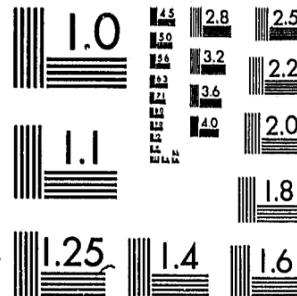


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- Probation: A Skills Course—Crisis Intervention in a
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MARCH 1981

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All phases of preventive and correctional activities in delinquency and crime come within the fields of interest of FEDERAL PROBATION. The Quarterly wishes to share with its readers all constructively worthwhile points of view and welcomes the contributions of those engaged in the study of juvenile and adult offenders. Federal, state, and local organizations, institutions, and agencies—both public and private—are invited to submit any significant experience and findings related to the prevention and control of delinquency and crime.

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NUMBER 1

This Issue in Brief

Disclosure of Presentence Reports in the United States District Courts.—This article is a summary by Philip L. Dubois of a report prepared by Stephen A. Fennell and William N. Hall under contract with the Federal Judicial Center. The author states that, on the one hand, it does appear that a large proportion of Federal districts have achieved disclosure of presentence report in a large proportion of their criminal cases. On the other hand, he adds, although the high rate of disclosure is a positive step, many districts utilize practices that limit the effectiveness of such disclosure.

Prosecutive Trends and Their Impact on the Presentence Report.—With Federal prosecutors launching aggressive prosecutions against white-collar criminals, narcotics traffickers, corrupt public servants, and organized crime racketeers, probation officers find they need significant enhancement of their investigation and reporting skills, assert Harry Joe Jaffe and Calvin Cunningham, U.S. probation officers in Memphis, Tenn. For these offenders, a presentence writer can prepare a useful presentencing document by concentrating chiefly upon three significant areas: the official version section, the financial section, and the evaluative summary.

The Right To Vote as Applied to Ex-Felons.—While rights are intimately connected to duties, laws disenfranchising ex-felons show that correlations between the two are often drawn imprecisely, writes Professor John R. Vile. While voting is a fundamental right, the Supreme Court has refused to void felony disenfranchising legislation, he reports. The Court's action is normatively questionable, he maintains, especially when applied to those whose incarceration has ended.

Action Methods for the Criminal Justice System.—Dale Richard Buchanan, chief of the Psychodrama Section at Saint Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C., tells us that while role train-

ing, role playing, and psychodrama have been extensively used in the criminal justice system, there has been a lack of coordination among these terms and in the ways in which they were used. Action methods will probably continue to gain greater use within the criminal justice field, he asserts, because of their direct applicability to the jobs that are needed to be performed by criminal justice personnel.

Administrators' Perception of the Impact of Probation and Parole Employee Unionization.—This article by Professor Charles L. Johnson and Barry D. Smith presents information from a recent survey on the incidence of parole/probation unionization

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and administrators' perceptions of the impact of unionization on the quality, cost, and difficulty of administering services. Some of the critical issues emanating from the increased parole/probation unionization are delineated and discussed as they are reflected in the literature and as a result of the survey.

Highlights, Problems, and Accomplishments of Corrections in the Asian and Pacific Region.—The Australian Institute of Criminology recently organized the First Conference of Correctional Administrators for Asia and the Pacific, which was well attended and prepared the ground for joint action. Already this has resulted in the collection of data on imprisonment, some of which are provided in this article by W. Clifford, director of the Institute. In this very broad survey, some of the problems of corrections in the region—and some of the approaches which are different from those in the West—are highlighted.

The Demise of Wisconsin's Contract Parole Program.—This article discusses the elimination of an innovative method of paroling criminal offenders in Wisconsin. The State abolished its creative Mutual Agreement Program because budget analysts deemed the program to be an ineffective method of paroling offenders when compared to the traditional method of parole decision-making. Although this program has been eliminated, Wisconsin Parole Board Member Oscar D. Shade says it is conceivable that contract parole is workable and could prove to be a most effective means of managing an offender's parolability.

Juvenile Detention Administration: Managing a Political Time Bomb.—Administering a juvenile detention center is one of the most difficult and frustrating jobs in the juvenile justice field,

asserts Youth Services Consultant Robert C. Kihm. Although it is clearly stipulated in idealistic terms how children ought to be cared for while in state custody, the detention administrator must deal with the reality of providing care with very limited resources and little control over who is admitted and discharged from the facility, he states. This article examines how these contradictions proved the demise of four detention administrators' careers, and what lessons can be gained by current administrators facing similar problems.

Parent Orientation Program.—Juveniles paroled from a correctional institution are faced with readjustment problems. Community resources are limited and families poorly equipped to offer assistance. To increase the effectiveness of families as resource people, the author, Serge W. Gremmo, has developed the Parent Orientation Program (POP) which orients families toward potential problems in the parole adjustment of their children, acquaints them with the mechanics of parole, disseminates information to assist juveniles during reintegration, and lends support during a difficult period.

Crisis Intervention in a Community-Based Correctional Setting.—Despite their widespread use in other practice settings, crisis-intervention theory and techniques have been woefully underutilized in community-based correctional agencies. This article by New York City Probation Officer Margaret R. Savarese is an attempt to help remedy that situation by presenting an overview of crisis theory and techniques and then illustrating their application at a particular crisis point in the criminal justice system—the point of sentencing—via two actual case situations.

All the articles appearing in this magazine are regarded as appropriate expressions of ideas worthy of thought but their publication is not to be taken as an endorsement by the editors or the federal probation office of the views set forth. The editors may or may not agree with the articles appearing in the magazine, but believe them in any case to be deserving of consideration.

Parent Orientation Program

BY SERGE GREMMO*

Residential Parole Officer, Parole Resource Office and Orientation Facility,
Bureau of Parole, New Jersey Department of Corrections, Jersey City

IT IS WELL KNOWN that youthful offenders when paroled from a correctional institution are faced with a myriad of readjustment problems. As a result of unpleasant institutional experiences he may have become embittered and pessimistic of the future. He may be confused and unsure of his role as a parolee and apprehensive about how his family, friends, and community will receive him. His lack of education and training makes it difficult to secure and maintain employment. The parolee and his family are often unaware of the community services that could be of assistance. These are a few of the problems that make reintegration for the juvenile painful, frustrating and, at times, untenable.

The role of the Bureau of Parole, in part, is to assist the parolee by utilizing appropriate community resources to service the needs of their clients. One of the most important and perhaps least utilized resources is the family. Families of parolees are motivated by a genuine concern for the well being of their children. They can provide love, understanding, and support. Unfortunately, many families are poorly equipped to provide practical assistance. In an effort to increase the effectiveness of the family as resource people the staff at PROOF (Parole Resource Office and Orientation Facility) has developed the Parent Orientation Program (POP).

The objectives of POP are to orient parents toward the potential problem areas of parole adjustment and to help them examine various ways of dealing with these problems. More specifically, the Parent Program provided insight into institutional experience which can change a child's attitude and behavior. It discussed some of the emotional problems faced by the child during the reintegration period and how these problems could affect the child. The program explored effective ways to communicate with a child in this situation. In an effort to bridge the distance between parole

and parent, POP explained the mechanics of parole supervision and their son's responsibility to that system. To assist with some of the more practical problems during the reintegration period such as securing employment, POP disseminated information about community resources which could be of important value. Finally, our program provided the emotional support needed by these parents to continue in assisting and encouraging their children toward a successful reintegration. Equipped with such information and support of the parents, other family members could fully realize their potential as resource people.

As resource people parents must realize the impact incarceration has had on their child. POP provided some insight into the nature of the institutional life the child has experienced. Parents were brought together and in a group setting could discuss the changes in their child and explore ways of responding to these changes. Patterns of communication were examined in the group setting. Using some of the common practices of interactional theory, parents had a chance to witness the dynamics of communication. Through role playing and discussion, members could analyze their present mode of communication and perhaps change it. Residents residing at our facility provided parents with firsthand information about the problems and frustrations they were experiencing. With this blend of the cognitive and experiential approach we hoped for a synergistic result enabling parents to become more effective when communicating with their children.

As resource people, parents should be aware of the mechanics of parole supervision and their son's responsibilities to that system. Parents are often unsure and skeptical of the field officer's intention. Many of their ideas about parole are based on spurious and apocryphal secondhand accounts of friends or neighbors. Often they are unaware of the name, address, and phone number of the parole district in their area. Many are not familiar with a parole certificate or the possibility that special conditions might exist. POP sought to acquaint parents with the philosophy of parole and describe its function in both the law enforcement and social

*The author wishes to thank Douglas Modrow, supervisor, Parole Residential Facility, for his guidance and editorial assistance, and Domenick Sparaino, supervising parole officer, Central Parole Bureau, Trenton, N.J., for his overall direction and support.

aspects. POP wanted to explain the function of the field officer and his responsibility to the parole system. Through our efforts we hoped to build a relationship of trust and confidence on which the family and field officer could work in cooperation for the welfare of the juvenile.

Effective resource people must be familiar with community employment agencies, training programs, educational opportunities, mental health, and medical services. They are familiar with red-tape procedures that may accompany public helping agencies and are able to assist the parolee in managing any frustrations he may be encountering as a result of being delayed in the sometimes slow results of the system. Effective resource people are aware of the sectors of private industry that can be effective contacts for the newly released parolee. They are versed in job interviewing skills and employer-employee relations which when imparted to the child will enable him to secure and maintain a job. Banking and budgeting procedures are part of the knowledge necessary and parolees must learn how to effectively manage finances. Armed with such information parolees can hope to live independently as productive and contributing citizens. They are less likely to resort to crime in an effort to sustain themselves and become less of a threat to the community. POP sought to disseminate information that would enable parents to understand what services are available in the community and how best to utilize them. Equipped with such information they become more effective resource people and enhance their child's prognosis for successful reintegration into the community.

To accomplish this we provided the parents with community resource sheets. Contained on these sheets are the names, addresses, phone numbers, and key personnel of services available to them. Through role playing in a group setting we explored effective interviewing techniques. We examined the implications of employer-employee relations and the responsibilities of one to the other. We discussed how frustrations stemming from red-tape agencies can cause one to become depressed and we offered suggestions to overcome the situation. To lend credibility to our discussion we invited key personnel people of large companies and agencies to speak at our meetings. We hoped that through our efforts the parents would impart to their children all they have learned at our groups.

As effective resource people, parents must be able to provide strength, security, and confidence

to a child experiencing despair. Unless the child can receive encouragement in troubled times his chances for success are questionable. Often the parents are unable to provide this support. During our meetings parents often reported that they are hampered by the frustrations and disappointments arising from the reaction of the community. Parents feel a sense of isolation and loneliness which is exacerbated by a lack of understanding from family and friends. The support and assistance they receive from public helping agencies can seem inadequate and unapproachable. The parole officer with large caseloads cannot always offer sufficient time and assistance. Private assistance is often beyond the means of most families. Many families describe lives of quiet desperation! In such a state their effectiveness as resource people is hampered.

POP provided some of the emotional strength and support these parents needed. Through discussion and interaction of shared experiences, parents find they are not alone. Their doubts and guilts about the possibility of being less than adequate parents are somewhat allayed as others relate their stories. They console and empathize with each other.

Parents listen and learn that others have fears and guilt feelings. A parent remarks, "listening to your story makes mine seem like nothing." Another states, "listening to all this relieves some of my loneliness." Yet another exclaims, "I am glad I found someone who knows what I am going through." Slowly the parents gain confidence and strength. Often the child of the parent senses this and together they work toward success. Some parents show remarkable change as evidenced by the field officer who informs us that one of his clients claims that as a result of his mother's attending our meetings, her alcohol problem has lessened. In this way POP helps the child through helping the parent!

The purpose of POP, then, is to increase the potential of parents as resource people by improving the quality of communication within the family, encouraging a relationship of cooperation between family and parole, disseminating information about community services, and offering the emotional support that is sometimes missing in their lives.

In order to promulgate the program we presented our ideas to the Central Parole Bureau and received permission to pilot the project. Next we contacted the IPO's of the Youth Correctional Institute, Annandale (YCIA), Jamesburg, and Youth

Reception and Correctional Center (YRCC), explaining our plans. We chose this juvenile population as many of the children are first offenders and family relationships have not been seriously weakened. The ages of the kids were 17 to 21. At the beginning of each month the institutional parole officers send us a list containing names and addresses of the juveniles to be paroled. Prior to the release date we contact the parents, explain our program and invite them to attend. A followup letter several days prior to the meeting is always included with name, phone number, and location of our agency. We offer our program as concerned people with the expressed understanding that no one is required to attend. We invite the parents to bring friends, neighbors, relatives, or any interested member of the community. The meetings are held prior to the juveniles' parole date but often extend until well after he has been paroled.

The pilot project was scheduled for a 6-month period, April through September. During those months a total of 34 juveniles were referred. Fourteen of these referrals had no phone and a letter alone apparently was an ineffective contact as none responded. Two of the families did not command the English language well enough to understand our invitation and purpose. Of the viable referrals (18), 12 responded by attending one or more POP meeting. Of the six who did not respond, four were interested but unable to attend because of transportation problems or evening employment. The other two referrals presumably were not interested in attending.

During the 6-month project, 19 meetings were held with 90 people in attendance. This figure represents people who returned several times, friends of the family and interested members of the community. Although we did not keep exact records of the 12 families who returned a total of 90 people in attendance suggests a rather high rate of return.

When the parents arrived at our facility they were met at the door and escorted to our conference room. They were seated around a semicircular table where coffee and cake were being served. Our groups were no larger than eight. We enjoyed the refreshments while chatting informally. At the start of each meeting we introduced our purpose. Initial meetings dealing with mechanics of parole and available community services were structured with a high degree of leader input. The use of "handouts" was often employed. Role playing was used to establish our point and offer the member an opportunity to practice what

he or she had heard during the presentation. Whenever possible guest speakers were invited to lend credibility to our discussion. We did not use a strict lecture approach. We relied on group interaction and discovery. We avoided severe psychological evaluation but facilitated a climate of openness and candidness. Later meetings became relatively unstructured. The group was encouraged to choose its own goals and personal directions. The leader's responsibility was to facilitate the sharing of feelings and thoughts on the part of the group members. For some members the group became a social outlet where concerned people met with shared interests. For others, the group became an effective arena where personal conflicts, i.e., guilt or lack of assertiveness, were examined. For others, the group provided a sympathetic ear that would listen to the trials and tribulations that plagued them.

The meetings generally lasted 1½ hours with time allowed at the end for questions and answers. We established a feedback norm which enabled us to ascertain whether we accomplished the leader or group goals set prior to the meeting. At the end we chatted briefly and extended to all an invitation to return. We announced a specific time and day for the next meeting.

The objectives of POP were to orient parents toward the potential problem areas of parole adjustment and to help them examine various ways of dealing with these problems. In this way they could become more effective resource people. Several weeks after the conclusion of the project we conducted a telephone survey in an attempt to evaluate how well we met our objectives. The participants unanimously reported a better understanding of the problems of parole adjustment. In their actual experiences they felt better equipped to face these problems. As resource people they were now aware of the community services available to them. They were more familiar with the mechanics of parole supervision and the role of the parole officer. They were aware of more effective means of communication.

Through the emotional strength provided by the group, parents were better able to support and encourage their children. Parents stated that the meetings were enjoyable and a refreshing break from their everyday lives. After the program was completed, many called for advice and expressed an interest in continuing the meetings.

In conclusion, the Parent Orientation Program provided counseling for immediate family members and other concerned members of the com-

munity preparatory to the inmates' receiving parole status. The aim is to orient them toward potential problems in the parole adjustment of their children, acquaint them with the mechanics of parole, disseminate information which might enable their children to achieve a successful reintegration, and lend support during a difficult period. The method we have chosen and the statistical analysis of attendance suggest our program tenable and the results of our telephone

survey indicate our goal of creating effective resource people possible. We believe our program is promising because it does not presume to reform or rehabilitate. It is based on the existing motivation of parents to help their children and fulfills a present need of families in the parole community. We offer parents the opportunity to learn something which they can use to help themselves and their children.

Although this program is currently operating at the Parole Resource Office and Orientation Facility in Jersey City, it can easily be expanded to each district parole office.¹

¹Currently the Parent Orientation Program is being implemented in the nine district parole offices in the State of New Jersey.

END