

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
Pursuant to P.A. 114 of 2009
Section 424(12)
Demonstration Project – Evidence Based Practices

Section 424 of P.A. 114 of 2009 stipulated by May 1, 2010, the department shall report to the senate and house appropriations subcommittees on corrections, the senate and house fiscal agencies, and the state budget director on the status of the demonstration project prescribed under this section, including information on all of the following: (a) Demonstration project locations and participating courts; (b) the number of probationers participating in the pilot categorized by location and offense; (c) evaluation status and methodology; and (d) preliminary results, if any.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT LOCATIONS AND PARTICIPATING COURTS

The Department of Corrections and State Court Administrative Office agreed to implement the demonstration project in two phases. The first phase of the project will include both Genesee and Ingham Counties – these two counties were identified in the Council of State Governments’ Justice Center Report on Analyses of Crime, Community Corrections, and Sentencing Policies as two of the top five counties in Michigan with violent crime rates over 500 per 100,000 residents. Phase two of the project will include two other counties identified in the report with high violent crime rates.

Judge Yuille from the 7th Judicial Circuit in Genesee County and Judge Draganchuk from the 30th Judicial Circuit in Ingham County have both agreed to participate in the demonstration project. The project is expected to begin May 2010.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The department has assigned a probation agent in both Genesee and Ingham Counties to supervise a specialized caseload for high-risk, high-need probationers. All offenders sentenced to a term of probation by the participating judges will be assessed by the agent using the COMPAS risk/needs assessment tool. Probationers that are scored high-risk will also be assessed to determine their criminogenic needs. All probationers that are scored as being high need will be referred into residential services for a period of up to six months and enrolled into evidence-based interventions to address their criminogenic needs. To date, no offenders have been assessed to participate in the project.

Residential Program Curriculum

The residential program will address the criminal behavior and substance abuse needs of the high-risk/high-need probationers. Treatment is expected to assist the offender’s to develop an understanding of the addiction and relapse process, enabling them to identify and correct attitudes about drug use and criminal behavior, address triggers of drug use and criminal behavior, improve level of functioning, and develop pro-social alternatives to drug use and criminality. The treatment paradigm will address all aspects of criminal and addictive behavior using evidence-based treatment, including motivational interviewing; cognitive restructuring; relapse prevention; and training in areas such as anger management, problem solving, and social skills. The interventions will target all aspects of the offenders’ problems, including environmental factors, cognitive factors, behavior, physical and emotional factors.

The goal is to place these offenders in a residential program designed to restrict their movements to only pro-social activities and to provide a cognitive restructuring therapeutic (CBT) intervention. For this program, the department has selected the Hazelden *A New Direction* program as the CBT curriculum to be delivered. As it is likely the thinking errors that lead to anti-social behaviors for these populations are deeply ingrained, the residential stay will last up to 180 days.

Training

Criminal justice stakeholders, including the participating county judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and probation agents were invited to attend a Felony Sentencing Seminar sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court - Michigan Judicial Institute held on March 30, 2010.

The seminar offered two presentations: Dr. Timothy Brennan, Ph.D and Vice President of Northpointe Institute for Public Management reviewed the science supporting evidence-based instrument (i.e., COMPAS) and mechanics of using the risk and needs assessment instrument for criminal justice practitioners who must make decisions regarding community placement, supervision, treatment, and case management. The Honorable Roger K. Warren, Sacramento Supreme Court Judge (retired) provided the second presentation and reviewed the research data on evidence-based practices and discussed how its application can be incorporated into Michigan sentencing process to reduce offender recidivism in appropriate cases.

Probation agents assigned to the demonstration project have received training in collaborative case management and will be trained on issues of substance abuse, motivational interviewing, mental health and drug testing.

EVALUATION STATUS AND METHODOLOGY

The strongest evaluation model would utilize random assignment of offenders meeting pilot project criteria to assign subjects to treatment and control groups. This method would produce the most valid and reliable estimates of program impact. However, because it is anticipated that all offenders assessed as high risk and high need will be referred to residential placement and intensive interventions, such random assignment will not be possible.

Therefore, the impact evaluation will need to utilize quasi-experimental methods to estimate program impacts. Those methods could include several possible approaches:

- Matched comparison groups selected from either the pilot sites, other counties or both
- Statistical matching, including calculation of propensity scores and matching on those results
- Pre and post pilot comparisons both within the pilot sites and across comparison sites. Those comparisons could employ multiple techniques include difference-of-difference, statistical controls, etc.

The evaluation will include process assessment to determine the extent to which (at a minimum) offenders were assessed for risk and needs, the extent to which treatment and other interventions

were appropriately matched to assessed risk and needs, amount and quality of offender participation in programs, enrollment and completion rates, staff training in evidence based case management techniques.

Planning for the evaluation will be done collaboratively, involving the local judiciary, local community corrections board(s) and the MDOC Office of Research and Planning (ORP). Working with project stakeholders, ORP staff will identify proposed outcome and process measures, data sources, data collection methods, analytical strategies, etc. The evaluation plan will include a follow up period (after discharge from residential placement) of at least two years, with assessment to occur at one year and two year intervals at a minimum.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

There are no results to report to date.