

# Research in Brief

## Absconder Project

**Source Document:** Absconder Project, Division of Probation Services, State Court Administrator's Office, Colorado Judicial Branch  
**Date:** January 2006

**Key Words:** absconder, special programs, partnerships

### Practical Application

*The following ideas are offered for consideration by probation staff and were either specifically suggested by the authors of the Absconder Report or the contributors to this "Research in Brief."*

- ✓ Offenders presenting with characteristics linked to absconsion risk should receive early intensive engagement by probation
- ✓ Utilize such group settings as COG or Life Skills to increase contacts with those potentially high-risk absconders.
- ✓ Develop an alert screen program in E-CLIPSE to notify officers when offenders present with the predictive absconder criteria.
- ✓ Assist the offender with obtaining basic life skills.
- ✓ Utilize volunteers or interns to support the basic assistance needs of offenders at the forefront of probation.
- ✓ Build basic needs into the initial case plan. Don't overlook the importance of stability for an offender.
- ✓ Utilize translated forms (Spanish and other commonly used languages) with non-English speaking offenders.
- ✓ Make specialized programs available for non-English speaking offenders.
- ✓ Recruit volunteers and employees who speak more than one language.
- ✓ Retain updated resource lists for basic needs, activities and non-English speaking services and programs.
- ✓ Provide booster training on the pre/post absconder policy to insure officers are doing everything they can to locate offenders.

- ✓ Prioritize officer efforts to locate absconders based on the level of risk and severity of offense.
- ✓ Develop partnerships with law enforcement, fugitive units, parole, state police and district attorney's offices for tracking, apprehending and prosecuting high risk absconders. Multi-systemic partnerships are a great resource for community safety.
- ✓ Share resources and best practices. Presenting current promising practices with broad application to other districts is a way to develop strong programs.
- ✓ Explore innovative strategies (e.g. using a tracker/community officer, technology, incentives).

### Limitations of Information

There are some limitations of the data utilized for this report. Inconsistent data entry, by field officers, resulted in a smaller sample size. This prevented district level analysis. Analysis was only completed on a statewide level.

The use of the interpreter code in E-CLIPSE, is not readily used and was just introduced for court staff use in the last few years. This code is used to determine if an offender is non-English speaking for the purposes of this report. The authors of this report recommend the conclusions made regarding non-English speaking offenders be revisited at a later date, when a larger sample is available.

Additionally, little empirical research on best practices and policies related to absconsion exists. Most research cited in the Absconder Project relates to recidivism.

### Summary/Conclusions

In 2003, PAC approved a pre/post absconder policy. As departments have struggled to implement this policy, due to budget cuts and staff limitations, the Absconder Project was initiated and a report written. The purpose of the project was to assist field officers in identifying potential absconders and collect research that reflected best practices and potential strategies for locating absconders.

The findings identify a group of offenders who are most likely to abscond from probation supervision. The offenders present with one or more of the following characteristics: employment instability, age 25-36, male, high score on the LSI criminal history subscale, high LSI total score, no organized activities, and less willing to disclose (i.e. high defense score on the ASUS subscale).

The findings also suggest that intensive supervision reduces absconding and when an offender receives help with finding a job and stable residence, he/she is less likely to abscond.

Based in part on these findings, the practices summarized in this brief are suggested.

**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. Some of its limitations are described above.

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303.866.1111; www.courts.state.co.us April 2006