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# Federal Probation

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## ACQUISITIONS This Issue in Brief

**The Leadership Development Program for Federal Probation and Pretrial Services Officers.**—Authors Michael Eric Siegel and Marilyn C. Vernon describe the Federal Judicial Center's Leadership Development Program, a 3-year program designed to give participants the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective leaders. The authors explain why the program was developed, who is eligible to participate in the program, and what the program requires. They give examples of the in-district reports and temporary duty assignments undertaken by participants thus far.

**The Feasibility of Establishing Probation Field Offices in the District of Minnesota.**—Author Garold T. Ray reports on a comprehensive study which addressed the issue of whether to open additional probation field offices in the district. Based on data regarding numbers of supervision cases and investigations, a survey of officers' opinions, and a cost analysis, he addresses whether establishing field offices will improve the quality of investigations and supervision, provide greater service to the court, enhance officer morale, and be cost effective.

**Building Synergy in Probation.**—Can traditional management styles keep pace with the multidimensional, fast-paced fluidity of the present-day criminal justice system? Author Frederick R. Chavaria explains the limitations of the traditional top-to-bottom command authority and relates the benefits of a managerial/leadership approach which encourages synergy, a notion of partnership. He stresses the importance of continually reassessing organizational priorities, policy, and mission and of practicing a management style anchored in trust, concern for staff, and shared decisionmaking.

**Intensive Supervision: A New Way to Connect With Offenders.**—The U.S. probation office in the Southern District of Florida was looking for an immediate sanction for drug use in the occasional drug user population. It tried intensive supervision and found "a powerful method to control risk." Authors Carol Freburger and Marci B. Almon describe what intensive supervision involved for both the officers and the of-

fenders. They point out the supervision advantages and the administrative advantages of this method and what it requires as far as personnel and equipment.

**Group Reporting—A Sensible Way to Manage High Caseloads.**—With more offenders on probation and fewer officers to supervise them, what is a practical way to supervise offenders who require ongoing contact but not a high degree of intervention? Anoka County Community Corrections has had some success with group reporting. Author Jerry Soma explains how group reporting works and how it allows his agency to meet its goals to maintain face-to-face con-

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# Intensive Supervision: A New Way to Connect With Offenders

BY CAROL FREBURGER AND MARCI B. ALMON\*

**T**HE ESSENTIAL challenge in supervision is to obtain sufficient knowledge about offenders' activities to be able to affect those activities. Even under the best of staffing circumstances there will always be one probation officer to many offenders. More often than not, these offenders do not wish the officer to know what they are doing. How can a probation officer maximize his or her ability to track offender whereabouts and activities in a cost-effective manner?

Enter intensive supervision, Southern Florida style. Four years ago we were looking for a significant, immediate sanction for drug use in the occasional drug user population. Dade had the highest rate of cocaine use in the Southern District. Drug use was one of the most frequent violations leading to revocation and imprisonment. We believed an immediate consequence would deter occasional users from further use and would screen for drug-dependent users who could not stop using drugs on their own. Available consequences were inadequate for two reasons: Modifications of release conditions to add electronic monitoring or drug abuse treatment took too long. We believed drug abuse treatment was not always indicated for occasional users, most of whom were not drug dependent, were unmotivated for treatment, and were often involved in drug trafficking. What else could we do with the resources we had?

We tried a new idea with a few offenders. We believe over the past 4 years we have developed this idea into a powerful method to control risk, a method which has many applications across populations and behaviors.

## *Intensive Supervision in Southern Florida*

Offenders in the general supervision population in Dade County who test positive for cocaine or marijuana, the drugs of choice in the district, are placed in what we call intensive supervision. The case transfer occurs within 48 hours of a positive Emit test result. Since the Southern District of Florida has its own drug testing lab, in most cases offenders are transferred within 4 days of testing or within a week of the actual drug use.

## *Drug Use Issues*

The offender is instructed to report to the office twice per week for drug testing. Networking with employers when necessary has revealed a surprising level of cooperation to allow the offender to report for testing. To our knowledge, not one single person has lost a job as a result of reporting.

Offenders are also required to report for a 16- to 20-hour drug abuse education program. This service is provided free of charge by two local hospitals to the community at large. It is available during evenings and weekends. The education program is not treatment. It is presented to the offender as information to use in making an informed decision about drug use and treatment. It differs from the traditional approach in which the probation officer tells the offender, "You have used drugs while under supervision, you have a drug problem." Or, "You need treatment."

Occasional, nondependent drug users unmotivated for treatment are given an incentive: If they complete the education program, show no further drug use, and comply with intensive supervision instructions, they will not be required to enter treatment. Offenders who show continued drug use are referred for treatment. The Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI) is used as a screening tool in conjunction with behavioral observations.

## *Intensive Reporting*

Offenders are told that, because of their positive drug test, they have been placed in intensive supervision. They are further informed that they will remain under intensive supervision for an unspecified period of time, depending on their future performance.

A detailed interview is conducted as to the circumstances surrounding the drug use, with the goal of obtaining an admission of drug use from the offender. The offender is informed that his or her reporting instructions are now changed: Henceforth, the offender is to page the probation officer before every move from one location to another and upon arriving home. He or she is instructed to wait 15 minutes after paging the probation officer. If the officer does not respond within the 15 minutes, the offender is to call the officer's answering machine and leave a detailed message including name, time, present location, destination, and estimated time of return. Offenders are instructed that they are not to have caller ID or call

\*Ms. Freburger is United States probation officer and Ms. Almon is deputy chief United States probation officer, Southern District of Florida.

return. By prohibiting caller ID and call return, the officer can return calls from home or any other location. Call forwarding is not allowed.

Incoming offenders are coached on how to report and conditioned to the procedure by initially returning pages and calls at an almost one-to-one frequency. Gradually, the frequency of response is dropped for those offenders who are employed, have no positive tests, and are otherwise stable. Sufficient response frequency is sustained to maintain the reporting behavior.

### *Supervision Advantages*

The officer monitors the pager and the answering machine. Field contacts are made to verify location and activities. No longer is the probation officer looking for offenders who may or may not be where they are supposed to be. By recognizing the numbers on the pager and listening to the answering machine, the officer can pinpoint an offender's location any time and see the offender in the community. If the offender is not located at the last reported location, the officer immediately contacts significant others, locates the offender, and confronts him or her regarding inaccurate reporting. Failures to report are not charged as violations. Instead, they are used to inquire as to the offender's activities and reiterate the necessity of compliance. Failures to report also provide leads for further investigation.

Intensive reporting has a number of benefits for the officer and the offender:

1. Listening to messages gives us an unprecedented look at an offender's lifestyle: where the offender spends free time, how much time the offender spends at home. Subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, voice changes detectable in messages tell us the offender may be having a problem or may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Answering machines with date/time features provide immediate verification of the actual time of the message. Discrepancies between actual time and the time the offender reports are brought to the offender's attention every time they occur.

2. The procedure extends our presence in the offender's life. No longer can the offender easily predict when the officer will contact him or her. The combination of telephone and field contacts serves to reinforce the officer's presence. The probation officer can now multiply the opportunities for contact through use of the telephone, while remaining in control as to how much supervision to apply in each case.

The extension of the officer's presence in the offender's life is not always negative; it is also positive. When an offender is complying, the officer responds to a message and positively reinforces the offender's

adherence to a constructive schedule. We have found many offenders react positively to this kind of individualized attention. The rapport developed in this manner serves to increase cooperation on the part of the offender.

3. The intensity of reporting is not reduced when the officer is off duty. Daily, the officer chooses when to respond to pages or messages. When the officer is on leave, offenders continue to report as usual. During extended leave periods and on weekends, a secretary transcribes the messages. The officer reviews the transcribed records upon return, and the records provide valuable information as to offenders' schedules and patterns of movement.

4. The procedure makes the offender take notice of his or her activities. Those who are involved in criminal activity have the most difficulty reporting and can be easily targeted for investigation. Impulsive offenders have to practice discipline: make a phone call, wait for an answer, leave a detailed message. Most offenders comply with the reporting instructions.

5. Depending on the offender's motivation to change, the reporting procedure either coerces or assists in the cessation of criminal associations. In either case, intensive reporting is a way to increase the probability that the offender will avoid the "people, places, and things" which trigger drug use and other dysfunctional behaviors.

### *Administrative Advantages*

In a time of reduced resources, intensive supervision offers considerable advantages:

1. Whereas reporting demands are significantly increased, no action by a releasing authority is required, since the instructions are covered by the standard conditions of release. District judges were briefed before we began using this method and have extended their full support. There are significant savings in time and resources. No paperwork to modify release conditions need be prepared, mailed, handled, or signed by probation office staff, judges, or Parole Commission staff. No appointment of counsel, involvement by attorneys, or court time is involved in situations in which the offender might oppose a modification. Inquiring attorneys are advised that increased reporting instructions are based on probable cause of drug use as shown by a presumptive drug test. In 4 years, only one offender has formally, and unsuccessfully, challenged the instructions.

2. Intensive supervision also saves treatment funds and maximizes treatment resources. The testing protocol serves to screen offenders able to control their drug use from those who are drug dependent. Those whose drug use continues under the increased restrictions are placed in treatment. Offenders in denial are

more likely to accept treatment when their failure to remain abstinent in intensive supervision is clearly demonstrated.

3. No outside contractor is involved. Equipment costs are minimal. There are no fees to collect. Virtually no additional paperwork is generated.

### *Requirements*

In order to be effective, intensive supervision requires support in the following areas of personnel and equipment:

1. Intensive supervision requires probation officers who are attuned to field supervision. Willingness to insist consistently on compliance is crucial. Investigative training is important in that intensive reporting often uncovers information which requires followup. Unexplained assets or income, assets obtained by fraudulent means, and multiple identities are but a few examples of leads which are uncovered.

2. Intensive supervision requires management support. Any supervision program which demands a significant change in offender behavior patterns will generate complaints. Offenders will attempt to evade instructions by appealing to supervisors and top management. Positive supervisor involvement in the process increases the probability that the offender will remain compliant.

3. The third personnel requirement is caseload size not to exceed 25 offenders if the entire caseload is on intensive reporting. Since the program has no set duration, caseload size can be maintained by returning stable cases to general supervision to allow for incoming, unstable cases.

4. Equipment requirements are a 15-memory pager and an answering machine with remote message retrieval and date-time feature. A cellular phone for field work is highly desirable, but not essential.

### *Where Do We Go From Here?*

At this time we do not know whether intensive supervision results in significant reductions in risk and noncompliant behaviors. When we began using this procedure, we did not simultaneously institute research to measure effectiveness. We have attempted to go back and examine some indicators such as drug use during and after intensive supervision. Uncontrolled variables, e.g., lack of control groups matched for other characteristics, lack of standardization in testing schedules after intensive supervision, preclude any conclusions. Prospective, controlled research is needed to determine whether this intensive supervi-

sion method makes a significant difference in compliance.

In a time of search for effective supervision, this procedure merits further examination and development. One obstacle to such development is lack of resources. Because intensive supervision does not require a special condition of release, it does not qualify for additional personnel. Its efficiency is its Achilles' heel.

In the technological area, the procedure can be improved in many ways. While we used the very limited technology we had, new voice-mail systems can increase effectiveness. Features such as ability to save messages can aid the officer in managing an intensive supervision caseload or even a few offenders placed under the reporting procedure. We will be exploring new telephone technology in the near future and welcome exchange of information in this area.

Intensive supervision can be successfully applied to other groups of high risk offenders in addition to occasional drug users. Offenders placed in drug abuse treatment can certainly benefit. After all, what is the point of providing drug abuse counseling a few hours per week if the offender spends the rest of the time engaged in activities which are incompatible with treatment? The activities of offenders unwilling to obtain employment can be tracked. Too often we instruct offenders to "get a job" but fail to interfere with the job they already have: criminal activity. Followup on social service referrals can be improved by requiring immediate feedback from offenders as to whether they report for referral appointments. Activities of re-released supervision violators and violent offenders can be tracked from the first day of their release. This method can be used in conjunction with electronic house arrest to track the offender outside the home. Similarly, it can be used by halfway houses to track offender activities outside the facility.

Finally, although we do not supervise juveniles, we have discussed this method of intensive reporting with juvenile justice professionals. They see potential for improvement in the supervision of the juvenile population through this procedure. Juveniles, who are still amenable to adult direction, can be given such direction through this method. All of the supervision advantages discussed in the case of adults apply to juveniles.

Finding methods to provide improved, cost-effective supervision must be a priority if community corrections is to meet taxpayers' risk control demands. We believe this method offers a significant improvement over supervision techniques currently in use and welcome inquiries and ideas for improvement.