STATUS REPORT: MEASURING OUTCOMES

Prepared by
The Center for Applied Research and Analysis
The Institute for Social Research
University of New Mexico

Prepared for
Community Corrections
Probation and Parole Division,
New Mexico Corrections Department

Robert J. Perry, Cabinet Secretary, NMCD
Kevin H. Dooley, Director, Probation & Parole Division
Erma Sedillo, Community Corrections Administrator

June 1999

CENTER FOR APPLIED RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

RESEARCH TEAM STAFF

Data Analysis and Writing:	*Jennifer Rioux, M.A.*
Statistical Consultant:	*Rebecca Frerichs, M.A.*
Principal Investigator:	*Paul Guerin, Ph.D.*
Research Assistants:	*Felicitas Marquart* *Jeanette Valdez, B.A.*

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 2

MEASURING OUTCOMES 2
Question 39: "Please provide us with an approximate breakdown of your average caseload by type of current offense." 2
Question 40: "Do you identify intermediate objectives to help you in assessing whether an offender is making progress toward achieving a goal?" 4
Question 40a: "If you answered *Yes* to the previous question, please explain how the intermediate objectives you identify relate to the successful completion of a goal outlined in the case plan?" 4
Question 41: "What modifications would make it possible to increase your level of involvement with individual clients, resulting in more in-depth knowledge of offenders' problems and needs?" 5
Question 42: "Do you believe that increased involvement with offenders would lead to higher rates of success in achieving the objectives and goals outlined in their case plans?"7 Question 42a: "Do you believe that incre success in achieving the objectives and goals outlined in their case plans?" 7
Question 43: "Among the following three categories, which one best fits your sense of your role as a Probation/ Parole Officer." 8
Question 44: "In terms of the overall mission of the Probation and Parole Division, how do you feel funds could be best distributed to monitor offenders, provide rehabilitative services and maintain public safety?" 9

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS 11

List of Tables

Table 1. Q40a How Do Intermediate Objectives Relate to Goal Completion? 5
Table 2. Q 41 What Modifications Would Make Increased Levels of Involvement Possible? 6
Table 3. Q42a Why would Increased Involvement with Offenders Lead to Greater Success? 8
Table 4. Q 44 How Can Funds Be Best Distributed to Monitor, Rehabilitate and Maintain Public Safety 10

List of Figures

Figure 1. Q 39 Breakdown of Officer Caseload by Type of Current Offense 3
Figure 2. Q 39 Breakdown of "Other" Answers for Officer Caseload by Offense Type 3
Figure 3. Q 40 Do You Identify Intermediate Objectives to Help You Assess Whether An Offender is Making Progress Toward Achieving Goals? 4
Figure 4. Q 42 Do You Believe That Increased Involvement With Offenders Would Lead to Higher Rates of Success Achieving the Objectives Outlined in Their Case Plans? 7
Figure 5. Q 43 Among the Following Three Categories, Which One Best Fits Your Sense of Your Role as a Probation/ Parole Officer? 9

INTRODUCTION

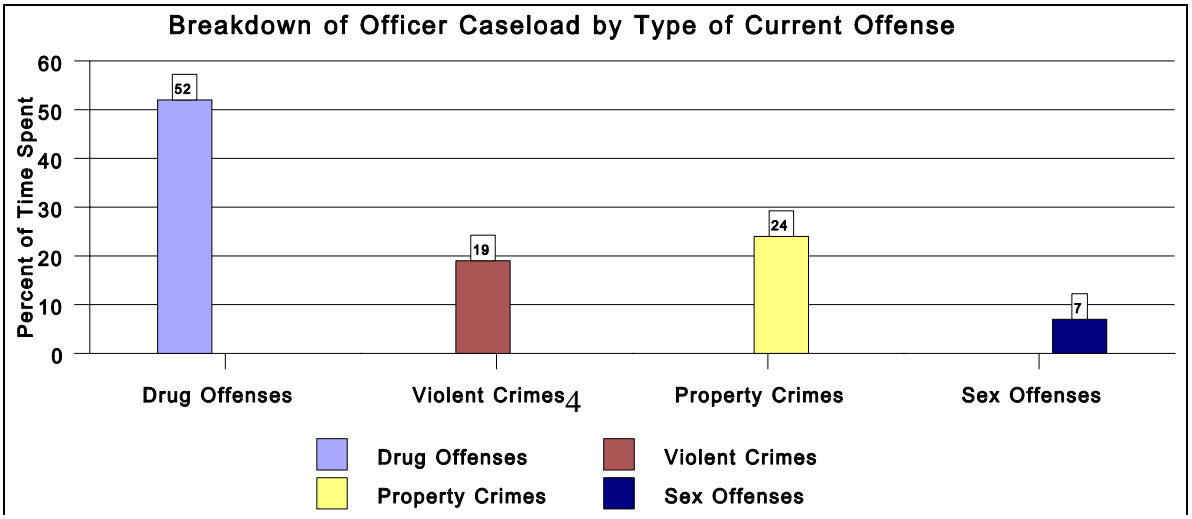
In our previous status report, we focused on the scoring procedures utilized in the Risk Needs Assessment instrument and other relevant indicators used by Probation/Parole officers to anticipate successes or failures with clients. Respondents stated that the scoring procedures on the RNA have limited accuracy and relevance, mostly for Regular Supervision and Community Corrections populations. Some of the specific critiques included the questionable accuracy involved in the self-report nature of many categories and the lack of a category for sex offenders, a portion of the population that they feel should be explicitly delineated. In this status report, we will be covering our analysis of the section of the PPO Survey in which we inquired about the tools and strategies used by Probation/ Parole officers to manage and monitor the outcomes of their clients. These questions will provide further information on the discrepancies between the measures incorporated in the Risk/ Needs Assessment instrument and the mechanisms regularly used by officers to track the progress of their clients, thereby developing a protocol for anticipating outcomes.

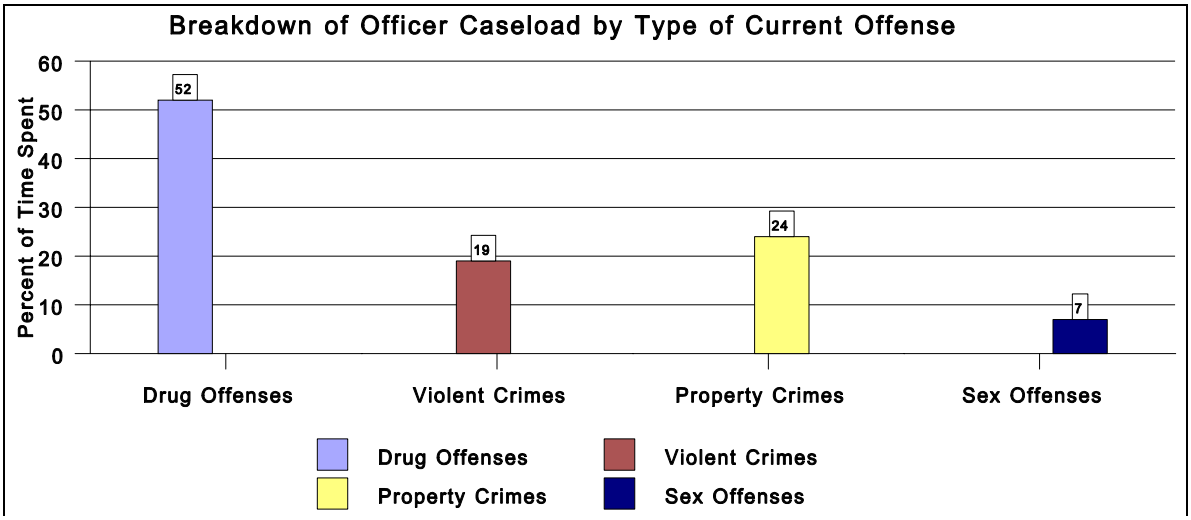
MEASURING OUTCOMES

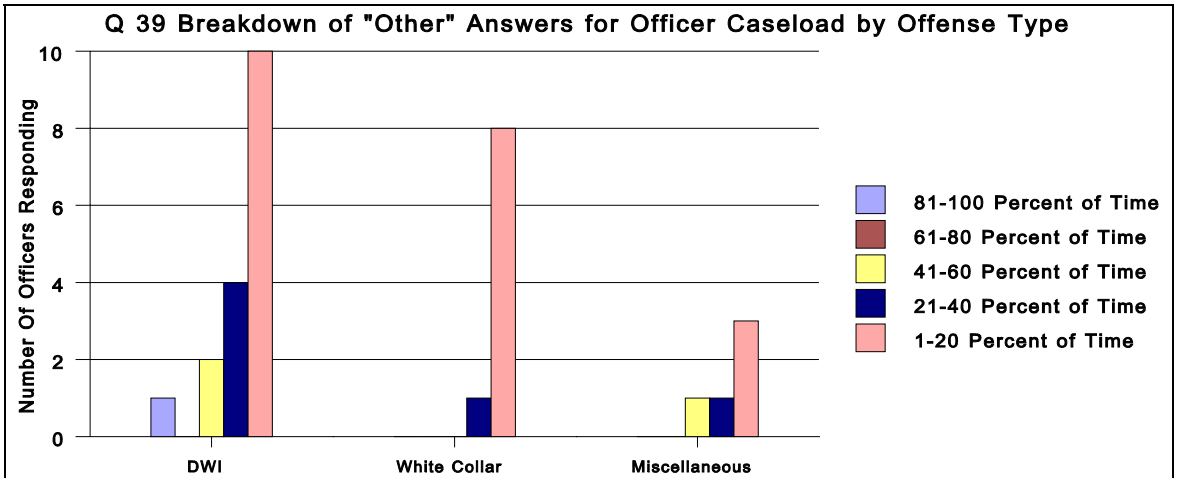
Question 39: "Please provide us with an approximate breakdown of your average caseload by type of current offense."

We asked officers to tell us what their typical caseload consisted of in terms of the types of offenses their clients had committed. A handful of officers provided us with information that added up to either less than or more than one hundred percent which skewed the following chart to add up to a total of 102%. Presented below is the median percentage of time spent by officers overall dealing with each type of offense as a proportionate amount of their caseload. Officers overwhelmingly told us that they most commonly deal with *Drug Offenses*, 52% of the time overall. This finding is relevant because decreased substance abuse is considered by PPOs to be one of the primary criteria for offender success of failure. All officers combined deal with *Property Offenses* as the second largest portion of their caseload, 24% of offenses overall. Officers told us that *Violent Crimes* make up almost a fifth of their caseload at 19% of the total of their current offenses at the time of the survey. The fact that PPOs find the assaultive offense category on the RNA to be ineffective should be seriously considered since violent offenses comprise one fifth of their total caseload. Lastly officers reported that *Sex Offenses* were 7% of their caseload overall, yet there is no category for sex offenders on the assessment form. This oversight should be addressed considering the fact that sex offenders are nearly one tenth of the total caseload administered by PPOs responding to this survey. Twelve officers provided us with no information in regards to this question.

A number of officers also responded that portions of their caseload fall outside of the four categories presented in the survey. Of those answers recorded in the category "Other", the following chart represents the distribution of responses, the two most discernable of which are DWI and white collar offenses. The largest number of "Other" responses falls under the category of DWI offenses, which also points to the relevance of decreased substance abuse as an indicator of offender success or failure.

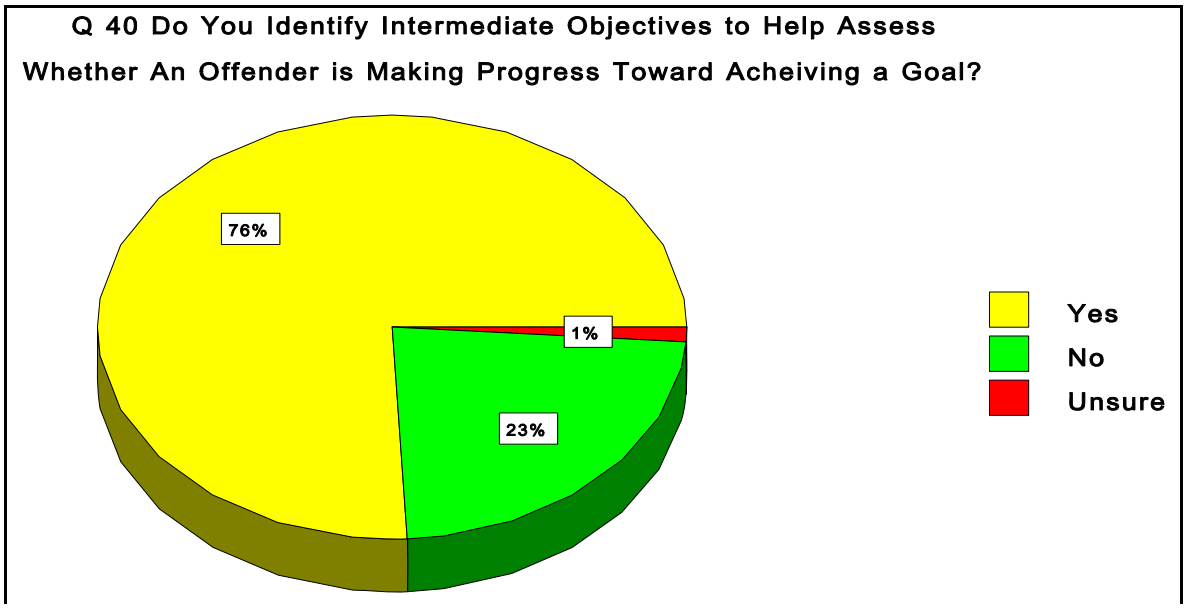



Breakdown of Officer Caseload by Type of Current Offense
Percent of Time Spent
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
52
19
24
7
Drug Offenses
Violent Crimes
Property Crimes
Sex Offenses
Drug Offenses
Violent Crimes
Property Crimes
Sex Offenses


Q 39 Breakdown of "Other" Answers for Officer Caseload by Offense Type
Number Of Officers Responding
10
8
6
4
2
0
DWI
White Collar
Miscellaneous
81-100 Percent of Time
61-80 Percent of Time
41-60 Percent of Time
21-40 Percent of Time
1-20 Percent of Time

Question 40: "Do you identify intermediate objectives to help you in assessing whether an offender is making progress toward achieving a goal?"

Seventy six percent of officers reported that they do establish intermediate objectives for their clients to assess whether they are making progress towards achieving case plan goals. The remainder of officers stated that they do not establish these intermediate performance goals for their clients. With



almost one quarter of officers stating that they do not identify intermediate objectives for their clients, it may be that a path toward the completion of goals has not been sufficiently outlined for clients. Implementing a standard procedure for establishing intermediate objectives may be useful in promoting accountability for client outcomes.

Question 40a: "If you answered *Yes* to the previous question, please explain how the intermediate objectives you identify relate to the successful completion of a goal outlined in the case plan?"

Many of the responses we received to this question were not comparable because a large number of PPOs did not seem to understand the intention of this question. This may reflect that this question was not communicated in the most effective manner possible or that officers are not used to reflecting on their case management strategies from the perspective of intermediate objectives. Slightly over half of the answers we received did not provide relevant information in terms of

looking at strategies PPOs use to facilitate client progress. Instead of telling us how they implement these strategies, PPOs told us what the strategies were or why they implement them. These responses do not provide useful information on whether PPOs know how to utilize intermediate objectives to the best advantage of their clients. In the chart below, only category three reflects an appropriate response to the intended question. Twenty-two percent of officers provided relevant information about how they work with intermediate objectives to break large goals into manageable steps the client can understand and work with. The most frequent response offered by PPOs was a simple listing of the possible goals they may use in working with clients. Almost 30% of officers responded by listing these possible objectives while another quarter of officers told us why it is useful to establish intermediate objectives rather than explaining how they go about establishing them. Fifteen percent of respondents told us how they feel the objectives function to motivate their clients, while 5% told us that client input is useful in making objectives relevant and motivating. A small percentage responded by telling us how they set up objectives which assist them in tracking their clients'progress rather than describing how they establish objectives to assist the client in taking steps towards the goals outlined in their case plans. This may seem to be a subtle distinction but further training in using intermediate objectives to facilitate positive client outcomes may benefit officers who find that they their clients have a hard time conceptualizing the overall plan that will be implemented during Probation or Parole, thus resulting in poor compliance or adherence to imposed conditions. We received 85 responses to this question, and 23 PPOs opted not to answer this question.

Q 40a How Do Intermediate Objectives Relate to Goal Completion?		
	Frequency (85)	Percent
Listing of possible goals	25	29%
Provide bureaucratic rationale for objectives	20	24%
Breaking larger goals into intermediate steps	19	22%
Conceptualize how objectives motivate	13	15%
Client Input/ Review objectives with client	4	5%
Using objectives for tracking, not client goals	3	4%
Don't know	1	1%

Table 1

Question 41: "What modifications would make it possible to increase your level of involvement with individual clients, resulting in more in-depth knowledge of offenders' problems and needs?"

In asking this question, the research team chose to offer a couple of examples that had been demonstrated as relevant in the pilot survey conducted with a small sample of officers and use these to provide context for possible answers. However, in providing these examples, it is possible that the influence of suggestion played a role in the increased frequency with which these answers were cited. The two examples cited in the survey question were the two most frequently cited responses of less paperwork and smaller caseloads. The increased frequency of these answers may be accurate in terms of the role they play in constricting officers' ability to spend more time with each individual client, but suggestion may have also played a role in the large percentage of answers accounted for by these two categories, a combined two thirds of the total. Officers also told us that better computer equipment would facilitate the completion of their daily responsibilities and free up their time for client supervision while they also felt that less time in the office and more time in the field would mean they would have greater information about offenders' lifestyle, whereabouts and behavior. Presumably less time in the office and less paperwork are related categories. PPOs stated that Probation/ Parole offices were not adequately staffed and that if they were able to delegate some of their current responsibilities to other personnel, this would also free up their time to pursue more involved supervision strategies. Other answers included providing officers with better vehicles and better equipment that would increase their safety and thereby their level of comfort in pursuing greater involvement with clients. They also stated that they felt they could spend less time in court and that more support from management would allow them to prioritize time spent on client supervision versus other aspects of their daily responsibilities. Six officers chose not to respond to this question.

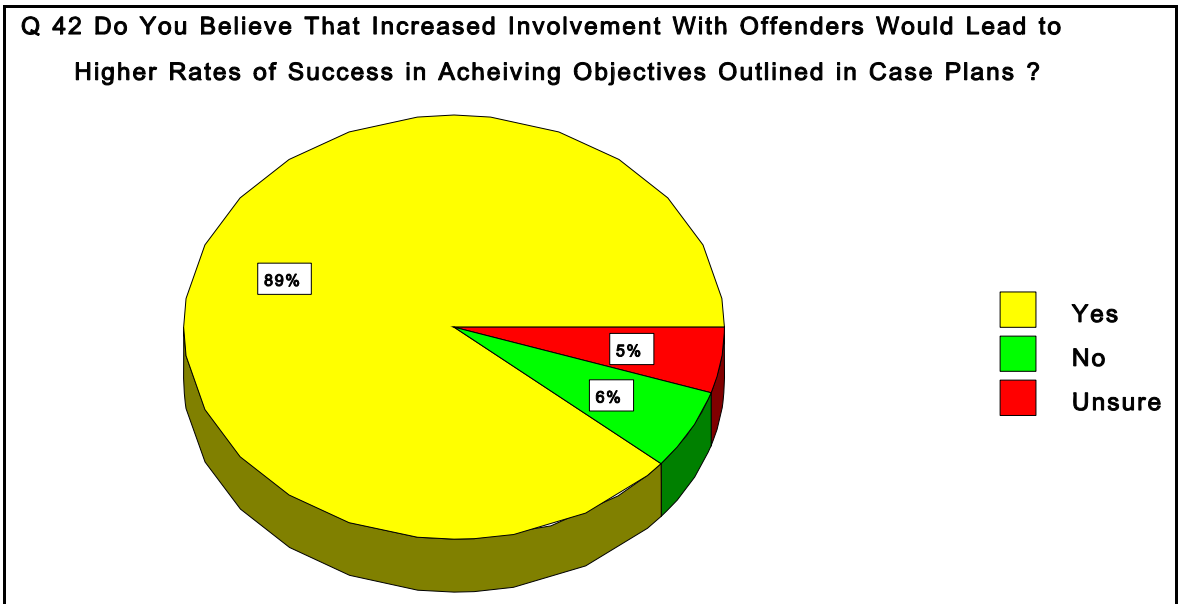
Q 41. What Modifications Would Make Increased Levels of Involvement Possible?		
	Frequency (284)	Percent
Less Paperwork	92	32%
Smaller Caseloads	85	30%
Better Computer Equipment	22	8%
More Time in the Field	19	6.5%
More Staff/ Delegation of Responsibilities	17	6%
Better Vehicles	10	3.5%
Other Miscellaneous Answers	9	3%
Better Equipment	8	3%
Fewer Court Appearances/ Less Field Time	8	3%
Support from Management/ More	8	3%

Increased Interaction with Service Providers	6	2%

Table 2

Question 42: "Do you believe that increased involvement with offenders would lead to higher rates of success in achieving the objectives and goals outlined in their case plans?"

In order to determine whether it would be worthwhile to implement some of the suggested modifications we asked officers if they believed there was a relationship between increased involvement with offenders and rates of successful completion of case plan goals. Eighty-nine percent of PPOs answering this question responded affirmatively, that they felt increased involvement with clients would result in higher rates of success. Since almost 90% of officers believe that more contact time with offenders would positively affect outcomes, it may be important to make the necessary modifications to allow officers to increase contact with clients in order to allow for maximum supervisory effectiveness. Responses to Question 41 should be seriously considered as potential strategies to be implemented to free up PPO time for increased monitoring and case management efforts. Six percent of officers did not feel that more contact time with



offenders would affect outcomes and 5% responded that they were unsure whether increased contact would ultimately affect results. Twelve officers chose not to answer this question.

Question 42a: " Why do you believe that increased involvement with offenders would lead to higher rates of success in achieving the objectives and goals outlined in their case plans?"

This question was aimed at gathering information about officers rationale for increasing involvement with offenders as a means of increasing successful completion of goals by clients. The research team wanted to know how officers would use the increased contact time with clients to support positive outcomes. One third of the responding officers stated that the increased involvement with offenders would take the form of providing social support in order to encourage clients adherence to conditions and attainment of goals. Almost a quarter of the officers simply told us that increased monitoring efforts by the PPO lead to increased compliance by the offender because they are provided with greater structure. Roughly ten percent of the PPOs stated that increased contact with the clients allows the officer to collect more, detailed and in-depth information about a client's life, giving them more leeway in terms of their supervision strategies and another ten percent told us that greater involvement with the client provides the opportunity to refer to more beneficial services. Nine percent of officers note that increased involvement allows for a focus on prevention, rather than punishment as a supervision philosophy while eight percent told us that increased contact just means that will have more opportunity to catch an offender violating their conditions. Those officers citing better communication with clients as a byproduct of increased involvement seem to be echoing their colleagues who state that providing social support through a facilitating relationship encourages successful outcomes. Ten PPOs did not respond to this question.

Q. 42a Why Do You Believe That Increased Involvement Leads to Greater Offender Success?		
	Frequency (123)	Percent
Provide Social Support	40	32.5%
Increased Monitoring = Compliance	29	23.5%
More Information About Client	13	10.5%
Better Service Provision	13	10.5%

Focus on Prevention	11	9%
Catch Offenders Violating	10	8%
Better Communication With Clients	7	6%

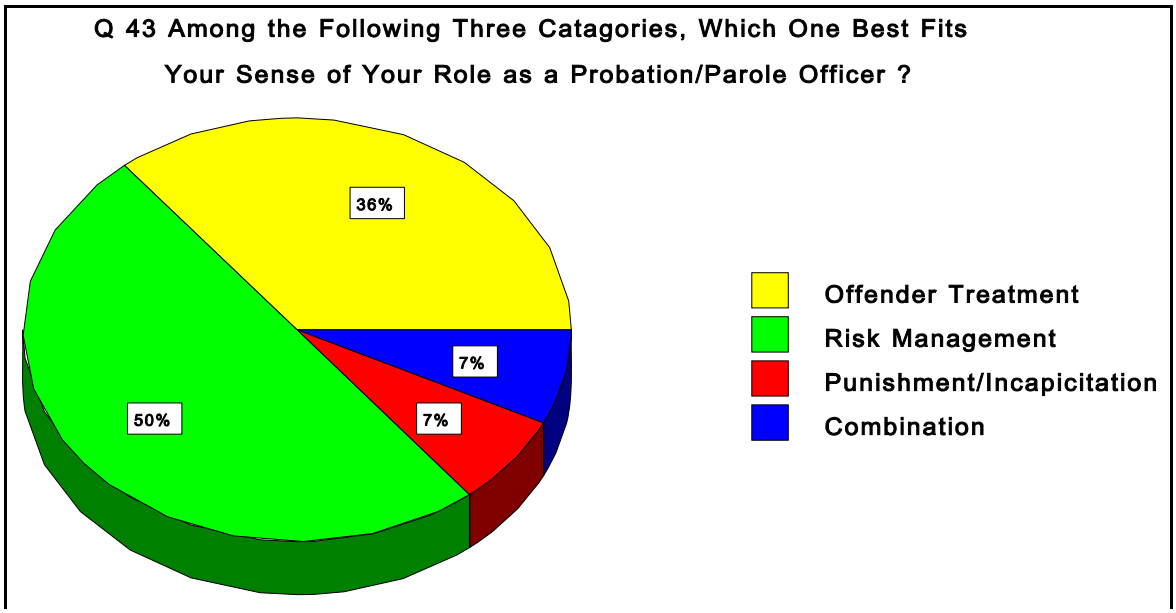
Table 3

Question 43: "Among the following three categories, which one best fits your sense of your role as a Probation/ Parole Officer? Are you primarily concerned with 1) Offender Treatment 2) Risk Management and 3) Punishment/ Incapacitation?"

The research team posed this question in order to solicit the mental frameworks officers use to situate their supervision strategies. Fifty percent of respondents told us that their philosophy is one of risk management, primarily referring to protection of the community and preventing probationers or parolees from reoffending. Thirty-six percent of responding officers told us that they feel their main priority is service provision to offenders, in the form of treatment and resources useful in keeping clients from pursuing a criminal lifestyle. Only seven percent of PPOs told us that their primary supervision objective is punishment/ incapacitation. Some of these PPOs may be dealing with higher risk offenders under intensive supervision, while others may simply feel that this is the appropriate supervision philosophy under which to function. An additional 7% told us that their primary concerns fall into more than one category. Most officers who responded this way cited a combination of all three categories. It may be advisable for the Division of Probation and Parole to clarify their objectives for the PPO staff and establish priorities for a coherent supervision philosophy that can be adhered to by all. Six officers did not respond to this question.

Question 44: "In terms of the overall mission of the Probation and Parole Division, how do you feel funds could be best distributed to monitor offenders, provide rehabilitative services and maintain public safety?

This question aimed to get at officers perceptions of how they felt funds could be most effectively distributed to facilitate the overall mission of the Probation & Parole Division. More specifically, we asked PPOs to think about how funds could be used to improve the monitoring of offenders,



provision of services and protection of the public. The first way this data was analyzed was to obtain a simple frequency for each category, the number of times officers cited a particular funding priority. The chart below demonstrates those areas of spending which officers deemed most crucial, in descending order. Officers' first priority was to spend division money on job development and employment resources for offenders at 20% of cites, and secondarily to fund additional educational services for their clients, accounting for 19% of all responses. The third funding priority cited by PPOs was increased financing for substance abuse treatment generally with some officers specifying short, term outpatient treatment, this accounted for 16% of all responses. Although it is difficult to say how many of the cites for general substance abuse also cover long, term inpatient care, there were 11 officers who specifically cited the need to fund residential or half-way house type substance abuse treatment at 2% of all cites. The fourth priority cited by officers as in need of additional funding was counseling and mental health services, cited 8.5% of the time by respondents and 7 percent of the responses fell under the category of increased funding for PPO equipment and training.

How can funds be best distributed to monitor, rehabilitate and maintain public safety?		

	Frequency (484)	Percent
Job Development/ Employment Resources	96	20%
Educational Services - GED, life skills, parenting	92	19%
Substance Abuse Treatment: General/ Short-term, Outpatient	78	16%
Counseling & Mental Health Services	41	8.5%
Equipment & Training for PPOs - cars, computers, vests	34	7%
Increased Monitoring & Surveillance, Intensive Supervision	21	4%
Service Provision/ Rehabilitation	20	4%
Miscellaneous Other Suggestions	20	4%
Transportation & Housing Assistance	18	4%
More Staff/ Delegation of Tasks, Better Salaries	17	3.5%
Electronic Monitoring	14	3%
Substance Abuse Treatment: Long-term, Residential	11	2%
Sex Offender Treatment	9	2%
More prisons/ Incarceration	7	1.5%
Public Education/ Community Involvement	6	1.5%

We have also analyzed each category of funds distribution to obtain an average percentage of funding designated to be spent on each activity or service. Since officers were not asked to rank pre-determined categories but to provide both the categories and the distribution, their answers are not comparable. For this reason, we are only providing the average percentage of money slated to be spent in any given area cited by officers choosing that category. As noted above, the number of times a category is cited varies widely, so categories with 96 cites are weighted equally with responses from categories with six cites. For this reason, the distribution of percentage of funds to be spent in all categories is equal to more than 100%. In the most frequently cited category, the average percentage of funds officers stated should be distributed to Job Development / Employment Resources is 19%. For the second most frequently cited category of Educational Services, the average percentage of funds officers said should be spent in this area was 19%. Under the category of General Substance Abuse Treatment, the average among all officers choosing this category was that 28% of funds should be concentrated in this area. Those officers who chose Mental Health and Counseling as a priority told us they would like to see 17% of funds spent for these services. In terms of additional Equipment and Training for PPOs, the average percent of funds officers felt should be spent for this purpose was 28%.

Summary and Recommendations

This status report has discussed the tools and strategies used by Probation/ Parole officers to manage client outcomes and the mechanisms used by officers to track client progress. Questions included in this portion of the survey also cover other factors influencing caseload management, such as type of caseload. Officers told us that over half of their caseload is comprised of *Drug Offense* clients and another 24% of the caseload is made up of *Property Offenses*. We asked officers if they regularly established intermediate objectives to facilitate achievement of case plan goals. While seventy-six percent of PPOs told us that they do use intermediate objectives as a strategy to enhance goal completion, only 22% provided us with an appropriate explanation of how they use objectives. This indicates a lack of consistency amongst officers in terms of how they may establish or utilize intermediate objectives with clients and perhaps a lack of understanding as to how this mechanism can most effectively benefit offenders who are under their supervision. When we asked officers whether they felt increasing their level of involvement with clients would contribute to successful outcomes, eight-nine percent responded affirmatively and the most frequently offered explanations for why this increased involvement may improve outcomes were that it provides additional necessary social support and that clients are more inclined to comply with increased monitoring efforts. We then inquired about the modifications officers felt would free up more of their time to spend on case management and the most frequently cited responses were 1) less paperwork, 2) smaller caseloads, 3) better computer equipment, and 4) more staff or better delegation of responsibility to 5) allow for more time in the field. Lastly, we asked officers about the philosophies behind their supervision strategies and their sense of how funds could be best distributed to monitor offenders, rehabilitate and maintain public safety. Half of the responding officers told us that risk management is their primary goal while another 36% stated their primary concern as offender treatment. In order to meet these goals of managing risks and treating offenders, we solicited officer opinion on how they felt funds could be most effectively distributed and they most frequently mentioned as their top three priorities: 1) job development, 2) educational services and 3) substance abuse treatment.

These answers echo officers statements that a lack of secure employment or the skills necessary to maintain employment are essential to successful outcomes, second only to resolving substance abuse issues. In this section of the survey, officers have highlighted those aspects of their job duties that they feel interfere with offender management and have provided suggestions for further facilitation of their supervisory responsibilities. They have also told us about their philosophical orientation toward supervision and how they feel division money could be spent to increase the chances of offender success. Officers may benefit from some standardization or clarification of Division procedure, and alternatively, the Division may benefit from further solicitation of officer input in determining appropriate policy and procedure.