

Multnomah County Auditor's Office

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Community Corrections:

*Mixed results from new
supervision programs*

This report is a summary of our review of the County's Department of Community Corrections. We focused on two specific programs: the Intensive Case Management (ICM) program for high risk offenders and the Centralized Casebank (CBC) program for lower risk offenders. Like other departments around the country, Multnomah County's Department of Community Corrections has been faced with the challenge of managing more serious offenders in the community. In recent years the Department has undergone significant organizational and program changes to address new responsibilities. It has integrated State personnel into the organization along with their caseloads of felony offenders, developed new programs, and adapted to legislative changes such as Sentencing Guidelines and Structured Sanctions.

To meet these added responsibilities, Department expenditures have increased over the last five years from \$16 million to \$28 million, and its workforce has grown to 350 to supervise the 10,000 offenders currently on the County's caseload. To better protect the public, the Department uses a risk control strategy and classifies offenders based on the likelihood that they will commit new crimes. About 220 of the highest risk offenders are assigned to the Intensive Case Management (ICM) program and 1,300 of the lowest risk offenders are assigned to the

Centralized Case Bank (CBC). The remaining offenders are supervised on general caseloads or by one of the Department's other specialized programs.

Key program components of ICM, CBC and General caseloads	Program Component	Intensive Case Management (ICM)	General Caseloads/Traditional	Centralized Casebank (CBC)
	Risk Level	High risk with serious violations	Offenders at all risk levels	Low/limited risk
	Average Number Served FY95-96	220	6,200	1,300
	Referral Process	Sanctioned to ICM by POs or Hearings Officers	Varies	Enrolled at Probation Intake or Transferred from General Caseloads
	Annual Cost Per Offender FY95-96	\$3,646	\$1,495	\$293
	Monthly Supervision Requirements	6 contacts w/ PO 1 home visit	Varies by supervision level	1 telephone or mail report
	Average Caseload	25 per PO	75 per PO	650 per PO

Source: Auditors analysis of supervision caseload, staffing, and costs

ICM has not reduced recidivism and revocations The Intensive Case Management (ICM) program is intended to provide increased supervision to offenders who would otherwise be sent to prison for violating the conditions of parole or probation. Personnel in the ICM cost about \$3,646 annually per offender, compared to about \$1,495 for general supervision, representing at least \$470,000 annually in added supervision costs.

However, we could not find measurable improvements in offender behavior as a result of these additional supervision efforts. There were no significant differences between the new arrests, convictions, or revocations for offenders in ICM and comparable high risk offenders supervised traditionally on general caseloads. Further, the program has not reduced the number of technical violators returned to state prison.

Our results are similar to the conclusions of studies conducted of other intensive supervision programs in the country. To address the weaknesses identified in those earlier studies, the Department designed its ICM program based upon the most current research. However, several elements of the program design were not fully

implemented. For example, we did not find that ICM parole and probation officers (POs) regularly developed case plans to match supervision activities with offenders' risks and needs. They did not meet program guidelines for visits with offenders at home. Although offenders at ICM were more likely to enroll in treatment programs, they did not meet program guidelines for completing alcohol, drug, and other treatments. Better monitoring of caseloads would have also identified a large number of offenders who were enrolled in the program more than 18 months, much longer than the planned three to six month stay in the program.

We recommend that ICM, as it is currently operated, should not be expanded for additional offenders who will become the County's responsibility under Senate Bill 1145. The program has not yet been proven to be cost-effective. Until more evidence of success can be demonstrated in Multnomah County or elsewhere, the ICM program should continue to be considered experimental. ICM has also recently assumed responsibility for supervising graduates of the State's boot camp program. These offenders may require different types and styles of supervision than current ICM offenders. The Department should ensure that POs develop appropriate supervision methods in order for these distinct programs to succeed.

Casebanks provide cost-effective supervision for low risk offenders

We found clear indications of success when we examined the Department's Centralized Case Bank (CBC) for less serious offenders. CBC was initiated by the Department Director to provide a lower level of supervision, including self-reporting by telephone or mail, for offenders classified as low risk. We found that CBC offenders were no more likely to be re-arrested, convicted, or revoked than comparable offenders supervised traditionally on general caseloads.

On average, an offender on general caseload costs about \$1,495 annually, compared with the CBC cost of \$293 per offender. We estimate that up to 360 more offenders could be transferred to CBC at little additional cost, freeing general supervision POs to focus on higher risk cases. These transfers could provide the equivalent of about \$430,000 in additional supervision resources annually. We found some problems with transfers of offenders both into and out of the CBC program. Some general supervision POs are reluctant to transfer their more compliant offenders to CBC because of potential workload increase, and

because of the paperwork required. We also found delays in transferring CBC offenders back to general supervision when they violated the conditions of probation.

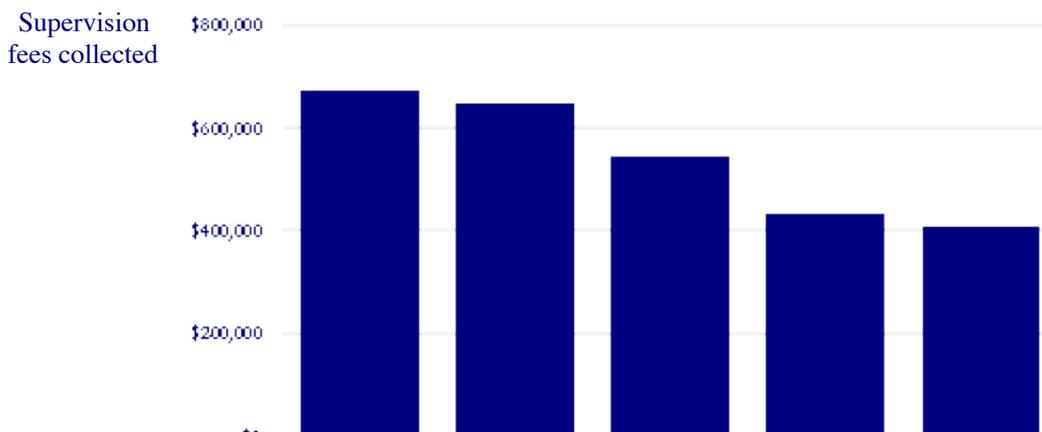
Policies and procedures on transfers, more regular caseload audits, and monitoring of management and performance data are necessary to ensure the most cost-effective operation of CBC. In addition, the Department has operated CBC for several years without a manager or budget distinct from other operations.

General caseloads are not always supervised according to risk

When we examined supervision levels of the other 6,200 offenders assigned to general caseload, we found that the allocation of correctional supervision and services could be better matched to the risk posed by offenders. We found that the general caseload POs, on average, provide the same level of supervision to high risk and low risk cases. Within all risk groups, POs make an average of 2.8 contacts with each offender per month.

Supervision fee collections could be improved

We also examined the collection of supervision fees from offenders, and believe that collections could be increased. In Multnomah County the fee is generally set at \$25 per month, but the sentencing judge may defer or waive all or a portion of the fee. POs may also waive fees with supervisory approval. We were not able to obtain an estimate from the courts or the Department regarding waived fees. In FY95-96 the County received about \$409,000 in supervision fees, or an average of \$3.43 per offender each month. The comparative rates for Clackamas, Lane, and Washington counties are \$15.38, \$6.01, and \$11.98, respectively. We estimate that the Department could collect an additional \$900,000 annually if it pursued the strategies in these counties.



FY

FY91-92

FY92-93

FY93-94

FY94-95

FY95-96

Source: County financial management system

Management Response Department managers believe that further analysis of the ICM program is necessary to conclusively determine that it is not successful. Nevertheless, in response to the audit results and anticipated revenue losses from Measure 47, the Department has decided to discontinue the ICM program in January, 1997. The Department also recently submitted and received Board approval to create a separate budget and manager for the CBC program. In addition, Department staff have begun reviewing caseloads of POs and transferring eligible offenders to CBC. The Department is exploring alternative case management and risk assessment methods to improve supervision practices, and has formed a team of personnel to improve fee collections.

[Read the response from management](#)

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