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CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN PROBATION

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CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN PROBATION

A case management system is the way in which a probation agency organizes itself to apply resources to its clients in order to achieve its purpose. The broad concept of "applying resources" includes within it, among other things, workload allocation, personnel structure, appropriateness of activities, approach to decision making, and lines of communication. Since all probation agencies organize themselves in some fashion and are intent on reaching their purpose, clearly, all probation agencies have a case management system.

It is a common experience in many agencies that the current case management system was developed and is perpetuated in an "unintentional" manner that is without sound long-term or short-term planning. In this time of diminishing resources and of heightened demand for accountability, it is necessary to raise the question of whether an agency's existing case management system is the best suited to help that probation organization achieve the purpose for which it is being held accountable.

Before determining the appropriateness of an agency's case management system, a fuller understanding of what is meant by case management system is necessary. There are two central concepts in any case management system: the first is the agency's purpose; the second is the way in which the agency organizes itself, or its organizational structure. Therefore, understanding these concepts, agency purpose and organizational structure, and their relationship with one another is crucial in the development of any case management system.

Purpose

Purpose may be loosely defined as the agency's reason for existence. For probation, one might loosely define purpose as the statement which would answer the questions "Why is there a need for probation, what is it supposed to do?" A clear articulation of purpose is important because it tends to focus the organization's energies and activities in a specific direction. It is for this reason that experts on organization stress the importance of a clearly defined purpose shared as much as is possible by all members of an organization.¹

Studies concerning the formulation of an organization's purpose have shown it to be influenced by both the personal attitudes of staff as well as the surrounding environment. For example, whether a probation agency sees its primary purpose as providing surveillance and control rather than services and rehabilitation is usually a function of the personal attitudes of administrative and line staff of the agency. Often, there can be disagreement between the members of such an organization as to what should be the primary

purpose of the agency.² When this is true, fragmentation and conflict in activities of staff can occur.

The definition of agency purpose is also a function of the environment within which that agency operates. The environment limits the possible range of purposes which a probation agency might choose to adopt. Experienced managers are well aware that the environments in which correctional systems exist can differ, sometimes dramatically. Such differences can include the amount of community support for human services agencies, the level of unemployment, the size of the offender population, as well as the prevalent public attitude toward certain types of crimes. This difference in environments leads to concomitant differences in the type of probation agencies supported in each.

Structure

The second aspect of a case management system is the organizational structure. The "structure" may be defined as the way in which people and other resources are organized by the agency to carry out the agency's purpose. An agency's purpose and structure are inter-dependent, and the way an agency organizes its resources will have an impact on the degree to which its purpose can be attained. When managers make decisions about organizing their staff, they often do so without thinking through the relationship between structure and purpose. The result is an organizational structure which, if it does support the agency's purpose, does so merely by chance.

Just as organizations can develop structures that are functional to achieving purpose, it is also true that dysfunctional structures can exist. Often this occurs as a result of changes in the environment which create change in the agency's purpose without the necessary organizational changes in structure. For example, in the last decade, support has developed for a "reintegrative approach" in corrections,³ however, all too frequently the traditional structure supporting casework therapy developed to support a rehabilitation approach has been retained.

The concept of organizational purpose and structure and their inter-dependency are relevant for an understanding of case management systems within probation agencies. At the most basic level, the way in which the agency currently organizes its resources, its organizational structure, is the concretization of the agency's case management system. That is, case management at the organizational level in probation, is defined by both the organization of people and resources (structure) and the policies and assumptions inherent in that organization (purpose). Since structure and purpose are interdependent, the case management system of any probation agency will either support the agency in attaining its goals or will impede such goal attainment. For example, a traditional caseload structure may interfere with a policy such as maximizing the use of community services through referral which derives from a reintegration purpose.

Therefore, two points are important to stress. First, the structuring of a case management system cannot be effectively accomplished without a con-

sideration of agency purpose. The second point follows from the first: since different agency purposes require different case management structures, there can be no universally ideal case management system. Each system must be tailored to the specific agency on the basis of its purpose and environmental constraints. In order to establish such a fit between structure and purpose, probation managers rely on information about the agency and its environment.

Information

Every probation organization keeps information in order to operate its case management system. The kind of information an organization needs to keep depends on the case management approach it is using--that is, not all agencies will have the same information needs; this will vary as will purpose and environment. However, typical kinds of information some agencies use for case management include client information (including background information and data on service needs), information on the community and the usefulness of its resources for clients of probation and data on staff skills. Sometimes this information is kept systematically, at other times it is haphazardly collected and kept only in the minds of administrative decision-makers or more typically by individual probation officers themselves.

Unfortunately, many probation agencies try to keep too much information in these various areas, especially client related information. Much of the information retained is irrelevant to the agency purpose or structure. The result is an overload of paperwork for staff, much of which is of extremely limited usefulness to management. The result of this "information overload" is that those who record the information--line probation officers--find it difficult to take the "forms" seriously,⁴ in part because managers find it impossible to use the complicated information in this overloaded format to improve decision-making or monitor the appropriateness of past decisions.⁵ Though most organizations typically try to keep too much information, often they also fail to maintain certain types of data that would be of great assistance to decision-making and goal attainment. Ideally, organizations should keep, in a routine manner, only that data that is needed to monitor goal attainment and the case management process.

Four Case Management Models

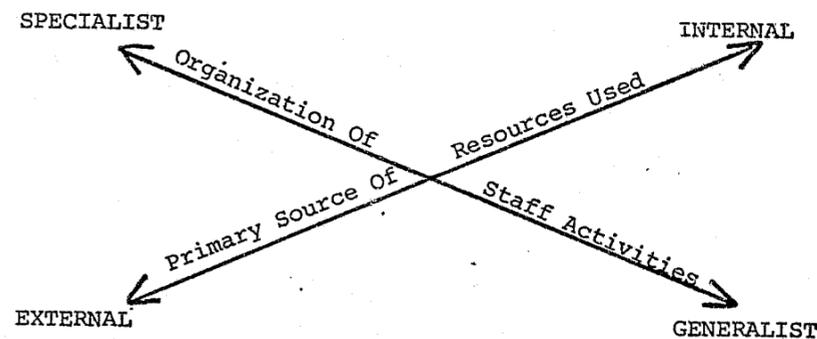
For purposes of understanding case management systems, the concepts of "structure" and "purpose" can be translated into two dimensions of case-management, and information needs and organizational dynamics can be discussed given these dimensions. The structural dimension is concerned with the distribution of resources within the organization. Specifically, this dimension is expressed as the dichotomy between the organizing of staff as "generalists," requiring each to be responsible for a large variety of functions; or the organizing of staff as "specialists," requiring each staff member to limit his

or her area of responsibility on the basis of specific skills possessed or the area to which he or she has been assigned. Moreover, generalist structures are normally "hierarchical," while specialist structures are of the "program" variety.⁶

The "purpose" dimension, as applied to case management, is concerned with the degree to which the agency relies on "external" sources for achieving its aims. This also involves a dichotomy, specifically between reliance upon outside resources, such as community service agencies, for dealing with clients or the reliance on staff resources within the agency to deal with clients. This dimension has several implications for purpose, including the degree of control or surveillance potential of the agency and the amount of direct concern for service-delivery. In general, those systems emphasizing the use of external resources have as their primary purpose, change while those stressing internal resources have as their primary purpose, control.

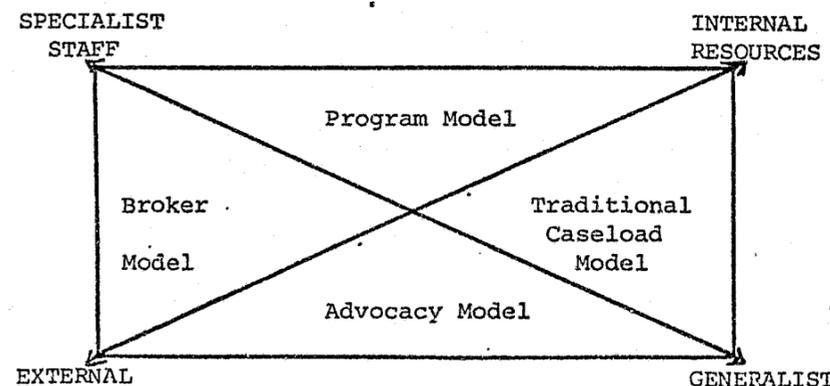
While each dimension has been described as dichotomous, a more realistic depiction is to present a continuum running between the respective dichotomous positions. It is therefore possible to locate a probation agency at a specific point along each continuum.

Figure 1: Case Management Continua



These two continua can be combined to identify four case management system models; traditional caseload model, program model, advocacy model, and broker model.

Figure 2: Case Management Models



However, rather than treat each continuum independently, since actual case management systems take both dimensions into consideration, they may be more appropriately represented as intersecting continua, and it is on the basis of this representation that the models of case management systems have been derived.

In order to more fully understand the complexities of each case management system and its impact on a probation agency, each model will be examined in detail. In describing each of these models, the implications of the models to purpose and structure and for several organizational characteristics will be assessed, including: information (the data required by management to operate the case management system), decision-making approaches, staff interaction, rewards (the means by which staff are motivated to work)⁷ and the leadership styles which tend to occur.⁸

It is important to stress that these models are stereotypes. While none is purely reflective of any existing probation agency, an examination of the characteristics of each intended to provide a fuller understanding of the complexities involved in case management systems as well as the implications for an agency as it moves toward any one of these pure types.

I. Traditional Caseload Model

This model is identified by a generalist orientation to the use of staff and a focus on internal resources rather than resources external to the agency. The formal staff structure is hierarchal: the traditional model in which authority is centered at the top and flows downward through the organization. Policy decisions usually emanate from the top and are dispersed downward throughout the agency, and there is little formal opportunity for input from line staff into these policy decisions. The line staff are provided with general caseloads of clients who are not differentially assigned to officers.

The information required for decision making concerning the agency's workload into these units is usually simple. In some agencies, for example, caseloads are organized by geographic area, and the individual's place of residence is all that is required to make the client distribution decision. In agencies which try to maintain a uniform caseload size, all that is necessary to decide where to assign clients is an accurate count of the current caseloads of officers. Since in this model clients are distributed randomly into caseloads without attention to differences between clients, and since each probation officer is a generalist, the assumption is made that the officer will have the capacity to effectively handle the variety of persons assigned to a caseload.

The principal activity engaged in by agency staff, the agency's basic technology, is counseling. However, counseling may range in focus from a rehabilitative or medical model approach to simple surveillance. Regardless of the focus, the full responsibility of supervision rests with the individual probation officer. Decision making concerning the most productive activities for the agency to be engaged in with respect to an individual

are left with the officer as well. This approach creates a situation similar to that observed by Wilson in his research on police: discretion increases in scope as one moves down the hierarchical lines of authority.⁹ As a result, the information relied upon to make case decisions varies from officer to officer. In addition, this information is rarely specified so that its appropriateness for decision making can be examined.

The individual caseload concept serves to isolate staff from one another. The sharing of problems and seeking of advice depends on each officer's initiative. Some may be reluctant to admit that they are having difficulty by asking for assistance. Often, assistance from an officer will only be offered in the context of informal office interaction. There is no formal mechanism for increasing the influence of effective staff. Some officers may also be hesitant to discuss their own accomplishments for fear of adding to their own work. Officers with problem cases of a specific type might be only too happy to turn them over to another officer who has demonstrated a facility for working with this type of client.

Since almost all activities and decision-making remain isolated in these caseloads, it is very difficult to assess the agency's effectiveness in working with clients. Records are frequently kept in a highly individualized manner, with individual officers deciding what information to keep and how to organize it. Because of the failure to standardize information used to identify successful and unsuccessful cases the agency and its officers receive no feedback which can be used in judging which approaches are the most effective. Also when agencies attempt to systematically keep records, the isolation of the officer from the management uses of the information in these records often will lead to questions regarding the significance of the information and, ultimately, to haphazard approaches to "filling out the forms."

This case management system has a distinctive reward system: it is primarily dependent upon the personal satisfaction each officer derives from working with his or her caseload. Since administrators cannot tell, except in extreme cases, the varying degrees of effectiveness each staff member is attaining, the agency can contribute little in the way of meaningful rewards, other than small monetary incentives and other rewards that have limited motivating potential.¹⁰

The leadership style common in this model is typically bureaucratic and authoritarian. The chief administrator is expected to establish policy and to be available for consultation when requested. The administrator does not usually become involved in decisions affecting individual clients, except when asked.

In fact, while the chief probation officer has the responsibility for making policy decisions affecting the organization as a whole, the responsibility for the agency's activity decision, how each probation officer supervises the cases in his caseload, is left in the hands of each staff member.

One of the strengths of the traditional model is that it is fairly simple to administer. It requires a minimum of information to maintain the

structure, individual responsibility for problems that arise can frequently be easily determined, and highly-skilled, independent staff are free to pursue their skills in handling cases. Thus, the lack of ability to supervise staff that characterized this model has its positive side--staff are given a great deal of flexibility in decision-making. Because the model is simple, the management functions of planning and coordination are also simplified. The primary issue is whether the lack of complexity in this model prevents the agency from effectively responding to what is often a complex array of clients, thus interfering with goal attainment.

II. Program Model

This model is characterized by a specialist staff orientation and a preference for the use of internal agency resources rather than resources external to the agency. Staff are typically provided with caseloads of clients differentiated on the basis of some criteria the agency has selected. Often probation officers with similar caseloads will be grouped together into specific units. For example, clients may be separated into caseloads of persons with drug-alcohol problems, marital problems, employment problems, etc. Caseloads may also be divided by risk based on some criteria which assesses the potential for recidivism and subdivided into intensive, moderate and minimum supervision. Sometimes, program model agencies differentiate clients on the basis of offense: sex offender caseloads, drug offender caseloads, and so forth.

The information required to make decisions concerning the distribution of clients is certainly more complex than that required in the Traditional Caseload Model. The precise information needed depends on the caseload differentiations made. For example, assignment to a drug/alcohol caseload can be determined by chance or by information provided by client, police, family or friends concerning the client's use of drugs or alcohol. Or, more detailed "risk" assessment instruments may be used to determine the need for supervision, as has been suggested by the General Accounting Office.¹¹ In any case, the Program Model case management system relies on information about clients that is more detailed than that found in the previous model to assist in the case allocation decision.

Therefore, presentence investigations are often structured and used in this agency model to identify particular client problems. Usually, predetermined criteria are used to place probation clients into groups with other clients with similar characteristics. The assignment of probation clients in this model can be even more complex, using information relating to both client and staff member, matching the client's needs to the staff member's expertise as a case management policy. Once the assignment decision has been made, however, any further decision-making concerning the most appropriate supervision strategy remains in the hands of the probation officer, as is true with the Traditional Caseload Model.

This approach to supervision carries with it a particular problem. A person under supervision may require the skills of more than one probation officer. Typically, a determination is made at "intake" as to the most

pressing need and the assignment is made to the probation officer with the corresponding resource. This means that this officer will be required to provide secondary resources for which he or she may not be equipped. Depending on how formalized this problem identification process is, some program agencies may eventually devise additional formalized procedures whereby probation officers, requiring additional help, may request and receive the necessary assistance from other staff members. Included in these methods might be weekly staff meetings or even specifically scheduled administrative review of a probation officer's caseload. The potential exists in this model for these review mechanisms to develop because of the existence of visible criteria for decision-making which are available for managers to monitor. However, as with the Traditional Model, most decision-making regarding supervision rests with the individual probation officer once the case assignment decision has been made. Because the impetus for seeking additional resources rests with the supervising probation officer, such may not be sought, when appropriate, in all cases. This can be attributed to either the probation officer not recognizing the need or, as previously discussed in the Traditional Model, the probation officer being reluctant to admit to lacking resources.

As with the Traditional Model, policy decisions in the Program Model are made at the highest administrative level and are communicated downward. Line staff have little input. However, when caseload volumes result in more than one officer supervising similar caseloads or when one type of caseload is receiving special attention, for example drug cases in the early 1970's, officers in charge of these caseloads may exert some influence on policy. This is particularly true if the decisions have the potential to adversely affect the unit or its officers.

Because the focus in this model is on the use of internal resources, the technology typically employed is counseling, though the counseling can be problem-specific, begin based on the identified needs of the client. Counseling may also frequently be done in groups: since the caseloads are organized around problem areas, and the intervention approaches for each individual are similar, it is often seen as more efficient to maximize resources and apply the counseling to groups rather than individuals. Therefore, one strength of this approach is that it also increases internal resources by using probationers as resources for one another. In addition to group counseling, a second widely used Program Model technology is surveillance, which is often employed when counseling "fails."

The Program Model tends to isolate staff less than does the Traditional Model. Probation officers, particularly those with similar caseloads, tend to communicate with one another frequently. However, this identification to communicate with one another sometimes have the negative effect of further isolating staff by creating competition between different specialized units. The overall impact on the agency is that, while it relies heavily on internal resources, a free sharing of these resources is hindered by the program structure.¹²

The reward structure characteristic of this model is, as with the Traditional Model, heavily dependent on the personal job satisfaction felt

by each officer. If the office is a large one, with several officers sharing similar types of caseloads, the informal recognition given to each other may serve as a motivating factor. However, formal rewards, for example promotion, may depend on the degree to which different "speciality" areas come to be defined as important or "successful," a judgement which may be based less on the perception of successfulness. When this is true, a result can be increased conflict for rewards between specialized units or caseworkers.

The authoritarian approach is again consistent with the leadership style of this model. Since high level administrators are only infrequently involved in decisions concerning cases, and since there are no formal way to review decision making practices of each officer, there is little for the administrator to do other than issue policy directives and intervene when requested.

The major strength of the Program Model is its basis in the recognized limitations of the Traditional Model: no one officer can be responsive to the wide array of problems all clients face. In specializing the tasks of officers, the Program Model attempts to increase the skills of officers in handling specific client problems. The two major shortcomings of the model are first that clients will often have multiple problems of a complexity greater than a single agency can respond to, and second that the administrative approach to caseloads again tends to isolate officers from one another and from policy-making.

III. Advocacy Model

This model is characterized by generalist staff who are involved in using external resources to deal with client needs. The rationale for the Advocacy Model may be ideological and reflected in the statements; "It's the responsibility for the community to deal with the problems that caused these clients to engage in law-breaking behavior" or "Community resources, because of a greater range of experience and professional expertise, can do a better job providing services to clients." In either case, the task structure is similar: cases are assigned more or less randomly to staff caseloads; staff are expected to work with the cases so as to involve the clients in various non-probation human service agencies, such as family counseling or mental health centers, job training programs and drug treatment programs.

To administer this kind of case management system requires little information about the client, at least initially. As was true of the Traditional Model, clients are distributed to officers so as to keep caseloads essentially equal in size and there fore the manager only needs to know intake counts and caseload counts. Once the client is under supervision, however, it becomes important for the officer to keep information on the agency the client is involved with, though this information need not be made systematically available to the probation manager.

Because the Advocacy Model is based on the need to maximize resources without specializing staff, some problems can emerge in such an agency over time. One obvious problem is that officers differ in their capacity or

desire for locating useful resources. This is a task which often requires out-of-the-office footwork, salesmanship and perseverance. Thus, some officers will be better at finding jobs than others; others will be experts at locating appropriate sources for therapy. If the client is to benefit maximally from probation, it will depend in part on being placed in the caseload of an officer whose skills match his or her needs.

A second problem may arise because of the above: officers may be placed in competition with each other in finding outside resources. Particularly when resources are scarce, officers may tend to keep them "hidden" from colleagues. For example, officers in areas of high unemployment may be tempted to hold confidential information about a new job opening until one of his or her clients becomes unemployed, even though the clients of other officers are in need of jobs. Obviously, this zero-sum strategy can be detrimental to the interest of probation clients.

Finally, large caseloads may affect this case management approach as well. Since the Advocacy Model requires more time to be spent on cases, there may develop a general strategy of finding places to "put" a case so that the officer can turn his or her attention to other clients. Thus, large caseloads may make follow-up a low priority for officers, thereby leading to a loss of control over cases.

Because the structure is hierarchical, officers are again isolated from the policy-making levels of the agency. The leadership style that develops can be one of "hands off" leaving the maximum amount of discretion to line officers. However, for Advocacy Model officers, this can lead to a difficult dilemma: the development of conflicts between outside agency policies and probation client needs. This conflict should be resolved by the action of the probation manager, but because of the isolation, there may be no formal means for alerting the administrator to this developing conflict, and it may be difficult to characterize the policy problem as going beyond a simple case-by-case problem-solving approach. Therefore, needed management support of staff activities may be lacking.

The principal technology is related to resource development and surveillance. Since external resources are responsible for bringing about change, the use of counseling by probation officers is discouraged. Probation officers activities are limited to referral to outside resources and follow-up to determine if the client is complying with the requirements of the resource.

Staff rewards flow primarily from the nature of the work, but there is a potential for a high degree of staff frustration. The Advocacy agency's task is offender change through service provision, but the change programs are run by agencies not under the control of probation. Thus, much of the credit for successful cases and responsibility for appropriate programming for clients' needs falls outside of the probation officer's hands. Under conditions of high workload, it is possible that many officers will "burn out" because of the inability to get intensive satisfaction from the job.

The Advocacy Model has its heritage in the older "street worker" concept, that clients need to be handled "on their turf" and that communities must be made to change in response to client problems. That is the strength of this model--the tasks themselves are conceptually sound. The problems with the model stem from heavy workloads under conditions of isolation of staff and minimal feedback about effectiveness of activities.

IV. Broker Model

This model is characterized by an emphasis on the use of external resources and the organization of staff into speciality areas. The structure is very similar to the Program Model in that probation clients are organized into caseloads on the basis of common problems. The rationale for using outside resources flows from the realization that the probation agency cannot, or should not try to, develop the range of services needed by its clients while maintaining quality of services.

Since there is a reliance on external resources, the information needed for decision making is more complex than that seen in previous models. It is not enough to have information concerning problem areas for clients and simply match these with the resource strengths of staff; the agency must also have an accurate picture of the resource strengths of the community, as well, so that clients can be matched to these resources. This is often accomplished by having the agency undertake a resource inventory of the community. While conducting such an inventory, the Broker Model case manager must also consider the suitability of clients for the community resources, including the willingness of these community agencies to handle probationers. Thus, the agency in this model is using information concerning clients, probation officers and community resources and is attempting to work out the best fit involving all three. Staff is specialized because it is felt they can become more intimately acquainted with the community resources in this way and therefore provide a better match.

In this model the probation officer's task is to provide prescreening before referral of the client to a community resource. The extent to which he or she can do this accurately will often influence the availability of the resource for probationers in the future. Prescreening is designed to determine client needs and provide appropriate referral in as expeditious a manner as possible. The responsibility, however, does not end at referral. Surveillance is relied on as a technology in addition to screening, but surveillance consists of the probation officer's follow-up on all referrals with appropriate action taken in the event that the probationer refuses to comply with the referral order.¹³

The formal lines of communication, as defined by the organization's structure, and the potential for interagency competition and conflict are the same as with the Program Model, with staff placed in conflict over whose "speciality" is more needed by clients. However, the competition that exists in the Advocacy Model between staff for outside resources is reduced by the specialization of staff. Specialization also creates a need for managers to coordinate functions. Therefore, the tendency is for the administrative

role to focus on the issuance of policy directives often with little input from line staff. This may develop except perhaps in those cases where the policy decision adversely affects a specific caseload unit, in which case that unit may be contacted for feedback.

A major difference between this model and the Program Model is found in the reward system. Under the Broker Model, the agency is not designed to provide increased responsibility and recognition for achievement, both of which are key motivating factors; if anything, this model reduces both. The administrator is no better equipped to judge staff effectiveness. In fact, when dramatic changes are seen in a probationer's behavior, these are often attributed to the community resource and not the probation officer, that is, the "new program" is credited with helping clients stay out of trouble, not the probation officer. Much like the Advocacy Model, this model also has the potential for staff "burn-out" and other morale problems because of this lack of recognition of effectiveness. There may also develop a tendency for some staff members to supervise cases traditionally or to be less willing to extend themselves beyond what they must in their dealings with outside resources.

The strength of the Broker Model lies in its use of community resources and its attempt to bring a wider range of such resources to bear on client problems. As a strategy for meeting clients' needs, it is the most complex and can handle the widest array of clients. If the intrinsic rewards of the job are reduced because the officer-client relationship is limited primarily to referral, reduced staff morale becomes a key problem for the manager to be concerned with, in addition to reduced control over cases.

An Integration of Case Management Models

From the foregoing discussion, it should be clear that no single approach to case management will be free from problems, and no single approach will be optimal for all or even most agencies. Because of the complexities most agencies face, with respect to variety of clients and staff as well as political and economic environments, most managers will want to design a case management system that combines aspects of each of these stereotypical models. This approach begins with the realization that it is legitimate to pursue as purposes both the control of clients as well as their change and therefore there will be a need for a mix of internal and external resources. Either will be appropriate depending on the client's situation. As a matter of fact, to be most effective, a case management system should be able to quickly respond to a change in purpose for a client as the situation dictates. For example, some clients may need to be brought under control before any intervention are applied with the intent of achieving long-term changes in behavior. For some cases this latter purpose may never be appropriate, and in some cases the need for control of the offender may never be an issue. What is important is that the agency's case management system should be able to pursue different purposes with different clients simultaneously.

Originally, this concern for flexibility was a major reason for the general caseloads of the Traditional Model, and individualized supervision

was what most experienced probation officers tried to do anyway. The strength of the traditional caseload has been that it allows the individual probation officer to get to know his or her cases as individuals, and to be able to decide what approaches would be most effective in dealing with each person. While the intention is good in the ideal, we know that the reality has not worked quite that well. Probation officers cannot always be expected to decide on the best approach to take; partly because they cannot have all the knowledge in all the cases and partly because, being human, they cannot be totally objective and will tend to favor certain approaches over others.¹⁴ The final point is that the traditional caseload is never managed by probation administrators; caseworkers, in making the day-to-day decisions regarding supervision, actually take over the management functions of planning and operational policy-making. The purpose of case management should be to place the ability to manage these decisions within the control of the probation agency's administration.

The major benefit of an integrated case management system comes from the organizational structure it requires and the procedures and techniques it devises to carry out its purpose(s). The formal articulation of structure and procedure consistent with the system's purpose increases the probability that the purpose will be achieved. In order to implement an integrated case management system, there are three primary conditions which must be met.

The first requirement is for a structure which can be flexible enough to tolerate changes in the purposes of probation and in the kinds of clients handled by probation. Moreover, the agency will need to employ technologies for handling clients which reflect the complexities of client needs, even given varying purposes. A structure which is highly suited to flexibility in management is the "matrix" or team structure. This structure allows officers and managers to be organized according to the requirements of given tasks, so that the people with the relevant skills are working together to solve a problem about which they have expertise. It is a particularly appropriate structure when tasks are complex, require a variety of skills, and for which there is no simple solution.¹⁵ This is true of the integrated case management approach, and the flexibility of a matrix structure is a key ingredient to success.

Second, the manager must have available on a routine basis information which is helpful in making decisions about structuring resources and monitoring the use of resources. To do this effectively, information is required concerning the nature of the client and the client's "needs", the supervision activities of the probation office, the nature of the community resources and how useful those resources are in assisting clients. This kind of information will allow a manager to make decisions about the kind of staff specialization needed as well as the degree to which any specialization is required. In addition, the manager will be able to determine how great the need is for external resources to meet client needs. In other words, the manager will be able to determine the appropriate mix of case-management for his or her agency.

Third, a participative leadership style is necessary. In complex case management systems, the manager needs to be able to learn of problems and

staff concerns when they occur. Moreover, the staff need to be involved in the administration of the system so that inappropriate decisions regarding use of staff are avoided. Unilateral leadership styles will prevent this level of input. Under a matrix structure, it is possible to encourage a wide degree to staff participation in policy decisions and evaluation/monitoring activities.

Because of the shortcomings of traditional case management approaches, probation managers will find it increasingly necessary to develop new structures for handling cases, structures which reflect the unique array of clients, community influences and staff skills. This development task, involving establishing an integration of the case management models presented above, is the key aspect of systematic case management. Development in appropriate case management approaches is also the key to improved probation.

FOOTNOTES

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