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## REDUCING TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS OF PROBATIONERS

Cox, S. M., Bantley, K., Roscoe, T., & Hill, B. (2008). *The Effects of Connecticut's Probation Transition Program on Reducing Technical Violations*. *Justice Research and Policy*, 10 (1), 1– 20.

### Why Was the Study Done?

Like many states, Connecticut has had a dramatic increase in its prison population (an increase of 82% between 1992 and 2003). Concern over the number of probation technical violators being sentenced to prison led to the piloting of the Probation Transition Program (PTP), a specialized probation program targeting high-risk offenders. Twenty-five percent of Connecticut inmates were probation violators, with the average sentence for violations increasing from 18 months in 1992 to 30 months in 2000. The goal of the PTP was to enhance probation officers' ability to successfully reintegrate released inmates back into their communities. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the PTP in regard to lowering the rate of technical violations.

### What Did the Researchers Do?

The researchers compared two groups of probationers—those in the Probation Transition Program and a comparison group—to see whether PTP had an effect on the rate of technical violations. They collected probationer data from three sources: 1) court records, providing current charge information; 2) probation records, including demographics, current probation supervision level, special conditions, dates probation began and ended, and reason for probation termination; and 3) scores from the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R), an assessment measure of risk and need factors.

Using these data, the researchers first compared technical violation and new arrest rates one year following PTP participants' program start date to the comparison group rates one year after they began their probation supervision. They then conducted multivariate analyses on the likelihood of technical violations and arrests for the two groups. Finally, they conducted similar multivariate analyses using only the PTP study group to identify what demographic, legal, and risk factors were predictors of technical violations and arrests.

### What Were the Study's Findings?

The study found that the PTP group had significantly fewer technical violations than the comparison group but not significantly fewer arrests. The analyses of who was technically violated or arrested within the PTP participation group found that male drug offenders were most likely to be violated, while young African-American males with multiple convictions, negative peer groups, little independent financial support, limited education, and a criminal attitude/orientation were most likely to be arrested.

### What Are the Implications of the Study for Policy Makers?

The PTP was created out of statewide concern over the prison population, specifically, how to decrease the number of technical violators of probation sentenced to

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## INSIDE

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prison. Connecticut's approach addressed both probationers' criminogenic factors and organizational strategies on handling probation violations. This study demonstrates that multifaceted approaches can lead to significant reductions in technical violations.

There are three primary implications of this study. First, PTP participants had significantly lower technical violation rates (14% to 26%) one year after prison release than the comparison group. The question is whether the PTP had more effect on changing probation officers' or probationers' behavior. Did PTP officers simply stop violating probationers or did probationers' behavior improve as a result of the PTP? The authors believe that it was a combination of both.

Second, fewer technical violations did not appear to increase arrest rates for new offenses. If PTP officers were slow to technically violate PTP probationers solely because of the program mandate, a significantly higher arrest rate would be expected. The PTP appears to have been able to decrease technical violation rates without a spike in new arrests.

Third, there were pronounced differences between PTP probationers who were technically violated and those who were rearrested. Technical violators appear to be serious drug users who could not comply with the conditions of their probation or successfully complete drug treatment. PTP participants who were arrested were very high risk and had multiple criminogenic needs (e.g., lower levels of education or limited employment opportunities, negative peer groups, and poor attitudes regarding noncriminal activity). Attention should be given to this group in the future to identify strategies that more effectively address their criminogenic needs and may decrease their likelihood of being arrested.

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## PREDICTORS OF SUICIDE IN NEW GENERATION JAILS

Tartaro, C., & Levy, M. P. (2008). *Predictors of suicide in new generation jails. Justice Research and Policy, 10(1), 21-38.*

### Why Was the Study Done?

The first podular direct supervision jails were opened by the Bureau of Prisons in the mid-1970s. These jails are divided into pods, which are triangular or

rectangular areas. The walls of the pod are lined with cells or rooms, and the center of the pod consists of a dayroom for inmates to converge, watch television, and socialize. The podular design facilitates officer supervision of inmates, since the sightlines are greatly improved over what is found in linear jails. What is unique about these facilities, however, is the normalized physical environment and management strategy. Creators of the direct supervision model believed that by developing an environment that generates positive expectations for inmates' behavior, jail staff members would be able to maintain a jail that is less violent and less stressful for inmates and staff.

Podular direct supervision jails, also called new generation jails, have been credited by practitioners and some researchers with reducing violence, stress, and suicide among inmates. However, a recent national comparison of these facilities with more traditional jails found that the direct supervision institutions were no less likely to experience inmate suicides. This study looked more closely at the podular direct supervision facilities to determine which jail characteristics are predictors of suicide.

### What Did the Researchers Do?

The researchers sent surveys to nearly every jail listed in the National Institute of Corrections' *2001 Directory of Direct Supervision Jails* in the summer of 2004. Of 275 eligible jails, 150 responded. Questions focused on key components of podular direct supervision jails that were identified in previous research. The resulting data were analyzed to determine which characteristics of the podular direct supervision jails are predictors of custodial suicide. The study tested three hypotheses:

1. Jails that offered more extensive communication skills training to its officers were less likely to report a suicide.
2. Jails that concentrated their services on the pod level were less likely to report a suicide.
3. Jails that took steps to make their living areas "non-institutional" were less likely to report a suicide.

### What Were the Study's Findings?

In response to the study's survey, 69% of the jails reported no suicides during 2003. Eighteen percent reported one suicide, 6% reported two, and 1% reported six suicides in 2003. Seven percent of the jails

did not answer this question. None of the direct supervision jail characteristics were correlated with reported suicides. The location of the jail was significant, with urban jails being more likely to report at least one suicide. The number of reported inmate-inmate assaults was also related to reported suicides, with jails having higher levels of inmate-inmate assault being more likely to report at least one suicide. Additionally, for every inmate-inmate assault, a jail was 1.96 times more likely to have a suicide. None of the officer training or officer circulation variables increased the chance of inmate suicide. The jail environment score, which is related to inmate living areas, was found to significantly increase the chance of suicide in these jails; for every additional environment score characteristic that the jail possessed, the jail was about half as likely to have a suicide. The other inmate living area variable, type of furnishings, was not significantly related to suicide. In short, the results of the analysis conducted in this study provide no evidence to support the first and second study hypotheses. Support was found for the third hypothesis, namely, that jails that provide a less institutional, more comfortable living environment for inmates tend to be less likely to report at least one inmate suicide.

## What Are the Implications of the Study for Policy Makers?

The finding of a relationship between the jail environment and reported suicides has important implications for jails nationwide. The podular direct supervision model has been recognized by researchers and practitioners as being a promising design and management strategy. Some of the characteristics of this jail, however, are expensive and politically controversial; for example, officials could be accused of coddling inmates. Decision makers need to recognize that not including certain aspects of the direct supervision jail model may contribute to its failure in creating a safe environment and will likely reduce its effectiveness in preventing suicide. A reluctance to follow through with the principles of direct supervision can result in its failure if a well-publicized security incident (including suicide) occurs in one of these institutions. Unfortunately, members of the media and politicians reacting to such an incident are unlikely to make the distinction between a poorly implemented direct supervision jail and one that is being run properly.

## MARIJUANA TREATMENT AND ARREST POLICIES

*Sabet, K.A., Johnson, B.D. (2008). Marijuana Treatment and Aggressive Arrest Policies: A Study of New York City. Justice Research and Policy, 10 (1), 19–59.*

### Why Was the Study Done?

A widespread argument among researchers is that policy makers must decide between two competing ideologies when formulating drug user policies. They can choose the “treatment” or public health route, which assumes that drug use is a health problem best dealt with by health officials. Or, they can choose the “incarceration” or public safety intervention route, whereby users are arrested, treatment entries decline, and health plays a small role. Only a few studies, however, have analyzed the relationship between law enforcement policies and drug treatment entry among arrestees with marijuana as their primary drug problem. This study looks at a period in New York City when an “aggressive arrest policy” that focused on quality-of-life crimes was instituted to see how entries into treatment were affected. Specifically, the study’s purpose was to document that increases in law enforcement intensity in New York City were not tantamount to decreases in treatment delivery to marijuana and other drug users.

### What Did the Researchers Do?

In the mid to late 1990s, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Police Chief William Bratton focused on arresting and detaining people for crimes that contributed to a lower “quality-of-life” in New York City. This aggressive arrest policy resulted in a record growth in marijuana arrests. Using data from criminal justice admissions into public-funded treatment centers provided by the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), this study examined pathways to marijuana treatment entry in New York City since the implementation of the aggressive arrest policy. TEDS provides data on admissions to publicly funded drug treatment programs for marijuana as the primary drug of abuse, as well as the demographic and substance abuse characteristics of those admitted to substance abuse treatment. The data are routinely collected by state administrative systems and then submitted to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in a standard format. In addition to the data from TEDS, marijuana arrest data were obtained from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) for New York City. These

treatment, referral, and arrest data were analyzed over time, from 1992 to 2004.

## What Are the Study's Findings?

The TEDS data show that the number of drug users, at admission into treatment, whose primary substance of abuse was marijuana grew about 4 to 5 times during the 1990s, coinciding with the start of the Giuliani administration. It also appears that the number treated rose generally during this period, from under 100,000 in 1995 to a peak of more than 140,000 in 2000. More importantly, from the base year of 1992, the rates of growth in arrests for marijuana and criminal justice referrals to treatment for a primary marijuana problem are strikingly similar and parallel. In 1993, there was an increase of more than 100% over 1992 in arrests for marijuana and criminal justice referrals to treatment for a primary marijuana problem. By 2000, both rates had grown 1000% since 1992. In 1998, the difference in the rate of growth for arrests and referrals slightly widened (eight times more arrests since 1992; six times more referrals to treatment), but that year is an anomaly in the whole time series. Although arrests for marijuana possession greatly outnumber referrals to treatment, the trend lines are quite parallel and similar to each other. Whatever the reasons for increases in mandated marijuana treatment referrals, the aggressive arrest policy did not inhibit people from entering marijuana treatment, whether they chose treatment for themselves or were compelled by the criminal justice system to enter treatment. When Giuliani left office, the growth in marijuana arrests and criminal justice system mandates to marijuana treatment tapered off.

## What Are the Implications of the Study for Policy Makers?

This study examined several sources of data on arrest policies and entry into treatment following arrest for marijuana in New York City during the period 1992–2004. Findings indicate that more aggressive law enforcement activities are not necessarily incompatible with increased treatment entry, as often asserted. Conducting drug policy formulation and analysis on the basis of this “either/or” scenario fails to acknowledge that treatment often accompanies incarceration or other criminal justice measures. Indeed, many criminal justice practitioners believe that court mandates can

“motivate” otherwise “unwilling” addict offenders into treatment. Those mandated to treatment are no less likely to be successful in reducing their drug use and crime rates than those entering treatment voluntarily.

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## Civilian Review of Police Officers

*de Guzman, M. C. (2008). Perceptions of Civilian Review: Exploring the Differences in Reviewed and Non-Reviewed Officers. Justice Research and Policy, 10(1), 61–85.*

### Why Was the Study Done?

Civilian review has long been a contentious issue for the police, yet most research that focuses on police perceptions of civilian review has two shortcomings. Researchers tend to assume that police officers have collective sentiments against civilian review, and most deemphasize the influence of experience on one's perceptions about things or institutions. In addition, most research has been overly simplistic, with simple dichotomies such as trusting-not trusting or like-dislike being used instead of approaches that allow for more complex measures of officers' perceptions. This study surveyed officers of the Philippine National Police in an attempt to overcome some of the shortcomings of prior research and achieve a better understanding of how officers perceive civilian review.

### What Did the Researcher Do?

In a study of police accountability in 1978, Perez introduced the concepts of integrity and legitimacy as characteristics that determine police satisfaction with a review board. The current study elaborates on Perez's methodology by considering the board's integrity and legitimacy at several stages of the complaint process. These stages include the filing of the complaint, the investigation of the complaint, the hearing, and the disposition of filed complaints.

Questionnaires were prepared for officers who had been reviewed by a board and for non-reviewed officers. The first part of each questionnaire collected demographic information, such as the respondent's age, rank, gender, level of education, and monthly household income. The second part of the questionnaire was divided into several sections. The first section collected

data on the respondents' perceptions about the board's integrity and their satisfaction with the various integrity issues. The second section solicited information on the respondents' perceptions of the board's legitimacy and their satisfaction with the investigation, the hearing, and the decision of the civilian review board (the People's Law Enforcement Board [PLEB]). The final portion of the survey asked about the respondents' overall satisfaction with the PLEB. Of the 1,000 surveys sent to each group, 206 usable surveys were returned by reviewed officers and 514 by non-reviewed officers.

## What Were the Study's Findings?

*Perceptions of Review Board Integrity.* Based on findings from previous studies, it was expected that police officers would be dissatisfied with a review board that is civilian dominated, but reviewed officers were generally satisfied with three out of the four measures of review board integrity. (The measures were satisfaction with filing venue, investigators, hearing venue, and board composition.) A slight majority (51%) reported dissatisfaction with board composition. The findings for non-reviewed officers showed a similar pattern. Two differences between the police groups were significant: that reviewed officers were less satisfied with the composition of PLEBs than non-reviewed officers, and that non-reviewed officers were less satisfied with the investigation of cases than reviewed officers.

*Review Board Legitimacy.* The PLEBs appeared to project legitimacy. Most positive attitudes concerned the PLEBs' fairness. In general, respondents from either group believed the PLEB was "very fair" or "fair" in its investigation, hearing, and decision processes. At the same time, respondents had less positive beliefs about PLEBs' objectivity, though in most situations a majority of respondents had favorable perceptions about this measure. Reviewed officers tended to have more positive perceptions than non-reviewed officers. Additional analysis showed that the reviewed and non-reviewed groups had significantly different perceptions on six of the nine legitimacy measures, however. A significantly higher number of the reviewed officers perceived the board to be thorough in the investigation of cases, believed the hearing to be fair, objective, and thorough, and believed that the board was objective in its decision and thoroughly considered all the elements of the case before issuing a decision.

*Overall Satisfaction.* The majority of the respondents stated that they were satisfied overall with the PLEB. Reviewed officers had a higher satisfaction rate (80%) than non-reviewed officers (64.2%).

## What Are the Implications of the Study for Policy Makers?

This study compared two groups of officers—those who had been reviewed by a PLEB and those who had never been reviewed—to compare their perceptions about PLEB composition and process. The two police groups had significantly different perceptions about civilian review, suggesting that police officers do not have a one-dimensional attitude toward civilian reviews. The findings also suggest that experience may shape or alter one's perceptions about civilian review. Although there may be a tendency for police officers to mistrust a completely civilian review, it appeared that such mistrust may be overcome by the board's exercise of fairness, objectivity, and thoroughness in its processes.

Nonetheless, policy makers should look into providing more active police participation in the review process. The greatest apprehension of the police about the board was its purely civilian composition as well as the dominance of civilians in the investigation process. Perhaps the mixed model of a police review board, with both police and civilian members, should be considered instead of the more common completely civilian review board.