



Program Evaluation

Summary

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Cook County pilot program seeks to reduce female DUI recidivism

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Women arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or illicit substances (DUI) in Cook County who are identified as needing substance abuse treatment are receiving assistance through Community Based Transitional Services for Female Offenders, a specialized Cook County pilot probation program initiated in June 2004. The Cook County Department of Social Services, which handles DUI misdemeanor probation cases, launched the program in response to rising rates of female DUI offenses.

Since its inception the pilot program has served 608 high risk female offenders charged with DUI. Designed as a best practices model program, its goals include reducing recidivism and increasing offender competency to re-enter the community. Implementing best practices for female offenders requires that programs develop and

implement services that reflect the nature of female offending and effective change management strategies. On review, the pilot program had successfully met 80 percent of best practices approaches targeted, and was focusing on upgrading areas cited as in need of improvement.

Under the jurisdiction of the Cook County Adult Probation Department, participants receive individualized, gender-specific supervision and assistance and group substance abuse treatment. As an enhanced specialized probation supervision model, the program features a reduced caseworker-to-client ratio, and employs staff who have undergone additional training in working with participants.

Program development and overview

The rising rate of women arrested for driving under the influence revealed the existence of a gap in substance abuse treatment services for women, as most corrections-based treatment programs lacked a gender-specific approach. The Community Based Transitional Services for Female Offenders program, developed by the Cook County Department of Social Services, concentrated on closing this gap.

Modeled on "Helping Women Recover," a community services substance abuse treatment program, Community Based Transitional Services was intended to provide individualized, focused supervision for female offenders. Its design took into account research findings indicating that a woman's motivation for committing offending behavior is complex, that it needs to be dealt with individually, and that it needs to be viewed within the overall context of the woman's life. Research also indicated the existence of a "female offending cycle," related to substance abuse, which may be preceded by victimization or be perpetuated by it.



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Table 1
Comparison of Cook County probation program participant characteristics, 2004-06

| Characteristic | Community Based Transitional Services probation (n=608) | Diversified probation (n=924) | Intensive probation (n=951) |
|---|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Average age in years | 37 | 35 | 38 |
| Level of reporting | (Following amounts indicated are percentages) | | |
| Low | 2 | 29 | 18 |
| Medium | 15 | 38 | 32 |
| Maximum | 78 | 23 | 45 |
| Missing | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| Driving under the influence monitoring level (levels based on rules of Cook County Circuit Court) | | | |
| Level 1 (least restrictive) | 0 | <1 | <1 |
| Level 2 M | 0 | 1 | <1 |
| Level 2 S | 13 | 39 | 26 |
| Level B | <1 | 6 | 1 |
| Level C | 41 | 35 | 20 |
| Level D | 0 | <1 | 0 |
| Level 3 (most restrictive) | 29 | <1 | 49 |
| Missing | 18 | 19 | 4 |
| Race | | | |
| White | 70 | 62 | 70 |
| African American | 19 | 21 | 20 |
| Hispanic | 8 | 13 | 6 |
| Asian | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Indian | 0 | <1 | 0 |
| American Indian | 0 | <1 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | <1 | <1 |
| Missing | 1 | 2 | 3 |

The program has received about 220 referrals during each year it has been operational. Besides requiring that a participant has a conviction for a DUI offense or has a prior DUI record, the program mandates that participants be classified as in need of intensive treatment. The majority of female offenders referred to Community Based Transitional Services has been sentenced to 12 to 18 months community probation (within Cook County, to minimize transportation issue), or conditional discharge or have been placed on supervision.

Prior to sentencing every offender charged with driving under the influence in Cook County has a mandatory predisposition assessment completed by Central States Institute of Addiction. Information collected during this assessment places an offender into a medium, significant,

or high risk treatment needs category. The assessment is also provided to the court to be considered during sentencing. If an offender is sanctioned to probation, the intake process of the Cook County Social Services Department through the Cook County Adult Probation Department determines assignment of an offender to either the Community Based Transitional Services for Female Offenders program or to general probation

Assessment and referral into the pilot program

Before joining the program, probationers are required by court order to complete 30 hours of substance abuse counseling and aftercare or 75 hours of substance abuse counseling and aftercare, depending on results deter-

Table 2

Comparison of Cook County probation programs supervision compliance, 2004-06

| Characteristic compared | Community Based Transitional Services probation | Diversified probation | Intensive probation |
|--|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | (Following amounts indicated are percentages) | | |
| Participants subject to random urine tests | 36 | 29 | 5 |
| Failure rate per 100 urinalyses | 24 | 14 | 7 |
| Arrest check (new offenses found) | 20 | 8 | 13 |

mined through various assessments. Court orders generally mandate treatment in the program to begin within 60 days of sentencing.

Based on their place of residence, program participants are assigned to report to one of four caseworkers located in the north, northwest, south, or southwest regions of Cook County. Several assessment tools are then administered to participants seeking to determine stability of substance use, mental health status, and how an individual responds to recovery-oriented activities.

During the first several meetings between caseworkers and probationers, the Client History/Case Planning Interview, a gender-specific assessment tool, probes probationers' social history, family risk factors, prior substance abuse, and victimization history, both physical and sexual. The Interview also determines offenders' child care needs, and classifies probationers based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Continuing the assessment and interview process, participants complete the Trauma Symptom Checklist, a self-report instrument that measures symptoms of childhood or adult traumatic experiences and examines anxiety, depression, dissociation, sexual abuse trauma, sexual problems, and sleep disturbances. It is administered both at the outset of supervision and again on completion of group treatment sessions.

Finally, caseworkers access criminal history record databases for official data regarding probationers, develop a specific case management plan, assist clients with service linkages, and provide them with intensive supervision. Women attend group meetings for 14 weeks, after which they are assessed again. If necessary, at this point they are placed in individual therapy.

Services provided

The best practices framework outcome for the program, reducing recidivism and aiding community reentry, re-

quires implementation of an effective substance abuse treatment program providing three elements:

1. Ancillary services designed to improve access to treatment programming and reduce barriers to participation.
2. Services developed to address the specific needs of female substance abusers, which can include personal and relationship issues; issues of race, ethnicity, culture and disability; gender discrimination, harassment and interpersonal violence; health and hygiene; parenting skills; sexual concerns; employment; and other problem areas.
3. Program elements offering a unique treatment environment for female substance abusers, such as women-only programs.

A review of the 39 best practices approaches determined the program met 31 of them, including the following:

- Provided support to help women stay in compliance with scheduled meetings, including arranging for transportation, flexible treatment, and an effective referral system to treatment.
- Extended treatment options addressing the needs of the whole female offender, including addiction, low self esteem, race and cultural issues, interpersonal relationship issues, sexuality, stress management, spirituality, and life plan development.
- Ensured a supportive treatment program that acknowledged gender differences and had staff qualified to work with female offenders.
- Offered programming for both individual and group counseling.

Eight best practices areas targeted for improvement included:

- Provision for childcare during sessions.
- Programs incorporating community outreach or addressing ways to counter the social stigma of substance abuse treatment.
- Certain treatment components, such as dealing

with gender discrimination, disability issues, and eating disorders.

Participants in this program were subjected to random urinalysis, engaged in community service, participated in victim impact panels, and paid fines as part of meeting the terms of their probation. Unlike other probationers however, they were mandated to higher levels of substance abuse treatment and had to complete an aftercare program that offered specific treatment tailored to the needs of each individual, as identified in assessments.

Finally, in an attempt to alleviate barriers to treatment access, financial benefits such as transit cards and assistance with treatment costs were provided to poverty-stricken and indigent participants.

Outcome and impact evaluation

In seeking to evaluate the success of the Community Based Transitional Services program researchers utilized two similar Cook County women's probation programs for comparison purposes: the diversified probation program and the intensive probation program. Diversified probation provides individualized supervision and specialized interventions to individuals found guilty of a variety of felony and misdemeanor offenses. Intensive probation supervision is a highly structured program aimed at keeping offenders in the community rather than incarcerating them. *Table 1* illustrates a comparison of the characteristics of these three groups of probationers.

Due to the nature of the program, Community Based Transitional Services participants received more alcohol treatment referrals than probationers in the other two groups. Some of the other referral treatment services that Community Based Transitional Services participants were offered included domestic violence related counseling, inpatient treatment, and rehabilitative confinement.

It was noted that Community Based Transitional Services program participants displayed a higher level of risk and treatment needs than either of the other comparison groups, and participants were faced with greater risk of violating probation due to the intensity of the program and the lower caseloads of their probation officers. Even though probation officers regularly contacted participants in both the diversified and intensive probation programs, Community Based Transitional Services participants received two to three times as many documented contacts with their probation officers than the other programs.

As illustrated in *Table 2*, researchers compared probationers in each of the three types of probation based on their

substance use, new criminal offenses, and the scheduling of a new hearing (which would indicate either a new crime or a technical violation of the terms of probation had occurred). The more often probationers were subject to urinalysis the more likely their chance of failure became, and since Community Based Transitional Services clients were subject to more checks, they had a higher risk of failing some of those checks. Case outcomes for these probationers also differed due to the program's reduced caseworker-client ratio, the extensive client services provided, and the characteristics of women selected to participate in the program.

Conclusions

Measuring the program's success by recidivism rates and by participant compliance with terms of supervision indicates that, overall, Community Based Transitional Services is achieving its goal of helping high risk offenders. The probation program has been evaluated as well-developed, well-organized, and implemented within the targeted population. It has met goals outlined in the initial proposal to develop a gender-specific supervision model that targets an at-risk group of female probationers; to close identified gaps in services for those offenders; and to follow best practices approaches outlined at its inception.



Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

The July 2007 full report, "*An Evaluation of the Cook County Community Based Transitional Services for Female Offenders Program*," is available on the Authority Web site at www.icjia.state.il.us/public. The evaluation was prepared by Gaylene S. Armstrong, Ph.D., George Burruss, Ph.D., and Martha Henderson, Ph.D. of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

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