

OVERVIEW:

Napa County Probation Department was a national pilot site to implement Dosage Probation--matching offender needs and risk with programming and time on Probation.

CHALLENGE:

Offenders are placed on Probation through the court. Generally the term of probation is three years. Caseload sizes continue to grow in Departments across the country. It was important to come up with a way to lower caseload sizes for appropriate supervision to occur. One way to lower caseloads is to have offenders on shorter periods of probation. However, just reducing length of time does not ensure safety for the community. Following the research and what we have learned from evidence based practices it is believed that if the proper "dose" of probation is given to offenders the term of probation can be shorter than three years. The National Institute of Corrections chose two pilot sites across the country. Napa County California and Washington County Minnesota were selected as the sites. Napa was chosen based on the current implementation within the Department. The goal was to implement Dosage Probation and determine if this program could positively impact recidivism and assist with caseload sizes for probation officers.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION:

Prior to Napa County Probation being selected, all criminal justice stakeholders had to be in agreement that this program could work in our system. Meetings of all stakeholders including the District Attorney, Public Defender, Health and Human Services, Jail, Police, Sheriff, Probation, and the Courts. This group designed a program for medium and high risk offenders. This program started with the premise that at least one year of supervision would be required. Then programming would be determined based on the risk level of the offender. Medium offenders needed to complete 100 – 200 hours of cognitive behavioral programming in addition to other terms and conditions of probation (restitution, drug testing, searches, and fees). High risk offenders were required to complete up to 300 hours of cognitive behavioral programs. Once the "dosage" hours were completed along with at least one year of supervision the offender's probation case was closed.

The National Institute of Corrections provided site specific technical assistance. Probation Officers were given additional skills in working with offenders using cognitive behavioral assignments and learning to determine accurate counts of hours earned. Eight probation officers volunteered to be a part of this project.

An important component of this program is that it is incentive based. Research shows that a 4:1 ratio of positive feedback to sanctioning is much more effective than straight sanctions. The biggest incentive of this program is an early termination of probation but other incentives are used throughout the program.

ORIGINALITY:

Currently, no other California Probation Department has followed the National Institute of Corrections model of Dosage Probation. There are now four sites nationally that are working with or have worked with the National Institute of Corrections on this project.

COST EFFECTIVENESS:

This program was started with no additional funding to the Probation Department. The Department was able to provide about a week of training time to the probation officers offered through the National Institute of Corrections consultants on the project. The Probation Department did budget \$50,000 out of funds used for quality assurance for an outside coach to come and observe interviews and give feedback to officers on their use of evidence based practices skills.

RESULTS:

The program was implemented in April 2016. We have just completed one year of operations. To date, there have been two program graduates and several others that are nearing completion. We have learned that many offenders are not ready to start such intensive programs right after being placed on probation. It was been determined that it may take officers a few months to help the offenders see the benefits to join the program. The numbers in the program are continuing to increase. It is too early to tell the success of the program as we are just now seeing graduates. The plan is to track all graduates for at least three years to see if they can stay out of the criminal justice system.

One very positive result has been for the probation officers. They are very excited about seeing the successes of those on their caseloads and gaining new skills in working with offenders through this process.

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