

# Colorado Probation Research in Brief

## *Juvenile Probation Officers: How the Perception of Roles Affects Training Experiences for Evidence Based Practice Implementation*

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**Key Words:** Evidence based practices, JARPP, juveniles, workplace role, training.

### Summary/Conclusions

Previous research regarding role orientation has identified probation officers assume the roles of law enforcement, social services, and resource broker. This study's purpose was to evaluate whether the roles juvenile probation officers identify with have any influence on their understanding or perception of Evidence Based Practice training. The study had two outcomes. The first finding was role did not have a significant effect on juvenile probation officer perceptions of clients/training. The study also found enhanced specialized training may have an effect on officer perceptions of training and clients.

### Limitations of Information

The study utilized qualitative (interview) data, which is often difficult to analyze. The limited sample size of 12 juvenile probation officers restricts generalizing study results. The sample lacked one of the three workplace roles commonly found in probation, which is a law enforcement oriented probation officer. This study focused exclusively on juvenile probation officers, it is unclear how findings might change with adult probation officers.

**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

### Building Support for Evidence Based Practices

This study was based on data collected from the Juvenile Assessment, Referral, Placement and Treatment Planning (JARPP) study conducted between April 2009 and July 2009. The JARPP study was a randomized controlled experiment, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The study evaluated the effectiveness of evidence based practices training administered to juvenile officers. Probation officers were divided in control, standard, and enhanced training. The control group received a one day motivational interviewing training. A standard group received motivational interviewing training in conjunction with intensive JARPP training, as well as ongoing educational boosters. Finally, the enhanced group received motivational interviewing training, intensive JARPP training and was provided with on-site peer coaching to support the implementation of evidence based practices.

Officer statements were gathered post training. Each officer was sorted by the job roles of social worker or resource broker. Officers were rated on their attitudes towards training and probationers. To discover correlations between job roles, training and attitudes, the results were arranged by control, standard, and enhanced training levels.

Findings from this study concluded that officer roles (i.e. law enforcement, resource broker, or social worker) did not affect officers' perceptions of probationers or training. Enhanced training may

effect positive perceptions of both training and probationers, as officers in the enhanced group were the only officers with both positive perceptions of training and probationers. Researchers hypothesized a link between organizational support and perception of training and probationers exist. Conversely, previous research has found that organizations less accepting of change have trouble implementing evidence based practice.

### Practical Applications

- ✓ Consider having conversations with your supervisor about how to implement and receive performance feedback on integrating the Eight Principles of Effective Intervention in to your daily work.
- ✓ Pay special attention to personal biases. Being open to new information and practices will help integrate new and effective ways of dealing with difficult situations and clients.
- ✓ Identify your workplace role in probation. Be open to attempting to change roles as needed based on the individual probationer.
- ✓ Organizations should examine and assess their overall willingness to change. Learning organizations continually evaluate and adapt to increase productiveness.
- ✓ Continue to pursue training and professional development opportunities.