

Colorado Probation Research in Brief

The Role of Probation in Reentry from Jail

Source Document: Solomon, A. L., Osborne, J. W. L., LoBugio, S. F., Mellow, J., & Mukamal, D. A. (2008). *Life After Lockup: Improving Reentry from Jail to the Community*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, pp 163-174 .

Key Words: Jail, reentry, transition, prisoner reentry, technical violations, intermediate sanctions

Summary/Conclusions

This section is part of a larger monograph addressing a variety of topics related to reentry from jail to the community. The document was written by the Urban Institute with a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The monograph describes the United States' jail population and profiles inmate reentry; however, Section Four specifically addresses the jail inmate, who transitions to community supervision on probation. There is a discussion on facilitating the transition process, as well as reducing the flow of offenders from probation to jail through effective management of technical violations in the community.

To read the complete monograph, visit the following website:
www.urban.org/uploadedPDF/411660_life_after_lockup.pdf.

Limitations of Information

There are no national studies which address offender reentry to probation, so the size of this population is unknown. Also, the authors provide no outcome data in regard to the programs and practices highlighted in this section of the monograph; therefore, the success of these programs is not available nor have these programs or practices been rigorously tested to determine their effectiveness.

Caveat: The information presented here is intended to summarize and inform readers of research and information relevant to probation work. It can provide a framework for carrying out the business of probation as well as suggestions for practical application of the material. While it may, in some instances, lead to further exploration and result in *future* decisions, it is not intended to prescribe policy and is not necessarily conclusive in its findings.

Jail Reentry

Although no national statistics are available, we do know there is a portion of probationers, who transition from jail to community supervision. The American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) conducted a survey in 2007 to better understand this population. The APPA discovered that most departments did not address jail reentry; however, there were a few jurisdictions with innovative programs and practices. Specifically, these jurisdictions acted to facilitate the transition process and to decrease the number of probationers entering jail.

Usually reentry efforts by probation are limited to specialized caseloads, but there are counties that choose to assist the broader population. For example, in two Maryland counties, the probation officer (PO) meets with the inmate weekly, just before release, with a team of "advocates from substance use, mental health, employment, and housing agencies." The team develops a reentry plan to ensure a smooth transition to community supervision. In a Minnesota county, PO's conduct a regular "How to Succeed on Probation" class in the jail and distribute community resource guides to soon-to-be-released offenders. In an Arizona County, PO's help inmates "reapply for federal entitlements [such as SSDI, food stamps, etc.] to avoid gaps in care upon release."

In addition to reentry programs, some counties are trying to reduce the number of probationers entering jail on technical violations. The authors strongly encouraged the use of intermediate sanctions to address violations, rather than incarceration. Sanctions employed swiftly, consistently,

and predictably can effect behavior change, while preventing incarceration. In a Florida County, probation officers utilize a day reporting center, in lieu of jail, for technical violators.

Practical Applications

- √ Complete terms and conditions with the probationer in custody, and conduct assessments. Use this time to identify needs, build rapport, and make referrals.
- √ Make advance arrangements for emergency housing with a local motel/rental using offender services funds.
- √ Use the PSI process to identify potential re-entry issues and address them in recommendations.
- √ Work with judges to ensure the probationer is ordered to contact probation immediately upon completing a jail sentence.
- √ Arrange for local service providers to establish contact with probationers in jail to ensure a seamless transition to treatment/classes upon discharge.
- √ Meet with probationers in custody to develop a transition plan covering housing, job, medications, treatment, etc.
- √ Develop and deliver a monthly presentation for inmates on issues related to being successful on supervision.
- √ Address technical violations immediately before the risk requires revocation and/or incarceration.