

Research-Based Practices For Field Services

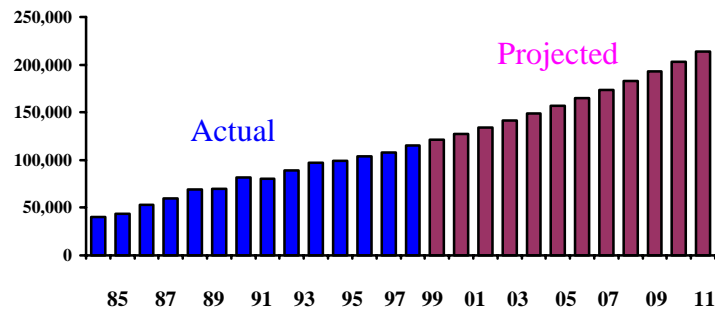
8 Point Plan



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Minnesota Probation Open Cases at Year-End



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Introduction:

For Minnesota's correctional services to achieve consistent, result-based outcomes across the entire state, benchmarks need to be set and achieved for field service practices. To begin setting benchmarks, the following eight "best practices" are summarized. In addition, each practice has recommended practices outlined, based on current research. It is recommended that these practices be considered when implementing correctional services in Minnesota.

Automated and Validated Risk Tools

Cognitive/Behavioral Programming

Case Plans

Restorative Justice

Primary Services

Supervision Workload Standards

Transition/Aftercare Services

Outcome Measures

Automated and Validated Risk Tools

Description: The newest generation of risk/need tools is validated on existing, local offender population for prediction of reoffense based on actuarial methods. The tool identifies key factors which predict recidivism. It also lends itself to supervision levels and intervention strategies.

Recommended Practice: Every felon and all personal gross misdemeanors and misdemeanors should have a risk tool applied. The tool should be consistent statewide and validated to the local population. The offender should be re-assessed at least every six months. Other risk and need tools should be deployed as deemed appropriate.

Claim Statement: The use of risk tools is a better predictor of future offenses than professional judgment alone. If criminogenic needs are targeted and met, recidivism will be reduced.

Research Validation: Gendreau et al. (1996) demonstrate that focusing on dynamic risk factors can lead to sharp reductions in future offense and that these factors are responsive to treatment. The most predictive dynamic risk factors include antisocial associates and attitudes and difficulties at work, home, school, and leisure. Actuarial methods are more predictive (Dawes et al., 1998) than judgment alone.

Automated and Validated Risk Tools

You know it when you see...

- The use of a common risk/need tool(s) that identifies criminogenic needs.
- The use of augmented tools or trailers to further determine intervention strategies.
- Specialized tools for unique population such as female, pre-teens, domestic assault, and sex offenders.
- The use of assessments that are sensitive to culturally-specific needs.
- A method to audit the consistent and accurate use of the tools for quality control.
- The use of tools to determine supervision intensity level and techniques.
- An automated version of the tool which self-validates on a continuous basis.
- A reassessment process put in place on a periodic basis every six months.
- A collaborative screening team to discuss difficult or unique cases.
- The presentence and adjudication reports using the results of the tools to justify and communicate recommendations.

Cognitive/Behavioral Programming

Description: Offenders often possess cognitive patterns which predispose them to committing crime. These thinking patterns might include, for example, rigid thinking, poor problem-solving skills, anti-authority attitudes, lack of victim empathy, and antisocial values. Cognitive/behavioral programming provides cognitive restructuring, thinking skills, and life skills. It helps the offender re-examine his/her values, understand consequences to holding certain beliefs, and provides a set of skills to handle conflict and attain personal goals.

Recommended Practices: All adult and juvenile high-risk offenders will be referred to a cognitive/behavioral class when appropriate.

Claim Statement: By challenging one's personal values, understanding consequences to holding certain beliefs, and acquiring a set of cognitive skills, an offender's risk to re-offend will be reduced by 25 to 50 percent.

Research Validation: Andrews et al. (1980) meta-analysis shows that the most effective intervention in reducing re-offense for most offenders is a cognitive/behavioral intervention as opposed to punishment techniques, psychodynamic therapy, or surveillance.

Cognitive/Behavioral Programming

You know it when you see...

- The offering of the three forms of programming (cognitive restructuring, cognitive skills building, and life skills) for all medium to high-risk offenders.
- Care taken in the timing of which and when the three forms of programming are offered.
- Attention paid to responsivity factors both of the referrals and the facilitators.
- Careful selection and training of the facilitators to ensure that they possess the proper skills.
- Attention paid to the group milieu and mixing of risk levels.
- Forethought to gender and culturally specific programming needs.
- Groups that are more intense and last longer (i.e., six months or longer) for higher risk offenders.
- Quality control mechanisms put in place including but not limited to peer review, taped sessions, use of an outside consultant, support groups, etc.

Case Plans

Description: The use of case plans ensures that the case manager channels a sundry of information and diverse mission objectives into a purposeful interaction. The plans target the purpose of supervision and hold the offender, staff, and service provider accountable. To be effective, the plan should be written, time and goal driven, realistic, and dynamic in nature.

Recommended Practices: Each high-risk offender should have a case plan completed on him/her, incorporating the core supervision objectives and conducted through motivational interviewing techniques.

Claim Statement: A case plan that is developed with the offender through motivational interviewing techniques, is clear, and has realistic goals attached to criminogenic and restorative goals will produce better outcomes when compared to traditional supervision techniques.

Research Validation: Just as an agency improves its outcomes when it is clear what its objectives are and how those objectives are best measured (Boone, 1993), case workers can improve supervision outcomes by increasing offender buy-in through motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 1991) and written case plans.

Case Plans

You know it when you see...

- Structured plans developed for every higher-risk offender.
- Plans that take into account both risk reduction and restoration objectives.
- Plans that are clear, written, concise, realistic, measurable, and specific.
- An emphasis on building of developmental assets and strength-based approaches.
- Plans that allow for parent, victim, and community involvement and signature when appropriate.
- The use of motivational interviewing techniques in the development of the plan.
- A distinction between what is required and what is desired.
- Built-in incentives to encourage compliance and motivation.

Restorative Justice

Description: An intervention is deemed to be restorative when it answers the questions of what was the harm, what is needed to repair the harm, and who is responsible for the repair. It focuses on the needs of the three stakeholders (community, victim, and offender) and gives all parties affected by the crime the opportunity for input. The offender is held accountable by understanding the harm and “making things right” to the degree possible.

Recommended Practices: Restorative justice techniques should be made available in all appropriate cases.

Claim Statement: When all affected parties are given the opportunity for meaningful involvement, the offender is held responsible to make amends and the community accepts its responsibility to address crime, then fear is reduced, satisfaction increases, and justice outcomes are improved.

Research Validation: When restitution is paid in full, victim and offender satisfaction is increased and fear is reduced (Smith et al. 1989). Mediation increases levels of victim satisfaction, increases likelihood of restitution payment, and fear is reduced (Umbreit and Coates, 1992).

Restorative Justice

You know it when you see...

- An emphasis on repairing harm.
- A balanced approach to accountability (victims), competency development (offenders), and public safety (community).
- Participation by all stakeholders.
- Victim offender face-to-face dialogue.
- Victim empathy and impact classes.
- Community conferencing.
- Community courts.
- Community work service projects that are “good for the soul.”
- Crime repay crews.
- Full payment of restitution as a primary goal.

Primary Services

Description: Certain correctional services are considered by the profession and the courts to be core to the efficient and/or effective operation of the justice system. These primary services should be available regardless of the location of the jurisdiction, relative availability of regional funding, or type of correctional delivery system.

Recommended Practices: Each jurisdiction should have available those services listed as primary and core in the 1994 Probation Standards Task Force Report.

Claim Statement: Consistent and predictable availability of core correctional services will improve the court’s ability to ensure compliance with court orders and correctional objectives.

Research Validation: Although there is no specific research study to validate this standard, it is commonly agreed upon as a given. Similar arguments are made around other statewide services being available in comparative measure (e.g., access to medical services, public defender services, etc.).

Primary Services

You know it when you see...

Consistent minimum levels of correctional services and organizational characteristics in all 87 counties such as:

Services:

- Presentence and pre-adjudication investigations
- Specialized assessment services
- Chemical dependency and urinalysis services
- Sex offender services
- Work crews
- Domestic abuse investigations and services
- Culturally-specific programming and translation services
- Restitution collection
- Intensive supervision
- Mental health programming
- Diversion

Organizational characteristics:

- Volunteers
- Citizen advisory boards
- Comprehensive or strategic plans

Supervision Workload Standards

Description: Current caseload and workload sizes vary extensively across the state. Many if not most jurisdictions measure workload differently, making activity and outcome comparison as well as funding needs difficult to determine. Other states have common workload measures and standards which give the field and policy-makers better information to make decisions. In addition it provides the opportunity to measure outcomes based on changing workload.

Recommended Practices: Each jurisdiction should report workload size using similar reporting mechanisms. Until a specific workload (as opposed to caseload) method is developed, the following supervision caps should be applied as maximum caseloads per agent:

	<u>Intensive</u>	<u>Special</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Admin.</u>
Adults	15	40	60	100	300	1,000
Juveniles	10	NA	25	35	100	NA

Claim Statement: How supervision is conducted is more important than actual workload size when linking staff resources to outcomes. However, workload size is a key factor. The lower the workload, the more likely the agency can implement effective supervision strategies including swift accountability, restoration, and risk reduction.

Research Validation: A number of studies attempted to determine an ideal workload size, with no clear results in finding a size that is more likely to produce specific outcomes. However, some studies show certain supervision techniques, in combination with treatment, can be highly effective (Peterisillia, 1998). Intensive and community-based techniques hold the best promise according to the American Probation and Parole Association publication on Broken Windows. Supervision techniques that have been proven or deemed to be promising require lower workload size to perform (e.g., cognitive probation, police corrections partnerships, community conferencing, community courts, sex offender monitoring, neighborhood probation, etc.).

Supervision Workload Standards

You know it when you see...

- Caseloads at a level where research-proven practices can meet public safety and other mission objectives.
- Swift intervention upon awareness of non-compliance.
- Restoration of public trust in probation priorities and activities.
- Intensive agents in partnership with law enforcement officers providing meaningful supervision.
- Probation staff highly visible in the community by moving their offices from the government center to their cars and local neighborhoods, wearing identifying clothing, and working closely with business, community, faith, and other community groups.
- Probation staff participating in community crime prevention initiatives with the public, block clubs, etc.
- Probation staff working side by side with offenders in cleaning up neighborhoods.
- Probation staff using offender labor in building up communities through projects that are “good for the soul” such as homeless shelters, parks, and youth centers.
- Specialized probation staff conducting spot checks for monitoring of drunk drivers in the bars.
- Juvenile probation staff located in schools working with school personnel to apply offender interventions, academic improvement activities, and prevention.
- Parents of juvenile offenders are provided support and similar services to those offered to juveniles (such as cognitive programming) when appropriate.
- Families of offenders are provided support and programming.

Transition/Aftercare Services

Description: Residential placement represents the most expensive form of correctional investment with most per diems falling in the \$50 to \$200 range. Transition and aftercare services is a key method to ensure successful integration from residential care back into the community and serve as a way of preserving the financial investment already made. Effective transitional services involve case management, release planning at the point of residential placement, assessment services, collaboration with multiple, community-based agencies, linkage with a caring adult (mentor), a highly structured environment, and restorative programming to help the offender feel accepted and ready to return to the community.

Recommended Practices: Transitional planning should start at the time of intake. A written plan should be developed prior to release which incorporates effective practices. Case management services follow for a minimum of 90 days.

Claim Statement: By applying effective transitional and aftercare services, the offender will be more likely to succeed in the community upon release as evidenced by reduced recidivism rates.

Research Validation: The July 1999 Office and Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Bulletin, “Reintegration, Supervised Release, and Intensive Aftercare” (Altschuler, et al.) lists the key components to effective transition and aftercare (as listed above).

Transition/Aftercare Services

You know it when you see...

- The intentional creation of seamless services from residential to field supervision.
- Case managers beginning to plan for transition from the point of initial placement.
- Comprehensive assessment services.
- Use of booster sessions.
- Creation of relapse plans.
- Linkages with mentors and community support.
- Collaboration with multiple community-based agencies.
- Involvement of faith communities.
- Efforts to bring the offender back into the community's good graces through techniques such as support circles or reintegration dialogue.
- Conscious effort to keep offender out of a criminogenic home or community environment.

Outcome Measures

Description: In order for a jurisdiction to determine if existing practice is producing the intended results, the agency mission must be clear and measurements developed to know whether the objectives are being reached. Furthermore, for policy-makers and funders to know how to effectively contribute toward intended results, data is needed. Each jurisdiction needs to have a consistent and core set of measured outcomes in order for policy/program development and funding to be successfully applied. The 1996 Outcome Measurement Task Force identified a set of core objectives and measurements that should be collected in each correctional jurisdiction.

Recommended Practices: Each correctional jurisdiction should report outcome data as identified by the 1996 Outcome Measurement Task Force.

Claim Statement: Having statewide outcome measurements will lead to improved correctional practice and more informed policy and funding decisions.

Research Validation: It is now widely accepted that “what gets measured, gets done.” Recent correctional publications have illustrated the need for a clear mission, specific objectives, and measurable results which lead to improved practices and outcomes (Boone, 1993).

Outcome Measures



You know it when you see...

- Measures that tie directly to the agency's objectives.
- Highly visible and accountable measures publicly reported and easy to understand.
- An information system that includes data fields considering all three stakeholders (offender, victim, and community).
- The use of surveys to determine how external stakeholders view services.
- Staff incentives and performance plans that link results with rewards.
- Funding and policy development tied to results.
- Consistent reporting on core outcomes for all 87 counties.
- Accountability through agency contracts with vendors.
- Integrated data systems for ease of reporting.