

# Putting Public Safety First

*13 Parole Supervision Strategies  
to Enhance Reentry Outcomes*

*The Urban Institute*

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# Contents

<b>ABOUT THE AUTHORS</b>	v
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	vii
<b>FOREWORD</b>	xi
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
Background and Focus of the Paper	3
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL-LEVEL STRATEGIES</b>	7
1. Define Success as Recidivism Reduction and Measure Performance	8
2. Tailor Conditions of Supervision	10
3. Focus Resources on Moderate and High-Risk Parolees	12
4. Front-Load Supervision Resources	14
5. Implement Earned Discharge	16
6. Implement Place-Based Supervision	18
7. Engage Partners to Expand Intervention Capacities	20
<b>INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL SUPERVISION STRATEGIES</b>	23
8. Assess Criminogenic Risk and Need Factors	24
9. Develop and Implement Supervision Case Plans that Balance Surveillance and Treatment	26
10. Involve Parolees to Enhance their Engagement in Assessment, Case Planning, and Supervision	28
11. Engage Informal Social Controls to Facilitate Community Reintegration	29
12. Incorporate Incentives and Rewards into the Supervision Process	31
13. Employ Graduated Problem-Solving Responses to Violations of Parole Conditions in a Swift and Certain Manner	33

CONTENTS

REPOSITIONING PAROLE SUPERVISION: LOOKING AHEAD	36
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX	49



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This resulting paper was cowritten by eight authors in four organizations and reflects the views of many leading parole experts and practitioners, both attendees of these meetings and additional leading scholars and practitioners who could not attend but weighed in with their insights and feedback. We are grateful for the time and expertise that each committed to this process and report. We also want to thank Tony Thompson of New York University School of Law, who facilitated these discussions, for creating a meeting environment that was focused, candid, and incredibly productive.

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# Foreword

**M**uch has been written about the challenges presented by the growing number of people being released from our nation's prison systems. Most of the essays, articles, and books address one or more of the issues related to a person's return to the community after a stint in prison. These works stress singularly or in combination the importance of pre-planning, risk assessment, housing, employment, drug and alcohol or mental health treatment, cognitive-behavioral interventions, community partnerships, family involvement, graduated responses to parole violations, and swift and certain responses to parolee behavior. There are numerous writings and limited, but nonetheless valuable, research papers available to those who care to read them to provide guidance in making changes in the way their agencies perform the arduous, unglamorous, and underappreciated tasks of successfully integrating individuals returning to their communities from prison. However, the prospect of compiling and reading through the volumes of information is an unlikely or, at least, daunting proposition for the often overworked and crisis-based corrections practitioner.

Corrections professionals interested in and committed to improving their reentry practices need not fret over how they will coherently grasp the totality of what has been written and presented. *Putting Public Safety First: Parole Supervision Strategies to*

*Enhance Reentry Outcomes* efficiently and effectively provides a concise yet thorough blueprint for implementing effective approaches to supervising individuals released from prison. This document draws together research, promising practices, and the “best thinking” from the field to present a baker’s dozen of strategies that promote effective and achievable approaches to community supervision.

The authors have divided the 13 strategies into two categories. The first category of strategies provides instruction for agencies involved in post-incarceration supervision on the creation and implementation of organizational-level policies. The seven organizational-level strategies outlined propose the importance of recidivism reduction and performance measurements; tailoring conditions of supervision; the vital need to focus on the initial phases of reintegration; the importance of early discharge; expending resources on high-risk individuals; the implementation of place-based supervision; and the engagement of community partners.

The second category of strategies places a focus on the implementation of practices by supervision staff working at the individual level. The six practice strategies include assessing risk and need factors related to criminal behavior; developing a balanced supervision case plan that considers both surveillance and treatment; engaging those who are under supervision; engaging informal social controls; reinforcing compliance; and responding to violations in a timely and parsimonious manner.

The authors assist the reader further by providing numerous citations, pull quotes, and program examples throughout the document. This product for change reads much like an annotated cookbook with 13 recipes, all of which are necessary for a complete and successful feast. This is an important point. Although each strategy on its own may have promise in improving reentry outcomes, it is the complete package of strategies that will provide agency administrators, practitioners, and even policymakers with the best hope for substantially improved outcomes.

One of the major strengths of the strategies is that none of them individually or in total are unreasonable or cost-prohibitive to implement. In most cases it will simply require the will to implement the strategies. To that end, the authors discuss the need for agency leadership to spearhead the efforts. From their perspective this leadership is a “top-down approach.” Administrative leadership as a necessary component is not questioned. It is important to note, however, that agency leadership can and does come from all levels of agencies. Many of these strategies can and will be implemented and embedded because a champion for the cause will rise up from the ranks of middle management, line personnel, or supervisors who are interested in improvement and dedicated to long-term public safety while being responsible for the day-to-day implementation of successful policies and practices. Therefore, it is important that this document be a cookbook not only for head chefs, but also for those who prepare and serve the individual dishes.

It is also noteworthy that this guide to successful supervision of individuals released

from prison also has many ideas and strategies that could just as easily be implemented for individuals exiting local jails. Judges, probation chiefs, probation staff, and local policymakers can also learn from this document. The overall goal of recidivism reduction is just as important to probation supervision, and the means of reaching that goal are not substantially different.

As the president and executive director of the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), we are honored to have been part of the process to develop this document. The APPA vision states, "We see a fair, just and safe society where community partnerships are restoring hope by embracing a balance of prevention, intervention and advocacy." We hope this "pocket guide" to system and practice improvement will not only assist the reader in implementing positive change in his or her jurisdiction, but will also serve as a guide to the field for helping us realize our vision.



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# Introduction

Over the past 35 years, incarceration rates in the United States have grown to unprecedented levels and continue to climb. According to a report from the Pew Center on the States (Public Safety Performance Project 2008), more than one in one hundred adults are currently incarcerated in prison or jail. Correspondingly, prisons are releasing record numbers of people each year. In fact, more than 700,000 people were released from state and federal prison in 2006 (Sabol and Couture 2008). The majority, nearly 500,000, are released to parole supervision via mandatory or discretionary release (Glaze and Bonczar 2007). The parole population is now at an all-time high of more than 780,000, a four-fold increase from 1980 (Glaze and Bonczar 2007; Hughes, Wilson, and Beck 2001).

As ever-larger numbers of people serve their time and return to the community, parole supervision agencies can play a critical role in the promotion of community safety, successful reintegration, and individual accountability. Community supervision strategies that help improve outcomes related to substance abuse, employment, health, and family relationships while holding individuals accountable for their behavior directly advance public safety objectives. Even modest reductions in recidivism will result in fewer crimes and fewer victims and will make a dent in the \$65 billion this country now spends on corrections. The Second Chance Act, a landmark bill recently passed by

“There are two reasons to care about parole: public safety and economics.”

— CAMPBELL (2008, 5)

Congress and signed by the president, further demonstrates the emergence of prisoner reentry as an important, bipartisan public policy issue. The need for parole supervision agencies to effectively carry out their mission of reducing crime and aiding reintegration has never been greater.

Current practice in parole supervision continues to rely heavily on surveillance, which has repeatedly been shown, on its own, to have little impact on recidivism. According to a Washington State Institute of Public Policy analysis of adult corrections programs, supervision programs without a focus on treatment do not, on average, produce any reduction in recidivism rates (Aos, Miller, and Drake 2006). Moreover, with expanding caseloads and increasingly tight budgets, parole officers often lack the resources, training, time, and mandate they need to successfully reintegrate this growing population. According to the Crime and Justice Institute, “the conventional approach to supervision in this country emphasizes individual accountability from offenders and their supervising officers without consistently providing either with the skills, tools, and resources that science indicates are necessary to accomplish risk and recidivism reduction” (Bogue et al. 2004, 1).

In fact, two-thirds (67.5 percent) of those released from prison are rearrested within three years, and more than half are reincarcerated (Langan and Levin 2002). This pattern holds for those released to supervision as well as those released without it (Solomon, Kachnowski, and Bhati 2005). Recidivism rates have changed very little over the past three decades, and the frequent revocation of parole, often for technical violations, has contributed significantly to the rise in incarceration rates (Blumstein and Beck 2005; Public Safety Performance Project 2008).

States have a clear opportunity to reduce the recidivism rates of those on parole and to manage technical violations in a cost-effective way that holds individuals accountable and improves behavior and subsequent parole outcomes. Considering the high stakes and increasing costs of continuing “business as usual” in corrections, equipping parole agencies to support successful reentry should be a top priority for states.

“The conventional approach to supervision in this country emphasizes individual accountability from offenders and their supervising officers without consistently providing either with the skills, tools, and resources that science indicates are necessary to accomplish risk and recidivism reduction.”

— BOGUE ET AL. (2004, 1)

A consensus is emerging in the corrections field about interventions that lead to positive behavior change and reduce recidivism, ultimately improving outcomes for parolees, their families, and the communities to which they return. Building on decades of learning in the field and a growing research base, this body of knowledge suggests a set of interconnected parole policies and supervision strategies that would improve practice and provide the best foundation for enhanced public safety and reintegration outcomes. We have synthesized this body of knowledge into 13 essential strategies.

Around the country, a number of parole supervision agencies have begun to reshape, reform, and even transform their organizations by implementing one or more of these strategies. These agencies are learning that they need more than effective program models. The implementation process is as critical an issue as program design. These parole supervision agencies are also learning that change of this nature requires leadership committed to changing parolee behavior and creating an organizational culture that embraces evidence-based approaches to parole supervision. Examples from the field are included to illustrate that these concepts can be implemented with the expectation that they will improve outcomes.

Parole supervision agencies can implement most, if not all, of these strategies, but they cannot fully succeed at transforming reentry in isolation. Full transformation will require a commitment from a consortium of stakeholders—corrections; parole agencies; law enforcement; and other nontraditional partners, such as health and human service providers, housing authorities, workforce development boards, faith-based organizations, and formerly incarcerated people—that have already begun to address reentry as part of their work in communities. Parole supervision is only part of the solution, but it is an essential part, given its mandate to manage offenders released from prison. Given its unique position and mandate, parole should play a leadership role in forming and operating these broad-based consortiums that are so important to the success of reentry.

The time is right to rethink, reframe, and reposition parole supervision so that it more closely mirrors the consensus among leading parole practitioners and the research community about “what works” and produces the outcome of increased public safety.

#### NOTE ON LANGUAGE

With recent changes in correctional and sentencing policies around the country, the term “parole” is no longer used universally to define a period of community supervision following release from prison. We use the term “parole” and “post-prison supervision” interchangeably to refer to all systems of post-incarceration supervision.

## Background and Focus of the Paper

To build on the existing body of knowledge and determine how to best assist the field, the JEHT Foundation, in collaboration with the National Institute of Corrections, asked the Urban Institute to convene two meetings with national experts on the topic of parole supervision. The goals of the meetings were to articulate participants’ collective best thinking on parole supervision, violation, and revocation practices, and to begin to identify communication and assistance strategies to help policymakers and practitioner leaders (including governors, parole supervision agency leaders, state legislators, and department of corrections directors) improve public safety and make the best use of taxpayer dollars. The 13 strategies outlined in the paper are the result of this process and reflect an emerging consensus of leading researchers and practitioners in the field.

The paper draws from the most recent and relevant research reports and practitioner statements that identify “best thinking” in the area of post-prison supervision and includes feedback from the panel of experts convened by the Urban Institute. Because rigorous empirically based outcome research that focuses specifically on parole strategies is scarce, we rely on a combination of practitioner and expert experience in the field and a broader knowledge base that includes program evaluation, evidence-based practices (see sidebar 1), criminological theory, and data-driven strategies that identify high-risk offenders, places, and times. As stated in the recent National Research Council report, *Parole, Desistance from Crime, and Community Integration*, “Because so few reentry service programs are accompanied by rigorous evaluations, a scientific review panel . . . has very little to draw on with confidence. . . Yet there is a great deal of experiential and practitioner knowledge with regard to the apparent efficacy of various programs” (2007, 82).

The paper is divided into two major sections: organizational-level strategies and supervision strategies that take place at the parole officer–parolee level. We begin with a discussion of organizational-level strategies for parole agencies to

1. Define success as recidivism reduction and measure performance;
2. Tailor conditions of supervision;

**SIDEBAR 1. EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES** in the field of parole supervision focus on critical success measures such as recidivism reduction and behavior change. Simply defined by the Reentry Policy Council as “those initiatives, programs, or actions that research has shown to be effective,” evidence-based practices can take many forms (Reentry Policy Council 2005, 249). Recognizing the need for an integrated approach to community corrections, the National Institute of Corrections and Crime and Justice Institute developed a model for implementing evidence-based practices and improving reentry outcomes. Their “Eight Evidence-Based Principles for Effective Interventions,” are (Bogue et al. 2004, 3):

1. Assess Actuarial Risk/Needs
2. Enhance Intrinsic Motivation
3. Target Interventions
  - a. Risk Principle: Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offenders.
  - b. Need Principle: Target interventions to criminogenic needs.
  - c. Responsivity Principle: Be responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender when assigning programs.
  - d. Dosage: Structure 40-70% of high-risk offenders’ time for 3-9 months
  - e. Treatment: Integrate treatment into the full sentence/sanction requirements.
4. Skill Train with Directed Practice (use Cognitive Behavioral treatment methods).
5. Increase Positive Reinforcement
6. Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities
7. Measure Relevant Processes/Practices
8. Provide Measurement Feedback

3. Focus resources on moderate and high-risk parolees;
4. Front-load supervision resources;
5. Implement earned discharge;
6. Implement place-based supervision; and
7. Engage partners to expand intervention capacities.

We then present supervision practices—at the case management level—that are believed to produce better outcomes. These include practices to

8. Assess criminogenic risk and need factors;
9. Develop and implement supervision case plans that balance surveillance and treatment;
10. Involve parolees to enhance their engagement in assessment, case planning, and supervision;
11. Engage informal social controls to facilitate community reintegration;
12. Incorporate incentives and rewards into the supervision process; and
13. Employ graduated, problem-solving responses to violations of parole conditions in a swift and certain manner.

## **SIDEBAR 2. AN INTENTIONALLY NARROW FOCUS ON POST-PRISON SUPERVISION**

Although we have focused on post-prison supervision strategies, we acknowledge that parole supervision does not occur in isolation but is one part of a larger criminal justice system and is greatly affected by what occurs before the individual is released and by community-based factors after release. Parole is only part of the broader reentry strategy. We have chosen to focus on the unique opportunities and challenges of this critical—and sometimes overlooked—criminal justice function. Though many of the arguments carry implications for improving reentry policies generally, the recommendations are centered on rethinking and redefining the role of parole supervision within the larger context of reentry.

Additionally, while we have touched on the role of the paroling authority in setting conditions and monitoring parole failures and violations, we have not addressed broader strategies identified specifically for releasing authorities. The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has been leading an effort to inform and provide direction on the topic, developing a comprehensive framework for paroling authorities with input from allied professionals (Campbell 2008). As the NIC framework highlights, a key aspect of effective practice must be the collaboration between parole supervision agencies and paroling authorities in developing a common vision of how conditions can and should be set, how supervision and case management will take place, and how responses to violations will be handled. For more information on paroling authorities, see *Comprehensive Framework for Paroling Authorities in an Era of Evidence-Based Practices* by Nancy Campbell: <http://nicic.org/Downloads/PDF/Library/022906.pdf>.

For each policy or practice, the paper summarizes a definition of the policy or practice and its benefits, the underlying evidence base, and how the policy or practice varies from “business as usual.” Each section also includes examples from the field.

The policies and practices at the organizational and case management levels are inter-related and draw on common or complementary sets of concepts for improving parole supervision. Taken together and implemented in one place, these strategies can have a transformative effect on what is possible and realistic for parole to achieve.

### **SIDEBAR 3. AN EMERGING EXPERT CONSENSUS**

A review of the parole supervision literature identifies substantial overlap between the strategies outlined here and recommendations found in other major research and policy reports on the topic. A summary of this information is included as an appendix and lists policy and research reports that recommend some or all of our 13 supervision strategies. The purpose of this chart is to illustrate that, although the strategies are not “business as usual” in most jurisdictions, they are in line with the views of many leading researchers and practitioners, including a much broader group of experts than those involved directly in the JEHT Foundation/NIC-sponsored meetings.



# Organizational-Level Strategies

**T**his section summarizes organizational policies and practices that could improve reentry outcomes for people on parole while holding them accountable. These policies and practices include setting goals and performance benchmarks at the agency and officer levels, aligning supervision resources with individual risk factors (concentrating on high-risk people, places, and times), using incentives as well as sanctions to motivate offenders to change, and engaging partners outside the criminal justice system. These strategies are highly inter-related, and parole agencies that are successful at reducing recidivism will employ comprehensive change models that incorporate many, if not all, of these elements. Implementation of these strategies requires organizational change and leadership from the top. Taken together, these innovative strategies complement comprehensive reentry approaches and aim to simultaneously reduce recidivism, prevent crime and future victimizations, hold parolees accountable, and control public spending on corrections.

The following section addresses policies to (1) define success as reduced recidivism and measure performance; (2) tailor conditions of supervision; (3) focus resources on moderate and high-risk parolees; (4) front-load supervision resources; (5) implement earned discharge; (6) implement place-based supervision; and (7) engage partners to expand intervention capacities.

**SIDEBAR 4.** It is important to note that any parole supervision agency considering the model presented in this report must examine its basic mission to determine whether it is compatible with the aims of these strategies. Success under this approach is clearly focused on the reduction of recidivism by parolees through the application of behavior change strategies and tactics. Thus, a threshold question must be asked: “Is our agency committed to helping offenders change their behavior?” An affirmative answer would be required before proceeding.

## 1. Define Success as Recidivism Reduction and Measure Performance

Parole agencies—like all agencies—should be clear about their mission, define criteria for success and set benchmarks for performance. While most parole practitioners would agree that public safety is, and always has been, an important goal of their agencies, the typical strategies employed to accomplish that goal have focused more in the recent past on monitoring, surveillance, and external controls. There is now an emerging consensus that parole should adopt risk reduction and behavior change strategies in order to accomplish its public safety mission (Burke et al., 2007; Solomon, 2006; Burrell, 2005; Kleiman, 2005; Reinventing Probation Council, 2000; Burke and Tonry, 2006). The difference here is the clarity and transparency of public safety mission; accountability for meeting public safety goals, and the strategies and tactics used to accomplish the mission. As noted above, this paper

embraces offender behavior change as its principle strategy, in contrast to the surveillance and enforcement model so prevalent in the field.

Defining success as reduced recidivism and improved reintegration outcomes among the parolee caseload will drive agencies to change their practices in a way that will hold parolees accountable and reduce future victimization. As policymakers and parole leaders seek to rethink and reposition parole, it is critical that they consider reducing recidivism and improving reentry outcomes as their top objectives and measure their performance against these standards.

“Community corrections leaders need objective, real-time data on key outcomes to effectively manage their organizations and the offenders under their jurisdiction, and to demonstrate they are delivering results and creating public value.”

~ BURRELL AND GELB (2007, 4)

For example, a group of bold police chiefs in the 1990s challenged the conventional wisdom that the police could not affect crime rates, set specific crime-reduction goals, and achieved unprecedented public safety successes. Leaders in the probation field have similarly urged their colleagues to assume ownership of recidivism and acknowledge that traditional probation supervision strategies often fail to manage the risk that probationers present to the community. The Reinventing Probation Council argued that “probation leaders can no longer wait for major shifts or increases in funding or resources to flow their way. They must be willing to take the first steps on their own, with or without new support, and they must demonstrate positive results NOW, under present conditions and in the environments in which they labor daily” (2000, 2).



Along these lines, parole agencies should set goals to reduce reoffending by specific amounts. In the probation context, Beto, Corbett, and Dilulio (2000) suggested establishing a goal that no more than 10 percent of all probationers commit a new crime within three years. Probation leaders have argued that setting such goals is a bold but necessary step to bring integrity to the field (Reinventing Probation Council 2000). Expecting 90 percent of parolees to remain crime-free may not be realistic in the most optimistic context, given that more than half of parolees are now arrested at least once within two years of release (Solomon, Kachnowski, and Bhati 2005). However, defining success with specific targets for reduced reoffending would be a sea change for the field (Solomon 2006). It could both raise parole's credibility with the public and signal to line staff that their actions, attitudes, and approaches could play a pivotal role in controlling crime.

Whereas most supervision agencies collect some data to reflect their performance, only a few set explicit goals and benchmarks for public safety outcomes, such as rearrest, or other important outcomes, such as drug use or employment. Further, most do not track information frequently to manage and improve practice on an ongoing basis (Burrell and Gelb 2007). Failing to define success as recidivism reduction will result in a continued emphasis on surveillance or other supervision "outputs," such as the number of parole officer–parolee contacts, at the expense of the outcome measures that matter most. As agencies begin to track their progress toward reduced recidivism they will be better prepared to understand their successes and failures and identify ways to improve operations while building accountability, transparency, and integrity for parole staff, clients, and the public (Burrell and Gelb 2007).

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

In **Kansas**, the state legislature created the **Kansas Sentencing Commission** and charged it with measuring and reporting the state's success at reducing recidivism. As part of its comprehensive strategy to reduce recidivism and limit state spending on corrections, the Kansas Department of Corrections set a goal of reducing parole and probation revocations by 50 percent. Required to report on the state's collective efforts toward this goal, the Sentencing Commission uses performance evaluations to measure outcomes and demand accountability. Any savings from lower-than-projected correctional populations that result from the Department of Corrections efforts to divert technical violators is reinvested at the community level.

For more information, see the Council of State Governments' Justice Reinvestment brief on Kansas at <http://www.csgeast.org/pdfs/justicereinvest/KS.onepager.FINAL.pdf>.

**The New York City Department of Probation's STARS** (Statistical Tracking, Analysis and Reporting System) uses up-to-the-minute data to measure performance, ensure accountability,

*Continued*

### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD (*Continued*)

and improve management techniques. The STARS program involves ongoing evaluation of agency performance and “live audits” that provide information on arrests and other critical areas. This information is shared with probation managers and reviewed in monthly meetings. Accurate and timely intelligence is followed by rapid deployment of resources, evidence-based tactics and interventions, and relentless follow-up. Through these initiatives, the Department of Probation has kept recidivism among probationers remarkably low; the monthly average probationer rearrest rate is 2.5 percent, and probationers now account for only 2 percent of the city’s arrests.

For more information, see Burrell and Gelb (2007) at <http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedfiles/You%20Get%20What%20You%20Measure.pdf>.

**The Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles** has created a focused approach to offender management that identifies specific targets for individuals and tracks each parolee’s progress in an automated system. Measurements for individual progress, such as the number of parolees in treatment programs or employed, are organized by parole agent and by district office. Agents and districts are compared on a regular basis to identify potential problems or to help identify areas in need of attention. Because agents routinely see these measurements, they are able to appreciate the importance of these issues to the organization. According to the Board, “Supplemented by the electronic case management system and groundbreaking methods of analyzing and reviewing performance outputs on a real-time basis, the Board has implemented management practices which serve to reinforce the causal linkage between effective supervision strategies and parole success with statewide rankings, charts and rolling summaries of performance at all levels of the Field Division.”

For more information, see the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles web site at <http://www.pap.state.ga.us/opencms/opencms/> or see Meredith and Prevost (2009).

## 2. Tailor Conditions of Supervision

In virtually all states, paroling authorities retain the role of setting conditions of release. Current practice relies heavily on standard conditions (such as abstaining from alcohol and drugs, maintaining employment and stable residence, obeying all laws, and paying restitution), which are sometimes augmented by special conditions to correspond with the characteristics of the parolee and the case. The result is often a long list of rules that do not differentiate the importance of various conditions over others. Taken together, these conditions may be unrealistic and difficult to meet for any individual, but they are especially difficult for those who are already struggling to hold a job, support their family, and stay sober. The research is clear that surveillance-oriented supervision based on a long and generic list of conditions without proper

attention to the parolee's criminogenic needs will not reduce recidivism (Aos et al. 2006; Cullen and Gendreau 2000; Lowenkamp and Latessa 2004; Petersilia 2003).

Many in the field agree that conditions of release should instead reflect what Carl Wicklund, executive director of the American Probation and Parole Association, refers to as the "three R's" of supervision conditions: They should be *realistic*—few in number and attainable; *relevant*—tailored to individual risks and needs; and *research-based*—supported by evidence that they will change behavior and result in improved public safety and reintegration outcomes (Wicklund 2005).

**Realistic.** When setting the conditions of supervision, parole agencies and paroling authorities should consider an average parolee's ability to satisfy every requirement imposed. Too often, parolees are saddled with an unreasonable number of conditions that, when combined, make it difficult to attend to other reintegration priorities, such as maintaining employment, becoming financially stable, accessing treatment, and satisfying restitution requirements. Behavioral research identifies that human beings are only able to handle two to three target goals at any given time, which is important in defining conditions. The special conditions should be set to those that most address the drivers of criminal behavior (Taxman, Shepardson, and Byrne 2004). Further, conditions should include only those rules that the parole authorities are prepared to consistently monitor and enforce—in other words, realistic for parole officers as well as parolees. If conditions are not clearly communicated and consistently enforced, the credibility of supervision is undermined and the deterrent impact will be minimal (Kleiman 2005).

**Relevant.** Supervision conditions should be individually tailored to the circumstances of each parolee, reflecting risk and need factors and prioritizing the highest-order risk and need factors. It is equally important to avoid assigning certain conditions to those who do not need them. In fact, a significant number of technical violations (e.g., failure to report to the parole officer or failure to attend treatment) could be reduced if parole agencies avoid imposing intensive supervision or extensive treatment on individuals who do not objectively appear to need this level of attention or intervention. "Relevant" risk and need factors will ideally be identified by a validated assessment tool (discussed later). Parole agencies should also take into account available resources and services in a parolee's community of return.

**Research-Based.** Supervision conditions should also incorporate principles of effective interventions that are proven to lead to positive behavior change. There is a body of research based on the "what works" research and evidence-based practices. Conditions should focus on interventions and rules that have the promise to reduce crime and promote successful outcomes. To the extent that conditions can focus attention and resources on the most powerful criminogenic factors (see sidebar 5), the likelihood of success will increase (Andrews and Bonta 2006). To have the greatest impact on individual behavior, parole officers must consider parolees' learning styles, culture, and temperament, and must clearly communicate conditions to parolees in a

#### EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

As part of a larger effort to implement the principles of evidence-based practice, the **Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole** has recently established procedures designed to link conditions of supervision to levels of risk and types of criminogenic need. As the board reviews candidates for parole, information is provided on risk level and domains of criminogenic need identified through the board's validated risk and needs assessment protocol. Specific conditions of parole are then identified to respond to those areas of need and guide the supervision of the parolee.

For more information, see the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole at [http://www.pbpp.state.pa.us/pbppinfo/lib/pbppinfo/newsroom/2008/aca\\_acreditation\\_2008.pdf](http://www.pbpp.state.pa.us/pbppinfo/lib/pbppinfo/newsroom/2008/aca_acreditation_2008.pdf).

way that will enhance motivation (Ginsburg et al. 2002; Harper and Hardy 2000; Miller and Mount 2001; Miller and Rollnick 2002; Ryan and Deci 2000).

A one-size-fits-all approach to conditions also limits the role of parole officers and reduces their ability to develop and revise individualized case plans. Parole officers—and even agency supervisors—often lack the authority to alter supervision conditions to better reflect changes in an individual's risk or need level and progress in the case plan (Burke 1997; Burke et al. 2007). Paroling authorities should consider policies that allow supervision officers to modify certain conditions of release. Greater flexibility to reduce and enhance conditions at the agency or officer level can provide more direct consequences for parolee behavior. Knowing that the parole officer can make adjustments in requirements and conditions will provide incentives to the parolee to change behavior knowing that compliance with conditions will be reassessed regularly and that meaningful adjustments can be made.

### 3. Focus Resources on Moderate and High-Risk Parolees

There is broad consensus, supported by a solid research base, that staff and programming resources ought to be focused on populations at a moderate to high risk of reoffending because this population is more likely to benefit from treatment and supervision (Andrews 2006; Aos, Miller, and Drake 2006; Austin 2006; Burke 2004; Burke and Tonry 2006; Cullen and Gendreau 2000; Jacobson 2005; MacKenzie 2006; National Research Council 2007; Taxman 2002, 2006, 2007). As discussed later, a key aspect of identifying and effectively supervising this population is the use of validated risk and need assessment instruments to identify these parolees. Based on these assessments, interventions directed to individuals with higher levels of risk, and that address specific criminogenic needs, will result in better outcomes.

Accordingly, low-risk parolees warrant reduced supervision and, in some cases, only administrative oversight. Research has shown that treatment resources focused on low-risk parolees tend to produce little, if any, positive effect (Lowenkamp and Latessa 2004; Petersilia and Turner 1993). In fact, Lowenkamp and Latessa (2004) assert that involving low-risk offenders in extensive programming may actually worsen outcomes for this group. The available evidence and sound correctional practice strongly suggest a realignment of resources away from low-risk parolees and toward those with the greater needs or risk of recidivism. Focusing more attention on high-risk individuals

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and less attention on low-risk individuals can also help parole agencies manage case loads, allowing parole officers to devote valuable and limited case management time to those who warrant it most.

Importantly, more supervision by itself—even for high-risk parolees—will not ensure more successful outcomes (Andrews and Bonta 2006; Aos, Miller and Drake 2006; Grattet, Petersilia, and Lin 2008; MacKenzie 2000; Petersilia 2002; Sherman et al. 1997; Taxman et al. 2004; Petersilia and Turner 1993). Surveillance alone does not address the criminogenic factors and barriers to successful reentry, nor does it address the motivation of the parolee in a meaningful way. Indeed, for many years, supervision has been focused primarily on meeting “contact standards” that direct parole officers to maintain a certain frequency and type of contact with parolees (Petersilia 2002; Taxman 2002). Success has often been defined (or assumed) when parole officers meet their contact standards and paroling authorities return parolees to prison after detecting any significant noncompliance with conditions.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Passed in 1999, the **Offender Accountability Act** (OAA) affects how Washington State provides community supervision to adult felony offenders. In broad terms, the OAA directs the Washington State Department of Corrections to do two things:

1. Classify felony offenders according to their risk for future offending.
2. Deploy more staff and rehabilitative resources to higher-classified offenders and—because budgets are limited—spend correspondingly fewer dollars on lower-classified offenders.

For more information, see Aos, Miller, and Drake (2006) at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/06-01-1201.pdf>.

The **New York City Department of Probation** uses automated check-in kiosks for the city’s low-risk supervised population, a strategy that could be applied to low-risk parolees as well. The limited use of kiosks began in the 1990s, and by 2003 about 70 percent of all adult probationers were on kiosk supervision. After being trained on how to use the system, probationers assigned to kiosk supervision report to the kiosk and answer questions about their conditions (e.g., residence, updated contact information, employment, and new arrests). The kiosk system uses a biometric hand scanner that generates a receipt when used. A recent assessment of the city’s kiosk system found that it helps improve compliance with reporting conditions without sacrificing public safety. Moreover, kiosks allow the department to allocate more resources to those who pose the greatest risk to public safety—probationers who are identified as high-risk for recidivism. According to a 2007 assessment by the JFA Institute, arrest rates for both low-risk and high-risk probationers are down.

For more information, see Wilson, Naro, and Austin (2007) at [http://www.nyc.gov/html/prob/downloads/pdf/kiosk\\_report\\_2007.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/prob/downloads/pdf/kiosk_report_2007.pdf).

Given heightened expectations for the success of parolees in returning to the community without re-offending, parole agencies are developing innovative and more effective strategies for supervision on the basis of knowledge and principles emerging from empirical research. Techniques such as cognitive behavioral treatment are showing great promise in reducing the likelihood of parolee recidivism. The challenge is to reshape supervision to incorporate some of these techniques and concentrate their application on those identified by assessment as moderate and high-risk offenders.

It is important to recognize that conditions imposed by the paroling authority often determine which individuals will be placed in high-end, resource-intensive supervision programs (e.g., home detention or intensive supervision) and who will participate in high-end treatment programming (e.g., in-patient or long-term programming). All too often these decisions are made independent of a structured risk and need assessment or a clinical evaluation of treatment need. In many cases, high-risk parolees such as sex offenders, gang members, and individuals with a history of violence are explicitly excluded from programming. As a result, significant policy changes and decision-maker education may be necessary to improve practices in this area. The community corrections field is making a considerable effort to use valid and reliable assessment tools; train staff to interact with individuals to enhance motivation; and make appropriate treatment interventions available for high-risk and high-need parolees. In order to integrate these changes into parole supervision practices, the community corrections field must make a major and sustained organizational investment to redefine parole supervision—and the role of parole officers—as agents of change, rather than as purely enforcement officers.

## 4. Front-Load Supervision Resources

Research clearly identifies the first days, weeks, and months after release from prison as a particularly high-risk period (Binswanger et al. 2007; Grattet, Petersilia, and Lin 2008; Langan and Levin 2002; National Research Council 2007; Travis 2005). In one analysis, researchers assessed the probability of rearrests and violations during the first month out as nearly double that during the 15th month (Rosenfeld et al. 2005, as cited in National Research Council 2007). Not surprisingly, this period of increased recidivism corresponds with a period of risk in other areas as well. Parolees' substance abuse, mental health, employment, housing, and other service needs are especially high during this period (Binswanger et al. 2007). Supervision resources and strategies should be better aligned to match the risk of early recidivism and concentrate resources in the first few days and weeks after release. As recommended by the National Research Council (2007, 82), "parole authorities and administrators of both in-prison and post-release programs [should] redesign their activities and programs to provide major support to parolees and other releasees at the time of release."

Many would argue that the beginning of supervision is so critical to individual success that parole agencies should not wait for the individual to be released to the community to develop and implement a supervision plan (National Research Council 2007; Aos et al. 2006; Bogue et al. 2004; Burke 2004; Burke and Tonry 2006; Campbell 2008; Jacobson 2005; Petersilia 2003). Parole staff will ideally be involved in prerelease planning activities and help support the concentration of supervision interventions just after release. Early involvement by parole staff can contribute to success by helping the parolee understand the conditions of release and the expectations of the parole agency once release occurs. Jurisdictions can facilitate this process by transferring inmates to a facility closest to the city or town where they will return, as is done in Maryland, allowing parole agencies and community service providers to meet and evaluate inmates, and increasing opportunities for family members to reconnect before release.

In addition to the obvious benefit of providing resources at the time they are most needed, front-loading resources also helps identify the cases that warrant enhanced supervision over the longer term and those that do not. Parolees who do well and achieve their supervision goals will require less supervision and perhaps even shorter supervision periods in the following months, which would then help to offset any additional parole officer resources that may be needed up front (Jacobson 2005; Petersilia 2003). This not only reduces officer workloads, it reduces long-term costs for the agency. By focusing on those parolees who are most likely to commit new crimes, parole agencies will reduce the number of technical violators who are sent back to prison thus freeing up precious correctional resources and saving taxpayer dollars.

Whether before release or during the first weeks out, front-loading supervision will not make an impact if it consists of increasing contacts without concomitant supports. Some jurisdictions place many newly released offenders on intensive supervision, which often means more surveillance and not increased services and assistance. As discussed, simply watching parolees more closely in the first month will likely surface more violations without improving behavior or preventing crime. In addition, more frequent contact with parole, in the absence of support services, may itself constitute a barrier to successful reentry, as it may take time away from activities such as job or housing searches. Rather, in the first few weeks and months after release, supervision should provide a “bridge” of interventions and case management strategies targeting individual-level risk and need.

Several states, such as Michigan, Georgia, and Ohio, are beginning to align their supervision resources to support the individual just after release. These states begin “in-reach” activities as individuals near the end of their incarceration so they can build

“Parole authorities and administrators of both in-prison and post-release programs [should] redesign their activities and programs to provide major support to parolees and other releasees at the time of release.”

~ NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (2007, 82)

### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

In **Oregon** and **Michigan**, field staff who will be involved in post-release supervision either go to the facility before release and meet with the incarcerated individuals who will be on their caseload, or communicate with them and an institutional case manager by phone and e-mail. The parole officers and case managers make efforts to determine appropriate housing, ensure that basic needs such as identification and medication are addressed, and ensure that the individual is clear about expectations before leaving the institution. In Oregon, the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice reports that the rate of parolee failure to report for supervision upon release has been reduced significantly by this effort to develop a relationship with the individual before release.

For more information, see the Transition from Prison to Community state profiles on Oregon and Michigan at <http://www.nicic.org/TPCStateProfiles>.

relationships with parole officers and connect with employment resources, community services, and treatment providers before they are released. In conjunction with a wide array of reentry stakeholders, these states are making the transition from prison to community easier for both the parolee and the parole agency.

## 5. Implement Earned Discharge

Providing incentives for meeting case-specific goals of supervision is a powerful tool to enhance individual motivation and promote positive behavior change (Andrews 2006; Andrews and Bonta 2004; Burke 2004; Cullen and Gendreau 2000; National Research Council 2007; Petersilia 2004; Taxman, Soule, and Gelb 1999). Many experts recommend a system of earned discharge as the ultimate incentive whereby certain lower-risk parolees can earn their way off supervision early by adhering to specific goals and strict guidelines (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation 2007; Jacobson 2005; Petersilia 2003, 2007; Travis 2005). An opportunity to reduce a term of supervision could be a powerful incentive for parolees to participate in appropriate programs, obtain and retain a job, stay sober or in treatment once they are back in the community, and work to repair the damage resulting from their criminal behavior.

Austin et al. (2007), Jacobson (2005), and Petersilia (2003) argue that many parolees could be moved to an “administrative” caseload or complete supervision altogether after about one year of adhering to goal-driven supervision conditions. Shortening the period of supervision builds on the research of Richard Rosenfeld and others who have found that recidivism rates are highest in the first year of release before stabilizing in the second and third year (National Research Council 2007). Front-loading supervision



addresses the period of highest risk, and the possibility of reducing the supervision term through earned discharge should enhance offender motivation to comply with conditions and reform their behavior. Additionally, there is a cost-saving advantage to goal-driven supervision whereby front-loading resources in the first year when violations are more likely to occur and reducing or eliminating supervision thereafter results in fewer resources spent on simply trying to catch technical violators (Jacobson 2005).

A system of earned discharge stands in sharp contrast to current practice in which parolees generally “successfully” complete their parole term based on the amount of time spent under parole supervision, not on how well they have done since leaving prison. Under the typical system, parolees have no opportunity to reduce the amount of time they are subject to community supervision, as the parole period is tied to the length of the sentence imposed by the court. Often, the paroling authority and the parole supervision agency lack authority to shorten the length of the original sentence. However, several states, including Arizona and California, are creating legislation that would enable parole entities or courts to terminate parole early for good behavior and to focus extra resources on those who pose the biggest risk to public safety.

“We must revise the current ‘contract’ between the parole officer and the offender so that it reflects research evidence on how to increase motivation and promote behavioral change in resistant clients. At the center of the revised contract must be a system of ‘earned discharge’ or accelerated release, whereby parolees have the ability to reduce the total length of their parole term by demonstrating arrest-free behavior and self-sufficiency.”

~ PETERSILIA (2007, 808)

#### EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

Earned discharge is being used in **Nevada**, where lawmakers passed a bill authorizing the Department of Corrections to “award greater amounts of credit against the sentences of offenders under certain circumstances” (Nevada Assembly Bill No. 510). The bill, which was made retroactive, allows parole agencies to reduce parolees’ term of supervision if they meet certain education and treatment conditions, such as the following (Nevada Assembly Bill No. 510):

1. Demonstrating a willingness and ability to establish a position of employment in the community.
2. Demonstrating a willingness and ability to enroll in a program for education or rehabilitation.
3. Demonstrating a willingness to pay for all or part of the costs of his confinement and to meet any existing obligation for restitution to any victim of his crime.

For more information, see Nevada Assembly Bill No. 510 at [http://www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/Bills/AB/AB510\\_EN.pdf](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/Bills/AB/AB510_EN.pdf).

## 6. Implement Place-Based Supervision

It is well known that parolees are concentrated in a relatively small number of often disadvantaged neighborhoods in each state (La Vigne, Cowan, and Brazzell 2006; Lynch and Sabol 2001; Watson et al. 2004). Like community policing strategies that have transformed the operations of many police departments, place-based parole (also known as community-based or neighborhood-based parole) takes officers out of their offices and the confinement of 9-to-5 weekday work hours and into the neighborhoods where their parolees live and work.

In a system of place-based supervision, parole officers have geographically based caseloads and may have satellite offices physically located in the communities where high concentrations of parolees reside—places where risks are presumably higher. By supervising parolees where they live, fostering relationships with those who see them frequently and know them best, and becoming familiar with local resources and

high-risk areas, parole officers could play a substantial role in making communities safer while improving outcomes for the parolee (Petersilia 1998, 2002, 2003; Reentry Policy Council 2005; Solomon 2006; Taxman 2006).

Organizing caseloads by neighborhood (in urban settings) efficiently allocates scarce resources and eliminates costly and time-consuming travel from one part of a city to another. No longer expected to make long trips out of their neighborhood to visit their parole officer, parolees can focus more energy on finding a job, meeting treatment needs, and reconciling with their families. As a member of the community network, neighborhood-based parole officers can find increased opportunities for collaboration, open lines of communication, and gain greater trust from the parolee, their families, and other important stakeholders. Even in suburban and rural areas, geographically-based caseload assignment is more efficient and effective.

Place-based supervision has a strong theoretical grounding. Many experts agree that the greatest power to shape offender behavior lies not with the individual officer, but in the

network of natural and informal supports in one's neighborhood (e.g., families, neighbors, schools, churches, and labor markets) (Bogue et al. 2004; Cadora 2002; Dickey and Smith 1998; Reentry Policy Council 2005; Taxman 2002; Reinventing Probation Council 2000). According to the Reentry Policy Council, it is this natural network that "can support each individual's successful readjustment, fail to support such adjustment, or even create problems that hinder successful reintegration" (2005, 363). Interventions shown to be successful with at-risk populations are those that recruit and engage family members, spouses, and other supportive individuals involved in the lives of the intervention

"Potential partners such as community political leaders, faith-based leaders, and extended family members, make up a local culture that can support each individual's successful readjustment, fail to support such adjustment, or even create problems that hinder successful reintegration."

~ REENTRY POLICY COUNCIL (2005, 363)

population (Bogue et al. 2004). Furthermore, a close relationship with the community enhances an agency's authority and legitimacy to enforce conditions of supervision (Dickey and Smith 1998). When implemented in conjunction with individualized case plans, which emphasize treatment and link incentives to positive behavior, place-based supervision further enhances the parole officer–parolee relationship.

While far from the norm, a few supervision agencies use place-based supervision, particularly in ways that involve partnering with other justice system agencies, such as police officers, to work together in the same neighborhoods.

### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

In 2003, the **Arizona Department of Corrections** started developing new ways to improve community safety and reduce the number of released prisoners who end up back behind bars. In 2004, the DOC implemented "Getting Ready: Keeping Arizona Communities Safe." One result of the Arizona plan is the **Legacy Project**, a pilot program that concentrates parole efforts in a particularly high-impact zip code in Phoenix where officers work to address underlying problems associated with criminal behavior. As part of this larger effort to supervise parolees more effectively and reduce the use of prison as a response to violations, parole officers work in the neighborhoods where parolees live, engaging family and community support systems and partnering with social workers and service providers to find solutions to the challenges parolees face in the community. The state has recently expanded its efforts to other high-impact zip codes and hopes to partner with Arizona State University to evaluate the program's success.

For more information, see an Arizona Central article on the Legacy Project at <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2008/06/15/20080615crimezip0615.html>.

As part of its **Proactive Community Supervision (PCS)** model, **Maryland** employs place-based supervision in four areas of the state. Parole agents are assigned geographically based caseloads; placed in the neighborhoods where parolees live and work; and given the resources they need, such as laptops, to effectively work in the community, increase public safety, hold parolees accountable, and help them successfully make the transition from prison to the community. To achieve these objectives, supervision caseloads are reduced and parole agents undergo training on how to motivate parolees, identify critical risk factors, and create practical supervision plans. Working directly with parolees and their families, parole agents are better able to match parolees with appropriate treatment providers, help them find a job, and meet their parole requirements. In turn, parolees are less likely to commit a new crime, fewer people are sent back to prison for technical violations, and the community as a whole benefits. Research indicates that parolees under PCS supervision have arrest rates 31 percent lower than parolees under traditional parole supervision as well a 9-percentage-point difference in warrants for violation of parole (Taxman 2007).

For more information, see the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services web site at <http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/rehabsevs/dpp/pcs.shtml> or Taxman (2007) at [http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/publications/pdfs/dpp\\_corrections\\_today.pdf](http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/publications/pdfs/dpp_corrections_today.pdf).

## 7. Engage Partners to Expand Intervention Capacities

Given the substantial treatment, health, housing, education, and employment needs of the parole population, it is essential for parole supervision agencies to partner with other government and private agencies, including community health care providers, housing authorities, substance-abuse counselors, mental health service providers, workforce development boards, faith-based organizations, and other relevant groups. These agencies increasingly recognize aspects of the reentry problem as their own and have specialized expertise to be effective.

These collaborations are natural given the considerable overlap between parolees and the population receiving health and other human services (Cadora 2002; Fisher, White, and Jacobs 2007). Greater coordination between organizations will reduce duplicative efforts and will allow parole agencies—as well as those community-based organizations that serve formerly incarcerated people—to spend less time tracking and placing people in programs and more time building relationships, engaging informal networks, and affecting behavior change. Most important, coordination across agencies increases the chances that parolees are receiving the services they need.

Parole agencies must recognize and capitalize on the role that community organizations play in the reintegration process. These collaborative relationships may best take root at the policy level, where organizations create formal and informal partnerships to address the various reentry challenges in complementary ways, building on each organization's strengths and capacities. Opportunities for collaborations can also

occur at the neighborhood level, and partnerships are a crucial part of any place-based supervision strategy. Many individual parole officers have developed robust networks of partners in their supervision, including employers, service providers, and law enforcement officers. Parole agencies would benefit from translating these relationships upward from the officer level so that officers and parolees throughout the agency can benefit from them.

The National Institute of Corrections' Transition from Prison to the Community (TPC) initiative rests, in large part, upon the principle that transition and reentry are issues that belong not just to parole, corrections, or criminal justice agencies, but to a wide range of stakeholders (Carter et al. 2007). As such, TPC has begun its work in all eight participating states with state-level policy teams that involve the parole supervision agency and a wide range of public and private stakeholders with an impact on the work of parole supervision. TPC has contributed to a growing realization

“Supervision narrowly conceived as monitoring of an individual’s criminal behavior, without parallel efforts to plan for housing, treatment, health care, and other aspects of re-entry, is unlikely to promote a person’s safe and successful return to the community”

~ REENTRY POLICY COUNCIL (2005, 345)

that parole supervision agencies must collaborate with other stakeholders at the policy and case management levels to redesign and implement effective approaches to supervision that will enhance successful completion of parole supervision and improve reentry outcomes.

Despite limited research on collaborative strategies in parole supervision, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that collaboration increases stakeholder involvement, establishes sustainable support networks within the community, and improves outcomes (Burke et al. 2007). Current practices in parole supervision do not go far enough in engaging community and other government partners. As the field moves toward more comprehensive models of supervision, it will become increasingly necessary for parole agencies to collaborate with other organizations and to enhance the impact of these partnerships. Coordination will be especially important in the first few days and weeks after release and the most successful models may involve community partners before release. These changes will require strong leadership to facilitate organizational change and encourage collaboratively focused staff.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

To promote greater citizen and community involvement in the parole process, the **Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole** created Citizens Advisory Committees to assist and consult with parole agents in the state. These committees, consisting of social workers, law enforcement, business people, faith organizations, advocates, students, and parole staff, provide recommendations, reports, and input on parole supervision practices, policies, and strategies. These collaborations serve to develop good communications between the board and the public; employment opportunities for ex-offenders; and contracts with community service agencies to provide needed services to ex-offenders.

For more information, see the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole at <http://www.pbpp.state.pa.us/pbppinfo/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=154087>.

The **Reentry Partnership Housing** effort in **Georgia** was established between the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, the Georgia Department of Corrections, the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and numerous community faith-based partners. Working together, these organizations found ways to create housing solutions for inmates who were eligible for parole release, but who did not have an appropriate housing plan and thus remained incarcerated. Through the program, reentry housing partners provide food and shelter for parolees who otherwise have no housing options. The stated goal of the program is to provide short-term assistance, provide a stabilizing reentry process, and enhance the parolees' ability to remain crime-free after release.

For more information, see the Georgia Reentry Partnership Housing effort at <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/housing/specialneeds/programs/rph.asp>.

Collaborative strategies are not yet “business as usual,” but there is a growing number of states and local jurisdictions forming reentry committees such as the TPC examples noted above. Another example is the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI), implemented in all states. The vast majority of SVORI collaborations involve parole supervision agencies, which are widely perceived by SVORI project directors as substantial contributors to SVORI programs (an evaluation of this approach is under way) (Visher, Lindquist, and Brumbaugh 2007). Other collaborative ventures, like the Reentry Partnership Housing effort in Georgia, discussed below, focus more squarely on parole.



## Individual-Level Supervision Strategies

In this section, we focus on supervision strategies at the case management level, involving the parole officer and the parolee. These strategies are designed to enhance the role that parole officers can play in improving individual outcomes. They require a commitment to fostering a strong interpersonal relationship between the parole officer and the parolee, a relationship that is central to positive behavior change and parolee accountability. To improve supervision outcomes, parole officers should:

8. Assess criminogenic risk and need factors;
9. Develop and implement supervision case plans that balance surveillance and treatment;
10. Involve parolees to enhance their engagement in assessment, case planning, and supervision;
11. Engage informal social controls to facilitate community reintegration;
12. Incorporate incentives and rewards into the supervision process; and
13. Employ graduated problem-solving responses to violations of parole conditions in a swift and certain manner.

These strategies are built upon and made possible by the organizational-level strategies described above. They represent a shift in organizational culture toward systems that emphasize behavioral change, treatment, and collaboration. The strategies outlined below address the structures and dynamics of the officer–parolee relationship and require agency-level leadership, support, training, and tools. As such, they will be most effective in agencies committed to comprehensive reform.

## 8. Assess Criminogenic Risk and Need Factors

There is broad agreement among experts and strong evidence from the research literature that parolees—as with other offender populations—should be assessed to determine criminogenic risk and need factors and determine supervision levels so that appropriate interventions can be delivered (Aos et al. 2006; Andrews 2006, 2008; Bogue et al. 2004; Cullen and Gendreau 2000; Petersilia 2004).

Research has shown that assessment instruments (reliable, validated, and normed for a specific population) are a better predictor of an offender’s risk and criminogenic need factors than individual professional judgment. Such instruments also increase the chances that individuals will be matched with the appropriate type of treatment and services (Andrews et al. 1990; Andrews and Bonta 2004). To effectively match individuals to interventions, assessments must be responsive to cultural and gender-specific needs as well as individual learning styles and temperament (Cullen and Gendreau 2000; Gordon 1970; Guerra 1995; Miller and Rollnick 2002; Williams et al. 1995). Interventions should focus on those dynamic criminogenic factors that can be changed, such as employment or drug use (see sidebar 5). This focus on the dynamic nature of assessments requires that parolees be reassessed at regular intervals to determine the need for adjusting interventions.

Assessments are important for informing behavioral change interventions, but they also guide efficient use of resources.

Standardized assessments differentiate among risk levels and identify the higher-risk parolees and problems, which can inform parole agencies about how to use supervi-

“The development of risk assessment techniques that identify both level of risk and level of criminogenic needs is an important step toward ensuring that effective interventions are appropriately targeted to generate maximum recidivism reduction.”

~ BURKE (2008, 39)

### SIDEBAR 5. WHAT ARE CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS?

Upon reentering the community, ex-offenders have a variety of treatment and behavioral needs. Many of these needs are, in and of themselves, risk factors for future offending. Criminogenic needs are the dynamic risk factors most closely associated with criminal behavior. Using reliable assessment tools, parole agencies can identify and respond to offenders’ criminogenic needs and reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

Major criminogenic risk and need factors include (Andrews et al. 2006, 11):

- history of anti-social behavior,
- anti-social personality pattern,
- anti-social cognition,
- anti-social associates,
- family and/or marital,
- school and/or work,
- leisure and/or recreation,
- substance abuse



sion resources efficiently and effectively. Assessments can also identify those who are returning to a job, stable living arrangements, and intact supports and thus have little need for intervention.

Strength-based assessments, which identify the positive attributes that parolees bring to bear, are also an important piece of the assessment process. Strength-based approaches to assessment and supervision balance an individual's risks with existing strengths, abilities, and capacities. Proponents of strength-based practice argue that it provides more opportunities to enhance intrinsic motivation to stay out of the justice system by taking advantage of and building on positive individual qualities (Clark 2006; Clark et al. 2006; Maruna and LeBel 2003).

Agencies should work closely with technical experts to put in place valid and reliable risk and need assessment tools that will yield consistent results. Agencies can develop and validate their own assessment instruments on their own population, or they can identify existing instruments that have been developed and validated elsewhere. Such instruments should be validated locally to ensure that the instrument is accurate for the agency's population. Whether adopting an existing instrument or developing one, it is important to conduct analysis and training to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment instruments and their proper use by staff.

Parole agencies should recognize that parolees may have been assessed while they were incarcerated (with mental health, educational, and substance abuse assessments as well as other, more general, risk and need assessments). This information can aid agencies in the development of appropriate supervision plans. In current practice, however, information is not often shared across agencies or divisions because of policies, confidentiality rules, or other reasons. Further, departments of correction and parole agencies may use different tools to measure the same areas, resulting in potentially confusing or inconsistent information. Assessment information should be shared between institutional and supervision personnel, and where different tools are used, agencies should either consider the value of a single tool or train parole staff to understand and appropriately use the information they receive.

Many parole agencies employ their own validated assessment tools, but these tools often focus primarily or solely on risk and are used to determine supervision level alone and not to assess treatment needs. The most current and comprehensive assessment tools, known as *fourth generation* (Andrews, Bonta, and Wormith 2006) assess both risk and need factors and link the assessments to the supervision case plan. Further, few agencies incorporate into their supervision plans the assessments from departments of corrections, especially when the parole supervision agency and the department of corrections are separate entities. As discussed in the section on front-loading resources, if parole agencies can begin to work with parolees while they are incarcerated, the agencies will be better positioned to utilize and build on assessments already conducted in the institution. By using the same assessment tool before and after release, states are better equipped to create seamless transition plans and put parole agencies and parolees in a position to succeed.

### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Several of the **Transition from Prison to Community** (TPC) sites have successfully incorporated the use of assessment tools into their supervision plans and coordinate their assessments with the department of corrections, often using a single assessment tool for institutional decisions and supervision in the community. Both **Michigan** and **Georgia** use the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions (COMPAS) tool for assessing risk and criminogenic need, whereas other states, such as **Oregon** and **North Dakota**, utilize the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LS-CMI) tool. The new approach to case management adopted by the North Dakota Department of Corrections directs staff to identify the three highest-scoring domains of criminogenic need and then to craft a case plan that specifically addresses those needs. In fact, participating TPC sites are all using, developing, or implementing assessment protocols to be used during both incarceration and post-release supervision. These systems are designed to accurately assess ongoing risk and need factors, determine the appropriate level of supervision in the community, and develop effective interventions that will have the greatest effect on recidivism rates.

For more information, see Burke (2008) at <http://nicic.gov/Library/022669>.

## 9. Develop and Implement Supervision Case Plans that Balance Surveillance and Treatment

“It is the treatment—not the intensive monitoring—that results in recidivism reduction.”

~ AOS, MILLER, AND DRAKE (2006, 6)

Each parolee should have a supervision case plan that drives individual goals, conditions, and activities while under supervision. To be effective, supervision plans should reflect treatment priorities as well as surveillance and enforcement. The research clearly shows that a combination of surveillance and treatment is more effective at reducing recidivism than surveillance alone (Aos, Miller, and Drake 2006; MacKenzie 2006; National Research Council 2007; Petersilia 2003; Sherman et al. 1997; Taxman 2007). Certain treatment programs, such as

cognitive-behavioral interventions, community-based drug treatment, and education and job assistance programs, have been proven to contribute to lower crime rates and should be incorporated into a parolee’s supervision plan (Aos, Miller, and Drake 2006).

The supervision case plan should build on valid risk and need assessments, strengths-based assessments, and parolee input as well as the input of other involved stakeholders. Interventions outlined in the supervision plan should also be sensitive to issues of culture, motivation, temperament, and learning style (Gordon 1970; Guerra 1995; Miller and Rollnick 2002; Williams et al. 1995). Supervision case plans are an important tool to implement these principles of targeting by risk, need, and responsivity. Case plans for low-risk offenders might be very basic, involving minimal required treatment

and conditions, encouraging the involvement of informal networks of support in the community—those that any citizen might draw upon, and that require few supervision agency resources. On the other hand, case plans for moderate and high-risk and high-needs offenders will be more explicitly and fully drawn to address criminogenic factors with specific strategies combining appropriate intensity of supervision with treatment interventions designed to reduce risk.

The most effective release and supervision plans are developed collaboratively with input from corrections, law enforcement, victims, family members, and community-based service and advocacy organizations (Burke 2004; Burke and Tonry 2006; Burrell 2005; Petersilia 2002; Reentry Policy Council 2005; Taxman 2007; Taxman, Shepardson, and Byrne 2004; Travis 2005). These organizations are a critical source of support for parolees, and involving them in the development of release and supervision plans can only enhance the likelihood of successful reintegration. Further, parole officers will be in a better position to build positive and sustainable relationships with parolees and their families, employers, and treatment providers. Ideally, the plan would be developed while the individual is incarcerated and would be updated on the basis of progress on goals, the conditions imposed by the paroling authority, and other new developments after release. The TPC initiative promotes the use of a single, dynamic Transition Accountability Plan (TAP) that is developed upon admission to prison, updated during incarceration, and passed on to supervision staff to use, reassess, and update during community supervision. The TAP outlines treatment and training interventions, activities and goals, and the responsibilities of correctional staff, service providers, and the parolee.

As discussed in other sections, it is important for parolees to be engaged in the assessment process, the development of their supervision case plans, and the process of change. Every effort should be made to enhance individual motivation and encourage positive performance. The supervision plan will build on and incorporate conditions that are ideally few in number and meaningfully tied to individual risk and need factors and desired outcomes. The need to work on accomplishing case plan objectives and to comply with the conditions of supervision—and the consequences for failing to do so—must be explicitly communicated if they are to affect offender behavior. For a motivating or deterrent effect to be possible, parolees must understand the ground rules and expect follow-up and enforcement (Dowden and Andrews 1999; Kleiman 2005; Solomon 2006; Taxman, Shepardson, and Byrne 2004). Additionally, parole officers may want to establish interim goals that are realistic for specific individuals' situations. Research suggests that individuals are more likely to work toward a goal if they believe it is possible to achieve the goal (Duncan, Miller, and Sparks 2004). As such, the successful implementation of supervision case plans depends on the parole officer–parolee relationship.

Current parole practice does not commonly include supervision case plans tailored to address an individual's assessed risk factors and treatment needs. More often, parole officers supervise parolees based on pre-set conditions laid out by the paroling authority that neither officers nor their supervisors have much authority to modify.

### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Recognizing that surveillance alone was ineffective at reducing recidivism, the **Oregon** state legislature has begun requiring that the Department of Corrections spend at least 75 percent of its state funding on evidence-based programs. The result of a 2005 law, the statute defines evidence-based practices as those that are based on scientific research, cost-effective, and “reduce the propensity for someone to commit a crime” (Oregon Senate Bill 267, 2003). In **Missouri**, supervision case plans routinely include monitoring activities, such as requirements for drug testing, but also prescribe treatment for substance abuse and mental health when those are identified as criminogenic needs.

For more information, see Oregon Senate Bill 267 at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/03orlaws/sess0600.dir/0669ses.htm> or Carter et al. (2007) at [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/pdf/SVORI\\_CEPP.pdf](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/pdf/SVORI_CEPP.pdf).

## 10. Involve Parolees to Enhance their Engagement in Assessment, Case Planning, and Supervision

Traditional parole practice is contact-driven, focusing on monitoring and surveillance and the quantity of office and field visits rather than the quality of these interactions. The evidence is clear that increasing the number of contacts does not produce better outcomes for parolees (Petersilia and Turner 1993; Taxman 2002, 2007). Evidence-based practices suggest that supervision should evolve from a contact-driven system to a behavioral management model where the parolee is an active participant in developing the supervision and treatment plan (Burke 2004; Taxman 2006; Taxman, Shepardson, and Byrne 2004). In a behavioral management approach, the routine interaction between parole officers and parolees is reframed as an intervention in itself, one in which effective communication is central (Burrell 2008; Taxman 2002, 2007;). With the techniques of motivational interviewing and positive reinforcement, parole officers can enhance engagement by clearly communicating conditions of supervision, reviewing assessment information and developing case plans with parolees, working with parolees to update and modify goals and supervision case plans as appropriate, and explaining the reasoning behind such adjustments.

Recent data from the Urban Institute’s *Returning Home* study have shown that the majority of parolees have remarkably positive attitudes toward their parole officers. Most parolees report that their officer is helpful, trustworthy, professional, and treats them with respect (La Vigne, Visher, and Castro 2004; Yahner, Visher, and Solomon 2008). In fact, parolees have high expectations about the ways their parole officer can

help with their transition. Although such expectations are often unmet, these findings highlight the importance of officer–parolee interactions and the critical role the supervision process could play in facilitating positive behavior change. In fact, a recent parole study by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections found that successful parolees were substantially more likely than violators to indicate having a positive relationship with their parole officer (Bucklen 2006).

A number of parole agencies employ practices that focus on more-meaningful measures that engage parolees in their supervision process. For example, motivational interviewing is a technique that many parole agencies are exploring, and parole officers are receiving increased training in this area. A broader behavioral management approach has been implemented and evaluated in Maryland, and findings suggest that such an approach can reduce the likelihood of new crimes and issuance of warrants that result from technical violations (Taxman 2007).

#### EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

The state of Maryland instituted their **Proactive Community Supervision (PCS)** program to increase parolee engagement, sustain meaningful behavior change and help the parolee become a successful, law-abiding citizen. Employing behavioral management strategies, the PCS model stresses the parolee–parole officer relationship and goal-centered interactions. The model emphasizes engaging the parolee in the change process and uses supervision and treatment interventions to address criminogenic factors, involve informal networks, and facilitate pro-social activities such as job training, counseling, and education programs. According to Faye Taxman, who collaborated with the Division of Parole and Probation on the design and evaluated the PCS model, “all of this is what the reentry movement is trying to accomplish—identifying a responsive model to engage the offender in the change process. This model of supervision does that, and it provides a framework that serves to facilitate offender change” (Taxman 2007, 101).

For more information, see Taxman (2007) at [http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/publications/pdfs/dpp\\_corrections\\_today.pdf](http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/publicinfo/publications/pdfs/dpp_corrections_today.pdf).

## 11. Engage Informal Social Controls to Facilitate Community Reintegration

Interactions with their parole officer comprise only a small fraction of parolees’ time, even under the more intensive supervision regimes. The vast majority of a parolee’s time is spent with family, friends, employers, or alone—just like the rest of us. En-

gaging a parolee's natural web of supports is a practical and cost-effective way to complement the role of the parole officer (Family Justice Institute 2006; Taxman et al. 2004). With proper support, even fragile informal networks can provide crucial resources, such as housing, crisis intervention, reinforcement for positive behavior, and a source of feedback for officers as they make decisions about supervision interventions. Burke and Tonry (2006) argue that it is important to involve pro-social networks at every stage of the supervision process to improve outcomes for the individual and the community and enhance the parole officer's capacity as a change agent.

"Understanding the multiple players in a supervisee's environment gives probation and parole officers a better sense of how to draw on family strengths to encourage self-sufficiency and prevent relapse."

~ FAMILY JUSTICE (2006, 5)

Sociologists recognize that these relationships are typically more effective than formal controls in promoting positive change among individuals (Dickey and Smith 1998; National Research Council 2007; Sampson and Laub 2003; Taxman 2002). Research also shows the importance of the institution of marriage and employment in desistance from crime (National Research Council 2007; Sampson and Laub 2003). In fact, recently released prisoners overwhelmingly cite family ties as the most influential factor in their staying out of prison (La Vigne, Visher, and Castro 2004; Visher and Courtney 2007). These findings suggest that parole officers should not focus on parolees as solitary individuals upon whom to impose interventions and conditions of supervision, but as persons who belong to and interact within important social relationships. Parole has the potential to bring parolees into natural prosocial systems and relationships

existing in the immediate worlds they live in: families, neighborhoods, friendships, and other civic, community, and faith-based ties.

Effectively engaging informal social controls will require parole agencies to shift from the surveillance-heavy mentality of the contact-driven approach that currently characterizes much of the field. Parole officers must be encouraged to incorporate an individual's support networks into the supervision process and trained to recognize where they exist and how to engage them. Whereas most parole agencies do not systematically engage the support networks of parolees, notable exceptions exist. For example, "citizen circles" in Ohio encourage the involvement of individual stakeholders and various community members in developing plans and supervision activities for an offender. Many agencies are also adopting programs that incorporate the community in the reentry process; some of these efforts include "community guardians" to assist in transition to the community and employment, education, and treatment retention efforts, and to help the parolee build a noncriminal network of peers (Taxman 2006).

**EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD**

**Ohio's Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC)** has incorporated the use of "**Citizen Circles**" to encourage the involvement of parolee's families, individual stakeholders, and various community members in the supervision of parolees. Composed of concerned citizens, Citizen Circles help parolees reconcile with their families, stay away from drugs and alcohol, develop personal decision-making skills, find employment, and meet their treatment needs. According to the DRC, "Citizen Circles create partnerships that promote positive interaction and accountability for offenders upon release. Circle members address risks that contribute to criminal activity by taking ownership of the solution. It is an opportunity for citizens to communicate expectations for successful reentry and help offenders recognize the harm their behavior has caused others. Offenders are able to make amends and demonstrate their value and potential to the community."

For more information, see the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections at <http://www.drc.state.oh.us/web/citizen/citizencircle.htm>.

**La Bodega de la Familia**, a direct-service storefront operated by Family Justice on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in New York City, works in partnership with New York State Parole to improve supervision outcomes for parolees by involving families and communities as natural supports and resources. La Bodega provides family case management, 24-hour support for drug- or family-related emergencies, and walk-in and prevention services for all neighborhood residents. Family Justice provides training services on its family-focused methods to local, state, and federal probation and parole agencies, including the American Probation and Parole Association, the New Jersey State Parole Board, the New York State Parole Board and several state departments of corrections.

For more information, see Family Justice at <http://www.familyjustice.org>.

## 12. Incorporate Incentives and Rewards into the Supervision Process

Research indicates that positive reinforcements should be used four times as often as negative sanctions to enhance individual motivation toward positive behavior change and reduced recidivism (Bogue et al. 2004). Drawing attention to the gains an individual has made rather than focusing on lack of progress can promote positive responses. Examples of incentives and rewards include awarding certificates of achievement; reducing reporting requirements; allowing inmates to defer a monthly payment, appointment, or other requirement; eliminating conditions (such as home de-

"When learning new skills and making behavioral changes, human beings appear to respond better and maintain learned behaviors for longer periods of time, when approached with carrots rather than sticks."

~ BOGUE ET AL. (2004, 6)

tention or program participation); or asking the parolee to be a mentor to other offenders.

As with responses to violations discussed below, responses to positive behavior should also be swift and certain to have the greatest impact on behavior change (Petersilia 2007; Taxman et al. 2004). This process is facilitated through the parole officer–parolee relationship and depends on the ability and willingness of parole officers to reward positive behavior as a strategy for individual engagement. Parolees themselves can provide valuable input into the selection of goals and objectives and, ideally, would be involved in developing their own incentives and rewards (Burke 2004; Taxman 2002).

Current practice does not place enough emphasis on incentives, strengths, and interim successes, and parole officers are rarely trained or encouraged to use incentives. However, several jurisdictions have formally incorporated systems of graduated incentives into their supervision process.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

The **Ohio Adult Parole Authority** uses a structured incentive system to recognize pro-social activities that contribute to a parolee’s successful reentry process. Incentives are given on the basis of a parolee’s Supervision Accountability Plan (SAP) and increase in value as progress is made toward certain goals. For example, a low-level incentive, such as a paper certificate of recognition, is given after completion of one activity in the SAP; medium-level incentives, such as a medallion certificate of recognition or a reduction in supervision fees for each month a parolee continues to do well, are given after completion of two to three activities in the SAP; and high-level incentives, such as additional reductions in supervision fees, reductions in supervision time, or a quarterly recognition event with parole directors and officers from all regions, are given after completion of more than three program activities in the SAP.

For more information, see the Ohio Adult Parole Authority at <http://www.drc.state.oh.us/web/apa.htm>.

Similarly, the Georgia Parole Board uses a **Behavior Response and Adjustment Guide** (BRAG) that illustrates suggested responses for both positive and negative behavior. Like Ohio, Georgia utilizes low-, medium-, and high-level incentives that increase in value as positive behavior and achievements continue. Low-level incentives, from verbal recognition to a certificate of completion or compliance, are given if, for example, a parolee remains sober or employed for 90 days or remains at a stable residence for six months. As a parolee continues to remain sober or employed and in stable housing, medium-level incentives, from letters of recognition to early termination of supervision or supervision level reduction, are given. High-level incentives for long-term stability and achievement include graduation ceremonies and recognition, gift certificates, and commutation requests.

For more information, see the Georgia Parole Board at <http://www.pap.state.ga.us/opencms/opencms/>.



### 13. Employ Graduated Problem-Solving Responses to Violations of Parole Conditions in a Swift and Certain Manner

There is broad agreement among experts, supported by a growing research base, that many parolees who violate their conditions without committing a new offense (technical violators) can be managed in the community without compromising community safety or utilizing expensive prison beds (Austin et al. 2007; Burke et al. 2007; Fabelo and Gunter 2005; Reentry Policy Council 2005). As with other behavioral management approaches to supervision, the purpose of responding to violations should be to confront behavior in a way that will change it without necessarily relying on a costly return to prison or jail that disrupts the reintegration process.

To be sure, high-risk offenders who present a threat to the community should be returned to prison when they commit a serious violation or new crime. However, there are many parolees whose minor violations may be better met with swift and certain interventions that are both proportional to the seriousness of the violation and address the reasons that the violation occurred (Burke 2004; Burke et al. 2007). For example, if a violation involves substance abuse, an appropriate community-based intervention may include increased drug testing or treatment. Responding to violations with a continuum of available sanctions and rewards—from low-intensity community-based options to highly secure residential and institutional options—can be more effective in preventing relapse and future offending, and less expensive, than revocation and reincarceration.

The paroling authority and supervision agency should develop a common vision of how conditions should be set, how supervision and case management will take place, and how responses to violations will be handled (Burke et al. 2007; Campbell 2008). The parole agency must clarify the goals of violation practices, which should be consistent with the overall goals of supervision. These goals should then be communicated to line officers to ensure they are implemented consistently across the organization. Accompanied by clearly defined goals, risk assessment tools can guide responses to specific violations for specific parolees. If parole officers are given structured discretion and the necessary tools to employ graduated sanctions, they will be empowered to respond quickly and appropriately to many of the violations they detect (Burke et al. 2007).

A growing research base suggests that responding to violations in this way could lead to improved community safety, increased offender accountability, and additional prison beds reserved for the most violent, serious, and persistent offenders (Austin et al. 2007; Bogue et al. 2004; Burke 2004; Burke et al. 2007; National Research Council 2007; Taxman et al. 1999, 2004). NIC-supported work in three states has shown that it is possible to reduce returns to prison without incurring additional criminal behavior among parolees (Burke et al. 2007). Research from multiple disciplines suggests that

to be most effective, sanctions in response to negative behaviors (and rewards in response to positive behaviors) should be swift, certain, and consistently applied to create and reinforce a deterrent effect (Burke 1997; Burke et al. 2007; Harrell, Cavanaugh, and Roman 2000; Harrell et al. 2003; Taxman et al. 1999). The availability of substance abuse and mental health services was associated with a reduced risk of technical violations and parole violations for low-level criminal behavior in California (Grattet, Petersilia, and Lin 2008). This finding suggests that parole officers may be less likely to move to parole revocation if there are viable treatment alternatives available in the community.

Most states respond to violations inconsistently and with little guidance to supervision staff. In many agencies, it is often easier to revoke parole than to continue working with a parolee. As a result, parole violations account for about one-third of prison admissions nationally. However, substantial progress has been made in this area, and momentum continues to grow. Some jurisdictions, such as Ohio, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, encourage consistency in the disposition of violations with guidelines that help sort violations into categories, with various sanctions available at particular levels of authority (Martin and Van Dine 2008). Several jurisdictions also empower hearing officers or other individuals who conduct probable cause hearings to impose a variety of non-custodial sanctions. A number of jurisdictions, including those states involved in NIC's Transition from Prison to Community project and the Justice Reinvestment sites working with the Council of State Governments Justice Center and the Vera Institute of Justice, among others, are making systemic changes in this area that show enormous promise.

#### EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

In 2004, the **Kansas Sentencing Commission** determined that parole and probation revocations accounted for 68 percent of prison admissions. Recognizing the financial and social implications of this figure, the state legislature set out to dramatically reduce the number of parolees who were sent back to prison for technical violations, reserving prison beds for the most violent and serious offenders. The state legislature created the Kansas Criminal Justice Recodification, Rehabilitation, and Restoration Committee (or "3R's" Committee) tasked with developing a comprehensive strategy for reducing the rate of recidivism. Building off the committee's work, Kansas policymakers increased oversight of the revocation process; established an interagency council (Kansas Reentry Policy Council) to implement the statewide plan; and launched reentry pilot programs in two counties targeting the highest-risk parolees. Utilizing several of the strategies we have outlined—including focusing resources on high-risk parolees, tailoring conditions of supervision, and developing case plans that balance surveillance and treatment—the state was able to reduce parole revocations in the two pilot counties by 50 percent from 2004 to 2006. According to Secretary of the Kansas Department of Corrections Roger Werholtz, "we want to make sure that parole officers have to work as hard to revoke an offender as they have to work to help them succeed in the community" (personal communica-

**EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD (Continued)**

tion, October 31, 2008). This strategy saved Kansas more than \$13 million and appears to have reduced its prison population and reoffending rates.

For more information, see the Pew Center on the States' Kansas Case Study at <http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/KS%20Case%20Study%202-22-07.pdf>.

**Oregon Community Corrections** has employed a structured sanction program since 1993, giving parole officers the authority to immediately apply intermediate and graduated sanctions without having to go through the time-consuming and costly court hearing process unless a certain level of sanction is required. To promote a structured and consistent decision-making process, parole officers are required to use a sanctioning grid to determine appropriate responses to certain behavior. The goals of Oregon's structured sanctioning approach are to (a) respond to violations swiftly and with certainty in order to more effectively enhance public safety; (b) reduce the number of violators who are sent to prison by making sure all community alternatives are used before revocation; (c) ensure that similar violations receive similar responses; (d) avoid costs to the public from court hearings and other justice system processes that result from parole revocations; and (e) prioritize the use of justice system resources for those for whom other sanctions have proven ineffective. In 2002, the Department of Corrections published a report on the effectiveness of the program which included the results of a longitudinal study on the behavior of offenders receiving their first sanction between 1999 and 2001. That study found that reconviction rates are higher after a jail sanction than a community-based sanction, those sanctioned with community service had the lowest rates of reconviction, and longer jail stays were associated with higher rates of recidivism following release. These results demonstrate the need for, and the effectiveness of, graduated sanctions and the need for a broad range of sanctions in response to technical violations.

For more information, see Oregon Community Corrections at [http://egov.oregon.gov/DOC/TRANS/CC/cc\\_welcome.shtml](http://egov.oregon.gov/DOC/TRANS/CC/cc_welcome.shtml) and [http://www.oregon.gov/DOC/TRANS/CC/docs/pdf/effectiveness\\_of\\_sanctions\\_version2.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/DOC/TRANS/CC/docs/pdf/effectiveness_of_sanctions_version2.pdf).



# Repositioning Parole Supervision

## *Looking Ahead*

### Implementing Change

**T**his report is filled with noteworthy examples of jurisdictions that have implemented one or more of the policies and practices recommended in this paper. In Maryland, Kansas, Oregon, Michigan, Ohio and elsewhere, effective leaders have successfully implemented departures from parole business as usual. In so doing, they have revisited their vision and redefined their mission to emphasize public safety and the reduction of recidivism. They have moved in a sustained manner to effect short- and long-term changes in how their agencies do their work. They offer helpful exemplars.

These examples of innovation and change from the field lead to the consideration of successful transformation efforts. Such efforts have two equally important components: empirically driven models and successful implementation practices. Too often, best practices such as the 13 strategies are literally thrown at an organization with little or no attention to the intricacies of implementation. Those who wish to undertake the transformative change that these 13 strategies represent are cautioned to pay careful attention to the demands of implementation (Rhine, Mawhorr, and Parks 2006).

Leadership is the single most important element in effecting both systemic and organizational change. It is essential that those in positions of leadership first and foremost express a willingness to assume the daunting and often vexing challenges associated

with retooling an organization. The adoption of the set of recommendations called for above will require a substantial redirection in vision, mission, and focus for many agencies currently responsible for post-prison supervision.

Effective leadership is premised on embracing a vision that is compelling yet grounded. Heckscher and Foote (2006, 494) state that it is necessary to legitimize and mobilize the agency and its staff not around a “grand vision” alone, but a “grand vision *that can be implemented.*” Yet leadership is also dependent on posing and answering difficult questions, such as: If I am committed to this course of action, why is my agency not achieving this vision in practice? If there is a compelling research base showing the efficacy of evidence-based practice, why has the agency been slow or reluctant to adopt the necessary reforms?

Leadership is often considered an elusive quality, a commodity that is difficult to define. Wielding effective leadership requires a style that is more decentralized than in years past, less directive and command-centered. It involves an active commitment to communication, team building, and staff empowerment. Leadership that seeks to effectively reposition the field of post-release supervision must begin by “embracing accountability” for producing the necessary reforms (Moore 1995, 273). Embracing accountability involves clearly articulating the agency’s vision, mission, and goals with key stakeholders and staff, and committing to the 13 recommendations called for above. For engineering change, it requires a far-reaching, if not tenacious, commitment to pursuing, measuring, and reporting on outcomes that contribute tangibly to public safety.

The policies and practices we have recommended can be adopted in most jurisdictions with the appropriate leadership and will, and legislative action can play a major role in accelerating the establishment of such policies and sustaining improvements after a change in leadership. With states increasingly struggling to balance their budgets, and an ever-growing recognition that governments cannot bear the seemingly limitless costs of high incarceration and recidivism rates, legislators are beginning to consider innovative polices, such as earned discharge and the use of graduated community sanctions in response to violations, to limit prison growth, increase public safety, and reduce crime. Even with legislative support and initiative, however, the impetus remains on forward-thinking parole leaders and practitioners to advance a new public safety mission that incorporates these strategies for effective supervision.

## The Importance of Communication

It is often argued that leadership does not spend enough time on conveying its vision. John Kotter comments that those in positions of leadership expend roughly 1 percent of their energy sharing and advocating for their visions. A compelling vision creates what he calls “an imaginable picture of the future” (Kotter 1996, 72). It provides a clear and cogent sense of direction, energizes agency staff to take actions to realize the

vision, and serves as a foundation for policy decisions that will support these aims. Vision work is not self-executing or its meaning self-evident. It is clear that a much greater portion of the leader's time must be spent on communication. In facilitating organizational change, leaders must use every opportunity to express, affirm, and reinforce their vision. In this way, a major opportunity exists to educate supervision officers, state government, the media, and the public at large.

It is also essential that individual leaders engage in a thorough and self-critical assessment of where their agency stands relative to the degree of staff buy-in to the vision, as well as the extent of policy and operational compliance with the various recommendations. Though difficult in practice, taking such actions requires a focus on the extent to which the agency's chain-of-command comports with the general direction suggested. The authors agree with Thomas White, who states effective leaders must "realize that changing organizational culture (values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior) occurs through positive modeling and positive reinforcement" (White 2007, 13). He goes on to note that shifting an organization to evidence-based practices cannot be mandated or forced, but must be embedded in the agency's culture, especially "in the local office culture." To do so, leaders must engage in a meaningful, wide-ranging, and systematic examination of an agency's culture and the policies, operational practices, and measurement of activities and outcomes that form the core of its fabric. According to White (2007), the culture of an agency is composed of the following characteristics:

- Statements or documents concerning the organization's vision, mission, and goals;
- Established policy, procedures, and systems of operation;
- The criteria used to select, reward, and promote staff;
- The activities that are measured and monitored;
- The way in which the agency reacts to crisis; and perhaps most importantly,
- The actions and behavior of the organization's leaders.

There are a host of administrative norms and procedures, and typical ways of doing business, often long-unexamined, that agency leadership must consider in conducting a comprehensive inventory or assessment of the agency's constellation of practices governing parole supervision. These procedures exert a continuous and powerful impact on staff beliefs and behavior. As they are constitutive of the organizational reality experienced by staff, it is critical that these same tools be modified to create and reinforce the vision, mission, and strategies toward which the agency's leadership seeks to move.

## A Vision for the Future

It is useful to envision what an agency might look like if it embedded evidence-based practices into its culture and daily operation drawing on the policies and strategies recommended herein. New parole officers would go through a thorough screening

process that determines their competencies, background, and willingness to balance surveillance and treatment in supervising offenders. Once hired, the parole officers in training would learn about the agency's public safety vision and its overriding commitment to the reduction of recidivism and helping parolees achieve positive outcomes. Their working experience from that point forward would align with this vision and commitment. They would receive careful guidance on policies, procedures, and specific skill sets relevant to deploying the tools of evidence-based practice. Coaching from their supervisors would serve to explain and reinforce the importance of assessments and case planning (including prerelease planning activities), and the value gained in targeting some risk levels with more intensity than others, using incentives, maximizing earned discharge protocols, and responding to violations of supervision conditions in a graduated and appropriate manner. They would receive instruction on how to supervise by engaging parolees in the change process. The agency would emphasize the importance of the quality of every interaction in the field or in the office.

Officers would be trained and supported to carry out their work in communities and neighborhoods, often during nontraditional work hours. They would receive instruction on how to connect to prosocial networks and form vibrant partnerships in local neighborhoods to which their offenders return—in essence, how to cultivate the levers of informal social control to reduce the likelihood of rearrests, especially early in the supervision period. They would learn that the recidivism and positive achievements of parolees on their caseload would be measured and reviewed both during and after the termination of supervision. They would also receive ongoing guidance, feedback, and reinforcement from their supervisors on using their skill sets and knowledge base to continuously improve their performance in effecting successful reentry and desistance from crime. In this way, the public safety vision of the agency would be grounded in the evidence-based practice of day-to-day supervision.

## Conclusion

Over the past thirty years, numerous changes to sentencing laws have resulted in the imposition of lengthier sentences and have required offenders to serve longer periods of incarceration before being eligible for release. These shifts have produced a dramatic growth in prison populations and, not surprisingly, a historically unprecedented number of individuals returning home each year. The sheer volume carries enormous public safety implications for communities and neighborhoods when hundreds of thousands of prisoners released annually from prison are singularly ill-equipped to succeed and poorly supported during and after their transition home. The Pew Public Safety Performance Project's recent report (2008) addressing these trends presents a somber portrait of the evolution and future challenges associated with continued increases in the rate of incarceration. It acknowledges that while the number of those incarcerated continues upwards, thereby "blowing holes in state budgets," (Pew 2008, 3) rates of recidivism are barely being dented.

As Bureau of Justice Statistics studies have shown, the outcomes associated with offender recidivism have remained stubbornly and unacceptably high (Beck and Shipley 1989; Langan and Levin 2002). During the same time, parole supervision practices have often focused more on the monitoring and surveillance of offenders rather than on addressing the core issues that may contribute to their likelihood of success or failure after their release from prison. It is sobering to recognize that rates of recidivism for offenders exiting prison have demonstrated a remarkable constancy for several decades. This singular focus has not contributed to an increase in public safety. As Petersilia notes, “persons being released from prison today are doing less well than their counterparts released a decade ago in successfully reintegrating into their communities. More of them are being rearrested; these arrests are occurring more quickly; and as a group, ex-convicts are accounting for a larger share of all serious crimes experienced in the United States” (2003, 144).

We have discussed why parole, as currently practiced, often does not reduce recidivism. However, since the late 1970s, a concentration on surveillance and enforcement is precisely the strategy that parole has been asked to implement (Rhine 1997). Contact standards have become a key benchmark in assessing agency performance, and quick returns of violators are a measure of vigilance. This is a judgment, not about parole as an institution or component of the system, but about the strategies that have been consistent with larger thinking in the field. But that thinking is changing. The tactics of surveillance, monitoring, and control have been found ineffective on their own.

The national dialogue emerging from the reentry movement in corrections has created a unique opportunity for parole (Carter et al. 2007; O’Hear 2007; Travis 2007). There is a renewed interest in the mission and efficacy of parole and other forms of post-prison supervision (Burke and Tonry 2006; Paparozzi and DeMichele 2008; Petersilia 2003; Rhine 2006; Travis 2007). Indeed, parole represents a vital component along the reentry continuum, positioned perfectly to address the challenges of transition and reentry into the community. We have made the case that parole, by combining its traditional supervision function with assessment and focused interventions, can serve as a strategic, targeted delivery system for effective evidence-based interventions. The timing is right to enhance the overall performance of parole and capitalize on the good faith efforts of professionals in the field who are committed to making a difference in the work they do. The strategies presented are intended to serve as a catalyst, even a call to action, to rethink and reposition parole relative to prisoner reentry and public safety.

There is a growing desire and pressing public policy need to identify effective, evidence-based models of community supervision that promote public safety, emphasize offender accountability, and foster desistance from crime. We have argued that parole supervision must and can be repositioned to contribute tangibly to the achievement of such outcomes. We have presented organizational policies and individual supervision strategies that have the capacity to guide how the business of parole may be reconfigured to simultaneously equip and support offenders to succeed as they return to com-



munities while holding them accountable to their conditions and responsibilities.

The 13 strategies demonstrate what evidence, research, and practitioner expertise suggest sound parole supervision should look like. Getting parole supervision right requires a willingness to apply the results of research-informed, policy-resonant discussions of the evidence-based operational practices suggested herein. Each of these 13 strategies, if adopted alone, will produce a positive but limited impact on the outcomes sought. Implemented together, they could transform post-prison supervision for parolees, their families, and communities in a very positive, very powerful way.

If parole supervision is to effectively reposition itself, immediate actions must be taken now. The authors share an overriding conviction: *the policies and strategies recommended could be adopted today given the willingness to do so—with a thoughtful modicum of planning and a steady and sustained investment in staff training, and by realigning organizational resources to accomplish the changes and reforms required.*

We believe parole administrators and practitioners have reached an important moment in time. The proposed strategies, if incorporated into the fabric of an agency's culture and practice, will facilitate systemic and organizational change. The strategies represent the best thinking on sound supervision practice. In making this claim, we appreciate how hard engaging in change of this magnitude will be, and how difficult it is to accomplish meaningful and durable reforms in both policy and practice. We also acknowledge how much time it will actually take to evaluate the results and know whether the modifications in policies and strategies made a difference in the outcomes achieved. The challenges, however, are not insurmountable.

Though many issues must be considered, those in leadership positions must guard against the crippling inertia of current organizational culture and its tendency to compromise a very different and more expansive vision of the future. A number of agencies are beginning to lead the way in repositioning the field. They have come to embrace accountability for achieving a vision that affirms the value of parole supervision and draws its sustenance from evidence-based research and practice. Additional courageous pioneers are needed to further demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, build momentum for broad transformation of parole, and make a clear and unmistakable commitment to contribute to public safety, recidivism reduction, and community reintegration.



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# APPENDIX

## Consensus among Research and Policy Reports

A review of the parole supervision literature identifies substantial overlaps between strategies outlined in the paper and recommendations found in other major policy reports on the topic. A summary of this information follows, listing policy and research reports that recommend some or all of the 13 supervision strategies. The purpose of this chart is to illustrate that while the strategies outlined in this paper are far from “business as usual” in most jurisdictions around the country, they are in line with views of many leading researchers and practitioners, including a much broader community of experts than those involved directly in the JEHT Foundation/NIC-sponsored meetings.

	Organization-Level Strategies						Individual-Level Strategies						
	Define success and measure performance	Tailor conditions of supervision	Focus resources on high-risk parolees	Front-load supervision resources	Implement earned discharge	Implement place-based supervision	Engage partners to expand capacity	Assess criminogenic risks and need factors	Develop supervision plans that balance surveillance and treatment	Supervise to enhance parolee engagement	Engage informal social controls	Incorporate incentives and rewards into the supervision process	Employ swift, certain, and graduated responses to violations
A Decade of Experimenting with Intermediate Sanctions (Petersilia 1998)			X			X	X		X		X		
A Meta-Analysis of the Predictors of Adult Offender Recidivism (Gendreau, Little, and Goggin 1996)			X	X			X	X		X	X		
Adult Correctional Treatment (Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk, and Stewart 1999)	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X
Another Look at the Effectiveness of Parole Supervision (Gottsfredson and Mitchell-Herzfeld 1982)				X									
Assessing Correctional Rehabilitation: Policy, Practice, and Prospects (Cullen and Gendreau 2000)	X		X				X	X	X	X	X		
But They All Come Back: Facing the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry (Travis 2005)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Cognitive Behavioral Tactics: The Next Phase for Evidence-Based Practices (Burrell 2008)	X		X				X	X	X	X	X		X

APPENDIX Consensus among Research and Policy Reports (Continued)													
	Organization-Level Strategies						Individual-Level Strategies						
	Define success and measure performance	Tailor conditions of supervision	Focus resources on high-risk parolees	Front-load supervision resources	Implement earned discharge	Implement place-based supervision	Engage partners to expand capacity	Assess criminogenic risks and need factors	Develop supervision plans that balance surveillance and treatment	Supervise to enhance parolee engagement	Engage informal social controls	Incorporate incentives and rewards into the supervision process	Employ swift, certain, and graduated responses to violations
Community Corrections Recommendations from the National Community Corrections Forum (BJA 2004)	X			X			X	X	X	X			
Comprehensive Framework for Paroling Authorities in an Era of Evidence-Based Practice (Campbell 2008)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controlling Drug Use and Crime Among Drug-Involved Offenders (Kleiman 2001)					X				X				X
Dangerous Opportunity: Five Futures for Community Corrections (Dickey and Smith 1998)			X			X	X				X		X
Does Parole Supervision Work? Research Findings and Policy Opportunities (Solomon 2006)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Does Supervision Matter? In Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America (Piehl and LoBuglio 2005)			X		X		X	X	X		X		X
Downsizing Prisons (Jacobson 2005)			X	X	X			X					X
Employ Behavioral Contracting for "Earned Discharge" Parole (Petersilia 2007)		X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X
Enhancing Adherence to Risk-Need-Responsivity (Andrews 2006)	X		X					X	X	X			

## APPENDIX

## Consensus among Research and Policy Reports (Continued)

	Organization-Level Strategies							Individual-Level Strategies					
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Evidence-Based Adult Corrections Programs (Aos, Miller and Drake 2006)			X	X				X	X	X			
Evidence-Based Corrections: Identifying What Works (MacKenzie 2000)			X	X			X	X	X	X			
Graduated Sanctions: Stepping into Accountable Systems and Offenders (Taxman, Soule, and Gelb 1999)					X				X	X			X
Implementing Evidence-Based Principles in Community Corrections (Bogue, Campbell, Clawson et al. 2004)	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Intensive Probation and Parole (Petersilia and Turner 1993)	X								X				X
Parole Violations and Revocations in California (Grattet, Petersilia, and Lin 2008)			X	X	X			X					X
Parole Violations Revisited (Burke 2004)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parole, Desistance from Crime, and Community Integration (National Research Council 2007)	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Policy Recommendations on Improvements to Probation and Parole Supervision (American Bar Association 2007)	X		X	X						X			X

APPENDIX Consensus among Research and Policy Reports (Continued)												
	Organization-Level Strategies						Individual-Level Strategies					
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Policy-Driven Responses to Probation and Parole Violations (Burke 1997)	X		X				X	X				X
Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising (Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie, Eck, Reuter, and Bushway 1997)	X						X	X		X		X
Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment for Criminal Justice Populations—A Research-Based Guide (National Institute of Drug Abuse 2006)		X			X		X	X	X		X	
Probation and Parole Supervision: In Need of a New Narrative (Rhine 1997)	X		X				X	X		X		
Probation and Parole: Overworked, Misunderstood, and Under-Appreciated: But Why? (Paparozzi and DeMichelle 2008)	X											
Reentry and Supervision: One Is Impossible Without the Other (Taxman 2007)			X				X	X	X	X	X	
Reforming Probation and Parole in the 21st Century (Petersilia 2002)			X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Reinventing Parole and Probation (DiIulio 1997)							X		X			

## APPENDIX

## Consensus among Research and Policy Reports (Continued)

	Organization-Level Strategies							Individual-Level Strategies					
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Reinventing Probation and Parole: A Matter of Consequence (Rhine and Paparozzi 1999)	X						X			X	X		X
Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council (Re-Entry Policy Council 2005)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rethinking Rehabilitation (Farabee 2005)			X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X
Successful Transition and Reentry for Safer Communities: A Call to Action for Parole (Burke and Tonry 2006)	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Supervision: Exploring the Dimensions of Effectiveness (Taxman 2002)			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Tools of the Trade. A Guide to Incorporating Science into Practice (Taxman, Shepardson, and Byrne 2004)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Topics in Community Corrections: Effectively Managing Violations and Revocations (National Institute of Corrections 2006)	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X
Transforming Probation Through Leadership (Reinventing Probation Council 2000)	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Trends in Probation and Parole in the States (Burrell 2005)	X	X					X		X	X			

**APPENDIX** Consensus among Research and Policy Reports (Continued)

	Organization-Level Strategies							Individual-Level Strategies					
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What Should We Expect From Parole (and Probation) under a Behavioral Management Approach? (Taxman 2006)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
What Should We Expect From Parole? (Austin 2006)	X		X	X			X	X			X		X
What Works in Corrections? (MacKenzie 2006)	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X		
What Works in Prisoner Reentry? Reviewing and Questioning the Evidence (Petersilia 2004)			X				X	X	X	X	X		
When Brute Force Fails: Strategic Thinking for Crime Control (Kleiman 2005)	X	X											X
When Offenders Break the Rules: Smart Responses to Parole and Probation Violations (Burke, Gelb, and Horowitz 2007)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry (Petersilia 2003)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
You Get What You Measure: Compstat for Community Corrections (Burrell and Gelb 2007)	X												





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