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Understanding
**"PROBATION
AS USUAL" *for*
YOUNG ADULTS**

*A Baseline Report on the
Experiences of Clients and
Their Natural Supports*

**Research
& Planning**
Community Justice

**Multnomah County
Department of
Community Justice**

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5-7
<i>Background</i>	5
<i>Method</i>	6
<i>Focus Areas</i>	7
Findings	8-19
<i>Relationship with JCC/PPO</i>	9
<i>Inconsistent Disciplinary Figure</i>	12
<i>Cultural Matching</i>	13
<i>Rehabilitative Community-Based Provider Resources and Referrals</i>	14
<i>“It Keeps You in the System”</i>	14
<i>Supervision is an Intrusive Experience</i>	15
<i>Traumatizing Home Visits</i>	16
<i>Addiction: A Motivating Factor and Barrier to Success</i>	17
Feedback	20
Conclusion	21
References	22
Appendix A: Focus Group Recruitment Flyer	23
Appendix B: Focus Group Protocols	24

Executive Summary

With grant funding provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (DCJ) set out in 2015 to develop and align emerging best practices in the supervision of 15 – 25 year olds. A dedicated unit was established under a case management approach to address the unique cultural, emotional, and developmental needs of young adults under community supervision. To achieve this, this unit held young adult caseloads exclusively and staff received intensive specialty training in trauma informed care, brain development, and racial equity.

Prior to implementing this specialized supervision unit, independent program evaluators organized a series of focus groups with 15-25 year olds being supervised in both the DCJ Adult Services Division and Juvenile Services Division. The goal of these focus groups was to collect baseline understanding of the supervision experience for both young adults and their parents or natural supports who have to navigate these systems. This evaluation considered procedural justice as a central factor when analyzing how clients and their natural supports experienced the supervision process. In total, 24 clients and 18 natural supports participated in the focus group series. Two focus groups were conducted with clients and two focus groups were conducted with parents or natural supports of young adults under community supervision. On average, these focus groups lasted 67 minutes.

These focus groups revealed a central theme shared by both young adults and their support systems, which was that the relationship with JCCs/PPOs was one of the most crucial factors for successful supervision. Additional themes of the supervision experience also emerged:

- ◆ Juvenile Corrections Counselors and Parole and Probation Officers often provided inconsistent discipline.
- ◆ Cultural matching between clients and their JCC/PPO in their racial and/or cultural backgrounds was important to some clients and natural supports.
- ◆ Community-based provider resources and referrals were some of the most rehabilitative experiences during supervision.
- ◆ Many young adults believed common supervision practices “kept you in the system” in a cyclical process of increasing degrees of supervision or incarceration.
- ◆ Supervision was an intrusive experience for both clients and those around them.
- ◆ Home visits were highly traumatizing to many young adults and their family and natural supports.
- ◆ Addiction was a common struggle for young adults and this was reported as both a motivating factor to succeed on supervision and a significant barrier to success.

Although the focus groups were designed to elicit information regarding whether there are differences in supervision experiences for young people being supervised by either the Adult or Juvenile systems, clear differences did not emerge from the focus group discussions. Many of the qualities of good JCC/PPO relationships were consistent with previous research on procedural justice (e.g., Blasko & Taxman, 2018; Dai et al., 2011), suggesting that improving the quality of relationship with clients and natural supports by JCCs/PPOs listening to clients, treating them with respect, and consistently following through for clients can improve the quality and success of supervision and possibly increase the likelihood of compliance with conditions.

Introduction

Background

In 2015, the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice received a Smart Supervision grant through the Bureau of Justice Assistance to help develop and align a variety of emerging best practices in the supervision of 15 – 25 year olds. Research suggests that this age group needs customized and comprehensive services to address their unique cultural, emotional and developmental needs. During this developmental period, they experience major changes in the brain that are particularly relevant to juvenile offending, such as an increase in the intensity of emotion, impulsivity, and risk taking (e.g., Steinberg, 2017; Toga, Thompson, & Sowell, 2006).

To meet these challenges, the Smart Supervision Team was formed and began planning a unique case management approach integrating Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS), trauma informed care (TIC), brain development science, and cultural competency. The long term goal was to improve outcomes for this population which nationally has the highest re-arrest, reconviction, and return to prison rates among youth (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002).

At the onset of the grant, the Research and Planning Team (RAP), who served as the independent program evaluators of this effort, organized a series of focus groups with 15-25 year olds being supervised in both the Adult Services Division and the Juvenile Services Division. The goal of these focus groups was threefold:

- ◆ Collect baseline information about the supervision experience by young adults
- ◆ Collect baseline information about the supervision experience by the parents and natural supports of young adults in the system
- ◆ Identify if there are differences in the supervision experience depending on whether a young person is supervised by the Adult or Juvenile system

It was expected that through the roll-out of various Smart Supervision activities, participants would experience improvements in their perceptions of procedural justice. Procedural justice is an increasingly important factor to consider in criminal justice work, particularly as it informs the perceived legitimacy of criminal justice organizations (e.g., Reisig & Mesko, 2009). Procedural justice theory (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) suggests that people are more likely to cooperate with authority and comply with rules and decisions when they are treated fairly. Aspects of fair treatment include neutrality, lack of bias, honesty, effort to be fair, politeness, and respect (Tyler, 1990). Studies have shown that individuals are more accepting of criminal justice system decisions when they 1. Perceive their interactions in the system as fair (Tyler, 2006), 2. Feel their own voice is included in the decision by being able to communicate their side of the situation (Dai, Frank, & Sun, 2011), and 3. Feel they have been treated with respect (McCluskey, Mastrofski, & Parks, 1999). In institutional corrections, research has linked procedural justice to increased compliance and cooperation with prison officials (e.g., Beijersbergen, Dirkzwager, & Nieuwbeerta, 2016). Procedural justice has been more commonly researched in specific contexts of policing (e.g., Maguire, Lowrey, & Johnson, 2016) and the

courts (e.g., Gottfredson, Kearley, Najaka, & Rocha, 2007), but continues to be explored in additional parts of the criminal justice system. Although procedural justice has not been studied as extensively in community corrections settings, two studies tested what dimensions of procedural justice are particularly salient in the context of community corrections (Blasko & Taxman, 2018). These studies theorized that procedural justice in this context would consist of neutrality, voice, treatment with respect and dignity, and trust (Jackson, Tyler, Bradford, Taylor, & Shiner, 2010) and developed a measure of community corrections procedural justice. Items described procedural justice in terms of POs listening to clients' side of the story (e.g., when they miss an appointment), following clear guidelines when sanctioning clients, working with other agencies to get clients services they need, giving sanctions that are deserved, making fair decisions, treating clients as they do others on supervision, and not inventing their own rules. This evaluation therefore considered procedural justice as a central factor when analyzing how clients and their natural supports experienced supervision.

Method

Four focus groups were planned with the goal of comparing and contrasting differences in participant experiences (see Table below). The young adults recruited from both systems were similar in age, risk level and crime type.

Adult Services System	Juvenile Services System
Focus Group A: Young Adults on Supervision	Focus Group B: Young Adults on Supervision
Focus Group C: Parents/Natural Supports on Young Adults on Supervision	Focus Group D: Parents/Natural Supports on Young Adults on Supervision

Parole/Probation Officers (PPOs) from the Adult System and Juvenile Court Counselors (JCCs) from the juvenile system were given recruitment flyers to share with supervises with the targeted characteristics. The recruitment flyer used to recruit participants for focus groups is included in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to take part in semi-structured focus groups designed to probe questions around client satisfaction with the current system, frequent difficulties they face in navigating their probation/parole, and what type of services they anticipate needing the most. The consent process was reviewed and approved by a local university institutional review board.

These focus groups were facilitated by research partners who had experience engaging with members of community corrections populations. Clients and natural supports were asked to participate in pre-program implementation focus groups during the first (federal) fiscal year of the grant (June 2016-Sept. 2016).

In total, there were 24 client and 18 natural support participants in the focus group series. The focus groups lasted 67 minutes on average, ranging 44 to 78 minutes. Informed consent was collected from all participants at the beginning of each focus group. Participants were compensated \$25 for completing a focus group.

Focus Areas

The focus group protocol was designed to cover aspects of supervision that were anticipated to be impacted by the interventions being planned by the Smart Supervision Team. Additionally, questions were phrased with an intention to explore the procedural justice framework within the context of supervision. A complete description of the focus group questions for both clients and natural supports is included in Appendix B. The study researchers analyzed the contents derived from the focus groups and incorporated applicable elements into long-term program sustainability measures and outcome reports.

Example of Protocol Question	Procedural Justice Area
Do you feel your JCC/PPO makes decisions fairly?	Neutrality
Do you feel comfortable asking your JCC/PPO for help?	Voice
How does your JCC/PPO show you respect?	Respect and Dignity
Are there people in your life that you feel are trying to help you? How do you know you can trust them?	Trust

Findings

Although we initially planned to compare the adult and juvenile supervision systems in this analysis, clear differences did not emerge from the focus group discussions. None of the clients in the juvenile system focus group had contact with the adult system and therefore did not have the range of experiences expected to be able to make such comparisons. Although a little over a quarter of participants in the adult client focus group had previous experiences with juvenile supervision, there was no consensus among participants regarding differences between the systems. For example, one client believed the juvenile system was much less flexible than the adult system, as they did not trust their JCC while they were on juvenile supervision and thought they were less understanding than their PPO for their adult supervision. On the other hand, a different client had good experiences with both juvenile and adult supervision and said their JCC helped them through a lot. Similarly, about 20-25% of participants in the natural supports focus groups made comparisons between the two systems but did not reach consensus regarding their similarities and differences. Coding comparison analysis also did not find large differences between the primary themes identified in the juvenile system focus groups and those identified in the adult system focus groups. Therefore, the remainder of this report presents the primary themes derived from all four focus groups conducted with clients and natural supports.

The central theme that characterized typical supervision was that

- 1** *the relationship with JCCs/PPOs was one of the most crucial factors for successful supervision for both clients and natural supports*

Qualities of both good and difficult JCC/PPO relationships were identified and are described in detail. Additional themes of the supervision experience were that

- 2** *JCCs/PPOs provided inconsistent discipline*
- 3** *cultural matching between clients and their JCC/PPO in their racial and/or cultural backgrounds was important to some clients and natural supports*
- 4** *community-based provider resources and referrals were some of the most rehabilitative experiences during supervision*
- 5** *supervision “kept you in the system” in a cyclical process of increasing degrees of supervision or incarceration*
- 6** *supervision was an intrusive experience for both clients and those around them*
- 7** *home visits were often described as highly traumatizing to clients and their natural supports*
- 8** *addiction was a common struggle for clients. Dealing with a substance use issue was reported as both a motivating factor to succeed on supervision and a significant barrier to success*

The concept of procedural justice is discussed in relation to the central theme of the quality of relationship with JCCs/PPOs, as well as to JCCs/PPOs providing inconsistent discipline and to community-based provider resources and referrals. Quotations identify participants by number and whether they were in the first (A) or second (B) client focus group or the first (C) or second (D) natural support focus group.

Relationship with JCC/PPO

In discussions with clients and their support systems, the relationship between a JCC/PPO and their client was described as one of the most crucial factors in a successful or unsuccessful supervision process.

Good relationships were described as those where the client:

- ◆ Felt safe
- ◆ Felt valued
- ◆ Felt the JCC/PPO listened to them
- ◆ Felt like they were treated like an individual
- ◆ Felt treated with respect
- ◆ Could be honest with their JCC/PPO without fear of excessive punishment
- ◆ Did not feel judged or defined by their past actions
- ◆ Got consistent and thorough information on their supervision process
- ◆ Was referred quickly to appropriate services and community providers
- ◆ Felt celebrated when they met goals and milestones
- ◆ Could trust the JCC/PPO to follow through on their promises, for both rewards and sanctions

Many of these qualities are consistent with previous research on procedural justice, particularly regarding the importance of listening to clients, treating them with respect, trusting that JCCs/PPOs will follow through on the clients' expectations for their behavior, and treating clients as individuals (e.g., Blasko & Taxman, 2018; Dai et al., 2011). If a client or support system participant indicated that they had a good relationship with their JCC/PPO, they could usually provide multiple examples of the positive quality of the relationship and how the relationship promoted a successful supervision experience.

Clients often described good relationships with JCCs/PPOs in terms of the honesty, genuineness, and willingness to provide help on the part of JCCs/PPOs. One client gave an example of how their positive relationship with their JCC/PPO was fostered by mutual trust between them: ***"She's cool. She's genuine. I can tell whenever she tells me anything that she's being...honest, all that...She'd give me a inch and I don't take that nine yards. That's what she's looking for. That's what she's looking for, you know what I mean?"*** (Client 10B). The client was able to reach out to the JCC/PPO based on that mutual trust. In one instance, the client asked to join the JCC/PPO at a speaking event. The JCC/PPO reciprocated that trust and rewarded the client in the process. The client explained, ***"She gives me community service for it. But me not even knowing about it, not even knowing that she's going to be able to give me community...She rewards me for it because she knows that I didn't have to come with her. I could have been doing anything else I wanted to do because I'm not required. I just have to do my community service"*** (Client 10B). Ultimately, this reinforced the client's trust in the JCC/PPO and the client's belief that the JCC/PPO was someone they could turn to for help if needed: ***"Just something as little as that makes me feel like I can trust in her. So it's like, even if it was just I was just down bad, and I had no one to***

call, nowhere to go, or just nothing, I was just out on the street, I would be calling her, letting her know this because maybe she can be able to help me with it” (Client 10B).

Many clients agreed that JCCs/PPOs needed to approach supervision with the goal of getting to know and understand the client as a person, not as a statistic or stereotype, in order to have good relationships with clients. One client described this as a comparison between two types of JCCs/PPOs: **“I’ve had both. I’ve had the PO that treats you just as a statistic and a number. And then I’ve had the one I have now who really wants to understand who I am, what I’m going through, and what he can do to help. And of course, I’m going to be more willing to work with the one I have now than the d***head”** (Client 3B). Another echoed this comparison, imagining how the two types of JCCs/PPOs react to a new client’s background:

“ From my personal experience, it’s like you only get two type of probation officers. One that looks at the paper and be like, ‘Okay, I know this kid,’ or one that looks at the paper and be like, ‘I want to get to know this kid to figure out why he’s here.’ (Client 10B)

Similarly, natural supports of clients appreciated when JCCs/PPOs were reliable in their expectations of clients, had open communication with clients, and gave positive feedback to clients. One parent was especially enthusiastic about the relationship between their child’s JCC/PPO and the youth:

Another parent summarized a similarly positive JCC/PPO relationship with their child, saying, **“I think they have a really good relationship, I mean, considering the circumstances, of course, but...I’ve heard him have conversations with him about kind of when he grew up, was in sports and just of trying to relate to him. So I think that was helpful for him”** (Support 3C).

“ The one thing I can say that my son always says, he says, ‘He told me I was proud of-- he was proud of me.’ He says there’s not too many people that are going to tell you that they’re proud of you and especially a PO Officer. So I’m glad he’s got who he has, and I wouldn’t wish him to have anybody else. So I have no complaints on that end...he’s been there for my son every time. Like I said, he went to the school with him to get him going and help him along the way. He has set expectations from the get-go, ‘This is what I expect and this is what I expect from you, and you can expect this from me. If you don’t show up at your meeting with me, then I’ll be meeting you somewhere’ (Support 2C)

A client who had a positive relationship with their JCC/PPO also could understand when their JCC/PPO made a mistake without it damaging the relationship, as long as the JCC/PPO acknowledged the mistake and worked to correct it. For example, one client explained that their JCC/PPO disappointed them when they failed to notify the client that there was a warrant out for their arrest and the client was picked up for it: **“So I kind of felt like it was kind of her fault. Like if she’d told me, we would have been able to get in front of it. I could have turned myself in or anything”** (Client 10B). The JCC/PPO discussed this with the client afterward and made a plan for how to address this kind of situation in the future. The client shared how the JCC/PPO acknowledged their own responsibility for the mistake as well as the client’s responsibility for the behavior: **“She just like, ‘Okay, well, how about we get in front of everything from now on and make sure-- Let’s get in front of everything.’ She says, ‘Okay. It’s my fault and it’s your fault. So let’s just make sure that we don’t have no faults from here on”** (Client 10B).

Difficult relationships were described as those where the client:

- ◆ Felt disrespected
- ◆ Felt “like a number,” and not like they were regarded as an individual
- ◆ Did not feel like they were being heard
- ◆ Did not feel like they could be honest with their JCC/PPO about their struggles for fear of disproportionate sanctioning or punishment
- ◆ Felt defined by their past actions, regardless of how hard they worked or how well they were doing in their supervision
- ◆ Were not referred to needed services or appropriate community providers
- ◆ Felt their successes were ignored or belittled
- ◆ Felt their JCC/PPO was inconsistent or did not follow through with their promises

Difficult relationships with a JCC/PPO were associated with feelings of resistance to the supervision process, triggers for substance use, and a general distrust of the public safety system. Many of the qualities that characterized difficult relationships between clients and JCCs/PPOs were the direct inverse of the aspects of fair treatment that contribute to procedural justice (Tyler, 1990), such as being treated unfairly and being disrespected.

Natural supports expressed frustration with JCCs/PPOs who did not have any relationship with them as parents, in addition to their relationship with the youth on supervision. One parent indicated this frustration by asking **“What relationship?”** (Support 7D) in response to the question about their relationship with the PPO/JCC. This parent believed that the PPO/JCC also did not have a relationship with their child on supervision, which led to further issues: **“I’ve been having issues with my son not doing what he’s supposed to do. I called to see if he’ll tell him that school’s part of his new requirement, and my son’s in the background even telling the PO to f-off, and the PO hasn’t called me back in a month. I’ve only seen him-- we talked in person, once...He doesn’t have a relationship with my son. Even when my son’s mentor and stuff was supposed to meet up with him, he doesn’t even show up to the meetings that he sets up. So there’s no relationship”** (Support 7D).

Another barrier to a good supervision relationship between client and JCC/PPO was rapid or frequent switching of JCCs/PPOs. Getting a new JCC or PPO was reported as a very destabilizing event by clients and their support networks. These switches broke old relationships, required the forging of new relationships, and often required a repeat of upsetting and invasive experiences like home visits. These switches were also associated with feelings of resistance to the supervision process, triggers for substance use, and a general distrust of the public safety system. One client explained that frequent changes in their PPO nearly got them arrested at one point and suggested their new PPO did not adequately try to get in touch with them:

“ I can’t count how many times I didn’t know who my PO was. And then they didn’t get in contact with me to set up a date or a new date to meet them, right? And then I was a day away from having a warrant put out. And I get a phone call. And it’s some guy I’ve never even heard of, ‘I’ve been your PO for two months.’ And I’m like, ‘Okay. I don’t know. You haven’t given me a call. How was I supposed to know that?’

'Well, I sent you a letter in the mail [laughter]. I'm like, 'How old are you?' I was like, 'It's 2016. We have--' I wasn't trying to be rude, but he was about to put me back in jail. So I was kind of offended. I have a cell phone. I have an email address that I've given you guys. You're going to send me just a letter in the mail when it's on your guys's computer that I work out of town' (Client 7B).

Clients described disruptions through PPO changes as creating ***"havoc"*** and being ***"traumatizing"*** (Client 2B). Changes in PPOs could also result in client distrust of PPOs, such as questioning why a new PPO asks them to share their story again even though they shared it with previous PPOs. Another client described how changes in their PPOs disrupt relationship-building, not only for them but for their natural supports as well: ***"Yeah, I mean when it's not planned and everything and because you have to create that relationship over again. And not only you, but your family does too. And every PO is going to do a home visit a little bit differently. So then they have to adapt to that. And it's really just embarrassing to me having my sister or whoever I'm living with at the time, my ex, having them go through it just because the county is-- I don't know what their deal is changing POs all the time"*** (Client 7B).

Inconsistent Disciplinary Figure

Parents and guardians of minor-aged clients reported a frustration with JCCs acting as an inconsistent disciplinary figure. Many complained that JCCs would frequently make a threat of consequence, but not follow through on their promise when the target behavior materialized. Such inconsistency could undermine perceptions of procedural justice, which is strengthened by supervision officers following clear guidelines when sanctioning clients, giving sanctions that are deserved, making fair decisions, and not making up their own rules about supervision conditions (Blasko & Taxman, 2018). Parents felt this was confusing to their children and sent a message of leniency that went against the stated goal of the JSD supervision process. Parents also felt betrayed by these experiences and at a loss as to how to subsequently follow up with or support their children.

Parents gave many examples of how JCCs did not follow through with consistent discipline, from enforcing school attendance to failing to check on their children at all. One parent expressed a frustration in reconciling the lack of JCC attention towards their child with their own parental responsibility: ***"I'm like, 'Gosh, can you please come check on him?' or whatever. But I know he's-- yeah. And at the end of the day, he's my kid"*** (Support 6C).

Another parent described how inconsistent discipline from their child's JCC/PPO resulted in long-term negative consequences for the youth such as not graduating on time, and potentially even leading to additional delinquent behavior. They stated that their child's JCC/PPO did not routinely check in with their child and that they did not have a clear understanding of what consistent discipline and reinforcement from a JCC/PPO would look like. They explained, ***"He hasn't ever been anywhere with my son or went to the school to check in or-- and that was kind of frustrating. It was like his thing was that he had to go to school and then months went by. He wasn't going. And I'm like, 'Okay. Well, he hasn't been in school. I thought that's what he's supposed to be doing.' And it was four or five months. And all he needed was two credits so it was really frustrating. It was like, 'You're this close. You're going to graduate with your class,' which would have been a really good feeling for him later on in life to say, 'I graduated with my people,' and whatever. Two credits and he just didn't go. I just felt like he didn't feel like there was any-- nobody was really paying attention. So he could do what he wanted... So it was just like here's this piece of paper of what we want you to do, but there was no follow through. And I don't know what the follow through is supposed to look like. I don't know."*** (Support 6C).

In addition, some parents suggested that the quality of relationship between their child and the JCC/PPO could influence the ability of JCCs/PPOs to support youth successfully through supervision, which to them included enforcing consequences for youth. One parent explained,

“My daughter’s counselor does not click at all. Like I said, I feel like she is just setting my daughter up for failure... She let my daughter get away with all this stuff. And I called her and told her to let her know. And all she said was, ‘Okay. I hear you.’ The other day I was on the phone with her and she told me, ‘You know, I’m really happy that you’re concerned, and you called me to let me know this.’ What? And nothing. You’re telling me you’re happy and you still, nothing” (Support 8D).

However, it was also unclear whether parents and guardians were always fully aware of the gravity of consequences which are set out formally by the JSD system. It is recommended that parents and guardians of minor-aged clients be fully briefed on the nature of the JCC role, their corresponding role as parents during the supervision status, and the differences between legal and parental discipline at the start of their child’s. It is also recommended that JCCs have sufficient training in the developmental trajectory of adolescence and that they know up-to-date strategies on childhood learning and discipline in order to make sure their supervision is most age-appropriate and effective.

Cultural Matching

For some clients and their support systems, it was important that the JCC or PPO that was assigned to the client be from a similar racial and/or cultural background. The primary reason given for this preference was a sense that this matching would guarantee a certain level of mutual understanding between the client and the JCC/PPO. For example, a parent explained that a lack of cultural matching between the JCC/PPO and the youth undermined the JCC/PPO’s ability to provide adequate supervision:

Support 2D: I would say my son’s first PO was uneducated.

Interviewer (I): Can you elaborate on that? Like he didn’t have the degrees to be a PO or--?

Support 2D: Well, no. I would say he had the degree, but uneducated on being culturally responsive to what my son was going through.

I: Okay. So he just didn’t-- it probably wasn’t his experience, his life experience--

Support 2D: No. Not at all.

I: --and he didn’t have any sort of additional cultural knowledge about--

Support 2D: Most definitely.

I: --your son. Well, a son like yours.

Support 2D: Yeah.

I: And in relationship to what he was tasked to do with him.

Support 2D: Fine. I mean, because it’s easy to go to school and get that degree and say, ‘I want to be a PO.’ And of course, through social experiences, you feel like you can face the situations that our kids go through. But when you’re hit with it in reality, it’s like, ‘Oh. I’m not really dealing with this.’ And if you’re not educated with that culture, then you don’t really know, as a PO, what real decisions to make when it comes to the success of our young black and brown boys.



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Rehabilitative Community-Based Provider Resources and Referrals

Many clients and their support systems report that the connections and referrals made to community-based providers were some of the most rehabilitative and life-transforming experiences during their time in supervision. The social networks and services provided by these community providers are deeply valued by DCJ clients and those who support them. This finding is consistent with procedural justice theory, which suggests that working with other agencies to get clients the services they need is one action that can contribute to perceptions of being treated fairly in the community corrections system (Blasko & Taxman, 2018).

Occasionally, clients and their support systems indicated a desire for referral to these community providers earlier on in the supervision process. Several parents described a common perception that earlier preventative efforts would have been helpful to youth. One parent voiced a desire for earlier intervention before a criminal justice system record: ***"I wish they had started treatment way earlier in the game. I think that would have been-- I knew he needed treatment before he got in trouble. And I was reaching out and just felt like there was a-- I wish there was a program before he had gotten in trouble because I already knew what was happening. I already knew... it's like, 'Gosh, I got the medical people willing to take him. I just need somebody to say he has to go.' But before he got a chart. I wish it could have happened before that"*** (Support 6C). Another parent agreed:



There's something lacking in the system to prevent youth from escalating, that they kind of-- the only option is to wait for your youth to escalate to the point where they have to get caught up into the system (Support 1C).

Some parents expressed frustration that even when they tried to utilize resources such as drug treatment for their child, nothing seemed to change until the youth got in serious trouble with the criminal justice system. One parent was left at a loss as to how to help further in this situation: ***"Especially when you've looked and looked and tried all sorts of alleys, and they all come to the same dead end. And you have no options other-- I mean, I felt had no options. I tried the police. I tried hospitals. I tried drug treatments. I tried everything I could think of. And my son was out there roaming the streets, and I didn't know where he was at. And I was waiting for that phone call saying that he was dead. It's a horrible thing to live with, knowing that they have a problem with drugs, and you can't get help anywhere you look. And then, all of a sudden, he gets in trouble, and then it's like, okay. Now he's the adult and you don't have anything to say about it. So I don't know"*** (Support 2C).

"It Keeps You in the System"

Clients and their support systems report a mismatch in the stated goal of supervision, to get a client to finish their supervision successfully, and the outcomes of many standard supervision practices, which keep a client on supervision through an extended period due to proportionally minor infractions. Clients and their support systems find this tension to be alienating, and it negatively impacts their sense of trust and relationship with DCJ staff and their JCC/PPO. One client suggested that his PO was not only extremely rigid with him but seemed to undermine his success to keep him in the system: ***"Well, the adult probation system is more relaxed than the juvenile probation system because the juvenile probation system, they show up at my school, you know what I mean. But it just - and he wasn't cool or understanding at all. You know what I mean? It was what he said went. And he would lie to me and trick me into getting arrested in weird situations. I'm supposed to be on 24-hour adult supervision. And he's like, 'Hey, [youth's name], you need to go find a job, this and that.' And my dad was complaining about me going to find a job too. So my dad goes to work. I'm on house arrest at the time, right, with an ankle bracelet. And so I get cleared to leave the house to go look for a job. And then my PO called me when I was out and asked me where I was. And I told him. And he asked me, 'All right. Will you come into the office real quick?"***

I need to talk to you.' And I'm like, 'Okay.' And I come in, I'm like, 'What's going on? Are you- I mean, I feel like I'm gonna get arrested or something.' He was like 'What? No, why would you been arrested?' He picks up the phone, like 'Hey can I get an officer to come detain a youth, [youth's name]?' And I'm sitting there like, 'What?' He's like, 'Well, you know you're supposed to be on 24-hour adult supervision or at your house on house arrest. And you knew that your dad wasn't with you when you left.' And I was like, 'You told me to leave to go look for a job.' And he was like, 'But you knew that he wasn't with you.' And I got arrested for it. Like just stupid stuff like that" (Client 3B).

Supervision is an Intrusive Experience

Clients and their support systems (family, close friends, and particularly parents) experience the supervision process as highly intrusive. Many clients and supports report feelings of shame and embarrassment in having to be a part of the community supervision system, fear of being unduly judged by staff they come into contact with, and worry about others knowing that they or their child is under supervision status.

Some clients indicated that the information requested from them by JCCs/PPOs reached a level of detail that felt unnecessary. For example, one client explained that their detailed questioning was tiresome: *"When she comes to talk to me, I talk to her about what I've been doing and stuff but she asks for too much. She'll ask me, 'What did you eat for breakfast?' And I'm like, sometimes I don't even eat breakfast so I'm like, 'I don't know, nothing.' It's just vague questions...every single detail every single day"* (Client 7A).

Another client suggested that their age influenced how intrusive their supervision felt: *"I got put on probation for the first time when I was 19. And I was in a different program. And they asked a lot of questions and came to my house a lot. And it was like, 'I need some space.' And I was young too. I was 19 years old too. So I was trying to do my thing and there was always this probation officer texting me, and showing up at my house, and always asking with surveys and questions, and I'm supposed to fill this s*** out. So it was definitely a little too nose for me"* (Client 6B).

Events and practices that are associated with reported feelings of intrusion include contact from JCCs/PPOs through the phone, text-messaging, and social media. For example, one client described how the degree to which some JCCs/PPOs investigate clients' social media use felt like stalking: *"The younger POs, the younger POs, like the POs that be young, like 20, 30 they be all up in you-- in your business. They'll find you on Facebook. Your Facebook name could be Skywalker or some weird stuff, and they'll still find you. It's straight stalker, wrong to me. It's not okay"* (Client 7A).

These feelings become particularly intense during communications with a client's family members and during home visits. The same client later implied that his PO could intrude further by invading his family member's privacy as well: *"I feel if I tried to tell her that something was happening with my family, she'd be all up in the business. She would try to call my sister. My sister's not even on papers. And she's a minor"* (Client 7A).

These feelings, as experienced by clients and their support systems, are not associated with rehabilitation or introspection on the part of the client. Quite the opposite: clients report feeling less inclined to follow their supervision program when they frequently or intensely feel intruded upon when supervision intersects with their sense of personal dignity and privacy. Additionally those clients who report struggling with substance use disorders indicate that these feelings, particularly in association with communication with family members and home visits, function as a trigger for a return to or escalation of substance abuse.

Several clients discussed how supervision could interact with someone's readiness to change regarding substance abuse and possibly overwhelm them or trigger substance use. Clients explained that supervision could put someone in a place where they might want to use again, though one gave a caveat:

“Only if you're not really ready to quit...if you're really not ready to quit and they're cracking down on you, then you're going to want to go use. But, I mean, once you're ready to quit the pressure from the PO becomes nothing” (Client 3B). Another client agreed, ***“Right, well, oh yeah, well, I was just saying it can be overwhelming them hounding you all the time. I'm just speaking, that was still on the past. Now I'm a lot different. I look at things differently. But yeah, that short leash could be a trigger for some people” (Client 7B).***

In order for supervision to be rehabilitative, it appears that an important balance must be struck between the need for supervision to address public safety and client accountability, while also making sure that these practices and policies are carried out in a way that affords the clients and their support systems with an appropriate sense of personal dignity.

Interactions with JCCs/PPOs that limited clients' contact with their families or otherwise negatively impacted their families were particularly concerning to clients. Supervision processes could constrain the amount or timing of contact with extended family, as one client described: ***“All my family's in Washington. So I have to fill out for a trip permit just to go there. It takes 10 days for them to process it. So I can't go see them whenever I want to” (Client 4B).*** A second client expanded on this discussion with an example of how PPO contact with family members could sometimes be unnecessary and would only upset family members: ***“Yeah, my current parole officer called my dad one day looking for me. And I had group that night. And I asked him, ‘Why'd you call my dad? He's freaked out that my PO's looking for me now. So now he's calling me like, ‘Dude, what'd you do? Do you need a ride? What's going on? Your PO just called me.’ He's like, ‘Oh, I was just looking for you.’ I was like, ‘You have my phone number, my email address. You can text me.’ He was like ‘Well, your dad's number came up first.’ I was like, ‘No, that's kind of weird that you'd just call my dad, freak him out, have him call my mom.’ Now my mom's calling me like, ‘Oh, my gosh. I heard your PO just called. What's going on?’ It's like, ‘F***’ So yeah, it's kind of weird to have some random dude that has authority over you calling your family looking for you and not explaining himself as to why” (Client 6B).***

Traumatizing Home Visits

Home visits by the JCC or PPO were reported as highly traumatizing to clients and their support networks. Clients reported feeling disrespected and degraded during these visits. These feelings were compounded when clients' family members were present during these home visits. Home visits were particularly traumatizing when:

- ◆ The visit is performed by a JCC/PPO that the client has never met, or only recently met
- ◆ The JCC/PPO is rude to the client
- ◆ The JCC/PPO is rude to any friends or family members present
- ◆ The JCC/PPO treats the client with hostile suspicion without immediate cause
- ◆ The JCC/PPO arrives without any warning

Negative home visit experiences were associated with feelings of resistance to the supervision process, the destruction of a positive relationship with the JCC/PPO, and triggers for substance abuse.

The negative intrusion of home visits could be compounded when clients experienced frequent changes in their JCC/PPO. Several clients discussed how disruptive this process was:

Client 2B: ***They ask you repeated times because you're getting new probation officers or parole officers every two, three months sometimes--***

Client 3B: ***Yeah, that's annoying. First six months I went through three of them.***

Client 2B: ***-- because it's the order of operations.***

Client 3B: ***I had one PO show up at my house. I didn't even know that he was a PO. He knocks on my door and he was like, '[Youth's name]?' I'm like, 'What?' And he's like, 'I'm your new PO, PO's name laughter.' He was like, 'I can come into your house right now.' He's like, 'I need to come in your house right now!' I was like, 'Okay.' And then, so he comes in, he steps in my house and my pregnant girlfriend is sitting on the couch, and her friend was sitting over there with her. They were talking about whatever pregnant girls talk about. And he was like, 'Who are you? And who are you?' And she, 'What?' I'm like, 'This my girlfriend, man.' Just, yeah, first time I met him, totally just -- yeah he's, anyways laughter. It was messed up bro."***

Another client described how home visits could be a source of fear or intimidation for their family members or others, particularly if a client was not home when the JCC/PPO arrived: ***"You got to be at the house when you're supposed to. If you have a home visit, or whatever, or even if they have a random home visit, and they come to see your house, and you're not there. Somebody's going to answer that door and they're going to see a person with a vest, with a walkie-talkie, and a gun on their hip, and they're going to be like, 'Where's so-and-so?' So now they're like-- I'm saying what if that was a guest that opened the door. 'Oh, can you get the door for me?' And they're like, 'Oh, snap man. There's somebody here...and they got like three people behind them'"*** (Client 10B).

Other clients agreed that home visits could be intimidating to them as well. A client described the conditions of their initial home visit, saying,



First home visit I had, I had three cops show up in vests and guns out...One of them walking through my house with their hand on the pistol (Client 3B)

Another responded, ***"That's scary"*** (Client 2B). The lack of discretion could also influence neighbors and clients were concerned about how that might change their neighbor's perception of them:



I mean, if you live in apartments the last thing your neighbors want to see is a bunch of cops roll up and come into your house...you got all your neighbors judging you (Client 7B).

Addiction: A Motivating Factor and Barrier to Success

Many clients reported a struggle with problematic substance use. Substance use was an important aspect of some clients' experience that influenced their supervision experience. For example, one client experienced shame and numbing as a result of their addiction and could not confront this reality until they were clean: ***"I felt more ashamed than anything else because it's coming to terms with accepting all the stuff that I did and to having to accept it myself. You kind of numb yourself off to the people you hurt around you. And you don't really see how you hurt your family and your friends because you're not really on the other side of the fence. But till you get on the other side of the fence you don't-- it happened to me after I got clean. Then you realize"*** (Client 3B).

Dealing with a substance use issue was reported as a motivating factor in succeeding in the supervision process. For clients who discussed addressing substance use as a motivating factor in regards to their supervision, two experiences were repeatedly identified as important:

- ◆ Receiving quick and appropriate referrals to providers who address substance use
- ◆ Feeling supported by their JCC/PPO in a path to sobriety, including having an understanding approach to occasional relapse

Clients felt stymied in their progress when a JCC or PPO was perceived to come down too quickly or too harshly in the event of a relapse, which in turn fostered feelings of resistance towards supervision and a trigger for even further substance use.

Substance use was also reported as a significant barrier to a successful supervision process. Clients reported that they were often unable to engage in their supervision process before they were also emotionally prepared to address their substance abuse. Addressing substance use issues and the supervision process should be approached in parallel.

Housing was also a primary issue for clients dealing with addiction, particularly when the only available housing supports could put clients in closer contact with other substance users. One client explained how a criminal history and addiction could negatively interact for referrals from PPOs and threaten his recovery process:

“ I've been trying to find housing. And he told me that he knows of a couple places that accept felons. Well, yeah, it's also I can find dope on every f*ing stair step in there. I mean, I'm not trying to go live around that (Client 6B).**

Another client agreed that housing concerns can take priority over their compliance with supervision: **“I've been homeless for six months. And they expect me to check in every night and give them a address when, well, I only got a few select places to rest my head in confidence. Why am I trying to worry about calling them to give them an address where I might be residing?”** (Client 2B).

The interaction between supervision and addiction recovery could be particularly frustrating for clients. One client was incredulous that the only housing supports available to him as a male were homeless shelters that would surround him with other people with drug addictions and remove his natural support system: **“I was like, 'What the f***? How is that going to help me out at all? I'm a recovering addict and you're telling me the only thing you can do for me is send me to a homeless shelter with a bunch of other drug addicts?' You know what I'm saying? And he's like, 'And I'll put your girlfriend and your kids into emergency housing, but you won't be able to go there.' And I was like, 'Why not? I don't have any domestic violence on my record.' And he's like, 'Well, because it's emergency housing for women and children, not for women and children and husbands or the man or whatever.' It was like, so you're going to tell me you're going to take away the only thing for me that's been keeping me struggling in my recovery and just tell me, 'Oh, I'm sorry, man. You'll just have to tough it out. Here, I'll give you a voucher for a homeless shelter.' And it's like, 'There's no help for me? You're going to tell me sorry and kick me to the curb? I've been clean for almost two years. I'm off supervision. I have a full-time job. I'm doing everything right. And then all I do, I was asking you for some help, and you're telling me all you can do is send me to the f***ing street?' It's like - that's not help at all”** (Client 3B).

This client later thought he had found a solution to his problem by moving to a different state to rent an affordable house his sister had found for him: ***“And I was like, ‘I’m there.’ I’ll have to change my career. I’ll have to find a new job, whatever, but at least I won’t be homeless now. I’ll have a place to go with my family”*** (Client 3B). His PO’s response quickly stopped the client though and made him feel like there were no resources available to him: ***“So I tell my old PO that and he’s like, ‘Ha. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Wait, no. No, that’s not going to happen, [youth’s name]. I’m telling you right now, dude, you leave the state, I’ll put a warrant out for your arrest. You’ll be back in jail quicker than you know what’s happening.’ And I was like, ‘What? Are you sure? Can I get my case transferred?’ He’s like, ‘No. That’s not going to happen either.’ I was like, ‘But I only have six months left on probation.’ And he was like, ‘Well, you’re going to have to tough it out.’ That’s when he told me, ‘I’m sorry you’re stuck in such a hard spot, but I can send you to the homeless shelter.’ It’s like, where’s the-- that’s just ridiculous. There’s not any help. You’re just trying to keep me in the system”*** (Client 3B).

Feedback

Both groups of clients on supervision provided feedback at the end of each focus group and offered advice they would give to other young people like themselves who are just starting supervision. The most common suggestions were to not do drugs, stay in school, and not commit crime. A few clients also had specific suggestions about handling supervision requirements. These included being honest with yourself and with your JCC/PPO, taking supervision requirements seriously, finding a JCC/PPO that you could connect with, trying to be the opposite of what would stereotypically be expected of you, cutting off contact with everyone you were doing “**dumb s*****” (Client 6B) with before supervision, and getting in a routine and sticking to it. Clients said they themselves wished they had known that they could have gotten off supervision early in some circumstances, and how to avoid situations that would get them on supervision. This was not the first time that most clients had been asked to provide their feedback. For example, one client was asked to write a reflection when they got off supervision.

Parents in one focus group also gave advice to other parents of young people at the beginning of supervision. They primarily suggested that parents and natural supports ask a lot of questions, even questions they think might be dumb, get an advocate for themselves and for their children, work with an experienced court counselor, and stay engaged in the process. One parent said that if they could change anything about supervision, it would be to “**treat children like children and not adults**” (Support 7D). Parents themselves wished they knew more about the system when their youth started on supervision, particularly about Measure 11. They also wished they knew that others would be making a lot of decisions in the process whether they wanted them to or not, and what questions to ask when they were trying to navigate the system. For some parents, the focus group was the first time they had been asked for this kind of feedback, while others had provided feedback before.



[...] treat children like children and not adults (Support 7D).

Conclusion

This report presents findings from a series of focus groups with clients and with people who form their natural support systems (e.g., parents, guardians, family members) that were conducted prior to the implementation of a specialized supervision unit for high risk young adults, ages 15-25. Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice piloted this supervision unit to allow staff to specialize in supporting the needs of this population with an enhanced case management delivery model. The focus groups were designed to elicit information from clients and natural supports regarding their experiences with "probation as usual" in either the adult or juvenile systems as a baseline comparison reference to better understand the effectiveness of the specialized supervision unit.

Findings suggested that clients and natural supports perceived supervision as something that "kept you in the system" in a cyclical process of increasing system involvement and was an intrusive experience for both clients and those around them. In addition, home visits were often described as highly traumatizing to clients and their natural supports, while community-based provider resources and referrals were some of the most rehabilitative experiences during supervision. Cultural matching between clients and their JCC/PPO in their racial and/or cultural backgrounds was important to some clients and natural supports and addiction was a common struggle for clients, which could be both a motivating factor to succeed on supervision and a significant barrier to success.

A central finding was that the supervision experience of "probation as usual" was largely defined by the quality of the relationship with JCCs/PPOs. Inconsistent discipline within supervision could undermine the quality of relationships with JCCs/PPOs, particularly for natural supports. Good relationships were described as those where the client felt safe, valued, respected, listened to, encouraged and recognized when they met goals, and treated like an individual. Good relationships fostered clients' honesty with and trust in their JCCs/PPOs. When clients and natural supports had good relationships with JCCs/PPOs, clients did not feel judged or defined by their past actions, felt they received consistent and thorough information from their JCCs/PPOs, and were referred promptly to appropriate community services. On the other hand, difficult JCC/PPO relationships were described as those where the client felt disrespected, like they were treated as a number, defined by their past actions, their successes were ignored, and unheard. In these relationships, clients did not feel like they could be honest with their JCC/PPO due to fear of unreasonable punishment, believed their JCC/PPO was inconsistent and did not follow through with promises, and did not receive necessary or appropriate community referrals. Many of the qualities of good JCC/PPO relationships were consistent with previous research on procedural justice (e.g., Blasko & Taxman, 2018; Dai et al., 2011), suggesting that improving the quality of relationship with clients and natural supports by JCCs/PPOs listening to clients, treating them with respect, and consistently following through for clients with both recognition of success and reasonable sanctions when necessary can improve the quality and success of supervision by fostering perceptions of being treated fairly by the system and subsequently increasing the likelihood of compliance with conditions.

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Appendix A - Focus Group Recruitment Flyer



Would you
like to share
your
experiences
on
supervision?

Multnomah County
Department of Community Justice
wants to hear from you.

Join us for a
Focus Group



July 9th



6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



Midland Library
805 SE 122nd Ave
Bank Room



Tell us about your experiences
on supervision and receive a

**\$25 giftcard to
Fred Meyer**

Pizza Will Be Provided.

Your responses will be confidential

Appendix B - Focus Group Protocols

Focus Group Script 1: Young Adults

Q1. Early Experiences with System

- When you began supervision, you may have participated in an assessment in which you were asked a lot of questions about yourself. Do you recall how you felt being interviewed?
- Did any questions upset you? What did they miss?
- Did your JCC/PPO explain why you were on the type of supervision you were put on?
- Could they have explained that better?
- Was everything explained to you about what was happening next and what you needed to do?
- Could they have explained what was happening better?
- What were your first impressions of your JCC/PPO?
- Optional: What was the reaction of your friends and family members when they learned you were first placed on supervision?

Q2. Relationship with JCC/PPO

- Do you feel comfortable asking your JCC/PPO for help?
- Does your JCC/PPO encourage you? What things do they do that were positive/helpful?
- Does your JCC/PPO upset you? What things do they do that are frustrating/depressing?

Q3. Challenges/Barriers

- What part of supervision is hardest for you?
- What are things that are impacting supervision that aren't supervision?
- School? Legal problems? Personal Safety? Employment/Financial? Transportation? Drugs/Alcohol?

Q4. Expectations of Supervision

- What do you think are the perceived differences between the juvenile system and the adult criminal justice system?

Q5. Respect

- How does your JCC/PPO show you respect? Police? Staff who provide treatment services? Court staff?
- Do you feel your JCC/PPO makes decisions fairly?
- Do you respect your JCC/PPO? Why or why not?

Q6. Strengths/Supports

- Who is your greatest support?
- Possible probes include: Are there people in your life that you feel are trying to help you? How do you know you can trust them?
- How could the people who are most important to you be more involved in your supervision?

Q7. Goals

- What do you need from your JCC/PPO to increase your likelihood of success?
- What services have worked for you?

Q8. Feedback

- What advice would you give to a person like yourself who is just starting supervision?
- What do you wish you had known when you came onto supervision?
- If you could change one thing about supervision, what would it be?
- Is this the first time you have been asked for your feedback?

Focus Group Script 2: Parents & Natural Supports

Introduction and Warm Up

Everyone is here because you have a young person in your life and he/she is on supervision.

Give us one word that describes what it feels like to be caring for someone in the system on supervision.

Q1. Early Experiences with System

- What was your first impression of your youth's JCC/PPO?
- Was it explained to you why your youth was put on supervision?
- What were your main sources of information about what was happening?
- Did you get all the information that you needed?

Q2. Relationship with JCC/PPO

- What kind of relationship do you have with the supervising JCC/PPO?
- Does your youth's JCC/PPO encourage them? What are the things they do that are positive/helpful?
- Does your youth's JCC/PPO upset you? What are the things they do that are frustrating/depressing?
- Do you feel comfortable asking the JCC/PPO for help? Giving input?

Q3. Challenges/Barriers

- What part of your youth's supervision is hardest for you?
- What things are impacting supervision that aren't supervision?
- School? Legal problems? Personal safety? Employment/Financial? Transportation? Drugs/Alcohol?
- Do you have challenges that limit your own ability to support the youth?

Q4. Expectations of Supervision

- What do you think are the perceived differences between the juvenile system and the adult criminal justice system?

Q5. Respect

- How does the supervising JCC/PPO show you respect? Police? Staff who provide treatment services? Court staff?
- Do you feel the supervising JCC/PPO makes decisions fairly?
- Do you respect the JCC/PPO? Why or why not?

Q6. Strengths/Supports

- What is the best way to involve parents and mentors in the supervision of youth?
- What has been your best experience with supervision?
- Where do you get your strength to support others?

Q7. Goals

- What do you need from the JCC/PPO to best help your youth?
- Do you and the PPO/JCC want the same outcome for your youth?
- What services or resources have worked for your youth?

Q8. Feedback

- **What advice would you give to parents just getting involved with the system?**
- **What do you wish you had known when your youth came onto supervision?**
- **If you could change one thing about supervision, what would it be?**
- **Is this the first time you have been asked for your feedback?**