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SUCCESS ON SUPERVISION

Positive Trends in Adult Probation and Post-Prison Supervision

Multnomah County, Department of Community Justice

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Introduction

215 Supervisees received earned discharge in FY2018

Length of Jail Sanctions decreased by **<40%** from FY12 to FY18

650 Supervisees received residential treatment service

980 individuals were diverted from prison to be housed in the community less expensively.

82% of all supervision cycles are completed successfully

The vast majority **<70%** of supervisees do not return to supervision once they complete a cycle

Probation and parole agencies play a distinctive role in the criminal justice system. With the exception of the prison system, our engagement with justice-involved individuals is far lengthier than our partner agencies such as the courts, jails, and police agencies. For example, the average length of a probation sentence in our jurisdiction is 29 months and the length of a post-prison cycle is 25 months. This length of time allows a probation/post prison officer (PPO) an opportunity to develop an ongoing relationship with the individual in contrast to the arresting officer, sentencing judge, district attorney, or public defender.

Additionally, PPO supervision represents a unique pivot point in the treatment of a justice-involved offender where the goals begin to shift from punishment to reintegration into society. The goals of probation/post prison supervision are shared by the individuals themselves, marking the moment where needs of the public safety system and the individual move in the same direction. Together, officers and supervisees work toward successful completion of supervision and an eventual liberation of the client from the system itself.

Given this vantage point, PPO agencies are ideally positioned to see success on a daily basis, yet traditionally we do not recognize it. Officers prioritize their time with those in violation of conditions rather than in compliance. Long-established metrics focus on arrests and abscond occurrences, such that the prevailing outcome measures used to evaluate PPO services are failure rates. This is in stark contrast to a field that seeks to align itself with evidence-based practices and rely on “what works”.

This report is an effort by the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice to shift our focus to what is working in probation and post prison. We looked for indicators of success in our Department so we could acknowledge efforts that are moving in that direction. We offer this to our employees to better highlight their role in making positive change, and to the field of Community Corrections and to the community as a whole as the beginning of a framework for sharing our collective success.

About Multnomah County Department of Community Justice

Multnomah County is one of 36 Counties in the State of Oregon and encompasses the City of Portland. As the most populous county, Multnomah has nearly 800,000 residents. Community Corrections is county-operated in Oregon and is run by the Department of Community Justice (DCJ) in Multnomah County. DCJ operates the Adult Services Division with approximately 125 officers who jointly manage both probation and post-prison clients on their caseloads. Officers are optionally armed and have arrest powers. On any given day, DCJ manages about 7,860 adults with a typical caseload size of 35 to50 clients per officer. DCJ has integrated the evidence-based principles of risk, need, and responsivity into its practices. Validated risk assessment tools such as the LS/CMI, WRNA, and Public Safety Checklist are used to assess and triage justice-involved individuals. Case plans and service referrals are based on information collected through these assessments. The majority of individuals supervised by DCJ are assessed to be high to very high risk. DCJ strives to address the highest need individuals, and protect lower risk offenders from interventions that may actually do more harm than good. Because of this commitment to supervision based on risk and evidence-based intervention strategies, Multnomah County achieves a great deal of success on supervision. As seen in Table 1, the majority of individuals who complete supervision never return to a supervision cycle. In fact, 82% of supervision cycles are successfully completed.

Table 1: Completion Rates

Year	Total Number of Supervisees who Completed Supervision	Percentage (Number) of Total Who Have Not Returned to Supervision[1]
FY09	3,758	70% (2,619)
FY10	3,472	71% (2,463)
FY11	3,417	74% (2,519)
FY12	3,105	75% (2,331)
FY13	3,147	77% (2,417)
FY14	3,498	82% (2,870)
FY15	3,741	85% (3,175)
FY16	3,664	87% (3,204)
FY17	3,461	90% (3,112)
FY18	3,252	94% (3,054)
	34,515	80% **(27,764)**

[1] Includes supervisees who have had at least one year accrue after completing supervision and have not returned on a supervision caseload in Oregon as of this report, June 2019.

Earned Discharge & Safety Rules

In 2013, Multnomah County DCJ began to implement an Earned Discharge program, made possible by the passage of Justice Reinvestment legislation in Oregon (HB 3194). Review for earned discharge eligibility is automatic at the halfway point of supervision, and is only available for probationers, not those on post- prison supervision. If a justice-involved individual meets the criteria for earned discharge, they can be released from the conditions of supervision. The earned discharge program provides probation officers with an influential incentive to induce positive behavior and outcomes.

In order to qualify for the Earned Discharge, a person is reviewed for the following criteria:

- **No new convictions**
- **Felony justice-involved individual (those supervised for misdemeanors are not eligible)**
- **Current on all supervision and court fees**
- **Completed community service**
- **No Probation Violations received in the last 6 months**
- **In compliance with supervision case plan**

Granting earned discharge is at the discretion of the probation officer and serves as an excellent tool to promote engagement in the services provided by DCJ that affect positive change. As presented in Table 2, in FY18, 215 offenders were granted early discharge.

Table 2: Earned Discharge

Year	Total Number of People Who Earned an Early Release
FY15	11
FY16	120
FY17	238
FY18	215
Since Earned Discharge was implemented, 584 individuals were successfully discharged and able to leave the criminal justice system.	

Pre-Trial Release

DCJ operates a pre-trial triage unit known as the Recog Unit (i.e., Release on Your Own Recognizance). This unit operates 24 hours, 7 days per week out of the Multnomah County jail. Using validated risk scores, workers in this unit recommend whether a defendant waiting for court can be safely released into the community and relied on to appear for their court date. In calendar year 2017, the Recog Unit screened, processed, and released 2,668 defendants. Of those, 2,044 (77%) were not rearrested and met all of their court dates within six months of arrest or by their trial end date (whichever came first).

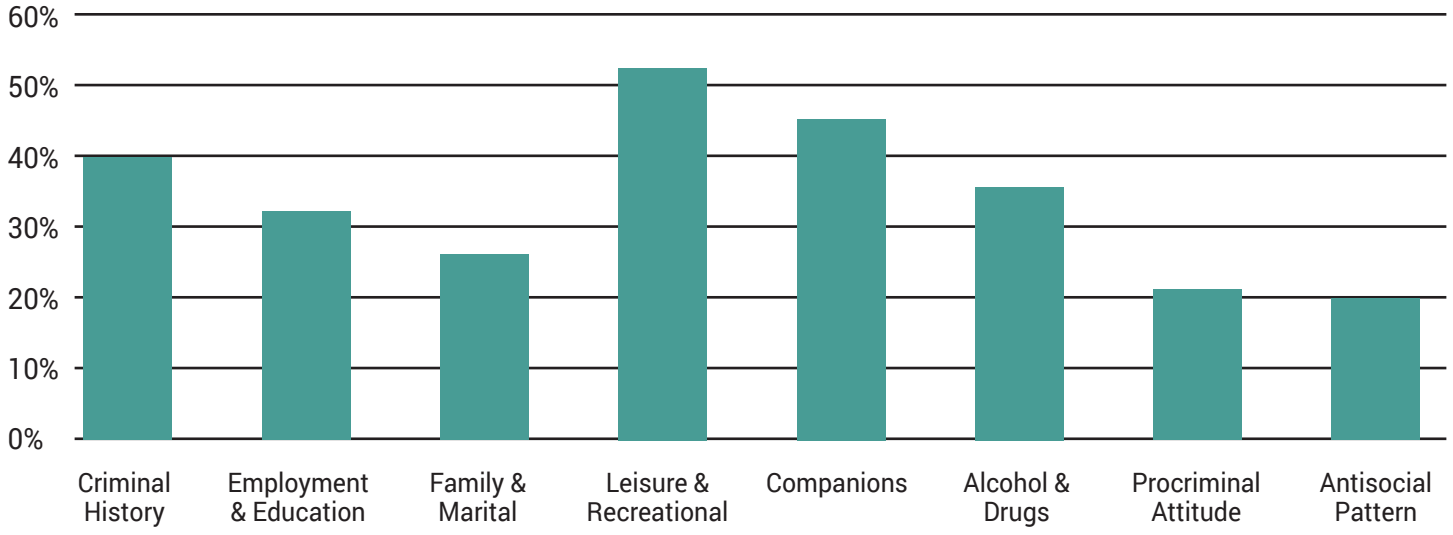
of the pre-trial defendants released on their own recognizance in 2017 were successful

Overcoming Challenges

Probation/post-prison officers collect a lot of information about the people they supervise through risk assessment tools. These tools help identify the challenges a person may face to safely and successfully complete supervision. Despite the fact that many clients measure at high risk, many clients do succeed even when these challenges are present, helping to demonstrate that risk factors can be overcome. The following findings were identified[2] when all active supervisees who did not recidivate as of the beginning of FY18 were examined:

- **Almost half (48%) of successful clients were classified medium, high or very high-risk by a validated triage tool**
- **40% of successful clients had extensive criminal histories**
- **About half (46%) of the successful clients were surrounded by people who discouraged them from changing their lives but they still did**
- **36% of successful clients had issues with alcohol or drugs**
- **Over half (53%) of successful clients faced significant lifestyle changes to promote their success**
- **31% of successful clients had a treatment referral while on supervision**

Successful Clients Originally Assessed High/Very High in these LSCMI Challenge Areas



[2]*Generated using domains from the LS/CMI and administrative records of treatment referrals.*

Highlighting Hard Work

Probation officers invest time in engaging with clients so they do not abscond or commit a new crime. Probation officers site trust as a major challenge to overcome when building a rapport with their client. Through the department wide implementation of EPICS (Effective Practices in Community Supervision), probation officers are encouraged to meet their clients at the level that the client is starting, and work for positive change from there. According to members of the Research/Field Partnership Workgroup, goals are defined as small steps towards achieving some element of their case plan and are very reflective of the needs of the individual. Once trust begins to be established, clients are more likely to keep in touch, be consistent with communication, and be open to addressing underlying issues related to their criminality. Tables 3 and 4 show the caseload trends of completed clients who never committed new crimes or lost contact with PO during the course of their supervision.

Table 3: Safety Rates

Year	Total Number of Supervisees Who Began Supervision in That Year	Percentage (Number) of Total Who Were Never Arrested or Sanctioned for a New Crime While on Supervision[3]
FY09	4,161	65% (2,725)
FY10	4,124	65% (2,668)
FY11	4,140	64% (2,637)
FY12	4,480	63% (2,830)
FY13	4,526	64% (2,886)
FY14	4,863	63% (3,084)
FY15	4,243	64% (2,728)
FY16	4,204	62% (2,623)
FY17	4,924	65% (2,542)
FY18	3,881	68% (2622)
Total number of individuals in the last decade with no re-arrests while being supervised: 27,345		

[3]*As of this report, April 2019*

Table 4: Absconds

Year	Total Number of Supervisees Who Began Supervision in That Year	Percentage (Number) of Total Who Stayed Engaged throughout Supervision (no abscond recorded)
FY09	4,161	73% (3,040)
FY10	4,124	73% (3,013)
FY11	4,140	70% (2,916)
FY12	4,480	73% (3,285)
FY13	4,526	71% (3,216)
FY14	4,863	70% (3,402)
FY15	4,243	70% (2,986)
FY16	4,204	68% (2,855)
FY17	4,924	72% (2,834)
FY18	3,881	74% (2,869)
Total number of individuals in the last decade with no absconds while being supervised: 30,416		

Reducing Jail Usage

Jail beds are an expensive and limited resource in any community. Probation officers in Multnomah County take correctional best practices into consideration when sanctioning individuals to jail. Length of jail sanctions are thoughtfully reviewed so that the resulting jail sanction can be as impactful with clients as possible. Alternative sanctions are also being used more frequently so that jail is only one option in a continuum of possible responses to non-compliant behaviors. Tables 5 illustrates the consistent decline in jail sanctions given.

Table 5: Jail Usage

Year	Total Number of Supervisees Who Received a Jail Sanction	Average length of Jail sanction (in Days)
FY09	2,396 (18%)	14.7
FY10	2,481 (20%)	13.7
FY11	2,347 (19%)	14.6
FY12	2,387 (19%)	14.5
FY13	2,375 (18%)	13.2
FY14	2,545 (18%)	11.6
FY15	2,552 (18%)	10.9
FY16	2,554 (19%)	10.8
FY17	2,247 (18%)	8.2
FY18	2,214 (18%)	8.5

Positive Impacts for Our County

Success on probation or post-prison supervision translates into success for our community. By engaging with justice-involved individuals and reducing recidivism, all members of Multnomah County benefit. Through programs like Smart Supervision and Justice Reinvestment, DCJ has been able to save the state more than $200,000 a year in prison bed costs. More importantly, the lives of DCJ clients, their families, and other members of the community that interact with DCJ clients, are positively impacted. The following are examples of the positive and rewarding results of the work of DCJ officers.

Stacy's Story (Start Court)

"Stacy" was placed on supervision in lieu of a lengthy prison sentence with the expectation that she participate in the County's drug court program, START court. As a result of her ongoing meth use, "Stacy" had lost her kids to the care of her family, had no stable place to live, made dangerous connections with associates and intimate relationships, and earned income working in the sex industry. "Stacy" reported as expected and made frequent court appearances to report new substance use to the drug court judge. She was always open about her use, and remained pre-contemplative about entering into residential treatment and beginning a life of recovery.

On a whim, I called her and told her Volunteers of America Oregon (VOA) had a bed for her and I needed her to be to treatment by 10am. At the time she took my call, she was sitting at a bus stop with a suitcase in tow after a night of work. "Stacy" did not hesitate, agreed to report to treatment, and changed her route to VOA right there on the spot. When she arrived at VOA an hour later she admitted to staff there she had just used meth, let them know she had paraphernalia in her suitcase, and asked them to search her belongings well before checking in to the program.

"Stacy" has held her recovery since that day: 7/16/14; 5 years 1 month and 28 days. She completed residential treatment, then ongoing outpatient treatment, and continues participating in support meetings and activities. She returned to school and attained a degree from PCC. She works as a peer mentor for one of our partner agencies. She rents her own apartment. She is reunited with her children. And we continue to stay in touch when I see her at community events and when she accompanies current clients to my office.

"Stacy" has shown the most amazing perseverance. Despite a difficult upbringing and early adult life, she has taken control of her future, holding onto her recovery as a foundation for her motivation to continue moving upward and onward.

Ms. T's Story (MCJRP)

Ms. T grew up in an environment where her self worth was constantly questioned. She was subjected to drugs, alcohol, and violence at an early age—a pattern which continued into her adult life. Ms. T has survived trauma, received incarceration, and had prior terms on supervision.

In 2017, Ms. T was given an opportunity on MCJRP probation; however, she did not utilize it right away. After being on abscond for about a year, Ms. T returned to supervision and was ready to hit the ground running. Many times she has expressed wanting to do things differently and be a positive role model for her family, particularly her daughter, and for her community. Over the last year, I've had the opportunity to work with Ms. T. During that time she had been open and honest, working through her trauma and recovery despite the pain that she must face. She has obtained her own housing, is a leader in the recovery community, and is actively rebuilding relationships with her family.

Ms. T has transformed her life into one that she is proud of and recognizes her self worth. She aspires to be a champion for other women who have shared experiences and is working towards becoming a mentor. The MCJRP program gave Ms. T the tools to change her life. She is a leader in our community and will continue on to make a difference for those she works with.

Mr. V's Story (MCJRP)

Mr. V had a tumultuous childhood marked by drugs, instability, and violence. His involvement with the criminal justice system began in 1995. He has tried his hand at probation, incarceration, and treatment; however, he was unsuccessful before MCJRP.

In the beginning of his MCJRP probation, Mr. V was unsure about how to make the changes necessary to reach his goals related to a positive life. It wasn't until an accident where he was left to recover in a wheelchair, that Mr. V began to understand he had to crawl before he could walk and walk before he could run—in all aspects of life. Once given the time to reflect on his life and the choices he was making versus the person he wanted to be, Mr. V got the ball rolling. While working with his PPO, Mr. V began attending treatment, obtained his own housing, and started to realize his life had more value than simply a state ID number.

Currently, Mr. V has four months clean and sober, has achieved stable housing, and is working consistently with treatment, supervision, and his mentors. Mr. V has graduated from the first phase of MCJRP and continues to demonstrate his leadership ability in the recovery community. Mr. V's path has been marked by many successes, but most impressive of all is the clear belief that his life was worth investing the effort. Mr. V is an extraordinary example of the resiliency of the human spirit.

The previous stories are a very small sample of the good work and hard won results that PPO's are working towards every day. Each client is a unique opportunity for positive impact, and no two stories or paths are the same. PPO's develop case plans and goals that make sense to the individual, and continue to guide and direct that individual towards success even if that person's greatest obstacle is themselves. As a result, the community is safer and the individuals served are achieving milestones that may not have been possible. DCJ should be proud of its impact.

About This Report

The Research & Planning Unit is responsible for producing the statistics and figures in this report. We use a variety of data sources in this report including:

- **CIS:** The Corrections Information System is maintained by the Oregon Department of Corrections, and is the system of record for all probation, prison, and post-prison supervision. It records the details of each supervisee's stay in the corrections system, including sentences, supervision location (in or out of custody), sanctions and violations, and supervision completion.
- **OMS:** The Offender Management System is a web-based portal maintained by the Oregon Department of Corrections, and is used by DCJ staff primarily to record risk assessments and case plans.
- **LEDS:** The Law Enforcement Data System is maintained by the Oregon State Police, and records all fingerprinted arrests in the state.
- **Recog Database:** This database is maintained by DCJ, and is used by the staff of our pretrial supervision team – known as the Recog unit – to record assessments on every defendant who is booked into Multnomah County jails. The name "Recog" comes from how the assessment is used to triage which defendants are safe to be "released on their own recognizance" back into the community while awaiting the outcome of their trial.

About the Authors

Dr. Kimberly P. Bernard was the Director of Research and Planning at the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice at the initiation of this project. She is currently the Principal Investigator for three evaluations projects with the Bureau of Justice Assistance as well as a scholar with the National Institute of Justice WEB Du Bois Program. In the fall of 2017, Dr. Bernard became the Research Chair for the American Probation and Parole Association. She has over 20 years of experience managing process and outcome studies in applied settings. Dr. Bernard holds a Ph.D. from the Brandeis University Heller School for Social Policy & Management.

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