

Colorado Probation Research in Brief

An Experimental Evaluation on the Impact of Intensive Supervision on the Recidivism of High-Risk Probationers

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Summary/Conclusions

This article examines the differences between intensive and regular supervision caseloads and the effect on recidivism. Two separate groups of similarly high risk offenders were examined for possible linkages between recidivism and the frequency of ISP officer contacts, drug screens, and home-visits. There was no statistically significant difference in the rate of recidivism after 12 months.

Limitations of Information

The study groups included individuals on probation and parole. The study was not completed on Colorado populations. All individuals in the study had a "high-risk" risk classification; it was predicted they were at a high risk to commit serious violent offenses. The study did not account for the differences between officers, such as targeting criminogenic needs, and quality of practices utilized by officers.

The protocols governing supervision with both the ISP treatment and control groups did not include any therapeutic treatment elements.

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.

Does Increased Surveillance Equate to Less Crime?

Many questions still surround the intensity of supervision practices and offender outcomes. This study dives deeper into the types of practices used in community supervision and whether they correlate to reduced recidivism in intensive supervision programs (ISP). The study compared intensive practices vs. regular supervision practices. The clients involved in this research (832 males) were classified through assessment. In addition to the overall risk of the individual to commit a new offense, the assessments predicted the individual's risk to commit a violent crime against a person. They were randomly assigned to an ISP treatment group ($n=447$) or into a control group ($n=385$). The ISP treatment group received an increased level of supervision and control, which included: weekly face to face meetings, twice a week drug testing, and monthly home visits. Additionally, there was a policy in place to prove any technical violations and to be prosecuted fully.

The control group was assigned to the level of supervision traditionally reserved for medium risk offenders, which included: monthly face-to-face appointments and drug tests that were administered only by judicial order or with cause. In addition, no out-of-office contacts, such as home visits, were permitted.

Offense and criminal history data were collected for the 12 months following each participant's enrollment in the ran-

domized trial. This data was limited to any new charge and did not include technical violations. The recidivism rates for both the ISP treatment group (40.5%) and the control group (41.6%) were nearly equal. (Additionally, there was an increase in technical violations and absconding for the ISP treatment group). In sum, the research highlights that the ISP program alone, with its intensive contact standards, did not yield a reduction in recidivism, however, the program did increase the instances of technical violations.

Practical Applications

- ✓ Utilize an IBA (Intervention Based Appointment) format to target the "Big 4" criminogenic needs with higher risk probationers.
- ✓ Focus the time spent with clients on identifying thinking errors and skill development.
- ✓ Target higher risk populations with the appropriate balance of cognitive based interventions and supervision surveillance practices.
- ✓ Consider using one of the many cognitive based tools (specifically Thinking Reports, Carey Guides) to shape face-to-face interactions with clients.
- ✓ Use "Strategies for Behavior Change (SBC)" to target behaviors and respond accordingly.
- ✓ Provide normative feedback based on assessments to develop client awareness of their criminogenic risk areas.