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*On Good Authority* is a periodic briefing on trends and issues in criminal justice. This report was written by staff research analyst Karen S. Levy McCanna. It is a summary of a program evaluation of the Enhanced Domestic Violence Probation Program in Champaign County. The evaluation was conducted by Barbara Hayler, Ph.D., Nancy Ford, J.D., and Mick Addison-Lamb, M.A., of the Center for Legal Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Copies of the evaluation are available from the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit.

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## Champaign County enhanced domestic violence probation program evaluated

In response to the growing number of probationers with domestic violence convictions, the Champaign County Probation and Court Services Department developed and implemented the Enhanced Domestic Violence Probation (EDVP) Program. The program was designed to provide enhanced supervision and coordinate batterer's intervention programs and other services, while providing a victim liaison and services referral component.

Evaluators with the Center for Legal Studies at the University of Illinois at Springfield conducted a yearlong implementation and preliminary impact evaluation of the project. The evaluation was funded by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority using federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act (ADAA) funds. Information contained in this summary reflects program activities observed and analyzed between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999.

### Program description

Initially, the Champaign County Probation and Court Services Department employed two probation officers specializing in supervision of domestic violence cases. As the caseload of specialized offenders grew, the department recognized a need for enhanced probation services that focus on the more serious felony and misdemeanor domestic violence offenders. Using federal ADAA funds distributed through the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the department hired two additional officers and implemented the

Enhanced Domestic Violence Probation Program. The program was initiated in October 1997. Two officers handle cases assigned to enhanced domestic violence probation. Two other officers handle cases incorporating standard probation supervision.

The Enhanced Domestic Violence Probation Program focuses on victim safety, offender accountability, and early intervention. The program combines enhanced levels of supervision with intervention and victim liaison services to address the increased level of need often associated with felony offenders. County funds and probation fees also helped support the program.

Offenders were ordered to enhanced domestic violence probation by the court. The majority of EDVP participants were felony offenders (Figure 1). Participants were subject to additional conditions of probation as specified by the sentencing judge, including random drug and alcohol testing, and searches of their homes and automobiles. They also were required to comply with special curfew conditions, and orders of protection or no-contact order provisions. Program participants who were neither employed nor full-time students were required to report daily for community service assignments.

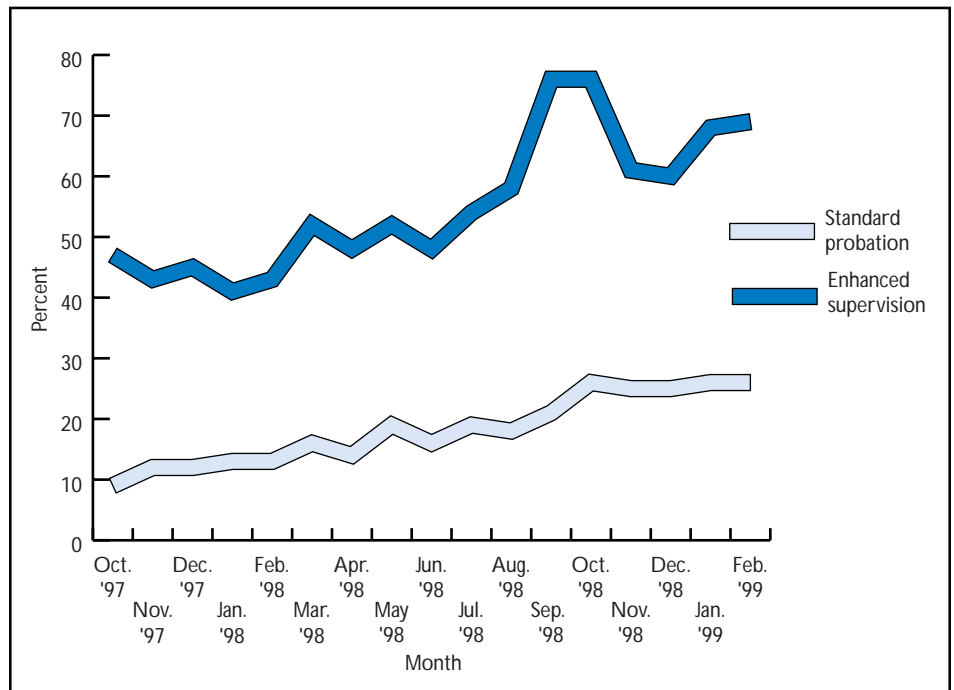
Offenders in the program were expected to complete the requirements of a three-phase supervision system in six months. Phase 1 consisted of at least four contacts with probation officers each month, including two contacts in the community and two in the probation

office. Offenders also were required to complete a batterer treatment program and refrain from further domestic violence to graduate to the next phase. Phase 2 consisted of two contacts each month, one in the community and one in the probation office. Prior to entering the third phase, offenders were required to complete the assigned conditions of their probation sentences, and be classified at a "minimum level" according to the Domestic Violence Inventory risk/needs assessment, a standardized tool designed to evaluate the potential level of substance abuse and lethality. Phase 3 required contact once a month, in or out of the probation office.

The program calls for a risk/needs assessment administered prior to entering each phase, and upon program completion. EDVP staff administered the assessment and shared the outcomes with the batterer intervention program providers.

Family Life Skills and CHANGE, two state-approved batterer intervention programs located in Champaign County, were utilized in the EDVP program. Family Life Skills is a private counseling program with a curriculum centered around teaching life skills to both the

**Figure 1**  
Percentage of felony offenders in the Champaign County Domestic Violence Probation Unit

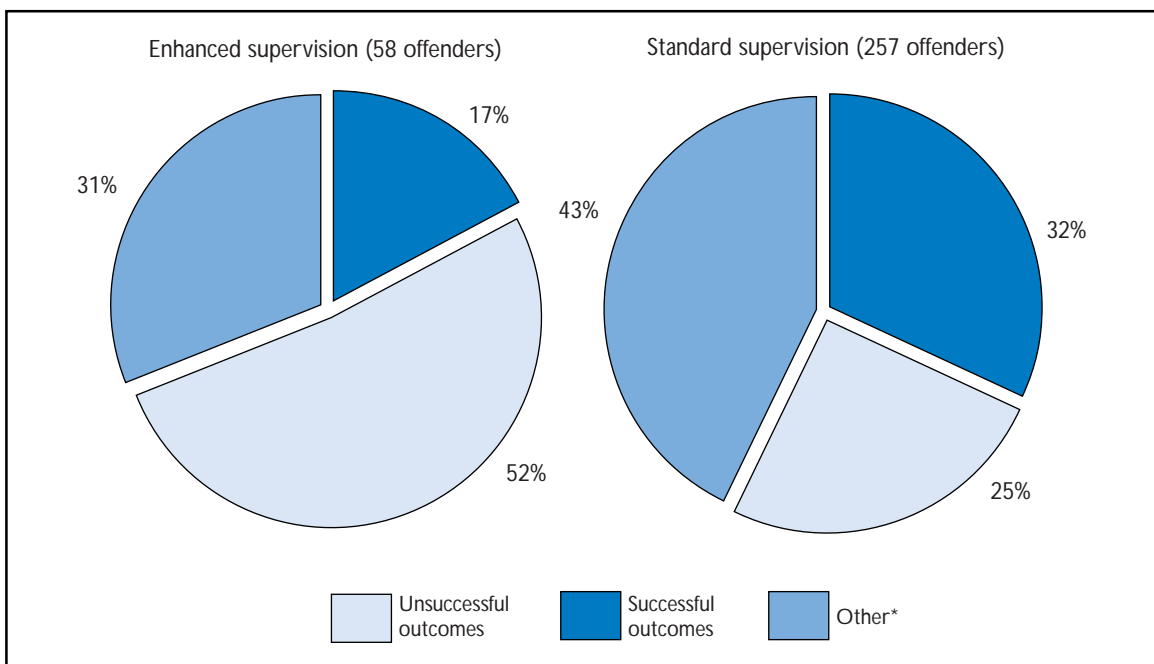


aggressor and the domestic violence victim. CHANGE is a private batterer intervention program consisting of 24 consecutive group sessions designed to confront denial, minimization, and

patterns of thinking that block the ability to make responsible choices.

In addition, most EDVP participants were referred to the Prairie Center for Substance Abuse for treatment along with batterer intervention. Treatment

**Figure 2**  
Probation outcomes



\*The category of "other" includes offenders who had an alternate Department of Corrections commitment or who had transferred out of the program.

assessment appointments were scheduled within two weeks after the request for service. The assessment helped determine withdrawal and relapse potential, biomedical conditions, emotional and behavioral issues, and treatment acceptance or resistance. Participants attend group counseling and educational treatment sessions on substance abuse. Probation officers received assessment results, treatment recommendations, and notification of treatment completion. Participants engaged in group counseling and educational treatment sessions throughout the program.

### Preliminary program impact

Program impact objectives include: increase compliance with probation conditions; increase the successful completion rate of batterer intervention programs; reduce domestic violence recidivism; and reduce the overall crime recidivism rate of those convicted of domestic violence.

Because these objectives are primarily long-term in nature and evaluators did not have access to accurately measured baseline data, the preliminary impact analysis was limited to a simple comparison of 58 offenders who received enhanced domestic violence probation and 257 domestic violence offenders sentenced to standard probation. Due to the nature of the program, EDVP participants were held to a higher level of accountability than was expected of a standard probationer. Not surprisingly, the EDVP participants experienced a lower rate of successful program outcomes (17 percent) than offenders sentenced to standard probation (32 percent) (Figure 2). Possible explanations for these results included:

- EDVP officers were more willing to revoke probation if conditions of probation were not met;
- EDVP participants were subject to stricter surveillance standards; and
- Serious offenders, who are more likely to be assigned to enhanced domestic violence probation, may be

**Table 1**  
EDVP goals and objectives

#### General goals

1. Victim safety. Develop a victim component within the probation program to provide information and referrals.
2. Offender accountability. Increase county-wide cooperation in support of "no tolerance" toward domestic violence.
3. Break the cycle of violence through early intervention. Refer offenders to the full range of community resources, including batterer intervention programs.

#### Program goals

1. Hold EDVP probationers accountable. File petitions to revoke probation on a timely basis.
2. Make entry into a batterer intervention program and subsequent behavioral changes a high probation priority, leading to a 50 percent increase in the number of probationers entering specialized programs.
3. Monitor probationers through entire treatment process, with a 100 percent increase in contacts with program and treatment providers.
4. Conduct drug testing. Provide an evaluation referral to probationers who test positive.
5. Track EDVP participants for three years following termination from the program to collect information on any new domestic violence offenses.

#### Process objectives

1. Assess offenders in EDVP to determine lethality (risk factors) and substance abuse.
2. Provide education and other specialized services through contractual providers to offenders in EDVP determined to be in need of them.

#### Impact objectives

1. Through strict supervision and enforcement, increase compliance with probation conditions by 20 percent over the compliance rate in standard probation.
2. Increase the rate of successful completion of batterer intervention programs by 25 percent.
3. Reduce domestic violence recidivism by 20 percent.
4. Reduce the domestic violence recidivism rate in the year after successful completion of probation by 25 percent.
5. Reduce overall crime recidivism by 10 percent.

more resistant to compliance with probation conditions.

### Goals and evaluation recommendations

The Enhanced Domestic Violence Probation Program focused on victim safety, offender accountability, and early intervention (Table 1).

#### Goal 1: Ensure victim safety.

Program staff served as victim liaisons in each case, and provided victims with assistance and referrals. A letter of notification was mailed to each victim of offenders assigned to enhanced proba-

tion. It was confirmed that about half of those letters reached the addressee. Most victims reached declined any interaction with an EDVP officer. Ultimately, the officer's primary contribution to victim safety was to closely supervise the offender and reduce instances of reoffending.

#### Recommendation

The program's victim component should be further supplemented by continuing to strengthen relationships between probation officers, local domestic violence shelters, and victim advocacy groups.

**Goal 2: Promote offender accountability.**

The number of office visits set by the program was achieved and maintained; however, the expected number of field visits by officers fell below anticipated numbers. Staff turnover early in the program may account for this. In addition, probation records revealed noncompliance in 11 cases of offenders with a no-contact order. Although petitions to revoke were filed by the state’s attorney’s office on some of these individuals, others received only a technical probation violation report, or in some cases no consequences at all.

**Recommendation**

Identify a range of conditions and requirements that the judge, the state’s attorney’s office, and the probation department agree are appropriate for imposition in EDVP cases. The judge as part of the order of probation should

include these conditions when the offender is sentenced. The impositions should be implemented as appropriate by the probation officer during the offender’s term.

**Goal 3: Break the cycle of violence through early intervention.**

Program staff proposed to break the cycle of violence through offender referrals to batterer intervention programs. While referrals were made early in the probation process, and EDVP probationers made contact with the treatment providers, some offenders did not complete the treatment program.

**Recommendation**

EDVP and probation officials should consider setting a short time frame within which a batterer intervention program must be selected and the entry process should be initiated, with the batterer losing his right to choose the program if he fails to do so within this

period. Failure to meet the standards for continuation in a batterer treatment program should be treated as a probation violation, and should have consequences attached.

**Conclusion**

The Champaign County Probation and Court Services Department successfully developed and implemented a specialized domestic violence probation unit. The evaluation identified specific implementation issues to be addressed by the program staff and agencies involved with the program. Evaluators suggested that the program continue to develop cooperative relationships with various criminal justice and community agencies to provide consistent and effective domestic violence offender programming while ensuring the safety of victims.♦

