

“Broken Windows” Probation: The Next Step in Fighting Crime

REINVENTING PROBATION COUNCIL

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Table of Contents

PREFACE—3 MILLION IN OUR MIDST	1
WHY PROBATION MATTERS	2
<i>Probation: A Matter of Life or Death</i>	2
<i>Why Probation Isn't Working</i>	3
<i>Probation Reform: Meeting the Public's Expectations</i>	4
HOW PROBATION CAN WORK	5
<i>Public Safety Comes First</i>	5
<i>Supervise Probationers in the Neighborhood, Not the Office</i>	5
<i>Rationally Allocate Resources</i>	6
<i>Enforce Violations of Probation Conditions Quickly and Strongly</i>	7
<i>Develop Partners in the Community</i>	7
<i>Establish Performance Based Initiatives</i>	9
<i>Leadership is Critical</i>	9
HOLDING PROBATION ACCOUNTABLE	9
STRUCTURAL ISSUES IN RE-THINKING PROBATION	10
<i>Case Assignments and Job Responsibilities</i>	10
<i>Hiring, Job Description and Training</i>	11
<i>Caseload, Resources and Technical Support</i>	11
<i>Community Involvement and Support</i>	12
CONCLUSION	12

3 MILLION IN OUR MIDST

Violent crime rates have fallen nationally by 26 percent since 1993. Some of this drop is undoubtedly due to so-called “broken windows law enforcement” and community policing. In Boston and other places, probation departments have also helped cut crime, both on their own and in partnerships with police, community groups and clergy.

If the criminal justice system is going to keep violent crime on the run, however, it will need to do even more, beginning with a much better job of supervising the three million probationers in our midst.

This report is the work of a baker’s dozen of veteran practitioners, including several present or former leaders of the National Association of Probation Executives (NAPE) and American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), who met and deliberated independently over the past two years in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

In sum, we believe probation is at once the most troubled and the most promising part of America’s criminal justice system. We also believe that probation’s past troubles can be but a prologue to its coming triumphs. Herein, and in a longer, more detailed report prepared for and released through NAPE and APPA, we call for a new era of “broken windows” probation and community corrections.

We admit, perhaps more candidly than leading members of our profession have ever admitted, that widespread political and public dissatisfaction with community corrections has often been totally justified. We also outline new strategies and rationales for reinvesting in and reinventing probation.

Our report is sure to attract criticism from those who say our proposals are too soft on criminals, as well as from those who say they are too tough. To those outside of our profession who respond that our ideas are too little, too late, and to those who cynically advocate abolishing probation, we say, “Get real!” Taxpayers will not finance what their ideas would imply, tripling the size of our prison system to accommodate the three million current probationers. To those within our profession who respond that our ideas concede too much to the field’s many critics and to popular misunderstandings of probation, we say, “Wake up!” As our report shows, hundreds of thousands of violent crimes are committed each year by people on probation. The public wants to reduce violent crime NOW: probation can either be part of the solution or part of the problem.

Either probation will be at the political and intellectual core of future policy-oriented efforts to promote public safety and offender rehabilitation in America, or it will continue to be widely marginalized, mischaracterized and underfunded. The days of failed low- or no-supervision “fortress probation” can and should give way to a new era of politically and administratively successful “community probation.” We hope this report not only sparks both professional and public debate, but also sharply enhances civic awareness that “probation matters” and helps launch spirited efforts to “make probation work” in cities all across the country.

WHY PROBATION MATTERS

Probation enjoys a unique status within the criminal justice system. Each year ushers in a “new high” in the number of offenders either incarcerated or in the community under supervision, and each year probation serves as the disposition most often imposed by the courts. At the end of 1997, a record breaking total of 5.7 million offenders were under some form of correctional supervision—in prison, in jail, on probation or on parole. Of these, 3,261,888 were adults serving a probation sentence, or *just under 60% of the entire offender population!*

This means on any given day there are over 3 million probationers living in communities across the land. **More than half of them have been convicted of felony violations of the law.** Though they are expected to abide by the rules of probation or other special conditions of supervision, their range of freedom is comparable to that enjoyed by the citizenry at large. This means they may move about within their neighborhoods, go to the movies, shop, go to work, visit parks and pursue other activities that form the fabric of daily living. How these offenders are supervised and the effectiveness of the strategies that are adopted to control them carry enormous implications for public safety and the quality of community life.

Probation: A Matter of Life or Death

Critics of community corrections have long charged that probation has failed to promote public safety, enforce court orders and get community-based criminals the drug treatment or other help they need to succeed in life and remain crime-free. The data show that all too often the critics stand on solid ground.

- Promoting Safety: About two-thirds of probationers commit another crime within three years of their sentence, and many of these crimes are serious. The roughly 162,000 probationers returned to state prisons and incarcerated in 1991 were responsible for at least 6,400 murders, 7,400 rapes, 10,400 assaults and 17,000 robberies. Likewise, records show that 156 of the 1,411 persons convicted of murder in Virginia from 1990 to 1993 were on probation at the time they killed. If probation had done a better job, fewer people would have been killed or otherwise harmed by probationers, and the overall crime rate would have been much lower.

- Enforcing Orders: To remain out of jail, over 90 percent of probationers are ordered by the courts to get substance abuse counseling, remain under house arrest, perform community service or meet other such specific conditions. Unfortunately, studies have found that about half of all probationers do not comply with the terms of their sentence, and only a fifth of those who violate their sentences ever go to jail for their noncompliance. Such “intermediate sanctions” are almost never rigorously and consistently enforced.

Worse yet, in addition to those who won’t comply with orders are those who don’t even stay in contact with probation—the probation absconders. By the end of 1996, of the 3.2 million offenders on probation, some 288,000 were on absconder status, out of contact with probation, out of compliance with court

orders and out from under any control or monitoring. In too many jurisdictions, next to nothing is being done to apprehend these scofflaws, a number of whom are “hiding in plain view.” The lesson is not lost on new probationers, who may find their obligations too onerous: Stop complying—they won’t come after you.

But can probation do anything about this horrific number of absconders? Or are defiant probationers free to roam the community without supervision and accountability?

The experience of Williamson County in Texas suggests an answer. In 1997, a decision was made by the local probation department to go after absconders seriously. By employing a variety of technology and databases to track missing probationers, that county arrested 470 probation violators in the first year of operation. In addition to bringing these offenders to justice, the absconder unit recovered nearly \$15,000 in outstanding fees.

By 1998, the unit was successful in arresting 605 probationers and collecting nearly \$51,000 in unpaid penalties, a significant jump in just one year. And this was accomplished by a two-person unit, staffed by one officer and a caseworker!

- **Helping Offenders:** Probation all too often fails to help probationers avoid drugs, learn to read, obtain jobs or otherwise get their lives together. For example, all the data show that almost half of today’s probationers were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they committed their latest offense. The probation discipline has long argued that probationers need to obtain community-based substance abuse treatment. Indeed, probation data from Massachusetts indicates that at least 80 percent of all probationers have such significant substance abuse problems that treatment is necessary. But only 37 percent of all probationers nationwide participate in any type of drug treatment program during their sentence, and only 32.5 percent nationally are tested for drug use once they do receive treatment.

Why Probation Isn’t Working

Why has probation long been weak at promoting public safety, enforcing orders and helping offenders? A large part of the answer is that probation as a field has long been weakly funded, totally underresearched and woefully understaffed.

Compare probation spending to spending on prisons. Since 1985, the nation’s population of prisoners has more than doubled, and prison and jail budgets and staffing have more than grown apace. Spending on prisons now constitutes about a quarter of total state and local criminal justice spending (police, courts and corrections), and about two-thirds of total corrections spending.

But recall our earlier numbers: Community corrections, which includes parole, has about two-thirds of the persons in criminal custody. Despite this fact, it only receives one-third of the total corrections dollar, about half what prisons receive to serve only half the probation

population! Even this figure overstates how much probation receives, since it splits this meager amount with parole agencies — even though there are fewer people on parole than behind bars, and even though the number of probationers who have been convicted of violent crimes rivals the number of parolees with a violent history.

The disparity between the prison and probation budgets is best seen by comparing per-offender amounts spent on each. Most states spend between \$20,000 and \$50,000 a year for each person in their prison system. UC Davis criminologist Joan Petersilia notes, however, that we have spent barely “\$200 per year per probationer for supervision.” This has led to average probation caseloads between 100 to 500 offenders per probation officer. No wonder recidivism rates are so high!

Inadequate funding, however, is not the only cause for probation’s failure. All too often probation departments have employed practices that simply do not do the job. Consider some commonplace probation practices and their results:

- Drug testing that is scheduled in advance, providing test results two or more weeks after the test is administered and done infrequently, is ineffective as a deterrent to substance abuse;
- Conducting supervision mainly in office settings contributes little to the management of offender risk or public safety (an approach that has been likened to “fortress probation”);
- Spending an average of five to twenty minutes once a month with offenders in an office does not constitute a reasonable quantity or method of supervision.

Not all probation offices fit our examples. Many talented probation administrators and field staff struggle to find more effective methods of supervision. Some have succeeded, but unfortunately, most have not. The key issue is that the systems these individuals work within are often ill-prepared to listen and understand what local communities deem important.

Under these circumstances, it should be no surprise that active probationers compose nearly one-fifth of all felony arrests. And it should be no surprise that probation is widely disparaged and viewed by the public as an ineffective sanction — a “slap on the wrist.”

Probation Reform: Meeting the Public’s Expectations

Despite the recent drops in crime, the public believes crime rates are still too high, and they are upset with many aspects of the criminal justice system. They think violent felons are let out early, instead of serving their sentences. They think sentences for most crimes are a joke and that the system plea bargains every criminal just to process cases. They think the victim is ignored and the community is shut out, and they do not believe that probation or parole improve public safety.

What does the public want? First and foremost, they want *safety*. Public safety is the bottom line. They view controlling violent and dangerous offenders as the justice system’s job. They are willing to pay for that. They are also willing to help. They want to be partners in the process, if only the system of justice will let them in. The public also requires *the truth*.

They expect the system to do what it says it is doing. *They want the sentence to fit the crime, the offender and the circumstances.* They want to know that a sentence is a sentence, and that everyone will abide by it. They also want to know who is in their neighborhood. They want us to tell them if someone is dangerous, and to be told when the reverse is true.

Finally, they want *some good to come of it.* They do not want the process of justice to be a dead loss. They want to feel that justice creates value for the offender, for the victim and for the community. They want to believe that those working within the justice system know what they are doing, and that what people working in public safety do somehow adds value to their lives.

In view of its unique status, probation is invested with wide-ranging ability to meet the public’s expectations. Its strength lies in its capacity and authority to repair broken lives and hold offenders accountable for the harm their actions have caused to victims and communities. Accordingly, probation is the criminal justice sanction best positioned strategically to contribute directly to public safety and community well-being.

Probation — when properly structured — is not a walk away or a “get-out-of-jail-free” card for an offender. Based on our lifetimes of experience in the probation system, we propose that probation offices nationwide embrace a new emerging paradigm that puts public safety and community involvement first.

HOW PROBATION CAN WORK

Successful probation reforms underway in Boston, Spokane, Phoenix, in specific locales throughout Maryland and elsewhere are characterized by a heightened focus on achieving public safety goals through active partnerships with community and neighborhood groups. They are also characterized by the following key strategies:

- Placing Public Safety First*
- Working in the Community*
- Developing Partners in the Community*
- Rationally Allocating Scarce Resources*
- Enforcing Conditions and Penalizing Violations*
- Emphasizing Performance Based Initiatives*
- Encouraging Strong and Steady Leadership*

Public Safety Comes First

Successful probation programs put public safety first. Their primary goal is to let the public move about and feel free of the risk of harm to their person or their property.

Supervise Probationers in the Neighborhood, Not the Office

Public safety cannot come first where supervision, such as it is, takes place in the probation officer’s office. Effective probation supervision must take place where offenders live and work. While the office is rightfully the *base* of probation supervision, the neighborhood should

be the *place* of supervision. Firsthand knowledge of where the offender lives, his family and his immediate and extended environment are critical elements of meaningful supervision. Such community probation should be highly visible, and this visibility must be positive in nature.

Meaningful supervision also means that it is conducted at times not confined to the traditional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, workday. To be effective, it must be delivered at nights, on weekends, and on holidays.

Two Arizona probation departments—the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department in Phoenix and the Pima County Adult Probation Department in Tucson—have experienced successful offender supervision efforts by increasing the level of offender contact in the community and by working non-traditional hours.

Rationally Allocate Resources

Successful probation programs rationally allocate their resources. Probation officers must spend more time supervising those offenders who are most at risk to violate their conditions of supervision and those whose offenses or affiliations pose a public safety risk (e.g., sex offenders, gang members, drug dealers, those with histories of violence). The rational allocation of resources is necessarily based on knowledge of the offender gleaned through presentence investigation reports, juvenile records, psychological evaluations and risk/needs assessments. Probation agencies must use assessments at the front end of the system to make placement decisions as well as continue using offender-specific assessments to routinely monitor their progress.

Two systems that place considerable emphasis on assessments are the Dallas County Community Supervision and Corrections Department in Dallas, Texas, and the Sixth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

In Dallas County, Texas, a new Comprehensive Assessment and Treatment Services (CATS) program was implemented in 1998 to address the gap in substance abuse and mental health treatment for probationers. The goal of CATS is to provide early assessment and treatment in order to increase successful completion of probation. Under this program all felony probationers must be screened. Those who cannot afford indicated services are provided those services by the County. CATS has already screened 4,400 probationers. Of those screened, 62 percent were referred to treatment for substance abuse and 9.5 percent were referred for mental health treatment.

In addition, probation officers should be strategically assigned to supervise specific geographical areas rather than being randomly assigned to offenders as they are placed on probation. This concept, referred to as “place-based supervision,” affords an excellent opportunity for developing law enforcement and corrections partnerships. It also keeps probation officers close to their wards, allowing them to keep an eye on an offender even when they are not spending time with him.

Several probation departments, like the one in Spokane, Washington, have developed meaningful partnerships with police and have strategically placed probation officers in areas where they are needed the most.

Enforce Violations of Probation Conditions Quickly and Strongly

Probationers often realize they may expect two or more “free ones” when it comes to dirty urine samples, electronic monitoring violations or failure to comply with a variety of supervision conditions. **For probation to be effective, this permissive practice must be abandoned.** All conditions of a probation sentence must be enforced, and all violations must be responded to in a timely fashion. A critical part of enforcing supervision conditions is the cooperation of the courts, where such violations are usually addressed. Those probation programs that emphasize strict enforcement of the rules and enjoy a supportive relationship with the courts tend to have fewer problems with offender compliance.

The key is that the response must be swift and sure. This does not mean that each violation will result in the revocation of probation, but rather the imposition of graduated sanctions (e.g., curfew or house arrest, electronic monitoring, mandatory drug treatment).

An excellent example of a structured, graduated sanctions program is found in the Tarrant County Juvenile Probation Department in Fort Worth, Texas.

Similarly, probation agencies need to be tough-minded and put teeth into apprehending absconders from probation. If it is easier for an offender to abscond than to comply with the terms and conditions of probation, then such behavior is simply reinforced. Probation agencies need to develop specialized units that work with law enforcement to apprehend offenders.

A good example of a specialized absconder unit is that found in the McLennan County Community Supervision and Corrections Department in Waco, Texas. Another is in Suffolk County, New York. Suffolk County Probation in New York has a warrant unit consisting of specially trained probation officers with full time responsibility for the location, apprehension, and arrest of probation violators who have absconded. In 1997, the unit, sometimes with assistance from other probation officers, made 209 arrests of absconders. That number rose to 331 in 1998. Large urban jurisdictions that are well managed can achieve even greater results. In 1998, Maricopa County Adult Probation served an astounding 2,400 warrants for felony probationers.

Develop Partners in the Community

The involvement of other agencies, organizations and interest groups is critical to the success of probation. Probation administrators should include community leaders and groups whenever there is a need to develop policies, initiate new programs, craft supervision strategies and deliver services. In essence, the community needs to play a vital and participatory role in community corrections. This may be achieved by:

- Creating a system that has meaningful participation from victims and the community;
- Developing partnerships with neighborhood groups, schools, businesses and the faith communities to bring offenders into an environment that has pro-social supports;
- Establishing cooperative partnerships between probation, law enforcement and

other criminal justice agencies that focus on public safety;

- Partnering with human service, treatment and non-profit agencies to provide enhanced services to assess, diagnose, treat and supervise offenders;
- Creating a comprehensive education campaign to make citizens aware of the crime problem, the steps being taken to address it and communicating the message that their involvement is desired.

There are many potential partners with whom to collaborate. When probation agencies build these collaborative relationships, they are often able to effectively supervise offenders, impose greater leverage and accountability over them and return them safely to the community.

Very good examples of such collaborative relationships have been established by Probation Departments in Boston, Massachusetts, and by the Suffolk County Probation Department in Yaphank, New York. In Boston, since the implementation of Operation Night Light and related community partnerships, homicide rates (the intended target) have dropped dramatically. In the years leading up to the change in strategies, the city averaged a hundred or so each year. Since 1995, when the program kicked in, the drop in homicides has been the steepest in the nation. In 1996, the city experienced 61 murders, down from 96 in the previous year (1990 was the high water mark with 153 homicides). In 1997, the toll fell to 43, in 1998 to 35. By August of 1999, the number stood at 17.

Working with the community reduces recidivism and increases public safety. It also provides greater success in securing offender compliance with and completing probation. To build such partnerships, it is essential that probation agencies retool their operations to accomplish the following:

- The role of the probation officer must be redefined (e.g., attending neighborhood meetings, participating in local crime prevention activities), “place-based” supervision strategies must be adopted and non-traditional operating hours must be established;
- Criminal justice task forces must be created (inclusive of human services and/or the faith community) working together to develop enforcement strategies to reduce crime in the community. Such task forces should establish formal written agreements and protocols, co-locate in community offices, conduct joint staffings and share accountability for curtailing crime;
- Prevention strategies must be developed to work with community partners that engage the child and family in a holistic manner to ensure service delivery to the entire family;
- Community betterment activities should be pursued working with neighborhood groups, business organizations, religious leaders and city agencies;
- Collaborative supervision strategies must be developed to carefully monitor offenders in the community and to hold them rigorously accountable for the payment of all fines, restitution and other just debts. This necessarily includes a protocol for the public both to provide information and obtain feedback on crime issues and offenders in their neighborhoods, and to participate in shaping strategies to address these issues;

- A continuum of sanctions and treatment must be formed across the justice system that ensures rapid placement as a method to maintain public safety and to hold offenders accountable for all violating behaviors.

Establish Performance Based Initiatives

Information-based decision making is paramount. The strategic and rational allocation of resources by probation agencies should be premised on developing, adjusting and retaining specific programs based on their performance.

Good evaluation models must be developed to measure program effectiveness. This includes not only the achievement of clearly defined program outcomes, but also effective program administration. A good program may prove unsuccessful if there was not a good action plan, poor implementation, or staff who were not properly trained or did not understand the program’s philosophy.

Leadership is Critical

In the final analysis, leadership is the most important ingredient for success. Leadership in probation does not come from unwieldy state bureaucracies, nor does it emanate from the work of agency committees. Clear and effective leadership comes from individuals—individuals who care deeply about probation, who are not satisfied with the status quo, who possess the courage to critique their profession and act with vision and dedication to do something about it. In sum, it flows from individuals who are risk takers, willing to enthusiastically embrace a new narrative for their field and the practice of probation.

HOLDING PROBATION ACCOUNTABLE

Probation will change when those who run probation departments are held accountable for achieving—or failing to achieve—specific outcomes. The paramount outcome for probation is public safety. However, there are other valued outcomes that must be addressed if probation is to be successfully reengineered. These outcomes include equality of justice, punishment, crime prevention, and a restorative commitment to victims and communities. These outcomes express the public’s expectation that the justice system is doing its job. These are the outcomes that matter and that require ongoing and careful measurement by probation practitioners.

In measuring such outcomes, corrections in general and probation in particular must apply business principles to everyday and long-term operations, except for the pursuit of profit or financial gain. As in business, the focus on clearly articulated results will drive a myriad of everyday supervision practices designed to be relevant to the accomplishment of such results. Three key business practices that must be given due attention include the following:

- Research and development—identifying state-of-the-art strategies for achieving effectiveness with maximum efficiency, and the ongoing pursuit of evidence-based best practices;
- Staffing—ensuring that the values, vision, and competencies of staff for

implementing appropriate strategies are related to desired results;

- Management information systems—developing mechanisms for measuring intermediate performance of staff and organizational practices, as well as for the reporting of accomplishments related to desired outcomes.

Reinventing probation will be a dynamic process. It will demand that those working in the field pay careful attention to state-of-the-art research and evaluation regarding the effectiveness of their own practices.

STRUCTURAL ISSUES IN RE-THINKING PROBATION

Many structural issues must be considered in the effort to reengineer probation. They start by recognizing that probation officers have very different perspectives and work within very different systems. It is critical that those who take on the task of retooling probation begin by recognizing what they share in common with others. These commonalities represent the strategic starting point for action.

Those involved in reengineering probation share in common the mission of promoting public safety. They likewise share a commitment to provide effective supervision and control over offenders and to achieving outcomes that the public values. Ultimately, they share an energetic and informed willingness to push probation out of centralized offices and bureaucracies into the neighborhoods and street corners within the communities they serve.

There are numerous structural impediments to achieving the vision and accomplishing the strategies for supervision suggested throughout this monograph. Any such effort will produce what Robert Merton called “unintended consequences.” Initiatives undertaken with only positive intentions in mind frequently can perversely set off negative consequences that often overtake any gains. With this in mind, probation practitioners must be mindful of four specific impediments to reengineering probation, as well as several steps that might be taken to address them

Case Assignments and Job Responsibilities

A commitment to community probation will require a fundamental change in the traditional system for assigning cases used by most probation agencies. Rather than merely assigning cases to the next probation officer on the list, case assignments must reflect geographical specialization. New cases should be assigned by local neighborhoods or bounded geographical areas. Probation officers, in turn, will be held accountable for clearly defined supervision activities and outcomes in their area or neighborhood, rather than for the completion of a finite number of assessments or the submission of administrative paperwork.

Many probation officers are locked into a nine to five daily work routine, one they will find very difficult to break. Nonetheless, if such practitioners are to achieve the goals of community probation, they must necessarily work the hours during which they can be most effective in their assigned area. Market research may be done to determine what these hours should be. It is very likely that evening and weekend hours will become part of their everyday work. “Fortress probation” is not a viable option under this model.

The role of the supervisor will, of necessity, undergo a drastic change. The supervisor will become a resource person for their field officers. He or she may also take on the role of ombudsman to the community. In playing such a role, the supervisor may find that the concerns and needs of the community are quite different than those normally pursued by criminal justice system practitioners. In this scheme, the supervisor becomes the individual who removes obstacles and impediments so that the line officers can perform their community-based tasks more effectively.

Hiring, Job Description and Training

If in the long run probation is to be fundamentally reshaped, developing a successful work force will be dependent on the emphasis placed on job descriptions, hiring and training. Given the extent to which the role of the probation officer is redefined, the job description must reflect the new and expanded responsibilities associated with working *in* the community. Probation officers will require such skills as community organizing and advocacy, creative problem solving and a capacity to work as much with adults and local stakeholders as with offenders on their caseload.

The hiring decision will likewise need to change and be tailored to the community. It should be decentralized to ensure that staff appropriate to the needs of the community may be hired. Staff should be hired for the particular area in which they will work. In the hiring process those probation staff who have been successful in the field should be used to assist in screening candidates.

Training methods will change as well as probation moves to embrace its new mission. *The adult probation department in Maricopa County in Phoenix, Arizona, provides a model for such change.* New hires there attend a two week training academy followed by a 90-day assignment to a mentorship with a training officer. During the period of mentoring, the probation officer trainee carries a reduced caseload. Within this system, the trainee gains valuable practical experience under the close supervision of an experienced officer. The assignment of a smaller caseload gives the officer a chance to work into the job without being immediately overwhelmed.

Caseload, Resources and Technical Support

Any effort to reengineer probation will prove unsuccessful unless caseload issues, resources and technical support are addressed. The feasibility of probation officers being held accountable for geographic areas of assignment is dependent on the manageability of caseload sizes. The paradigm shift that is proposed and the new and redefined role of the probation officer as captured in the job description can be achieved *only if caseloads become much smaller than they are now.* Caseloads averaging 100-500 offenders are absurd.

Resources other than personnel will also have to be committed to the effort. To do the job effectively, the field staff must be comprehensively equipped. If the neighborhood storefront or other such location is to become the probation officer's base of operation, then laptop computers, palm corders, cellular phones and flashlights will become the new tools of the trade.

Technical support is as crucial to probation’s relocation to the community as is caseload reduction and an infusion of resources. Clearly, sophisticated yet user-friendly management information systems are essential for communication and information retrieval on a daily basis. Once such systems are in place, they provide for an economy of time management and immediate access to information that cannot be obtained in any other way. This, too, will require fiscal support.

Probation department managers must realize, however, that adequate resources will not come until the public is persuaded that probation is more than a “slap on the wrist,” a hollow experience that trivializes the offense, demeans and enrages the victim and emboldens the offender. The transformation of probation from being the under-funded, unappreciated and anemic intervention it all too often is to a sentencing option worthy of public support—both moral and financial—depends critically on the capacity of probation to define itself and its mission coherently and convincingly.

Community Involvement and Support

The work of probation becomes easier to the extent it is genuinely involved with the community. It is essential that partnerships be built and sustained with local neighborhood organizations. This increases the leverage that can be maintained over offenders. The Sixth Judicial District in Iowa has also been a leader in surveying its customers, developing partnerships with the community and law enforcement and designing successful treatment programs. In 1997, it developed a comprehensive computerized assessment, MATRIX, to determine appropriate levels of supervision and treatment for targeted offenders. This helped to give the intensive sex offender program less than a 5% failure rate over the past year.

The District has also established a partnership in neighborhood resource centers with law enforcement and neighborhood groups to develop a “Neighborhood Based Supervision” program to intensely supervise offenders on the street, (where they live, work and recreate) in conjunction with the COPS program. Agents participate in weekly staffing meetings with law enforcement partners to target joint activities, and citizens now participate on a Citizens Task Force on Community Justice and a Neighborhood Reparative Board to make offenders under supervision accountable to the people who live in the neighborhood. As a result, the number of crack or disorderly houses in targeted neighborhoods have been reduced from 93 in 1998 to 23 for the same period in 1999.

CONCLUSION

The reinvention of probation requires a sustained effort to ensure that traditional internal forces within probation do not stymie progress. These forces almost always create unimaginative organizational cultures. In such environments it is difficult for probation professionals to see the very real possibility of a dramatically different and more viable future—a future where what they do for a living can be discussed proudly with outsiders. In short, reinventing probation requires leadership committed to enforcing violation warrants, supervising offenders primarily in the community rather than in probation offices, and not directing probation officers to avoid dangerous areas. (Which reduces the possibility of personal harm, but at the same time makes it virtually impossible to be a

probation officer!) Probation will be reinvented when the probation profession places public safety first, and works with and in the community.

Serious efforts to reinvent probation will give the probation profession the first chance it has had since its earliest years to establish itself as a viable community-based and community-placed criminal justice option—an option with real public value and real public support. The Reinventing Probation Council, in partnership with the NAPE, the APPA and the Manhattan Institute’s Center for Civic Innovation, looks forward to promoting and assisting such efforts in cities all across the country.

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Amy Sherman

Roger Starr

The Center for Civic Innovation's (CCI) purpose is to improve the quality of life in cities by shaping public policy and enriching public discourse on urban issues.

CCI sponsors the publication of books like Mayor Goldsmith's [The Twenty-First Century City](#), which provides a blueprint for getting America's cities back in shape, and George Kelling's and Catherine Coles' [Fixing Broken Windows](#), which explores the theory widely created with reducing the rate of crime in New York and other cities. CCI also hosts conferences, publishes studies, and holds luncheon forums where prominent local and national leaders are given opportunities to present their views on critical urban issues. *Cities on a Hill*, CCI's newsletter, highlights the ongoing work of innovative mayors across the country.



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