

# Innovations in Supervision Initiatives: *Grantees at a Glance*

An estimated 4.5 million people—or 1 in 55 U.S. adults—are on probation or parole.<sup>1</sup> As the two most common forms of community supervision, probation and parole have key differences: probation is a criminal sentence that allows a person to remain in the community, while parole is a conditional release from incarceration that permits someone to serve the remaining portion of their sentence in the community.

Modern probation and parole agencies are expected to serve dual missions of protecting public safety and rehabilitating the people under their supervision by addressing the needs that can reduce their risk of reoffending. Ensuring that these individuals successfully complete the terms of their supervision can have a large impact on crime, arrests, and prison admissions.

Through the Innovations in Supervision Initiative (ISI), the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance provides grants and technical assistance to states, local communities, and tribal governments to develop, test, and implement research-based and innovative community supervision strategies. ISI grantees enhance supervision practices in a variety of ways, based on the needs of their agency, the people they supervise, and the communities they operate in.

## Common strategies include the following:

- **Using evidence-based practices (EBPs)** and principles of effective supervision and service delivery—such as cognitive behavioral interventions (CBIs)—to help people on probation and parole understand and change behaviors that often lead to further criminal justice involvement;
- **Increasing collaboration** among criminal justice partners, including agencies and officials responsible for probation, parole, pretrial, law enforcement, treatment, reentry, and other services in the community;
- **Focusing supervision resources** on (1) people who are most likely to recidivate by using validated risk and needs assessment tools and (2) the time when people are most at risk of recidivism by frontloading supervision contacts and services;
- **Incorporating evaluation and action research**, continuous quality improvement, and other methods of collecting and analyzing data about processes and practices to determine what is working and make improvements when needed;
- **Adopting technology** to enhance operations, including monitoring and improving officer accountability, using data analytics to help predict and prevent failures on supervision (e.g., noncompliance with supervision conditions or commission of new crimes), and using data about individuals' risk of recidivism and criminogenic needs to tailor supervision and treatment decisions; and
- **Enhancing staff training** to support officers in implementing recidivism-reduction interventions and ensure consistency in the delivery of supervision activities.

The following ISI grantees have implemented the strategies detailed above through a variety of well-defined interventions. For the grantees that have completed program evaluations, highlights from the findings are included here; the remaining grantees are in varying stages of program implementation and evaluation.

1. Danielle Kaeble, *Probation and Parole in the United States, 2016* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018), <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6188>.



## The following grantees have completed evaluations of their programs:

### Montana Department of Corrections

The Montana ISI enhanced staff training and examined officers' workloads to increase the use of risk and needs assessments for people on probation and improve resource allocation.

#### Key Program Features:

- Advanced the implementation of the Montana Offender Reentry and Risk Assessment system (which is a version of the Ohio Risk Assessment System adapted for the state) and the Women's Risk and Needs Assessment to focus services on people assessed as high risk
- Provided specialized trainings to support officers in using EBPs such as motivational interviewing and Thinking for a Change with people on probation who are assessed as high risk
- Developed new resource officer positions aimed at providing more support to people assessed as high risk in two regions of the state
- Conducted a workload study to learn about probation and parole officers' thoughts on the quality of their activities. The study highlighted concerns about lack of time; for example, 74 percent of the officers felt they did not have adequate time to visit and recruit service providers for referrals, and 69 percent reported they did not have enough time to conduct home visits. These results informed the development of a tool to help make decisions about staff allocation.

#### Evaluation Findings:

- Among the participants who received support from the resource officers, all were referred to at least one service, and more than half were referred to substance addiction treatment for the first time.
- The two resource officers relied heavily on verbal acknowledgment or praise as an intermediate reward for participants despite having a variety of other tactics at their disposal (such as fewer drug tests, a letter of commendation, or a decrease in supervision level); verbal acknowledgment accounted for more than 95 percent of rewards to participants.

### South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services

The South Carolina ISI implemented four main initiatives in four counties to increase staff capacity and skills in addressing clients' reentry needs, with the goals of reducing revocations and increasing successful case closures.

#### Key Program Features:

- Developed a leadership academy to promote collaboration and information sharing among front-line supervisors and mid-level managers, and train them on skills such as managing conflict, communicating effectively, and leading staff through organizational change
- Trained officers on the University of Cincinnati's Effective Practices in Correctional Settings II (EPICS-II) model to advance the use of EBPs and graduated sanctions
- Funded community-based substance addiction treatment services and offset costs to participants
- Used results from risk and needs assessments to modify officers' caseloads and inform decisions about interventions

#### Evaluation Findings:

- Revocations decreased from 34 percent in FY2010 to 19 percent in FY2015.
- During the same period, the number of successful case closures increased by 1 percent.
- The leadership academy encouraged sharing of skills and knowledge about EBPs: following the training, 92 percent of staff participants reported a willingness to share the techniques they learned with other staff.

## Colorado Department of Public Safety

The Colorado ISI implemented its Behavioral Shaping Model and Reinforcement Tool (BSMART), a method of supervision that emphasizes the consistent use of incentives and sanctions to improve outcomes for people on community supervision who were assessed as high risk and high need.

### Key Program Features:

- Reinforced positive behaviors and streamlined the sanctioning process for supervision violations, allowing for consistent and swift responses to client behaviors in an effort to increase the client’s sense of accountability
- Trained staff in EBPs that help effect behavior change in clients
- Implemented BSMART in 85 percent of the community corrections facilities across the state (exceeding the initial goal of 50 percent), resulting in service provision for more than 3,016 diversion clients and 2,718 transition clients<sup>2</sup>

### Evaluation Findings:

- One year after implementing BSMART, a third of the facilities saw an increase in successful discharges; and half of the facilities saw increases after two years.
- However, for diversion clients, unsuccessful discharges increased 2.2 percent after one year of implementing BSMART and increased 4.1 percent after two years.
- Technical violations among all clients declined 2.1 percent after one year of implementation and 1.7 percent after two years.



## New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts

The New Jersey ISI piloted the Risk-Based Supervision (RBS) program—which uses a standardized risk assessment to better understand the needs of people on probation and tailor supervision practices and services accordingly—in three counties.

### Key Program Features:

- Adjusted the size of probation officer caseloads and the number and type of contacts for each program participant (e.g., home inspections) so that a greater proportion of resources were directed toward people assessed as high risk
- Assigned probation officers to only one type of caseload based on results from risk assessments—reduced (low risk), normal (medium risk), or close (high risk)—to create more consistency in the quality of contacts and ensure officer accountability

### Evaluation Findings:

- Overall, people who participated in the RBS pilot were less likely to be rearrested or to violate the conditions of their probation within 210 days after beginning the program: 11 percent of RBS participants were rearrested, compared with 18 percent of members in a control group of people on probation at the same time as the pilot program but outside of the three RBS counties. RBS participants violated probation conditions at a rate of 7 percent, compared with 21 percent in the control group.
- The RBS program decreased county jail time for participants by approximately four days. Reducing people’s length of stay can lead to overall cost savings for a jurisdiction, promote greater access to community-based services, and minimize the challenges associated with the transition from incarceration to the community.

2. In Colorado, “diversion clients” are ineligible for standard probation and are directly sentenced to the Office of Community Corrections (OCC) by a district judge following a felony conviction. In such cases, OCC serves as an option of last resort before prison. For these clients, the OCC facility determines the response to violation behavior and can return the client for resentencing if deemed necessary. Failure as a diversion client almost invariably results in a prison sentence. “Transition clients” are clients who are under Department of Corrections supervision and are preparing for the gradual return from prison to the community by participating in an OCC program. In such cases, the OCC facility determines the response to violation behavior and can choose to return the client back to prison if deemed necessary.



## Pennsylvania First Judicial District

The Pennsylvania ISI sought to strengthen the use of EBPs among probation officers and leadership in the First Judicial District (Philadelphia) through staff training and improving the use of risk and needs assessments in case planning.

### Key Program Features:

- Trained probation officers and supervisors in SOARING 2, an evidence-based supervision strategy that aims to improve probation officers' use of risk assessments in developing case plans, engagement and motivation of clients, and problem-solving techniques
- Worked with researchers at the George Mason University's Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence to customize a needs assessment from the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Simulation Tool—a web-based tool to help corrections and treatment providers recommend referrals based on their clients' risk and needs—for the Philadelphia Adult Probation and Parole Department, to complement their current risk assessment tool from the University of Pennsylvania
- Introduced software to develop electronic, individualized case plans based on the needs assessments

### Evaluation Findings:

- Officers who received SOARING 2 training used the risk assessment and management skills component with their clients 96 percent of the time.
- The needs assessment was well-implemented; however, officers expressed frustration using the assessment since it required entering data into a separate system, therefore duplicating work the officers had already completed.
- To evaluate the implementation of case plans, the study looked at a sample of more than 5,000 clients and found that case plans were completed for 86 percent of the sample group and the use of case planning helped officers more effectively identify clients' programming needs.
- Greatest areas of client need based on case plans were identified as job/vocational services (43.7 percent), education (20.8 percent), substance abuse treatment (18.4 percent), and financial assistance (11.1 percent). However, officers felt the handoff to community-based providers was insufficient for several reasons, including not having up-to-date information on what programming was available or most effective.



## Florida Department of Corrections

The Florida ISI piloted the Alternative Sanctions Program (ASP) in Pinellas County to reduce incarceration among people who violate their probation conditions.

### Key Program Features:

- Assessed all ASP participants using the Offender Needs Assessment System and used results to determine how to refer cases to court-ordered wraparound services, such as behavioral health treatment, education, employment, and housing
- Developed a decision matrix consisting of community-based sanctions for 12 common low-level infractions as alternatives to incarceration
- Administered rewards such as reduced supervision level and verbal praise to reinforce positive behaviors among people enrolled in ASP

### Evaluation Findings:

- Approximately 44 percent of participants were successful during their first year in the program, having no further involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Serving participants in the community rather than incarcerating them in prison or jail saved considerable resources—\$3,697,062 and \$8,176,273, respectively—even when accounting for both positive and negative discharges.
- Over a one-year period, the absconder rate of participants was 4.5 percent, a decrease from the statewide average of 13.7 percent.



## Maine Department of Corrections

The Maine ISI sought to strengthen the implementation of the Maine Integrated Risk Reduction Model (MIRRM), which had been adopted in 2011. MIRRM focuses on staff training and applying risk-need-responsivity principles to build more trust between officers and people on probation assessed as moderate or high risk, reducing the number of sanctions needed for clients.

### Key Program Features:

- Provided regional correctional managers with the Supervisor's EBP BriefCASE, an evidence-based curriculum on supervision best practices to help them coach community supervision officers
- Trained 73 probation officers on the Carey Guides and Brief Intervention Tools (BITS) to help officers address the most common criminogenic needs of people on probation

### Evaluation Findings:

- Community supervision officers were only able to partially implement the Carey Guides and BITS. Several factors, including high caseloads and lack of accountability, were identified as barriers to implementation.
- Evaluators divided participants into six-month cohorts and tracked one-year recidivism rates. The largest reductions realized were 13 percent for one of the high-risk groups and 23 percent for a moderate-risk group. For one of the moderate-risk groups, recidivism increased by more than 10 percent.



## Noble County, Indiana Probation Department

The Noble County ISI piloted a program to use risk assessment results to inform probation supervision and service decisions and to minimize costs in this rural jurisdiction with limited resources.

### Key Program Features:

- Assigned "new felony" defendants randomly to receive enhanced services over the course of a two-year pilot period (the average program participation was 10 months)
- Administered the Indiana Risk Assessment tool to participants who volunteered to be assessed
- Risk assessment results were used to identify and target interventions for participants based on several domains, such as past involvement in the criminal justice system, family support, and peer associations

### Evaluation Findings:

- Program participants had shorter average jail stays compared to the control group (88 versus 114 days), allowing for less disruption in the participants' lives and more access to treatment and services in the community. However, there was no significant difference in prison time between groups.
- There was no significant difference in rearrests or reconvictions between the participant group and control group.

## The following grantees are currently implementing programs or have completed implementation and are now conducting evaluations:

### Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

The Allegheny County ISI developed and tested a dosage-based probation model that determines the length of supervision based on a person's assessed treatment needs, rather than based solely on the court's discretion and not on the needs of the individual.

#### Key Program Features:

- Examined the type and amount of intervention that could maximize the potential for positive behavior change for each participant and used this information to determine the length of their supervision
- Set targets for each participant and, once targets were reached, allowed for possible adjustments in their supervision level or early release from supervision
- Trained supervisors and officers in EBPs, such as motivational interviewing, and implemented validated risk assessments
- Used custom, mobile-accessible dashboards to allow supervisors to monitor officer-to-client contact

### City of Salinas, California

The City of Salinas ISI focused on increasing the capacity of local service providers to adhere to EBPs and improve supervision outcomes.

#### Key Program Features:

- Assessed each participating service provider on their implementation of EBPs and developed plans to strengthen program fidelity
- Revamped policies and procedures to promote information sharing and data collection among service providers, enabling them to better administer case management and wraparound services
- Established outcomes and measurement indicators for probation and integrated them into a software system to track service-specific outcomes

### Eighth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services, Iowa

The Iowa ISI implemented a Youthful Sex Offender Treatment Program (YSOTP) for young adults, ages 18 to 25, who are assessed as high risk and on pretrial, probation, or parole for sex offenses.

#### Key Program Features:

- Assessed program participants using validated risk assessment tools for people who have committed sex offenses, enabling probation staff to place participants in treatment designed to mitigate factors that contribute to their likelihood of reoffending
- Provided a program setting specifically for young adults who have committed sex offenses, rather than a more general setting where stigma may affect their engagement in treatment
- Collaborated with a treatment partner to implement the Building a Better Life curriculum, which builds on the Good Lives' model of facilitating desistance from crime by emphasizing goals the client wishes to work toward (e.g., "I will identify 2 to 3 peers who can be a positive influence on me"), rather than focusing solely on avoidance goals (e.g., "I will stay away from my peers who are a bad influence on me"). Based on assessed risk and client goals, supervision strategies included individual psychological counseling as well as support in procuring health insurance, obtaining employment or education credentials, assessing the need for substance addiction treatment and mental health services, and referring participants to appropriate services.

### Multnomah County, Oregon

The Multnomah County ISI is piloting a specialized probation unit to serve youth and young adults (age 15 to 25) who are assessed as high risk.

#### Key Program Features:

- Trained staff and supervisors on topics related to youth and young adult brain development and CBIs, including reviewing videos of their skills in practice and providing feedback
- Incorporated a more trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approach into several aspects of the unit, including staff training, service delivery, and the physical environment





## New York City Department of Probation

The New York City ISI is piloting a specialized youth and young adult caseload model for clients ages 16 to 24 who are assessed as moderate to high risk.

### Key Program Features:

- Administered age-appropriate risk and needs assessment tools to inform supervision and programming, including rigorous individual and group CBIs specifically developed for youth and young adults
- Used elements from the positive youth development framework to better engage the youth and young adults and encourage behavior change, including developing positive relationships between the young person and probation officer
- Trained probation staff in adolescent brain science and positive youth development



## North Carolina Department of Public Safety

The FY2015 North Carolina ISI implemented a program to better serve people with mental health needs who are on probation by establishing specialty mental health caseloads in nine counties.

### Key Program Features:

- Began requiring all probation staff to participate in a Mental Health First Aid course to help understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance addictions
- Trained all probation officers and managers in responding to crisis situations, interpreting risk and needs assessment results to connect their clients with appropriate behavioral health services, and helping clients with medication adherence; training also included self-care strategies to address vicarious trauma
- Designed smaller specialty mental health probation caseloads and assigned probation officers for these caseloads through a selection process based on the officer's performance with comprehensive case management strategies
- Provided ongoing training and monthly case consultations between specialty mental health probation officers and a licensed clinical social worker



## Somerset County, Pennsylvania, Board of Commissioners

The Somerset County ISI established a day reporting center (DRC) with two on-site probation officers to increase capacity for delivering specialized supervision to remote communities.

### Key Program Features:

- Provided counseling for substance addictions on site and supported collaboration with the Somerset Single County Authority for Drug and Alcohol to place clients in treatment facilities
- Trained DRC staff and probation officers in motivational interviewing and other EBPs and trained first-line supervisors in a collaborative coaching model to provide ongoing support and mentorship to their staff
- Addressed the lack of resources in this rural area by providing transportation to participants, arranging teleconference meetings for medical needs, and using online courses to enhance program offerings

## Connecticut Judicial Branch

The Connecticut ISI is expanding its Forensic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (F-CBT) program to two additional sites, a continuing effort from an FY2013 Second Chance Act grant that piloted this approach designed for probation officers to help people on probation address specific thinking patterns that lead to poor decision-making.

### Key Program Features:

- Built on the FY2013 grant project, in which probation staff worked with Central Connecticut State University to develop CBT-informed scripts focused on criminogenic risk factors such as antisocial companions, lack of connection to school or work, and substance use. These scripts guided probation officers' routine interactions with the adults they supervise so that every contact became an opportunity to restructure thoughts that drive risky and criminal behaviors. The FY2013 project reduced recidivism among people on probation assessed as having medium and high risk.
- Increased sustainability by developing a staff-training program in which coaches are selected among supervision officers who previously received F-CBT training to train their peers and facilitate ongoing booster sessions
- Designed an information technology platform to collect and catalog taped officer and client interactions to support quality assurance, staff development, and risk reduction
- Created reports to measure F-CBT utilization and trained adult probation office chiefs in how to give feedback and reinforce F-CBT practices among officers

## Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Common Pleas Court

The Cuyahoga County ISI provides community-based alternatives to jail incarceration for community supervision and court staff to use in cases that involve a defendant who has behavioral health needs.

### Key Program Features:

- Hired a crisis intervention/behavioral health specialist to train staff, community partners, and court officials to recognize and respond appropriately to people with behavioral health needs and in crisis situations
- Offered treatment-focused options—such as de-escalation centers or hospitalization—as alternatives to jail for mental health stabilization

## Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections

The Louisiana ISI developed two programs that use short-term incarceration and structured supervision to assess, support, and sanction people on probation assessed as high risk.

### Key Program Features:

- Used intensified case management and probation supervision in conjunction with sanctions for participants in two established agency programs: the Swift and Certain Program and the Reentry Court Workforce Development Program
- Increased collaboration between probation and courts through regular court hearings, giving judges and probation officers the opportunity to review clients' status and make decisions about sentencing and supervision using a structured sanction and performance grid



## Office of the Attorney General of Virginia

The Office of the Attorney General of Virginia ISI strengthened pre- and post-release services for people involved in gangs in Norfolk, Virginia.

### Key Program Features:

- Administered Thinking for a Change—a CBI that was developed by the National Institute of Corrections and focuses on improving thinking patterns, social skills, and problem-solving skills—to participants while they were incarcerated
- Implemented the Family Partnership Model, an EBP that helps participants and their families build stronger relationships and overcome challenges
- Provided intensive case management to address participant's distinct needs, such as employment, housing, and behavioral health services

## Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

The Ohio ISI tailored supervision strategies to the specific needs of young adults on probation and parole in four counties who were assessed as moderate to high risk.

### Key Program Features:

- Trained probation and parole officers in young adult brain development, trauma-informed care, building problem-solving and social skills, and CBIs for people seeking employment
- Piloted new community supervision and treatment policies and strategies for young adults, such as increasing time for home visits for officers and using text messaging to communicate with clients, to enhance engagement

## Virginia Department of Corrections

The Virginia Department of Corrections ISI designed and implemented an automated administrative response matrix (ARM) to enhance officers' responses to technical violations and reduce probation and parole revocations.

### Key Program Features:

- Embedded the ARM into their existing case management system
- Guided probation officers in selecting incentives and sanctions consistently and swiftly when responding to various behaviors
- Implemented the ARM in 10 pilot sites that represent a cross-section of the state's rural and urban localities
- Enhanced support for implementation by developing a team of officers who were most skilled in using the ARM and created learning plans for other staff

## Wisconsin Department of Corrections

The Wisconsin ISI developed a quality improvement plan that incorporated methods for assessing probation officers' interactions and procedures to provide measurable feedback to staff.

### Key Program Features:

- Trained field supervisors statewide in topics such as supporting officer interactions with clients, modeling appropriate behavior, and targeting criminogenic needs
- Implemented a coaching model that included recording office visits and allowing coaches and supervisors to listen and score the degree of adherence to EBPs

## Judiciary of Arizona

The Arizona ISI is conducting research and providing training to advance the use of EBPs and graduated sanctions among probation officers and build capacity in its existing EPICS-II Program.

### Key Program Features:

- Delivered training to all probation officers to support their ability to deliver CBIs, used the SOARING 2 system to evaluate their understanding and skills, and provided ongoing individualized skill development for officers in sustaining EBPs
- Offered additional training to officers with the skills needed and interest in serving as coaches to their peers

## Massachusetts Parole Board

The Massachusetts ISI is implementing the Parole Recovery Opportunity supervision program to increase support for people who are on parole, have a history of opioid use, and are assessed as having high risk and high needs.

### Key Program Features:

- Combines medication-assisted treatment with behavioral health counseling and high-intensity supervision
- Increases collaboration among partners to ensure that each person on parole receives supportive and efficient case planning during their transitional and supervision periods

## North Carolina Department of Public Safety

The FY2017 North Carolina ISI is using existing criminal justice agency data and predictive analytics to help identify early warning signs of noncompliance with supervision conditions and tailoring supervision to mitigate them.

### Key Program Features:

- Examines existing data on characteristics and outcomes for people on supervision to develop risk-need profiles and then applies the profiles to people currently under supervision
- Trains supervision officers in ways to incorporate the tailored practices into case management

## Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

The Pennsylvania ISI is piloting a specialized program to reduce supervision violations among women on parole.

### Key Program Features:

- Uses a gender-responsive risk and needs assessment to inform decisions about pre- and post-release services, including trauma-informed care, enhanced mental health treatment, health care, and peer support
- Intends to place parole agents at each service provider's office and provided additional support such as transportation assistance and child care, with the goals of better engaging participants in routine supervision meetings and reducing failure-to-report violations



## San Diego, California, Association of Governments

The San Diego ISI strengthened coordination among the San Diego County Sheriff and Probation Departments and the Behavioral Health Services Division to improve criminal justice and behavioral health outcomes for people on probation.

### Key Program Features:

- Formed multi-disciplinary teams among the probation department, behavioral health services division, and community-based service provider to inform treatment plans and streamline the reentry process
- Began conducting a validated risk and needs assessment and providing services while individuals are still in custody to establish a relationship, followed by creating a treatment plan to implement upon release
- Instituted pre- and post-release multi-disciplinary team meetings with clients. The multi-disciplinary team serves to assist clients with specific needs once in the community, including arranging transportation from the facility on the day of release and providing referrals to housing and treatment for substance addictions



## St. Louis County, Missouri, Department of Justice Services

The St. Louis County ISI implemented three EBPs to reduce the length of stay for people detained in the local jail for technical violations of probation.

### Key Program Features:

- Provided legal services to people with outstanding municipal warrants, debts, and other legal issues, including negotiating for community service in lieu of fines and fees for clients
- Developed an expedited processing program for people detained in the county jail for technical violations of probation
- Addressed the rising rate of heroin dependence among people on probation by providing medication-assisted treatment