 1,436 were matched with a full term case corresponding in risk level and age, bringing the total number studied to 2,872. Individuals were then tracked for rearrest for a period of 3 years following the end of supervision.

Since early terms are more common among low risk offenders, the study was composed of 74.4% of low risk individuals. Medium risk accounted for 23.7% of study participants. Only 1.8% of the sample were high risk.

Researchers found that those early terminated were less likely to be rearrested, more likely to be rearrested for a lesser offense, and were in the community for a longer time before re-arrest. The early term group had a re-arrest rate of 10.2%, while the full term group had a re-arrest rate of 19.2%. When the study excludes minor offenses, only 5.9% of early terms were rearrested, while full terms were rearrested at rate of 12.2%. The full term offenders, on average, were rearrested 18.8 months after com-

pletion of supervision. Early term offenders were in the community for a period of 19.4 months before re-arrest. While risk accurately predicted the likelihood of re-arrest, all risk types (low, medium, and high) of early term offenders possessed lower rates of re-arrest.

Practical Applications

- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the new early termination policy and checklists for adults and juveniles located on Judicialnet.
- ✓ Examine re-assessments for overall risk reduction to determine if early termination is appropriate for the probationer.
- ✓ When reviewing your caseload, actively seek out those minimum and medium risk cases and evaluate them for eligibility for early termination.
- ✓ Consider utilizing early termination on lower risk probationers who have completed all necessary terms and conditions and any needed treatment. This will allow more time for the higher risk/need probationers.
- ✓ Inform probationers at the beginning of supervision of the opportunity for early termination. Explain the criteria and encourage them to reach that goal.
- ✓ Develop a good working relationship with district attorneys; their support for early terminations is critical. Share this research, the new policy, and checklists with stakeholders in an effort to support the use of early termination.

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